

"Katarína Zemková, Artist

Interview and Conclusions by Prof. PhDr. Ľubomíra Fašangová, PhD."

If I wanted to trace the gradual process of thinking by Katarína Zemková, a graduate of the Faculty of Arts at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, in her approach to representation, it was necessary to see her early works, preschool ones, where she attempted to develop her own handwriting to portray her own ideas. After the vernissage of the Senec exhibition, I accidentally learned from Katka's close relative about an important fact related to her early childhood activities and interests at the age of 2-3. She worked with a pencil, pen, brush, anything to express her ideas that she wanted to draw at the earliest age...

Given the long-term absence of the painter's exhibition presentation, this fact is linked to new realities, new emotions, not only in the composition of the scene or its coloration but primarily in the reflection of her new thinking, the current philosophical direction of the author-artist... This change must have occurred automatically in view of new family or domestic conditions.

Let's try a little reminiscence in her life and creative past.

For Katka, that long time was a world full of miracles, a world that also changed her lifestyle. Why am I mentioning this? It was precisely this absence that allowed her to delve deeper into the present, into living reality, where dreams became concrete in real family life. And it is precisely this new reality that brings us viewers to works that are incompatible with the past and, on the other hand, are a continuation of previous years.

The long-term absence of presented works brings new surprises and new facts with it. With them comes a new acceptance - perception, perhaps even surprise about what we are facing. We welcome this new aspect, which not only forces us to reflect but also surprises us in the ingredients that surprise us.

For many who did not have the opportunity to closely follow her direction after completing her artistic degree, it may come as a shock. However, we will get to know her in a new guise. We will have to reflect on the painting not once, but several times and extract from its subject, its content, perhaps only a fragment of what we find, what we can appropriate. What becomes her secret possession as an author, we have no right to demand an explanation of her expressed feelings. Sometimes motivation is understood in the first presentation or the first perception, while at other times, time remains the only determining factor. A factor designed to reanimate past, slowly fading experiences during which we can unexpectedly and faithfully evoke our own feelings and perceptions.

Is there a difference in them? Yes, let's call it the escalation of those experiments that have acquired a solid form and coloration, finely attuned by her. And yet, it's not her. But the directions of her quest are already emerging in connection with the places of discovery.

As a rhythmic colorist, she began with a lyrical tuning of illuminated colors. With these, she composed more improvisationally than with a conscious form, still lifes, landscapes, or figurative scenes. Today, we see a new understanding of composed subjects and a new coloration. A new perspective, with a new purpose, must have led to a change and a review of her previous work. These are new feelings, new reflections, and new contemplations arising from a new life change with the establishment of a new lifestyle in general.

So after many years, I am encountering a new authorial approach to collections of paintings that, after so many years, produce new compositions with a new coloration. What does the theorist see, whose task is evaluation, commenting, and who helps him in the last measure to create evidence of partial, if not entirely absolute, understanding of the one who will always take the palette and clean the brushes?

Nothing, absolutely nothing, had a different influence on her decision to embark on this path of beauty and express it through drawing, later painting.

School provided her with knowledge, but in a way, it wanted to shape her in a direction that was not her own. Ultimately, this phenomenon occurred with most art students.

"The development of a child who, in the early, even the earliest years, reaches for a pencil with a desire to capture something he does not want to lose," says Norbert Schultz in his publication "Art of the West" at the end of the chapter.

Silence is not forgetfulness; on the contrary, it is a permanent search and, to a much lesser extent, successful finding. I express these thoughts for reasons of my own and by no means straightforward conclusion. And I arrive at a result that I did not expect.

We are with the paintings of an artist who has been silent for several long years by presenting her work and has replaced her longer fugue with the birth of three living and beautiful beings, which has caused not only her professional concealment but also a certain loss of the viewer.

What became the fundamental principle of the creative professional decision of the young artist Katarína Zemková?

