

PIGRO: AN "ABSOLUTE INDIVIDUALIST" AND HIS PORTRAIT STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

Painting and drawing are the most basic, natural, direct and psychologically interesting forms of expression and communication with oneself and with the others. For some patients, like schizophrenic patients, the artistic expression can be a more suitable form of communication than the use of words. The paper on which the patient draws or paints can be the first external material to contain the patient's psychotic experience. With artistic expression he can externalise initially inexpressible thoughts and fears. Parallel to the agitation of psychotic patient, the drawing style during psychosis state is chaotic and characterized by dissolving structures.

CASE REPORT: PIGRO

How does he represent himself?

"Pigro. Lazy. This is what my childhood friends called me," he replied without hesitation when he was asked about the pseudonym with which he is introduced in this article. So, Pigro.

"Absolute individualist. This is a person who is supposed to be absolutely independent in every sense of the word, completely outside the frame of general social requirements and regulations, which he rejects. He also behaves in this way, which he believes to be appropriate, even though he has no material or other incentives to support such behaviour. He considers general social and ethical norms as an alienation from personal freedom, and too restrictive. He never did anything that would shock people." This is how he presented himself when he was hospitalised in the psychiatric hospital for the first time in 1982, when he was 19 years old.

Psychiatric history

Pigro, a 46-year old man was admitted to the psychiatric hospital at the age of 19 years. He was suspicious, paralogic, he showed unprovoked violent behaviour. Half a year after his first hospitalisation he was transferred from prison to the psychiatric hospital.

He had severely injured his father with a shovel. Due to the threats and physical violence at the time and several times later, a sanction of compulsory psychiatric treatment was imposed on him. The last four years he lives in the psychiatric hospital. His diagnosis is schizophrenic disorder.

Meetings with Pigro

I occasionally met Pigro in the town he lived in, usually in the part that drug dealers and users inhabit. From there he walked with unsteady steps, while looking down, "stoned" as well.

Sometimes we met at the psychiatric outpatient clinic where I work. If he was not in the hospital or abroad, in other countries, usually in Italy or France, where he often escaped, he came to his daily therapy at the outpatient clinic. Usually, he was impatient and did not wait for his psychiatrist in the waiting room with the other patients. However, if he did come, he waited in the corridor alone, with his hands in his pockets, rubbing his back on the wall. The therapy was arranged for him and so he could receive it without the presence of the psychiatrist. Therefore, he often just came and went away. Sometimes he squatted by the nurse, supported his head with his hands and told her something. However, most often he would disappear the moment he received his therapy.

If, by chance, I met him in the outpatient clinic where I work with his psychiatrist and encouraged him to paint, he smiled and asked for money. "If I had money, I would paint," and sometimes somehow lightly added that he would paint my portrait if I wanted. When he got a pencil and paper, he looked, made some strokes and the portrait was done in a minute. He signed it and then left without a word.

The last time I met him was in December of the previous year, in the psychiatric hospital in Ljubljana at the Forensics Department, where he was transferred from his hospital after attacking his psychiatrist. After being enthusiastic that we were meeting after more than a year, he completely dismissed me on my second visit. "I have no time..." was all he was prepared to say before he disappeared with a cup of coffee behind the walls of the psychiatric hospital.

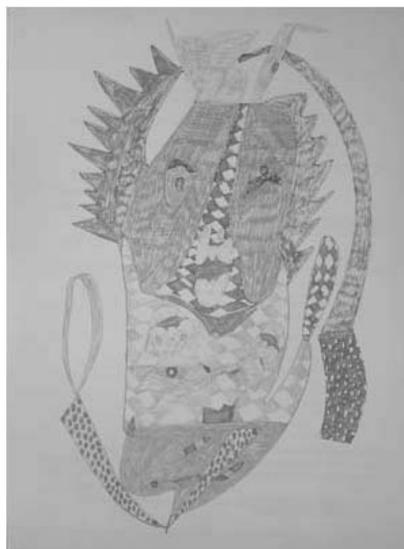


Pigro's drawings and paintings

The presented drawings were made during one of several hospitalisations, which was confirmed by his therapist of 1991. The working therapist, who monitored Pigro over decades of hospitalisations, said that Pigro has always been obstinate, independent, moody and difficult to communicate with. He did not want to be encouraged when painting, correct anything or add anything to his paintings. He preferred to paint alone, at unusual hours. He required tranquillity. He sought out the therapist on duty when he needed materials for painting. He was always brief. Usually he said "Give me paper", and then left. He never wanted to discuss his paintings. He also did not say much when Ljubljana

Television shot a documentary in 2003, which was mostly taken in the hospital environment where he painted. "I is only the I who knew what I thought," he commented on the film and the fact that he did not speak very much.

