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The Elemental Feelings

Стихійні почуття

Abstract. The article deals with the art project by two famous Ukrainian artists—Larysa Pisha and Valeria Trubina. The project was built on work with the unconscious. By the power of the artists art becomes the domain of the intellect, gains awareness and is eventually assimilated by means of the color, of the formal solution, by word and sound. Art makes the transition from the category of the unconscious into the conscious and rational. Monolithic potency of the Universe is split and divided into the fragments convenient for comprehension that manifest the symbols of four elements: Water, Air, Earth, and Fire. In their project the artists created the picturesque world of archetypes, gave shape to the idea, providing the viewers with aesthetic joy, developing a sense of taste, evoking the Elemental Feelings.

Keywords: art project, elemental feelings, unconscious, symbols of four elements.

Outlining the bounds of uncontainable, limiting the unrestricted, the Human aspires to neutralize the inconceivable. Our unconscious acquires the non-volume world continuum, reinvents it and returns it in a modified assimilated form. Here the main tool of “processing” is analysis, the work of intellect. Eventually, Art as the intellect’s living environment comes into play. By power of an artist the non-volume agent gains awareness and is eventually assimilated by the means of either the color or the formal solution, either the word or the sound. This makes the category of the unconscious transform into the conscious and rational. The process of phenomenon assimilation results into creation of its symbol, which becomes an idea and is embodied as a concept.

By the will of an artist the intellectually unembraceable monolithic potency of the Universe is split and divided into the fragments convenient for comprehension that manifest the symbols of four elements: Water, Air, Earth, and Fire. Thus the picturesque world of archetypes is born, the idea gains shape, this form brings aesthetic joy, develops a sense of taste, bestows emotions, evokes the Elemental Feelings. In this process the collective, trans-personal gives way to the individual, which is how the identity of the artist, the creator, the One-Who-Assimilates-The-Inconceivable is manifested.

Harnessing the elements, people’s turbulent feelings and emotions are the theme of a visual dialogue of two female artists—the unique and inimitable personalities—Larysa Pisha and Valeria Trubina.

During implementation of the *Elemental Feelings* project the semantic shifts became unavoidable: liberated in the process of the artists’ harnessing the elements, the potent creative energy is manifested and carved in memory via the alchemy of color and shape. This gives a chance to embrace the unexplored—the boundless entirety of the phenomenon. It is an opportunity to visually express the “indescribable”—here the four traditional elements are spontaneously joined by the Element of the Word, the paragon of which for both female artists became the poetry by Taras Shevchenko, “... Like silver, forged and beaten, by fire in the furnace heated, smelted sevenfold, oh Lord, so are these mighty words of Thine! Scatter them, Lord, those words divine throughout the earth!..”

Disassembled into fragments and harnessed by the material world, the elements evoke the spontaneous feelings, clear the vision blurred by mundane chores, enhance the perception of the garrulous world. Thus there appears a free dialogue of full-fledged personalities—the two female artists who have an important message for each other and the world. Each of them has come her way and trodden her own path in quest of absolute truth. However, both artists are coming to shared understanding that each person’s individual feelings are equal to space obeying its elements and spiritualizing them.

The potency of Universe hides in every little fragment of picturesque canvases by Larysa Pisha and Valeria Trubina,



Valeria Trubina. Green tears of rain. 2016. Oil, canvas. 120 × 120

in plain symbolism possessing a clearly expressed social connotation. Spectacular surface of the paintings masterfully resonates with profoundly conceptual interpretation of the idea, while contemplation as the viewer's main function becomes energy-consuming intellectual work, the tool of self-cognition and self-reflection.

The blueprint of this project appeared in the Velykiy Pereviz Art Residency of Oleksandr and Tamara Babak in the Poltava region. It was Tamara Babak who had an idea to invite two absolutely different artists Larysa Pisha and Valeria Trubina, with contrasting views, characters, tempers, stylistics and aesthetic preferences.

The mighty land of Velykiy Pereviz possesses the power of structuring the meanings. There the sense of real reigns supreme, which in the epoch of total simulacra domination is an exorbitant luxury and a great marvel. This is a true Terminus—the junction which has in stock a mystical “crack between the worlds”. This place was a starting point of the artists' spiritual journey, their initiation in the status of the “wise witches” possessing a secret knowledge of the world's wisdom, having powerful intuition, mastering the magic of creation, knowing the secret of finding balance and self-sufficiency.

In Velykiy Pereviz the potent saturation of the land with chthonic information—the ancient salubrious saps so exciting and mind-blowing—is felt especially acutely. It makes you feel as if you happen to get into a matrix keeping the surreal incredible pulsation of the cultural layer in sync with your heartbeat. It is this pure vital energy that has caused the creation of the picturesque world of the archetypal symbolic images. It is here that the trivial statement “The nature is a God's concept, while the artist is only an interpreter from the celestial into the earthborn language” becomes strikingly clear. Thus, it is utterly natural that the genius loci of the Velykiy Pereviz Art Residence gave birth to the *Elemental Feelings* project by Valeria Trubina and Larysa Pisha.

