

Ivan
Dzeparoski

**Van Gogh's Tight Shoes:
Derrida Unshoes
Heidegger and Schapiro**

I don't have the usual habit of looking at the shoes of people walking past me, nor do I look at the shoes of those I speak to, be it on the street, at work, or at someone's home. I don't look at unknown people's shoes! But, it is different with those I know, those who are close to me. I notice changes and sometimes I even pay a compliment to their appropriate choice of new shoes. *And still*, I understand why this is so: unlike any other object that serves to cover and protect our body, shoes most straightforwardly speak of their owner's taste, style, but also financial status. The aesthetics and sociology of the Balkan shoes in transition is a story as sad as it is promising, but unfortunately, here it will be cast aside and will not be discussed. This is because I am determined to write about another type of shoes, shoes or boots I became fond of long ago, shoes that from time to time have not only made me perceive them aesthetically, but also understand them, and to some extent, even interpret them.

And so, when I not-so-often go shoe-shopping, before embarking on the mundane, yet tempting shopping adventure, with a smile to myself I think of Vincent van Gogh's shoes. No matter how silly and pretentious this may sound, these shoes, both with the mind and the senses, are mediated by the memories of Heidegger and Schapiro's interpretations. Derrida's intervention is imposed in order to create problems, to indicate that sometimes, both in life and in art, there is no such thing as "a pair of shoes", but rather "odd shoes", *mismatched shoes* that exist only to disrupt the orderly, to cause unrest and worry.

Therefore, to avoid further shoe-shopping problems, after many years of preparation and gathering momentum I have finally decided to philosophically approach and interpret the story of van Gogh's shoes, with the hope that this will once and for all solve the problem of hesitation when it comes to looking at and buying new (or old, or old-new, or new-old-new) shoes. The motive for doing so is thoroughly personal, but there is hope that this interpretation will touch upon some essential issues important not only for aesthetics or art history, but also for the fate of the contemporary de-centred subject.

But we are in no hurry. That should be left for the ending, for the conclusion. Now one should slowly and calmly pass by the frame and the *passe-partout* and enter the painting; not like the horrific entrance in the painting of the Japanese artist Yoshihide from Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story 'Hell Screen' (Akutagawa, 1976), or similarly to the calm entrance in the painting,

beyond the waves and beyond reality, of the painter Wang-Fo from Marguerite Yourcenar's short story 'How Wang-Fo Was Saved' (Yourcenar, 1963). One should enter subtly and scrupulously, much like van Gogh enters the Japanese estampes, in the coloured woodcuts of Hiroshige and Hokusai.

Vincent's Many Shoes (and Clogs) Cause Problems

Entering a museum is like entering a closed world hung upon a wall, a world that narrates a story, but a story that is structurally arranged. However, when this story regards a museum's permanent exhibition of one author, it usually follows a chronological order, from the author's earliest to the latest works. The arrows in the museum show us the direction we are to follow in order to successfully absorb this chronology.



More than a quarter of a century ago, in the summer of 1979, when I was a student and hitch-hiked or travelled with an InterRail ticket, marking the cult, must-see cities I was going to visit, Amsterdam was the first city on the long list. And there, of course, apart from the *Vondelpark* and the nightclubs among which *Melkweg* became my favourite, were the greatest museums of the wonderful museum triad: the *Rijks*, *van Gogh*, and *Stedelijk* museums. In all three the exhibited works followed the chronological order. Especially in the van Gogh museum. All began with the grey and foggy northern Dutch regions, with the alienated people and objects, with the workers, farmers and weavers, with the

wanderers and beggars, with the works created under the influence of resignation and social poverty, under the influence of Millet's and Courbet's artistic achievements. But in this dark harmony of tones in van Gogh's early works the only thing that partially gives light is the whiteness of a random shirt or of the white wooden clogs. Still, van Gogh became a poet and painter of light much later, after his departure to Paris, and later to the south, to Provence. Even at that time all this was not new and unknown to me. In the museum I followed his road towards light, I came to the late paintings in which colour brightly shines and disturbs, but I could not avoid carrying within me the darkness of the bond he had with his country and with the alienated people and objects.

