

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW WITH FATMIR KRYPA

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Duration: 305 minutes

Present:

1. Fatmir Krypa (Speaker)
2. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Renea Begolli (Camera)

Symbols in transcription, nonverbal communication:

() - emotional communication

{ } - the interlocutor explains some gestures.

Other rules of transcription:

[] - addition to the text to help understand

Footnotes are add-ons that provide information about places, names or expressions.

Part One

Fatmir Krypa: So, let's start... I was born in 1942, in Gjakova, into a family of craftsmen. I was lucky to have a father who fed me with knowledge and education and work respect, which I have followed to this day step by step... I follow these even in my studio. We monitor continuously, invoking things that followed throughout my life, and it's a good example that I have followed throughout my life. When I introduced myself as a kid, when they asked me, "Whose son are you?" When I told them that I was Halil Krypa's son, "Respect." They didn't know the word respect, they would say that he is a very good man, a very honest man... words, different epithets, the best.

And as a kid back then, I didn't think about that, what does that mean. But as time passed by I started to monitor the situation that I really am in a family where I am being educated by a man that even today I hold his education, even though I have done 20 years of school. But the education my father gave me isn't a master's degree, or a doctorate, but it's a special education, life education which every person needs. Family education is very important for every creature that grows and develops. School can perfect it, give it a different direction, but family education is very important.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What kind of person was your father and what kind of experience did he have?

Fatmir Krypa: He... his experience was that he traveled from Gjakova often, very often. He was a trader, a tailor by profession. He bought materials in... for his store, in Zagreb, Maribor, in Celje, Kranj... where textile factories were. And like this he also imported new models, he imported and had affordable prices to compete in the market back then. And he was special because there wasn't an assortment like that, his colleagues didn't have the assortment he had. So he traveled in Yugoslavia. He had brought a rage to the culture of Zagreb, Ljubljana, Slovenia... and it fell... it reflected in the family, in the behavior... He made people like him with his civilization.

So, as his kid I had that benefit that I transmitted to myself and my children. Aside from the pedagogical side, what I learned in pedagogy and in psychology during my studies and my reading, during my experience in life and with my students, during my 50 years of experience I have entwined the past with today to harmonize things and give an adequate thought for each child.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How many children were you in the family?

Fatmir Krypa: It was a special life as a kid when I look at it from the point of view of a 78-year-old. For the first time in the neighborhood where we lived, maybe it even was the first ball in the neighborhood... yes, yes, in Gjakova, it was one of the first plastic balls {moves his hands as if he's playing with a ball} they brought it for me from Zagreb. We didn't know how to play with it, it bounced a lot... we were used to having balls made from wool, we would take wool from cows and we would make a ball. We would make balls like that and play. When my father brought that ball to me, it was a surprise because it would bounce high, we didn't know... we couldn't maneuver it... we didn't know how the ball functioned. So, to that point.

When I went to elementary school, when I explained this to others, they wondered, 'What is that?' We called it *tafte* [board]. *Tafte*. It was an A4 plaque with a wooden frame, thin like a blackboard. On one side, it had no lines, on the other, it had lines to guide your handwriting. It had wide and narrow lines, wide and narrow. One side was empty, it was black entirely, and, on that side, we would do our in-class work and continue at home, written with white chalk that would scratch the surface, it would leave white or gray marks. And that was our school notebook, that was all we had, what was in our possession. Even though *abetare*¹ existed for teachers. But for us in the first semester, *abetare* didn't exist. They gave us *abetare* in the second semester. But with my father's knowledge, he... he brought me and some of my friends notebooks, notebooks which later became common for students later.

But this, when I tell someone that we wrote on *tafte* in math, we drew, we calculated, we wrote. The worst that could happen to you, while you were going to school, a friend, well, a malicious friend, would come from behind and erase your homework and you would have to go to school without homework.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So, you would do all the homework on the same *tafte*?

Fatmir Krypa: On the same *tafte*. Yes, yes. We would wipe it with a rag, sponges didn't exist back then, they didn't. And this was the life of a child in the first grade. Before that I remember when airplanes paraded over Gjakova, which withdrew forces of World War II from Greece and passed through Gjakova. I just went out, I was three years old. It was the end of the war and the sky filled with planes. I had never seen something like that. Airplanes, you couldn't even count how many there were, maybe eighty to one hundred. The sky was filled with them.

A man around 30, 40 years old grabbed me by the hand and told me, "Run under the shelter." I didn't know why, until I got to ask why he grabbed me by the hand and put me under shelter and told me that the airplanes could kill me. I was a kid, how would I know the airplane could kill, what did I do to them, but it was the war and they knew I didn't know what the airplanes were for, it was the first time I saw them. And the sky was filled with them, he put me under the shelter, the shelter was around a meter long, we waited there until the planes headed to Peja.

¹ The Albanian alphabet book.

Then we heard from people that Peja was bombed. It was mistakenly bombed according to some data, Peja was mistakenly bombed. It was in a way a mistake, or was it a mistake encouraged by spies, someone purposely did that, we don't know to this day. There were many victims in Peja, people and infrastructure. I remember this when I visited Peja and I saw Peja as a city. When I went to the Art School, I noticed traces of where it was bombed, the locations where it was bombed and more detailed data of this case. But, let's move past this, let's continue with continuing form of education...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Mister Krypa, what kind of family did you have? How big was it?

Fatmir Krypa: Well this was my family, I was the oldest son in the family from my six siblings. I had two sisters and three brothers. I was the oldest, and from all of us, two of my brothers and I got master's degrees. There's no doctorate in arts because I would have done it, but there's no doctorate in arts. The brother who was younger than me was more interested in crafts and our parents. My sisters finished high school, both of them got married. And that's how...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you help your father as a child?

Fatmir Krypa: Well no, I will answer this question with a motto I use constantly, "Do not waste time." This motto is also used in my family, I use it in my job today. I plan my day in the morning, what I have to do in the morning, what I have to do in the afternoon and at night. I plan my day. A global agenda. There can be cases when someone calls you and invites you somewhere, or another request and it changes. But 80 percent of the time I follow the plan until nighttime. My younger brother that continued with crafts changed his profession because he got bored, he realized that it would be better to work in something else. He became a supervisor at the Agimi company, a boss, then at Agimi shopping mall in Gjakova, that's where his career ended because war began and it closed down. Then he had other jobs.

So, my other brothers, one of them studied cybernetics in Belgrade, the other studied machinery in Zagreb. I tried to push them towards a different profession. And I... they found financial support and everything... educational, and I pushed them towards that direction. Both of them successfully finished it, one of them in Belgrade the other in Zagreb.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I meant when you were a child, did you help your father?

Fatmir Krypa: Now I'll talk about myself. It was my father's request to not waste time. This is my motivation even today. My school was very far from my house, on the other side of Gjakova. He would always ask me at night, I had to give a report every night. I had to give him a report every night of what I did today, what will I do tomorrow, what my plans are. When I say this, I thank my father. He left me some time for games, but not waste all my time on games. When I came back from school, I learned, I did homework. If I didn't learn, I went to the store. I had to pick one. To go out with friends and play, play until forever, "No, no."

In the seventh and eighth grade the Children's Theatre was created in Gjakova and me and some friends were selected to play *Snow White*, then *Little Red Riding Hood*, and then some others like this. With 20 premieres each, I mean repeats. We went to Peja, to Gjakova. So, I also had to contribute to the

other society of artistic amateurism. So I would tell my father, “I have rehearsals today.” “Okay, go to rehearsals.”

I would also sing, I had to go to the school’s choir also. I went to the school’s choir when we rehearsed and the end-of-the-year celebrations... then theater rehearsals. And I would do all these within a day. And the store... and now I got the machine, I brought it from home yesterday, the sewing machine, it’s here, we can take a picture of it later. I brought it, because I have to hem some sweatpants for my daughter.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So he also...

Fatmir Krypa: I learned how to sew. I know how to do it. It was a motto of mine to learn this craft. School, yes, but also the craft. If you know a craft wherever you go... even if you go to Africa, even if they throw you somewhere with a parachute, you can live. And that motivated me to also learn photography in Peja. I was stationed with a photographer and I would take pictures with a camera that I had, Altix IV, an old camera. I would take pictures, I would develop them there. And I even started developing them by myself in his emulsion.

I started helping him because he had a visual impairment. I was in art school then. But, before I get where, I am going through... I learned photography there. From photography retouching, which was hard but I was very determined because I was a student in art school. I would do the retouch and it wasn’t detectable, because I had to do it on film with a pencil. In film.

I learned to take photographs in the studio, in nature, interior, exterior... with light, without lights and so on. To develop photographs, retouch, I learned everything. I already knew the tailoring craft.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you sew for yourself?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes. I would sew t-shirts in twelve minutes. I would sew a t-shirt in twelve minutes. Because we would compete, my father had three other workers in the store. So, we would compete with the workers who sew faster. Twelve was the fastest I could do it. Also pants. But, this was just to learn the craft because I didn’t know what was going to happen with me. In the fourth grade I drew Skanderbeg’s portrait that was in history books, in profile. We would learn about Skanderbeg, shortly, just to learn who Skanderbeg is. The picture was on the page of a... the page of a book. And I took it and drew it on an A4 page. And after I was done, I showed it to my arts teachers and I said, “Did you do a good job?” A little afraid if it looked like Skanderbeg, I could see it did.

I would show all my work to my father. I had a very... the child-parent relation was, how do I say it, I thought he knew everything. How would he know how to write, you know? But he said it was good, “It’s good, yes.” He would sometimes maybe say things just to please me, he would say it was good and I would believe him. And I took it my teacher, Mazllom Hoxha, a very mature teacher, just like all the other teachers of that time, they were an example for students, parents and the culture of that time. They were an example for everything. Teachers were people who corrected society at every step. Even if they saw you headed in a bad direction, “Look, son, you’re wrong.” You know, they would give advice on the street, let alone the classroom. The role of the teacher was everywhere. There was also a

lot of respect for teachers by students. When teachers said something, it was a done deal. It was true, it was sincere what they were saying, not just to say something.

And he said, “Who helped you?” You know, the teacher said, “Did someone help you?” I was the oldest, there was no one to help me, no! “No, I did it myself.” You know, “Very nice,” he said, “Very nice. Give it to me.” And he sticks it to the classroom wall, Skanderbeg. And to me it seemed *uha* {onomatopoeic} the teacher picked it, and students were happy how I could draw... Now I was among the students, now I’m modest, but we were 40 students in the classroom.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were there girls at that time?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes, yes, of course. There were girls. And there was a number... and in that instant when my drawing got picked, I thought maybe I can draw. Maybe I can draw, you know. And the next day, during the week, my teacher says, “Fatmir, you have to draw the geography maps.” We were learning about Yugoslavia rivers. I can draw the map and border of Ygolsavia by heart even now. I know the rivers, lakes, mountains, everything.

Those maps were on a paper. And he had two poles and he hung them in the classroom. He made me draw all the work during the learning process. But in the fourth grade it seemed like something only I did, you know, like... but I was very modest, very modest, very modest. I couldn’t even tell myself that I know something. I didn’t know why I was doing it, because young people didn’t pride themselves on something they did, I... lying was impossible, let alone telling the truth, telling someone you did it yourself, that someone older verified it. Even though I wanted to do the same in other subjects. I have two books here...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And all... the whole class learn geography through your drawings?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes. Yes. The maps were there. The borders, the mountains... Triglav, here’s the peak of Triglav {points} in Slovenia, 2,700 and how many meters, 2,800, or how high is it. Here is that {points}, this Pannonia, this is the biggest field, here it is, here it is... Dalmatia was here, all of these. There was history, geography. And now I started to mirror this knowledge on other subjects, because I was good at mathematics. There was a boy who worked in the store and he made me solve math problems in my free time. When there wasn’t any work he would give me math problems. Mathematics was something, apart from the drawing, mathematics was my second subject. And there was the moment when I had to decide if I should study architecture or arts? There was a dilemma, but I decided to study arts, because I loved mathematics...

And now... one day the professor in class... mathematics, but now to get graded. And a classmate who was good at math... There were no other students who were excellent there, or four... three of four students. It wasn’t like not, that the whole class has excellent grades, or 80 percent. Back then...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Not all of them could follow or...

Fatmir Krypa: What?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They weren't all capable of getting into the system...

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, no, but now look, there wasn't anyone to increase their level. Now I'm saying from 40 students only four or five, every tenth student... 40 students... It was quite prideful if 40 students were excellent. And they would give us each a book, I have it here, I'll show you after. "As an excellent student this book is given to this person." I got a book in the first and second semester. *Si u bë njeriu vigan?* [How did people become giants?] The first book that was translated into Albanian, and *Tregim për bukën e bardhë* [A story about white bread.]

And this was the beginning of translations from the Serbian literature because there weren't any writers who... later there was Esat Mekuli with his poetry and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about books?

Fatmir Krypa: Excuse me? There were no books. Later *Rrushë ka nisë me u pjekë* [The grapes started to ripen] by Sinan Hasani was published, but this was later. That is the first Albanian novel, *Rrushë ka nisë me u pjekë* by Sinan Hasani. Unfortunately from a person who later devalued himself politically, where his work, maybe the first novel isn't mentioned. No one knows. No one mentions it. No one appreciates it, because he stained himself, he stained the art of writing with the work he did on politics. I say, I was never a politician and I'm not now, but they ignored his artwork.

And so, with... in the second semester because it is, I'm talking about the fourth year because it is a trampoline from others, from myself, that I did in accordance with art. And in the second semester the teacher Mazllon left and Salih Canhasi came, an older man. We were used to the young teacher. He was more allegro, more approachable. The new one was more experienced, he had more experience and... but somehow we, just like my second daughter when we wanted to enroll her in the first grade, "I want a beautiful teacher dad, I want a beautiful teacher mom."

We also wanted our teacher to be handsome. Salih wasn't but he made up for his physical appearance with his work, his behavior, his values. He made himself handsome. Maybe even more handsome than Teacher Mazllom, who I respect a lot. And whenever I saw him we reminisced, those drawings I used to make. When my mother died, the condolences he expressed, he said, "Fatmir was one of the best students I've had." In the room filled with men, which wasn't the right place, but he said, "He was my best student."

And when one day the teacher Salih, we had drawing class, this is very important for me, vital. It was drawing class, it was the long break, 15 minutes, we had all gone outside. Teacher Salih had found a perspective, a way, in perspective, the bigger building, the smaller and the even smaller building, how it got smaller in the book. And he wanted to draw on the blackboard so we could learn about perspective, what perspective is, to teach us how the same house can look big, but it looks smaller from far away. But in reality it always has the same size. And he started to draw but they fell down, he couldn't.

How did I find out? The headteacher called me, because Teacher Salih also made me draw. All the heads of the Republics, because he saw them too, "Who drew these maps?" "Who did this?" "Fatmir."

You know? He made me draw all the heads of the Republics of Yugoslavia at that time. Lazar Koliševski from Macedonia, Đuro Pucar “Stari” from Vojvodina, Ivan Gošnjak from Croatia, Petar Stambolić from Serbia and so on. From six republics. I had to draw all the heads of the Republics. We had learned about them and now we had to draw them.

Drawing them and preserving their character wasn't easy. Because one little thing can change, one eye has an arch above, the other under. None of our eyes are the same. We have two arches, no one has the same eyes. Making it more wide, more slope, the character changes. A wider nose, a long nose, fuller lips, thinner lips, a narrow forehead, the character changes. You have to evaluate these proportions well. And I don't know I had... instinctively, as a kid, I had done it.

