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Interview with Vlado Franjevic, an all around fine artist

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Brigitte Schweiger and Vlado Franjevic

Vlado Franjevic was shortly interviewed by Miss Edie Okamoto
<http://de.rivoda.net/organization-management.asp>
 and he is very, very much thankful about!

Edie Okamoto :
 What do you call your style of painting?

Vlado Franjevic:
 I'm not really sure that we can talk about any clear style of my painting! Why? Because I push all of my feelings and creative energy out directly from my belly! It means, sometimes I paint more figurative and sometimes totally, or fragmentally, abstract, with strong and expressive colours. Fire, power and warmth from my deepest, come out! Anyway, all time I'm sincere to myself and just so I can be also sincere to the colourful world around. I know, with this, I'm a fair player: to everybody who has something to do with my art works! I paint in short series from maybe three to fifteen paintings, then I change „my style“ but after some time I come back again and follow subconsciously something „from before“! Of course, in one moment a saw the problem – if I want take the position on the art marketplace, so that my painting style will be recognizable, this „style without the style“ can be problematical. And, don't forget: I finished the school as a painter but, I'm not just this! I'm a hard, fine art and experimental, creative worker, who use different art techniques and develop also complex work in progress projects. I know, already many of us said: I'm different... and, everybody has right! So I don't know if I can say also the same, without the losing of my originality! (smile) And on the end, I remember, **Al' Leu**, an art and literature critic from Zurich said once, he doesn't see any problem about the style of my painting, he does see just a clear „red thread“ in all what I, as a very creative and talented person, do! Here his quotation: „Vlado Franjevic is a remarkable artist personality who had not only a large artistic potential, separate he is also particularly suitable as a cultural mediator.“ It's a good feeling to hear/read something like this from people as **Al' Leu** is!

Edie Okamoto:
 When did you first get started - when did you realize you would become an artist someday.

Vlado Franjevic:
 First I started to draw comics when I was in the primary school. As a boy I loved to go in the school! I did show always my „works“ to my grand mother with who I grew up. She and her „critic“ were very important to me! Because she finished no more then four years school, she thought, she can't understand this my „strange“ necessary to draw and paint! (smile) But she was always careful and took her time to see what I made as a child and after that she said maybe: „You know, I'm an old woman, I don't understand this. But, this is somehow nice, colourful!“ That was very at this time, very important for me. I know many, many other „more educated“ people who would say at the same time: „Please go away, I've no interest for this!“ In the secondary school I did show my portray collection of famous people. Some of my teachers were impressed!
 A long time in my life I was very confused and didn't know what I want, who I am and where I'd like to go! After finishing of the school for applied art in Zagreb in 1985 I didn't feel that I have to live my own as an artist. At this time, it should be more „normal“ to start to believe I was born to be a loser!