He mostly paints with markers, directly on paper. He does not like watercolours and he only painted with oils once. He does not copy motifs. The paintings are primal. Mostly, he painted portraits and even though he might have painted something else, the painting added the attributes of a face. The faces have several eyes, and there are faces within faces. The paintings include many symbols. For him, painting was mental labour, exertion. He has not been painting for the last few years.



The presented paintings are not dated, some are not even signed, or he used his initials only. They belong to one of the two or three cycles that Pigro repeatedly created during his psychotic episodes, almost in an identical sequence.

The first five paintings were drawn in pencil. It seems that, with a pencil, it was easier for him to follow

the disassociated thoughts and mental "zippers". The first two paintings, which are on the level of doodling, represent an especially chaotic world, from which, slowly differentiating in the subsequent pictures, an image (portrait) finally appears. The chaos, therefore, represents a kind of order, which is established in the fifth painting.



Other drawings or paintings are mostly made with markers, one with coloured pencils and two with watercolours. The paintings made with watercolours also have a coloured background. The drawing made with colour pencils is surrounded with a black, serrated border, while the others are left with a white background. He painted on drawing paper, mostly a format of 29 x 41 cm. Some paintings have a title on the back. For example, the seventh painting in the sequence was entitled Greh (Sin), the ninth Narcis in Zlatoust (Narcissus and Gold-mouthed) and the fifteenth Hudič (Devil).

Pigro's portraits and schizophrenic disorder

Pigro drew the cycle of 26 pictures. He did not want to interpret his drawings. "The drawings are a study for the portraits" was all Pigro was prepared to explain. So portraits. And that is true. Even with the first doodle-like drawing made in pencil there are individual attributes of a face - on many of them, there are faces within the face, a figure within a figure. Mostly, these are female portraits. The drawings attract attention with

their exceptional colourfulness and numerous details, which have nothing in common with the face. He draws swastikas and stars, helices, a sabre and a small heart beside it, and among these, in several places, we find eyes, several pairs of eyes, variously formed, mostly deformed lips, designed noses or variously formed and very accentuated noses and teeth in the form of a saw. The acuteness and, in many places, clawed hands or paws was softened with various bows, flowers and eyes, and decorations wrapped like candies. Serrated hair styles and hair tied with bows are characterised by several colourful details, either in the form of circles, triangles, rectangles, checkerboards or wavy or other lines and stripes. Each differently designed or deformed drawing of a face continues with a variously configured neck, which gives the impression of a pedestal. It may only be traced, drawn in a form of a triangle, star or otherwise, many times full of various details or decorated with a necklace. It may continue from the face or be strictly separated from it.

The drawings are so complex, compounded, everything is centred, asymmetrical, however somehow balanced.



Pigo's drawings resonate with the various paintings of schizophrenics, who were defined as such by Ernst Kris. Excessive threading of doodles, details, decorations and signs points to a characteristic horror vacui, a fear of emptiness. Schizophrenics always use the same motif, which is most often a human head. Even though they are capable of recognising expressions of different feelings on an actual human face or in a photo, they cannot depict this in a drawing. Therefore, compared to portraits created by people with other psychotic disorders, schizophrenics' portraits are markedly empty, insensible masks. The gestures of the face are a means of communication, of contact; however, this is lost in schizophrenics. It is therefore possible that schizophrenics are incapable of reflecting gestures (and not that they do not know how to do it) or that they try to reconstruct them through portraits; however, they rarely succeed. In order to be successful, their drawings mainly include frontal facial images whereby the face is

more visible than in profile. Therefore, the drawn heads, even though they are made from a live model or photo, are not actual portraits, but rather the patient's messages to the therapist about himself/herself and his/her condition. Kris (1970), 112-124.

