

Łukasz Zaręba

CHARRED RUINS

Identity. War. Media.

SUMMARY

This is an artist's confession, starting with an attempt to communicate about armed conflicts through painting. At the beginning of his work on the series of paintings, the author tackles the political situation in the Middle East, which affects him personally through what he refers to as a 'genetic heredity'. Eventually, the problem is presented universally: the trauma of war is the same regardless of the place and time. Humanity exists amid permanent global unrests, revolutions, and military conflicts. Life is full of suffering, injustice, and unforeseeable pivots. Eternal axioms are questioned. Founding norms and concepts for social systems evolve, and all aspects of life suffer from a violent crisis. The author shows how the artist and their art can stand up to evil. He believes that many adverse events in today's world stem not only from the lack of a vision that could unite people but also from the shortage of creative attitude in life. Short-term material needs overwhelm those that cry from the deepest layers of the being, such as the need for beauty, self-actualisation, and happiness.

The work is also an attempt to describe an internal process that led to the exploration of this particular topic, but first of all, allowed the artist to get closer to sorting out his own multiplied identity. He demonstrates that the identity we all have deeply rooted inside is neither set in stone nor determined by our background. Having considered negative sociopolitical phenomena related to conflicts and relevant to the sense of identity, he emphasises that it can be used not only to divide but also to integrate, through art if nothing else, which can be a cure for today's populism at the end of the day.

This text is an account of a personal perspective on events that took place over the last 150 years. The author tries to install a continuous narrative and bring together fragmented reports from the Second World War and the Holocaust with experiences of people directly affected by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It is a tale of humanity tried in war, death, and disappointment; a story of shame, disillusion, exile and escape, and loneliness but also anger, faith or lack thereof, pride, heroism unimaginable today, but most of all, longing for what is no more and will never be: for a world vanished.

The process we follow is not just a journey into the depths of the history that has moulded the author as a person, but primarily an insight into himself through the facts that shaped him as a committed artist. This artistic attitude involves an effort to stimulate the audience's memory and introduce a new, equal, and diverse discourse to break through the dominant, forced, accepted, and mainstream narration. Committed artists make use of their art-based immunity to independently set the rules to promote anti-totalitarianism, support

exiled people, fight for social equality and solidarity and the rights of minorities and women. They can mobilise and gather members of various groups into communities of those who remember. It is an art of dialogue where groups without borders can emerge. Zaręba also discovered on his evolutionary path that, being an artist, he must not be indifferent toward war and the propaganda machine. Through art, he can express his protest and join the 'everyday resistance'. His trip to Palestine helped him understand that art is also a challenge and a mission to oppose evil.

The author believes art to be a privileged human activity necessary to build a truth-based community because the truth can be manifested through it. The work outweighs the reality for those involved in art because the emotion evoked by art reception often becomes closer to the truth. Therefore, art can reveal the truth and escape the rule of realness which falsifies it. The truth is not given directly. Instead, it has to be pursued and extracted. The transformation caused by the experience of art does not vanish after reality sets in. Paradoxically, art retains the truth in its essence, pure being, without annihilating its dynamics. One of the differences between realness and art is that what is necessary in the real world is a mere possibility in art. One can experience the essence of reality by eluding realness through art.

Moreover, creation is a specific, one-of-a-kind value that can use and amalgamate three spheres of beings: past, present, and future. A creator is aware of what was, appreciates what is, trusts the intuition about what will be, and is open to it. Art is also an opportunity to focus on a dying world. This destructive process continues uninterrupted somewhere far or, sometimes, closer than we want it. After all, one generation passes away, and another generation comes; that which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done. In fact, the entire world exists in ashes and on charred ruins.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Julian Zangor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'J'.