

MG MESTNA GALERIJA
NG NOVA GORICA

ARJAN PREGL

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V preteklih letih je delo Arjana Pregla zaznamovala zapletena soodvisnost njegovega umetniškega ustvarjanja (slikarskih serij vse od *Petminutnih revolucij* prek *Karnevala* do *Gugu gaga* in *Otroških slik*) z recepcijo njegovega dela, ki jo je generirala njegova siceršnja javna družbenokritična drža, slednja predvsem v okolju socialnih omrežij. V natančno preiščene koordinate teh zapletenih odnosov se je iz serije v serijo Arjan Pregl spuščal resno in zavzeto, kot da lahko reakcije na svoje delo, tudi kadar so neargumentirane, nekritične in hkrati izrazito osebno sovražne, vzame kot resničen izziv za razmislek o tem, kaj v svojem slikarstvu počne in kako lahko s slikarskimi sredstvi odgovori na zastavljene dileme. Ukvarjal se je z razmislekom o vzgibih za slikarsko delo, za umetniško gesto (tako konceptualno kot čisto slikarsko-likovno), ukvarjal se je z vprašanjem, ali se je znotraj slikarskega dela mogoče ukvarjati tako z eminentno znotrajlikovnimi in znotrajslikarskimi problemi kakor obenem s percepcijo in interpretacijo dela, nad katero ne more imeti nadzora, še najmanj kadar je ta tako odmevna in nepričakovana, kakor so jo izzvale zadnje serije slik v okolju socialnih omrežij. Omenjene serije so se gradile ena iz druge, koncizno in s potrebno širino; to je bila uspešna strategija, ki je v razmislek pritegnila zelo širok nabor tem in problemov, ki določajo po eni strani slikarstvo kot umetniško prakso v razširjenem polju sodobne umetnosti danes, po drugi pa zadevajo pogoje in učinke našega skupnega, torej v najširšem pomenu političnega izrekanja, mišljenja in delovanja.

Otroške slike so se nato v nekem trenutku iztekle, lahko bi rekli, da je serija izčrpala svoje možnosti in vsakršno nadaljevanje v tej smeri bi se verjetno prej ali slej izpelo v ponavljanju. Arjan Pregl je takrat, jeseni 2021, vse pogosteje risal, sproti skiciral spontane risbe, ki jih je brez posebnega načrta skoraj vsak dan nihal v skicirke oziroma zvezke. Risbe od začetka niso imele kakšnega posebnega namena, še sam avtor ni bil zares prepričan, od kod so prišle in kaj, če sploh kaj, lahko iz njih nastane. V zgodovini umetnosti so skice, pripravljalne risbe vedno imele pomembno mesto v ustvarjalnem procesu, vendar jih skoraj nikoli ne razumemo kot končno delo, ki bi bilo namenjeno očem javnosti. Slikarke in slikarji so jih in jih še vedno uporabljajo kot neke vrste sprotne zabeležke, podobno kot pišočji ljudje, ki si sprotno misel kot opombo zapišejo v beležko, da ne bi ušla iz glave. Kajti take sprotne misli in podobe kaj hitro lahko tudi uidejo, ne jemljemo jih dovolj resno, ne ustvarjamo jih disciplinirano in jih zato tudi ne gledamo vedno pozorno. Iz nekaterih takšnih vizualnih ali besednih idej se nato skozi proces spreminjanja, zorenja, brisanja, opuščanja in dodajanja zgodi kaj večjega, iz nekaterih, v katerih se sreča več srečnih okoliščin in v katerih je izvorna ideja dovolj klana, lahko nastanejo kompleksnejša umetniška dela.

V Preglovih preteklih serijah del že obstaja takšen moment leta 2011 in 2012, ko je avtor ustvaril serijo akvarelov manjših dimenzij, ki so nastajali tako rekoč povsem spontano, brez vnaprejšnjega razmisleka, ali bo iz teh akvarelov kaj nastalo, kaj so vprašanja, ki ga pri tem najbolj intrigirajo, ali jih bo lahko nadaljeval v prihodnje delo itd. Kar je bilo pri tedanjem Preglovem slikanju akvarelov odločilno in na idejni ravni povsem nasprotno od naključnega in spontanega nastajanja akvarelov, je bila predvsem osebna okoliščina, da je nekaj let živel v tujini, saj je bila njegova partnerica poslana na diplomatsko delo v tujino,

