

received: 2020-04-01

DOI 10.19233/ASHS.2021.11

SREČKO KOSOVEL'S PERCEPTION OF ARTISTIC CREATION IN LIGHT OF CROCE'S AND CESAREO'S AESTHETICS

Vanda SREBOTNJAK

Gregorčič – Trubar State Educational Institution, with Slovenian Teaching Language / Slovene School Centre Gorizia,
via Puccini 14, 34170 Gorizia, Italy
e-mail: vanda.srebotnjak@solskicenter.net

ABSTRACT

The article examines some constants in Srečko Kosovel's definition of art and its social role. Special focus is placed on a not yet definitively explored area, which was the influence of Cesareo's and Croce's aesthetics regarding artistic creation with which Kosovel was familiar and from where he adopted some ideas, such as the distinction between art and science or the equation of content and form.

Keywords: aesthetics, art, content, form, Srečko Kosovel, Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, Benedetto Croce

LA CONCEZIONE DELLA CREAZIONE ARTISTICA DI SREČKO KOSOVEL ALLA LUCE DELL'ESTETICA DI CROCE E CESAREO

SINTESI

L'articolo si propone di evidenziare alcune costanti nell'opera di Srečko Kosovel, in particolar modo sulla definizione dell'arte e del ruolo, che essa svolge nella società. In particolar modo si focalizza su un aspetto ancora poco analizzato: l'influenza esercitata dall'estetica dell'arte creatrice del Cesareo e dall'estetica di Croce, che Kosovel conosceva e da cui ha acquisito alcuni aspetti, quale quello sulla separazione dell'arte dalla scienza e dell'identità tra forma e contenuto.

Parole chiave: estetica, arte, contenuto, forma, Srečko Kosovel, Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, Benedetto Croce

INTRODUCTION

The Slovene poet and thinker Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926) often expressed his ideas, definitions, and elaborations on art and artistic creation in his letters, articles, essays, and diary entries. In his letter to his sister Karmela from 1 Jan 1924, Kosovel mentions Cesareo (Kosovel, 1977, 503) who is briefly presented in the footnotes by Ocvirk as: “a poet and writer [...] who followed in the footsteps of De Sanctis and German aesthetics” (Kosovel, 1977, III, part two, 1184–1185).

In his study dedicated to Kosovel, Zadravec does quote Giovanni Cesareo, but only in conjunction with the “spiritualization of matter” in order to emphasize that: “(the impressionist) must imprint their ‘soul’ to matter” (Zadravec, 1986, 44).

Janez Vrečko mentions neither Cesareo nor Croce in his monograph on the poet. He does, however, focus on Kosovel's extensive concept of the equivalence between the content and the form, but which he ascribes to the poet's knowledge of constructivists (Vrečko, 2011, 134–161). Kosovel was undoubtedly familiar with Russian constructivists who emphasized the meaning of the equivalence of the content and the form (Vrečko, 2011, 134–161), but we nevertheless believe that Kosovel's definition of “content \equiv form” requires additional explanation. The poet marked it with a special symbol/ideogram, which had been introduced and first used by Gottlob Frege¹ in his work *Begriffsschrift*, but more on that later.

There are no discernible studies in literature expressly analysing the influences Croce's and Cesareo's aesthetics on artistic creation had on Kosovel's perception of it, so we will attempt to give a brief overview of the elements that Kosovel adopted and used from 1924 onward in his own articles, essays, or drafts for commentaries, letters, reviews.

A specific diary entry is very interesting for this research, in which Kosovel mentions Curcio's essay *L'estetica italiana contemporanea 1921* and also features a copied excerpt on futurist aesthetics (Komelj, 2019, 349). In his essay, Curcio presents an overview of the history of the development of Italian aesthetics and emphasizes the significance of three particular authors: De Sanctis, Croce and Cesareo. De Sanctis for distinguishing between the world of fantasy and the conceptual and emphasizing fantasy “as a creative, intuitive, and spontaneous ability, the real Muse, Deus in nobis, that is organic in its essence and is the privilege of a choice few

who are called poets” (Curcio, 1921, 6). According to Curcio, “art therefore creates, as it is fantastic. However, art is all form: the content has no value, because it is integrated, lost in the form.” And Croce because he was the first to establish aesthetics as the basis for the philosophy of spirit: “The two are forms of cognition, the intuitive and the logical, the one using fantasy, the other intellect, the first is individual and the second universal, this former artistic and the latter logical in the general sense” (Curcio, 1921, 18). Cesareo was singled out for having complemented Croce, because: “even though Croce sensed it, the creativity of art is Cesareo's concept” (Curcio, 1921, 71).

The family library in their homestead in the village of Tomaj actually features both De Sanctis' *Storia della letteratura italiana* and the essay bearing Srečko's signature with the inscription 1924, *Saggio su l'arte creatrice (Essay on Creative Art)* by Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo² from 1921. The essay is divided into four chapters: Function of Art, Creation, Expression and Form, and Art Critique. There is also an addendum on *Aesthetics* by Francesco De Sanctis. All of this indicates that Kosovel followed Curcio's definitions and began studying the very authors he believed were crucial for the development of Italian aesthetics.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the contents of Cesareo's essay and determine where and how Kosovel adopted some definitions i.e. terms on artistic creation and its social role. The data will be primarily sourced directly from Cesareo's and Kosovel's diary entries, essays, and articles; it will be compared and mutually interpreted. As reported by Miklavž Komelj, the National and University Library keeps a folder dated 1924 containing some of Kosovel's writings that expressly deal with the study of the work of art (Komelj, 2019, 298), which leads us to believe the year 1924 was a milestone for Kosovel from this aspect, because this was obviously when he began to expand on his theory of artistic creation.

I.

In order to get a better understanding of the subject matter and influences on Kosovel's contemplation on the characteristics of art and its role in society, we will adhere to the same layout of the subject matter as has been set out in Cesareo's essay. We will be amending this resource with other authors' statements, especially Croce, whom Kosovel read

1 Frege Gottlob (1848–1925) German mathematician, logician and philosopher, inventor of mathematical logic. Today, he is highly regarded as a thinker who set the foundation for the philosophy of language. His works influenced Wittgenstein as well as Bertrand Russell.