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It wasn't really a good time: I came from a small village to study in a big town where I did feel the most time lost and lonely. Somehow, the most time in my life I was or am lonely. That was not always bad. I did feel often a stranger under my own skin, in our family, in my birthplace, in the capitol of the republic of Croatia where I did study... It must not be always a problem to be a stranger or „stranger“, and feel lonely! One can better talk like this when one is that not anymore! I think today, some kind of my ingenuosness but also believe in good and hope, and my dream at this time, helped me to make a big step! To go in an unknown world and culture! And try to grow up from the point zero! I was 25 years old when I moved out from former Yugoslavia, socialistic republic Croatia. Today I can smile about – there were just two possibilities: a) fall down (no problem, nothing new, I was "ready" for this); b) find my own way, live myself (much better solution – for me, and everybody who loved me, and who I learned to love. I was also ready for this)! I staid once so, it was I think 1988, in the centre of Zagreb, with my hands in my empty pockets and asked myself what I really want to do?! God blessed me, I remembered, my mother lived at this time in St. Gallen, Switzerland. I said to myself: „That's maybe not bad solution! I'll not be there alone, for the beginning, I'll not must sleep under the bridges and on the benches in the parks in the time when I don't speak theirs languages!“ Terrible! I didn't speak any foreign language! It means, I had to learn fast! So fast as possible. No problem, I did it! As a German spoken author, a poet, I got already a prize for my poetry! It's one of many signs that I worked on myself very hard. In the year 1991 I got a possibility to exhibit in a small gallery in St. Gallen. That was maybe no just because my art was good enough in this moment. The most interesting was I think that I came from former Yugoslavia! There was starting war! That was important for story around my art working! After opening of my first exhibition I read in a local Swiss newspaper about this exhibition and about my person. When I read this, I knew: nobody can stop me anymore! One year later I exhibited on a big art fair in Geneva where I met a Croatian fine artist Boris Krunic from Eze-Village in south French; it's about seven kilometres from the Principality of Monaco. He helped me friendly to exhibit one year later in the Galerie de la Cathedrale. That's in the middle point of centre of Monaco-Ville. At this time was for me a totally crazy feeling to come to Monaco and see in the windows of every store there a poster with my name and painting! A great, great feeling which gave me much creative power! I came in a foreign world as a child with its big open eyes. I was just as always very open and communicative and sometimes also naïve. Something like this can be also danger in a strange world! But, I had lucky. It's look like, I worked all time spontaneously also on my luck. The life is a wonderful learning process. Am happy and thankful to get the chance to learn! I'm happy also to know, I must do anything anymore to show the world that I'm also here! I know where I started my way, and in which situation and form, and I know and understand more and more what I made till now. That's just really great! Still I don't think I'm an artist... I'm a communicator who has much more possibilities to communicate with the world then the most people!

Eddie Okamoto:
Who was your initial inspiration?

Vlado Franjevic:
My inspiration was first small, simple people like maybe my grand mother. My inspiration was later searching for new definition of friends, home, homeland, my own identity and understanding of micro and macro world with all its beauties and problems... Later, with the possibilities to travail and come to direct contact to other culture, that was also very important. Like also my deepest inner necessary to close people together, make connections and networks; work on better understanding between the people.

Eddie Okamoto:
Who are the major influences - I see a little Picasso and a little Miro in your style yet it is unique - who are your favourite painters

Vlado Franjevic:
I don't see influences. I had "not much interest" for what happened before. I live today, understand better this now and here and look better for tomorrow! I love some great painters like Kandinski, Klee, Miro, Picasso, Chagall, van Gogh, Baselitz, A.R. Penk, Immendorff of course... But, I stay never in front of the most famous paintings, painted by most famous painters and think I don't know what... I'm very, very sorry! I'm just wondering sometimes how closed I am to some paintings, some style of painting by other colleagues. I'm happy that I staying in front this wonderful works get the chance to understand theirs world and that we feel similar. My belly says me always what is good or what's maybe not so good. Good for me. Good for me isn't good enough for somebody else...

Eddie Okamoto:
What is your medium - oil, acrylics, watercolour, etc.

Vlado Franjevic:
First I draw very much and with the time I paint with oil, aqua oil but most with acrylic. At last time I made some small sized watercolour illustrative works. I made also wall objects using different materials like wooden plate, cardboard, cords, nails, silicon then I drew up on it funny stories about collecting of public hairs from different people. I made also a few plastic works and installations, I made a wonderful video experiment where 29 persons talk in 32 languages one of my poems in my video camera and also a video documentation about the staying and working in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. I develop very complex work in progress projects based on a digging up of a spiral channel in the ground. To projects like this I invite my friends, colleagues and other correspondents. They are asked to send me theirs contributions to one theme. After that I involve these contributions in my project and present them to the public. And close people together, make new networks; bring different inputs and energies to only one common point of interest. The places where the spiral channels are dig up are for a moment some kind of ritual places of exchanges of different spirits and energies.

Eddie Okamoto:
What moves you – you seem to paint about relationships... how do you come up with new paintings what is the process you go through

Vlado Franjevic:
As I said, the human being with its all, daily problem is for me very interesting. Its relationship to other human beings and nature as well. Its sexuality and nudity is also very



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interesting. Dreams about the good or better, more colourful world are also very important for me. I'm not sure that I always know what should be a better world but I search for this! Concrete, at the moment I paint for my next exhibition in Frankfurt a.M. in Germany. The opening of this exhibition has to be on the beginning of October this year. I collect also the contribution for my spiral channel project "Magic of Water". In September I'll dig up my next channel here in the Principality of Liechtenstein. I prepared also my art work for the participation on 3rd International Art Biennale in Beijing this summer. On 4th July I've to fly to its opening.

