

A painter of dark emotions who has inspired the world. Where did Anna Ruth's success come from?



Anna Ruth in her studio, Prague (CZ), 2024.
Photo by Ondrej Rychnavsky.

by Veronika Pařízková
December 11, 2025

There was not much interest in her paintings at the Academy of Fine Arts. Anna Ruth herself resisted the sale of her paintings. Today, the situation is dramatically different. The young artist exhibits all over the world, and collectors' interest in her works, which are defined by a strong relationship with nature and medieval mysticism, is growing sharply.

"I am the fourth generation of painters in my family, so the environment was always open to art. At the same time, however, there were great doubts about whether free art was a 'reasonable' choice for me due to the unpredictable possibilities of application. In the end, however, it became clear that I could not avoid this direction," Anna Ruth recalls her decision to go to art school.

However, in Jiří Petrbok's drawing studio, she did not appear as a talent whose paintings would be extremely popular. This was mainly due to the nature of Anna Ruth, who did not want to give up her intimate canvases. She never wanted to paint "on demand", since her work had been an inner need to express herself since childhood.

That's why you often find ethereal women in the paintings, who are strikingly reminiscent of Anna herself. "My own features are the most accessible visual material for me and I see myself in the mirror every day. But these are not self-portraits. I don't paint specific people, I'm more looking for the expression and inner state they carry," adds the painter, who is currently exhibiting her work at the Brooke Benington art gallery in London.

But what is typical of her work is above all a strange mystical energy, often imbued with subtle irony and sarcasm. Details of faces on which nightmares sit, slender white hands protruding from a gloomy dungeon or strange harpies with terrifying gazes, these are just a fleeting selection of the themes that the painter deals with.

Not only is the historicizing, mysterious aesthetic essential for her, but also a strong relationship with nature. "I like the version of the world where nature takes back what belongs to it. I regret that it has divided and become so distorted that nature is understood as an adversary, as an independent reality standing against the human one. For a long time, I have tried to paint nature as people once saw it, as a force that transcends them, evoking awe, awe and respect," says Anna Ruth.

She grew up in the landscape of the Central Bohemian Mountains, on the edge of a village near a forest, isolated from her peers, and it was this experience that allowed her to build a strong inner world, from which she still draws today. She fell in love with painting as a child, and thanks to her mother, many of her drawings have been preserved.

"As a child, I drew almost manically; I would spread dozens of papers on the floor, tell myself stories out loud, and immediately draw them," recalls the painter, whose most expensive painting was sold at the Frieze fair in London this year, of her early years. The turning point in her career came when she started sharing her canvases on social media. The reticence that had prevented her from fully asserting herself at school disappeared, and Anna Ruth gradually began to establish herself as a prominent figure not only on the local but also on the international scene.

"In my senior year, I went through a big personality change. I started to get tired of my fear of what would happen if I were seen. I admitted to myself that I was tempted to try to step out of the shadows and finally put all my energy into what fulfills me the most, and I stopped being afraid of being judged. I realized that no one else can paint the pictures I carry inside me for me and that there are so many of them that I don't know if my whole life is enough for them," Anna Ruth recalls, looking back at the time when she decided to show her work to the world. During that time, her work has appeared in dozens of exhibitions, from Bold Gallery, Pragovka to an exhibition at the IRL Gallery in New York.

Everywhere her imagination unsettles the viewer with an unusual mix of subtlety and rawness. Many motifs may seem welcoming and pleasant at first glance, but upon closer inspection you will come across a detail that is often dark and cruel. However, there was also a significantly "merry" period in Anna Ruth's work, when she chose cats as the main motif of her work. "I remember that time fondly, the cats were created at the same time as my darkest paintings I've ever painted in my life. They were something I needed to balance that heaviness. The cat paintings were anything but heavy," she explains of the phase when she balanced the darkness with light.

A certain polarity, the ability to see both sides of the same thing, to not be afraid to pull back the curtain and boldly look face to face at what lies behind it, is the ability that fascinates us most about Anna Ruth's work. She is like our empathetic guide to the dark layers of the soul that we would rather not see, but that never disappear.

"I create what I lack in physical reality and what I can influence to a certain extent with my work. It is a reaction to the constant urgency to materialize things that are difficult to name and capture. I want the viewer to feel it, so that through that gesture they can be transported into an emotion that they might otherwise overlook. My work is about transformation, reshaping meanings and processing pain. It is a desire for harmony," Anna Ruth describes her vision.

Interest in Czech artists is growing steadily abroad. It's not just about the works of Kateřina Šedá or Eva Kotátková; this year's phenomenal success was above all the solo exhibition by Klára Hosnedlová at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof. The interest in Anna Ruth also confirms that Czech artists are an attraction.

"I am currently preparing a solo exhibition that will take place in April 2026 at the Grimm Gallery in Amsterdam. I am really

looking forward to it. I want to focus a lot on intimacy and relationships in this exhibition. I still feel like I am at the beginning, and my greatest desire is to be able to continue creating," the thirty-year-old painter confides.

But why do you think that interest in local artists is growing today? "In general, I think that the increased visibility of Czech and Slovak female artists is due to their extraordinary strength. There is a generation of women who are worthy of international attention, and I am glad that foreign audiences really perceive and are able to recognize this. At the same time, I feel that interest in art from post-communist countries is growing in the international discourse. Attention is being drawn to their experience and layered trauma, but also to the mystique that this region carries. Sometimes there is a touch of exoticization and even fetishization on the part of the West, but let's leave that aside. The essential thing is that our artists stand up for themselves with their work."

Creation is still an inner need and a lifelong commitment for Anna. After a year of struggling with Lyme disease, she realized even more how fragile reality can be. "For a long time, I rather downplayed my successes, I was aware of the transience of the art world and I didn't want to get carried away. However, during my illness, I really experienced fears that I could lose everything. Therefore, I am starting to perceive every success much more intensely and, on the contrary, I want to enjoy it with immense gratitude. It is proof that I can continue on."