

A speech of the art critic Snejana Karlukovska at the opening of the retrospective exhibition of JARAVA at the art exhibition hall of FESTINVEST : 26, "Ivan Assen " street
from 23rd March 1998 till 15 April 13th 1998

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here today to touch and gain energy from the art of an artist ,who is no longer among us, but has left this world unquiet for the place that his works deserve and unrelieved from the time and the experienced collisions.

Dimitar Todorov Dimitrov alias Jarava (in Bulgarian "jarava" means "glowing embers"), which he owes to his fiery temperament, is not a popular name among the art appraisers, he is even hardly known to the specialists. In the "Encyclopaedia of the Arts in Bulgaria"(issued in 1987) as examples for his painting are mentioned the portraits of "Liyana Dimitrova"- 1969, "Lenin"-1970, "Georgi Dimitrov"-1972, "Nikolay Hrelkov"-1974 and certainly is pointed out his merit for the making of the first Bulgarian cartoon films : "It Serves Him Right "(1949), "Wolf and Lamb"(1952), "It's his own fault" (1953) , as well as the first Bulgarian cartoon film in colour "Woodland Republic"(1954).

Alas, the first two films are not preserved in the archive of our cinematography, but it's a good thing that at least "Wooden Republic" can be seen, so that we could make certain with our own senses that it's a reality. For the animation and its father I shall leave the detailed explanation up to other specialists, but here I must underline this undisputed historic contribution for the creation of a new kind of art- a product of the 20th century, which now has such a large application.

But where does this creative, inventive spirit of Dimitar Todorov-Jarava comes from? In order to answer to this question ,we must come back to the student years, when after graduating painting at the Academy of Arts in 1925, he took another specialty- "Decorative art" at the same academy. Here he received a new orientation towards the illustrations for children ,which in those years was at an exclusive level in Bulgaria.

The contribution to the popular child magazines up to 1944- "Firefly" and "Children's world" gave him the chance to express himself, and from here came the idea for the first comics for children, that brought Jarava to the universe of the animation. To it he dedicated almost 2 decades of his life- from the end of the 30s till 1955.

In the literature we always find the year 1948 as the founding of the Bulgarian animation, when the Bulgarian film production was nationalized. But can we believe that only by a state decree, an executive act could be created an art, which had already been created, over which people had been working? And is it possible to produce a cartoon film in just one year's time, if before that there had not been ideas, restless work ...and most of all- talent!

We are now standing before the paintings of Jarava, that he painted from 1956 until the beginning of the 80s. After the animation, the painting takes a leading place and I must admit that this great productivity is amazing. Here are exposed only a small portion of them. Dimitar Todorov Jarava has put all his energy and well-known temperament mostly in his landscape pictures from the whole country. The subject-matters are not new for the Bulgarian art, which back in the 20s discovered the beauties of Tarnovo, Dryanovo, Jeravna, Kotel, Sozopol, Teteven, etc. In the 50s , though, those portraits were estimated as retrograde, " an escape from reality" and were not appealing to the official critics. If we take a look from today's point of view, the Jarava's pictures are quite expressive, rather conditional; the work of the putty knife and the brush is too individual and powerful to come to terms with the Bulgarian art of the socialistic realism of the 50s.

Jarava is not an innovator in the art of painting; he rather continues the classical line of the

development of the Bulgarian expressive in its influence realism of the 30s, in which worked famous artists like N.Tanev, Boris Denev, D. Dechev, Ivan Hristov. What makes him different from them is the restless and dense dramatic effect of some of his works, that are emphasized with an expressive way of painting, with sharp counteracting of the colours. Without destroying the vivid natural forms, Jarava magnificently works with the expressiveness of the colours, their narration, which also gives a fairy-like appearance of the paintings. These pictures also give out something from the character of their master- this is his consistency and honesty, which are in the basis of the consistency of the style over the years.

With this small exhibition we have coming back to us an honorable master and hopefully we will be worthy the lessons and the values of his art.

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Snejana Karlukovska