A dialogue always presumes the tolerant attitude to the opponent. It is sheer art to hear and to be heard... Valeria Trubina and Larysa Pisha have added to these features a skill to create harmony from potentially dangerous energies, to harness their own elemental feelings with color intentions. Due to their talent the air does not turn into a tornado, the water does not become a whirlpool, the fire limits its temper down to the confinement of an old country-house armchair, while the earth (as it should always do) gives fruit feeling nostalgic for the potency of its chthonic antiquity. However, everyone who is able to see knows that in this subdued fragment there is a hidden power of the entire element ready to break free at any moment.

In their creative work each of the artists used to go their own way: Larysa Pisha mastered her style via discovery of the Boychuk art school painters, studying their heritage and researching the aesthetics of the national visual art. Valeria Trubina did it by joining the experiments of the European trans-avant-garde. Eventually both artists have found the common denominator—the unclouded intuition giving birth to pure painting manner free from cold masculine calculus. In the artists' opinion, love is the only emotion worth respect and protection. It is the feeling resulting from interaction of the four elements. By recreating in their scenic canvases the symbols of air, water, earth, and fire, the artists declare the outer simplicity and transparency, which are merely a manifestation of profound ruminations.

Acting in a peculiar space of iconography, formal and coloristic solutions in the epoch of domination of, as Jean Baudrillard called it, “the cold energy of simulacra”, both painters prove that being real, direct and genuine is both the most insane idea and a privilege affordable to the select few.

Valeria Trubina—water and air

I am an Aquarius and my elements are elusive water and air.

Valeria Trubina has always been one of the key figures of the “ParCom” squat (the name “ParCom” derived from the “Parisian Commune”, which was the name of the street where it was situated), which was one of the most popular artistic locations in Kyiv, a legend of the Ukrainian post-modernity in the late 1980s through the early 1990s. Valeria was a direct participant of all the events and exhibitions of the squat. Young, talented, full of creative ardour and not burdened with any obligations, the “ParCom” painters suddenly burst into the art space of the country, which was on the verge of irreversible changes.

However, Valeria's creative works are hardly possible to put into pigeonholes of stylistic definitions. Like a stubborn plant sprouting through the thickness of asphalt, she would always stand out of any disciplined structures even such expressive and unpredictable as “ParCom” with its Ukrainian version of trans-avant-garde—a mythologeme originated by the Italian post-modernity trend masterminded



Valeria Trubina. *Let me go*. 2016. Oil, canvas. 120 × 120



Valeria Trubina. *Over the clouds*. Oil, canvas. 120 × 120

by the professor of the art history of the La Sapienza University of Rome Achille Bonito Oliva, who is considered to be its ideologist.

Valeria Trubina acquired artistic education in the Voroshilovgrad Art College, where the core subjects were painting, drawing, surface anatomy taught by Oleksandr Ivanovych Kadenko—the Kyiv Art Institute graduate. Exacting and extremely persistent, he was “sculpting” his students’ creativity patiently and with great respect to their identity. Valeria considers that Oleksandr Kadenko was the one who played the most important role in her professional evolution. It was he who formed her attitude to color as vibration that broadcasts a special conceptual meaning.

With this background the budding artist came to the Kyiv Art Institute cherishing a hope that there she might hone her mastery and gain the higher profound innermost knowledge... However, the very first class brought disappointment—for her portrait of a villager in a wide-brimmed hat performed in the Bruegel stylistics Valeria received an unsatisfactory mark. To her request to explain the reason the professor said: “Where is the festival of colors here?! Where is the vibrant rainbow?!”... Obviously this was the moment when her relations with the academy were broken though by inertia they kept on going for some time, still for not very long. Valeria did not like the atmosphere of the Institute; she had a wish to “hole up” so that she could get to other professors’ classes.

At the same period on initiative of Oleksandr Soloviov, she and her friends—Oleksandr Hnylytsky, Oleh Holosiy, Arsen Savadov as well as other painters became the members of the Union of Artists of Ukraine. According to the regulations of that time, this peculiar club of the privileged did not accept students, so after the third year of studies Valeria took an academic leave.

That was the time when the friends came up with the idea of a squat. In summer the artistic workshops

in Lenina Street (now it is Bohdana Khmelnytskoho Street) used to be empty, so they were leased out to the graduates who were working on their diploma projects. Valeria helped her friends to paint their diploma works. However, she was reluctant to return to her studies at the Art Institute. For a few times she came to her alma mater, peered into classes and lecture halls and felt so dreary. Finally she made up her mind. The presence or the absence of a diploma will hardly make a difference in her life as this will not prevent her from becoming an artist.

