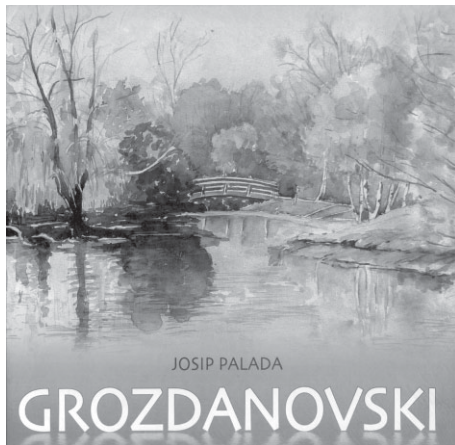


BOOK REVIEW



**GROZDANOVSKI – STONE AND WATER
(GROZDANOVSKI – KAMEN I VODA),**
by Josip Palada, editor. Zagreb, 2006, 136 pages
ISBN 978-953-95655-0-1

The layout of the conveniently designed and decently formatted book on Nikola Grozdanovski nicknamed Kole, a painter, has been done by Ivan Rožmarić. It is the painter's monograph edited by Josip Palada, who has also provided the introductory word. The book is entitled *Kamen i voda* (Stone and Water).

The painter's brief *curriculum vitae* as an introduction to the book shows that Nikola Grozdanovski is an amateur painter, being a physician by his primary occupation. The more so, in the chapter entitled Dual Life, Josip Palada emphasizes coequality of both occupations, inventively comparing them with *đvanjkuš*e, a natural gift of two coupled fruits. The chapter Watercolors, Sketches, Oil Painting introduces the reader into Nikola Grozdanovski's painting, appropriately preceded by a photograph of easel with empty canvas, thus symbolically suggesting the easel character of Kole's work.

Nikola Grozdanovski has been painting since his young age, as shown by a photograph from 1951. Unfortunately, the monograph contains only a few prints of his early phase works, quite an exception rather than the rule. Those early

works have probably been lost or unavailable to the author, or maybe scattered all over the world through exhibitions and donation, like many other works. However, the watercolors *Visitors (Vizitarke)* from 1966 or *Brothel (Bordel)* from 1976 are crucial to comprehend the painting of Nikola Grozdanovski and for its correct validation. Both paintings, like some others (graces and nudes) reveal the painter's research strivings and drawing skill of supernatural effect. This book does not disclose the extent to which these drawings are an exception and to what a systematic part of his opus.

Yet, it should be noted that Nikola Grozdanovski is not a self-taught painter. In 1957, in his young age, he attended private painting school led by Rista Lozanovski in Skopje. Palada mentions several early cycles on the topic of World War II and disastrous earthquake in Skopje in 1963, however, these works are not presented. When he moved to Hrvatsko Zagorje to work there as a physician, the course and motifs of Grozdanovski's work have changed. Palada mentions the 1964-1966 period when the cycles *Tears for Zagorje Hills (Suze za zagorske brege)* and *Lyrical Intermezzo (Lirski intermezzo)*, which have determined the painting of Nikola Grozdanovski as intimate and lyrical, were created.

This monograph does not deal with the overall Kole's opus but with paintings mostly created during the past decade, thus losing somewhat in presenting the intriguing, highly sensitive and less known artistic personality of Nikola Grozdanovski but gaining in providing an integral, specific atmosphere realized primarily through watercolors. Most of these works, as Palada says, are an ode to the beauty of Nature, and some are by topics related to still life, nudes and city sights. Watercolors predominate; however, there are some oil paintings and drawings. The female nudes from a recent period reveal the painter's occasional interest in the creative interplay of the form research and study persisting today when he has acquired the title of watercolor master, a landscape poet, i.e. when he has established himself by another type of creativity.

In the chapter entitled Occasional Notes on the Painter and Painting (*Prigodnice o slikaru i slikarstvu*), all authors agree that Nikola Grozdanovski is an unrivaled watercolorist. The more so, “even when employing other techniques, oil or pen-and-ink, he uses them in a watercolorist manner”, says Zdenko Balog (Trakošćan, December 19, 1992). All authors agree that Grozdanovski is highly sensitive in observing and presenting nature and its subtle changes, while being an intimist because everything he paints he does it with full emotion, painting what surrounds him at the given moment. Many have named him a poet of atmosphere and poet of watercolor, whereas Duško Lončar compares his watercolors with Tadijanović’s poems. In the same review (Novska, April 10, 2003), Lončar explains this magic association of watercolors and landscapes citing Matoš who identified Croatian (or any other) national feeling not only with the past the people are bound to but also with the landscape that is almost identical to the nationality.

Writing on several occasions about Kole’s watercolors, Dragutin Kiš, a watercolorist himself, has stated that irrespective of the longstanding past of watercolors (since the very beginning of the civilization) to the present, it is just Grozdanovski “... who confirms that the »i’s« have not yet been made... Our Macedonian Croat and Croatian Macedonian acts dually through his gradually developing watercolor style: he continues the tradition of Macedonian watercolorists (Dimitri Pandilov, Simončeski, Ivanovski, Belogaski) while approaching the Croatian watercolor miracle in the work of Slava Raškaj”, etc.

This book provides witness of the role and significance of Nikola Grozdanovski as a founder and member of Group 69 as well as of his independent work over years. In his inspired text entitled A Painter of Complex Poet-

ics from 1987, Ljubomir Radovančević writes: “What is it that Grozdanovski does to us – or rather – what do we do to ourselves while watching his work? To start from myself, hoping I share the emotions, the opinion and the concepts with the others because »no man is an isle«. Immersed as a part into the mankind through collective consciousness and subconsciousness, now and here I give way willingly to admiration and enjoyment, I let the colors influence me like the pattern on my beloved woman’s summer dress, like instigators of archaic images of primordial confidentiality between man and nature, between archetypal environmental scenery such as ‘green, I love you, green’, the scenes of Eden, and pastoral calmness of autumn groves, spring lakes, meadows in blossom... These scenes will only gain in importance with daily deterioration of ecologic devastation of our only planet of Earth”.

Among others, this monograph witnesses that the painting of Nikola Grozdanovski, somewhere between the coloristic, light and other efficient illusions realized by his serious approach to the motif, is a precious contribution to ethnographic documentation (on wooden cottages and huts that disappear daily), and to architectural and zoning documentation (on urban picturesque sights that are being lost due to new construction and different engineering). This monograph is a specific recent painting diary because such are motifs of the author’s interest and time, motifs that are changing on a daily basis, just as he has modified the inner light in the white of the paper (or canvas) by his brush and paints, by his skillful hand and penetrating observation of his eye and heart; this is Nikola Grozdanovski nicknamed Kole, the painter, also said to be an excellent physician.

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