And now I'm talking about Teacher Salih. He couldn't draw it, he erased it with the sponge. But, the sponge was dry. He wiped it a few times superficially. But my eyes were so sharp that I could tell that there were houses which seemed down. They weren't in perspective, they were down. He couldn't. “Head Teacher, where is Fatmir? Call Fatmir.” I ran, he said, “Can you draw this?” I looked at it, there was a road with three houses on one side, three three-story houses on one side in perspective. And I had never drawn in perspective. I said, “Yes.” I don't know where I got the courage to say yes, I ask myself today where did I get the courage to say yes. And I said, “Yes.” And I drew it as it was in the book.

When I went near the blackboard, I noticed that the teacher had tried to draw them before but he couldn't, he erased it. And I kind of felt bad for him, but I also felt proud that I can draw better than the teacher. *Uaa* {onomatopoeic} who am I? I was in the fourth grade, he was an experienced teacher, a person who... a pedagogue. Then as I said, he made himself handsome and smart as if he was everything above me. He didn't even tell me not to say that I was the one who drew it. But I have never said it until he passed away, Salih Canhasi, may he rest in peace. But why shouldn't I say it? Pedagogues aren't supposed to be able to draw. But he was a great pedagogue in all the classes he taught in the second semester.

And, so, I have mentioned him throughout all my life and in my biography, in my monograph, I will have his portrait. I will have his picture, because we took a picture as students in elementary school, with a shaved head, because it was my father's principle, I had noticed this about him, but I could never ask him why. When we were supposed to take the picture at the end of the year he always gave me the money to shave my head. Almost all of the students did that. And I am in the fourth grade picture with a shaved head. But it's good, it's there, it's a truth, a biography, something I consider. And with this knowledge that I had summarized, because I also have his signature, that I will deposit... in my monograph that I have here. He gave me that book, his signature... everytime I see it, I see his picture in front of me. I have a special respect for him.

This, the fourth grade was the base that I built myself in other subjects with excellent success and with knowledge I had gained from drawing and then I continued with fifth, sixth grade...

Part Two

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you decide to go to arts school, I mean high school...

Fatmir Krypa: Let's... in the seventh grade, in the painting class, we heard that a teacher came from Peja, his name was Shahin Kryeziu.² *Uaa* {onomatopoeic}, we didn't know who he was, they said he was tough. Oh, what does tough mean, he asked for a lot. I wasn't worried about that in painting but I thought about it. The professor came into painting class, Shahin Kyrezium, this was in seventh grade in elementary school.

And when he gave us the assignment, he took one of his drawings, a painting actually, still life with fruits, with flowers he had painted it, brought and put on the blackboard, he said, "Paint it, be careful with this and that." It was so hard for the other students but I drew it and he said, "Next week you have to paint it at home." Well good, I painted it with tempera paint in Gjakova...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: There was tempera paint...

Fatmir Krypa: There was no tempera paint in Gjakova. He came from Peja, he was stuck there, he studied in Venice for two years, and when he came here during the Second World War, he was stuck here and couldn't go back to Italy. He stayed in Peja as a painting professor, but he moved to Gjakova and worked as a teacher at my school luckily. And I, I took the tempera paint from my father, he bought them for me in Celje, where they were produced. He bought them there, because I asked him to buy me paint. He explained it to them thinking that they paint with these paints in Celje and Zagreb, of course. Just because we are a province doesn't mean that we don't know what tempera paint is, we had no idea. When he brought them to me, they looked like toothpaste. We painted with watercolor paint, at school we called it watercolor paint, because most of the people paint with water. It requires a lot of water, watercolor paint.

And I painted it with tempera paint. I remembered the colors, I wrote it down, the apple, it was red here, yellow here, a little green, imagine it a little, it was orange, I painted it orange with a little bit of brown where it seemed more dark, a little back, mixing the colors and it was done. Still life, and I was curious if I had done a good job. It seemed like I had to wait so long for the painting class so Professor Shahin could correct it, because at that time he was the most professional of all Albanians in Kosovo. There was no one who was more educated with two years of university. And I waited for him in the hallway with my painting and I said, "Professor, can you tell me if I did a good job?" He took it, looked at it. He said, "Get inside." He finished his procedures.

²Shahin Kryeziu enrolled in the High School of Arts in Tirana in 1938, in the class of professor Odhise Paskali. During the years 1940-1943 he stayed in Turin (Italy), then continued his studies at the Academy of Arts in Florence (Italy). From 1945 he started teaching at the High School of Peja, as a Drawing Professor. He was one of the initiators for the establishment of the High Degree of Arts in Peja during 1949.

And now he said to the students, “Bring out your painting, let’s see if you did your homework.” And almost none of them, only two or three people tried to paint it because they didn’t know how to paint it by heart. Around three people had started painting it, one almost finished it and I was the only one who had finished it using tempera paint which was... and then he said to me, “Stand up, boy. Where did you get this paint? What kind of paint did you work with?” Because it was written there “Temperne Boje” [Srb.:, “Tempera Paint”]. I said, “I painted with tempera paint, those that look like toothpaste.” He knew there weren’t any in Peja, Gjakova, anywhere in Kosovo, “Where did you get that paint?” I said, “My father bought it in Zagreb, or Maribor, I don’t know where he bought it.” “Aha, what does your father do?” I told him, it isn’t important. “Very good.” And from that we started some kind of correspondence, a closeness, I was very devoted to all the work and then I finished seventh grade with a mutual respect.

We changed schools, we went to a new school, because there was a lack of schools in Gjakova. The seventh grade classes were held in Beg’s houses, in a private house, in private houses. There were schools, Komon’s school was taken over by partisans, it was the school where I finished the first four, three grades. Mejtep’s school, it was called Ruzhdije in Turkish, where I finished fourth grade, where I was with the teachers. I had finished fifth and sixth grade at the gymnasium. The seventh grade in a private house. They were called like this, Mullashabani’s School, Beg’s School, Komon’s School, now I don’t remember the names of the schools, of the owner’s of the houses that were bigger, they turned them into schools. Then, then this became a new school in the eighth grade where the majority focused on private houses and this became a huge school called Vojo [Vojislav] Lakičević, and there were probably thousands of students, it was a huge school, thousands of students. It started in the morning until nighttime, there three shifts, that’s where I finished eighth grade.

I mean Shahin, Professor Shahin, respect, maybe in front of the TV [camera] I could tell him that I’m sorry. When I met him once accidentally, because I became the editor for the creation of the Monograph of Kosovo at the Gallery of Kosovo, by create I mean who would take part where, the painters, the sculptures, graphists, and the painters had forgotten Shahin. We said, “Where is Shahin Kryeziu?” “We didn’t include him.” I said, “You didn’t include him? He is the basis, he taught at the Art School, he taught generations.” I said, “He was an educated man, with two years of education in university.” I said, “How can we not include him?” Then we decided that I should visit him since he wasn’t present with his work, visit him.

I took it upon myself to visit and consult him on which of his works we should include in the monograph. I visited him but unfortunately he was a little sick. He got up from bed and told me which of his work I should include. I said, “I have taken it upon myself to list you in the Monograph of Kosovo as the first initiator of the visual art of painting in Kosovo.” He said, “Thank you very much, Fatmir.” I said, “I can’t ignore the visual art without Shahin Kryeziu being there, you have given a lot to the scenography, you have done a lot as a scenographer at the Theater of Gjakova, you have done as much as you could pedagogically, you have done many works as much as you could, as much as it was possible for art to develop and be understandable to exhibit.” Who would exhibit there? Who would understand art there? Who would open an exhibit, they didn’t even know what an exhibit is. Why should I paint? There was no motivation.

So, he was withdrawn and so the works he did, some landscapes of Rugova, some motifs from Peja, some figures from the Dukagjin, they were self-initiated, just so to have a person who he loved that he painted it or some motif, nothing else. But there was no motive to exhibit, there was no place. So, I, thanks to that request, his work today is in the Monograph of Kosovo. And after we finished that conversation, we drank coffee, he said, “Fatmire,” I remember what he said in his exhausted voice to this day, “This time, you came to do work, next time you should come just to hang out,” he wanted to say to evoke because I also helped him in scenography where we did those [plays] with *Little Red Riding Hood*, I drew Little Red Riding Hood’s house, those wooden planks. I drew those houses, those wooden planks, the grandmother’s cabin.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Those plays in schools...

Fatmir Krypa: Excuse me?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Those plays for school?

Fatmir Krypa: I was... the play of the members of the Children’s Theatre of Gjakova, I mentioned it earlier, I was an actor there. Shahini put me to work in scenography and... I was young and had a lot of responsibilities... I said that I will visit him today, I will visit him tomorrow, I will visit him the day after that. Until one day I heard he had passed away and I regretted it so much, I got so sad that I didn’t get to have that conversation with him, he had said, “Let’s have a conversation because now you came for work, let’s evocate a little.” He wanted to talk because our relationship wasn’t student-teacher anymore, we were colleagues. Talk about art at the time we were in school, I helped in eighth grade, like courses, teaching students how to draw.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was he from Albania who came during Great Albania, Italy, or from here?

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, he was from here.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did people from Kosovo invite him to study in Italy?

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, he went to study in Italy, but in the meantime he came on holiday and the Second World War happened, because the Second World War suddenly started in Italy when Germany attacked Italy and from then it continued in Europe. So, he couldn’t continue his education, but he contributed with the education he had. When we came back to the eighth grade, further development is important. In the eighth grade I had managed with Professor Shahini to deal with many things more directly with him, and in addition to schoolwork, I drew, since I had drawn the portrait of Skanderbeg, the portraits of the heads of the republics then. I gained experience and pleasure from drawing portraits, so I would draw all kinds of portraits, it wasn’t interesting, I thought of drawing artists’ portraits.

Ali Podrimja was my friend, he was my neighbor. He would pass by my house to get to his house. He would pass by my door at least twice a day, and Ali Podrimja had workers that shared the movie at the Hysni Zajmi Cinema in Gjakova. They had a repertoire of every movie that came in Serbo-Croatian, it came translated from English, French to Serbo-Croatian. People who spoke it, most of the people did, not the children, but others spoke Serbo-Croatian, it would come translated in four pages, two sheets. The first page consisted of the title, the main role artist and inside were some scenes from the movie and in the last page was the content, now how would you know English, French or German, you know. But you would watch the movie and understand it according to what was happening.

Ali took those sheets, hundreds of them, from someone he knew and sold them. He took them, the owner of the movie gave some money to Ali since he sold them and he kept the rest for himself. I had money because I sewed in my father's store and I respected his rules, school, theater, home, when I didn't go to the theater, I went to the store, homework, school, everything was okay. When he went to parent-teacher meetings, everything was okay, and even when I asked for money, I didn't want to be too much, I asked my father, "Two dinars." He never gave me two dinars, he gave me five. I would spend two and save three. And like this, what did I do with those three dinars, I would buy the content from Ali Podrimja. He had the content of every movie, and I had made a collection of around 370-80 movie contents. I was one of the people who had the biggest collection. Ali would come, "Do you have this movie content?" It was called *Sadržaj* [Content] in Serbian, "Do you have it?" "Yes, I do." "Give me two." I would exchange it with one I didn't have and so on.

I would use these movie contents to draw the artists. So I wouldn't draw random people, I would take the picture from the movie content and draw it. They weren't important drawings, I would show them to Shahin, because it became boring, each of them was interesting, but I had fun. I remember a woman in a movie called *Bagdadski Prosjak*, *Baghdad's Beggar*, it was like that. A woman had a scarf, she was beautiful, a scarf that resembled Gjakova's scarfs, but it was a beautiful woman with a beautiful scarf, and I had drawn it very beautifully. I was interested in artists that I adored, not random people. I drew Kirk Douglas, almost by heart, Burt Lancaster³ with his eyebrows {raises his eyebrows} by heart.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Would you add the content, or how did you save them?

Fatmir Krypa: Excuse me?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you add the portraits...

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, I would draw them in a drawing block, the content was written in a smaller sheet, those were larger. I made many drawings and I used them to apply to art school. I got information about what is needed in art school, when I went there, they said, "You have to draw." I went there. At first I had a problem, I was the oldest son in the family, my father worked in the store

³ Burton Stephen Lancaster (1913-1994) was an American actor and producer. Originally known for playing "Tough Guys" in more complex roles during a 45 year career in film and, later, television.

with different people. I felt bad as the oldest son about leaving and going to Peja, it took one hour to go to Peja by bus, one hour and twenty minutes, that's how long it takes today to go from Prishtina to Gjakova.

As I said, I couldn't go there without asking my father, there was a teacher in my school, in Voja Lakičević, I said, "Sali Ballata, can you tell my father that I want to go to art school, that Shahin told him so, the school told him so..." Because on the last day of school they gathered us, all of us who finished eighth grade, the school principal invited us to a meeting with all the teachers of key subjects. "You're good at math, you should go there. You should go there. You're good at drawing, you should go to art school. You're good at music, you should go to the music school in Prizren. You should go to Peja." They gave us suggestions and they told me to go to Peja.

I wasn't brave enough to tell my father, not that I wasn't brave, but my conscience, my conscience wouldn't let me, I didn't want to let my father work alone, he worked with strangers. He went on travels for weeks, he was away from the store and he would leave the store to strangers... you can imagine what can happen when you leave strangers in charge. And I told Sali Ballata, he was our *akraba* [cousin] as they say in Turkish, he was our relative. I said, "How do I tell my father?" "Don't worry, I will tell him." I said, "Thank you."

One day, I would work in the store once a day, it would happen that I would go there every other day, an hour or two. He came, he was a teacher in that school, he came to his father's store, it was in front of our store. He noticed I was leaving the store and called me, "Fatmir, come here!" I went and said, "What's up?" He said, "I talked to Uncle Halil."

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Your father?

Fatmir Krypa: "I talked..." yes, "I talked to Uncle Halil about your dilemma." I said, "What did he say?" He said, "At first he was curious to know, he said, 'Sali, when he finishes school, what will he become?'" Because he had no examples, there wasn't anyone who has finished art school yet. Muslim Mulliqi who was before me, he had just enrolled at the University of Arts in Belgrade, Tahir Emra was in the third year, Esak Meka was in the second year... there were other people from Gjakova in art school, but there wasn't anyone who finished it that he could say, "This is what he is doing." "Uncle Halil, he will be an art teacher, no worries." "You know Sali better, he can go." Even though someone else asked him, I took it as a yes. I said, "There's an entrance exam for art school that lasts a week. We have to rent a house." I had a friend from Gjakova, but he failed, he didn't pass, and we found a house in Kale. We rented that house for a week, I don't remember how much we paid for it, and we stayed there for a week. We drew every day.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: The whole week?

Fatmir Krypa: The whole week, and on the last day we had to write an essay in Serbian. People from Gjakova didn't know Serbian, rarely, because even Serbs in Gjakova spoke Albanian. They spoke great Albanian, they didn't speak Serbo-Croatian, they spoke Albanian. Now writing that essay was a

problem, but I don't know where I got the courage, the topic was "An event from your life" in Serbian *Jedan doživljaj u tvom životu* [An experience in your life]. When I started writing, what would I write? My grandmother had died two years ago, we loved her very much, and I still felt that pain. I didn't know what to write, so I wrote about the pain for my grandmother who died.