To Parisian Commune Street (nowadays, Mykhailivska Street) they came as a tight-knit company of soulmates. The intellectual leader of the group was Oleksandr Soloviov. Trying to play the role of a certain campaigner against illiteracy he was quenching the total information thirst of the fellow artists. Together they would leaf through the album by Giorgio de Chirico so often that it nearly went to pieces. The friends were keen on American art and used to read the “Novy Mir” [The New World] magazine. They were enchanted by the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and enjoyed the Russian classical literature. Oriental art mesmerized them and they would spend tons of money on books.

This was an exciting transition period filled with special content—the iron curtain had fallen and finally Ukraine declared its independence—an event that was extremely meaningful for Valeria and her fellow artists.

For them Kyiv, a rather provincial city back then, felt too cramped, so the “ParCom” artists ventured out to Moscow which they conquered with the colorful riot of their paintings making the Russian critics talk excitedly about the potent phenomenon of “the Ukrainian neo-baroque” and “the Ukrainian wave”¹. Against the background of the Ukrainian artists’

¹ Десятерик Д. Там, де згущується час. До десятиріччя закриття сквоту «Паризька Комуна» // День. 2004. 30 липня. № 133.



Larysa Pisha. *A window on fire*. 2016–2017. Oil, canvas. 120 × 120



Larysa Pisha. *Tomatoes have been picked*. 2016–2017. Oil, canvas. 120 × 120

vivacious dynamic creations, the Moscow painters of the sixties obsessed with the orthodox ideas looked extraneous.

Natural freedom and boldness of scenic canvases by Trubina, Holosiy, Hnylytskyi attracted the famous British gallerist Andrew Brown who invited the artists to Edinburgh with an exhibition. According to the initial plan, the event had to be accompanied with a beautifully illustrated hefty catalogue for the publication of which the British party allotted considerable funds. However, the money disappeared without a trace in the Bermuda triangle of the Soviet Ministry of Culture, which promised mountain but performed a molehill resulting in a thin black-and-white brochure with which promoting an artistic career in Britain was ridiculous.

The *Elemental Feelings* project is the destination to which Valeria was coming via spiritual practices combining them with her travels around the world. For the artist a journey to the Velykiy Pereviz Art Residence in Poltava region became a personal emotional experience. Upon returning to Ukraine after long months of travels in various countries, it was in Velykiy Pereviz where for the first time she felt that Motherland really exists, that human emotions and sensations are weaved from the elements, while the energy given by them raises consciousness to a higher level.

Valeria knows the meaning of such ultimate fusion with nature when you ramble around the jungle for a week and you don't need clothes. However, this experience is a far cry from what the artist felt in Velykiy Pereviz where she was spellbound with the powerful entwinement of culture and history when suddenly eternity started peering through the empty darkness of the linear time and then the obscurity instantaneously became transparent and supraliminal.

These are peculiar wanderings through the Labyrinth, the ultimate goal of which is discovering your own self in the Center of the maze where according to the legend instead of the Minotaur each traveler faces a mirror with their

own reflection. While peering into this mirror the explorer finds the patrimonial anchorage in his spiritual life, creates his own semiotic system of ritual and magic universals—WATER and AIR.

Larysa Pisha—earth and fire

*If we divide the world into elements,
I will remain as earth and fire.*

Larysa Pisha is a Kyivite who was born in a talented family of poets, actors and scholars. Her grandfather Mykhailo Zhovtobryukh, a professor of philology and a luminary of linguistics, was an extraordinary person. The grandfather's beloved grandson, Larysa's elder brother Serhiy Ivanov was not only a talented actor famous for the films *Only Old Timers are Going to Fight* by Leonid Bykov and *The Days of the Turbins* by Vladimir Basov but also one of the founders of the Molodist Film Festival.

The family environment always has a considerably bigger impact on personality development than all further universities. When Larysa faced a dilemma where to acquire higher education, the family council came up with the whole range of "taboos". Her brother starkly protested against her applying for drama school telling about the complex travails of the actor's life. Her mother threatened that she would rather die than let Larysa enter the department of chemistry of the local university. Larysa's grandmother uttered the same precautions concerning a career in mathematics, while her grandfather warned her to steer clear of the philology department. To crown it all her father told her about a complicated destiny of a poet... Fortunately, there were no artists in the family, so young Larysa was lightheartedly let to continue her education in the Kyiv Art Institute. She was studying

at the monumental painting department, which at that time was headed by Vilen Chekanyuk. Her favourite professor was Mykola Storozhenko.

However, Larysa's first teacher of painting was Victor Zaretsky. An outstanding monumentalist, muralist, painter and graphic artist, he was deprived of the opportunity to make a career in art so he earned his living by teaching private art classes and preparing students for entrance exams at university. A person of a tragic fate, a true passion-ary... Each day of communication with him was great happiness. It was he who had the greatest impact on Larysa Pisha and produced the unforgettable impression on the budding artist.

