

DAVOR VUKOVIC'S GRAND ENTRANCE

BY ABRAHAM LUBELSKI

Davor Vukovic, a self-educated painter and poet, is one of the most prominent artists in contemporary Croatian landscape painting. Vukovic possesses originality mixed with an innate talent for spontaneous expression. Although his poems are more subtle and introspective, his paintings are passionate and exciting—he engages himself both physically and emotionally. Expressing himself in a range of colors that reflect both his inner self and his outer interactions with nature, Vukovic infuses modernity and impressionism into energetic paintings that soothe the mind. His work, through its evocative use of color, movement, texture, and shape, display a state of mind rather than a tangible landscape. This October, Vukovic will be highlighted in a major solo exhibition at Broadway Gallery, NYC.

Vukovic's paintings, reminiscent of Van Gogh or Whistler, are composed of different reflections and interactions with his creativity and his sea, something he feels is an expansion of his soul. He takes landscapes as an inspiration for expressing his emotional state of mind, creating personal visions without a need for narration or description. Vukovic's portrayal of the vibrations of the sun, moon, and stars on an inexhaustible sea is felt in *Dense Transparency*. In *Dragon's Tail*, *Floating Indigo*, and *Autumn*, Vukovic depicts the archipelago from his perspective. He always uses the contrast of dark and bright bold colors along with pastels to create a balance of the darkness and silence that exists on the islands of the Croatian Adriatic Sea, as well as the vibrant, vital energy that lives within modern cities. In correspondence to this contrast, he also writes a collection of poetry titled, "I Lean On The Silence," to express the vital, vibrant, and lively energy by which he is surrounded.

His poetry, on the other hand, illuminates a "ray of light" Vukovic believes is common to everything. In his poems he writes about merging with God, a moment that often emanate his art and his

poems. Vukovic's religion strongly influences his way of life, mindset and artwork—the holy component of his pieces that also serve as their cornerstone. His poetry is self-healing but his paintings are a way of self-expression.

I recently had a chance to interview Davor Vukovic about both his poetry and artworks:

AL: Does your poetry interlink into your artworks or are they two disparate forms of expression?

DV: Poetry is like a tapestry. One thread linking the others in associative and intuitive understanding, and penetrating me into the most profound state of peace.

Poetry is subtler, more introspective. It helps me in the self-healing process and calms me. On the other hand, expression through painting is more prominent. In painting, I have been engaged emotionally, mentally, and physically. It is mostly represented as a catharsis.

When asked to see where his art would be heading to in the future, and whether his techniques and stylistic approaches would change, Vukovic describes his artistic expression to be as spontaneous and transient as his paintings depict landscape to be.

AL: Where do you see your art going in the future? Do you see yourself veering away from your original approach and techniques to painting?

DV: I cannot predict which direction my work is going to develop in the future. As my artistic expression constantly explores the inner and outer world honestly, I do not know where it will take me. But I have confidence that inspiration will lead me in the right way. It is the process of evolution that is important to me.

This fearless sense of experimentation mixed with a belief in intuition is the mark of a true artist. He believes that the journey is more important than the

outcome. It is the transformation he undergoes with each artwork that he looks forward to. Furthermore, Vukovic knows he is a modern example of contemporary Croatian art and he has the innate talent and originality to lead this movement of Croatian art that is emanating through New York.

However, New York has not only been a gift, but also his greatest artistic challenge. His solo exhibition made him feel great responsibility towards both his own legacy and the international public—specifically the Croatian public. Despite the onerous pressures of the art world, Vukovic manages to find inspiration with this new opportunity and creates new ways of expression for his paintings. All of the twenty pieces that he prepared for the Autumn exhibition at the Broadway Gallery had positive feedback both from the Croatian media and the New York media.

When asked about his inspiration for his New York exhibit, Vukovic depicts a scene for us. In his latest cycle of artworks, *Urban Archipelago*, Vukovic recalls the brilliant lights lit all over New York City as he flew over the JFK airport. Jazz, is actually influenced by both the scenery and Mondrian's work—it is dedicated "to a charismatic megalopolis that never sleeps." Vukovic believes his colors reflect the splendor and glory of the colors he sees in nature. He, therefore, cannot imagine his paintings to be in black and white.

AL: You said in a previous interview that colors reflect the state of joy in your being. Would you ever try painting in black and white?

DV: I cannot imagine my paintings in black and white. But if there can be no pronounced colors in my paintings, there must be a colored sea. I am inextricably connected with the sea. Since I was a four-year-old boy, the sea has been an expansion of my soul—my true home. My paintings are dominated by blue and white. Sometimes it is enough to only use



these two colors to show my relationship with the sea.

AL: What do you think you are contributing to today's art world?

DV: Judging by many New York agencies, international galleries, and art critics who evaluate my work as something that, until now, was not seen in modern paintings, I believe that these new pieces are my greatest contribution to contemporary abstract paintings in today's art world.

My artworks are new and energetic paintings. The healing energy that is contained in most of my paintings, is confirmed by the growing number of collectors who invest substantial funds in buying them. Besides the undeniable artistic values, their experiences suggest that after a long and stressful workday, they can completely relax with my paintings.

Secondly, I have a technique that has occurred to me through an error. And it is, I believe, one of the expressions of His grace. It opened a new space for my creativity. I devote a large portion of my time to preparing the canvas for the final painting. The canvas depicts a brush first and then I throw paint on canvas. Finally, using different colors, I find the landscape hidden in the canvas.



Through a technique where he heroically throws paint onto the canvas, he then finds the landscape hidden in the canvas by using different colors. Vukovic discovers a landscape within the painting rather than finding the painting within the landscape. In other words, rather than outlining the landscape in front of him, it is as if Vukovic invents, discovers, and unearths the islands within himself—he converses with his soul.

Vukovic creates irreplaceable modern paintings through the subtle outline of the shape of each landscape and the vibrant colors that express an emotional communication with each of his landscapes. He imbues a kind of joy that celebrates transformation and life not only in his paintings, but also in his poems, which he utilizes to illuminate his own state of mind. Perhaps the reason his paintings move something deeply and intensely in us is because he is laying out his soul onto these paintings for us to see. His state of mind is not of learned expressionism or of objective views, but of lively emotional perspective, which transforms his paintings and poems to reveal the grace and beauty of nature. Vukovic is not only portraying his reflections, memories, and thoughts, but also the essence of life. □

All images courtesy of the artist