

Đanino Božić

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

21 February–22 March 2025

artKIT

More than twenty years have passed since Đanino Božić's first solo exhibition in Maribor, when he presented his "constellations" and paintings on metal. On this occasion, he presents a selection of recent works that show that his art is neither "linear" nor "static" or "predictable", but that his creative processes are open to different areas of exploration and elaboration of formal structures. Notwithstanding the fact that logos and order appeal to him, i.e. minimalism and neo-constructivism, his career over the years has proven that he moves effortlessly, almost playfully, between different artistic idioms.

Đanino Božić has been present on the art scene for over 30 years, first in Croatia and then in (Central) Europe. Regardless of how one defines geographical spaces, we can safely say that he is a constant participant and an authority on the artistic developments of his time, a personality who is very self-confident, genuine, subtle, creative and, above all, a prolific artist. Božić has continuously created, exhibited and curiously followed the trends in the art world, opening new chapters and fields of exploration of formal structures and their elaboration.

Đanino Božić's exhibition, which can be seen at the artKIT exhibition space at KIBLA in Maribor, is therefore not narrative, but consists of fragments of recent objects, painted reliefs and sculptural installations, whose articulation is resolved by the artist's focus on the question of their spatial combinatorics. We perceive it as a spatial installation of four thematic wholes (*archived images, patterned images, cargo objects, monochromes*), which are connected through the use of recycled materials, plastic toys, deformations or, for example, in the predominant "Klein" blue, as Đanino Božić opens up dialogical spaces of their meanings through their intermedial relationships, which he masterfully weaves into the linguistic and social discourses.

With each work on display, be it a blue-painted school globe, red toy cars with an oversized cargo on the roof, collaged pages of a discarded book or archived (classical) paintings that he has created, the artist draws the viewer into the contemporary themes of waste and consumer society with a pinch of humor. The exhibition is therefore not just an iconography of materials or a mere "accumulation of elements", but above all an amalgamation of actions that function simultaneously as an artistic and conceptual idea.

In line with the previously selected works, some of which are multiplied, others monochrome or tactile, the exhibition space is transformed into a kind of scenography. Nevertheless, the form defined by the exhibition is not restrictive, but rather reveals an "esthetic condition" that Božić subjects to the concepts of interference of materials, colors and forms, which he applies to the repertoire of delimited wholes.

One of these units are the "Archived images", a series of works created by cutting the painted surface into narrow strips, which are then densely arranged in handmade boxes. In this way, he compresses a painting of up to 4 m² that is old or has only recently been created into a volume

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of 19 x 19 x 2 centimeters. With this process, he transforms a (large) painting into a (smaller) object whose content is a “painting” but has a different dimension and texture. This micro/macro relationship, this transition from the past to the present of the object, in which the logic of the medium is not lost, means for the artist that he follows the movement of meaning.

The artist says: *“For me, transforming the painting into an object is not only about cutting the surface of the painting to destroy its traces, but also about the time I need to concentrate, a process of transforming one form into another.”*

Similar processes are used in a series of works that the artist calls “Patterns” – with the difference that a “painterly” veiling is used here: a perforated geometric metal surface. Each tiny opening consists of carefully selected patterns of different types of souvenirs, namely everyday objects, photos, flyers, candy wrappers and even old monographs and books.

And continues: *“Basically, I do not throw anything away, not even the leftovers on the table. Every detail has its story and I use it as a material curiosity.”*

However, Božić is not a freak who compulsively accumulates everything he finds. On the contrary, he carefully selects objects in order to reuse them. If we wanted to assign a catchphrase to his work, we could say that it is about recycling, but the author is not interested in the rhetoric of venerable themes, nor in a direct message, but rather in the transformation of recycling into a new visual whole.

He adds: *“I observe everything I find and preserve selectively in the spectrum of artistic forms. Sometimes I focus on the colors, other times on the shapes or the material, less often on a memory. You just have to carefully arrange this abundance of everything next to each other to get a completely different meaning.”*

Another object from Božić’s “collection of surpluses” must be emphasized. He calls them micro-installations and has placed one of them in the gallery space. Arranged around a vertical axis protruding from the metal casing are various objects that he collected during his walks on the beach, as well as small plastic toys from his son’s childhood. When you touch the vertical – which most visitors do because they are attracted to recognizable objects – the entire construction begins to vibrate. We do not know how Božić came up with this arrangement and whether we are really drawn to the problem of plastic waste, but all these objects nevertheless convey a certain lightness, a sense of childlike joy.

Although his “micro-collection of surpluses” differs slightly from the rest of the exhibited works precisely because of this sense of playfulness, it captures the common thread in Božić’s visual grammar. It documents the current meaninglessness of structures, constructions, systems. The only rule is that everything can be fixed in one way or another, that everything can be transformed or deprived of its meaning, that it can pass from one form of organization to another, from one system to another.

With the reversible strategy of interrelations of differences and opposites, a shift takes place that is not just an iconography of materials or a narrative around a theme, nor is it a mere “rearrangement” of parts, but a simultaneous and multi-local connection between actions that Božić’s works can assume in relation to space, the viewer and time.

In this sense, Đanino Božić’s exhibition at the artKIT exhibition space is a further visualization of a specific framework of thought that combines artistic, conceptual and discursive considerations with playful detachment and without rhetorical exhibitionism.

– Jerica Zihelr

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila (inserts)

BIOGRAPHY

Đanino Božić (1961, Pula, Croatia) graduated fine arts (sculpture) at the Faculty of Education in Rijeka, Croatia, in 1986. He has been active in the art scene since 1984. Since 1985, he has participated in numerous group exhibitions of contemporary art in Croatia and abroad and has also presented his own works on several occasions. He works with painting, sculpture, graphics, drawing, artist’s books, spatial installations and the environment. He is one of those contemporary Croatian artists where you never know what they will exhibit and in which direction their concept will develop. He has received several awards and recognitions. He lives and works as an independent artist in Novigrad and curiously follows current developments in the world of art.