

Natalya Bronzova

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Radio Interview Transcript

Part 2 Reflections on painting and writing

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In memory of Van Gogh

2010 Painting by
Natalya Bronzova
Acrylic on canvass
60cm x 80cm

a) PAINTING AND WRITING

Question

When is your favourite time to write or paint?

NB

Usually when I wake up, I usually pray or meditate. I begin to work only after breakfast. Although, when I write an article it will be usually in the evening; when I write a book then it could be all day and I can work 10 to 12 hours. Sometimes, when I am so absorbed, I even forget to eat.

Question

No one to remind you?

NB

Sometimes my husband would arrive from work and scold me for not eating.

Question

So you are really absorbed when you work?

NB

Yes, If something else catches my attention, then my mind cannot focus on the writing and it is difficult to return to the concentration that is needed to write. I wrote seven books so you can imagine the enormous concentration that is needed.

Question

Are you writing now?

NB

Right now I am concentrating on articles; I am thinking about a book project but it is not ready; maybe in two years. But I haven't set up mind to it yet, I need several months to prepare, one month is not enough!

Question

So how many month do you need?

NB

When I wrote my books, each one, including planning, writing and corrections, took from 6 months to one year.

Question

One year?

NB

Yes, one year for one book.

Question

What is your writing schedule?

NB

I usually write a whole chapter then review that before I set myself on the next one. I need to think out the order, review my thoughts. Its almost impossible to explain the details, the chain of thoughts...

Question

So the process its very variable?

NB

Yes...the books follow a certain pattern. Why I do paintings its another question altogether. Painting depends mostly on daylight, of course! When I paint it is only during daylight time.

Question

So you need a well lit studio?

NB

Yes I had a lovely studio in Canada...Here I don't have one, but I paint anyways. I set up a little corner, and work, wherever I can. But definitely, that day when I paint, I don't do anything else, I don't go anywhere and no parties. Like writing, you have to be with yourself, there in the present moment. I even switch off the sound on my phone so I will have total quietness; I don't want to be disturbed.

Question

You need to keep people away?

NB

Yes, because when people want to talk to you, they break your creativity. Even my husband is not at home when I create, he stays at work or if he is at home, he stays away from the room where I work!

Question

Does your husband or family judge your work? How do you know if you are a good painter?

NB

Its not for anyone or even myself to judge whether I am good or not. Only God can judge! And certainly not other people. What is good? Why do some people get a Nobel prize? I don't necessarily like their work. I prefer to read other books, that inspire me.

Question

That's how you get inspiration?

NB

What is the true criteria that defines if you are good or you are not good? Never think that your work is not good; that's the very first thing you should never forget. You forget about judgement, you can be good or not good, you just do, and only God can judge you, not the people!

Question

Can they not critic your work?

NB

People of course can say what they want, but you don't have to be influenced by their opinion.

Question

Because its a question of perception?

NB

Yes, its their opinion, nothing else. It should not influence you. You have your own way, you are guided by God. You do what He told you to do in the best possible way. To other people, He tells differently, then they do their own way.

Question

Do you follow others?

NB

No....I don't follow anyone. I learn from them, I don't follow them. You have to create you self identity... Like in anything, weather you are a businessman, a politician, just a father or mother, you have to create your own identity. You need to create what others don't do, make your life different. I create my own path and thus I am never afraid that anyone could take my place. Its not possible.

Question

No one of course....not even your family?

NB

No one can replace me. When you are on you own it is also a great responsibility. When you don't work for anyone, no great corporation or government, only for yourself it is a big responsibility. It is only between you and God! It is you life... it is not between you and your parents or between you and your husband...no...it is only between you and God.

Question

So then, what is your opinion on what makes a good painter?

NB

When I look at works that makes my soul to vibrate, works that somehow make me feel more beautiful and inspired...you know, this feeling of blessing that brings tears to your eyes. And you know it has happened when you just want to look at it again and again. That is a masterpiece! Although, it might not be necessarily true of all the work of an artist who made that masterpiece. Not all his work will provoke the same feeling. It is the same with writers. One book of a writer might inspire you, but not necessarily all his other works. That's why some pieces are masterpieces but others not.

Question

And if they have world recognition?

NB

No... for me, world recognition is not necessarily a criteria... Yet at the same time it can be, on some occasion. For example, one of my favourite books, a masterpiece book, was written by the Russian writer, Michael Bulgakov. The title is "*Master & Marguerite*". He finished it 1938, ninety year ago and he received the Nobel prize for it. I have read it several times, and each time it feels like a new book. On the other hand other books don't elicit such veneration. Would you read a Harry Potter book over and over again? I am not sure.... these books don't really attract me as literature. My imagination and creativity is much richer than what JK Rolling can imagine for me.

Question

Don't you like other people's imagination?

NB

No, for me its boring

Question

But many people worldwide have read her books, she became very rich.

NB

Yes, perhaps, I'm not saying its not good, many people need these stories.. they like her imagination. But for me its boring

Question

You prefer your own imagination?

NB

My imagination is much more important than any Harry Potter stuff. I agree, she became very rich with her popular imagination, but can her books read over and over again?....I doubt it. That is what criteria is all about. I can't say such books are not good, for her they are definitely good. She started off as a very poor person, she wrote, and her imagination made her life, earned her fame and money. So her books were good for her. Then, they are great and she is much better off than if she hadn't written her books.

b) TRAVEL, CULTURES & ATTITUDES

Question

Why do you travel around the world?

