

### ***Safet Zec and Srebrenica: How to express through art something unspeakable?***

„I regard as kitsch any representation of the Holocaust that is incapable of understanding or unwilling to understand the organic connection between our own deformed mode of life (whether in the private sphere or on the level of “civilization” as such) and the very possibility of the Holocaust.”

(Imre Kertész, *Who Owns Auschwitz?* 2001).

How to paint the face of one cosmic tragedy? How to paint the face of Srebrenica in July 1995? How to paint more than eight thousand lost souls? How to express through art something unspeakable?

Only humans have faces, and every face carries its own expression. Large faces of pain and agony of Safet Zec are calling to meet the experience of individuality found in every human suffering. It is an encounter which seeks for closeness and immediacy - it is an encounter in which act of observation begins to exist as the act of complete consecration and asceticism. Standing in front of these paintings, we are invited to go into seclusion of which Hannah Arendt wrote about in her reflections on Evil, where an encounter - with - oneself occurs. An encounter in which individual ceases to exist as a man of crowd whose emotions are able to be synchronize, an encounter which points out that *“morality concerns individual in its singularity”* and when after experiencing cosmic evil such as Srebrenica genocide, *“the answer to the question of what I should do, in the final instance depends on my own decision”*. Yet, in the absolute encounter with oneself, in the infinity of solitude, where the absolute beginning was being born, begins an honorable life, decision is made. In questions of these periphery situations, the art itself is faced with the decision on its meaning and possibilities of its impact, *because we should know that the responsibilities of the writers should be measured in terms of their attitude towards Srebrenica, the sieges and destructions of the cities, bridges, and towards bombarding the refuges columns...* (Igor Štikš, 2005).

Safet Zec canvas paintings are created in reverence for Srebrenica tragedy, collected in four large cycles - *Faces, Bread of Mercy, Exodus, Embraces* - on which he has worked for the last twenty years, inscribing in them his enormous knowledge, so far achieving the strongest artistic expressiveness and manuscript.

Twisted hands of a mother, covering her lips with the brim of headscarf, trying to restrain a painful scream, tired intertwined hands carrying drooped bodies of the wounded ones and frail body of a refugee child, a painfully bent head with hands to support, dumb in front of the face of an evil, pleading hands crying out for a help, weaken hands lying beside lifeless body are making the relief of human's suffering. In front of the grieving faces and embraces of the hands, life and death joins together, in the brutal reality that took place in the summer of 1995, in the lyrical landscapes of Srebrenica, where Safet Zec opens the central questions of human existence; he dissolves his artistic and ethical credo.

Confronting someone's other face in all his agony and suffering, experiencing the same feeling as it was part of your own existence, Zec goes beyond intellectual shallowness of our time in which prevails the belief that: *“the art is expressing the personality in which (only) myself as the artist really matters”* (Karl Popper). Safet Zec great canvas paintings depicting

the evil that occurred in July 1995, in Srebrenica, 25 years later acquiring its immensity, at the site of execution in a big dark sheds of the former Battery Factory in Potočari, nearby the Memorial Centre, where thousands of innocent souls dreading with anxiety waiting for their destiny to come.

Safet Zec's large canvas paintings provide *”a response to the sarcasm of contemporary art, which has completely forgotten its sense of duty, but also its powers”* (Jean Clair, *Responsibility of an artist*, 1997).

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