2 Cesareo (1860–1937) was a poet, essayist, literary critic, and playwright. He taught at the University of Palermo and was appointed a member of the High Council of the Ministry of Education in 1922. He became a senator under Mussolini's government in 1924.

in the German translation (Komelj, 2019, 308–315). In the foreword to the essay, Cesareo explains the intended principle purpose of the book, which is to awaken in young people a love and adoration for art and its beauty (Cesareo, 1924, 10). The essay therefore has a primarily didactic goal to explain the concept of a sense of beauty and to teach the basis on which the artistic can be separated from the unartistic. Starting with the very definition of art, Cesareo rejects both the empirical as well as the aprioristic approach. The empirical one because *“the definition of art cannot be extrapolated from an external phenomenon and a transmittal, which are always more or less practically oriented, but from an internal concept, which is exclusively theoretical, along with introspection and self-awareness”* (Cesareo, 1924, 17). The aprioristic because *“all of these sentences cloaked as pre-emptive judgements are merely subjective opinions that often transmute into tautologies, for if we disregard the experience, we cannot claim that art bears this or that attribute”* (Cesareo, 1924, 17). The author therefore proposes his own solution: human spirituality is composed of three elemental functions: the intellect, will, and fantasy, which coincide with three values: truth, goodness, and beauty. The first function, the intellect, is cognitive and is applied to scientifically examine the reality that surrounds us. The second, will, also steers our interventions in reality based on the first, while the third, i.e. fantasy (the most important for the artist), creates something completely new, different, something that cannot be found in the real world; this is creativity, as it enables the creation of art. Detecting the creative act in a work of art is the very thing that indisputably allows us to separate the work of art from everything else: the consciousness of creation (Cesareo, 1924, 19–20). Kosovel expressed his thoughts on this consciousness thusly: *“For all art is in its origin an expression of free creation, which can only exist in a free soul”* (Komelj, 2019, 143). Cesareo himself claims in a chapter of his *On the Freedom of Art*: *“The first and simultaneously most pronounced characteristic of a work of art is precisely the freedom,”* because *“the freedom of a work of art is reflected in the creation of new images, new proportions, internal syntheses that are not drawn by the mind from reality, but which are created in the artist's fantasy, they do not have the validity of reality, but only of beauty”* (Cesareo, 1924, 27–28).

Kosovel writes in a letter to his sister Karmela, dated 19. February 1923:

I read in one sitting Curcio's book “The Ideal of Life”, which is very beautiful and profound. [...] Curcio considers art to be ≡ fantasy, which can be completely understood

coupled with his idealism, which means strict spirituality and is also its foundation: all of this is a construct of the spirit, just like life (body) is merely one form of spiritual life, a chance for the spirit to actualize. (Kosovel, 1977, 483)

This insight enables us to deduce that Kosovel already began expanding on the meaning of art that year, with all signs pointing to the fact that he then focused his attention on it, partially reformulating it in accordance with Cesareo and Croce the following year, as is further supported by the folder from 1924.

Cesareo therefore considers art to be the creation of something new that is completely separate from reality. But human spirituality is an indivisible whole, so it is inevitable that all three of its components appear in it, but not with the same potential, allowing us to detect and distinguish between all three in a work of art to study them (Cesareo, 1924, 20). At the same time, the author emphasizes that since all three components are always inextricably linked in the artist's newly created synthesis, the aesthetic pleasure should not entail rationally dividing them, as this would prevent us from comprehending the essence of the work of art. In his essay *Art and the Proletarian*, Kosovel wrote: *“The artist has a new task to depict life from reality, transfer that reality into an artistic form, shape this reality into art,”* because *“an artist must speak the truth, not lies,”* if art is to be *“art for man.”* (Kosovel, 1977, 24). This thought clearly expresses how Kosovel incorporated all three elements: art carries within itself condensed truth and goodness, which are then shaped to form the beauty of the work of art.

Cesareo goes on to clarify the term regarding the consciousness of creation, separating it from the cognitive function and the practical will. The author defines art as a product of fantasy, which is a characteristic of the human spirit and is therefore separate from both the cognitive principle and from practical will, i.e. firstly, because it is not tied to the thought's congruity with the subject, and secondly, because its desire to change is not tied to the external world, but the internal world of spirituality: its main goal is therefore beauty. The artist uses his own internal fantasy to create a different, alternate reality that he then wants to impart onto others, which is why he gives it shape. His desire is therefore not to change the external reality, but to create a new, completely different one, which the author calls *“volontà fantastica”* and designates it as complete freedom. The artist creates something completely new that does not exist in reality and therefore cannot be constricted by reality (Cesareo, 1924, 27–33). Similarly, Kos-

ovel writes in a short note: "*Art does not represent nature. It creates its own nature.*" (Komelj, 2019, 42). This clearly demonstrates that the poet agreed with the claim that art is not a kind of mimesis of nature, but that it rather creates its own world – nature. Similarly, when supporting his claim that "*it is not the idea, but the emotion that gives art its symbolic lightness,*" Croce determines that "*each landscape painting is an emotional state: [...] not because a painting is a painting, but because a landscape painting is art*" (Croce, 1969, 33–35). In a writing entitled *On Art*, Kosovel claims: "*A scientist looks at the world with reason, people art is only understood with the heart. Art cannot be understood, comprehended with reason, at least not its essence*" (Komelj, 2019, 97). The thought is then synthetically recorded in the form "*scientific spirit ↔ poetic spirit*" (Komelj, 2019, 314) as opposing terms.

All of this supports the fact that Kosovel agreed that art is a creation of freedom that is reflected in a symbolic form and is strictly separated from science, because they have different goals. Croce similarly defines art's creative moment: "*In truth, we know no more than the expressed intuition: our thought is not as it is expressed in word*" (Croce, 1969, 43).

A work of art is therefore expressed intuition and this represents its artistic moment. Kosovel himself wrote about this thought by Croce: "*The creator's moment of art: It does not exist until it is created?!*" (Komelj, 2019, 311). At the same time, if art is intuition, it cannot have a cognitive character, which was expressly emphasized by Croce in his fourth negation on what art is not and cannot be (Croce, 1969, 21–25). Kosovel noted on this fourth negation:

4th last negation

Art is not conceptual-cognitive

To intuition, everything that is organic is un-separated reality from spirituality etc.

Looking for something completely new.

[Beauty]

The artist creates.

Art is separated from science by the conceptual form. (From math, philosophy.)

esprit scientifique ↔ esprit poétique

completely contrasting (Komelj, 2019, 310)

These synthetic notes clearly prove that Kosovel ascribed special meaning to the terms that were underlined. Science as such does not correspond to art, to which it is completely contrary, because art indisputably creates something else: beauty. This is because the artist:

Must be like an antenna receiving the most distant hints from the Cosmos, a sculptor, creating from himself the face of the future. His light illuminates the entirety, not a singularity, such as the light of the scientist, which is why he is religious. (Kosovel, 1977, 95)

And also:

Art is a living realization. It is not like science, accumulating "objective" results but still cannot reveal what life is and what it is that perpetually powers it, moves it: it also does not seek, like science, the "eternal" laws of life. (Kosovel, 1977, 96)

In his writing, which Kosovel then included in a letter to Vinko Košak on 2 August 1925 entitled *To Think Fast, Well, Clearly*, it is clear that he was nearing Cesareo's definition of the creative process:

If our relation to ourselves, to the world, and to people is profound, clear, grand; so our art will be grand. This is why the reality of our experience is one of the main elements of our life and in general of life's catechism.