At that time I had already read Martin Heidegger's study 'The Origin of the Work of Art' ('Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes' 1935/36) in the excellent translation of the aestheticians Danilo Pejovic and Danko Grlic, and I already knew about the interpretation of van Gogh's "Shoes" by Heidegger. Maybe that is why I stood before them for such a long time, wondering about the difference between the dark, heavy and worn out pair of shoes belonging to some peasant from van Gogh's time, and my brightly coloured, light, new sneakers with which I strolled through the then Schengen-free Europe.



Винсент ван Гог, *Чевли*, 1886, масло
на платно, Музеј на Винсент ван Гог,
Амстердам

Vincent van Gogh, *Pair of Shoes*,
1886, oil on canvas, Vincent van Gogh
Museum, Amsterdam

I cannot remember whether I had known at the time that van Gogh had painted a whole series of such dismal shoes - shoes that were lonely and separated from both time and space - but I am certain that I had not known about the well-known American theoretician and historian of art Meyer Schapiro and his comments about the van Gogh shoes in his famous dispute with Martin Heidegger. I also hadn't known about the then newly published book in Paris by Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* (*Le vérité en peinture*, 1978), where Derrida deconstructs Heidegger and Schapiro's theoretical discourse.

But there is no need to hurry. Let us take Heidegger first, then Schapiro, and Derrida at the end.

Heidegger Too Wrote Remembering the Same Pair of Shoes

Meyer Schapiro asks Heidegger a 'polite', academic question: which of the many differently painted pairs of shoes of van Gogh's was he thinking of when he wrote "The Origin of the Work of Art"? In return, Heidegger answers naïvely, unprepared for Schapiro's trap that those were in fact the pair of shoes that he had seen in the Amsterdam museum in March, 1930. He gave Schapiro the right to conclude that from the eight van Gogh versions of paintings of shoes, he was referring to the pair of shoes numbered 225 in De la Faille's renowned and exhaustive catalogue of van Gogh's works (Schapiro 1994:136).

But why is it so important for Schapiro to know exactly which shoes Heidegger was referring to in "The Origin of the Work of Art"? Simply to show that Heidegger strays from the right path when he bases his interpretation on that particular pair of shoes, since what Schapiro sees in them is totally different from what Heidegger sees!

And what Heidegger sees in them is "a pair of peasant shoes" that van Gogh had painted several times, a pair of shoes whose painting does not reveal where they are located, a pair of shoes without remnants of bits of mud, but a pair of shoes most poetically and precisely described by Heidegger:

"From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated te-

nacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself." (Heidegger, 1959:25-26 / Heidegger, 1976:664)

However, Heidegger attempts to reveal something different with this description of the shoes, something which in essence is primal for art itself, for the work of art and its origin. He finds the "equipmental-being of equipment" not by describing or explaining some shoes which serve as work equipment, not on the basis of a pair of real shoes, but only by setting us before van Gogh's painting. For Heidegger, all this is uttered by the painting itself; thus, with the nearness of the very work of art we are transferred elsewhere, for the work of art knows the truth of the shoes and hence the truth of the equipment.

It is not merely by accident that Heidegger extracts his key ideas regarding art and the work of art from the description of van Gogh's painting of the pair of shoes. It is so because within he finds the truth, and similarly to Cezanne's words in the letter he addressed to Emile Bernard on 23 October in 1905 "I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you", Heidegger also tells

us the truth about the work of art, a truth grasped only when the work of art enables us to deepen the essence of our being, when the “inner being of the world” will be found in the “being of the human being” and will reach “understanding”. Only then, as Heidegger says, will we be able to say that “it makes sense” (Heidegger 1985: 172), since with interpretation the work of art blends with action, in the very presence, and understanding is part of that experience, part of that “being-here”(Heidegger 1985:154). Thus, understanding is not part of a separate realization and part of a separate act, but rather an essential part of the very structure of human existence. All this is evident in the longer excerpt from the ‘Origin of the Work of Art’, an excerpt which shows how Heidegger, based on a pair of simple “peasant shoes” reaches the essence of art and the work of art.

