

Artist's Note on the exhibition "Departure"

The paintings shown in the exhibition "Aufbruch (Departure)" have been created since 2013, taking up the penetrating theme of "life". Specifically, they belong to the two cycles "The Eternal Feminine" and "Seasons". Together with these paintings, two new works are on display that I painted especially for the Krumpendorf parish church and for this year's Easter season (2020): "Our Hands I - Night in Blue" and "Our Hands II - Morning in Red". Due to the abrupt shutdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these paintings could not be exhibited at the planned time. Even though they will now be shown later than planned, I believe that the theme of Easter is indeed always relevant in our lives.

The ashes of the catholic Ash Wednesday liturgy were inspiring material. It formed an important starting point for these two works. I was present at the Ash Wednesday liturgy when my Lenten veil as the first part of the exhibition came into light. The liturgy reminded me of the deep, archaic meaning of ashes. The ashes from the willows in Krumpendorf embody the non-dualism of death and life. And this symbolism has served as a kind of signpost in the initial phase of the Easter paintings.

These two works mean a lot to me as an artist, because they were created in collaboration with the Krumpendorf community which was a rare experience and challenge for me. We did not physically come together to create these works. But the hand drawings of the Krumpendorf children, women and men stood for their existence. The drawn hands were not simply objects, but subjects with whom I had to go through the process of painting together. Each individual hand was as it was - a complete world. In one hand you see a landscape inside. In other hands there are beautiful flowers, then again some are filled with geometric abstract forms. There are also empty hands, or ones filled with bright colours, or just one colour. These incredibly different shapes have been brought out by the hand of inspiration, and we created ONE image together. These hands have not only been material media, but the goal of the painting process. These works with the theme "Our Hands" correspond with the symbolism of the two archangels Michael and Gabriel. This symbolism comes from the medieval Christian tradition and is present in the parish church of Krumpendorf in the form of large wooden sculptures. As I studied the tradition of the archangels, my inner eye was led to the vision of the Tree of Life, through which heaven and earth are connected and which embraces all life forms in between. This motif of the Tree of Life appears traditionally in various cultures, and I have long had the wish that I could one day treat this motif in my painting. My wish has come true through these hands. As they are, the hands are the tree of life: the tree of life that is rooted in the earth and whose branches grow towards the sky, and another tree of life whose roots grow upwards and whose branches grow downwards (as the Indian text *Bhagavad Gita* describes in chapter 15). The power that connects heaven and earth, that links the sacred and our everyday life, is in our hands. I hope that the images that have come into the world through my hands will nourish this power.

Sung Min Kim, Vienna, 23 June 2020