

Arūnas Rutkus is one of those rare artists who sensing the rhythm of globalization, join the global art stage with great confidence. The artist has exposed his works in personal and group exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad, and his paintings can be found in museums, galleries and private collections all over the world. In the West, the artist is distinguished for his unique painting style, characteristic for so called *Eastern school* – figurative poetic symbolism and impeccable implementation technique. Inspired by the philosophy of European and Eastern countries, the mastery of Renaissance artists, he demonstrates the deep sense of his roots and the influence of M. K. Čiurlionis's creativity model. In order to understand the whole of A. Rutkus expression better, one must note that the artist is also known as a film director who tried himself in short film and music video genres.

A. Rutkus was born (1961) and grew up in Vilnius, Lithuania. From childhood attracted to the fine arts, in 1980 - 1985 he studies mosaic, stained glass and fresco at Vilnius Art Academy. Later he devotes the biggest part of art for his core passion – painting. Trying himself in expressive abstraction, the artist chooses bright colors and futuristic forms. During this period red, blue tones dominate, imitable materials are decoratively extracted, lines and plasticity of sculptural form prevail. Influenced by the personal changes, he leaves indeterminable abstract spaces and remembers the classics of a portrait. A new creative stage is born.

Since 2003, the artist starts and comes to the middle of figurative *Woman's* portrait series that consists of over seventy compositions. Well-known paintings, such as "Two Butterflies", "Paradise Bird", "Evening Walk", "Silent Waters", perhaps best reflect the artist's long way of quests. The general style slowly stabilizes, characterized by dominant coloring, performance and themes.

The works of the series perfect and model up the artist's touch. Excellently controlling the space of the canvas and oil painting, he is playing with the texture of material, creates, recreates and repeats the original color palette. Warm earth colors become predominant, and they develop to copper and golden shades in the most delicate ways in order to witness the creative fulfillment. Sensitively occurring bluish contrasts, sort of few words spoken, deepen the harmony of colors and shapes even more. It's easy to notice A. Rutkus's attention to detail, lines and ornamentation finish. Of this whole the artist constructs and "weaves" a woman's head and body coverings, identical with the high fashion standards. Dresses of the ladies painted by the artist highlight their lines and give them an exceptional value and charm. All this performance is crowned by the design of a wedding dress. Realism dynamics of lace, fabric pleats, jewelry, body art, decorations, decor elements unconsciously induce the senses of touch. This is not only an artist but also a goldsmith. Using his handmade golden frames the artist decisively sets limits between the viewer's "here and now" and multidimensional space of the painting, where symbols and poetry communicate with us by different reckonings.

From the large and monumental paintings graceful figures of women's silhouettes line up - the main plot of the artist. As if today's photographer, who wants to capture the moment of a meeting, or a Renaissance portraitist, who understands the essence of a perfect beauty, he paints a close-up woman and a woman moving away. It's easy to perceive that this central figure of the compositions is the main object of the artist's thoughts, radiating an aura of romance and spirituality. The woman seems so important to the artist that remembering Rubens, you want to call them *Rutkus's women*. There are no names, and as A. Rutkus says, "there is no single woman;

they are women from the world of my dreams and visions". They are beautiful, adorned and fragile as if they're hiding behind a screen; they are beautiful like Sunday morning. The veil, the headgears hiding the faces of the women leave an ambiguous impression and lingering silence does not allow access to the woman's intimate world, but witnesses its existence. The faces behind the masks hint about a possible illusion of a moment. Inspired by the absolute harmony of nature the artist creates the unity of his own world. Skillfully rendered play of light and shadow together with female creatures take us into the mystical spaces where the imagination limits are not identified: to the African prairies, wild homeland meadow, the Venetian carnival or a private salon. Different decors of the paintings tell a different story of a meeting.

Unexpectedly, this *rendez-vous* becomes an intimate moment filled with tenderness and mystery. The spaces of the paintings easily "crystallize", according G. Deleuze, and the time journey gets its meaning. Is the woman still the same and yet different, a symbol of the female origin, and the artist in front of her is just a man trying to guess the code of a feminine nature?

Let it be the paintings that will help solve this riddle.