“But above all, the work did not, as it might seem at first, serve merely for a better visualizing of what a piece of equipment is. Rather, the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work and only in the work.

What happens here? What is at work in the work? Van Gogh’s painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. (...)

In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. ‘To set’ means here: to bring to stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining. (*Scheinen*)

The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work.” (*das Sich-ins-Werk-Setzen*)
(Heidegger, 1959:28 / Heidegger, 1976:665-666)

Based on such an interpretation, the work of art develops into a place where truth appears. It “exhibits” the world and “pre-deduces” the earth. According to Heidegger, the Earth (*Erde*) is what makes us mortal, but even the work of art itself as a “manifestation of truth” exhibits the historical worlds and announces the historical possibility of existence, always in its relation to death. According to Gianni Vattimo, these views indicate that: “the work of art which connects the world to the earth is achieved by the unity of foundation and diffusion persisting throughout Heidegger’s ontology” (Vattimo, 1991:129).

However, all of Meyer Schapiro’s subtle and deep interpretations of Heidegger are totally non-essential, since he seeks to find an error in Heidegger, he wants to prove that Heidegger’s vehement interpretation is based on a self-created construction. Schapiro’s point is that the shoes Heidegger is referring to (with the catalogue number 225!) from van Gogh’s painting are neither peasant shoes, nor shoes returning from a field, but rather shoes which come from the city, shoes which van Gogh himself owned. But again, let us not hurry with the conclusion. We should slowly shift towards Schapiro’s short essay which not only regards van Gogh’s shoes, but also Heidegger’s “wrong” interpretation!

Schapiro Argues: The Shoes Have a Particular Owner

In the text 'The Still Life as a Personal Object - A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh', 1968, Meyer Schapiro points out that in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger, in order to *illustrate* the thesis of the nature of art as the disclosure of truth, takes van Gogh's shoes as principal proof that the being has three modes of appearance: as a useful artefact, as a natural thing and as a work of art. Heidegger first describes the shoes as a useful artefact, only later, according to Schapiro, to define them as a work of art, which is "disclosure of truth" (Schapiro, 1994:135).

However, Schapiro believes that linking the shoes to the "peasant woman", i.e. to the earth, as Heidegger's interpretation suggests, is completely incorrect, since according to Schapiro, the shoes to which Heidegger is referring (Schapiro manages to establish this via detective work!) are not from the village, but from the "town", and are not women's, but rather men's shoes, and not just any man's shoes, but the shoes of the author of the painting and the *Pair of Shoes*, i.e. those shoes are the property of van Gogh himself. Therefore, Schapiro believes that "from neither of these pictures, nor from any of the others, could one properly say that a painting of shoes by van Gogh expresses the being or essence of a peasant woman's shoes and her relation to nature and work. They are the shoes of the artist, by that time a man of the town and city" (Schapiro, 1994:138).

According to Schapiro, Heidegger's associations from the painting of van Gogh's pair of shoes and their link to peasantry and the earth are not contained in the painting itself, but in Heidegger's constructions and in his "heavy pathos of the primordial and earthly". Heidegger's error, according to Schapiro, lies not only in his projection which estranges us from the work of art, for his words could refer to any existing pair of peasant shoes (and not the ones van Gogh painted), since Heidegger's statements about disclosing truth, the universal nature of things, the opposition between the world and earth, "this concept of the metaphysical power of art remains here a theoretical idea. The example on which he elaborates with strong conviction does not support that idea." (Schapiro, 1994:139). Furthermore, according to Schapiro, Heidegger finds the presence of the artist in the work of art completely unimportant, which is why he overlooks "the personal and physiognomic" in the shoes, overlooks them as a symbol of van Gogh's personality. Schapiro believes that the portraying of shoes which grow old wandering the world is a portrait of one's own life. He further gradually establishes this viewpoint through comparing van Gogh's painting to an excerpt from Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger*, where Hamsun exhibits a specific relationship towards his own shoes and describes them with the words "like a ghost of my other I".

