

From Step to Step

Talking to Judit Horvath Loczi

Judit Jankó

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Judit Horvath Loczi works her own emotions into her abstract art pieces, while her art - as she acknowledges it - is personal. She is the one who smuggles consciousness into her career development. We talked to her about the conscious art brand development, the possibilities to enter the international area, how to match family with work in the Faur Zsofi Gallery before the opening of her exhibition: 27 November 2019.

JJ: You had a busy year in 2019. Am I right to say that you are building your career consciously or simply the constellation of stars was good for you?

JHL: I am trying. There are lots of intuitional elements in it, as well, however, during the years, especially completing the Budapest Art Mentor Program I learnt that I have to give a distant goal to myself and then I have to keep in that target. It helps me making a decision if I look towards half the distance and focus on the next step in front of me, so I can see whether my next step I am to make, is to match with my long distance goals more or less or the next step would divert me. The steps that follow each other drive me to my final goal.

JJ: More and more people say that the central problem is that the Hungarian art scene is isolated from the international art world. How conscious is your outlook towards the international art world?

JHL: I build this part of my career fully intentionally. Some years ago I have started searching for opportunities abroad, that relates to the fact that I attended not traditional art schools, but I learnt a lot from other sources. Deep in my soul I always prepared to become a fine artist. I had good masters, tutors, but I took curves in my road to get here, unlike those who were admitted to the University of Fine Arts right after school. I took a roundabout way towards landscape building. It is difficult to express it in a nice way, to avoid misunderstanding. In Hungary they always ask the following question from an artist, "Did you graduate at the Art School or at the University? Or probably in Pecs? Who were your masters, tutors? ". I attended different arts schools, and looking back - all decisions on schools proved to be an excellent choice – still I had the feeling that I had to justify it. The Hungarian art scenery is very inward-looking, and those who studied not in one of the three accepted schools, may regard themselves outsiders. I had this feeling, despite the fact that I had excellent tutors I always felt like excluded. In response to this, I intentionally searched for international opportunities where not the name of my tutor or the name of the institute is decisive but the art piece that I am handing in for a competition. So I was shortlisted to several places, for example I was selected into a team exhibition project in Milan, in Venice. This is the third occasion this year that I took part in the Summer exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. These were very important feedbacks to me. If I can fit into the list of precious exhibitors in international scenario without background push and connections, then I do not care about that I am not chosen into certain places in Hungary, I do not care about that I am not awarded Derkovits grant. These not necessarily show that I do something wrong. May be these only indicate that I am not member of that circle of artists that graduated and come from the above mentioned three Hungarian schools.

So it was a conscious decision of mine that I turned towards opportunities abroad and one opportunity was followed by another one. In Italy I am on a list of those who are invited for calls and I receive information about exhibitions, I do not need to chase these. This is a very precious source of information that I usually share with friends because I am certain about that it is better for all of us to show out works in international art world. In 2015 first I was shortlisted to the Arte Laguna Prize in Venice, this is an exhibition organized in Arsenal, prior to the Venice Biennale. In 2015 I could get in with a painting of triptych, since then I apply every year with less success. In the same year I could send some of my paintings to Milan, where personally I could not travel to. I have several mixed experiences with applications that I do not mind to have but I will not try again. For example, I could take part in an exhibition in Livorno at the Premio Combat, in an old museum, in a fantastic venue where there was a nice reception. While it was a memorable experience, at the end they did not want to send my works back. At the finissage I had a talk with the organizers that I could not transport my art pieces back with me on the plane, I asked them to mail them back to me by post. I had to beg to them for months to get my works back. But all in all, applications for exhibitions is a good thing and it is worth doing it, I could learn a lot from this and I could build several good professional links.

Once I spent long hours on the net to read about tenders and I searched for exhibition venues, I studied all the conditions thoroughly. I studied the prizes, I studied who the curators are, who the members of the jury are, I looked for them one by one. One can learn a lot about an exhibition if we examine the website itself. A well-designed website shows professionalism. I looked the photos about the previous exhibitions, so that I could figure out whether my art style fits into their profile, so it is worth an application or not.

JJ: This summer You took part in the Summer exhibition of the Royal Academy and if I am well informed, they could sell your works.

JHL: This was the third year that I could get into the exhibition and every year they could sell my art works. But I have to emphasize that they can sell almost everything, my personal experience is that the exhibition venue is fully packed on a weekday morning. Grandparents with grandchildren take a walk and they check the catalogue. It is very encouraging to see that in a society like this there is a need for contemporary art. This is the summer exhibition of the London School of Art and this year they organize the 251th exhibition. It is a typical British phenomenon: whatever happens in the world, the Summer Exhibition is in the calendar, it cannot be cancelled. Anybody can apply, they carefully select among the applicants. The following names are in the catalogue: Antony Gormley, David Hockney. If your works are selected into the exhibition and you have a tax number in Great Britain, you can sell your art works. They make extraordinary figures in selling art. Out of 12 000 art pieces they put 1 000- 1 200 pieces on display. Besides the show they can communicate with all these artists well, they reply to you within 3 days even in the busiest times, and if you need, they do help you. This is a saloon type exhibition, there are lots of art pieces on the walls, but carefully selected and installed with special attention so that each picture does not interfere with the aura of the other ones.

The curators come from the teachers of the Academy and the chief curator - similar to the Venice Biennale – defines the major slogan of the exhibition – the show is organized around this slogan and they invite artists from all over the world to make art that suits this central slogan. They can attract big names to this, for example Baselitz usually appears with a painting there. Beside the chief curator there is a curator dedicated to each exhibition hall, they make their choices what they put on display in their own hall, and what color they paint the walls in that particular exhibition area. Together with

the printed catalogue, they upload all the art works to the online catalogue and art works can be purchased online, too.