Today I ask myself, "Okay, you didn't know Serbian, why didn't you write a little at least? Write a little." Because they gave us two large pieces of paper. I wrote a page and a half in Albanian, and half of it in Serbian, and there was a Serbian chauvinist who taught Serbian, he died laughing when he read the essay. On the other hand the other the teacher who assessed my drawing suggested that I pass in the second year in the second semester, just like Muslim Mulliqi. I didn't know that. I got very close with one of my drawing professors in the third year because we would make New Year's ornaments together, we would write banners and posters together. There was a law for all trucks to have the name of the company on their doors, in Albanian and Serbian, so we also did that.

We would work together and one day, he trusted me a lot, he could see I was trustworthy, and one day he said, "Go to my house, there under the cabinet, under the sheet take this much money," He told me, his student, to go to his house and get his money because he needed it, he trusted me. We talked about a lot of things and I had heard about it, but I wanted to know from him, I said, "Professor Kamenović",⁴ I said, "I want to ask you something." He said, "Yes, Krypa!" I said, "I know I made mistakes when I wrote the essay, I don't even know what I wrote. I want, I would buy that essay just to see what I wrote, I would save it just out of curiosity."

They proposed to advance me to the second year and he said, "Who? You want to advance him to second year? Look at his essay." And they didn't. He said, "When Brane Nikić showed us the essay, we decided that it's better for you to come regularly and learn the language, of course, you had talent and you showed it. That was the reason we didn't advance you to the second year." And this gave me courage that I had talent and I would work more freely...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What were the professors like? What profile did they have? Where did they come from? What were the students like?

Fatmir Krypa: The professors were from Serbia, there weren't any Albanian professors, we were the first, Muslimi was in the first year, Tahiri was in the fourth year. Then others finished later, and so on. Most of the professors were from Serbia, from Montenegro, we didn't notice any ignorance towards us by practical professors, no ignorance because art drew people in. For example, Professor Svetozar Kamenović liked me, he, my wife [Hyrije Krypa] was two years younger, when I finished school she was in the third years and I was a student in Belgrade, she wrote a letter to me, she said, "Professor Kamenović is talking very highly of you in class, he is saying that there was a student here, his name was Fatmir Krypa, he made great paintings."

⁴ Svetozar Kamenović

So, he was, you can make people like you with your art. But, we didn't know how much they hated us, luckily we didn't know how much Serbs hated us. When I went to Peja, I learned Serbian language within a semester. After the first year, I was equal to the other students, because people from Peja also spoke it. In their dictionary there were many Serbian words. When they said, "Why are you getting mad?" They said the word in Serbian, or when they said, "Why are you so conceited?" They said it in Serbian.

In the first semester I didn't understand them, it was a different world from Gjakova. I didn't even understand Albanians, my classmates. There were around twenty people in the classroom. From those twenty students, there were only five Albanians who were accepted that year. Compared to the population, how many were Albanian and how many were Serbian, it was discrimination, but anyway that was the year when the most Albanians were accepted, five. And so with that number, it almost ended with that norm for admission of students.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did you paint? Still life or...

Fatmir Krypa: We did schoolwork, we worked according to the model, gypsum, it was the most accurate work I did from those paper contents. Then gypsum in a natural form, as big as real heads are, ancient antique figures and then the living portrait, in the second year we did the living portrait. Different models would come, it would stay there for a week until we drew it, a week, five hours a day. We had drawing classes three, four days a week. During the week we would have five hours a day, for three days, 15 hours of drawing classes. And we also did nature drawing, still life in class, and they gave us different topics to do at home just by our imagination, but mostly they were by model.

The eye can examine exactly what you're seeing in front of you, what chapped lips looked like, a little swollen, slightly raised or shrunken, cheekbones, what they're like, you monitored it all by eye, the most meticulous camera. When you achieved this, you would get a higher grade, because it would look more similar to the original one, you could tell what kind of model it was as a professional and as an amateur if they got the character right or not.

So, we were assessed by professors with valid grades, with the highest grade. And we, the art school in Peja, we were the best school in Yugoslavia, out of Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Niš, Skopje, Montenegro, Montenegro and Skopje didn't have an academy, neither did Prishtina. There were high schools in Niš and Novi Sad, Serbia had three, one in Belgrade, one in Sarajevo, Novi Sad, and one in Niš, Serbia had three because it was big. The art school in Peja was one of the best out of all of these high schools. When we went to the entrance exam in Belgrade they would ask, "In which school were you?" "In Peja," "*Pećka škola*". "Peja's school," but they were very strict in Belgrade.

Part Three

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Mister Krypa how, did you know from the beginning that you will continue your education in Belgrade? Was it something like part of the high school culture to prepare you for University?

Fatmir Krypa: Well, since some of our colleagues were already in Belgrade, Muslim Mulliqi, Rexhep Ferri, Tahir Emra. Then the needs in Kosovo were great and we all had to meet them, one, two, three were not enough. So, I thought that there would be a place for me somewhere and I would be needed for the art of Kosovo in the future. I decided and got satisfaction in my work in high school, with the preferences of my older colleagues, professors who had a good opinion of me and my self-desire to achieve a higher level of knowledge, because knowledge in art is never reached fully, you have to perfect it as much as possible with education. But, there was still a dilemma, I still had to tell my father, how could I ask to go to Belgrade instead of looking for a job as a teacher and help my father, help with the education of my brothers and sisters.

“No,” my father told me to continue my studies, so a very big sacrifice, he sacrificed. He was satisfied to know he had a generation following him. I noticed then, he had many friends, because he was the first footballer on the Vllaznimi team in Gjakova. The first team started with him, right defender, I have pictures. They gathered in the yard of our house and then they went to the football field. So, he was lively, he wanted... and he didn't hesitate at all, he didn't say, “Look, I sent you to art school for five years, now you're done. Come on, work and help me.” But, he thought that I should continue.

And I had potential, in addition to what I had absorbed from the practical side of the work, I also had the potential to help and give love to my parents, and of course the society in the future. I didn't think about this, we weren't capable of thinking that we could contribute to society. Contribute financially, today financial goods are secondary, having an exhibit abroad is primary, being recognized as a Kosovar, as an Albanian from Kosovo. So, then I decided to go to Belgrade and continue my studies. It was before the fall of Raković.⁵

Erëmirë Krasniqi: '66?

Fatmir Krypa: It was the years, no, '63, and I thought that I would have problems when I go to Belgrade, I was prepared for problems. But I was focused on the work and the art I was going to develop in university. I didn't bother with the conversations around me. During the entrance exam in the first year, I had a surprise. There was a colleague of mine in front of me who was entering the exam, we had out easels like this one {points to the easel behind him} and we were drawing a live model up to here {touches his knees}, in this position and we drew it.

He was on my right side, with a *mašne* [Srb.: *bow*], with ironed pants, with shoes that you could use as a mirror, he was from Belgrade. I was casual, a boy from Kosovo, with modest clothes, but not like that.

⁵ Aleksandar Ranković was a Yugoslav politician, considered the third most powerful man in Yugoslavia after Josip Broz Tito and Edward Kardelj. Between 1945 and 1966, Ranković supported the control of Kosovo Serb minorities, mostly Albanians, through repressive anti-Albanian policies by the secret police. In Kosovo, the period 1947-1966 is collectively known as the "Ranković Era".

My father took care of my clothes, but I never asked for high-end clothes since it wasn't my money, I had to spare my father, normal clothes.

I drew the model, the guy from Belgrade was drawing it. I drew it fast, I had experience, he was in a two-year course, like a high school, it was called *šumatovačka škola*. A two-year school. And I took a break during the exam, we all took a break and came back. The professor told us to write our names in the right corner so I know which one belongs to you. I wrote my name, "Fatmir Kripa," so they would know because they read it as a "u", "Krupa," so I wrote it "Kripa," and that's how I graduated.

When we came back I saw an arm saw drawn under my name and I asked, "Darko," I said, "Who drew this? Did you see?" He said, "Why?" I said, "Why the saw, what is this?" (laughs) He said, "This is your symbol. *Zaštitni znak*. Your symbol." At first I didn't understand what *Zaštitni znak* meant in Serbian? I would have understood, but we didn't do these things in high school, I didn't know what it was, but I knew it wasn't a good sign. "But it's your symbol, you're a workman. Why are you doing art, workman?" He said, "I drew it there." And I erased it, it seemed like we argued before the entrance exam. We finished the exam, he had passed, he had passed in the first degree, and I would follow up with him, he was in the painting department, sometimes he would come, sometimes he wouldn't.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you choose painting as well?

Fatmir Krypa: No, sorry, another friend passed the exam, Darko didn't. Monday came and we got the results, so we worked for a whole week, until Saturday, five days, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, five days. We got the results on Monday at 8:00 am. I went there at 8:30 because I was curious to see the results as soon as possible. I saw the list, there were many people, I found my name, Fatmir Kripa, it was done. Then I searched for Darko Glišić, his name was not on the list, I took a look at the other list, his name was not on the list! I looked at other lists and there's no Darko Glišić. I said, "I wish I could see his face right now, that pretentious chauvinist."

I left the building optimistic and happy. Around 50 meters from the university, no, around 30 meters, there's a coffee shop where Branislav Nušić,⁶ Dositej Obradović,⁷ the Serbian writers hung around, they sad, they talked, they wrote, they mediated, they got inspired there, and they preserved it the way it was 200, 300 years ago. It still looks the same to this day, I noticed there's a ten-story building next to it, but the coffee shop didn't change. Every time I went there, before the war, and now I looked it up on the internet, a tall building was built next to it, while the coffee shop was the same color.

We went out, Darko with three or four of his friends were wondering whether they passed the exam or not, they drank a little, they got brave, they were laughing with each other. When I saw Darko I said, "This is good." I heard them as they were coming to look at the results, he came closer to me and I said loudly, "Darko, you passed the exam." In Serbian, he said, "Really?" Came to hug me smiling.

⁶ Branislav Nušić (1864-1983) was a playwright, satirist, essayist, novelist and founder of modern rhetoric in Serbia. He also worked as a journalist and civil servant.

⁷ Dimitrije "Dositej" Obradović (1739-1811) was a writer, philosopher, playwright, librettist, Serbian, translator, linguist, traveler, polyglot and the first Minister of Education of Serbia.

They're hypocrites, he forgot what he had said to me. He came to hug me to thank me and I, "*Položio si...*" I said to him, "The saw," I said, "That you drew for me, go get it and saw wood, Belgrade is waiting for you to saw wood, while I will go study." I said, "I will study, I will enroll on Monday, while you," I said, "Go get the saw." I never saw him in Belgrade during those five years I stayed there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was this the first you went to Belgrade from a small city?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes it was, we were on excursions, we went on excursion twice. I had knowledge on museums, galleries, we visited the Kalemegdan,⁸ Terazije,⁹ we were familiar with it, but it still was different to stay there, see people from up close and talk to people. This was something bitter for me, but fortunately it was a new guidance for me at that stage of my life. I always had to have in mind that there are other Darkos, not with the same first and last time, but there will be other people like that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did something similar happen to you again?

Fatmir Krypa: I was there with the late Agim Çavdarbasha, he was my friend in high school also, we both passed the exam, three others from Kosovo failed. We both passed the exam, Agim couldn't get a scholarship, he didn't have the financial means to continue his studies so I started the first year alone. When I started the second year, Agim started the first-year classes. I started the second year of studies, Agim got the scholarship and enrolled. So, I was alone in that generation. There was only one of us in each generation, in one generation there was only Shyqri Nimani, in one generation Rexhep Ferri, in one generation Agim Çavdarbasha and so on. To tell you the truth, you had to be political back then, to be good at what you do, to be good with people, not to brag about your art because they couldn't stand that, but when you did good work, the professor would say so.

I remember, during the first year, the professor who taught elements would grade us weekly, he said, "I will grade you for every work." And we would show him our work every day in the beginning of class and he would grade us, but he didn't tell us the grades. At the end of the month, he said, "I will tell you the result of the first month, from the first week to now. This person got a six¹⁰, the other a seven and so on." Then I started stressing, "Why didn't he tell us weekly, we would have gotten used to it." I looked at the colleagues around me, we knew each other more or less, we knew others were from, we would give compliments here and there to each other about the work. We tried to do good work, it didn't matter how we looked, Belgrade was big.

He said, "Fatmir Kripa," with an "i" and then he said, "Why?" He said, "Why Kripa? Why don't you say your last name as you have it?" Because he studied at the Academy of France and he was refined, he was very civilized, he wasn't like other professors. He had range and had culture, he had conversations, correspondence with students on a civilized and professional level. He said, "What is

⁸ Parku Kalemegdan ose thjesht Kalemegdan, është parku më i madh dhe një nga monumentet më të rëndësishëme historike në Beograd.

⁹ Terazije është sheshi qendror i qytetit dhe lagja përreth e Beogradit, Serbi. Ndodhet në komunën e Stari Grad.

¹⁰ Grade D on an A-F scale (A-ten)

your name? Your full name? I told him, “Fatmir Krypa, but if I wrote it like that,” I said, “with a ‘y’ you would read it ‘u’ and in Albanian is a *pogrdna reč* [derogatory term], it isn’t good.”

I said, “In Albanian we call it ‘krip’ and ‘kryp’ [salt],” I said, “It doesn’t matter.” He said, “Okay, that’s your decision, I asked out of curiosity. Now let’s see. You have a grade nine, you have a grade ten.” He looked up, “A grade ten and a grade ten, so one grade nine and three grades ten.” And up to that moment, no one had gotten such high grades. He was in the middle of telling our grades, he graded us alphabetically, he said, “You are the pillar. Do you see that pillar?” In the classroom, and I turned around and looked at it, I thought he was trying to say I’m head-strong or something. He said, “You are like that pillar that holds the class.” Then I realized that it wasn’t what I thought, he said, “You are the pillar of this generation up to now,” And I got wings (laughs) there was no other way.

We couldn’t handle things by force, some people would laugh at us, some would say something, but we had to be careful, we had to be diplomats, without actually being a diplomat by profession. We had to be an amateur diplomat and study a lot to be able to exist in a normal social circle. You could brag, but there was no one who could protect you there, who would protect you? You had to help your peers, “I’ll help you with this.” Or tell them when they’re wrong, “Hvala.” Thank them, or give them some sort of suggestion.

This was what was expected from you. Of course we would gain a small dose of sympathy, there was no other way. You had to be a gentleman, I even tried to copy one of my peers’ hairstyles. I had a lot of hair and I started to cut my hair {touches his head} like this, they said, “He is copying Tasa, Tasa cuts his hair like this.” They said, “You’re copying him, little Tasa.” Because he was older than me, he was around ten years older than me. The next day I changed my hairstyle. I wanted to blend in, I didn’t copy him anymore, I wanted to be myself.

I finished the first year and got close to my colleagues and professors. My older colleagues told me, “Look, here they observe you a lot, they evaluate and grade you, they grade every work you do, study a lot.” And I took this recommendation during the first days and finished the second year with this advice.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which one of you teachers was your mentor?

Fatmir Krypa: No, they were from Belgrade, different professors. Each for a different subject. There were dozens of professors. There was another exam for the second degree. This found me very engaged and motivated. Apart from us in Belgrade, the Academy of Belgrade, students also came from the first degree school in Niš, they came from other schools of Yugoslavia, they took this entrance exam. The competition grew, only seven people would be accepted to the Graphics Department, and around 35-40 people applied.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You decided then to study graphics?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes. Because the first degree is general. But it was still good, even though it was general, there was a class where we learned graphics. I thought I learned and gained a lot there. Why? I got a surprise, I thought about passing the exam a lot, I came to Belgrade a week before to get used to Belgrade, the noise, the life dynamics, with the language and everything. It was a big change to come from Peja or Gjakova where it was quiet, a car here and there, to the noise and dynamics there. You had to wait a few minutes to cross the road in Terazije [street in Belgrade].