The example of Victor Zaretsky, to whom the Soviet authorities did not give a chance to reveal his artistic potential despite all his potent achievements, brought Larysa understanding of the trajectory of movement in her own creative career. After all, the true knowledge is not black-and-white photo-prints of famous pictures at the history of art lectures in the Institute but the contact with the original works of the most outstanding masters of art in the best museums of the world.

Thus, Larysa stepped into the shoes of an artist only when she got a chance to travel abroad and see the original works of the world's best artists with her own eyes. There she could finally compare their creations with her own experience, as well as study the techniques, composition, color range of the world classic masterpieces, that is to do everything the famous monumentalist and the founder of the art school Mykhailo Boychuk required his students to do.

While travelling and visiting museums, studying the paintings by Rembrandt, Bosch, Klimt, Egon Schiele, watching the flocks of children who feel so at home at the museum, she realized the worthlessness of the Soviet art education... All this was recompensed with travelling and endless self-improvement.

Larysa's special love, her element is stained-glass artwork. Each of her creations is an inimitable work of a master, a perfect object of art which brings aesthetic pleasure due to talented performance. In all variety of its technologies the monumental painting is incredibly demanding and responsible: it brings up a sense of taste indirectly and gradually influencing the consciousness of a common person. Larysa knows it well as according to her convictions a sense of taste is truly a vaccination against negative impacts, an immunity to impudence and permissiveness. It has to be developed and refined, brought up via good education, high culture, wise books, top-quality art and architecture. For Larysa Pisha painting is peculiar stimulation of the "muscles of thinking" atrophied by excessive information content. Art is powerful energy-consuming work.



Larysa Pisha. *Wandering lights*. 2018. Oil, canvas. 180 × 180

While keeping track of the tendencies in the world art and studying innovative technologies one should not forget about traditional painting for it is alive, it keeps developing and moving and it will never disappear. The evidence of this is the *Elemental Feelings* project which prompted Larysa to work synchronically with her vis-a-vis, using stark contrasts and exquisite subtle parallels, to find common points in the personal experience.

In this project she opted for the elements of Earth and Fire harnessing which is not a simple task. Considered a symbol of destruction and purification from the evil, fire has always been a model that was too dynamic and dangerous. Its harnessing by the artist took place due to masterful localization—conducting the auto da fe of an old armchair and a windowpane became an spectacular performance for the artist's country house neighbors. However, in its picturesque manifestation Larysa Pisha's fire became a metaphor for spiritual energy grounded and harnessed by humans for their own comfort. Thus, the grandeur modified into the insignificant becomes the object of the postmodern person's homage.

The artist's works impress with deep understanding of the topic—the profound meaning of the land filled with echoes of incredible magic power that in all cultures has been associated with Great Mother. The artist expresses this ancient understratum of chthōn via a potent color layer that gives birth to intense fantasies, provides an allusion of the mysterious life full of danger and at the same time it is civilized by the fruit, so safe and familiar to the person.

Ременяка О.

Стихийні почуття

Анотація. Розглянуто мистецький проект двох знамих українських мисткинь — Лариси Пішої та Валерії Трубіної, побудований на роботі з безсвідомим. Владою художниць мистецтво стає сферою життєдіяльності інтелекту, усвідомлюється і асимілюється кольором, формальним рішенням, словом, звуком і з категорії несвідомого переходить у свідоме, раціональне. Монолітна потенція Всесвіту розщеплюється, розділяється на зручні для сприйняття фрагменти, проявляючи символи чотирьох стихій: Води, Повітря, Землі, Вогню. У своєму проекті мисткині творять живописний світ архетипів, надають ідеї форму, даруючи естетичну насолоду, емоції, пробуджуючи Стихийні Почуття.

Ключові слова: мистецький проект, стихийні почуття, безсвідоме, символи чотирьох стихій.

Ременяка О.

Стихийные чувства

Аннотация. Рассмотрен художественный проект двух известных украинских художниц — Ларисы Пишной и Валерии Трубиной, построенный на работе с несознательным. Властью художниц искусство становится сферой жизнедеятельности интеллекта, осмысливается и ассимилируется цветом, формальным решением, словом, звуком и из категории бессознательного переходит в сознательное, рациональное. Монолитная потенция Вселенной расщепляется на удобные для восприятия фрагменты, проявляя символы четырех стихий: Воды, Воздуха, Земли, Огня. В своем проекте художницы творят живописный мир архетипов, дают идею форму, дарят эстетическое наслаждение, эмоции, пробуждают Стихийные Чувства.

Ключевые слова: художественный проект, стихийные чувства, бессознательное, символы четырех стихий.

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