Pigo's portraits are also consistently drawn en face. So consistently, in fact, that here we may point out another conditional element. Maybe the fascination with the frontal facial image of the other can be associated with a look in a mirror. This is limited, of course, when we move the head from the frontal position to profile in front of a mirror; in this case we may observe ourselves while we still see ourselves with both eyes. Immediately, when the head is in the profile position, when one eye is no longer visible, the other eye is also at an angle at which we cannot observe our own reflection clearly, which creates mental discomfort. At a very early stage in his development, the human being responds to the full frontal face in a special way. The

beginning phase is characterised in psychoanalysis as a transition from primary narcissism to the object libido period, when the first attachment to objects and the beginning of crystallisation of the self occurs. A baby reacts to the face of an adult, in whose eyes he/she recognises his/her image only when he/she sees that person frontally. The baby does not recognise him/herself completely, since the constellation of both eyes is a sign on which he/she focuses. The mother mimics the feelings and consequently replies to the baby's gestures, looks and sounds. Since then, the subject is left with the face of the other, who exists outside him/her, the object of his/her primary identification, and the gestures are his/her first and most direct means of communication. The perception is not innate to the self, but must gradually be acquired by forming it after the image (Gestalt) of a whole body. When the child tears him/herself away from the first mirror, i.e. the mother, he/she perceives his/her body as imperfect, fragmented. The child can construct the wholeness of its self only via the mirror. When he/she fails to exteriorise into the image in the mirror and when he/she distinguishes between subjective feeling and the dimensional characteristics of the body, he/she perceives the image in the mirror as reality and, with tactile and kinaesthetic feelings, recognises it as his/her own reflection. Lacan (1949); Muller (1985); Haubl (1991), 278-290; Zazzo (1993), 174-178; Dolto & Nasio (2002); Guillerault (2003).

CONCLUSION

The schizophrenic, who shows infantile signs due to the dissociated and disintegrated psyche, cannot perceive the body as a whole, but only the fragments of it. He/she must re-establish the relationship of the organism and his/her reality, and, in his/her phantasms, pass from the fragmented body to its wholeness. He/she must become autonomous, which is the basis for the self-judgement required for socialisation and normal life, when he/she may reflect himself/herself in the other and communicate with that person. At first, Pigro's frontal portraits are chaotic doodles, results of spontaneous motor movement of the hand. They look like children's doodles, before he begins to be reformed according to the things he observed in nature. People who have achieved a certain level of artistic education have better control over the formation of strokes according to the principles of perspective, colour contrasts and other artistic principles, including profile portraits. However, people with psychotic disorders make strokes according to the characteristics of their mentally disturbed world; therefore, in the portraits they draw, they cannot depict facial gestures, which they replace with primary spontaneous doodles, decorations and signs. Pigro perfected this expressional method in such a way that, interestingly enough, his works do not

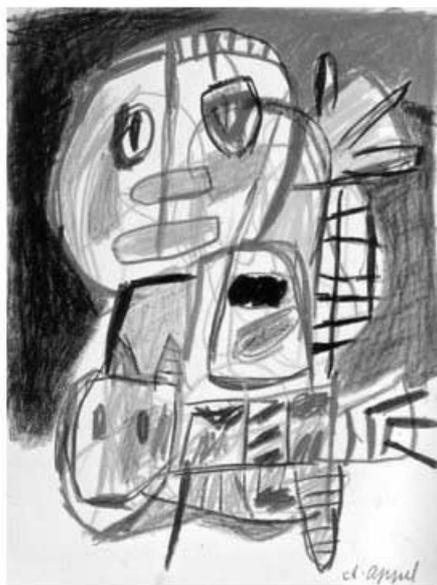
differ much from the paintings of famous Expressionists, Cubists and Surrealists (We know that Pigro likes word play, as was also the case with Surrealists. He derived his pseudonym from the Italian word for lazy. However, it is also the anagram of his name and the initial of his surname: P. Igor) even though the process leading to the stylistic characteristics may differ significantly.



Picasso, 1971



Appel, 1948



Appel, 1950

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