Thus Schapiro takes a different approach from Heidegger in interpreting the canvas portraying the shoes. On the one hand, Heidegger sees the truth of the world, uncovered through the encrusted life and the existence of the peasant's shoes as they heedlessly live. On the

other hand, Schapiro insists on the 'self-awareness' of van Gogh the author, similarly to the author Hamsun who feels that his shoes are an integral part of his person or "a portion of the self". According to Schapiro, van Gogh's greatness lies in his ability to transform his own shoes into an object of art, or better said, into a portion of a continuous "self-portrait".

Schapiro's final blow in proving that van Gogh's pair of shoes is in fact van Gogh's pair of shoes is presenting the Gauguin argument, or more precisely, Gauguin's recollection of his stay with van Gogh in Arles. For Schapiro, Gauguin's story about the significance of van Gogh's old shoes in the studio, the shoes which had about them the story of van Gogh's life, fully proves "the essential fact that for van Gogh the shoes were a memorable piece of his own life, a sacred relic" (Schapiro, 1994:141).

This is the sentence which ends Meyer Schapiro's text written in 1966. Still, he feels that even such a "fearful slam-dunk" does not guarantee his aerial combat victory over Heidegger (AAF and RAF against the Luftwaffe!). At an older age, in 1994, he again re-addressed the issue of the shoes, to add several arguments in favour of his own idea of the need to return to van Gogh's shoes, i.e. the ideal of the self-aware and centralized subject. But, one should not hurry around these 'new' arguments, since they were not familiar even to Jacques Derrida who endeavoured to further complicate – and also clarify this subtle dispute between Meyer Schapiro and Martin Heidegger.

Therefore, we finally arrived to Derrida, without hurrying at all.

Derrida Unshoes Heidegger and Schapiro

If we accept the opinion that Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) whole opus is an attempt to reveal the cracks in the discourse as a result of the cracks in the language and in the meaning originated from the Western European philosophy logocentrism, or, as Derrida himself has said, "the imperialism of the logos" (Derrida, 1976:10), then this strategy of Derrida's to reveal those seemingly irrelevant details that are weaved into the work, and which in turn are direct opposites of the work's very essence, this deconstructivist tactic in revealing the *aporias* in the text itself and of the text itself, can also be found, without doubt, in the essence of his deconstruction of Heidegger's and Schapiro's attitudes, which is subtly elaborated in *The Truth in Painting*, i.e. in the fourth and last chapter titled 'Restitution of the Truth'. (Derrida, 1987)

However, in his introduction to *The Truth in Painting*, titled 'Passe-partout', Derrida seems to want to remind us again of his famous deconstructivist viewpoint that the "threshold" is "the centre"¹, highlighting the borderline nature of the *passe-partout*, because, as lexicons teach us, what it is, in fact, in its primary meaning, is a master key, a key that opens many doors, and only then it is a copper or cardboard picture frame in which one can place figures or paintings of various sizes. It is also, at the same time, the secondary, the parergonal frame that surrounds the work, but which essentially determines the work itself. The threshold, the frame, the *passe-*

partout, even the shoes and their restitution, become a new “centre”; the seemingly irrelevant becomes important, and the important goes without saying. Even Derrida himself, as he has said about himself in ‘Passe-partou’, becomes the third man who pretends he is dead: in the duel between Schapiro and Heidegger he is only a “witness” to the struggle for the shoes to be given back to their rightful owner.

