

TURNER CARROLL

Traian Filip

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Before the fall of Ceausescu in 1990, the “official” art sanctioned by the Romanian government—the art of social realism—was patently optimistic. It’s purpose was to reinforce the idea that communism was successful and that life was good. As a reaction, my own art was darker and more pessimistic. I was illustrating the pain of living in a society of repression and depravation, where you had to guard every word and watch every step and where you never knew who you could trust.

I will always love my country and its people, but growing up under communism was like living in a cage. Free exposure to ideas and imagery is the lifeblood of an artist, and certainly this was restricted. Sometimes I become angry when I think about the opportunities I lost as a child—the art I didn’t see, the museums I couldn’t visit, the ideas I wasn’t exposed to. Still, this cage forced me to develop other resources: to exercise my imagination, to grow more resilient, to look for inspiration in literature, history, philosophy and the art from all periods in history. I learned how to find sources of contemporary imagery in unexpected places and in unlikely times.

Since I’ve been in the United States, I’ve been exposed to a new universe of visual information. I’m still internalizing these influences and giving them expression in my art, developing a style that merges my past and my present. You know, painting is really an exploration of your soul. It’s like going into a dark cave, grabbing something, and bringing it out in to the light. When I finish a painting, I see in it things I wasn’t conscious of while I was working. And then I understand more about myself, because creation comes from the deepest part of your soul.

Traian Filip, 1991

Traian's paintings are included in the Vatican Museum of Art, Wesleyan University Art Museum, and several others.