

Radovan Kunić

MULTIPLICATION AND PROPAGATION

26 January–24 February 2024

MMC KIBLA/KiBela

Nature melodies in the rhythm of the heart

In 2018, Radovan Kunić was our guest for the first time at the international interdisciplinary art exhibition Personal at the KIBLA PORTAL exhibition center as part of the Risk Change project; he was one of forty domestic and foreign artists and five of his paintings hung among more than a hundred works.

Now he is presenting himself for the first time in a solo exhibition at KIBLA with his latest works to date, a cycle of paintings from 2023 that appear before us like a kind of mirror of nature. When we look at them, we are immersed in the grasses, which at first glance appear to be arranged chaotically on the surface, but are in fact organized - that's just the way nature is. We look around »from a bird's eye view«, i.e. from above, just as we observe nature with our eyes hovering one and a half meters above the ground.

The motifs of the grasses come together to form a meadow in which we can stroll around curiously and look at individual sheaves of grass and immerse ourselves in the midst of the leaves that transport us to the time of late autumn or early spring, until we come across objects of human origin that nevertheless enliven the atmosphere because they break the monotony of the even rhythm and intervene in its structure, making it more dynamic. Even if these objects are visually appealing, even esthetically arranged and not simply discarded, they are still foreign bodies in the midst of nature.

If we put these images together into a rounded narrative, several possible readings open up – the paintings show worn shoes in the grass, perhaps abandoned or discarded, or simply there because someone has taken them off to change shoes or walk barefoot across the meadow. In other paintings, golf balls are hidden in the grass – perhaps the owners of these abandoned shoes have gone after the 18 holes. Other paintings show unusual elements such as cuttlefish swimming through the grass, smoke rising from the earth in a meadow or paintings depicting rocky landscapes.

Although there is no human being in most of the paintings, we still have the feeling that someone was there, that we were there. Pieces of waste that still shine next to nature and even multiply, even if they are quite worn out, but somehow still part of nature, created by beings of nature and used according to their existential needs or for play and entertainment. Apart from the ecocritical aspect of Kunić's works, his paintings are elementally existential and symbolist, especially in the way they deal with the view from above. Expressive and impressive, explosive and impressionistic in the way they open up the micro-world that surrounds us and that we pass through without really knowing it. The world we walk through is terra incognita for us. We do not know and are completely unaware of what goes on beneath our bodies, our feet. What life

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

we destroy, what living beings we kill, what kind of environment we change ... what we leave behind.

Grasses (scientific name Poaceae) are a family of mostly herbaceous, rarely woody plants. It comprises around 9,000 species, which are divided into around 650 genera. They include all cereals (including rice), most of the world's sugar production, food for domestic and wild animals, bamboo and reeds. The members of this family thrive in all biomes of the world. Grasses are cosmopolitan. They cover about 20% of the land. They dominate the zone between forests and deserts, i.e. the steppe, prairie, savanna and pampas. Under the influence of man, large areas of cultivated steppes have established themselves in the once forested areas. Grasses often have underground stems from which above-ground parts grow. The stems usually grow just below or above the surface.

In all their abundance, their richness of detail as well as their playfulness, perhaps even in the dark tones of the ground pressing from underground, as in Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), when he returns from exile in Siberia and penetrates deep into his own soul, Kunić's paintings encounter the iconographic horror vacui, the fear of emptiness. The emptiness in nature, the emptiness in painting, the emptiness in oneself and, above all, the emptiness in us. The space in which we are, in which we stand, exist and move, is our intimate environment. The space we see and hear is our social environment. The space we feel is our metaphysical environment in which we merge the perceptions of the world and the self.

The essence of the artist's painting is revealed in his search for visual unity and order, which is constituted through a series of repetitions in a lengthy, multi-layered painterly process. This approach goes hand in hand with the dynamics of nature, which changes slowly, driven by a continuous evolution with occasional challenges from unpredictable events.

His artistic motivation stems from the search for a counterweight to the increasingly changing trends of the present, which are characterized by an insatiable hunger for novelty and a very loose hedging of the attention span. Kunić's paintings function in part as meditative objects that offer a break from a hyper-dynamic lifestyle. In contrast to quickly outdated "commodities", timeless ambiances speak symbolically about the contradictory nature of the human endeavor to satisfy one's own needs and act for the common good.

