

## English Translation of the Artist's Note on Lenten Veil for the Ash-Wednesday 2020

Two weeks ago I finished the painting. With this painting, the process went easily compared to previous paintings. I had a faith that a great force was guiding me - instead of me having to work on it out of my own performance or ambition. Maybe that's why the painting process was easier this time.

Moreover I am grateful that the painting decided to be finished in time. For it is not I as an artist who decides when the painting is finished - but the painting itself decides out of its own life and will when it wants to stop.

The desire for me to create a Lenten veil arose abruptly in me. At first this idea did not come into my mind when I received an invitation from Pastor Hans Peter Premur to make an exhibition in the church. Originally, I only thought of an ordinary exhibition that would consist of my own pictures. But suddenly the idea took possession of me that I would like to paint a lenten cloth. Fortunately, Pastor Premur was open to the idea of hanging a lenten cloth in the church. In addition, he introduced me to the project "Krumpendorf - a whole village fasts" - and I was then even more enthusiastic because this Lenten cloth could be placed in the right atmosphere and would thus be placed in a broader context.

Last October I visited the church for the concrete planning of the exhibition. After it had been calculated how huge the Lenten veil should be, I had hesitated a bit inside and was worried because I had never painted a picture with such dimensions. It was also a problem how I could even paint such a large work in my small working space. But I felt obliged to realise this Lenten veil. Since this desire was already engraved in my heart, I had to bring it forth. I had no other choice.

At this stage, I had no concrete idea what the Lenten cloth could look like. After visiting the church, during a walk along Lake Wörthersee, Pastor Premur had told me about the legend of how Lake Wörthersee was formed. I learned that the legend of how Lake Wörthersee came into being says something profound about the danger in the domination of material abundance. Through this legend, the idea of water came to me for the painting: Water fizzing from top to bottom and falling down.

I have often dealt with the theme of waterfalls in my painting, for example in a picture in which a huge swarm of red butterflies flies over a waterfall. In general, water symbolises purification and the source of life.

During the preparation period, in addition to the motif of water, another motif from my memory rose to the surface of consciousness. When I experienced an inner crisis some time ago, a figure appeared in a large dimension before my inner eye. I saw this figure as two beings wrestling with each other, but at the same time intertwined like one being. At that time I interpreted it in this way: I experience myself in this figure simultaneously plummeting downwards – observing - and likewise lifting up. I first experienced the falling "I", but at the same time I experienced that another being exists as an antipole even in such a situation, which lifts me up with a gentle hand and protects me with a look full of compassion. This figure, engraved in my heart, had to remain in my memory for longer than a year. It didn't stay hidden all the time, but kept popping up in my memory space. For example, in a situation where, in foggy weather, I suddenly saw a yellow leaf fall down a steep gorge in the middle of a massive waterfall and tumble into the water.

But I was not very motivated to realise this figure in the pictorial space only on an individual level, because it was to be expressed in such huge dimensions. I didn't find the right context for this large figure - my paintings are large, but not that huge. The right motivation and conditions were not there to start such a huge work just for myself.

This dormant figure has appeared on the surface during the preparation time of the Lenten veil. After all, the 40 fasting days before Easter honours Jesus, who was led into the desert and struggled there before appearing in public. Therefore, I thought that the figure of the two struggling beings, which I had seen during my inner crisis, would be a fitting theme for Lenten veil, even though it arose on a personal level. The conviction developed in me that I could depict the inner spiritual struggle - as in the case of Jesus in the desert - on the Lenten cloth.

Through the context of the Lenten cloth, this figure could be transposed from the personal level to a broader, general level. I could relate this personal, inner struggle to the struggle between Michael and Lucifer in the Christian tradition. And likewise with the general level of struggle between two poles that always takes place before anything important comes into being. Perhaps we can also recognise such a struggle in the present crisis situation which the earth and humanity are confronting.

We passionately long to be guided and lifted up by the gentle hand so that we do not fall away. With this prayer I carried out this task. It was as if the guarding and gentle hand guided me in the process, so that I travelled through this painting process without falling off and in safety. I am very happy that I came back from this journey in time, at the promised time.

Vienna, 24 February 2020