That “phantom” of the shoes, that “re-sacredization” of the shoes that both Heidegger and Schapiro practise, that attempt to connect the shoes either to the village and the land (Heidegger) or to the city and the migrations (Schapiro), to Derrida represents a clear signal that the very shoes demand restitution. The problem, however, is that Derrida infers from the canvas that perhaps it does not depict “a pair of shoes” but that, with equal assurance, we can speak of two equal (left or right) shoes. In addition, the problem is that Derrida does not say, as Heidegger does, that those are peasant’s shoes, but just that *there is no proof that those are peasant’s shoes*. Then, he doesn’t say, as Schapiro does, that those are city shoes, and van Gogh’s shoes at that, but on the contrary, he says: *there is no proof, nor can there be any proof, that those are the artist’s shoes* (Derrida, 1987:364). If that is the case, then those shoes belong to neither a peasant nor to van Gogh (the man from the city), but, possibly, in both cases, we can speak about “projections” and about “interpretations”, about “truths in painting” which are equally correct or equally incorrect.

That is why the shoes needn’t necessarily be a pair, or as Derrida says: “The more I look at them, the less they look like a . . . pair” (Derrida, 1987:278).

Derrida works out these deconstructions of the truth about van Gogh's shoes on a hundred and thirty or so pages of his book, by a brilliant act of bricolage, constantly refining the inner lines of the *passe-partout*, yet, at the same time, neither polishing the shabby and untied shoes from the painting nor aiming to give those shoes back or assign them to anyone; he just falls into them as he would into an abyss.

In fact, Derrida takes off the shoes that Heidegger and Schapiro had put on, unbuckles them as if unlocking them with a master key, and he returns them to the painting itself, to the art that comes from the picture. For him the work's mimetic nature is irrelevant, just as the biographical and geographical ties are irrelevant; for him, the biographical interpretations (Schapiro's) and the geographical ones (Heidegger's) point more to the interpreters themselves and to their own philosophical and aesthetic standpoints than to the work being analysed. Heidegger, in the spirit of his onto-theology, aims to objectively base the shoes, to objectively base the artistic work relating it to the general, to the material (earth), and to the revelation of truth, whereas Schapiro wishes to tie the work to the subject (both theoretical and receptive) and to the subjectivity, bearing in mind that he "gives the shoes back" to the owner, to the artist, to the author van Gogh.

Moreover, Derrida notices that Schapiro wants to denunciate Heidegger's social position (even though it is never explicitly mentioned), in the background of Schapiro's criticism there seems to exist an awareness of Heidegger's connection with National Socialism, whereas the "restitution" of the shoes, their connection with the subject, which Schapiro advocates, seems to be also a return to those anonymous piles of shoes from the death camps, those shoes that lost their owners;

it seems to be a longing for reclamation of the lost subjectivity, the lost self, the lost self-consciousness and the lost self-awareness. In other words, the horizon of expectations pertaining to the shoes is completely different for Heidegger and for Schapiro: Schapiro wants to trust the subject and the subjectivity, which is why he connects the shoes to the subject, he connects them to van Gogh; whereas Heidegger, who has lost his trust in the Cartesian subject and in the epoch of the subject's metaphysics, insists on the objectivity of the work of art and its ontological foundation, insists on the knowledge that the shoes exist and *are* here for art's sake, for the truth of art itself.

However, what is interesting in this dispute is that Derrida, although not taking sides and being only a "witness", paradoxically, seems to be more inclined towards Heidegger's position.² In fact, Derrida continues where Heidegger stopped: if Heidegger wanted to push the work of art away from the mimetic understanding of its essence to save the work from its correspondence with reality - but not from the realization of the truth as a revelation, which places the truth inside the work - Derrida, in turn, thinks that even such a position stays within the frames of the mimetic interpretation of art. In order to overcome this position Derrida distances the work of art from its ontological and subjectivist contexts and places it into the area of pure reverie: the art is a mirage, an imitation that imitates nothing; it is beyond the borders of the essence and of the presence. The work has lost its centre, hence our indecisiveness (*indécidabilité*) regarding the truthfulness or deceptiveness of the work of art. Therefore, Derrida believes it is better to talk not about the work of art's essence or even its truthfulness or deceptiveness, but about that which is "around" the work

itself, about the frame, about the “passe-partout”. Which means, it is better not to talk about the shoes from van Gogh’s painting, not about to whom they belong, because “the desire for attribution is a desire for appropriation” (Derrida, 1987:260). And, therefore, one should speak not about their truth or about the truth in painting, but about the speech about this truth in Heidegger’s and Schapiro’s discourse, even in one’s own discourse, which is being deconstructed at the same time.