The basic principle of the young artist Katarína Zemková's creative professional decision was shaped by her coexistence with nature, from getting to know the garden to the vast expanses of her surroundings. Vah, her grandmother's old house by the river, and the plant life of the garden, which resembled the growth of her own family, played a crucial role in her development. As a child, she grew up in an environment where the color, form, and shape of plants influenced her artistic sensibilities.

This is evident in her first exhibition in Šaľa, 13 years ago, where two elements synthesized: her feelings and the desire for expression, and at the same time, the effort to adhere to the principles of composition she had been taught. It's not just a process unique to Katarína Zemková; every student, whether in the field of art

or any other discipline, goes through a similar process of searching and, of course, doubting. Doubt is a natural part of every person, every problem solved, every case we take on, and especially where we are seeking answers.

In all fields, whether technical or humanistic, choosing a path that is not easy, that is time-consuming and especially introspectively complex, is a common challenge. However, when we embark on this path, we experiment and sometimes even find answers. Many times, we find only fragments, but these small fragments can already be considered a direction. The first phase is often characterized by searching but not finding, leading to great disappointment, as in the case of Van Gogh. The second phase involves attempts to find a definitive result, as exemplified by Antonio Gaudi.

Why do I choose these two foreign examples when so many artists in our Central European region have also strived to create similar monuments? Two factors have hampered the development of art in our region. Firstly, there has been a lack of patronage, to which only a very small percentage of the urban sector contributes. This has been one of the main priorities in all Slovak cities and towns since the late 19th century. Secondly, there is a low level of cultural awareness among the population, not only in urban areas but especially in rural regions.

The introductory philosophical contemplation was inspired by the work of the artist Katka Zemková, titled "Direction." This work not only presents the uncertainties, alternatives, and inclinations of the artist and the viewer but goes even further by evoking the viewer's mental state. It inadvertently leads the viewer into nostalgia, into the past, where feelings and fragments of childhood and adolescence reanimate long-forgotten experiences and scenes.

In my past years as an art theorist, I often had the opportunity to glimpse hidden and unpublished experiences that had long been "carried away by time." Yet, by rediscovering a present work of art, it compelled the artist to stand still, reflect, and reminisce about the conditions in which the subject was realized.

The significant moment was the notion of "standing still and reminiscing." Often, during the search, the artist encounters disappointment, perhaps even shame about the reality and shallowness of their perception. But it's there, in the mind's pursuit, sometimes with great disappointment, without positive revival, and the inability to dig up and reach the depths of lost time. Other times, there's a proud feeling and assessment: "It's good..." In this case, the work "Direction" served as an example and not just for the author of "Direction" but for many of us, the viewers and consumers of "lost time." It made me reminisce, and I have no doubt that in this analysis of past work, there were others as well. Their interest in the presented work was evident and convincing. It revealed itself in their expressions as they delved into the subject image. Let's admit it, how often do we wish to revive the bygone, lost world and return to the most innovative solution?

Many authors and artists could laugh at the naivety with which art theorists present artists' views of the past, the nostalgia or feigned disinterest with which they attempt to enchant and amuse us with their long-lost childhood ideas. However, there is no shame, no reservations, no apologies, no sense of exceptionalism for a child's hand that already had the potential for exceptional perception, atypical visions, and more. It was destined for the artistic process, and, ultimately, it lacks the memories of the circumstances in which we tried to showcase our "abilities." We struggled with our initial experiments, with color, and with the realization that my apple could be purple, not green or yellow. Just a moment ago, an argument ended, the child suffered, and everything around them, all the colors, not just the objects, changed shapes and colors. And that's how it is with us adults too. It's a well-known saying: "The world turned black... The sun set... and so on."