I went there with some friends, they had exams, I said, "I'll come with you, we'll take a dormitory together. I'll wait there, I'll go out, get used to it, you can learn, I won't bother you." Since I thought so much about it, I didn't notice the time when the exam would be held, because we started our lectures at nine, for two years, our lectures started at nine. Why? Because there was no natural light early in the morning, and we needed natural light to draw. I went two days before the exam to buy the sheet, choose the position in the classroom where I can draw best, because the position is important.

It was convenient for me not to be frontal or side profile, half profile would be the right position for me. I took the paper and I wanted to put it there but the janitor didn't let me. I said to him, he knew me for two years, he didn't let me in, because I knew in which class the exam would be held. "I can't let you in." I told him I would give him money, "I can't let you in." I said, "I'll give you money to let me in." I showed him the amount of money, it was quite a lot, "I can't." I took the paper and left.

I went on Monday, twenty minutes to nine, but the exam had started at eight. Everyone already got in and placed their easels and I looked around and said, "What is this?" The class was full. They had thrown my easel into the corner somewhere, there wasn't enough space to even stretch my hand. I asked my colleagues, "Can you make some space?" Some came from Niš, some from Novi Sad, they didn't know, "No, why are you late?" My colleagues from Belgrade did the same, they wanted to narrow down the competition. I started with excellent grades and they wanted me to make some mistakes, fail the exam.

I moved their easels by millimeters so that I would just put my head and hand through. I drew it, it is hard just to listen to this story, let alone experience it. I went there with such ambition and now I was 40 minutes late, but by my account, twenty minutes earlier. I didn't start drawing immediately, I put it in position. I had heard that apples ease stress, as a student I read *Večernje Novosti* and I read it there. I went under Sava Bridge, there was a market there, I bought two apples.

They would sell as many apples as you needed, one, two or three, and I got two apples without even washing the apples I ate them near the Sava river. Danube and Sava meet there, I ate one, then the other one, I went to a coffee shop, got a coffee with a spoon of sugar, and drank it. After drinking the coffee, I got motivated, now all I had to do was go to the exam, they had already been in the exam for an hour and a half.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How long did it last?

Fatmir Krypa: It would end at 12:30, at 12:00, but I knew I could draw it perfectly for an hour, an hour and a half. But, I was in the back of the classroom, I couldn't see the model, I couldn't clearly see the model, that was the problem. And I went there, I tried very hard and finally I finished it. Maybe I could have done better, but compared to what the others drew, mine was excellent, but I could have done better. I say that I could have done better, I don't know, I couldn't even judge if I could have done better because I couldn't see straight from the stress. I calmed myself down, but you can imagine how I felt, I had a huge responsibility to myself, to my father who let me go. Today I paint graphics for my friend and I exhibit them all over the world. I experienced stress.

But when the exam ended and I passed, then I forgave myself, but I wanted more quality. I went there two days before the exam but the janitor didn't let me put the easel in the classroom. This was very ambitious of me, but as much as it was ambitious, it was also not allowed for anyone to do that. So, it wasn't allowed, "I just wanted to put it..." I didn't say anything and left, "No, no, no, you can't." This was what motivated me, I was the only one in the generation, and I finished it with such high success, I expected that, but I always thought I could contribute to myself. People can still say I'm modest, but I never thought I could contribute to my nation.

At that time, I had tens of books that I illustrated for the printing house Rilindja, sorry, the edition of *Rilindja*, Ramiz Kelmendi was the editor-in-chief and I can show you many of those books from the edition that I illustrated as a student.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You did them during your studies?

Fatmir Krypa: During my studies, at that time I thanked them because they motivated me to work in this profession. Ramiz Kelmendi, every semester break that I came, I would work with them, so I gained sympathy for the edition of *Rilindja*. Then other directors came, I have many books, tens of books for children, for grown-ups, libraries, today they're in archives, it's unlikely for random people to have them.

Many people tell me that they've heard my name somewhere, I tell them, "You've probably seen it in some book I illustrated." "Ah yes, I've read this book, I remember Fatmir Krypa illustrated it." So, it was helpful. Before I started this, the first book I illustrated and which motivated me to illustrate was Agim Ibrani's book, a funny book, maybe you've heard of it *Quo vadis, djalosh!* [*Quo vadis, boy!*] *Quo vadis, djalosh!* Agimi wrote many books, at that time on the radio it was, that book is very, I have it here somewhere, it was very current, very good. He also made jokes on the radio, and I illustrated the first book for him in the fifth grade of the High School of Art, I got quite a big payment, preparing for my studies, it was very good.

So, I gained sympathy with that edition, people from the edition called me on the phone, I illustrated continually. So, someone had to become an illustrator in Kosovo so I chose illustrated graphics. But, illustrated graphics, the cover, the illustration inside, the book was read, it was nothing. But I, during my studies it was under B [it wasn't as important then] figurative graphics, and after I finished my studies, figurative graphics had a high affirmative weight. The figurative cover couldn't be exhibited. I

did a lot of posters in Pristina at that time, my posters appeared all over Pristina in different events. But it only took walking from the beginning to the end of *korzo*¹¹ for the posters to be torn down, that's how long they lasted. This was kind of demoralizing for me because I worked hard for those posters.

I won awards, I won national awards in Yugoslavia, it was a big deal then. I had a few awards and it didn't feel good to see my work torn down, it seemed very... or they would read a book, like I said before, "Ah yes yes, I remember you I read this book, you illustrated it." Then I started to realize that the longest life of the creator is figurative graphics.

Part Four

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you go to exhibitions in Belgrade where graphics were exhibited?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, of course. It was a time where the food in the canteen was physical, while soul food was found in museums, galleries, daily. I didn't miss any of the exhibitions that came there. I remember when Van Gogh's exhibit came to Belgrade, in '67, '68-67, I think in '68, and the line to get in was infinite. My knees shook while I waited to get in, I almost fainted when I saw Van Gogh's work. I learned about him in high school, I learned about Van Gogh in Belgrade, I had written an essay for one of my friends, for her high school thesis, I wrote about twenty pages, I had learned a lot about Van Gogh.

At some point I got close to the door and I saw a part, a fragment of the painting, my heart started beating faster. I was wondering, "What is happening to me?" It was a huge impression, I don't know how to explain it. I approached Van Gogh's work, I shook when I saw every brush stroke, the roughness, and I stayed for as long as I was able to stay on my feet, I was the last one (laughs) to see them. They brought them with police, with protection, even Tito didn't have as much security as they did when they took them from the train station.

So, these events were, you couldn't avoid them because they were soul food, aside from the practical part that we learned in university, we had to get inspired by the experience of world art, because world's artists come out of Belgrade, that even in that school we got the knowledge that we needed. So, in the last year, I had a dilemma, I didn't know whether to continue my postgraduate studies in Zagreb or come back to my family and continue my studies later. It was a dilemma that was resolved easily, at that point, I was a father, I had my daughter Adriana. Now my parents were taking care of my wife and daughter also, so I had to get a job, and then continue with my postgraduate studies.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you get married?

¹¹ Main street, reserved for pedestrians.

Hysni Krasniqi: In '67, in '68 I finished my studies and came back to Gjakova, I started working at Hysni Zajmi School. I found very good friends there, new school, well-behaved students, they also started working hard. I showed them my work, they liked what I asked of them and they were successful. They were satisfied with their work, I was satisfied with their work, so the satisfaction was mutual. So I stayed there for around four years and I also had my second daughter.

One day during my break I got the newspaper *Rilindja*, the guy who sold came, his name was Islam, we called him Lam. He comes into the teacher's hall, "*Rilindja, Rilindja, Rilindja!*" I said, "Lam, give me one." Back then it was the only newspaper, I was looking through it and at the end I saw a job vacancy. I had never seen a job vacancy that long, Radio Television of Kosovo. *Au bllaj, bllaj bllaj* {onomatopoeic} so many job positions open, what is happening here? I read...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did the television open?

Fatmir Krypa: It was opening then, yes. I read everything there, what they were doing, cameraman, director, all these. Then I read they needed a painter - illustrator, Art Academy. *Ueee* {onomatopoeic} I'm here. It was winter time, late autumn, standing near the wood stove. I said, "Should I apply?" I went home and told my wife, I knew she wouldn't say no to going to Pristina, and I said, "Hyrije, there's a job vacancy in Pristina, there's a position for a painter and illustrator. Maybe past illustrations can be of use." Okay. The late Petrit Dushi was there and the next day I went to the television, to the director of production, Petrit Dushi.

I said, I am Fatmir Krypa, I studied at the Academy, this and that, I work, if you want more information you can contact Fahredin Gunga, the Publishing Office, the know, or Remzi Kelmendi, I said, "They're not random people, they can tell you. I've illustrated," I said. There was another young guy from Peja who applied, he studied in Belgium in a private academy. Petrit said, "You have to take a test. Come next Monday." I went the next Monday, he also comes. I said, "Why do I need to take a test? Here is my work, look at the books, the library, how many books I have, look at these illustrations, and look at the other candidate." He said, "I don't have an office to put you in, but we will work together. Me in one corner, and you in the other. Congratulations!" And he said, "You can start work next Monday."

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How long did you work here for?

Fatmir Krypa: I worked here for a year and in the meantime the Academy of Arts opened in 1974, the job at the Television was good, I made amazing friends.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What were the beginnings of the Television like? How did you work with television technology?

Fatmir Krypa: It wasn't a problem, I could go to Belgrade and follow the technical things, see how they work and I would stay there for about two weeks. A day, two, once I stayed for two weeks to see all they do, regarding my work. The work I did...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did you do, did you write...

Fatmir Krypa: I wrote, I drew, it wasn't just one job. And there I realized this job was not for me, it didn't show my knowledge. And my director, Riza Hala heard that I wanted to quit, I talked to some coworkers of mine, and, "Fatmir wants to leave?" "No, who said that?" Riza Hala called me, "Why do you want to leave?" I said, "I don't have an apartment, I might leave." "Don't, we'll see about the apartment." "If you give me an apartment, I'll stay, if not I will apply to the Academy of Arts. I will work with students there for three days, give my contribution to art, give my best." I said, "I can't give my best here, that's what's bothering me. Where can I find people like you, like him, like him..." I mentioned some, "Xhevat Juniku, I've never had such great friends." I said, "Okay, however you want." Anyway, there was a job vacancy in the graphics department at the Academy, I applied, as did three other colleagues, Shyqri Nimani, Xhevdet Xhafa, and Hysni Krasniqi.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In the exhibit?

Fatmir Krypa: Excuse?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: All for the exhibit...

Fatmir Krypa: For the job vacancy. So, there was a job vacancy for a graphics professor, and there were four candidates. To be honest, I didn't know where to write, I took it to Belgrade. Here there was no one who could do a recension, there was no one who had finished the studies before us. By law, a simple lawyer couldn't write it, they had to have art knowledge in the subject we were applying for. It had to be a professor of that subject. Since three of us had studied in Belgrade, me, Shyqri and Hysni Krasniqi, and Xhevdet Xhafa studied in Ljubljana, we decided to take them to Zagreb.

They took the recension to Zagreb, and I got a positive response, but one of the candidates, I won't tell which one because he's my friend, was very close to people in high political positions and he managed to cancel the vacancy. It was canceled and reopened, we applied again, now three candidates, Xhevdet Xhafa, Hysni Krasniqi, and me. Now we didn't send them to Zagreb, they had already spoken, "We have nothing else to write, we gave our opinion." Now we took them to Sarajevo. Sarajevo invited us there personally to see our work, how we would be as professors.

They said, "Do you want to improvise the class in front of students or the commission?" I said, the commission was asking this, "For me it's the same, but I think that I would gain more if we did it in front of you, you would know what to ask, you can ask me more professional questions than the students." They said, "Okay, you'll teach a class in front of us." I didn't ask what my other colleagues did.

Anyway, I did my best. It was over and a member of the commission said, "I like you as a person, we made our decision, but let's be honest, we're colleagues. I can't tell you who got the position, you will know when your faculty gets the news and tells you." I went to walk around Sarajevo and drink coffee with him, "I can't tell you who got the position." I was the last one to present, and he was impressed. I

noticed that it was a good sign that he was showing interest in me, I thought it was something positive. He said, “We will hear from each other again, we will write to each other, we will see each other again.” He was also a graphics professor. I didn’t spend time with the other commission members, they were more strict, Xhevat Hozo, Mersad Berberi, well-known people, they didn’t want to discuss this at all. I waited for the official results. The official results came from the Faculty of Sarajevo that Fatmir Krypa is chosen for the graphics professor vacancy.

Then I understood why my colleague trusted me enough to go for a walk with him, but he didn’t... he was discreet until the end. He could have told me, said, “Don’t say anything but you got it.” But at that time that was the pedagogical level. So, there I got the status of the professor, actually it was called lecturer.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Just to make it clear, so to get accepted in Pristina, your application was reviewed in Sarajevo?

Fatmir Krypa: First in Zagreb, then in Sarajevo, there was no cadre in Kosovo. I started working at the Faculty of Arts with a group of students who had just enrolled.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: They came from *Shkolla e Lartë* in Pristina?

Fatmir Krypa: No, they came from high school.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: There was also a two-year high school

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes, but not *Shkolla e Lartë*, but the first year after finishing gymnasium or art school.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: But students from the High School of Art had an advantage?

Fatmir Krypa: Mostly students who came from the art school in Peja, there wasn’t one in Gjilan. Now there is now, but back then, it was only the one in Peja. But they could apply after finishing the first year. *Shkolla e Lartë* was on another level, and the Academy was on another level. So, even those who came from *Shkolla e Lartë* had to apply, but we would accept those exams they passed in *Shkolla e Lartë*.

So I gained the status of a pedagogue there and then I opened a job vacancy for an assistant and accepted a colleague who had applied, Hysni Krasniqi. And after a while I told him to advance, I said, “Colleague, advance to a higher calling.” I mean, to have the right to lecture, have access to the staff as a pedagogue, not just an assistant, but to lecture. It was a different status as an assistant and a different status as a lecturer, lecturers were more privileged. So, that time... we won, we had two different classes of graphics and then we became rivals, and so on.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What were the conditions like at that time?

Fatmir Krypa: The Faculty was growing constantly, but we somewhat met the conditions to work and our contribution was huge, to do the work we did with students in barracks. The building we were in after the war, where it was... Do you know where the Academy of Arts is? It was for churches, we improvised classrooms there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where were you in the beginning?

Fatmir Krypa: In *Ferstudent* barracks.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What is *Ferstudent*?

Fatmir Krypa: It was for students, next to...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Architecture?

Fatmir Krypa: No, next to the Teacher Faculty [Faculty of Education], next to the church.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In front of the military barracks...

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, it was those military barracks, yes, yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So, in front of the Gallery?

Fatmir Krypa: Later, those barracks were for students to live in, the students left and we used them as classrooms. The conditions were very hard, it was very cold. You could light the wood stove, but it didn't heat up the barracks. The conditions were very hard, but our will was enormous. And we managed, as dean, I made a request, back then there was no Ministry, but Secretariat of Education, Science and Culture, a request to have a special building for the Academy of Arts. In the meantime, we developed, got stronger, we became the Academy of Arts and the Academy of Music. In the meantime, with Fadil Hysa's initiative, I took it very seriously, I pushed that initiative forward, you can ask Fadil who was the initiator, and he was the initiator, but I saw for the job to get done, to build and establish the Department of Drama.

