Romanian-born artist Tünde Darvay is known for her intricately painted artworks awash with colorful references to daily life. Human figures typically populate her kaleidoscopic paintings along with birds, houses, bees, plants, and objects typically found in the home. Darvay's upcoming exhibition, Whisperings, at Oklahoma State University's Gardner Art Gallery, set to open in January of 2019, will feature her multimedia paintings that center on both mythological themes and everyday life.

Darvay was born in 1977 in the historic region of Transylvania in central Romania. The region, known locally as "the land beyond the forest," is recognized for the grand beauty of the Carpathian mountain range, pristine rural landscapes, Saxon medieval citadels, and its tradition of folklore: think Dracula. Educated at the University of Fine Arts in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Darvay earned her Bachelor of Fine Art in 2003, focusing on monumental and religious painting.

Darvay and her husband moved to Oklahoma in 2004. After a period of settling into her new surroundings, her work addressed the similarities and differences between American and Transylvanian culture. Much of the work she made while living in Oklahoma City incorporated new sights from her life in America, such as the iconic yellow school bus, while also depicting familiar elements from her birthplace, like the colorfully painted houses of rural Transylvania.

The artist's work has often been compared to the paintings of the early modernist painter, Marc Chagall whose work centered on Eastern European and Jewish folk culture. His paintings were dominated by brightly colored, soaring figures situated in fantastic environments. Indeed, there is a definite stylistic relationship to the evocative, vibrant, and sculpturally painted works of Chagall or other Fauvist artists, such as André Derain and Alice Bailly, and Darvay's work. Conceptually, however, her work speaks to moments of our lives that stay with us, the experiences and small details of everyday life that are etched into our memory. The shape of a special water pitcher that one's grandmother used, how a line of drying clothing moves in the wind, the chipped layers of paint in a living room that speak to a home's history, or the flower print on a skirt of a close friend, are the particulars that flood our memory when we think of home.

Artworks such as House Turned Inside Out, 2018 and Girl with the Dandelion Skirt, 2018, show such moments. Both works are effervescent expressions of simple interactions with the things that decorate our homes and bodies. House Turned Inside Out, depicts a woman situated in a teardrop interior space, surrounded by birds, buttons, and boiling pots of tea or stew cooking away on the stove. Darvay's technique of layering paint, India ink, and found objects, helps to convey the feeling of a house turned upside down and inside out, encrusted and filled with objects, smells, and animals, that bring about a joyous and welcomed chaos. Girl with the Dandelion Skirt, 2018 is a more grounded composition with the female subject's left foot firmly planted on the ground. While she is rooted, her right foot reaches up toward the sky revealing a naked limb just freed from its boot. Her bright yellow, textured skirt, embellished with a bird in its center, provides a burst of color to the indigo background that she is placed within. A simple stitch-work like pattern surrounds the blue ground, referencing a handmade article of clothing or something mended by hand. Everything is connected in these paintings, the color of the skirt makes its way onto the subject's hands, which radiate with a brilliant intensity. The small bird on her clothing seems to be communicating with another bird near the girl's foot, their eyes looking up and down at one another. Her skin, a vivid turquoise with glowing auburn and buttery cheeks, blends seamlessly into the background she is found in.

Darvay selected the title Whisperings for her upcoming exhibition as the works selected represent the soft and quiet moments of the artist's life that have maintained their relevance and meaning. The artist suggests that the title can be interpreted as "the whispering voices of memories from the past, the soft murmurs of impressions in the present, and as the dreamy visions of the future."

Now back in her native Transylvania, in addition to her painting practice, Darvay's energy has turned to book illustration, contributing to children's books and a contemporary collection of surrealist Hungarian poetry. Of this she has said, "I feel like children's books are close to my heart because of their intriguing fantasy world, their playfulness, and the richness of their imagination. Surrealist poetry is also appealing to my style because it suggests an overstepping of boundaries in a dream world. We can hope to see some examples of these recent works in her upcoming exhibition alongside her multimedia paintings that welcome us in with their warmth.

Whisperings opens at Oklahoma State University's Gardner Art Gallery in Stillwater, OK, on January 16, 2019 and runs through February 14, 2019. The opening reception will take place on February 7th at 5:00 pm with an artist lecture at 6:00 pm. A workshop at the Prairie Arts Center in downtown Stillwater is scheduled for February 8th from 10:00 am -2:00 pm.

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