Hence, Derrida brings into question the very category of “truth”, in the context of the syntagm “truth in painting”, similar to what Nietzsche did while “re-evaluation of all values” when he tried to play with truth and knowledge. Derrida also doubts the truthfulness of the shoes outside of van Gogh’s painting; he questions the truth which both Schapiro and Heidegger think they have discovered - when they give the shoes back to either the man/woman from the village or from the city or to van Gogh himself. Derrida doubts all of this, since he does not deal with the pictorial representation of the shoes, i.e. their mimetic character, but with the shoes’ interpretations, with the historical narratives introduced into the discourses of the interpreters Heidegger and Schapiro.

Still, it can safely be said that the shoes are separate from one another, because there is no solid proof that there is a pair of shoes in the painting; it can also be safely said that the shoes have been separated from the feet which used to wear them, therefore they have been separated from the subject (van Gogh), just as they have been separated from the land they used to tread, therefore, they are separated from the object as well. Derrida’s

conclusion - if there is a conclusion and any closure at all, because the master key is used primarily for opening [doors] instead of closing [them] - is that there is not and cannot be a single possible interpretation or reading into art, i.e. into the shoes. Deconstructing both Heidegger's and Schapiro's interpretations, he does not want to construct a new interpretation, but only to point out the differences in the interpretations, which follow different present-absent traces.

Hence, John Llewelyn is probably right when he states: "And, like Heidegger, Derrida recognizes that he is in a predicament analogous to that which he discerns in the texts under analysis. It is his/our own predicament that he is deconstructing. Derridian deconstructions are auto-deconstructions, the deconstruction of Derrida and his dear reader, us." (Llewelyn, 1986:34)

Deconstructing the shoes' mimetic symbolics, playing with the structure and with the discourse, Derrida takes back the appropriated shoes from both Heidegger and Schapiro, de-shoeing them none too gently, and he leaves the shoes to van Gogh's canvas, so that the shoes could live there, beyond that other side of nature and beyond society, either as a pair or as a mismatch, either as men's or women's shoes - it doesn't matter really.

But the shoe story doesn't end here, and it doesn't end with Derrida. Schapiro reappears and insists again that the shoes belong to van Gogh! He does that in the 1994 text titled 'Further Notes on Heidegger and van Gogh'. Still, since in this text Schapiro doesn't introduce any new arguments, but only elaborates on the old ones, offering several less known excerpts from Paul Gauguin's reminiscences about his conversations with van Gogh, which should verify the "truthfulness"

of the thesis about the shoes' importance and of their ownership by the author, by van Gogh himself; and since Schapiro restitutes van Gogh's shoes in a literary way, this time not with the help of Hamsun but of Flaubert, yet doesn't mention Derrida at all in this new perspective of his about the shoe story - although, as a very informed professor he had probably read Derrida's book *Truth in Painting* - we shall not pay too much attention to this last re-evaluation of van Gogh's shoes and of Heidegger.

The formulation that the shoes, even though a pair, can also be "metaphorically paired shoes", takes Schapiro towards the additional argument about the shoes' ownership and importance. He says: "van Gogh's frequent painting of paired shoes isolated from the body and its costume as a whole may be compared to the importance he gave in conversation to the idea of the shoe as a symbol of his life-long practice of walking, and an ideal of life as a pilgrimage, a perpetual change of experience" (Schapiro, 1994:147).