One day a student asked me in the elevator, in Radio Prishtina, it was Fadil with one of his students, "Do you know who was the initiator of the Department of Drama?" He said, "No, I don't." He said, "One of the initiators is in front of you." And that's how it started. I went to Belgrade, I took all the elaborations needed to establish the department and they said they would help with reviews and instructions on teaching and we achieved an understanding and the Academy approved it and we opened the Department of Drama. When these three...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: This was with applied arts?

Fatmir Krypa: No, no fine arts, arts weren't divided, fine, applied, but it was visual arts, fine arts was called music, fine arts were graphics, sculpture, painting and graphic design, then we got music, then drama, and it was three. I was the dean and I made a request to change the building because of the conditions... I have gone to every office in the Assembly of Kosovo, to all politicians to try and find an understanding to open the Faculty, to build a building.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Now in '74 to...

Fatmir Krypa: And finally we the help of a colleague, Agush Beqiri, his brother was an architect, Qemail, we made a request, "Each group," I said, "Should take responsibility to see what sculpture, painting, drama, music needs, some characteristics that I can put on paper to show to the architect so he can consider them when planning the classrooms, the size, the lights." "Sculpture doesn't need natural light, I want the classroom facing the north, a constant light, it's the same in the morning and in the afternoon," said Agim [Çavdarbasha]. "Because now it's light, later it will be a shadow, it will ruin my position." And with these changes we made the project of a new building. After we did this, we requested the financial means. It was approved.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Which year, tell us the years.

Fatmir Krypa: Let me think.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How many years after it was established?

Fatmir Krypa: '79, '78-'79, sorry, sorry, it was '88-'89, '88-'89, sorry '87-'88, '87-'88.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How was it supposed to be built?

Fatmir Krypa: It was supposed to be built...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In what location?

Fatmir Krypa: Where the Church is, twenty meters in front of the Academy. That's how it was foreseen to be built, in two stages. They allowed me 500 million to the Radio Television for the cornerstone, 500 million to me for the Academy of Arts. Muhamet Bicaj, I remember it as if it were today, if he listens to this, he made me so happy that day. He called me that day at 8:00 am, Muhamet Bicaj was the prorector, did you know that? Anyway, he was the prorector, he said, "Good morning, Dean, and congratulations!" I said, "For what?" "Good morning, congratulations," he said, "The new Academy is being built." I said, "How?" He said, "Last night a meeting was held in the Rectorate for the realization of your request."

I said, "Muhamet, I can't hug you right now, but I will come to your office, or you come to mine, but not the prorector coming to the dean, I'll come to you and we'll drink coffee together, and we'll see what comes next." I went there, we drank coffee, we congratulated each other, I thanked him for the effort.

This happiness didn't last long. That money that they gave to the Faculty of Arts went to Ismail Bajra, also the money to the Radio Television, and not even 20-25 days went by and Milošević¹² get in all the banking instances.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did this and Milošević's speech happen?

Fatmir Krypa: That happened and he took everything, there was nothing there the next day. Everything was reversed, every decision, everything that happened until 00:00. Everything was different the next day, nothing applied anymore, there were new rules. The war started, the speeches started, everything started and those were left as just dreams. They called me twice, a girl from the Radio Television, she said that she would come to talk, but she never did, she said that she had found the right person to talk about the growth, the Academy that was supposed to be built at the Church, it would have been useful. Although they would have built it here where the Faculty of the Teacher [Faculty of Education] is, after... if that building existed, it would have been further away.

Part Five

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Let's go back to you professional development...

Fatmir Krypa: Work.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Work, yes. What was happening?

Fatmir Krypa: Since my studies, apart from the pedagogical work, which was my first calling, but apart from the pedagogical work, work which I did when I first finished my studies, I was also preoccupied with building myself in art and other forms so I don't remain in a province, even though I am in one, where the graphic art was not present, so in Kosovo. I traveled a lot, to France, Germany, Italy, England, Hungary, Greece, I researched and enriched myself with artistic creativity.

But, I always wanted to be that artist from Kosovo, from this region, who gives to art, one who would be embraced by Albanians from Kosovo or Albania, or any other artist from anywhere. To have valuable art, to have artistic values, not just motivation but also artistic values. So, this was my intention, to study it well, because graphics doesn't have an end, technically it doesn't have an end.

Today, a month ago, I found new things, a month ago, now that I'm consolidating into the new studio. I can't wait to move the new inventory and start working. I have a lot of new ideas. I have ideas in my

¹² Slobodan Milošević (1941-2006) was a Yugoslav and Serbian politician who served as President of Serbia from 1989 to 1991 and within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1997, and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997 to 2000.

head. I don't know how I can wait for next week to start. This is what I'm talking about, when something is accumulated, it will burst.

Art in Kosovo, our dream was to open exhibitions. That was our dream. When we started work, we didn't know how to illustrate to the students the work that they have to do. You would explain it with words, but there were no museums, not galleries for the students to visit, go there and see. The professors in Belgrade would tell us, "Go to the museum, go to this gallery, look, the second floor, look at this person, look how they worked." As I said about Van Gogh, when I saw his brush strokes, I got goosebumps, it seemed as if his hand was moving then.

This was a disadvantage for us, we had to make it better. I bought what I needed in the school where I worked, in Novi Sad, not here. I started making my first graphics in Gjakova and I have some exemplaries, one of which I have, you have it too, the Gallery has it, "Variola Vera"¹³ ["Smallpox"] was happening in Gjakova. I had recorded that happenstance in my works in two graphics, and from then I started dealing with this, opening my first exhibits in *Salloni Pranveror i Kosovës*, which we did with Engjëll Berisha, the painter Engjëll Berisha. He was the head of the Kosovo Artists Association and I took the initiative to make the poster, the catalogue, and exhibit in the Theatre of Kosovo. We opened the exhibit for three years.

We opened it for painters to compete, those who finished the Faculty, not students. We also made another exhibit for students to take part, we called it *Autumn Exhibit*. Students could also take part there with their work, but of course students who were in their last years of studies, there were members of the Kosovo Artists Association, and people who weren't members. So, a diverse generation was created there, and everything got more lively, we started to exhibit, we also got exhibits from abroad.

So the opening of the Gallery was a huge help for a place to exhibit, because the problem was the artist had the financial burden to make the catalogue and the place of the exhibit. Then in the Gallery, a commission was formed, who would evaluate the work, and would only exhibit work which was deserving. Not anyone could exhibit, "I'll just open an exhibit in the Gallery." When you had an exhibit in the Gallery, it had a special treatment. They had personal exhibits, then in some sort of foyer, but without any criteria. They exhibited in coffee shops, and so on, but without any criteria. There was no criteria. While in the Gallery, there was a commission who decided whether that work was worth exhibiting or not.

So, then started a... apart from the diversity with a rank of artists, professors and more advanced students started also having exhibits out of Kosovo. To affirm the work we did within Kosovo and the Gallery of Art, because I was also a member of the Artistic Council and the Purchasing Council, the work that was bought, we decided to exhibit first in Yugoslavia's region, in ex-Yugoslavia's republics. In

¹³ Variola Vera was an infectious disease caused by one of two variants of viruses, Variola major and Variola minor. Often those who survived had severe skin pain and some remained blind. The last outbreak in Yugoslavia was in 1972 when a Muslim pilgrim contracted the virus in the Middle East. Upon returning to his home in Kosovo, he caused an epidemic in which 175 people became infected, killing 35.

Romania during Culture Week, in Slovenia. There were exhibits during the Culture Week, so apart from drama, concerts, there were also exhibits, so a diverse culture, not just a consent, not just drama, but also visual arts. There were fine arts, applied arts, it was some sort of... and gradually we started exhibiting all over Yugoslavia, there were invitations, we also started doing individual exhibits.

I had an individual exhibit in Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik had another vice director in Varaždin [city in Croatia]. He told me, "Since you did it here, you have to do it in Varaždin also. So I did. So, a connection was formed in galleries and us as individuals and art in Kosovo in general started to develop. We started doing catalogues, the catalogues were left in the Gallery, someone would take the catalogue, someone would invite you to exhibit, they had seen your work, they had the address, the phone number. Like this I got invited to exhibit abroad, in many exhibits in the Modern Gallery of Ljubljana. I have done exhibits in over twenty states of Europe.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did these happen through the Association?

Fatmir Krypa: The gallery, the gallery, they had the catalogue and they chose, "From Kosovo I want to choose Fatmir Krypa." Done, "From Macedonia I choose this one, one, two, three." Done. Someone else from Serbia, from Macedonia, from Montenegro, from Slovenia and so on. They would gather 25, 30 painters, graphists.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did you promote the art of Kosovo, through the Association of Artists or through the Gallery?

Fatmir Krypa: It was more through the Gallery, because the Gallery had the staff who managed it better, they had correspondence with phones and directly with addresses and names of directors of different galleries. They would notify them, they would affirm their art in the art of Kosovo, they would send out invites saying we will exhibit Slovenia's art here and there, while they were participating with painting or graphics from Kosovo. So, an invitation would come and we would accept. So, the Gallery was like a bridge, we didn't have those connections as an association. We had an office, Engjëll Berisha, he was in that office for a long time, we would hold meetings, "*Blla, blla blla.*", we gathered works for exhibits, who would do this, who would arrange them and so on. Amateur volunteer work, amateur work, while in the Gallery it was more professional. There were the staff who arranged everything, wrote the messages, telegrams and so on.

Then they would come, letters and phone calls from Yugoslavia. So, we had correspondence with Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Belgrade. When the Museum of Visual Arts opened in Macedonia, they sent us invitations, "Who are those charitable artists who want to give their works to enrich our culture in the Museum that we're opening." A lot of our artists did, I remember I sent a graphic {points at the graphic behind him} *Hasjanja*, that one there. I gave them *Hasjanja*.

Also when the museum in Titograd opened, they invited me to send a graphic, I sent one to the Museum of Belgrade. These common exhibits were done in agreement that it would come and go as a notification of the art of Kosovo abroad, and they were curious to know what is happening with art in

Kosovo, because they saw the level of art in Kosovo. And so I told you when we exhibited in London in a gallery, they invited us to five other galleries after that.

So, I told you earlier since we exhibited in London, they invited us to a gallery, then they invited us to five other galleries who saw Kosovo's art there. There were many painters who did graphics and a few students who had just graduated and we formed a nice group who presented in London, a culture that had been going on for years and we were just amateurs.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: This happened in '85?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, we were amateurs. Art needs knowledge. I somewhat believed in myself, but not enough to know what they value, but then we started believing in ourselves more when we opened four, five exhibits, and then we got invited to Germany in two galleries. Then we were invited to Italy, also in Turkey. Art started to develop here, to breathe. There was no judgment about art in Kosovo anymore, it wasn't...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was there judgment about art in Kosovo, can you tell us?

Fatmir Krypa: Of course there was, it was a taboo, no one wrote about it, about art, no, no. In Yugoslavia there was nothing written about art, only what we have achieved individually in the faculties, proclaiming a bit, there was nothing. There were judgments, do Albanians know anything?

A student of mine applied to the Academy of Zagreb, I advised him to go there because the conditions are good. And that student developed well in those conditions, one of the best students of that time. In the meantime, he went from the Academy of Zagreb, in a collaboration with the Academy of Rome. The Academy of Rome's professors and students visited the Academy of Arts in Zagreb and they went to Zagreb. When one of the professors went to class, my student was painting, and the professor approached him to see what he's doing.

Yugoslavia had 22 million, there were six Academies and he asked the student, he saw he had done a very good job, a very good graphic, and he asked, "From which Academy of Yugoslavia did you come?" Meaning from Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Skopje, or Sarajevo. He said, "I thought about it first. I wondered why he was asking me? Is it good or bad? If I said I was from Pristina, he might not like it. And at some point I said, "From the Academy of Pristina." "Huh?" He said, "Very good," he patted my arm. "Very good, bravo." He started laughing and feeling more confident.

So, what our students had learned, what we gave them was very sincere and they praised it. So, we didn't hold back on our knowledge so they would get to this level. I said to myself, "If I have a good student, I become even better. When we have good friendships, we become even stronger, in graphics we become stronger." And that's how it was. Whatever I had in my mind I shared with my students.

The colleague I was working with, he was Serbian, we worked in the barracks as I said, but apart from working in the barracks, you can imagine what it was like to together work in a classroom, in a barrack,

an Albanian and a Serbian professor with their students. This was... there's nothing worse. But, the will we had to do something good was stronger. You couldn't expect to have great conditions, "I want the building, I was this." What do you want? Who would give it to you? Where? We asked for more, but these were the conditions back then.

As I was leaving the classroom, my Serbian colleague saw me with the student I mentioned now. As a student, he wanted to print the graphic, he had worked for about two, three weeks on it, but he wasn't sure how it was going to come out {points to the graphics in background}, the difference it makes. And I said, "It has turned out great, it's ready to be printed. Print it, I'll wait for you." It was a fifteen-minute procedure. My colleague said to me, "Let's go Fatmir, class is finished." I said, "I'll just wait for him to print it, he has worked on it for two weeks and I want to see the results."

The student printed it, got out the copy, and put it on the table, and I gave my assessment and told him that it was very good. Now, it was very good, but it was never enough, I wanted to see them do even better. And told my students, "It's very good, but improve it here, it will become even better." "Yes, Professor." "Don't print it out like this, work on this more, and it will come out great." "Okay."

We left the classroom and went to the teacher's room. It was the road filled with black locusts, I don't know if you remember. While walking there, he leaned into a tree and put his hands like this {crossed his hands} and in Serbian he said, "Colleague, you tell all that you learn in your atelier to your students?" I said, "What's wrong with that, Zoran?" "Keep it to yourself. Don't tell them everything. You won this knowledge trying hard, with your intellect. Telling them everything..."

I said, "Zoran, this student came to learn graphics from Fatmir Krypa, can he learn in these conditions? Do you see our library? There's nothing on graphics, there's Rubens, there's Rembrandt, classical graphic art but not contemporary art. Are there museums here? Are there galleries here?" Back then there were no museums and galleries. I said, "Where is he going to learn, knowledge doesn't come from the sky, if I won't teach him, if you won't" He said, "You'll see, he will never be thankful to you." I said, "Okay, so what? Someone will be thankful and see all I do." Like that professor in Zagreb that told him he was from Kosovo, he knew. My conscience, he wrote the request, "I want to learn graphics from Fatmir Krypa." I know how it's done, I can't not tell him and hold back.

Now when you look at it, art is discrete, it's true. In art, you can't know exactly how it's done. Muslim Mulliqi asked me about the can in *Malesorja* {points to the graphic} in the exhibition, "Tell how did you do it? It's very interesting." I said, "You have done paintings, Professor, when you start doing graphics I'll tell you." Jokingly.

It was sad to not tell the secrets to the students, it was a sin, they had nowhere to go to get information. Kosovo was closed, there were no exhibits. Where would they see anything? So... There are many, I don't want to mention names, but there are many students who come to visit me during vacations, they want to talk about things, professor-student relationships, now we're on the same level as creators and want to help art develop.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What were your relations to Serbs during those years, on the professional level, how did it work?