Forgo barren objectivity and naturalism; the object only becomes beautiful when placed in an interesting light, or a fantastical one, or a nice one, or a black one. Always consider that you are painting an object (a person, an event, an animal) on the canvas of your soul and that the subject only shines in that mysterious reflex called beauty. (Kosovel, 1977, 383)

Which corresponds to the following:

As in the image: Never stand "en face", do not become stereotypical. The position of the subject reveals only half. Attack the problem in an original, but not forced manner. Naturalists were stereotypical. When you write merry poems, jump for joy to the ceiling, and when you write sad poems, bang your head against the wall. To feel emotional turmoil in a physical way is a precondition to artistic creation. (Kosovel, 1977, 381)

Cesareo's writings reveal this explanation with an example:

*A real artist is able to objectify their phantasm to then follow its law, observe it, listen to it, and follow it as if it were foreign to their spirit. When Flaubert wrote his novel *Bouvard e Pecuchet*, one of his comments said*

"... I feel I am becoming one of them. Their failings are mine and I feel as if I am going to burst." (Cesareo, 1924, 85)

This example leads one to assume that Kosovel internalized that depiction by Cesareo and shared it with a friend. It explains what Kosovel had in mind when he spoke of the internal, spiritual experience of nature, life. Croce claims something similar when he writes that

The emotion and the image, outside the aesthetic synthesis, do not exist for the artist's spirituality: [...] for art is not an unimportant daydream, nor is it a restless passion, but rather the surpassing of all of this with a different act, or if we prefer, replacing these passions with others, yearning to design and admire it, with all of the pains and joys of artistic creation. (Croce, 1969, 41)

The artist should therefore not merely aimlessly daydream, but should rather try to exceed or replace this daydream with artistic creation and internal composition, the perception of the image of the work of art. And it is precisely in this artistic objectification in which the artist watches, observes, and creates a new image, a synthesis of content and form.

Later on in his essay, Cesareo transitions precisely to this key concept, which is the interconnection between content and form. The author staunchly opposes those who still insist on separating the content from the form. To him, the two are completely equal. In his opinion, the artist (here, Cesareo means all artistic forms) imagines the content simultaneously with its form so that both appear as a synthesis and are therefore inseparable. The content is not something the artist would a priori imagine and then integrate into the form: the artist simultaneously imagines the form of the work of art, which is simultaneously the content, so they are inseparably connected. A work of art is art not because of the feelings, the facts it depicts, but because of its form, the total vision emanating from it and negating the value of its individual elements into the only value, which is the feature of the work of art, which is beauty. A piece of art is therefore a creation for its own purpose, a new synthesis (Cesareo, 1924, 35). Of course, it allows us to separate the content from the form, but we do so by using our intellect, never when we are experiencing it through fantasy (Cesareo, 1924, 36). Art is namely a pure (form) shape that creates within itself smaller forms, reabsorbing them into itself; feelings, perceptions, thoughts, passions that are created from the first draft of the creation are themselves created;

creations, if we insist, contents, are negated by the form in its synthesis. Content is form (underlined in the original) (Cesareo, 1924, 88).

Different starting premises also lead Croce to unequivocally state that:

The truth is precisely this: that content and shape (form) may be separated in art, but cannot be separately defined as artistic, precisely because the artistic element is their connectedness or their unification, not as an abstract and dead unit, but as factual and alive, pre-existing in their synthesis; art is true aesthetics, an emotional synthesis of a priori images in intuition, about which we may claim that an emotion without an image is blind and that an image without an emotion is empty. There exist no emotion and image outside the aesthetic synthesis for the artistic spirit. (Croce, 1969, 40–41)

In his writing *To Be or Not to Be*, Kosovel draws next to item one "*Content ≡ form*" this special sign, which proves that he was completely taken by Cesareo's and Croce's definition of a work of art as a synthesis of content and form (Komelj, 2019, 28).

In his essay entitled *Crisis*, he explicitly stresses:

The difference between content and form in art disappears for ever in the museum of aesthetics; the content wishes to express itself in a free, modern organic form, it wants to be the content and the form all in one, making way for constructivism. (Kosovel, 1977, 13)

In the first sentence, Kosovel obviously takes issue with those segments of literary critics who separate the content from the form and ascribe the latter a special aesthetic value. As Kosovel had accepted this new idea of the unity of the content and form, such theories should according to him be banished to the museum, as they are no longer useful for the understanding and evaluating of new art. Here, we should also add that both Cesareo and Croce staunchly oppose, each from their own perspective, aestheticians who separate the form from the content and are therefore focused on studying the aesthetic element, or the moral, the conceptual one, etc., while also both claiming that art eludes them, because they look for it in places it does not exist. In the second sentence, Kosovel synthesizes both Croce's and Cesareo's definition of art as a free creation that is reflected through its organic form, in which content and form are completely interlocked. A particularly interesting aspect here is Kosovel's conclusion that the next logical step is to choose constructivism. Therefore,

if we dissect the poet's deduction, his belief that the content and form are bound together to form the core, the essence of artistic creation, it follows that constructivism is especially complementary to this kind of understanding of creativity, that it is its consequence. We also add:

[This is why] *content and form in art should often be discussed. It is true that new times demand new forms, but these should not always be merely visually new, but also deeply new in their interior, as the form also carries its own exemplary interior.* (Kosovel, 1977, 209)

From this new concept, derived from Croce and Cesareo, Kosovel extrapolates a subsequent argument that the artist (and consequently the work or art) is placed in a certain historical period (which was also supported by both authors), which dictates some new expressive means. If these new means are not integrated with the new content, they belong in the "aesthetician's museum". Kosovel's expressed sensitivity of righteousness and humanity and his knowledge of Russian constructivism (Vrečko, 2011, 235) allowed him to merge the "new forms" of constructivism with this "new content".

Kosovel elaborates on this concept in his writing entitled *Letter*:

For art that places its essence into form is not art, but virtuosity. But we all know that an artist does not create his works of art for the museum, the aesthetician, or for the artist, but for man and for life. [...] Such poets have nothing to say. There is no fire, no blood in those poems, no real pain or beautiful love, all there truly is, is the bare literary slogan adopted from poetics. (Kosovel, 1977, 94)

In this paragraph, the poet once again underlines where the separation between the content and form leads and for this reason "the poets have nothing to say". The following sentence leads us to believe that Kosovel adopted Croce's definition of art as "a content that is shaped and a form that is filled, so that the emotion is illustrated and the figure is sensed" (Croce, 1969, 41), because he explicitly emphasizes that these poems have no fire inside them, no blood, no pain, nor beautiful love.