Edie Okamoto:

Where are you from originally
How as it growing up - tell stories about your childhood and your grandparents.

Vlado Franjevic:

I was born 1963 in a small village in Croatia. That's about 70 km near to Zagreb, its capitol. My mother was divorced as I was a baby. She leaved me to her parents and was going to work first in Zagreb and later short to Germany and on the end to Switzerland where she staid 20 years. Last 10 years she lives together with her mother in her and my birthplace. The birthplace of my grand mother is next village called Bojana. There were also born my two best friends and famous Croatian fine artists, painters Anton Cetin who lives in Toronto, Canada and Franjo Matesin, who love his village very, very much, stay and work there, lead a gallery and exhibit the fine art of other artists!
About my childhood: I grew up with my grandparents in a small house with just two rooms. In one room was the earth ground. We didn't have bathroom in the house and rest room was outside.

I was just only one red haired child in our small village with approximately 100 houses. In all neighbours vilages together were also not more then just one or two red haired person. That was already a sign that "we are not normal"! As a child I was frustrated about this and later I understood, I was signed from God personally. He wanted show from the beginning to all other people - I'm different! And, he wanted look how strong I'm when other laugh about me.

First four classes I finished in the primary school in our village and was all time the best pupil and got every year a prize from the school - a book! I promised Tito, I'll be a good pioneer and work hard! Because we were poor, I had to be the best in the school, to be one of the best soccer or ping pong player, the most kind child in village and then, after all this, I was accepted by other children or people. But ok, I was talented for many different things and could do this everything. This method, which wasn't always easy for me and for which I needed very much energy, helped me on my way later! Never give up! Often near to abyss but impossible fall down! My grand mother was for sure the most important person in my life. She tried to learn me about the good, about believe, love, peace, ethic, moral. Every Sunday she was going into the church St. Martin in our village called Martinac and prayed for her husband and me, for her two daughters and all other people. I think sometime, she invested all of her positive energy in me. She told me once: I was just only one child in the vilage who never walked near to one people without to say: "Hello, have a good day!" A lot of people are wondering and asked me who my parents are! I couldn't explain them who my parents are but I said who my grand mother is! My mother was also a very important person of course. She sent us money from a far world and without her help, we couldn't live and I wouldn't finish school. But, I'm not close to her. These are "terrible pictures": My mother came once or twice in the year from somewhere and I run first to "say hello" to her bags and look what's in!

I remember also, many times my grand mother was going out from her worm bed in the night and she said to her husband, she can't hear him anymore and goes to kill her. That was this nights when he came drunk from somewhere, couldn't sleep and told bad about her. That was very painful and also now when I write about, I cry. She said, she would really do this but couldn't leave me alone!

I wasn't so closed to my grand father but today I remember often his clever meaning and stories about the normal life and world politici! Incredible how much he knew about the function of a human being, about its bad site, about inhumanity. Now I know, he had a wonderful instinct which can have just people totally closed to earth, nature and theirs fruitful fields. And now I know that I got also from him good and positive messages. We couldn't maybe best understand each other but he said me many stories from his life. Nice and sad stories in same time, truth stories. I was for example very impressed about his stories about the Second World War. He wasn't in any army because as a boy he had a big accident - a pig bit him for his left leg and after that it grew up and developed more slowly then other, health leg. He told me about, how the partisans run behind him and wanted kill him. And also others wanted kill him... These are many, many nice and sad stories and pictures from my childhood. Many of them are to find in my art works and also many in my poems. This is what I can give back - never give chance that this people and the good in them will be forgotten. I'm only one who can talk and let you know about.

