

EFIMIJA TOPOLSKI

Efimija Topolski (born 1965 in Belgrade as Jasna Topolski) through her drawings conveys archaic and existential experiences between conception and death. Her artistic world inhabits animals and plants, agents for the expression of existential feelings which challenge us to make a connection through them to our own inner world. There is the pain of loneliness, the yearning for relationships and for shelter and safety, the exhilarating feeling of freedom, the danger of feeling exposed and lost without these safe places.

The featured works were created over a three-decade-long creative career that largely took place away from the public eye. A Serbian artist Jasna Topolski had already enjoyed many years of success and completed a Masters at the Academy of Fine Arts, when in 1992, aged 26 and with a promising art career ahead of her, she retreated from society and entered the Christian-orthodox Monastery of Gradac, becoming Mother Efimija.

Even away from the world Efimija never ceased to be an artist. In Gradac, she found life-affirming forms for the otherworldly Byzantine icon painting. At the same time, she painted walls and iconostases of famous churches or monasteries. She also sketched and painted ceaselessly in notebooks, diaries and on paper of every kind, and in doing so reflected not only her life in the deeply traditional context of the monastery but also reacted to the modern, urban world outside.

As her work to date encompasses both pieces anchored in religion as well as these works which project existential feelings beyond a location in the monastic or worldly spheres, the artist defies standard categorisations.