Fatmir Krypa: Well, the relations were more flexible.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you have common exhibits?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, the exhibits were common. The numbers were the same as the population, one in four, one in three. When there weren't any, there were Turks, Fevzi Tüfekçi from Prizren. So, there were also people from Prizren in exhibits, there were painters, sculptors, graphics and so... It doesn't mean that there were all paintings, but in general we didn't choose how many paintings or graphics we chose, we couldn't make them even, but in general we never did exhibit without three, four Serbs.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about these cultural exchanges?

Fatmir Krypa: We had tolerance among each other, for example, when there were any awards, they would give the award to the person no matter what when they knew they deserved it. There was no judgment or bitterness, they belong to this nationality or this nationality. We had moved past that, politics had moved us past that. Back then we couldn't say anything about that because of the communism association. We were all in one party back then, and that party had one voice. When we worked in education, we were all in a party, we all had one goal in mind: to increase the level of culture, education, civilization, and so on. So, there was no bitterness, no disunity.

Actually, I remember when Zoran got married, I was the only one he invited to his wedding out of all our colleagues, only his relatives, sister, mother, father, and I were there. Even though I gave him a lot of criticism, but he saw them as good things, because I never said them in a bad way, undervaluing his work, or with bad intentions, but as a colleague, and even good friends and family members give criticism, you can get better.

So, we had a mutual cooperation and during those studies we didn't notice, maybe because of the atmosphere we didn't notice. We went in, maybe we wouldn't like something someone said, but we didn't react, now we're all Albanians and with two sentences and the discourse gets rougher, voices raise, and you wonder what happened, for nothing. We used to not get mad at each other with students, keep a level of culture, a level of art and gain as much as possible from this so when we go to the places we get to work we would have some sort of...

I saw a friend of mine who is a painter on Facebook, I saw his painting on Facebook, a week ago I saw how he paints. I felt like he had changed, bit seeing his art and seeing his soul, you can see his artistic soul in art. When you analyze every line, every detail if you have time, the psychiatrist finds many things. [Skender Boshnjaku](#) is a neuropsychiatrist, you know, do you know Doctor Skender? He was a critic of exhibits, he assessed them, he opened exhibits in the Gallery, yes, Skender was permanent. He analyzed beautifully, as an artist and as a person, all of it. The culture, he rated everything, he makes you understand.

And so we thought these mirrored what we were doing, and I took an initiative, apart from these common exhibits we had, to make personal exhibits and these personal exhibits would be the biggest mirror of my art. So we would for once participate not as Kosovo's art but as individuals. I participated in graphic art competitions all over Europe and the world. I have participated in Japan and Europe, in Latin America. So, I have been present in many exhibitions, biennials, triennials across Europe... I have the catalogs, we can look at them, it's a considerable number.

Part Six

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Tell us about the exhibit you had in Albania and this cultural cooperation that happened in the '70s. How did you go? What did you see there? What kind of experience was it?

Fatmir Krypa: To tell you the truth, all we had was what the television, the press offered us, we didn't have access to the press. The press only had two pages, *Zëri i Popullit* [*The Voice of the People*]. We didn't have information about art there, only what we saw visually, when the promotion of a statue or the monument of independence took place, when it was inaugurated, we saw it on television and that's all we saw. I assessed it as much as I could through the television and when I went to see the Monument of Independence oooo {onomatopoeic}, it was a masterpiece. You could see the muscle, that art power those sculptures had put into it. So, paintings weren't promoted, only when there was no other way, when there was some inauguration or something, you could see those.

When we were in the Association and we were talking, "Let's open an exhibit. Let's open it in Tirana? Why not? We could call the Albanian Embassy in Belgrade and get the phone number of the Gallery of Arts in Tirana and we can open an exhibit." We called the Embassy, and they answered, "A very good idea, but you have to contact the Gallery of Arts in Tirana." In the meantime, they talked to the Minister of Culture in Tirana, the Gallery of Arts, within minutes they talked to them. "Look, the artist from Kosovo will call and ask about this..." And we called the Gallery of Arts in Tirana.

The Gallery of Arts said, "Yes, it is a very good idea, to come to Tirana and open an exhibit and the procedures, of course the visas from the Embassy of Tirana, tell us the day and we will make an appointment, a hall." We went there to get the visas, they all got it except me, my passport wasn't valid. They went by cars, vans, with the works of art, with the whole exhibit. There was Nuredin Loxha, [Shyqri Nimani](#), Agim Çavdarbasha, [Rexhep Ferri](#), me, [Blerim Luzha](#), I don't remember all the name, there was also Nuredin Loxha, I mentioned him. They all went with vehicles, Nuredin Loxha had to leave his car in front of Dajti, Hotel Dajti¹⁴ and not move it until the day we came back, he just had to fill the tank with gas and come back, he couldn't move around with his car, no. They had an agenda, they had cars, everything, I went crazy that I couldn't go.

¹⁴ Hotel Dajti was a hotel in the center of Tirana, Albania. It bore the name of Dajti Mountain nearby, it was the main center for international visitors and diplomats during the socialist period of Albania, it was purchased by the Bank of Albania and currently does not function as a hotel.

I was walking through the *korzo* and saw Rexhep Ferri's sister, Besa. She said, "Fatmir, I'm sorry that..." her brother told her I couldn't go because my passport wasn't valid, I didn't notice it was valid before that, I thought it was okay. Theirs were valid, they got in the car and went to Belgrade and came back. She said, "Look," she said, "There's a way, go check with Putnik, they have flights through Belgrade and Tirana on Wednesday." I was in the *korzo* near Hotel Božur,¹⁵ Putnik's offices were there, Putnik travel agency.

I saw the guy who worked there clowning the office, I told him, "Wait, wait..." he was Serbian, "I have something to ask you." He said, "Yes?" I said, "Are there flights from Belgrade to Tirana?" He said, "Yes." "When?" He said, "On Wednesday." I said, "Good, Wednesday. What about the ticket?" It was a small plane, there were around six or seven passengers, one stewardess and the pilot. If the pilot had a headache, there would be no one to replace him (laughs). When I saw the plane (laughs), I was petrified, a small plane with ten people inside, I took my passport, I went to Belgrade early in the morning and got the visa, I went by train to be safer.

I arrived there at 10:00 in the morning, I went there immediately, I got off the plane at 5:30 in the afternoon. I went and got it, the Embassy opened at 7:00 in the morning. I waited for the Embassy to open, at 7:00, I rang the door, someone came out, "Yes, what do you need?" They were informed that I was coming by plane from Belgrade to Tirana, and someone would wait for me.

So, I took the new passport and the visa. The ambassador said to me, "Don't be surprised," he said, "You will be surprised because *Rilindja* has 36 pages, while *Zëri i Popullit* has four pages." I thought to myself, I don't have time to talk and said, "It depends what's written on the pages, not how many pages there are." I was thinking of him just stamping my passport, I didn't want to be late. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I'm going to miss my flight." I went by taxi to Belgrade's airport. I got on the plane, my friends from Kosovo waited for me and we opened the exhibit in the Gallery of Arts.

The exhibit was so good, so accepted, it broke the ice... It was, I don't know, I've been excited for many group and personal exhibits but not like I was excited for that one. I wondered what Albania looked like. What did the motherland look like? What did the Gallery look like? What did the people look like? What did the painters look like? What... Everything was good, everything was welcomed, everything was civilized, we presented nicely, my colleagues and I tried to do our best.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Very different, it was very different from their art at that time. They were in realism, you were much more contemporary...

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, there was a comment about *Malsori* [*The Mountaineer*], another mountaineer had his back turned, "Why is his back turned?" They said, that one there {points at the graphic}, I said, "He is looking at something there, noticing things, he can't do that if he is looking at you." It was a little

¹⁵ Hotel Božur, a Pristina landmark, was the first hotel in the city. Today, it has been turned into the Swiss Diamond Hotel on Mother Teresa Boulevard.

weird that I had to explain that, that seemed abstract to them, even though it was real, the scarf, the details, everything was real. But why turn around? He can't see in any other way. How do you see it? How do you do it? You can't do it otherwise.

I supported it, but it was like that. Things were a little elusive, even though as artists they knew that's how it was supposed to be, but some were from higher politics, "Why did they do such things?" Accepting this kind of art, one of them was Edi Rama's¹⁶ father, Kristaq Rama, was secretary for culture. Edi Rama's father was even taller than Ed, Kristaq was.... And then we gave our explanations. But, the exhibit was welcomed by both sides, there were so many visitors during the opening but also during the whole month it stayed open. We stayed for about two weeks then some of us came back, Agim [Çavdarbasha] stayed there, Rexhep Ferri stayed there because his brother was also there, and I said, "I don't want to go," I said, "I want to stay one more week," I said...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You could continue your stay?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, yes, Shyqyri [Nimani] also stayed because his mother was there. The other came back with Nuredin Loxha because he had the car. When Culture Week '96-97 was happening, we went there, Culture Week of Kosovo, music, concerts, theatrical drama, we opened exhibits, personal and group exhibits, a few people. Muslim Mulliqi and I opened an exhibit, Agim Çavdarbasha opened a personal sculpture exhibit, Shyqri opened a personal exhibit and I joined a group of painters.

There were five other painters and I. So, there was quite a big group of artists from Kosovo in all genres and that was a great event. The wall was broken there, everything uncensored was there, so everything went great. Baton [Haxhiu] was the organizer, he said, "As the oldest from that painter's group, you welcome Sali Berisha." Sali Berisha came, he was the president of Albania at that time, and he came to the opening of the exhibit, and as the oldest I welcomed Sali Berisha, where the big mosaic is in the National Gallery.

I got in front of it, it was quite far. I welcomed him, then I explained those, I explained those with Baton Haxhiu, with a group of painters, Sali Berisha was with a person from the Ministry of Culture. We talked about the work, how the process went, how it's going, the reasons why we did it, it was very good, there was no politics, everything was transparent about art and good for people, about collaboration, to somehow get closer.

This was the exhibit, the second one was amazing for that time. I had an appointment after the exhibit I had in Skopje, after the exhibit I had in Tetovo, the museum had given me the appointment to open the exhibit in April, but because of health reasons, I had eye surgery and prolonged it. Now I have to make another request, even though I have the financial means in the Ministry of Culture, I have to make a request with the Gallery of Arts in Tirana, the museum, to make another appointment for me. I

¹⁶ Edi Rama is an Albanian politician, painter, writer, publicist, former pedagogue, and former basketball player who is currently serving as the 33rd Prime Minister of Albania.

have many colleagues, many friends, I have many admirers from Facebook who are waiting to see graphic art.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did they fire you in the '90s? How did it come to that political climate? How did they make you leave?

Fatmir Krypa: Like anywhere else, in the Faculty of Arts also began these processions of the then regime, the indications that something better should be done in their own way, and insisted that we bow to the work of one direction both in terms of art and in terms of pedagogy. The same colleague who I said didn't invite anyone else but me to his wedding, who I shared a classroom with. The colleague whose classes I taught for a year, he still got paid and went to study, to study in creating art, it was like a preparation for personal exhibits.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Like artistic research?

Fatmir Krypa: Artistic research, something like that. A year, the Faculty gave him a year off with pay, but he has to find someone to replace him. He asked me, "Will you teach my classes?" I said, "Yes, I'll do this for you, you can do it for me sometime also, go." He made the request, it was approved, he researched for the whole year, prepared for personal exhibits, traveled. It was the day of the entrance exam, and he came to ask me how many students to accept.

We stayed in quarantine from eight to twelve thirty, as long as the classes were held, in quarantine in the classroom, we could speak, talk, drink coffee. If you went out of the building, they would bring the sign-in sheet sometime at eight, ten, eleven, or nine, we never knew. We all had to stay there, whether you had work or not, we didn't have lectures, the students weren't accepted yet. We had to start going there when the academic year started, from 8:00 until 12:30.

My colleague Zoran Jovanović came and opened the door... from shame that he couldn't see his colleagues like that, how we were staying without doing anything. Professors who had many years of experience and we were just staying, we would eventually play a game or chess or something. He said to me, "How many students will we enroll this year in graphics?" I said, "As usual, three or four Albanians and a Serb." I said, "You can enroll two Serbs." He said, "You're thinking of that {rolls his finger} old procedure?" He said, "One in four." I said, "Zoran, this is how we used to do it, this is how the population is," I said, "the structure. You can enroll two for you, and three for me." "What do you think?"

I said, "Why are you treating me like this, like you're talking to," I said, "a pig? I held your classes for a year? You traveled through Europe with my money while I held your classes," I said, "like a boss." I said, "How are you not ashamed?" I touched him here {touches his throat} I just touched him, said, "I fed you for a year with my money." {Raises his forefinger} "Uh," he said, "Why did you touch my hand, you'll see." I said, "Wait, what happened?" "You'll see." He went to the room where the commission was.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Employee review commission...?

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, there was a group who monitored other professors whether they were coming or not, their council.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: For violent measures?

Fatmir Krypa: For violent measures, the Council of Violent Measures, he was a member of the Council of Violent Measures. He went and said, "Write this about Fatmir *rraaak, rraaak, rraaak* {onomatopoeic}" And there I understood what was going to happen to me. I sat there with my colleagues and the cleaner who I had hired when I was the dean came in. She came with a book and asked me to sign a letter for suspension, she said, "Professor, excuse me, can you sign this?" I said, "What is this?" Pretending I didn't know. She said, "You know, professor..." I said, "Okay bring it here." I signed it and she left. I said, "Colleagues, friends you will continue to be here, but I'm leaving." Musil Mulliqi was fired first, I was the second to leave.

So I continued work with my activity. I had an atelier on the 13th floor in Qafa, it was 24 square meters large, it was under the roof, roughly 20 square meters. How can you have a 20-square-meter atelier? You had to have a small bathroom, you had to have a small kitchen. You had to work, work where? I had to have a sofa if a friend would come to visit, but it was okay. The new academic year started. I told the second and third-year students, because I only had classes with second and third-year students, the second-year students on Tuesday, third-year students on Wednesday. I told them, "If you have something, I can continue working on Thursday also."

I wanted to give them zinc plates because they didn't have any. I had to give them all the materials because they didn't have anything. I had to heat up the atelier with heaters during the winter so it would be warm for them. But who even asks you about that? I gave them all my knowledge, never sparing anything, and this is how the first, second, third year ended, and so on.

And it was a surprise when one year they came, when the war was about to start in '99, the U.S. Ambassador for External Relations to Europe and Asia came, they divided them by continents, there's a Minister of Foreign Affairs in general and also one for Europe and Asia. He came to meet Rugova, President Rugova, and they ate dinner together. When he came the second time, after a few months, Adnan from LDK called me, "Fatmir, how do you know the Ambassador?" I said, "I don't, I've only seen him on television. I don't know him at all." "He asked to go to your atelier," he said, "to see you." He said, "He said that he wants to visit Professor Krypa's atelier and meet him personally."

I said, "No, I don't know him." Anyway, he said, "When can we come?" I said, "Whenever you're available." He said, "We will eat at three, and around ten minutes past ten we will be there." Restaurant Ora was around three hundred meters from Qafa, so they came by foot. They came to the atelier, Skender Hyseni... they sent three bodyguards beforehand. He said, "One has to stay here." I said, "No problem." He said, "The other one has to stay at the elevator downstairs and one at the elevator upstairs." The other one said, "Where do I stay?" I said, "Stay by the window. There's no other place

where you can stay, lean in there.” I said, “The other can come sit here, there’s not much space.” Anyway.

When they came through the door I introduced myself. He said, “President Rugova gifted me a graphic of yours three months ago, I put it in my living room. My colleagues, my friends, my family like it, I also like it. I came here to meet you,” he said, “personally and see the place where that work of art was created. I thought to myself, “*Kuku*¹⁷.” This was that one {points to the painting} the second one down, I said.... Skender Hyseni was Rugova’s translator then.