If Van Gogh had yellow sunflowers permanently in his eye, why shouldn't he have a Yellow Chair and a predominant yellow ambiance in Provence or in his paintings created under Dr. Gachet's care? What was Gogh's similar intention? His Christ (the beginning of symbolism), which became the boundary between Gogh's and Van Gogh's symbolism? A similar intention or a similar idea? Their choice was based on the environment that was perceived and illuminated by the sun, which left them no choice but to work within it and immerse themselves in it. The Northern color palette doesn't select realistic visual images; every shade has significance, which we call symbolism. Symbolism exists in color from the Middle Ages onwards. Cobalt - the blue cloak of the Virgin Mary, never her mother Anne or her grandmother Elizabeth.

In symbolism, our feelings and emotions are reflected, and these are shades of color. And not only in the Middle Ages or late antiquity; this still holds true today.

Bazovský's crows, like all crows, are black - all the more so because they symbolize the brevity of human life with their short flight. But their circling around the evening moon intensifies another more significant artifact - a group of cottages illuminated by the moonlight in the evening. The priority is the moon illuminating the group of houses, or is it the contrast of the nightfall against the bright light spot - the moon? I find in it a force that reveals, unveils, discloses what daylight is not capable of truthfully revealing to us. I explain this with a multitude of approaches, a multitude of perspectives that not only provide us with a choice of alternatives but also lead to a multitude of incorrect conclusions.

I often find such a confrontational example in the field of painting during my long years. I find it even now in the work of the young painter Katka Zemková. The main reason for her work, which can simulate an application, is her artistic growth. She doesn't create a solitary entity in the artistic process among groups of young art hopefuls; instead, she is one of the few examples where the activities of a mother, wife, painter, and employee in the commercial sphere intersect.

Our interest focuses on her artistic work, in which other activities undoubtedly play a role.

The mundane human existence that is unaware of its direction. And that applies to everyone who follows a similar path to Katka, the artist, mother, wife, Katka Zemková.

(Personal records of Luba Fašangová, which in a way provide opportunities for Katka's inspiration.)

Katarina Zemková, C.V.

"100 years ago, the Czech writer Karel Václav Rais wrote the famous novel 'Zapadlí vlastenci' (The Sunken Patriots). The title itself invites us to reflect on the era, time, and place to which this address still applies. It is our duty to replace the term 'sunken' with words like hidden, unknown, etc. Territory and generational models do not matter; there is no region or country to which this cause does not belong. We feel the need not only to uncover them but also to pay attention to them due to their artistic creation, modesty, and low self-esteem.

How does a young woman, mother, and citizen from a small town in western Slovakia relate to these qualities? Primarily through her chosen focus and vocation. She is an academic painter, a graduate of the Faculty of Arts at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. The defining moment in her professional journey is her choice to capture and express her inner feelings and perceptions through drawing, brushes, and, most importantly, the use of color. This became her lifelong profession, love, and life motivation.

Her connection to the environment, a positive inclination towards her native region, which we can designate as the south of Slovakia, continuous acquisition of new yet verified knowledge about her surroundings – all these are records of her maturation into full adulthood. With this comes a reevaluation of her immediate and familiar surroundings. The painter knows her environment, revealing it through her portrayal of details, as well as her personal understanding based on a lifelong inclination towards nature, focused observations, especially of plant anatomy, flowers, branches, or overall views of colorful floral still lifes.

There is a fact that not only sets a precedent in the artist's work but also turns into a motif and subject encoded in the object, which simultaneously carries the tones of color. She never departs from her color palette without realizing the seen and experienced beauty of colors and tones. They guide her brushstroke not only in the intended direction but intentionally connect to neighboring values, whether in a contrasting or related form, or emerge as another previously undiscovered shade of the base color tone.

