

Nina Stopar

ENCOUNTERS ON THE EDGES OF SELF

17 January–15 February 2025
artKIT

“When does it all begin? When I take the brush in my hand and approach the canvas?”

I dance, I move over the canvas and around it. I combine different materials and the creative process is more important than what is left/created in the end. The process is the core of my work. The paintings are just documents – like a memory of something past.

In my paintings I depict what eludes identification by always returning to the origin of movement, color and line as the pure abstract gesture before the concept. I can say that my art is embryonic, as it explores the potential of the pre-concrete, as a dance between everything and nothing. There is an emptiness that is not still in a silence that is not empty. The white space is also filled with installations of found, discarded objects that, on the contrary, express the potential of something that has lost its value, like perhaps silence.”

In her first solo exhibition in Maribor, Nina Stopar explores how people and space define us and what we really are; in other words, what is the self other than the space and the people who define it, and how such definitions and encounters shape the image that those who look with their eyes see, as well as the image of the moment, here and now. She is interested in the questions of identity and authenticity that “only emerge when we tear off or discard all the masks or personae we wear and encounter the emptiness and fullness within ourselves, which are as transparent as the surface of the water in which the world is reflected. To believe that we are more than just a flowing stream would be and is an illusion.

Identity is a flowing dance of spontaneous actions beyond permanent identification with which we react to the world around us. We are and we are not, we are in a constant process of coming into being and becoming. Therefore, Dance is a metaphor for playful, transformative encounters of the self with life, for living in the now without boundaries, while art is an artifact or a promise, so to speak, that the Dancer with Identity was at work. The fluid identity of the Dancer, subject to the flow of movement, fleeting and changeable, eludes the repetition, regime and series that characterize not only the mechanics of the world and society, but also the body.”

The artist explores this identity of the Dancer through abstraction in abstract movement, through abstract art, through small installations composed of found objects, and through painting with the body, emphasizing space as a feature of the body and as a site of location as primarily essential for overcoming the temporally fleeting identity and as a site for locating the identity that no longer exists. In this sense, the artifacts exhibited in the gallery are faces or images of the past, no longer ephemeral self and are reminiscent of photographs that attempt to transfer a fleeting moment into eternity. Perhaps that is what the artist is doing with her painting.

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artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor
Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In addition to her most recent and some older works, the exhibition is accompanied by a video recording, through which visitors can get to know the artist's creative practice. Large-format paintings, which she paints with her body, hands and feet, are completed through the creative process to create colorful and multi-layered assemblages. The paintings are accompanied by her love poetry, which the artist also presents in a performance during the exhibition. Smaller works on paper, which in comparison to the large-format works are created in the usual painterly manner, and found but reworked and processed objects, a kind of *objets trouvés*, which she recycles, colors, repurposes or makes them purposeless, form a dialog with many ironic undertones, which ultimately forms the core of her overall work and the various artistic forms she uses.

The artist's expression draws from movement, dance, meditative states and from bringing consciousness to the core through movement and liberating body and mind. Her works are a manifestation of the process, they are boundless, the images have no edges, they can move freely in space, they can be turned in any direction and speak differently each time. In an interweaving of dance, painting, poetry, literature and philosophy, she creates multi-layered works of art through performance (through action). Through movement, the unconscious becomes conscious, becomes painting.

Nina Stopar relates her painting to the legacy of action painting and abstract expressionism. The body intuitively feels this, she says: "I am the brush, I am the color, I am the form, I am the painting. I love to lose myself in the unconscious field of painting and find my true expression."

In addition to large-format works, the **Artist Book** in the form of a collection of poems is also exhibited as a kind of poetry diary, which was created during a visit by the artist to Dahlewitz in the summer of 2023, while the **mini-installations** of found objects and creations made during the artist's stay abroad are displayed on the wall – like miniature paintings – and in the room. The exhibition of "documents" or artifacts (poems, the artist book and installations) thus gives us an insight into a specific time and the artist's life, into "my identification with myself, which exists only insofar as the documents exist. Or perhaps not?"

Only now do we truly realize that the fleeting encounters, the contacts, are crucial to articulating the thinking self and my identity, which is as impermanent as a face looking in a mirror. But in any case, such spatial determinations are necessary and essential and all that human life leaves behind.

Who is the artist really in the light of the self? Who does art belong to and what does it tell us about the individual and society?"

Nina Stopar poses an even more radical question: "Do I, the artist, exist only because of my artifacts – works of art that I leave behind because I have to – since they seem to be the only proof of my identity, the only proof of my existence, since every reflection disappears into the water?"

Or can I, the artist, exist without them (the artifacts)?"

Quotes: Nina Stopar
Text: Peter Tomaž Dobrila

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Nina Stopar (1982) is a professor of Slovenian language and philosophy, poet, visual artist and dancer, who graduated from the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana in 2007 and completed her MA studies at the same institution in 2016 with the thesis *Contemporary Art in Philosophical Reflection* under the mentorship of Dr. Lev Kreft. After almost ten years of teaching, she switched to the field of visual arts and in 2021 completed her Master's degree in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana with the thesis *Body Painting as a Spiritual Change in the Time of Indeterminacy* under the mentorship of Prof. Sergei Kapus and Dr. Lev Kreft. Since then, she has been engaged in a variety of creative practices, from classical painting to body painting and performance, dance and poetry.

Lives and works in Žerjav, Črna na Koroškem, and Ljubljana.