I told Skender to tell him, “Ardit Gjebra says, ‘Here I am’ [his song’s title]” I said, “But there’s not enough space here, but welcome.” There was also the secretary of the Embassy of Belgrade, Elizabeth Bonkowski, they were walking, looking at the drawings, I also put the student’s graphics. I said, “If you have time, five minutes,” I said, “two or three minutes,” I said, “to look at the student’s graphics.” They looked at them one by one and they were talking to each other, I said, “Skender, can I interrupt them in French?” I said, “To not let them talk for too long because it will be a problem to translate.” I said, “So it’s not troublesome for you.” “No,” he said, “They can talk and then I’ll translate.” “Okay.” I said.

When it was done he said, “They want to open an exhibit in Belgrade so you can somewhat be compensated for the spending you do for your students.” I said, “I can’t go to Belgrade, I am scared.” He said, “Where can we open it?” He said, “In the Embassy, in the Library on Čika-Ljubina [street in Belgrade]”. I said, “I’ve passed that street every day as a student, I have your magazines,” I said, “*Pregled*, culture magazine in Serbian,” It was about visual arts and all arts, it was called *Pregled, The Mirror*. “You took *The Mirror*?” I said, “Here, I have it.” I took three copies that I had, “Here they are!” I said, I put them on the table one by one *tak-tak-tak* {onomatopoeic}. “Ah, give me the address, we’ll publish them in Albanian.” I said, “Oh, that’s good.”

Anyway, we agreed that I would go to Belgrade and he said, “What are your prices?” I said, “I know the prices in Belgrade, but I’ll make an average with Kosovo’s prices. In Belgrade they would cost 600, 700, 800 more, here I sell them for 300, 350. So we’ll sell them for around 350, 400”. He said, “Okay, good.” We agreed that I would go. That happened, no... I asked to go with Edita Tahiri, I said, “Edita, since we’re going, you should come also.” There were four people, we were going to go by car. It was President Rugova, Adnan, Edita and the driver. She said, “No, no, no, you will go there by plane.” The war started in Prekaz, they fought for 24 hours. So, we didn’t open the exhibit and, after that, the relationship with Serbia was really bad, the exhibit never opened.

I didn’t care much for it, because I had already opened an exhibit in Belgrade, I showed myself, I held a lecture at the museum, they invited me. They invited me to hold lectures on graphics during the ‘70s... ‘88. In the year ‘88, the situation was complicated before it became confusing. The museum invited me to hold a lecture. When I saw my name there Fatmir Krypa *aaa* {onomatopoeic} my heart grew, I said, “This is good.” They had written my name with an “y”, the way it is. “This is the hour the lecture starts,

¹⁷ Colloquial, expresses disbelief, distress, or wonder, depending on the context.

this is the topic.” God helped me, but I also had prepared everything. I had printed that graphic there {points to the wall} and the museum bought it. The museum has it, I took it on purpose so they would see how it is properly printed. The museum director told me, “Professor, are you stressed, because the professor from Slovenia last night,” she said, “his graphic failed because he was so stressed.” “No, I have many pedagogical years of experience.” She said, “He was older than you and it failed.”

It’s really hard to do it, you have to work for around an hour and 40 minutes, think about what I’m talking about in the center of Belgrade and have it come out great. I thought about it, I prepared the colors and everything. When I saw my professors in the audience, there were more than two hundred people. I was stressed, I’ll never forget that moment. When you print the graphic and remove the letter, they can see how it looks, you can’t.

When I heard the applause *rra rra rra* {onomatopoeic} and they weren’t stopping, I turned it a little {pretends to hold a paper} and looked at it (laughs). I said, “Oh God,” I said, “Bravo.” I’ve never said that to myself, I said, “Bravo, and I’m thankful for the experience.” It wasn’t just for me, they didn’t see me as an individual anymore but as a nation, as everything. It came out great and when I saw my name six meters big, they had put it there. I said, “Thankfully, in the center of Belgrade,” But back then we didn’t have these kinds of cameras, if I had taken a photo in front of that, it would have been a masterpiece.

Part Seven

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Let’s go back, because we moved from ‘88 to the ‘90s, it’s okay. Let’s go back to ‘81 when you opened the exhibit in the Gallery of Art in Boro Ramiz and the two delegations were supposed to come, a little more specifically.

Fatmir Krypa: It was, it was an interesting event and politically elusive at that time. As I said, there were the members of Communist Association, we all were, especially I, when you work as a dean and director of post-university studies, they try to give you all the work. He’s working, let’s give him more. But, when the exhibit happened American were planning to come, they had notified the Gallery that they would come to the opening. But in the meantime they were informed that another group from the Embassy of Russia would come to the exhibit opening. Now the Russian-American relations weren’t good, and we couldn’t have them meet there.

I would be the victim in all of this. And we found a solution, the Russians compromised to come later, “After the exhibit’s opening, we will come.” The delegation from America came the opening and they were in the front line. I don’t have pictures with them unfortunately. I explained to them each graphic, how I got the idea, how I made it, they were interested to know.

I was stressed, I thought something might happen to the Gallery or to me as a person, or there would be confusion, the relations weren’t good, something might happen, but everything went smoothly.

Both delegations were content, the American delegation was there, I was able to take pictures with them. The towers thanked me for welcoming them, I also explained the work to them and everything was okay. So, these things happen to artists. It's good that you reminded me of it, I forgot, these aren't random things, but this happened and things like this will always happen in exhibits.

I also had *grafički kolektiv* [Srb. *Graphic collection*] in front of the Hotel Palace in the center of Belgrade. A professor of the Academy was planning to open the exhibit. He said, "I want to open the exhibit." We tried to keep good relations, it wasn't like now, there are no relations. You can't imagine, but we tried. He said, "I will open the exhibit." I said, "Okay," I said, you know, "I want to." Unexpected things happen in exhibit openings, my professor Mihailo Petrov,¹⁸ who founded graphics in Serbia, wasn't invited to the exhibit but had found out through television, radio. He found out the time and date, "Fatmir Krypa was my student and they didn't invite me."

He came and had a conflict with the Gallery, while the exhibit was about to open. It was quite an unpleasant thing. They finally accepted they were wrong, "We're sorry, Professor, it was unintentional." He said, "You didn't invite me to see my best student. I found out through the media." He was old, he was retired. He came revolted, I was so scared my exhibit would be ruined in the center of Belgrade, *kuku*.

My wife [Hyrije Krypa] left me sleeping in the Hotel Palace. I woke up in the morning, I sleep very soundly. I woke up, the Gallery was in front of the hotel, ten meters in front, just across the street, and I looked at the Gallery, there was no one there yet, and we waited. "Let's go eat breakfast," I said, "Did you sleep?" She said, "I didn't sleep at all." I asked, "Why?" "I don't know, I couldn't sleep." I said, "Hyrije, why couldn't you sleep?" She said, "*Kuku*, I was thinking..." I had the collection of *Malësorëve* [*The Mountaineers*], she said, "When they see them, they're going to go crazy." She said, "Who knows how they will feel about the exhibit." I said, "I have to worry about that, when the work is done well, the topic..." anyway. She stressed me out too. I was just waiting then I went to the Gallery. I saw a colleague from Belgrade waiting at the Gallery.

"Good morning," he said in Serbian, "How are you?" He said, "I'm here to help you arrange the work. I came because I was very glad when I saw the invite that you're opening the exhibit. I came to surprise you. I want to help you arrange the work." Because they didn't have someone to arrange the work like we do in the Gallery, but you would do it yourself or someone would help you, you had to look at the gallery to know how much work can fit in there. I had visited it daily, I had been there to hundreds of exhibits. And he came, I felt better, I said, "Look, Hyrije, how gladly they come, they know what I do, what I create."

Then I changed some things because you can't always work the same, it becomes monotone. You can keep your creativity, handwriting, you can keep the language your art speaks, but you don't necessarily always say the same thing {points to his work}. It becomes monotone no matter how

¹⁸ Mihailo S. Petrov (1902–1983, Belgrade) was a graphic artist, painter, illustrator, poet and critic, professor, compiler and printer of books and posters. He studied painting at the art school in Belgrade with professor Lj Ivanovi dhe and M. Milovanovi ((1919-21), and continued in Vienna (1922), Kraków (1923) and Paris (1924-25).

beautiful it is, however good it is, it runs out, it becomes boring, you take it gallery to gallery. “I saw it, it looks like the other one.” And the exhibit is left unseen, no.

When you have the technique, when you cultivate the technique, now I’m not saying... I tried to offer lectures to the Faculty in Albanian, but they’re jealous, “No, only if you want to come to a workshop.” Where, this has many problems, it’s very problematic for a workshop. Do you know when you can go to a workshop? You can go to a workshop only when you have knowledge and you want to increase that knowledge with other things. Now when you’re hearing about something for the first time, you can’t have a workshop, workshops require a base, knowledge. It doesn't matter how Fatmir does it, it doesn’t matter if students learn something. I offered to lecture, this and that, “We’ll see, we’ll see.” They had invited me themselves in ‘86, they invited me for graphics, Shyqri [Shyqri Nimani] for design.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In ‘96 or ‘86?

Fatmir Krypa: In 86, I confused them, in ‘86 to lecture. But the situation was as it was and we didn’t go, they would get our passports and not give them back, and it was left as a dream. I said, “I want to come, I’m retired and I can contribute.” But they said, “No, you can only do a workshop.” That’s a joke, it’s...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Are you talking about after the ‘2000s, when you retired?

Fatmir Krypa: Who?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you retire?

Fatmir Krypa: It’s been...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: But it’s after the year 2000, not in ‘96.

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, look, I was in Albania recently, I’m talking about after I retired. In ‘86, they invited me to lecture..

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When Enver Hoxha died.

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, then, they invited me, but we didn’t dare go. What I’m talking about is after I retired. They invited me in ‘86, way before. I was still strong then, I was still making decisions, but that aside, we wanted to sacrifice, but we didn’t want to be victims. They would take us, there were many obstacles because in education we were very monitored. They invited me as a secretary of the party. There I realized that I can contribute to professional and social work, not just art.

They invited me to the Municipal Committee, there was once an informative case conversation, I gave opinions about some friends, I gave opinions about some colleagues . “You, as the party secretary, give some opinions. You have some problems there,” I talked back with a risky tone, but I thought it doesn’t

matter what happens, sometimes it's not about politics, but amateurs, in an amateur way. It was the right decision. I said, "Wait, when we opened these exhibits in Yugoslavia, in Romania during Culture Week, we exhibited in Slovenia, in all of these galleries, these were the colleagues and students who did that. Those colleagues affirmed Kosovo, this structure, this country. Now we want to put them down? Do they deserve that?"

"No, but we have to find, think about it..." I said, "Look, I won't leave the office with the words, 'Think about it,' because that means I have to come back and report to you. I will not come back here." And I ended my political engagement there. I said that I will never engage in politics again, because it was all about the contribution, some people could say bad things about someone and put them in a bad position. The situation was complicated to be able to survive as a creator, as a pedagogue and as a person. Which meant if I talked poorly about my colleagues, I would automatically get fired. This is how they fired Fehmi Agani and many others, gradually.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Let's stop at the war, that period in '99. How did the war start for you? I mean, it started the same for all of us, but how did that period find you?

Fatmir Krypa: To tell you the truth, it is twice as hard for creators because of the emotions, because people can survive with a mouthful of bread. But artists cannot survive when they don't have the conditions to create, it is very hard and it's the same, just like you cannot survive without eating, you cannot survive without feeding the soul. You fill up your stomach, but feelings, you need new things, new ideas fly through your head. You can't unload them. Art needs quietness, and, to tell you the truth, we had an ax over our head twice, as a pedagogue and as a creator.

The building where I had the atelier belonged to the Secretariat. First four floors belonged to the residents, and the other part up to the twelfth floor belonged to people who worked in the Secretariat, either policemen or civilians who worked in offices, but regardless they worked in the Secretariat. They did their job whether they were wearing the blue uniform or not, they had to report everything they saw and heard.

I told my students, "Don't gather at the elevator, come one by one. 'Where are you going?' You can say number 34." So they wouldn't send anyone. I was scared they would bring the wolf to me as a pedagogue. Where can you find inspiration? You had to keep up hope that things would get better, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow when all those protests were happening. I have a painting I did inspired by the protests. I was inspired that day, I did a small sketch and now I painted it. I did it the day that the protests were held, I heard them, they were chanting in the streets, "Marshal Tito," there at the National Theater, at the *korze*, that's where they protested.

Where could I find inspiration? But sometimes you have to do it any way that you can. There's nothing else, wait for today, wait for tomorrow, there was rancor, art was needed, galleries were inviting me to exhibits, we had to be quiet, no. I didn't want to be quiet, I would send them graphics. I got on the plane, I went to Switzerland, I opened an exhibit in Châtel, Lozana, Zürich, I opened three exhibits

within a month and a half, each 15 days. It was actually Agim Ramadani was like a Secretary of Culture in Zürich, his wife had opened my exhibit.

You knew, it was sad, something worse was going to happen and you had to go open exhibits, spend money, spend material, give material to the students. When I think about this, I think there's just some energy that overtakes you, now listening to myself talk I wonder if someone is saying this, all of the things I did, or has someone monitored my work and is saying them. No, I have the document, I have the photographs in Zürich when they came with drums to open the exhibit, with national clothing, I have the photographs. I took my nephew, my daughter's daughter here in my arms, "Grandpa." It's very emotional.

But, these were, there were also some good things, the attention to our culture, the newspaper would write about it. I felt good, I felt good, I have those newspapers, the quotes, Albanians felt good. "Albanians, *Albanien, Shqiptar, Kosova, Albanien, Shqiptar, Kosova, Albanien.*" They would look at the situation differently when they knew you were Albanian also. It would increase our role, they thought that our rating was increasing. Many exhibits that I opened...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Where were you when the bombing started?

Fatmir Krypa: Bombing, I was in the classroom, I was... yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In your atelier?

Fatmir Krypa: No, no, in the Faculty.

[The interview cuts here]

Fatmir Krypa: It's a situation that everyone has experienced in their own way. It wasn't unexpected, it was expected, but we didn't expect what happened after the bombing. But, I had secured my work in big slides more or less. I had taken pictures of all my work in slides, they're there. All that I had done until then. And the worst happened, I couldn't take anything with me, only those slides, I could hide them somewhere. When the war came, the bombing happened, we had to leave Kosovo, we had to leave Pristina, a night before the police came and told us that we had to leave our apartment by tomorrow at 8:00, 41 families, we had to leave the apartments.

The police force stationed under Bast Trade because the police station was bombed. They came there, and so they felt more safe, so we wouldn't be there, because we lived next to Bast Trade, they expelled us from there. "Okay, what could we do?" I told my wife. "Let's pack our most essential things and leave." We took our documents, I made another layer of the bag, my tailoring skills came in handy here, I made another layer and put all our documents there, I put a paperboard over it then sewed it. I put all our original documents there, copies, and I said, "You hold this bag. If the police ask for documentation, we'll give them these." I put all the property owning documents there, I had a house in

Gjakova, I put them under there, I sewed it and they would never know, we put clothes on top, like nothing.

