

At a first glance Maxim Liulca's paintings could have the appearance of Romanian traditional rugs. The nice colorful geometrics catch the eye and it becomes of utmost importance for the viewer to decipher them.

But what lies under this strong initial feeling? Is it a deep respect for the ancestors' beliefs and for the weaver's meticulous toil, is it humbleness towards ancestral faith and the national main thread?

The viewer is left prey to such reveries not for long: in the same thorough chromatic scale, wide monochromatic areas annihilate (deny?) the colors: white, black, toneless and quiet grays are quick to bring about subtle inquietude.

A heavy, wet light, apparently filtered by the leaden clouds, materiality, the smell of primer paint and iron, ancient objects put apart to be preserved, cardboard dryness, all these things come to create the illusion of a postindustrial apocalyptic universe of decomposing hardware.

Sometimes the motifs (already nearly folkloric) create images of almost sordid interiors whose details are cancelled by vibrant touch lines. Color images are dissolved in sepia snapshots having a cinema effect similar to that in the opening scene of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*: the contrast between the shabby room and the jumble of objects huddled together where only someone familiar with the house, initiated into this space, can move at ease. But it all happens under the force of an exterior presence.

And then someone (an authority, maybe) draws a line, sets the limits of a zone – life goes up to here, so this is familiar ground, and from here on there is mystery, so it is forbidden. Accidentally or not, Maxim Liulca (born in Tighina in 1987) comes from such an area. Because what else is Transnistria for our collective imaginary? A forbidden zone, an informational chasm out of which one can hear the echoes of words/notions lacking the force of (precise) incarnation: (who can explain to me how the Fourteenth Army looks like, Igor Smirnov...)

In this context, with the dexterity of a stalker, Maxim Liulca shares the canvas in vivid areas where a chromatic geometry identifies motifs that are no longer that traditional. Of course it's the same wall rug from Oltenia, the domestic symbol, it's the old carpet set under the horse carriage for the afternoon nap, but this becomes more and more of a pretext to identify motifs that stand for life: flowers, beliefs, superstitions. A geometry that is sometimes playful and alert, sometimes rigid, on which you can see falling the signs of death, white silences, lead grays. And something else: the paintings' dimensions make you see Maxim intelligently intervening in a hieratic solemnity. The colors of life are cancelled in a nuclear sarcophagus – lead and cement. It's the end of universe.

Or maybe, with a little less drama, the contemporary imaginary, futile and hipsteric, would offer us the image of a rug spread on the ground for picnic. A glass of wine in the company of the woman you love, by all means on the bank of a smoothly flowing water. A picnic at the side of the road.

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