

The following text was written in response to a series of weekly dialogues between Yana Dimitrova and curator and art historian Dr. Isolde Vanhee during the past two years.

Between Four Mountains

“Some people dream of climbing high mountains. At the top of the mountain, they imagine themselves to be king of the world, with their head between the clouds, for a while anyway. I sometimes long for the mountains too, not to conquer them, but just to be with them. I remember the silence and the sense of isolation, being away from the noise of the world. As a painter, you look for that kind of aloneness in your studio, you try to order your emotions and thoughts in the paint, try to find the right form. For a long time that was enough. Where I painted I was at home, whether in Bulgaria or in the United States. I drew strength from painting. I had the feeling that I could let my voice be heard, my experiences and memories resonating in the lines and forms. Today, that is no longer enough. Not for me. Can my paintings give strength to other people, I often wonder.

*My landscapes and portraits are ways to (re)connect with that place between the four mountains where I grew up, but also the neighbourhood in Brooklyn where I live now, or this Manhattan gallery where my works now stand. In his book *Sculpting in Time* (1984), The Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky wrote that “the artist is always the servant, and is perpetually trying to pay for the gift that has been given to him as if by a miracle.” Could that be true?*

Through my paintings, I want to reach out to the people that are close to me: to my family, to friends and fellow-artists, to the people who live in the houses around me, or even to the people who enter this gallery. I hope to stay true to what Angela Davis once noted, that there is a need for building parallels between histories, in order to build strength and further alliances. I dream of my paintings becoming active forces in conversations and movements between people, making them resilient, by taking their story into account. For me, these are mostly stories of suffering and lots of love. Like the image of my neighbour who holds her family dear, I try to include a fragment of their tale and the emotional charge of our conversation in my painting, as a gift to myself and I hope to them.

Hovering between the rooms that make up this gallery, I move between different remembered, physical and imaginary places, taking in the stories of the people who once lived there or who are there still. I remember our talks, I try to see their faces, I imagine that I can touch them, between these four walls, with a view of the mountains.”

~ Yana Dimitrova