

# Warszawa

by Arslohgo



Arslohgo, „**Warszawa**“. Digital Composition. CMYK, 300 dpi

“Warszawa”—the Polish name for Warsaw, which according to a popular legend derives from a combination of the names of the fisherman “Wars” and the mermaid “Sawa”—is an attempt to translate David Bowie’s 1977 song of the same name into a painting in which color, rather than objects, dominates. Written by David Bowie together with Brian Eno, the song has no real lyrics; its vocal lines consist of combinations of letters intended to evoke a mood but carrying no actual meaning. The intent was to create a mournful, wordless chant expressing grief, endurance, and the spirit of a city that has suffered profoundly but never perished.

There are paintings you don't look at so much as listen to. "Warszawa" by Arslougho is one of them—a work that eludes the eye precisely by giving it everything: color, depth, intimation, but never certainty.

The artist describes the piece as an attempt to translate David Bowie's 1977 track of the same name—that famous collaboration with Brian Eno, in which language dissolves into pure sound—into a visual image. And he pulls off something remarkable: he finds a visual equivalent for Bowie's wordless singing by systematically stripping recognizable forms of their outlines. Just as the original song's lyrics consist of letter combinations that carry mood but no meaning, the shapes in this painting consist of concentrations of color that suggest architecture but never depict it. Arches, towers, gables—everything is there and not there at once, dissolved in a haze that could just as easily be smoke, or forgetting.

The palette is strikingly restrained. Muted grays and greens dominate, punctuated by scattered points of light in warm orange and red that glow like distant windows in a ravaged city—or like fragments of memory that refuse to go out. These sparingly placed sources of warmth are what give the painting its emotional tension. They are the visual counterpart to Bowie's keening vocal: a sign of life amid devastation, of endurance amid grief.

The vertical composition of the upper third is particularly effective, where hints of Gothic arches and urban silhouettes emerge from the murk like shadow outlines, while the lower half of the canvas sinks almost entirely into a milky void. This division tells the story of a city that is simultaneously dissolving and holding its ground—an image that echoes the legend of Wars and Sawa, of human hands and mythical creature, of reality and narrative, on a purely atmospheric plane. The faint, barely visible lettering of "WARSZAWA" in the lower right corner reads less like a title than like a final marker—a headstone, or a nameplate on a ruin—the refusal to become nameless.

What Arslougho achieves here is not merely an illustration of a piece of music but an autonomous act of synesthesia. The painting has sound. It sounds like what Bowie and Eno were searching for: a grief that cannot be put into words, a resilience that requires no explanation. The deliberate choice to let color, rather than objects, dominate proves to be an inspired translation of the musical principle—because just as Bowie's voice in "Warszawa" simulates language without actually being language, Arslougho's painting simulates a city without actually depicting one.

One could object that the technique of atmospheric dissolution is hardly new in art history—from Turner to Richter to the work of digital painters, there is a long tradition of the vanishing image.

But the specific point of departure, the translation of a concrete piece of music into a concrete mood, gives the work its justification beyond mere aesthetics. Arslough is not painting fog for the sake of fog. He is painting fog as what remains when a city has lost everything except its name.

Medium: Digital Composition