Kunić uses references to contemporary culture in a self-ironic way, adding anthropological connotations and touching on a variety of themes, including civilizational achievements, history, ecology, technological developments and the intimate everyday life of the individual. In this way, he transforms the inability to find perfect answers to questions that dominate today's public discourse into a game of expectation and speculation.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Radovan Kunić was born in Rijeka, Croatia, in 1987. In 2012, he completed his studies in sculpture at the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka. In addition to painting, which is a constant in his work, he also uses media such as animation, video and installation in his artworks, whose relationships he explores in the context of a gallery or an outdoor public space. He participates in international symposia and residencies (Belgium, USA, Germany) and exhibits in numerous group and solo exhibitions. He has received several prizes and awards and his works are in public and private collections at home and abroad. He is the author of the public part of the Mechanism mosaic on the Molo Longo in Rijeka. He also teaches as an assistant at the Academy of Applied Arts at the University of Rijeka. He lives in Matulji.

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SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2023

- Four Seasons?, City Museum of Rijeka – The Sugar Palace, Rijeka, HR
- Allotropy, (with Sašo Marjanović and Bratislav Radovanović), Heritage house, Belgrade, RS

2022

- Without Anything added, Pik Gallery, Rab; Turnac Gallery, Novi Vinodolski, HR

2021

- Etherarium, Vladimir Bužančić Gallery, Zagreb, HR
- Walkabout, Ravnika Gallery Space, Ljubljana, SI

2020

- Uncharted, Mala Galerija Poreč, Poreč, HR

2017

- Collecting of Time, Prsten Gallery, HDLU, Zagreb, HR
- Solo Exhibition, Gallery of Municipality of Matulji, Matulji, HR
- Solo Exhibition, Art Pavillion Juraj Šporer, Opatija, HR
- Structures of Disorder, SC Gallery, Zagreb, HR

2015

- Firewall, Lamparna Gallery, Labin, HR
- What is happening on the Surface?, Juraj Klović Gallery, Rijeka, HR

2014

- Searching for the Ease of Existence, City Gallery Fonticus Grožnjan, HR
- Inside the Painting, Poola Gallery, Pula, HR

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

2023

- 19th Biennial of Milena Pavlović Barilli, Gallery of Milena Pavlović Barilli, Požarevac, RS
- Novo, New, Nouveau, Now, Ravnika Gallery Space, Ljubljana, SI

2022

- 57th Zagreb Salon of Visual Arts, HDLU, Zagreb, HR
- viennacontemporary, International Art Fair, Vienna, AT

2021

- 6th Biennial of Painting, HDLU, Zagreb, HR
- viennacontemporary, International Art Fair, Vienna, AT

2020

- Situation, curator Anita Ruso, 35th Youth Salon, Forum Gallery, Zagreb, HR
- viennacontemporary, International Art Fair, Vienna, AT
- Uncertain Exhibition, Kortil Gallery, Rijeka, HR
- AIR4, Ravnika Gallery Space, Ljubljana, SI
- Open Studio 12, Hafenkombinat, Leipzig, DE

2019

- 5th Biennial of Painting, HDLU, Zagreb, HR
- AIR3, Ravnika Gallery Space, Ljubljana, SI

2018

- Personal; KIBLA PORTAL, Maribor, SI
- Art OMI open Studios, Ghent, NY, ZDA
- AIR2; Ravnika Gallery, Ljubljana, SI

2017

- Točka/Punto/Point, City Gallery Fonticus, Grožnjan, HR; Prima Gallery, Berlin, DE

2016

- Critic's Choice, curator Slaven Tolj, Juraj Klović Gallery, Rijeka, HR
- 19th International Exhibition of Miniatures, Novi Dvori, Zaprešić (HR), Gallery ALU Sarajevo, BA
- Utopia of dystopian Reality, curator Petra Jalšovec, Pikto Gallery, Zagreb, HR

2015

- 3rd Biennial of Painting, HDLU, Zagreb, HR
- 18th International Exhibition of Miniatures, Novi Dvori, Zaprešić, HR

2013

- Erste Fragments 9, Gallery Bačva, HDLU, Zagreb; Mali salon Gallery, Rijeka, HR

AWARDS (selection)

2022 – 27th EX Tempore Grožnjan – 1st Award

2021 – University of Rijeka Foundation Award

2017 – 23rd EX Tempore Grožnjan – 1st Award

2013 – Erste Fragments 9 – Acquisition Prize

RESIDENCIES

2020 – De/Construction of an Image, Leipzig, Germany

2018 – Art OMI, Ghent, New York, USA

2016 – GLOart, Lannaken, Belgium