sam pa je dobil birokratski status »partnerja diplomata«. Ta okoliščina je Pregla vodila do razmisleka, ali lahko tedanji status (ki ga kot posameznika tudi formalno definira kot odvisnega, podrejenega) poveže s svojim umetniškim delom; tako je bil definiran precej ozek prostor specifične pozicije, ki je sedaj spajala umetnika z njegovim formalnim statusom partnerja diplomatke. Začeli so nastajati akvareli (v tradiciji je akvarel razumljen kot enostavnejša tehnika, ki ni materialno in prostorsko zahtevna ter so se je v preteklosti posluževale ženske iz aristokratske elite v svojem obveznem kurikulumu slikanja krajin in prizorov v naravi). V ta drobna dela je vključeval tekste, to so bile običajno lahkotne, nesmiselne tudi absurdne besedne zveze, postavljene na piedestale v nekakšna idilična okolja urejenih parkov, pred bukolično krajino itd. Arjan Pregl je s to serijo pravzaprav izvajal nekakšen osebni eksperiment, saj je bil potisnjen v vlogo, v katero so v veliki večini običajno primorane soproge diplomatov, od katerih se pričakuje, da s svojo dejavnostjo podpirajo moža na državniško pomembni funkciji na način, da se udeležujejo skrajno neproblematično skozi dobrodelne dejavnosti, kuhanje tradicionalnih jedi in organiziranje pogostitev, skratka te naloge niso bistveno drugačne od tistih, ki jih je za ženske na družbenem vrhu predvidela tradicionalna dvorska in buržoazna družba preteklih stoletij. Okvir, ki si ga je zadal, je bil skrajno omejujoč, hkrati pa je pomenil, da je avtor na sebi prostovoljno preizkusil težo patriarhalnih družbenih konvencij, ki sicer na primerljivem položaju skoraj praviloma omejujejo žensko in ki jih je ta primorana privzeti kot samoumevne. Nastala je serija *Nedeljskih akvarelov* z aluzijo na nedeljske slikarje, torej na tiste umetnike, ki ustvarjajo zgolj iz strasti, so pa sicer amaterji, slikajo večinoma v prostem času, saj najverjetneje za preživetje počnejo druge reči. Preglova serija *Nedeljski akvareli* je tako na nek način samoironična metonimija vse tiste nevidne, nikoli v širši javnosti resno vzete in ovrednotene umetniške produkcije, ki je bodisi ženska bodisi amaterska, in tako ni namenjena resni javni presoji, pravzaprav ni niti namenjena očem javnosti. Enako se je zgodilo tudi z *Nedeljskimi akvareli*, ki doslej niso bili razstavljeni.

Ni posebej pomembno, ali je Arjan Pregl o tem razmišljal, ko se je jeseni 2021 znova vrnil k risbi, skoraj vsakodnevemu skiciranju v zvezke, skicirke, za katere ni imel posebnega načrta ali razloga. Na novo pridobljena dnevna navada je bila enostavno dovolj intrigantna, da je ni kar takoj opustil. Svoja prejšnja dela, slikarske serije, tudi te, ki smo jih omenjali uvodoma, je najpogosteje snoval zelo preiščeno, si začrtal njihove vsaj osnovne koordinate, smer, v katero je želel iti (ne da bi seveda vedel, ali bo tja tudi prišel, kaj bo našel spotoma ali kaj ga čaka na koncu), je bila vsaj v osnovnih obrisih jasna. To pa je tudi razlog, da je lahko bila tudi vsaka Preglova serija do sedaj navznoter zaključena celota, ki je imela svoje razloge, idejo in izvedbo, ki sicer vedno pušča dovolj prostora za nenačrtovana in dobrodošla presenečenja. Pogosta lastnost dosedanjega Preglovega dela je namreč bila, da je slike večinoma načrtoval v računalniških programih. Orodje v tem primeru ni bilo le najbolj priročno in učinkovito, temveč so že od vsega začetka, od Preglove serije s cvetjem in muckami, internetne podobe, do katerih je mogoče preprosto dostopati in jih je dobesedno v preobilju, tvorile ključen podobotvoren in pomenski člen v Preglovem delu. Ustvarjanje slikarstva s predpripravo z digitalnimi orodji za Preglovo generacijo namreč ni

bilo nič več novega, v iskreni drži ga je umetnicam in umetnikom generacije t. i. postmedijskega slikarstva uspelo tudi jasno in brez zadržkov že pred časom vključiti v svoje ustvarjalne prakse.

