

Interview: Iris Kren

How would you describe your creative process – do you follow a preconceived plan or let the process affect the result?

I usually start with a rough sketch, which I don't follow step by step. It only points to a feeling I want to capture in a painting. Coincidences and mistakes occur as soon as I start working, and I follow them; they lead my process. I use a technique in which nothing can be erased – whatever arrives on a canvas stays there forever.

How did your fascination with photograms come to be? How do you understand them vis-à-vis paintings – as their starting point or as equivalents?

I consider photograms to be equal to paintings. Yet, no matter what medium is used, each work of art is a starting point for others. In my process, the material and its horizon of possibility are the starting points. I contemplate what I want the piece to show and which medium would best bring that content to the forefront. For example, I deliberately overexposed the photograms, making the reverse process impossible. What is left are empty spaces and tiny particles, just like in painting.

The concept of 'overexposure' is in your artistic practice intertwined with the desire to erase. What has led you to that concept?

In our culture, I strongly sense people's growing need for withdrawal. Overexposure to enormous amounts of information affects all of us, and this is also reflected in art, where I've been observing a more frequent treatment of that topic. My work always stems from personal experience and my perception of the world.

One of the central elements in your work is emptiness – how do you decide how much of the surface to 'leave empty'? Is it merely an artistic/aesthetic decision or something else?

How much space I want to fill and how much to leave empty or unsaid differs with each piece. I persistently strive to find the balance between the known and the unknown. The aesthetic aspect of a painting is very important to me, for I believe that aesthetics and content can coexist in harmony without us having to give up one or the other. One needs to know when the painting is finished. I like to leave each painting to »settle in« as it is, and I only later decide if I want to add anything to it. It becomes difficult to see whether you crossed the line if you're constantly adding something.

You speak of the role of the spectator as a co-creator of the artwork. How does this specifically influence your creative approach?

I believe that every artist interprets this in their own way. In my work, I want to create visual associations that will guide the viewer. These associations must not reveal everything but must provide the viewer with enough for them to continue exploring the piece. No piece of mine is

finished until the viewer adds to it, which is why I leave negative spaces on a canvas that the viewers can populate with their experiences.

What can you say about your future development as a painter – is emptiness still your primary focus, or do you think it will someday transform into fullness?

It's hard to say [laughter]. I am currently very much into that theme, but it is hard to say whether this will ever change. Emptiness is such a broad phenomenon that I can probably explore it throughout my life. As for now, I can say for sure that I am mainly focusing on my research into mediums and developing my painting technique.

The interview was conducted by Hana Kreševič.