JJ: Do you know who purchased your art works?

JHL: Yes, I know. Those who are interested in a particular art work, they have to put down a deposit for it. I will receive an email about the contact details of the interested person, with a long list of his questions about what I need to inform my future buyer. I have to write down the following things like what material the art work is made of, what he need to know about me, who I am, if I will make receipt on the transaction, how do I transport the art piece to the buyer. If the buyer is still interested in the art work, then I make out the receipt, he transfers the price of the art work, and I issue a green card that I had received from the Royal Academy previously. With only this green card the buyer will receive the art piece from the exhibition. My buyer was an English lady, I do not know much about her, but we had a nice correspondence.

Once it happened that someone contacted me that he missed my art work because it had gone by then. He was interested in my website because he wanted to buy something from me. Since then he has purchased several art works from me, he put my art in his office. In the exhibition hall there is a bar counter, you could drink gin and champagne this year while you were walking and looking at the paintings and sculptures. This is how I would imagine the heaven of fine art.

JJ: One of your art works was on the Dobossy Auction. Did it sell there?

JHL: Yes, a Hungarian collector purchased that piece for 1 100 pounds, that was the mean value of the estimated price. He already had purchased several art works previously. Lots of Hungarian gallery owners and collectors went to London and they follow what happened there, what was going on at the event of the courageous young artists where hardly anything left.

JJ: Your individual exhibition will be on in Faur Zsofi Gallery at the end of November. What is the key concept of this exhibition?

JHL: It is titled "Bad Hairs" and the key concept is motherhood and parent life. I make art on these topics for a while and I try to speak about these issues openly. I have been exposed to so many experiences from those that I understood that other mothers do not feel like talking about their problems either, what challenges they face day by day, how difficult it is to bring up a small child and meet the expectation of the society at the same time. Mothers are in a much more difficult situation that previously. Women experience a constant frustration due to the various expectations of various roles they have to play. You should be a good mother, good wife, otherwise your husband leaves you and you will be blamed for it, and you have to fulfill your tasks like the other colleagues of yours in your workplace.

I am in a bit different situation because I am very motivated in my art work, but I would like to give more to my children to be even a better mother, and meanwhile I would like to keep my constantly working mind and thoughts busy, too.

There are difficulties that are not fancy to talk about. We are speaking about certain things even with my girlfriends shyly with concerns. I am always surprised, why it is like that, where this pressure comes from? How easier it would be to speak about these issues openly, honestly. It is an absolutely normal thing that we are not happy in every minute that we are not satisfied with everything all the time. Both physically and mentally it is a great task to bring up two small children. You have to adjust yourself to other people all the time, you do things in a different rhythm of time that is not your rhythm. It is natural from a mother but still it is not easy to live like this.

JJ: What art works do you put on display?

JHL: There will be formed canvas pictures that can be suspended on the wall that deal with these themes. Seldom I can work in the studio and seldom I can go for jogging – for me these two activities mean self-time. Usually I am out of my comfort zone, and it is difficult to live through without frustration. This has to be accepted and this has to be accomplished, but sometimes I have to find my way back to my self otherwise madness comes. I am making an installation about this and I am giving the following title to this: Making order. In German: Ordnung Machen – this compound word burnt in my mind like making order burnt in my daily routine. I clean the table, swipe the floor, put the toys back to the shelves. I am doing these things unconsciously. Like cooking - doing it half asleep, half awake. But whenever I make order around myself, the external order starts influencing order inside myself. This installation will simulate this process. Anybody can enter the gallery, can make order according to his/her system and hopefully it will bring about calmness and in this clean state, one can see my exhibition.

Besides this "Making order" installation and the series of art works titled "Meeting myself" there will be a wall full with my sketches that will give you a chance to see the process how my art works are being made.

I am happy that I could sneak literature into my exhibition, Imola Julianna Szabo composed some prose-poems to some of my art pieces that we will put on display in an exclusive way.

JJ: What will be a colors of this exhibition? I know that it is very important for you.

JHL: It is not by accident, because I am a professional color dynamics engineer. Nowadays strong orange and strong pink always appears in my works, these meeting with white color create a special aura around themselves. There will be two or three paintings that will come with grey and white only symbolizing the real gloomy days. Colors come by instinctive ways I never make a decision in advance. There are lots of periods of time when I cannot work at all, but I make notes all the time, so when finally I can go to my studio, I only open one of my notebooks and that one is full with ideas to be accomplished. I am hearing inspirations from the distant back part of my mind. Many times a very unusual colour matching appears on the canvas that carries special meaning.

Going back to your first question, we have not mentioned the most important thing, namely the Grant of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. First I was reading about it in the monography published by Tamas Szikorra, he said how much this grant helped him, for a year he did not need to work to make the ends meet, instead he could live like an artist. I checked it on the internet, whether this grant is still run and it turned out that Yes, it is still available. The widow of Jackson Pollock: Lee Krasner found out a project that only an artist can offer to another artist and that is a real help. We need to put down a plan what you would like to accomplish with the help of the grant and you have to outline how the grant will enhance your work. You do not need to give a detailed account what you spend the money on, it is up to you, but you have to give a thorough justification how it helps your career. You can spend the grant on medicine to your child, food, and professional things. In my project I wrote that I will rent out a studio, so that I can take it out from the family budget. With this, I have a quite place where I can work and I can make art. So I have a studio that helps a lot for me. This year 111 artists applied for this grant and from Hungary three of us were awarded the Pollock-Krasner Grant: János Saxon Szász, Árpád Forgó and me. I think this is a big thing.

