

### 1. On the Train, 1977

This is a very strange canvas, I clearly tried to prime it myself, but the holes in it are too big. Otherwise, I am visibly influenced by M.B. At that time I mainly used the train to go home to Gabrovo. There was one at 5-something in the evening, that arrived in Gabrovo around 11 o'clock at night. Six hours of jostling and swaying. Crossing the Balkan Mountains was very tedious, especially in the winter, when beastly heat blasted from beneath the fake-leather seats – dry heat, no less. That must've been when I got the idea for this painting. But it's not a winter scene – the vision in the corridor flaunts a summer dress.

### 2. Waiting for Her, 1978

A lot of waiting around happened on that terrace at Sofia Airport, now Terminal 1. The terrace for meeting and sending off our jet-setting relatives is long gone, but even longer before that my ex-wife and I briefly got married and then divorced a year later. We had been dating since our days at the Math High School in Gabrovo, after that we more or less kept our relationship going during our first year of university in Sofia (she studied Textile Engineering at MEI, I studied Mural Painting at the Art Academy). But after she went to study the same thing in Czechoslovakia, our love flared up because of the distance between us, and so it went for several years. We wrote letters to each other on a regular basis, which all ended with "You know ..." ("... I love you" was the unwritten sequel). I put mine in the mailboxes on the trams. It seems that this sweet service has long since disappeared. Well, here I am on the terrace, obviously it's winter or some inbetween season, it's cold. I'm dressed in a Mongolian Darhan coat (my lovely Bulgarian coat was stolen during the December 8 Students' Holiday celebration in my first year at the Academy); I have a special scarf knitted by my future wife to flutter around and a neat cap bought in Prague on one of my trips to my beloved lassie (who was very sexy, so "lassie" is not a very appropriate term). And a bouquet, of course. And some tricks in the composition of the picture – just look how finely drawn the control tower is. And the sky is pretty gloomy. I could speculate that this comes from socialist oppression, but I won't because it's simply not true.

### 3. The Landlady, 1978

So, once we met at the airport, and after she called her parents in Gabrovo to let them know she had landed, we barricaded ourselves in my room and indulged in sex, naturally. From time to time, Aunt K., the landlady, checked to see what was going on and the only thing that saved us from "Uh, well, I was just..." was a small latch. In the picture the latch has been removed.

### 4. Midday, 1978

But this buoy is not really ok. At the time, I used shit like krapprot or carmine, which I painted this picture with (for many years my palette consisted only of cadmium yellow and red, ultramarine, titanium white and ivory black). I remember thinking the sky here was quite an achievement, being as close as possible to what

I liked to call the "white sky". It happens in the summer and goes along with scorching heat. The character on the paddle boat is supposed to have passed through my head, given the point of view. Which sea is this? Ours, of course. Sunny Beach from back in the days when it was uninhabited. Or it could be from its north side.

### **5. Shooting Gallery, 1979–80**

To be honest, I'm not totally convinced that chronologically this work should be in this place. I have just achieved the "white sky" (which will serve as the basis of the future "silvery peinture" that will make me relatively well-known as the youngest member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists), and there they are again, those bright colors. But I'm sure that when I painted it, I identified with the boy in the dark.

### **6. Jilted, 1980**

After a while, we got divorced. We were couple for seven years, got married (at 21) and divorced in less than a year. She stayed at Czechoslovakia with the man she fell in love with, and I indulged in debauchery in Bulgaria. We saw each other last year, after 33 years, in Slovakia, where she lives. We had a great time at their hotel complex – the two couples embraced. Here it is: (there will be a silhouette drawing on the wall). The stealer-of-other-men's-women, whose guts I had previously hated, turned out to be a great guy. I told him this and we embraced again. Of course, this meeting was no accident and the whole juicy story was included in my work for yet another biennial. After all, I am from Gabrovo, and as notorious cheapskates we believe that nothing should go to waste.

### **7. Swing, 1980**

This tearful little jewel was most certainly painted in the family dorms in Students' Town (as was the previous work). I was basically on my own in the room, for obvious reasons, since my wife was in the Czech Republic and came back maybe twice – the second time it became clear that things weren't going well at all. Apparently I comforted myself with such sentimental compositions (I think there was a lonely wife somewhere on the same floor doing the same thing).

### **8. Village Idiot, 1981**

I already mentioned the "silvery peinture" with which I became relatively well-known. In the beginning, all my silver paintings screamed with color just as "Village Idiot" screams. After a while I made two paintings (note that at last I use the word "painting") with similar titles, and though they, as paintings, were much better than the "almost" one in front of you, at the moment this idiot is somehow more appealing to me.