

The monograph on Labin's distinguished artist and cultural operator Vinko Šaina contains two extensive texts written by two experts, the Croatian art critic Berislav Valušek and the Italian theatre researcher Roberto Tessari. Monographs on visual artists with two or more essays written by art critics are very common. However, what makes this work special is the fact that the two approaches are completely different from the point of view of their style and expression. Both texts are smoothly written and rich in terms of information: the one written by Valušek follows Šaina's artistic path of growth in a chronological order, while Tessari wrote an impressive essay inspired by the author's artistic production. What they have in common is the re-examination of Vinko Šaina's work within the European cultural context, which in Valušek's case means that the author of the essay is focussed primarily on the analysis of Šaina's artistic activities, the valorisation of his complete work and on a comparison with the recent European events, mainly concerning the ones related to visual art, whereas Tessari, as it should be the case in an essay in the field of culturology, analyses Šaina's work within the context of general and historical topoi of the European culture and civilisation. His essay is also characterised by occasional phantasmagorical episodes that Tessari introduces directly inspired by Šaina's artistic production, which he, among other things, places in the cosmic and spiritual space of unexplored worlds, as well as in the context of shamanic rituals and ancient civilisations. As far as the aesthetic component of Šaina's works is concerned, Tessari interprets it as a morphological completeness of hidden signs, most of the times recognising in them the religious inspiration related to Šaina's humanistic view of life, which is the starting point of the path leading to God, the truth and the light. Light is what Valušek talks about (and chooses for the title of his text), emphasising it as one of the most important characteristics of Šaina's painted compositions and approaching it mainly from the point of view of visual art. At the same time, he places it in a sort of a metaspace through which he explains the author's artistic personality. In seven detailed and coherent units (with inventive and meaningful titles), Valušek offers not only an analysis and an interpretation of the genesis and maturity of Šaina's painting, but also a logical conclusion concerning the fundamental essence of the painter's artistic expression, which is immune to stylistic categories (which he elaborated in detail and through comparison in his text), interpreting it as a peculiar and individual artistic approach based visually on landscape and metaphysically on religion. Valušek's text speaks also about the artistic surroundings in which Šaina grew up, which is a significant contribution to the essay's liveliness and is very important for a correct understanding of Šaina's work. Equally important is the subjective approach to Vinko Šaina's life and work, which Valušek, clearly, chose intentionally, thus bringing into his text additional individual qualities and the needed dynamism moderated through the introduction of numerous quotes the authors of which are critics who had written about the artist's work earlier. Speaking in general terms, both texts emphasise Šaina's thematic connection with Istrian landscape, reminiscences about the war events during Serbian aggression against Croatia and religious quality as the leading thread of this artist's life and work. Moreover, in addition to defining Šaina as an eminent artistic creator, the two essays confirm him as a distinguished cultural operator with strong humanistic principles.

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