Edie Okamoto:

What do you want to tell young inspiring artists - what is your message

Vlado Franjevic:

My message is: you have to know first who you are and where do you want to go. It would be good if you have a vision what you want to do with your talent and it's important to learn, learn and learn and be open for discussions and critics. You have to know: what doesn't break you down makes you strong. Please believe me; I know what about I talk to you here! All other stories can be interesting and helpful but just own experiences are one and only! Go out, see this wonderful world, meet this wonderful colourful people, have no afraid and produce positive energy so much you can! It can't be lost. Energy rich you back. It's same if you sent out from you good or bad energy. It riches you back. Why not work on it and send out of you more positive energy? Every of us is our own master. We can try but I don't believe that I can't do something like this for you and you can't do this for me. Every of us must work on self! I worked on my luck and so I had luck to meet the people who I call "the walking encyclopaedias". You can meet them also. You'll see, in their near is worm and beautiful.

Edie Okamoto:

What are your future plans.

Vlado Franjevic:

In my private, I want stay always near to my children to let them feel how much they are important for me and that I carry about them.

In my professional, I think big! I prepared all to make a next step in this direction. To rich a "higher level"! I've a lot of written material what I want publish, I have many ideas which I want realize and for these I need some kind of promotional "machinery"! I would love develop my spiral channel work in progress project which I started 2004 in Estonia and 2005 forwarded in Serbia and in this year make again in Bosnia and Herzegowina and Liechtenstein. My idea is work every time in other geopolitical space, country - with different humanitarian, social, artistic, ecological themes which are at this time important for these countries! In this project I involve many people from around and in every country where I work...

I'm on the end of this interview very much thankful for the opportunity to tell you my story!

VLADO FRANJEVIC - CURRICULUM VITAE

Vlado was born in the village of Martinac near Cazma in Croatia. He is living and working in the Principality of Liechtenstein since 1993. Vlado graduated from the School for Applied Art in Zagreb as Artist-Painter. In the beginning of his career he utilised basic techniques such as drawing or painting. During the time he developed his art in an experimental way. Using new techniques, like wall objects, plastic art conceptual work in progress projects and video. Vlado can also be considered as a creative sociologist. A vision, to which his conceptual work in the Internet and Land-Art, will lead us. One of the main objectives for this artist is international and intercultural communication, by living and enforcing cultural connections.

VLADO FRANJEVIC - MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES

One man show

2008, FL-Ruggell, Kueffer Martis Huus, Magie des Wassers
 2007, HR-Bojana, Galerija MATEŠIN
 2004, FL-Triesen, Atelier 11: „Werkjahrpräsentation“
 2001, FL-Vaduz, Galerie Artestade;
 2001, HR-Bjelovar, Museum of the City Bjelovar
 1998, CH-Chur, Galerie Planaterra
 1993, Monaco, Galerie de la Cathedrale
 1991, CH-St.Gallen, Macelleria d'Arte

Group show

2008, CN-Beijing, 3rd International Art Biennale
 2008, CN-Beijing, Olympia Fine Arts 2008
 2008, FL-Vaduz, Kunstraum, "Labor 2008"
 2007, KG-Bishkek, City of Artists, "Transit South Pole"
 2007, CH-St. Gallen, Galerie Werkart, „5 Positionen“
 2003, Serbia-Nis, Gallery for contemporary Art, „International mini Print“
 2003, BG-Sofia, Lessedra in National Culture Palast „World mini Print“
 2003, FL-Vaduz 2nd part of Culture Exchange Liechtenstein - Indonesia
 2002, Yogyakarta, Taman Budaya, 1st part of Culture Exchange Liechtenstein - Indonesia
 2001, F-Nizza, Point K Gallery
 2000, CH-Altstätten, „Idee:Scholle“
 1997, HR - Zagreb, MGC Klovicevi dvori: "Croatian Horizons"

Art Symposiums

2008, BiH, Bihac, Summer Artist Colony
 2006, Jordan, Amman, ASU, 1st International Design Symposium
 2005, Serbia, Trsic, International Summer Academy
 2004, EST-Mooste, MOKS Postsovkhoz 4
 2004, HR-Medulin, International painting Symposium

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