

# Arman Vahanyan

## EndReport

When you are going on a trip to a new, unfamiliar place, some ideas, some kind of visual image, involuntarily arise in your head, which are often destroyed when you meet with reality...

With such thoughts, a little worried, very tired of traveling (for the last 3 years I participated in several similar programs in European countries), imagining the long and tedious road from Yerevan to "some village in the Alps", I began my journey. My excitement intensified when, at the Kiev airport, I found that instead of my German SIM card, I mistakenly took some old Armenian SIM card with me... So, I didn't have internet access, and now I could only hope for good luck and my ingenuity, so as not to confuse something and not to be late. I got a little better when I found the old train in Brig, and realized that I still have time for one cigarette. When the train moved I began to look with interest into the floating landscapes outside the window. It was already in the evening... my favorite time of day, when there are no sharp shadows anymore and contrasts disappear. It was amazingly beautiful... But I did not forget about my vigilance, and at each station I searched for a sign with the sign "Fiesch", because I knew that I had to leave the train at the next station. Finally, when I got off the train with my heavy suitcases and with a large roll of watercolor paper, it turned out that I should hurry, because the cable car had to move. It was full and one kind, elderly man, seeing my confusion, kindly helped me to put my large suitcase on a special open platform from the outside and we drove off. Now I have a new cause for concern - I was concerned that the suitcase would fall into a deep gorge from a platform without fences, and hopelessly watched it. I was distracted from this worry by a large deer, grazing in the dim light on the mountainside. When the cable car finally stopped and I got out, I immediately noticed a woman looking at me with a kind and sincere smile... it was Mrs. Madelon Spinner, who kindly waited for me, without receiving any specific information from me about what time exactly i will come. All my fatigue and excitement immediately disappeared. We warmly greeted each other, and began to walk toward the apartment where I was supposed to live. The apartment was large, with all the comforts... there was a pleasant, homely atmosphere. After talking a bit, having discussed some details, we headed to the studio. The studio was located in the old part of the village, right behind the church, in one of the old wooden houses that stood in a circle. It was already dark and lanterns were burning in the streets. It was very beautiful. When I saw a low, old door, and the key to it (the handmade key was unusually large) I was very impressed... I really like old things, objects, because they have a special energy, almost human energy... they seem alive to me. Inside was the same, very warm atmosphere... I already knew that this is what I need. Mrs. Spinner, pleasantly showed me the studio and made sure I could find the way back to the apartment.

That was my first day at Bellwald. I talked about this for so long, because first impressions are very important in sense of arise of attitude and the process of adaptation to a new place, where you have to live and work, is formed... and three months is not a short time.

The next morning, I got probably one of the most powerful visual impressions during my stay in Bellwald: Despite physical fatigue, I woke up at 7 am. Still half asleep, I headed to the kitchen to make coffee. There was a thick fog outside... Suddenly, I felt some kind of movement outside the window and

when I looked closer, I saw a lot of black spots that slowly emerged from the gray fog... It was a flock of big, black birds (there were about 200-300 of them), which, circling for about a minute over my house, landed on the barely visible snow-covered roof of the house opposite. It was mystical... These black "spots" on a white background left a deep trace in my memory. After that, I almost every morning went to the balcony with a cup of coffee and a cigarette in order to meet these birds, who were descending from the mountains without fail, at the same time, and soared over the gorge, behind our house.

The foggy weather lasted for several days and I saw only nearby houses from the window or on the way to the studio, and I didn't have a real idea of where I am, what is around, what landscape surrounds me? On the third day I was waiting for another surprise: When I woke up, I immediately saw that there was some other, brighter light in the room. I went to the balcony. In front of me stood a large, massive, rocky mountain. The top of the mountain was lit by the bright light of the rising sun. I could not believe my eyes... It was like a miracle.

So, gradually I got acquainted with the terrain, adapted, every day I found for myself something new and interesting.

As I mentioned above, I took watercolor papers with me. In my artistic practice, I mainly do printmaking and painting, but I never really painted with watercolors. I did not take this medium seriously, though I really like experimenting with different techniques. This is probably due to the fact that I worked mostly in printmaking where besides technical skills, the ability to experiment is also very important. At first, painting with watercolirs was pretty unusual... I was looking for a suitable approach to achieve the desired saturation of tones and color, closer to my character, temperament and artistic tasks. I also discovered that the choice of paper is very important in watercolor technique. I worked with great interest and pleasure, tried different technical attitude.

In general, I felt very good in Bellwald. I liked everything, the terrain, the landscape and even the weather, strange as it may seem to some people. There was a lot of snow, sometimes there was a snowstorm... I liked to watch it, sitting by the window in the studio or walking at night in freshly fallen snow. The next morning, I generally clean the snow from the path leading to the studio with great pleasure.

For three months I almost did not leave the village. Of course there were a lot of interesting places to go to, but somehow I didn't want to "dilute" my impressions that I received in Bellwald. I especially liked the atmosphere, which was in the studio. Most of the time I spent there. Although on other art programs where participated before, I had bigger and lighter studios, but for sure in the studio in Bellwald I felt myself most comfortable and natural. I not only worked there... but I read a lot, looked through the catalogs that were in the library of the studio, I watched old movies, which I love very much. I also liked to smoke while sitting on the stairs, watching the passers-by and sometimes talk with them. In short, I lived there... lived a natural life, I felt myself like at home.

I think that the main advantage of the ArtBellwald program is precisely that the artist is given the freedom to choose: in parallel with his work, you can travel, get acquainted with the diverse culture of the Swiss regions, visit numerous museums, collections, exhibitions, galleries in Switzerland or in neighboring countries, to make new connections, business acquaintances, find new friends... or you can choose the path of solitude, the path of concentration and contemplation... and freedom is the most important thing for an artist. In this context, the possibilities provided by the ArtBellwald – Artists in Residence program – to live and work for three months in a village like Bellwald I believe can have vital significance for any artist regarding the enlivening, reevaluation, review of their perspectives and

ushering in new manifestations. The format of the reporting exposition is also very democratic... this is not an official solo exhibition, but an open studio day. In this case, the communication between the artist and the visitors is more relaxed and natural.

During my stay in Bellwald, I made about eight watercolors.

When I create, it's a continuous process that follows a line separating consciousness and unconsciousness. My "motivations" are independent influences – developments that seem transitory and unessential in real time, memories, visual sensations, that even years later, being filtered, subsumed and refashioned to the level of non-recognition, are transformed into visual spheres of coexistence, are developed like photographic film, and become codified pictorial surfaces... imprints... There are no secondary, trivial details, because there is nothing that doesn't leave an imprint. What is always important is the imprint, which is unknown, regardless of what subconscious transformations or generations it leads to.

In this sense, my work is not divisible from my life...

The day of the open studio was held in a very warm, sincere, light and relaxed atmosphere. The watercolor works made in Bellwald were exhibited on the second floor of the studio, and on the first floor I presented my realistic prints of different years made in different printing techniques. Thus, the guests could track down a rather wide period of my creative path - the development and transformation of artistic perception.

So, the time I spent in Bellwald was very seminal for me... I have accumulated a lot of visual impressions and positive memories. I believe that all this will surely lead to new impulses of perception and to varied formation/creations emanating from them.

Any new location must first be understood and recognized, and I hope that my stint in Switzerland, a periodic cycle of building and renewal, will become a period of discovery and new experience.