

# Fortuna Lazar

## IMAGES OF FACES

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### Images of Faces – they

#### In search of the purity of the self

What is the true face, what is the purity of the self, the true image of a face – and what is an image at all? On the surface of the visible there is a face with which we present ourselves to others, observe and are observed, we see and others see us, we decode and create images with which we communicate with the world and into the world. The circumstances of life demand a multitude of life roles and representations from us.

When we look at or observe faces, our subconscious creates an image from the facial expressions and gestures that take shape on a face. But images can be deceptive, elusive, honest or manipulative, they can also wear a mask over the mask and so on. The symbolism of a face has a much deeper meaning and role than we would assume at first glance. In order to have a social identity and be accepted in society, a job, a group, etc., we play certain roles based on which we are either accepted or not in what we want or need.

The face is the conductor of the body, it represents the whole and conducts the orchestra of a multitude of images. It is an entrance field for the character and emotional state of the other. But it can also be our mirror, because we can also find and see ourselves in the expressions we observe. Faces are carriers of subtleties, meanings, functions, protective facades and filters. They close off their expression to open up the artificial masks people wear to hide their expression, or play with them in the role they choose, making it hard to decipher when they put on their true face and let others see their true self and core. When do we stop and shed these images? Can we recognize honesty, can we see through the artificial mask and the false representation, the deception of people, can we recognize warmth and a genuine smile?

The etymological meaning of the word “face” in Slovenian, which originally meant “cut-out image”, is therefore more than appropriate.

These cut-out images have certain roles in society, in relationships; sometimes we play them, sometimes we have to play them, sometimes we are willing to do it with the masks or without them, we can adopt a myriad of images and use them in many ways. Just as chameleons change color and thus adapt to the environment, pull themselves out of it or make themselves visible, so the face is for us a kind of chameleon that changes colors, that is, the expressions of the image, although if we have to, want or need to, we can put on different masks and roles or enter into the reality of our own faces that we see in an environment and the space we inhabit.

Images can also wear masks. It is socially unacceptable to put on a false face, one that lies, deceives or is itself a deception and therefore leads to the loss of face and its authenticity. Although the opposite is so often the case. Moving from the individual level to groups and collectives, we come to the masks that societies put on. Now mix all this with social norms and codes, social behaviors and cultural traditions, complex situations in which both individuals and societies find themselves, the psychology of characters and emotions and look through the kaleidoscope – welcome to the biggest world stage of fluttering images of faces!

What is it in a face that evokes familiarity, affection, resistance or alienation in us? When do we want to show something with our expression and when do we turn away to conceal, to hide something? It may be true that we have numerous faces, images, but these can all be our true faces and real images at this moment in our lives. Sometimes we also need these images and masks to protect our inner worlds, which we want to shield from certain things and prevent their intrusion into our true character, state or mood. The meanings of masks and images are manifold and depend on the parameters and variables of life. Knowing which direction to sail in certain life currents and seas, when to lower or unfurl the sail, is something we all learn – life is a teacher to us all, watching over us and teaching us from the beginning to the end of our lives.

In the case of fashion photography, objectivity does not last long. The backdrop is set, the images are created, the desired effect is conceived, constructed and shaped. But there is a certain magical delay in a face happening. The natural human subtlety remains untouched, no matter how many times we depict it amidst the constructed backdrops, make-up and decorated images.

In the background of all this is the grace of the self, even when one has posed for a cover or shot a movie, there silently exists this deep core of a face that is true and pure, changing through the cycle of life, graceful and ethereal. The photograph captures the face, the person portrayed, but when the person is photographed, he or she congeals into an image. And when you look at a photo, it creates distance in you. The photograph, no matter how many times it is reproduced, is trapped in time and space, it belongs to another time that has passed and will never return. What is captured is the outline, the contours of the image, which are exactly that. We fill in the contours and bring the image to life with our memories of how we felt back then, how the light was, how the air smelled. We breathe life into the faces, arrange and shape them and live with them. We breathe life into the images with the memories we see in photos of images.

The cores of the faces do not change much. You meet an old friend again after many years and when you look him in the face, you know that he is still the same as he was ten years ago. The inner core of his face has not changed. Here we see glimpses of purity of self, glimpses of humanity, captured in the flicker of facial expressions and their images. Of course, we only recognize the expression of such a face in people who are or were close to us. Our true face changes very little over the course of our lives.

When we come to the milestone of the core of the face, the self, the process of exploration goes one step further and deeper. Each core of a face carries a specific aura, a unique description of the unrepeatable moment captured in an image. This is where the purity of self takes place, which is further explored in the world of painting. We find ourselves in an exhibition space with numerous perspectives, some of which are directed towards us, while others turn away from us. Most of the communication is through the immediate heterogeneity and expressivity of the eyes, gazes that follow us wherever we turn.

Fortuna Lazar's paintings immerse the viewer in the depths of human character. The paintings, which are on the verge of becoming the object of the viewer's attention, resist such a designation, for they hold up a powerful mirror to the viewer with their presence, their direct or indirect gaze. This is a collection of self-reflections, images of faces, ways of seeing and observing that emphasize the importance of a gaze upon oneself that attempts to penetrate to the core and the self of the face.

The images in the paintings seize their own life impulse and detach themselves from the realism of human reality depicted in a photographic milieu by coming to life in the medium of painting, whose additions, forces and components are clearly different from the photographic medium. The figures, the images of faces carry a hint of physicality that fades away. Some images are almost fused with color, diffused, they melt and merge, others are created with the technique of drawing, exploring the posture, structure, composition and clarity of the delicate realism of interiority depicted.

In most cases, the subject's perspective is direct and invites dialog. Several palettes are created in the structure of the painterly esthetic. One of them finds its source of inspiration in the character expressions of the faces. It encompasses the character of strong presence, provocation and earthiness, which the artist anchors with darker planes and strong lines, creating the dramatic effect, three-dimensionality and vibrancy of the painting. The counterpoint to the earthy depiction is the delicate transparency of the colors, the lyrical and poetic dreaminess of the faces, the grace and beauty, the tenderness and vulnerability achieved through the subtlety of the translucent watercolor medium. The fleeting moments are captured, but cannot be located in time and space. The flow of time comes to a standstill in the images of the faces. This approach alone leads us into the realm of inner observation and the instability of the background, which intensifies the confrontation with the visible image and provokes self-reflection. The non-existent time shifts can only bridge distances in memory, because the value of a face and its image lies in the personal memories that we preserve.

The deeply immersive world of Fortuna Lazar's painting searches for the purity of the aura of the face, for a deeper look and a deeper realization. She explores what we see and what we communicate, where the boundaries lie between invisible and real masks, between the true faces we love and those we reject. But when we come to the self, we can catch a glimpse of the flash of eternity that we have captured for a moment in the image of a face, our own or another.

– Nina Šardi

## BIOGRAPHY

**Fortuna Lazar**, born in 1982 in Murska Sobota, is a professor of fine arts in Lendava. After studying art education in Maribor, she devoted her knowledge and creativity to teaching and creating art in the school environment. She expresses her own ideas mainly with the watercolor technique and the motif of women's portraits. In 2014, she exhibited in the production and exhibition spaces of the Uho-Okò Institute and the Central Station in Maribor. A year later, her illustrations were published in issues of Modna magazine. Years later, her work was subordinated to motherhood, but now she is presenting new work for the first time in a long time.

Website