The morning came, we started leaving the building. My wife said, "Let's ask a friend," of hers, "Will she welcome us at the Third Local Community in Pristina." It was in Dardania. She said, "You can come." I said, "We have everything." I had gotten sausages, two packs of eggs, flour, pasta, sugar, butter... I had prepared everything. We had heard from Sarajevo that war lasts long and we prepared. I took everything and I said, "We have everything," I said, "You don't have to worry about feeding us." We stayed there for a night and the next day the police came into that neighborhood and expelled everyone from their houses. In the afternoon they had emptied the whole building and we got into cars and left for Macedonia.

When we almost got to Macedonia and I said to my wife, "I made a mistake," I said, "I forgot the slides," I said, "Now they'll ask who I am. I am a painter, a professor, a graphist." "Where are they, how can we know?" "I have nothing." I had prepared all the slides. I almost went crazy, we stayed there for a week but we couldn't do anything, life is sweet, when I saw people dying, there was nothing I could do, I had to accept it. We stayed in Macedonia for a week, then two months. When NATO intervened, the landlord where we were staying looked at me, I was confused...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mean when the troops intervened at the camp?

Fatmir Krypa: Yes, the troops got in and we were watching television. He was looking at me, to see my reaction, I was cold, I don't know what was happening to me, I lost my feelings, I was in shock. I was distracted, I wasn't *hooo* {onomatopoeic} yelling or something, I was lost, I don't know why that happened to me. He looked at me and said, "Uncle Fatmir, are you not happy that NATO intervened?" "Yes, of course, how could I not be happy!" Now I was feeling it. He said, "If you want, tomorrow is Saturday," he worked in a bookshop, "We can go on Sunday morning, the day after tomorrow." He said, "We can go and see Pristina and the situation there. Don't worry about it." I said, "Yes, we can do that, God knows what they have done there." He said, "We'll go and see." And that's what we did.

On Sunday morning, we got into his car and we came to my apartment. When we got near the apartment, in the army we learned, because I was in the army (laughs), we learned that when the enemy leaves, they leave mines at the doors so they could explode when you open it. Naser, the owner of the house where we stayed, had also been in the army, he knew that and I could tell that he was scared. I said, "Naser, don't be scared. If you're scared, go and stand after that wall, I will go inside first." I noticed he was scared. We got inside and even though we had closed the windows, we were near the barracks, our apartment would shake from detonations.

They had opened all the windows, it was messy. There was dust, you couldn't tell if you're inside or outside. I said, "Naser, let's eat some food here," we had taken food, "And then let's go to the basement." I had hid all my graphics in the basement. I had made a thick door for the basement. A door that was stronger and couldn't bend. It was very strong, the only way to get in would be with mines, there was no way to break it.

I was worried that someone would get it in there, what would they do. When I went there I saw my graphics there, I said, “Naser, now we can eat, we can talk, do anything.” Now a few neighbors came out, we gave them the leftovers of our food, they didn’t even have food. I gave them the bread, cheese, and half of the Coca-Cola we had. They were terrified. They had stayed, the woman limped, she couldn’t walk, and the man stayed with his wife, they stayed there all along, they were terrified.

So, then we came back to Macedonia and got our families, we came back here, we recreated our lives, I modified my apartment, the terrace. I turned my terrace into an atelier, I sold the atelier I had, I made this one biggest, 60 meters. There I developed my work, I’ve worked there since liberation until a month ago. I haven’t worked in a month because I was waiting to bring the graphics, the table and so on. Buying stuff, doing something, I brought the table, I brought the chair, trying to complete it. I haven’t done any art during this month, I just oversaw the process of moving.

Now I believe the weather will get better, I have heating here, I can heat it up, but I haven’t turned it on. I have two-three radiators, but I haven’t started working yet, so I didn’t want to make unnecessary spendings. Now I have to think about a retrospective exhibit as a summary of this conversation.

Part Eight

Fatmir Krypa: I think of doing the exhibit I couldn’t last year at the National Museum and participate in a few biennales during this year. Participate in a few of those with new work and the latest plan that I have is, if we’re able to do eight zero zero, do one about the ‘80s and in two years make a retrospective, a big catalog, give it a national color, because these graphics that I have all smell like war, they’re burnt in the back. They smell like war, they’re burnt. This one is *Ekzodi [The Exodus]* {points forward}. These are things that I’ve experienced and put into my work. So I plan on making a monograph which will conclude my work with all those vicissitudes, with all those desires, the time when my colleague drew a saw [refers to the story of the entrance exam at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade].

Now imagine if I had a camera to capture the saw under my name and I didn’t even know what that symbol meant. After three months, I went out with a friend and explored Belgrade, I was in the first year, I didn’t know Belgrade, I didn’t know life in Belgrade. And we went behind the National Theater of Belgrade, Narodno Pozorište, The People Theatre, there’s a bazaar there. We walked around, we saw some Albanians talking, one of them had a saw in his hands, one had a pickaxe, and the other an axe. Albanians were doing manual work and that’s when I understood what meant when he drew the saw, this is what you’re supposed to be doing.

Can you imagine, you have to calm yourself down, there was no one else to do it. The only time was when the professor told me, “Ti si ovaj stub” [Srb. “You’re this pillar”], for this class. My self-esteem increased, as if I was holding everything together. No one had three grades ten and a grade nine, no one. One of them had one grade ten and two grade nines, the others grades seven. I was the best. There was another student, she was from Novi Sad, she was also good. Another girl from Hungary also had good grades, she had two grade tens, a grade seven, and a grade nine. So, you needed to gain sympathy there, from professors and colleagues so you could continue doing your work.

I forgot to tell you this event that was drastic in the second year. The technique of lithography is like this, there’s a white stone, flat {rubs his hands} and you work on it and clean it completely of oils and draw with oil pencils, or with oil ink, with oil quill, with whatever you want {moves the hand as if he’s drawing} with a brush, with whatever you want, that technique endures and you can do the work. After you’re done with the drawing, you have to use chemicals to be able to press it, chemical procedures. When the professor saw my painting, he praised me “This is really good...” he liked it, this and that.

A Hungarian, as the professor was leaving, the class was done and he was leaving, he said, “Professor, Professor,” he said, “May I ask you something?” He said, “Yes?” “When I’m done, how do I finish the chemical procedure?” He said, “What do you need me for? Here’s Kyrpa.” He said, “He can tell you.” *Kuku*, he was pretentious and he told him, “What do you need me for? Here’s Kyrpa.” “On sve to zna.” “He knows all of these.” He said, “Ask him.” His ears turned red {touches his ears} his face also, he just went out. But when I came the next day, because I didn’t print it, I mean I had gotten it ready but waited for the next day because the procedure took a long time. The professor said, “It’s all good, just print it.” I thought I’d do it tomorrow.

What did he do? He got his hands oily with pie, because there was a bakery near the Academy, and he touched the details in my drawing that I couldn’t erase, that I couldn’t intervene because it would get ruined. He touched it, they come out as stains, back stains that you can’t see. When the chemical procedure is done, you can tell that the stone absorbed the oil. You could see the fingerprints there, *rraak* {onomatopoeic} he had touched it.

You couldn’t tell beforehand because it was one with white stone and black ink. But the oil in the details. When I put the chemicals to highlight the lines, I had done with oil, he had touched it. When I saw the fingerprints, I almost went crazy. Now it didn’t take much intelligence to figure out what happened, to know who did it. I asked for the assistant and told him “Look, one of my colleagues did this,” I said, “The professor told me it was all good, I just had to do the chemical procedure,” I said, “How did this happen? As he was going out, he asked the professor how to do it, the professor told him that Kyrpa was here, they didn’t need him.” The assistant felt bad, if he had told the professor maybe he would have expelled that student from the Faculty.

He advised me not to make the situation worse and, “You will draw another one, so the professor doesn’t take into consideration the bad behavior of your colleague, we know what happened, but you can do it again, and as a reward you’ll get the grade you deserve.” You can imagine what I went through, the first one was during the entrance exam, while this happened in the second year, this was

in the second year with my colleague. You can imagine how he felt the day when I was late for the entrance exam, he was glad that I made a mistake, that I lacked concentration, that I was at the back of the classroom and couldn't see. And in these hard circumstances, I made it and sometimes I tell myself "aferim" [Turkish - "well done"], not just say it, but...

I have done enough for myself and I'm still trying, when I was on Facebook, when the Museum of China, the Central Museum of China bought my graphics. It's a big deal because your work is in that museum continually and many many people feel proud. I have around four thousand fans on Facebook and they all felt proud that a colleague, a person, a creator from here managed to open an exhibit there, that my work was bought there, they will be exhibited there forever.

This gives you motivation. A relative of mine came and asked me, "What are the prices of your graphics, and are you selling any?" As if we were in a market. I said, "One, or two," You know, how many I'm selling, "One, two." I said (laughs), what can I tell him? "Look," I said, "In the past I've sold more, the awareness was higher. In these times, the awareness is lower because I have increased the quality of my work, but there's no sales." In the past there was more poverty, but people bought them for their shops, houses, or as gifts from one city to another.

There were so many sales that I even got my wife involved to help me with the process of printing graphics because I couldn't catch up. I had offers from abroad and from here. LDK, everytime someone would come, because once President Rugova came with a delegation and I sold around ten graphics to them, they came to my atelier. I don't know if you know where Restaurant Ora is, at the Assembly, I heard that now it's a hotel. President Rugova took the delegation who came there to eat. That was where he stayed.

A guy comes to buy some graphics, Masari, he said, "Professor, I'm here to buy some graphics." I said, "I like the word 'some'". How many is that? He said, "Around ten." I said, "Come on in." He came and picked them and he said, "How much do they cost?" I told him the price, it's different when there's just one, and different when it's ten." He took them, covered them. As he was leaving, he gave me one hundred marks, back then we used marks. I said, "Masar, what are these?" "I'll bring you the rest tomorrow or the day after tomorrow." I said, "Masar, I need to buy materials, I have to go to Turkey, France," I would buy the paper, "I import all my material, there's nothing here." He said, "I'll bring them tomorrow." I wondered why I gave them to him. I thought if he didn't bring me the money in one month or two, I would go to his restaurant and take them back, he won't go anywhere.

When I went home I told my wife, "Yhh I sold ten graphics today, so and so." "Au, nice, to who?" "To Masar for Restaurant Ora." And she said, "Good, what about the money?" I told her that he gave me one hundred marks and will give me the rest later. "What kind of a person is he? All that effort, all that endeavor, and you just gave them to him?" "Look," I said, "I am the son of a trader," I said, "Don't worry." I was trying to justify myself somehow. I said, "They will be exposed in the restaurant, it will be like a mini exhibit. Ten graphics are a lot." And at that time you couldn't exhibit anywhere, Serbians had taken everything.

It was the year '96-'97, when they went to the restaurants they saw them there. When delegations came to Rugova, they would sit there and see the works of art. One said to Rugova, "Who did these graphics?" "Why?" he said, "Do you like them?" He said, "Yes, I like them a lot. They're very well done technically." He looked at them closely, because you have to look at graphics closely to see how they're done technically, the details, how is it printed... He looked at them, he said, [Adnani \[Merovci\]](#) told me after that, "He looked at them" He said, you know. He told [Edita \[Tahiri\]](#), "Edita, go ask the professor to have two graphics ready." I wasn't at home, I didn't have a phone, I was in Gjakova. She called someone, "Where is Fatmir?" "He is in Gjakova."

Edita called me, I was in Gjakova, it was Friday, I wanted to rest a little. Hyrije said, "Edita is calling you." "Yes, Edita?" She said, "So and so..." she said, "President Rugova is asking for two graphics," so and so. I said, "Edita, when do you need these graphics?" I said, "Right now I'm in Gjakova." She said, "Can you have them by tomorrow night because they leave then?" "Yes," I said, "I can." I woke up in the morning and came back, what could I do? I made a sacrifice, I got them ready for them. They liked those graphics, "What, graphics here?" It was a very valuable gift, gifting artwork, "Who is this professor of our Faculty, Faculty of Arts?" You know, they were saying "Aaa {onomatopoeic}".

Then when they came like this, Rugova wanted to bring them to my atelier. Where? The atelier was small, Edita was there a couple of times, Adnan was there, Adnan had to go to his office... Time after time I would go to Switzerland where my daughter lives, I would tell Adnan, "Look, I left the graphics there for you, you can go pick them up, my son will give them to you." I would write the titles on lids, put them in plastic tubes, even if you threw them out of a plane nothing would happen to them, I packed them very professionally.

The next year I told Adnan, "Adnan, I'm going to Switzerland, I left the graphics with my son." "Kuku, no." I said, "Why?" "It was so hard to get in contact with your son." He was young, he would stay out late, he had called him all day long, "Hello, hello!" No answer. Adnan had called him until midnight. He said, "Please bring the graphics to me, I'll keep them in my office, within a month they will sell out." And this was the life of an artist in a small atelier, in bad conditions and in not favorable political conditions, and at the same time giving knowledge to students.

It was a mess that I hope never comes back, I don't know how I got through it. When I think back to that time I painted *Trungu Ilir [Illyrian Tree]*, *Zogu i Lirë [Free Bird]*, *Mollën e Epër* {points to his work}, I don't know if I could do them in these conditions. When I look at them, you know, I was inspired when the propaganda stopped, when television and radio had the right to speak whatever they wanted to, I painted *Zogu i lirë*, so a free bird flying, you were free, yes. This one, *Molla në tokën e epur*, a burnt ground, but still preserved.

There were some things, now those at *New Born*, after the war, these things. That graphic is also very good {points to the graphic} the one with the pears, when I think of the conditions I worked in... one day when one of my students was cleaning, he lost my *shaber*. *Shaber* is a scraper, it's a German word, when he threw out the trash he accidentally lost it. He didn't notice that the scraper was mixed up with the pile of trash and he threw it.

I used to say, “Don’t leave your trash here. Take it on your way out, so the next day you come you’ll find the atelier clean, warm, and you won’t wait by the door even a minute.” The student who lost felt so bad about it. When he came to the next class, I said, “Where did you leave the scraper you used yesterday? I needed it, where did you leave it?” “Professor, I left it here on the desk.” I said, “No one was here, I came after you. Did you throw it out with the trash?” “*Kuku*, I might have, Professor, I don’t know.” I said, “Okay, you did it accidentally but be more careful,” I said, “Where am I going to get one now?”

I asked my daughter in Switzerland to go to a particular shop, buy the same one, I told her how it looked, because I couldn’t work without it, nor could my students. It’s like when you have a quill, like something you write with. It’s a scraper. You could say, “This is what you suffered for? If I had known...” And after two years he has finished the Academy, he rang on my door *crrrr* {onomatopoeic}. “Good afternoon, Professor.” “Good afternoon.” He took it out of his pocket, he said, “Professor, two years ago I lost your scraper. I bought a new one for you in Germany and came to give it to you, I felt so bad because you did so much for us and I lost it.” I said, “It was an accident,” I said, “But you have to be careful.” He said, “No, Professor, I don’t forgive myself, but thank you.”

This was a story, as I said there were many things, how they were created, how life was, but creative work continues. I have samples of graphics that I’ve saved. I don’t make many copies, maximum ten pieces, except for *Skenderbeu* which I made more than one hundred copies. This is one of the first copies {turns around to look at it} I kept it for myself, because I don’t know what would happen to those paintings, I would be the poorest person in the world if I didn’t have them. Money comes and goes, but art remains to you, to the next generations, so they won’t think that there was no graphic in Kosova, I said, I will try to prove this with a monograph, leave it for the next generation. Then, we will see. There will be art from the new generations, my students.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Thank you very much Mr. Krypa. I think we should end it here.