

Self-portrait (2006)

Jan Karpíšek

I seek the peace of mind and heart sometimes

It is called with many names

I paint what I have found sometimes

I was born on the 15th March 1981 in the Czech Republic, a small middle European country, in an era of a collapsing communistic regime. (Communists governed until the Velvet Revolution in 1989.) My family is secular middle class, ancestrally farmers and workers, but also engineers and had been politically persecuted. My father is a champion in logics and crosswords. A family tradition is a mushroom picking.

I was an inquiring child. I read when I was five years old. I wrote stories and poems; fascinated by the fact that we live and that we are going to die. My best days were rollicking in the garden of my mother's mother and also at the cottage of father's parents at one of the Polish borders. There, in the beautiful countryside, I started to learn Asian martial arts from my friend when I was nine. Trying to find the arcanum of mysterious art of overpowering an attacking enemy without any weapon led me to learn about Asian philosophy and religion. It corresponded with my nature perfectly. Impressed with the teaching of Buddhism I stopped to train warcraft physically soon.

Then my childhood was in total conflict with parents who were not able to accept such a radical turn of their child; who would often sit without moving in front of the wall and refuse to eat meat. My practice changed in time with my belief. It varies from Hare Krishna to Advaita, from mystical Christianity to Zen. I was always seeking for a vital authentic experience of transcendence in accordance with both emotions and intellect. I hungered for belonging to understanding friends and after few years finally have found some in local hardcore crew, punk musicians professing to straightedge which shared some attitudes and values with my religious opinion. In 1990s hardcore was strongly

affected by Eastern spirituality. Ray Cappel will always be a very important person for me. Guys were making their music but me although talented vocally I missed a field of self expression. My cousin Michal Stepanek, joiner, roof designer and drummer inspired me with his own drawings. As with so many children, I loved to draw and finally realized that art could be the field I was looking for.

It was good fortune to get to enrol to studio of prof. Martin Mainer at Faculty Of Fine Arts in Brno University after grammar school. Martin was an understanding teacher with a few common concerns and study with such a teacher is a great experience. It revealed for me new horizons and was imbibing influences of creativity and freedom of Uni students.

I tend to nature, organic foodstuffs and permaculture but paradoxically after graduation I became employed for a huge American corporation as a computer operator. I hope it is a temporal job and things will move forward soon. After graduation I envisioned the impossibility to earn enough to make a living with art and I did not see any better opportunity. I will never follow the commercial trends even if I believe that selling artworks for reasonable prices is ok.

My art mostly circulates around spirituality. My main themes are: Who Am I?, (human) self, mind, meditation, consciousness, time, freedom and erotics. I seek for harmony between expression of authentic experience of transcendence and serious high-quality visual art (noncommercial, original). Whatever form of expression I chose makes no difference. Sometimes I paint naivistic symbols and metaphors, sometimes I do painting performance and automatical meditation visual records. I would like to go as deep as possible in both theme (content) and approach (form). I am close to holding a view that art should be a kind of yoga, i. e. joining with the absolute. On one hand I do not care about meaningless (but) up-to-date art, on the other hand I reject New Age kitsches. I came to the academe as not very skilled in drawing and never had much ambition to work in an academic style. And I left it to others to copy photographs with pleasure. In other words all my art can be considered as a diary of spiritual seeking with all the failings and

little triumphs. Since autumn 2005 I am again training martial art in the concrete aikido,
art of coordination, way of harmony.

Jan Karpíšek

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