It is obvious that Schapiro still insists on the importance of the shoes for the subject, for the author van Gogh, and thinks that Heidegger is unjust in ignoring all this, tying up the pair of peasant shoes (*ein Paar Bauernschuhe*) only to the land and to the peasant woman's world. Consistency deserves respect, although what doesn't deserve respect is the disregard of Derrida's opinions elaborated in the "Restitution", the disregard which is not only typical of Schapiro but also of a whole line of philosophers for whom Derrida was an anti-

epistemologist who was more interesting and more essential from the rhetorical and stylistic points of view than from the viewpoints of philosophy, ontology and logics (cf. Habermas: 1985:221).

Nevertheless, regardless of any of this, regardless of the origin and the end of the game tied to the shoe interpretation, it is time to say goodbye to van Gogh, and to Heidegger, and to Schapiro, and especially to Derrida, who was the last to part company with his own shoes in the Autumn of 2004.

Perhaps today the times we live in make us forget about van Gogh's shoes, those highly modernist representations of the shoes' essence, which for Martin Heidegger as well as for Frederic Jameson comprised "the whole object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty"! (Jameson, 1990:7). Perhaps that is why van Gogh's shoes aren't a fetish yet, since they do not hide the miserable and sometimes ugly reality and do not fetishize the social relations that govern reality. However, Andy Warhol's already postmodern shoes (*Diamond Dust Shoes*) introduce a different painterly representation, which is filled to the brim with fetishism.

Derrida, to my knowledge, does not have an opinion about these visual postmodern shoe representations. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult today, in this postmodern era, to find and to buy or to appropriate shoes - in a store, not in a painting, not on the canvas - shoes that would perfectly fit not only the feet but also the eye of any random shoe critics!

Translated from Macedonian by Rumena Buzarovska

Notes

1. I have written more on the deconstructivist philosophy and Derrida's aesthetics in the chapter „Уметничкото дело како апорија: Жак Дерида“ [“The Work of Art as Aporia: Jacques Derrida”], of the book *Уметничкото дело*. [*The Work of Art*] (Цепароски, 1998: 273-295)
2. On the other hand, yet more interesting is that Schapiro (Schapiro, 1994:139) as an argument for the subjective and symbolic character of the shoes uses the viewpoint taken from the novel *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun, the Nobel-winning author who was completely in favour of Fascism. It seems that the least we can say is that both Schapiro and Derrida seem to want to erase or at least muddle the traces!

References:

- Акутагава, Рјуносукe. 1976. *Рашамон*, Скопје: Здружени македонски издавачи.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1974. *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *O gramatologiji*, Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1987. "Restitutions of the truth in pointing (pointure)", in: *The Truth in Painting*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 255-382.
- Дерида, Жак. 2001. „Реституција истине у сликарству”, у: *Истина у сликарству*, Никшић: Јасен: 269-393.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1985. *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1959. "Izvor umjetničkoga djela", u: *O biti umjetnosti*, Zagreb: Mladost.

Heidegger, Martin. 1976. "The Origin of the Work of Art", in: *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, (eds.) A. Hofstadter and R. Kuhns, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press - Phoenix Edition: 650-708.

Heidegger, Martin. 1985. *Bitak i vrijeme*, Zagreb: Naprijed.

Jameson, Frederic. 1990. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Llewelyn, John. 1986. *Derrida on the Threshold of Sense*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Schapiro, Meyer. 1994. "The Still Life as a Personal Object - A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh", "Further Notes on Heidegger and van Gogh", in: *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society*, Selected papers 4, New York: George Braziller, 135-142; 143-151.

Vatimo, Dani. 1991. *Kraj moderne*, Novi Sad: Bratstvo-Jedinstvo.

Yourcenar, Marguerite. 1963. *Nouvelles orientales*, Paris: Gallimard.

Jursenar, Margerit. 1980. *Osmeh Kraljevića Marka*, Beograd: BIGZ.

Цепароски, Иван. 1998. „Уметничкото дело како апорија: Жак Дерида“, во: *Уметничкото дело во вџораша ѓоловина на XX век*, Скопје: Култура: 273-295.