This congruity is even further illustrated with his writing:

Not with mechanic reality condensed with a blind causality, the genius shapes reality according to the laws

of his spirit, that genius is the poet, upon whom reality bestows the content and the spirit the form (Komelj, 2019, 284)

This is further supported by this writing:

*Away with literary theory
And weathered aesthetics
The soul of matter (Pilon)
The matter of the soul (Jakac)* (Komelj, 2019, 281)

Here, the concept of content and form is once again evident, as in the cases of Pilon and Jakac, with a simultaneous critique of mechanisation, science that functions as a "metre" in which "death" is located. A poet-genius who shapes "his reality", the leading principle is "the movement", which is the "rhythm" and "rhythm: content" (Komelj, 2019, 291) or

Statics

↓

dynamics (Komelj, 2019, 351),

that the workers will create from "the rhythms of the collective part of the rhythms of the new collective art, the rhythms of a new song about the fight to assert human rights for all echelons of human society" (Kosovel, 1977, 25), because "our art will be a reflection of our human struggle and our search and its form will grow from our own evolution" (Kosovel, 1977, 20).

He goes on in his diary entries:

*Truth — Goodness — Beauty. | When searching for the essence of art, beauty, taste pleasure must be — eliminated.
Beauty, taste, pleasure | too relative and variable for pinpointing the essence of art.
They must be eliminated (T)
To me, God is the mirror of harmony: a cosmos in spiritual form, a man: man God.* (Kosovel, 1977, 696)

This entry also speaks to this conclusion, as Kosovel synthesizes his position in which he still emphasizes the merging of the content (God, Cosmos, man) with the (spiritual) form, which leads to the harmony "man God". It is namely true that

*Form – content
Art – life
Healthy, robust, and strong. The barrenness of form.
Content! It should be born by us from life.* (Komelj, 2019, 492)

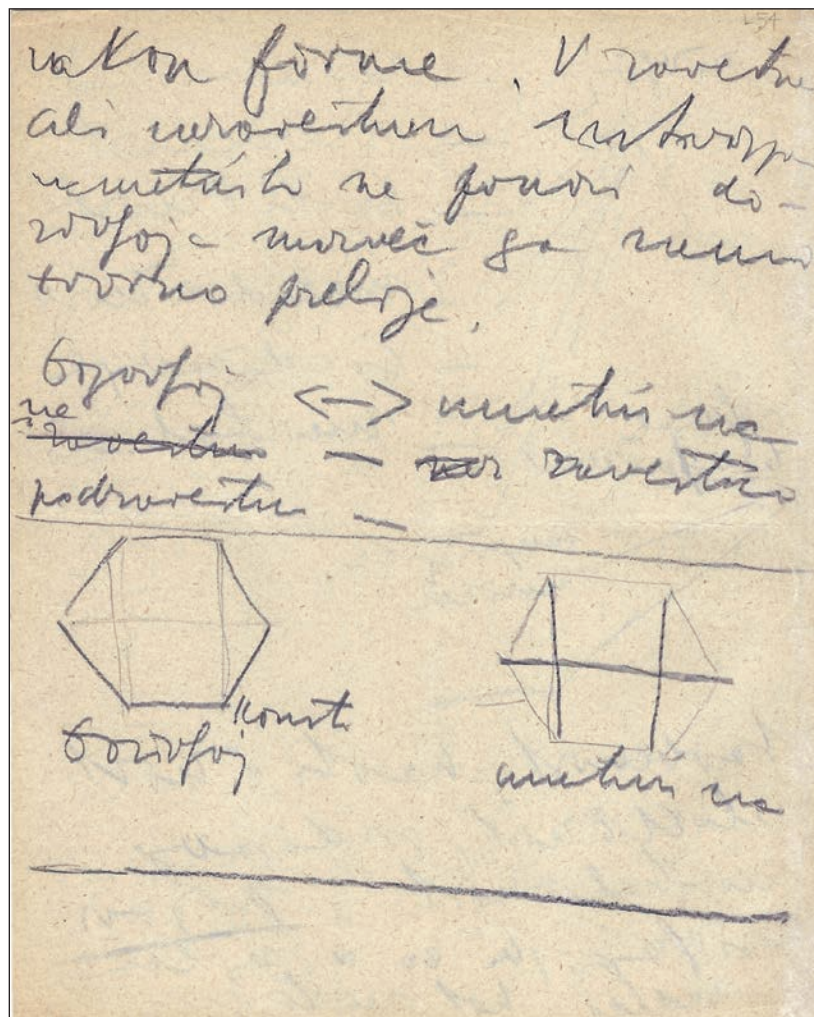


Figure 1: Two hexagons: the first depicts an experience with the inscription Konst, the second a work of art.

Deep inside, the artist must relive the beauty of life, because only in this way will this be able to be the true “**Content!**” that is reflected in the beauty of the artistic form, in which “man God” will also be able to finally live. This is the topic of discussion with Ivan Prijatelj, in which he writes that “*what does an artist experience in explicitness? The same truth in symbols as a philosopher in terms.*” (Komelj, 2019, 294), to which the poet adds:

*This is not true,
science-intellect
art-soul
dead analysis
living organism (Komelj, 2019, 294)*

Science is therefore “dead analysis”, “metre that is death”, while in art there are the soul, life, movement, rhythm, because “the tree flowers with a finite number of blossoms, that is the rhythm. A

blossom is a blossom, there are no half-blossoms" (Kornelj, 2019, 291). Similarly, there cannot be half a work of art, if it is reflected as the synthesis of content and form.

An especially interesting aspect of this is the writing Kosovel accompanies with a sketch of two hexagons:

Construction, chaos, melody, gradience, musicality, the experience, in it are in themselves internal laws of the form. In conscious or unconscious creation, the artist does not repeat the experience, but materializes it into form himself.
experience ↔ work of art
subconsciously – unconsciously
subconsciously – (Fig.2)

This is followed by a graphic illustration with two hexagons (Fig. 1). The first depicts an experience with the inscription *Konst*, the second a work