The discourse and everything related to the mentioned issue and its analysis can be applied to the personality of the academic painter, art teacher Katarína Zemková. In her latest exhibition in Senec, we not only observed her current motivation towards the mentioned flora, but the exhibition also presented her work, from older to more recent pieces, culminating in a current comprehensive body of work. The uniqueness and symbolism of the author's philosophy can be found in it. The exhibition of her paintings is a primary introduction to the public of her work, which can also be described as the first comprehensive presentation of 15 years of artistic creation. It is also a testament to the primacy of the first publication of work that, for the first time, on a broader scale, managed to reveal the author's feelings and sensations, motivating her to express subjective manifestations that require a sincere confession of everything that leads her to brushes or pencils. We sense her special and significant authenticity through her color scales in compositions where the effort to express the motif in the most intimate form is evident. Achieving this intention involves choosing the color palette in the color composition, where a leaf, flower, plant, or its detail creates the canvas's color palette. As mentioned, these are the colors of her grandmother's garden flora, but the selection of values, their primary or secondary representation in sketches and color treatments, is motivated by the author's inner personal perspective. Her selection is based on her views on the priority of color shades in her grandmother's garden, where she has been moving since birth, where she was raised to respect and understand flora, nature, and everything that surrounds not only her but all of us. The difference lies only in how we perceive or negate the current emotional state or to what extent we feel the urge to capture that color tone or the changing daylight with approaching evening shadows. What the artist expects before selecting a composed theme or its detail is inspiration, easily or more difficult to achieve, capable of creating a space in the subconscious so deeply that it returns to the artist in a shorter or longer interval.

At first glance, there is a poetic ease and captivating visual delight offered by flowers, blooming shrubs, or trees with their rich fruitfulness. All of this, however, preceded the search for numerous, often unusual experiments, techniques, combinations, as we perceive them in the latest contemporary works. Evidence of this is her current work, the paintings of recent months.

Katka Zemková received a precious gift from fate in her early childhood. Her acquired gift became her birthplace with significant values that determined her environment. A garden, nature - which formed her living environment from birth and instilled inspiration in her for everything we call our intimate surroundings.

If an artistic work, an artifact, is to originate from the situation of observation and cognition, the painter's aim is to gain its aesthetic significance. If we seek the key to the question of artistic value, we will not find it in a particular projection of scientific explanation, and even less so in assuming that it is merely an expression of personal opinions.

When we walk through the gallery spaces in museums or galleries and evaluate their artistic exhibitions, perhaps we do not even realize that we are simultaneously seeking a direction that will lead us to the desired result, which will help us analyze and correctly understand the motivation of the artist - the author.

It is an approach to representation in which we find our emotions, respect. The revival of images from our childhood. In the approach to representation, we also find motivated visions that leave us with a sense of emptiness, many awaken times long forgotten or unresolved today. We not only become consumers of the depicted events but also become a part of them.

And that is the unique contribution of the power of the artifact. The power of the artwork that brings us a nostalgic subject.

Katka Zemková's latest records raise doubts in many viewers. These are not doubts about a misunderstanding of the subject or aversion to the theme and its color scheme; it is simply a lack of understanding or unfamiliarity with the author's vision and concept. The question arises, which can only be answered at a professional level, of how an individual relates to visual art, i.e., visual content and visual form. Specifically, what is their relationship with the artwork? Does it leave them passive, indifferent, or does it irritate and motivate them?

Artistic work realizes a thought or a situation experienced in reality, where a large number of facts coexist. The goal of an artistic work is to preserve and convey lived life meanings, and through artistic expression, we convey comprehensible and specific meanings. The fact that nature is characterized by a holistic and contradictory expression is identical to human thinking, human philosophy of thinking.

Katka Zemková is well aware of all this. Her great advantage these days is the fact that she is at the beginning of her reflections. The gift of this positive fact is the cycle of life itself. Her artistic focus disappeared from Katka Zemková's daily life for a very long time. There were undoubtedly new facts when artistic progress was retarded but not lost, as evidenced by the exhibits in this exhibition space.

Katka Zemková-Pappová received a rare gift from fate - to bring pleasure to all of us with her existence, presence, and work. She is too modest to loudly demand attention with her work, which includes not only her creations but also creating a family environment, taking on many roles, not only on a private level but also facing a well-known or less known public, resulting in a successful outcome that has led her into a circle of admirers that will only grow in the future."

Štiavnik, 21.01.2017.