

A Free Space

On the recent works of Denitsa Todorova

Working almost exclusively with graphite on paper, Denitsa Todorova creates an abstract world of soft strokes in shades of black and grey. With a unique approach to her medium, she offers the viewer a veil, a passage to myriad possible meanings and dialogues, bound to trigger one's imagination.

The artist has discovered for herself an inverted technique: first, she completely covers her paper in graphite powder. Then, she carefully starts erasing this black surface, so that a meticulously crafted image appears. 'The results of my work might seem abstract and filled with coincidences, but for me they are really structured. I have a clear vision in my mind of what the image will look like, and I have to be very careful not to erase too much or too little. It's a very time-consuming practice.' There is space for a playful element in the shape of the paper, which is determined in advance, but is not necessarily cut off straight. This gives the final work a strongly individual, structural character.

The spiral has been a prominent character in Denitsa's work, as it is, for her, a symbol of many things: 'It's really a key to what I have to say. It's a symbol of eternity, it repeats itself endlessly. Still now, most of my works feature a spiral.' Recently, however, her attention has shifted from a geometric universe to natural environments: 'My greatest source remains the light.'

Whereas the spiral would reflect a kind of metaphysical light, maybe from another galaxy, the current works are closer to nature: they evoke the way light can touch and dance on water, or the manner in which it playfully drops through leaves in a forest. Light can also be considered a metaphor for Denitsa's method: she gradually erases small parts of a completely blackened surface, thus letting the light in through cracks in the darkness.

Specks of light are coming through the graphite curtain. What you see behind it, is open for interpretation. It could be related to your deepest desires. 'A lot of different associations can be made with my work. Some people seem to recognize landscapes they know, even cities or maps. A drawing of water can also look like marble. It is very important to me that the viewer finds some kind of attraction, a strong emotion in my works.'

The creations are ambiguous: on the one hand, Denitsa shapes this new reality of extreme beauty, often based on her memory of a place or an image. On the other hand, it doesn't really exist. She says: 'I want to take viewers by the hand and lead them into this new reality. I create landscapes, both as a visual reality, and as a space where you could meet with your emotions.' In other words, they are not so much non-existent, as they are an extension of the internal reflections of the viewer.

There is a lot of freedom in these newly found landscapes. They could be seen as a new dimension, a metaphysical space, as a form of escapism or as a mental space only the viewer can enter. 'Every work comes to life in this triangle between me, the work itself, and the viewer,' says the artist. The viewer and the activation of their imagination is the key to meaning in her work. Just as she finds a limitless freedom of expression in creating these landscapes, the viewer is free to experiment with attaching associations and meanings to them.

Generously created solely for the viewer to be absorbed by it, the free spaces transport you to new and different dimensions of beauty. As French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry put it: 'Freedom is one of those hateful words that are worth more than meaning' – assigning to it a greater value than any meaning can give it. The full value of freedom cannot really be put into words, it is a meaning in itself. It is one of the many meanings that can be found in Denitsa's works: the freedom to imagine a space, and to, in that space, be free.

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