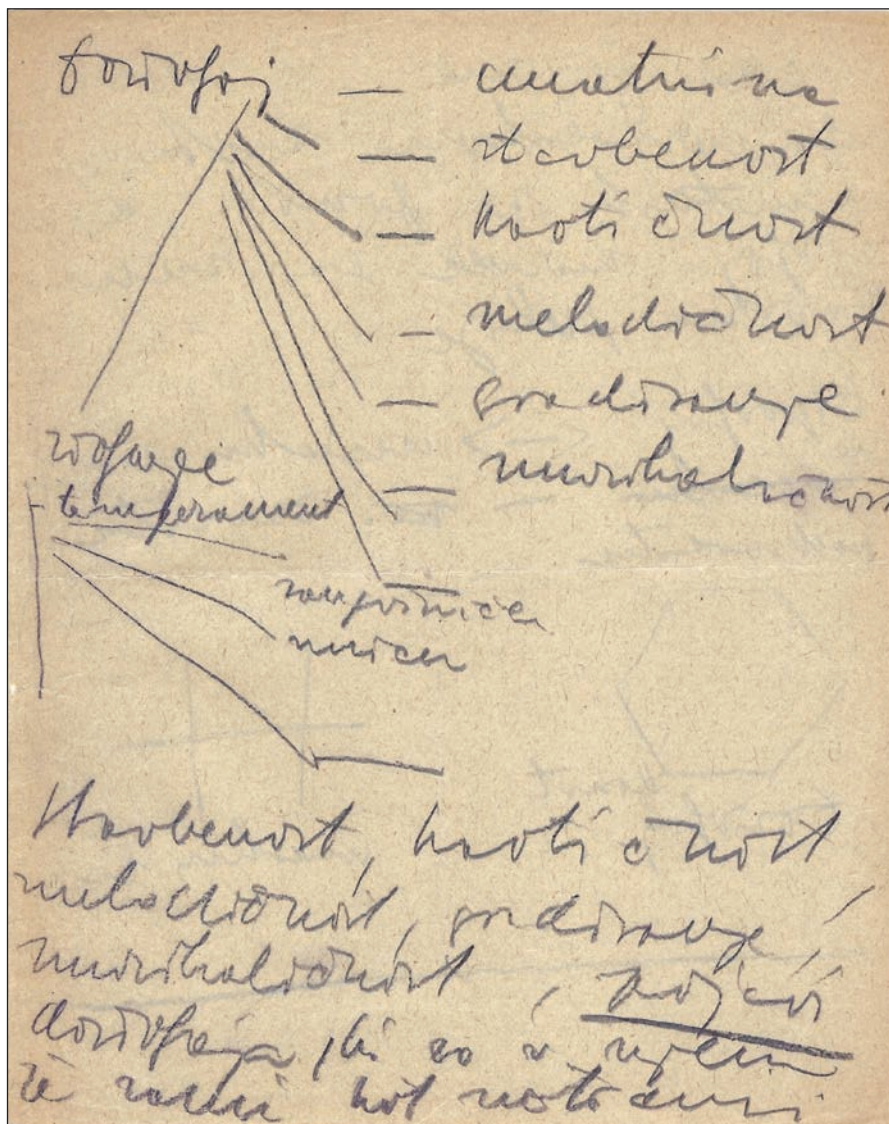


Figure 2: The description of external impressions.

of art. This is an extremely significant inscription in which Kosovel in essence accepts and reshapes Croce's and Cesareo's portrayal of the work of art. The instances of experience are already defined as an inner form and the inscription *Konst* next to the hexagon illustrates the experience that Cesareo had already called the internal transformation of new external impressions with internal spirituality. Next to it is an altered hexagon depicting the artist's "material transformation". Here, it should be emphasized that Croce in his aesthetics strongly opposed both the separation of art forms as well as genres within literature. He believed art is a priori an indivisible intuition and it is therefore completely irrelevant how it materializes. Similarly, although not as radically, Cesareo claimed that the artist in his fantasy creates a form that he then selectively shapes into a poem, a painting,

a building, etc., depending on his vision, which completely suited Kosovel, as it enabled him to "start walking the extreme path in poems as well" (Kosovel, 2006, 241). If the artist believes that mathematical symbols/signs and geometric shapes, such as in the poem *Grey* (Kosovel, 2004, 182), most appropriately merge/reflect the contents, then they must be used.

At the same time, Kosovel also claims that the artist creates "consciously or unconsciously": unconsciously according to Croce, consciously according to Cesareo. Especially interesting is the separation of the experience from the work of art, as this is also the essence of Cesareo's formulation of creativity, as has been indicated above.

The copies and notes Kosovel made while reading Bernhard Ten Brink are also interesting. The following sentence expresses a similar sentiment:

With true poets, the form is extremely organically linked to the content, while for imitators, the form has swum to the top and it is no longer formulation, but the formalism of form. (Komelj, 2019, 357)

On another piece of paper:

*The most important among them is undoubtedly the relationship between the form and the content, the manner of illustration. (8)*³ (Komelj, 2019, 359)

Of course, one who does not live this new life, cannot also create new content that births a new form. (Kosovel, 1977, 37)

According to Kosovel, this is why a revolution in art was unable to take place in Slovenia:

A revolution in art could not last, because it was only a revolution of form, but which was not rooted in our circumstances. As many times before, it turned out that form in art is only the certain expression of its content, that the form of the work of art is biologically merged with its contents and is therefore inseparable from it. (Kosovel, 1977, 41)

For this reason, Kosovel persistently strives to create a revolution in art, because

Art is the religion of modern, new life. Not the art that still depicts knights and princesses, court life, and that places all of its exertions into the shape of the form. Not that art. Because art that places its essence into form is not art, it is virtuosity. (Kosovel, 1977, 94)

These poets are therefore completely “without content” and “they have nothing to say”. The modern poet should be “so closely merged with life to feel its faintest beat”, because only “the real artist is a symbol of transformation, development, and new life. His development runs before life, because the artist creates the future. [...] His light must illuminate the entirety, not a specificity like the light of the scientist, which is why he is religious” (Kosovel, 1977, 94–95). With this in mind, we understand the significance Kosovel ascribed to the term religious. The scientist can illuminate (explain) a few aspects of reality, but the artist creates its entire image and because “art is a living realization” that “does not need civilisation”, it is religious. “She wants man. This is why she breaks the stiff, established artistic

form that has become the norm to civilized people, breaks the form that makes her cold” (Kosovel, 1977, 97). To that end: “To sum up: the new “artist”, who does not call himself that, but perhaps futurist, expressionist, constructivist, zenitist, etc., is not bound. He is free in content and form. But not entirely. What is more: to him, the content is a condition of the form, even more, to him content \equiv form” (Kosovel, 1977, 104). In his work Ideograms, Frege established a formalism, which is used to solve the logical confusions of linguistic communication, and introduced a number of ideograms and operations, which were used to express the basic logical processes of communication. The sign \equiv was defined thusly: “The sign for the equivalence of contents signifies a circumstance in which two different names have the same contents” (Frege, 2019, 25). As is evident in Budget (*Proračun*) (Kosovel, 2004, 201), Kosovel consistently differentiated between Frege’s ideogram (rectilinearity \equiv a // b) for the equivalence of content and the algebraic equals sign (finances = 0). He was also familiar with and used the symmetrical characteristic of the equals sign, as is evident in e.g., *Kons 5*: “*dung is gold / and gold is dung*”, “ $0=\infty/ \infty=0$ ” (Kosovel, 2004, 187).

All of this clearly states how essential the synthesis of content and form is to Kosovel. A synchronous image is created within the artist, be it the fruit of the synthesis of fantasy or a priori aesthetic intuition whose content has a form and whose form has a content. They cannot be separated without losing the fundamental characteristic of a work of art, which is its integrity, from which beauty stems. Beauty in art (any kind) must be regarded as a whole that stems from both the form and the content of the depicted, as they are equivalent. This also implicitly includes the thesis that we do not change the work of art, because: “If we rob poetry of its rhyme, rhythm, and its words, there does not remain, as some claim, beyond all of this, a poetic idea: nothing remains. Poetry was created as those words, that rhythm, and that metre” (Croce, 1969, 45). In terms of Kosovel, this means that Spherical Mirror (Kosovel, 2004, 154) was created like those verses and a depiction that must not be changed, as this would consequently demolish/alter the entire structure, content, and its beauty.

