

The way of sorrow and joy

There are three painters in fact. The first one might come from pagan times – who knows – because she does magic, has visions, she reads dreams and treats sore souls. The second one must have been invited to Prague by the emperor Rudolf II and must have got credit among the artists at his court. The third one eludes all characterizations. Passing Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca with smile on her face, she remarks: “Okay, guys, let’s try how you look today.”

This triple representation is a result of both origins, and education. Understanding order of things required a year of architecture studies in Kiev, and the dazzling expansion of imagination required further six years of stage design, topped off by Chekhov’s Three Sisters in 1987.

Deep in her subconscious were, however, Russian classics. Deep down the Serov’s beautiful portrait of very young V. S. Mamontova from as early as 1987, the portraits of Somov and the reflection of Mir Iskustva, as well as the lavish composition of strong local colours, so typical of Russia and even more of Ukraine.

The long way from Kiev was marked by lots of mishaps. She found her cure in five years of seclusion at a remote frontier village, surrounded by green foliage and colourful flowers. And she found her revolt there as well: “I cannot live without painting.” And there came the period of large canvases full of leaves and shining colours. Later, however, nature gave in to children, “hundred times repainted”.

„The sorrow is speaking. I, sorrow, am with you. Only I am your sorrow, because the sorrows of the others are too shy to meet you, hiding, reluctant to get engaged. I share your bed, your bread and your salt. You don’t know how they taste without me. You fall asleep rocked and soothed by me, you sleep under my cover, you wake up with me in your mind.” These words were written by a great Czech writer a few years before he shot himself dead in the exile in Switzerland in 1984.

The painter was lucky enough to understand sorrow as a state that is necessary to live through. The black headless creatures standing round a white column of light from her child nightmares received features of byzantine saints in her pictures. In her cycle Meditations of golden world she showed her way: in the irregular cosmic oscillation of two streams, a white and a black one, a fast and a slow one, two celestial lights mingle, directed to a closed portal. What will happen, when it opens? The temple fills up with water, dissolving its structure – Debussy’s Engulfed Cathedral? Man faints, and when coming round, finds a four-leaved flower – the vault of the cathedral with Christ’s baptism. The catharsis – purification and liberation.

Rudofine Arcimboldo is responsible for masterful women profiles that grew up into the Four Seasons. The last one, Winter, was however painted by Fragonard.

Somewhere between the second and the third painter, scenes from Commedia dell arte originated - perhaps enlightened by the holy trinity of Mir Iskusstva, by the painters and scriptwriters Somov, Benois and Bakst. The harlequin’s checked robe glitters with facets of jewels in the rays of setting sun, and little dragons colonizing the architecture listen restlessly to a dialogue with the spirit’s companion – who might have come in a boat across the sea.

The dialogue becomes a leitmotiv of scenes that give life to novella writing and theatre of Italian renaissance, reverberating still in Shakespeare. It is the dialogue of man with fate, when life is at stake. The dialogue of questions asked already by Hermes Trismegistus, calm, tranquil, but nonetheless dramatic. A dialogue with a mirror - the unforgettable Yesenin’s Black Man – or a dialogue of two women, or of a woman with a parrot. It may double, with recurring tiny figures on a round table of their patrons’ gestures, or it may become a triologue, if entered by a phantasmic woman hidden behind a large fan. And we expect the artwork to burst into pieces from its inner tension.

But instead – as in the gardens of the past – it is entered by children. Real children. They play with mirror reflections on the round table lit by birthday cake candles. And the victorious child’s dream gives birth to a work of art, great in its form and binding in its moral mission.