

Speech by Ján Hubinský, Commissioner of the Exhibition "THIS IS ME..." at the Art Centre Synagogue in Trenčín, July 2018

From one story by my favorite Russian writer, Isaac Babel (translated into the latest Slovak edition by Mr. Štrasser), I once wrote down a sentence: "What do I need a line for when I have color?" It was precisely this idea of Babel's that came to mind when I first encountered the paintings of Mrs. Katka Zemková. In fact, it's as if she whispered this idea to the author. I deliberately say she didn't say it, she whispered it, because that's how her paintings are - they whisper rather than speak aloud.

And so is the artist herself. Katka Zemková is, first and foremost, a colorist - she doesn't need lines; she has color. She doesn't express herself through drawing; her technique and method of painting could be described as the path of brush - color - canvas, a system of start - finish. If there are objects in her work, she sees them first with her inner vision and eyes, and then she projects them onto the canvas like a magical projector. She doesn't need to predefine, contour, or limit her color areas. Her methods are purely painterly. She doesn't need lines; she has color!

But often, in her paintings, we don't see objects; she paints not only landscapes, still lifes, and scenes but also abstractly, without a subject. Without an object. Only the subject remains - who, what? Painting. But painting with a capital "P." Plus many, many adjectives.

Katka is not an illustrator, or rather, she doesn't illustrate in a straightforward manner. The goal of artistic illustration is to bring a visual experience to a literary work, which can be closely tied to the text or entirely free as a visual parallel. This is precisely our case. Katka draws inspiration from Štrasser's poetics but doesn't force us to see something specific; she merely hints and whispers, "Ah, there, in this direction, tune in." She doesn't work systematically; she doesn't say, "I hear SUN - I'll paint a yellow ball with rays." She hears the sun and paints life, warmth, passion, love... She leads us somewhere else; she can create an atmosphere and convey emotion solely through color. She allows herself to be carried by sound, rhythm; she opens emotional pores and can express through her brush what has

passed through these pores into her soul. She introduces us to her world, a world where, thankfully (or perhaps regrettably for some), different principles and laws apply than in the world of give and take, did and should do, gave and shouldn't have given. The stroke of the brush, in the language of Gauguin, is a means for her to express an idea.

One of her paintings is called "The Measure of a Person." For me, the title is not only symbolic but directly symptomatic, characterizing her entire body of work. If I had the opportunity to enter the plot earlier, I would name the entire exhibition this way.

What is the measure of a person, in what units are this measure or measures given? Are they in centimeters, kilograms, degrees... yes, of course, a person has physical measurements. But besides them, apart from these tangible, inherent dimensions, a person has other, more essential dimensions than weight, height, pressure, temperature... these are dimensions (and now I allow myself to use a seeming oxymoron) - immeasurable dimensions, dimensions of quantities for which we do not have, and I hope we never will have, established units. These quantities are empathy, goodness, compassion, in one word, humanity. And precisely these attributes from Katka Zemková's paintings I feel. Not that they protrude from her paintings; they are present somewhere beneath the surface, only lightly hinted, whispered, left unfinished. Because Katka knows that completeness is the enemy of art.

At the beginning, I mentioned one statement by Isaac Babel. Allow me, dear attendees, to conclude this speech with another Babel quote, and allow me, Mr. Štrasser, to use your translation once again: "No bullet can penetrate the human heart as chillingly as a period placed at the right moment."

In the halacha, the legal part of the Talmud, it is said that one should hurry to the synagogue, a sign of impatience. Conversely, one should leave slowly, a sign of sorrow and reluctance to leave these spaces. I walked here following these principles, and I hope that you, dear attendees, will respect them when leaving.