II.

Both Croce and Cesareo are in agreement that art cannot be subjected to a moral judgement. Croce supports this claim by stating that art is not a moral obligation, because it is not the product of

3 The number is in the original.

will. Cesareo claims that the goal of art is neither truth nor morality, but beauty. Kosovel consolidates the two mentalities in this thought: "*Art cannot be a servant to morality and science; if the two are artistically combined, the advantage is naturally on art's side*" (Komelj, 2019, 309). This claim also reveals how Kosovel substantiated his transition to Integrals, this poetry with an expressed social charge and of course, to the poems that more or less explicitly contain political insinuations (*Italian Culture, Ej hej!*). However, this is not contrary to his claims about separating science from art, because the condition is that the two are "artistically merged" so that they no longer have their recognizable function, but an artistic function.

Both Croce and Cesareo strictly separate between science and art. Croce's position is that:

One who asks of a work of art whether it reflects the truth or not is asking the wrong question, [...] for differentiation between the truth and untruth always relates to some kind of judgement about reality or to an opinion, but it (the judgement) cannot be oriented to the image, which is [the fruit of fantasy]. (Croce, 1969, 22)

Cesareo claims that the goal of science is truth and the goal of art is beauty. (Cesareo, 1924, 144)

Similarly, both authors specifically insist on the unity of content and form as the only one that can reflect beauty. Cesareo understands the creative act as an inseparable whole that is created within the artist's spirit as an initially inseparable unit of a form that already contains the content with its inseparable form. For Croce, "art is an intuition" that "creates a cluster of images" that represent the "symbol". And because "*the thought in a symbol is not something separate that could be thought as separate from the represented symbol*", so "*the thought is completely incorporated into the represented (symbol)*" (Croce, 1969, 28–31).

It is therefore not surprising that Kosovel used a special sign to underline that the content is equal to the form. The artist can only achieve beauty if he is capable of creating a unified whole, because "*the suitable expression, if it is indeed suitable, is also beautiful, for beauty is nothing more than the correctness of the image and with it, the expression,*" as "*expression and beauty are not two concepts, but a single unity that can be used interchangeably with each other*" (Croce, 1969, 48).

Cesareo also clearly defines art as beauty that therefore cannot be judged and rated. This is not because it is beyond good and evil, but because its

goal is beauty. However, the author does acquiesce that an artist can create a new morality that is articulated in their creation, although he also adds that we must not separate its morality aspect (content) from the whole (form). In Kosovel's final period, after his turn "to the left" with "his eyes closed", it is clear from his writings what he deems to be the central role of modern art: truth. This is a value the artist emphasizes repeatedly and that defined his final period. "*The triumph of truth in cultural, of humanism in economic, of virtue, in social life will be the greatest triumph of modern man*" (Kosovel, 1977, 11). Kosovel's new content is therefore also reflected as a need to emphasize justice and truth in art. On the other hand, some of Kosovel's writings from late 1925 seem to indicate that the poet had changed his mind and denied the significance of beauty in art. By utilizing the previously stated facts, we will attempt to argue that Kosovel had not in fact changed his mind. In the conclusion of his essay *On "Art"*, Kosovel claims:

Therefore: do not look for form in this new life, look for the man. And art will no longer be a "joy", but rather a solace. (Kosovel, 1977, 105)

Kosovel laid out the starting point for this argumentation in his article *Art and the Proletarian*, in which he thusly elaborated on his opinion regarding the art of the time:

The bourgeoisie has claimed all the cultural channels and enslaved the artists in the process. It tried to rob them of the freedom of opinion by publicising the motto: art for art's sake. This was its manner of saying: Artist, pay no heed to what is happening in your life, whether or not it is just or unjust, but write, write, art for art's sake. (Kosovel, 1977, 23)

Kosovel's definitions of such art have already been exhibited in previous quotes. This is actually not art, as it is only reflected in its empty, aesthetic form and is therefore only suited to museums. Kosovel writes in his deliberations *The Basic Principles of Christ's Teachings*: "*Christ used his death to deny the value of the physical and elevate the beauty of the spiritual life. [...] It was Christ's teaching that searched everywhere for a man, a man with a heart*" (Kosovel, 1977, 47). This leads us to believe that the beauty of spiritual life is expressed by love governing interpersonal relationships, which carries with it justification. It is therefore not surprising that Kosovel denied this external, aesthetic beauty that begets pleasure and replaced it with a different, a spiritual beauty that is reflected in this "new

art" that is presented in this "new form", offering solace, if it creates "a new harmony between man and his surroundings, new religion, the religion of community as a unit" (Kosovel, 1977, 57). "If the goal of man is only good (and beautiful)" (Kosovel, 1977, 64), then it follows that:

who grows in beauty and eternity, deteriorates to society, because they grow in God. And so, the poet is a synthesis of generations that have striven for absolute beauty when they felt within themselves a fraction of a shiny cosmic building in which God resides, a symbol of a weightless, bodiless eternity (Kosovel, 1977, 81).

This thought already clearly emphasizes the unity between the beautiful and the good, meaning that what is good and righteous is also beautiful and therefore the poet is "a priest in the name of beauty" (Kosovel, 1977, 82). This is where the artist's role springs, from which he is to draw from life to create a new future in a new form. Art as religion that creates new humanity and therefore new beauty; its mission therefore is not and cannot be "the enjoyment of beauty"; its new, revolutionary mission is to act as a "religiously spiritual force" to "lead life" (Kosovel, 1977, 86) and its poet, the priest, must stay faithful to its main mission: the truth. It is namely "the vessel for everything else: beauty, freedom, eternal life" (Kosovel, 1977, 96). Thus, the circle is completed: beauty is not fashion, it is a moral value that is reflected in truth and justice.

III.

In the second part of the essay, Cesareo focuses on analysing creativity. Here, we believe two aspects should be pointed out: namely, that the artist can draw the material for his creation from himself, create it, or from his life experience. Similarly, Kosovel noted that "creating means bestowing upon the soul concrete, organic forms – the soul and the spirit" and that "to spiritualize matter is to engage in spiritual creation" (Komelj, 2019, 50). Secondly, Cesareo believes that the principle, the goal of poetry is to simply and only humanly strive for higher Beauty. We know that Kosovel often touched on the significance of beauty and described what it meant to him. As could be inferred from the previous quotes, both Croce and Cesareo understood the beauty of art only in the merger of its content and form. Cesareo defines the beauty a work of art as "creating something that supersedes empirical reality, a beauty that is not natural beauty, [...] but spiritual beauty that supersedes reality" (Cesareo, 1924, 118). In his definition of the concept, he

quotes Baudelaire's definition: "For the principle of poetry is, pure and simple, man's striving for a higher Beauty" (Cesareo, 1924, 119). Previous quotes also infer that Kosovel understands the beauty of art as something that stems from the integrity of the work of art, not from its form. Only the beauty experienced by the artist enables him a deeper understanding and therefore a better articulation of the content in the form.

