Grey Intuition

Because of the absence of figuration in abstract painting the focus on meaning and symbolism is shifted to color, shape and size. In my case in which represented shapes are not clear, color has become the core and holds concepts and the paintings in themselves together. I mix many colors together until I will get a specific shade. By using universal colors from tubes, I create my personal language. Especially, I have been working a lot with grey color, its shades, and mud and brownish scales. The choice of colors comes more intuitively than consciously. I want to explore more my relations to colors that I am working with. I will write here about grey color which I feel is the most important for me.

I see my process of painting as a collection of memories, experiences, moods, subconsciousness and the environment that surrounds us. All these elements shape our personality and I see them as a foundation and causes for everything; what we are, what we do in our lives. In this case I see direct connection between inner world and painting.

Grey color is very rich in its expression. Maybe it is better to say its lack of expression, which opens even more questions and meanings. What did I mean by lack of expression? The reading of this color is not that clear to me as it is with white or black. Grey color contains both black and white. It is not as bright as white and not as dark as black. It is between. You can get this color by mixing all other colors together too. So, it is a result of all other colors. Its reading is more ambiguous than the other colors. The message is covered by filters that preclude its reading. Uncertainty and ambiguity is what this color represents to me. Also, it is a color that represents the past. Black and white TV and old black and white photos. It connects me a lot with my own past as well. The new built tower block city in Bratislava where I grew up is full of these memories. It has been built by communist regime in the place where there used to be fruit trees and small family houses. The tower block city called Petřžalka was under construction when I was growing up. Sceneries of big piles of the soil and concrete building parts were everywhere. Also, new built houses and no trees and not so much green color. The color that represents that time is exactly the grey color. Now Petřžalka has changed and become more green. Even the old heavy grey iron bridge through which my mum was driving us to school every day when we were kids has become green as well. People were voting for this new color of the bridge, as if they would want to forget the past of the grey.

Still, many grey fountains, statues, buildings remind me of the time of the period of the communist regime. I was a child when the situation changed and my perception of world from that time. I was not aware of the consequences of communist regime, but mostly colors remain as representatives of this time to me. In the 90’s when the situation changed, and Slovakia became autonomous Capitalist country, we, the new generation of kids, had more access to the Western world. Or we were admiring it in fashion movies, music, etc.
When I studied ceramic at the high school in Bratislava, we worked a lot with clay. Also, when I paint now, I am modelling the idea, but using colors instead of clay. I think about the shapes that I paint on the canvas as three-dimensional placed in a three-dimensional space. I know that computers graphic programs as Photoshop and InDesign etc. use grey color as background. It is evidently the most neutral color. It is the most suitable background color when you have to work with other colors of images.

I have continued working with clay and soil, approaching these materials as archives of memories. Clay is a type of soil. Its particles are more finely grind than soil particles. The ground we are standing on has shaped us and is our history; a dying and recreating process.

During the summer of 2016, I went to see one place in Germany close to the city of Berlin, called Teufelsberg in the Grunewald. It is a hill with an old American listening station that was built during the Cold War. The hill is artificial, it was built by humans. It is built from soil and rubble from damaged parts of Berlin during the second world war. It was built to cover the Nazi military-technical college (Wehrtechnische Fakultät) from the second world war. They tried to hide this hurtful period of history. When I was walking up the hill, I got a very strange feeling. I could see building parts mixed with soil. The whole history of this place was under me, under my feet.

Another grey memory is connected to High Tatras, a mountain in Slovakia. Since I was a child, me and my family went to nature very often. Especially to this High Tatras. The highest peak is 2655 m. During hiking up to the top of the hill, you have to pass through many levels of vegetation until you reach nothing else, then the level of greyness, rocks. This was always my favourite part. I felt released, when getting rid of everything from reality of daily life, even of colors. It seemed to me, like going through some catharsis or meditation. From the top of the hill you look back, on the place you come from. I always get very intensive awareness of my own existence. The perspective from which I have seen things before in my life as was it the only truth, changed here.

Being in Iceland, reminded me this feeling a lot. I felt like I would have been permanently living on top of the mountain. It was the condition of weather and nature that remained me how small are human beings. Feeling of humility towards environment that we are living in. I came with plans and expectations which I had to change according the weather conditions. I got to know very soon that, I have to collaborate with nature. Environment is taking big part of everyday life in Iceland. Living in the city we can acquire a feeling or impression that everything around us is under control, you can bear whatever problems, because the state provides us many safety instructions to predict bad situations. But I see this mechanism or structure of the city much more chaotic. It’s a big theatre game, full of backdrops and confusedness. It creates also advertising, TV, newspapers, magazines. I do not think that we don’t watch TV, if we live in countryside, but when I am out of city, more in nature, I do not have this superior feeling as in the city.

My mum always says, that if you clean environment around you, you will clear also your mind. Maybe grey color is my cleaning method.
1. Picture of the Old Bridge from 1945, Bratislava Slovakia.
3. Old Bridge after the last reconstruction in 2016.
5. Picture of Petržalka from late 80s.