NB

I travel to meet different cultures, different mentalities...different attitudes to life, because I find they vary from place to place. For example Russia is quite different from Canada, America even Europe...Asia is apart and very different; the Philippines is a Christian country, Malaysia is Muslim. The most different from all the others, I feel, is India.

Question
India?

NB

Yes, very different, oh my God. I was there, far away, lost from the world.... I don't know how I survived there. I went deep in the Himalaya Mountains, where no one lived for kilometers around us. I visited the holy caves by myself...

Question
Do you remember the name?

NB

Let me see, yes it was a holy cave for meditation, but I cant remember the name; the closest village that a car could reach was three kilometers from the cave then you had to walk and climb a mountain.

Question
It was away from civilization?

NB

Yes, there was nothing, no phone...but still that is not important. Perhaps that is what I needed at the time. I travelled all around India with friends.

Question
Did you have any other purpose in India?

NB

Yes, we where in India to install a monument to Roerich

Question
So you learned a lot?

NB

Yes, I learned...but India is not a country I would return to, just the same! I returned here many times to Malaysia. I like Malaysia, the Philippines... India is like a different planet; nothing is the same there, it is another world, and absolutely different.

Question
Do you get a better understanding?

NB

You mean, how do we do a better world?

Question
To find peace...

NB

We have to find peace in each of us...despite of religion, of country!

We have to live in peace, create beauty and harmony so that each and every one of us is responsible for our soul, to be good to others...then it might be a perfect world! We should never judge one another, never hate one another...I understand this is an ideal....but we should all tend towards that ideal.

Question

First change yourself...?

NB

Yes, if you want to change the world, first change yourself first.... and I try to follow that. I learned about the world and about different people, because I am interested in people, their different cultures, different food and attitudes. What I learned in Asia, is their respect. In Europe, America...we have something called politeness; but here we have respect. Respect to the common people, respect to the elders... its much more than politeness. That is one of the reason I like to live at the moment.

c) VAN GOGS & EXHIBITIONS

Question

Do you try to send a message in your art?

NB

The message in my art is always about beauty and love. I think it is the artist's responsibility to bring to the world beauty and love. The works must bring vibrations that make you happy; filter through beauty that makes you happy. Horror for example, is negative. Few want to look at it, at least for myself. It is my idea that when you look at art, you should feel better than before you looked at it. Your soul, your heart... your esthetic feelings should please you. Your souls needs to soar and feel more beautiful, more relaxed, in harmony. That's why I love to go to museums, everywhere around the world, the Hermitage in St Petersburg, the Metropolitan in New York, just to enjoy beauty. I go to recharge my soul. In Amsterdam, at the Van Gogh museum for example, they show his dark period, but there is also his light period, which is so very inspiring. You can sit in front of the IRIS painting..... and just cry...!

Question

You are so inspired?

NB

Yes in front of the Van Gogh...they inspire me so much that I can stay there a half hour... I let myself meditate on them.

Question

So, art belongs to society?

NB

Yes... that's why I do my exhibitions. I try to do solo exhibitions, as I did last year in the Philippines at the Cultural Center. It is a very big recognition to be invited at the Cultural

Center of the Philippines. The exhibition was presented by the Russian Embassy and they were very critical of the quality of the art presented.

Question

So they chose the work

NB

Yes, of course. You cannot even replace one for another. For example at the Philippines Congress exhibition, I proposed to them over twenty paintings but still they gave me some latitude in the final selection. But at the CCP, it was very strict and I had to respect their choice. I am very proud of the honor they gave me.

Question

When was this?

NB

It was one year ago in February 2017. It was inaugurated by the Ambassador of Russia, the grand daughter of former Philippines president Cory Quirino and by my friend Jewel Pimentel, wife of Senate President. Director of the CCP at the time was Raul Sunico, also a very good friend. They are all of course, very dear in my memories.

d) ADVICE TO YOUNG ARTISTS

Question

Do you have any advice to other artists?

NB

My advice to any young artist, whether he is a painter or a writer.... actually to anyone who doesn't yet know his or her way in life is first to listen to oneself. Because when you ask God "what should I do in life?"... When you ask Him, he will give you some thoughts! Then you should definitely listen and think at what you are hearing. Then you need to try, to create; no matter what others will think, never be afraid to express yourself, in anything. It doesn't matter if it's on a canvas, in writing, poetry, music, whatever...

Question

Any thing, any media?

NB

Yes, anything... Definitely God will guide you to where you are best. Whatever you feel is better, it is yours. You develop it, learn the skills, you become even better.

Question

So learning is part of the creativity?

NB

Yes of course. For example, in music you need to learn the instrument, learn how to play and compose... You cannot just do it! Painting is just the same.

Question

It is difficult to start!

NB

What most young people are afraid of is to use their creativity, is actually putting something on the canvass or in writing, because they are afraid of judgment; people will see their soul and it is so very difficult to open one's soul.

Question

To get criticism?

NB

Yes... Be ready for that also. Yet, I will tell you, I believe that no one has the right to criticize me. They can do that, of course, but I will simply smile and discard it... That's it! Actually it will not hurt me so much.

Question

You are hard on yourself?

NB

It's just that you need to be stable enough that you will not let it hurt you. Maybe age helps a little. I remember that when I was younger, under thirty, it was difficult for me to hear people's opinions about my work. After a while, you grow to a stage where you are no longer afraid.

Question

So you need to learn how to be stable, not to be affected?

NB

It comes gradually... then suddenly you just get it! Maybe during a first exhibition or a first publication for example, to the public, you are really shocked, you feel scared! Then you just let it go.