IV.

In the third section, Cesareo addresses expression and form and the way the artist decides to transmit his work to others. Here, it is important to emphasize the statement that expression can be any verbal, graphic, mimic, phonic, or any type of means with which people express their thoughts (Cesareo, 1924, 158).

At the same time, Cesareo and Croce make an important distinction between grammar and rhetoric. The first serves us in our everyday lives to form sentences that allow us to communicate, while the other strives toward synthesis and is therefore freed of grammatical principles. The artist creates his art by following an internal instinct and if a new style of language needs creating, the artist should create it:

The creative nature of the artistic language is reflected in the constant tendency to rebel against any rule: the poet unearths many unused words, creates them; changes the sound and meaning of existing ones; breaks logical rules and grammatical ones; modernizes rhetoric; aids himself with rhythm; creates expressive organisms in which the value does not lie in what they express, but what they suggest; their virtue was not in them par sé, but in the form and the song, the ideal synthesis into which they were merged. (Cesareo, 1924, 208)

Kosovel wrote on a piece of paper: "Open verses, not rimed. Internal rhythm, internal composition. The poetry of half-tones./Healthy, sick dissonances." or "All you need are living expressions that express in a hearty and melodic manner exactly what you think; avoid everything that has faded in the usual use" (Komelj, 2019, 102, 111). As well as the following:

Of course, this kind of construction immediately breaks all the rules. The maxim is: use everything if you want to express yourself and what you have seen through the soul. The soul is the norm, not dead aesthetics. (Komelj, 2019, 47)

A Roman numeral three has been written in the upper right corner, which could also indicate the third chapter of Cesareo's essay, in which the author expressly discusses creative expression and in which he emphasizes the artist's freedom of expression, to which the general grammatical rules do not apply and that allows him to "use everything" (Cesareo, 1924, 207–213) to express the soul.

Croce also focuses on critiquing rhetoric, to which he ascribes two errors: the first is the one separating content from form, the second that Rhetoric is in the form: "cause harm by separating "embellished" language from the "simple" one, because "the appropriate expression, if it is appropriate, is also beautiful, for beauty is nothing other than the precision of the expressed, the expression. [...] Expression and beauty are not two terms, but a single term that can be expressed with one word or the other simultaneously" (Croce, 1969, 48). Taking into account the fact that Croce believed separating between artistic fields was wrong and unnecessary, then Kosovel's use of different symbols in poems and him organizing "words in space" is clearer. If these express the aesthetic intuition appropriately and precisely, they are beautiful.

V.

In the fourth and final chapter, Cesareo addresses literary critique. In it, the author focuses on the issue of the correct reception of a work of art. The reader is said to be basically reliving a similar process as the artist, with the exception that his creative act differs from the author's because the aesthetic judgement is not universally objective, but it is universally subjective, common to all people (Cesareo, 1924, 224). Kosovel sums this up: "A poem is like a curtain. Someone stands behind it and talks" (Komelj, 2019, 99). The reader is therefore completely actively involved in the dialogue with the poet and thus not only does he recreate the work of art, but by doing so, also experiences aesthetic pleasure (Cesareo, 1924, 228). Croce says:

Art is a vision or intuition. The artist creates an image or a phantasm and whoever enjoys the work of art directs their gaze in the same direction as the artist, peeks through the cranny that has been revealed to them to reproduce that same image within themselves. (Croce, 1969, 15)

Kosovel wrote in a short note on psychological critique:

The final result would be to look for the aesthetic experience of beauty as the shrine of all

experience, based on general psy[cho]-logy. This would be the fairest research method. (Komelj, 2019, 278)

He leaves no doubt when defining the critic's work with an underlined sentence, dated 7 March 1924, which is especially significant in this case: "Study of art/for its complete experience and its aesthetic judgement" (Komelj, 2019, 298–299).

These writings also demonstrate his agreement with Cesareo's statements that the literary critic must in himself experience the beauty of the work of art and search within it for the beauty of harmony between the content and form. If one of these methods are suitable to achieve this, its use is justified.

In his article *Critique, the Motor of Life in Art*, Kosovel thusly summarizes and synthesises Croce's definition of the ideal literary critic:

The critic's ideal must be to relive each work of art, intuitively searching for art in it, for even though art grows from life, it does not reproduce life, but itself creates into its own new life. This is why the critic must not look for a logic of emotion in a work of art as the naturalists did in the past, but rather for that something unknown from which art actually exists and cannot be comprehended, only sensed. That is when a critique will deserve the name "aesthetic critique, which is the only real art critique." (Croce 82). (Kosovel, 1977, 205)

When warning of erroneous aesthetic judgements, Cesareo very clearly states that:

A literary critic who does not account for the diversity of the harmony of rhyme and rhythm, hiatus and syneresis, who neglects the composition and rich meaning of an individual word, who ignores the lexicon and is too true to grammar, [...] will never be a good critic. (Cesareo, 1921, 277)

To this, Kosovel adds:

A critic must be a person who kisses the work of art with his own mouth to feel its life force. A critic is a contemporary to the artist, so he must draw from the present, from life. (Komelj, 2019, 258)

In terms of art history, Cesareo believes that there are no more or less beautiful works of art, however, that it is also true that

(Human) spirituality cannot be established as a creation if it does not escape its phenomenological reality. And this limitation is the limitation of an experience, of a practical experience that is different in every artist, every century, every town. [...] In this way, the piece of art, if it is freely synthesized, enforces (on the reader, A/N) the awareness of the limitations of which it has managed to break free. (Cesareo, 1924, 281)

This is why the biography of the artist is necessary for understanding the genesis of the work of art in the poet's spirituality. And because art is realized as a spiritual unit in historical reality. This is precisely why art can have and always has had its history. (Cesareo, 1924, 288)

Kosovel claims: *"I do not believe in the development of art. The old art says to me: This is what I am like, what are you like? And I have to find and create my own art"* (Komelj, 2019, 56). This statement contains two ideas: first, that the concept of art is eternal and as such does not know development; and second, if an artist is placed in a certain time and place, he uses the beauty of his own (and his time's) means. Therefore: *"The artist needs the basic principles of geometry Cube, sphere, point, line plain"* (Komelj, 2019, 116). The thought is thusly concluded:

*Rhythm in life bore rhythm in art. The moving soul expresses itself with movement
Everything must be torn down, a new living aesthetic must be built that will determine the relation to the content and the form. (Komelj, 2019, 116)*

This not only illustrates the poet's transition to a new phase of his creation, constructivism, but also as to how a new form must conform to the new content (humanity). A new rhythm of life (content) requires a *"new living aesthetic"* (form), because *"language is the form of matter to a poet"* (Komelj, 2019, 119), if *"poetry is not a pose /but the truth"* (Komelj, 2019, 123).

