

Vlatka Škoro

HALF A HUMAN, PAUL NEWMAN AND THE PACK

4 March–9 April 2022

MMC KIBLA / KiBela

Sculpture's character

Vlatka Škoro is one of the most respected and awarded Croatian sculptors. She received her Ph.D. at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. In the sculptural research work, she combines the personal imagination of hybrid beings with new technological possibilities and thus pushes the boundaries of the medium itself. Animal-like sculptures, to which she has been dedicating herself in recent years, inspire us with some familiarity and even humanity. Despite their realistic appearance, a more profound view reveals their characters, a subtle psycho, including some minor sinisterness in the sympathy. *Pack*, a group of 10 African wild dog sculptures conceptually assembled around the Alpha, fascinates her because of their social order and social ties. Above all, it is the only dog breed that is impossible to tame. The golden *Hedgehog*, named *Half a Human, Paul Newman*, is a massive anthropomorphic creature whose human-animal traits can evoke irony or seem bizarre, but in their fascination at the same time carry a message about the world and man and their symbiosis and our responsibility to nature, of which we are also a part.

She makes no distinction between human and animal; she recognizes and transcends differences. She considers people as being one with the animals, which are mostly positively contextualized, highlights their virtues, which are also human, and touches on their mischief, minor weaknesses, malice, and other emotional states that express them. Their actions are instinctive, their views and prospects are in harmony. They communicate their spirit, spirituality, thoughts, and intentions, controlled by their instincts and their own to people. Confidence or mistrust, constant willingness to act, attack or flee, open eyes and ears give us different responses to observation, from caution to admiration and even discomfort. The various poses of the dogs in the pack reveal their individual states, and the group confronts us with the pack in which each animal plays or plays its role. As it is in our society.

We wonder what is happening and what the future will bring, how to react, and what to do. We interact with sculptures that, with their vividness and diversity – each “animal” is different and unique – convince us that they are there with us and we are among them. The equality of figures and spectators establishes intuitive levels of perception when we step around them and view them as both individual and social animals. The reciprocal relationship brings us into a kind of coherence or even forces us into harmony between the pack and us, strikes us with something primary, awakens the innate drive for survival. We experience the mass psychologically – as some contradiction to the individual – and socially – as the only possibility of survival. The antagonism of psychological and social behavior is manifested as a behavioral claim that living beings’ actions, thinking, and emotions are objective reactions that structure our behavior.

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MMC KIBLA / KiBela, Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor
Opening hours: Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Saturday: 10 a.m.–2 p.m

Although we cannot attribute any engagement or allegorical value to Vlatka's sculptures, many will feel it in her works and think about it. In her work, she gives preference to the visuality and art of figures; the natural elements flow into the sculptural forms of naturalistic expression: forms vary, the group layout is variable, relationships are dynamic, the final result also depends on the space or their gallery habitat – biotope. She does not want to be classified as an animalist because she chooses animals instinctively; according to the key to bizarreness, the sculpture is the most important. When creating, she does not follow the exact biological structure of the statues but intertwines them with her aesthetics, based on art – using colors – and sculptural language, which it also builds in the second sculpture, *Half a Human, Paul Newman* – the giant golden hedgehog perhaps even more clearly illustrates her artistic vocabulary.

Almost every work of hers carries a certain contradiction in itself, and so in the sculpture, the bottom half is a human and the top half a hedgehog. We come across a unique and original mixture of reality and bizarreness, fantasy, and irony, drama and comedy, which from the extremes of perception blend into us as an elixir. The magic potion awakens a sense of responsibility in the present day of many global crises in some viewers, our emotion of concern for the environment can be intensified, feelings of coexistence with other inhabitants of the Earth and our common destiny can be born, of which animals or the whole of nature, including us, are an inseparable part. In Vlatka's work, this kind of engagement is not emphasized, as it warns, reminds, makes you aware by smiling and stabbing – like a hedgehog with spikes. An oversized anthropomorphic creature inhabits our space as a messenger from another dimension. As it carries human and animal traits, it does not belong to either world and draws us into its space of myths, talks about the world and humans, their symbiosis, and common movement.

As we approach the gallery space, we are greeted by a muffled echo, an earthly sound that spreads and slowly pulls us into a mystical atmosphere. The gold surface is vibrating. The live modeling and visible handprint underline the softness and power of the monumental sculpture, which is so likable that we would adopt it, embrace it, squeeze it close to us. Still, we can only observe it as this vast, surgically composed body rises above us with kindness as a messenger of the future and a witness of the past. Some kind of cosmic mind that holds the treasure of the mystery of being. When we watch it shine and glow, we also wonder about our existence and actions, which do not turn a human into a sympathetic and somewhat cumbersome hedgehog, whose spikes are intended for self-defense metamorphosis and, in this case, beauty. However, we are still beasts that destroy our living environment, nature with all its flora and fauna, and our domestic and foreigners, near and far, neighbors and relatives, acquaintances and strangers... our species for which we will pay the price ourselves.

- Peter Tomaž Dobrila

BIOGRAPHY

Vlatka Škoro (1987, Osijek) lives and works in Zagreb. In 2010 she received an M.A. in Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, in the class of professor Stjepan Gračan. In 2018 she earned her Ph.D. in Sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts, in the class of prof. Peruško Bogdanić and prof. Leonida Kovač. She has exhibited in ten solo and twenty group exhibitions in Croatia and participated in numerous workshops and festivals. In 2010 she received the Erste Grand Prix for the sculpture *Indigo Child*, and in 2020 the HDLU Zagreb Award for the best young artist. She currently lives and works in Zagreb.

Solo exhibitions:

- *Pack*, Poola Gallery, Pula, 2020
- *Animal*, Salon Galić, Split, 2020
- *Pack*, Bačva Gallery, Home of HDLU, Zagreb, 2020
- *Animal*, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2019
- *Animal*, Matica hrvatska Gallery, Zagreb, 2019
- *Reality vs. Virtuality*, Greta Gallery, Zagreb, 2019
- Public presentation of the artistic research doctoral thesis *A Sculpture in the Context of Artificial Intelligence*, Bačva Gallery, Home of HDLU, Zagreb, 2018
- *Half a Human, Paul Newman*, SC Gallery, Zagreb, 2015
- *Bure baruta* (with Igor Ruf and Ana Petrović), Kazamat Gallery, Osijek, 2013
- *Indigo Child*, SC Gallery, Zagreb, 2010

Selection of group exhibitions:

- *Acquisitions 2016–2021*, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2021
- *They are here*, Gallery of Fine Arts Slavko Kopač, Vinkovci, 2020
- *Situation*, Forum Gallery, Zagreb, 2020
- 13th Memorial of Ivo Kerdić – Triennial of Croatian Medallionship and Small Plastics, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2019
- *City of Sculpture*, J.J. Strossmayer Square, Đakovo, 2018
- 12th Triennial of Croatian Sculpture, HAZU Glyptothèque, Zagreb, 2015
- *Erste fragmenti X*, Home of HDLU Zagreb, 2014
- *Erste Fragmenti 7*, Mali salon Gallery, Rijeka, 2011
- 22nd Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2010
- 10th Memorial of Ivo Kerdić – Triennial of Croatian Medallionship and Small Plastics, Gallery of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2010
- 21st Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of Fine Arts, Osijek, 2008