CONCLUSION

This research has shown how important the year 1924 was for Kosovel's future creation and how it shaped his understanding of a work of art and its social role. It is evident from his diary entries, articles, and essays that he paid special attention to studying art theory. He most likely identified a few starting concepts in Curcio, which led him to read Croce's aesthetics and to purchase Cesareo's essay, from which he extrapolated most of his conclusions

and then consistently emphasized them. It is not possible to definitively conclude from the presented material as to whether he finally settled on Croce's idea of intuition a priori, or whether he leaned more towards Cesareo's definition of art as conscious creativity. Both concepts are mentioned in his diary entries, essays, and articles.

Kosovel did completely adopt some definitions and conclusions, mostly those regarding which the two authors agreed. He differentiated between art and the artistic act, which is not tied to the external world and creates in itself a synthesis between the subject and the object, and between other experiential fields, such as history, maths, and biology, which examine the outside world as the subject of study, whose examination runs along a logical procedure. This is why Kosovel continuously emphasizes this bipolar relation in his writings and graphically depicts it as contradictory.

A similar conclusion can be made regarding the definition of art as a creative act, which is mentioned by Croce as an illogical intuition a priori, or as a product of fantasy, which is one of the three functions of human spirituality, like in Cesareo. Kosovel does in some instances define art as intuition, in others as conscious creation. In any case, his definition of art as a creative act does include the thesis that art in its creation is completely independent from both external reality as well as morality. From the former, because it does not imitate it, but creates it anew, from the latter, because it is not tied to the external world, but to the subject of the created.

A key concept for Kosovel was his adoption of the concept of the inextricability of content and form, which was vehemently and theoretically supported by both authors. This belief that Kosovel continually emphasizes in his elaborations and writings is very clearly visible at the content level in his creation of *konses* as well at the level of literary critique. In the first case, this unity enabled him to create a new, expressly humanity-oriented content with contemporary forms of expression. Croce's and Cesareo's rejection of rhetoric and claims that any symbol, as long as it corresponds to the symbolized, is appropriate and beautiful, enabled Kosovel to propose a theoretical foundation and justification to develop towards a spatial organization of the text according to constructivist principles. Along with his familiarity and acceptance of constructivist principles, the poet would obviously also deepen the theoretical premises of artistic creation and found quite a few underlying principles in Croce and Cesareo that supported and enabled some of his most daring artistic creations. He expressed their definition of the equivalence of content and form with Frege's

ideogram. The second consequence was that he outright rejected both artists who placed priority on the form and were consequently “empty, empty, empty” as well as art critics who separated the content from the form when examining the work of art and about whom the poet believed belonged “in museums”.

Even in terms of evaluating the beauty of the work of art, the unity of the content and the form has certain consequences. The beauty is in the new conceptualization of a work of art as a successful fruit of the merger of the two. Beauty does not derive from the coordinated text, its organization, sonority etc., but from the synthesis between the symbol and the symbolized. It is therefore clear why this unity was so favoured by Kosovel; it enabled him to transition to the expressive means offered by constructivism, to “words in space”. As a result, he vehemently rejected the old interpretation of beauty. To him,

beauty was simultaneously the content and therefore the truth. He was able to create conceptual and stylistically expressly contemporary art that was at the same time socially engaging without remaining on the level of experimental toying without any content or content engagement with no new form. It also implies the thesis that a literary critic must not interfere with the work of art and correct it or even change the words in it, because it was created as a unified whole. By interfering, it becomes mangled and “nothing remains of it”. With all of this in mind, it is therefore completely incomprehensible and inexcusable that there are still some who choose to interfere with Kosovel's creations and thusly distorted poetry keeps being published. To the contrary: the reader and/or literary critic should respectfully approach the work of art and listen how “[t]he *nightingale* is / captured in my heart” (Komelj, 2019, 327).

POJMOVANJE UMETNIŠKEGA USTVARJANJA SREČKA KOSOVELA V LUČI CROCEJEVE IN CESAREOVE ESTETIKE

Vanda SREBOTNJAK

D.I.Z Gregorčič, Šola s slovenskim učnim jezikom, ul. Puccini 14, 34170 Gorica, Italija
e-mail: vanda.srebotnjak@solskicenter.net

POVZETEK

Članek skuša raziskati nekaj stalnic v Kosovelovi definiciji umetnosti in njeni družbeni vlogi. Posebno se osredinja na še ne povsem raziskano področje, in sicer na vpliv Cesareove in Crocejeve estetike o umetnostnem ustvarjanju, ki ju je Kosovel poznal in od tam prevzel nekaj zamisli, kot so ločenost umetnosti od znanosti ali o identičnosti vsebine z obliko. Tako je ločeval med umetnostjo kot ustvarjalnim dejanjem, ki ni vezano na zunanji svet in v sebi ustvarja sintezo med subjektom in objektom, ter drugimi spoznavnimi področji, kot so lahko zgodovina, matematika in biologija, ki pa gledajo na zunanji svet kot na objekt spoznavanja, katerega preučevanje poteka po logičnem postopku. Ključnega pomena pa je pri Kosovelu prevzem koncepta o neločljivosti vsebine in oblike. To prepričanje, ki ga Kosovel nešteto krat izpostavlja v svojih razmišljanjih in zapisih, se lepo kaže tako na vsebinski ravni pri ustvarjanju konsov kot tudi na literarno kritični ravni. Ta enotnost mu je omogočila usklajevanje nove, izrazito človečanske naravnane vsebine, z novodobnimi izraznimi oblikami. Zatrjevanje, da je katerikoli simbol, če je skladen s simboliziranim, primeren in lep, je Kosovelu omogočil razvoj k prostorski organizaciji besedila po konstruktivističnih načelih. Lepota umetnine, ki izhaja iz sinteze med simbolom in simboliziranim, je Kosovelu omogočila prehod k izraznim sredstvom konstruktivizma, k »besedam v prostoru«.

Ključne besede: estetika, umetnost, vsebina, oblika, Srečko Kosovel, Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, Benedetto Croce

VIRI IN LITERATURA

Cesareo, G. A. (1924): Saggio su l'arte creatrice. Bologna, Zanichelli editore.

Croce, B. (1969): Breviario di estetica. Bari, Editori Laterza.

Curcio, C. (1921): L'estetica italiana contemporanea. Napoli, Alberto Morano Editore.

Frege, G. (2019): Logica, pensiero e linguaggio. Bari – Roma, Editori Laterza.

Kosovel, S. (1977): Zbrano delo. III. Prvi del. Uredil Anton Ocvirk. Ljubljana, DZS.

Kosovel, S. (2004): Ikarjev sen. Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga.

Kosovel, S. (2006): Izbrana pisma. Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga.

Komelj, M. (2019): Kosovel Vsem naj bom neznan. II. Esejistični fragmenti, aforizmi, študijsko gradivo in drugi zapisi. Uredil Miklavž Komelj. Novo mesto, Založba Goga.

Vrečko, J. (2011): Srečko Kosovel. Monografija. Ljubljana, ZRC.

Zadravec, F. (1986): Srečko Kosovel 1904–1926. Trieste, Založba Lipa.