Zato je bilo, tudi za umetnika samega, kakor je povedal, na novo odkrito »staromodno« skiciranje, ki ni imelo posebnega namena, neke vrste ključno odkritje, četudi se morda na prvi pogled lahko zdi nekaj povsem obrobnega in nepomembnega. Domnevamo lahko, da je to neobvezujoča, skoraj osvobajajoča igra zarisovanja, tega nesmiselnega »doodlanja« ponudila užitek čistega ustvarjanja, igre, da je omogočila nekakšen neartikulirani občutek svobode, ki ga omogoča breziljno flanimiranje po neznanem mestu ali odkrivanje brezpotij po neznani pokrajini, če se izrazimo s staromodnimi metaforami. Do danes je Arjan Pregl s svojimi risbami in skicami napolnil nekaj zvezkov in njihova vsebinska raznolikost je naravnost fascinantna. Sčasoma so iz nekaterih od teh risb iz skicirk nastale slike, nova serija del, ki jo je, prvič, ko jo je predstavil spomladi 2022 v GalerijaGallery v Ljubljani, poimenoval *Podobe, ki prihajajo*.

Že sam naslov te serije nas napotuje na vprašanje o izvoru risb, slik, umetniških del in umetnosti nasploh. Risbe iz skicirk so bile namreč podobe, ki so prihajale nenadejano, presenečale so celo samega avtorja, v njih se meša najrazličnejše podobe, ki vendarle od nekod prihaja, čeprav tokrat na videz brez posrednikov, saj roka neposredno in spontano zarisuje tisto, kar je umetniku tisti trenutek pred njegovimi (»notranjimi«) očmi. Takšna predstava nas napotuje na nekaj zanimivih kulturnih in zgodovinskih referenc, med katerimi je gotovo avtomatsko pisanje in risanje. Po burnem 19. stoletju, kjer so z znanostjo pod zmagovitim praporjem razsvetljenske tradicije zagnano tekmovali vseh sort paraznanosti, parapsihologij in spiritualizmov, je avtomatsko pisanje (po nekaj zanimivih epizodah, vključno z iluzionistom Harryjem Houdinijem in zabavno zapoznelim epilogom resnega raziskovanja metode za oddaljeno videnje in avtomatsko pisanje v tajni operaciji The Stargate ameriške vojske, ki je bila leta 1995 zaradi nezanesljivosti in preštevilnih napačnih informacij sodelujočih »vidcev« dokončno opuščena) našlo pot tudi v zgodovino avantgardnih gibanj, predvsem pri francoskih surrealistih, ki so v avtomatizmu pisanja odkrivali metodo, ki skupaj z naključjem ustvarjalnemu duhu omogoča, da brez razumskih omejitev omogoči kar najbolj neposredno in pristno izražanje nezavednega. Surrealisti in pred njimi dadaisti so se v svojem programskem odporu konservativni tradiciji umetnosti in mišljenja upirali na različne načine in eden od pomembnih je bilo tudi odkrivanje potenciala nezavednega (poleg absurda, nesmisla, naključja in otroškega ustvarjanja). Sklic na nadrealistično tradicijo pri Arjanu Preglu ni brez podlage. Eni od risb z dne 12. 7. 2022 je pripisan napis *Cadavre Exquis*, kakor je pariška skupina surrealistov (Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, Marcel Duchamp in André Breton) poimenovala svojo igro, v kateri je vsak sodelujoči napisal besedo na list papirja, prepognil del z napisom in ga podal naslednjemu igralcu, ki je dodal svoj napis in tako naprej, dokler na koncu iz tega ni nastala surrealistična pesem, ki jo je sestavilo povsem presenetljivo sosledje besed, pogosto polno absurda, nesmisla in naključno generiranega humorja. Preglova risba *Cadavre Exquis* je nekakšna podvojena gesta nadrealistov, razkosano risbo s sosledjem razkosanih ali drugače pokončanih

trupel je izpeljal kar sam, z isto roko in prisotno zavestjo; potem ko je v številnih predhodnih risbah nastala že cela vrsta razkosanih trupel, je takšna igra s samim seboj lahko kvečjemu ironična.

Pa vendar, ali danes še lahko zaupamo konceptu nezavednega na tako pristen in nedolžen način? Je mogoče, da danes še karkoli lahko pride od nikoder in nekega onkraj, ki zavesti ni dostopen, denimo iz tako sumljivega kraja, kot je »človekova duša« ali »njegova psihična notranjost«, ki da je izolirana in od sveta ločena z nekim odraslim, civiliziranemu človeku vgrajenim filtrom za vso nesnago sveta? Sedaj, po učni uri postmoderne dobe, psihoanalize in poststrukturalizma je že jasno, da takšnega mesta ni, da ne obstaja trdno jedro posameznika in da subjekt nikakor ni cel. Predvsem pa, da ni gospodar svoje lastne zavesti in da nikdar ni docela avtor svojih lastnih besed, podob in vizij, tudi tistih, ki prihajajo še tako spontano kot čačka na gostilniško servieto, vstopnico za kino ali slikarjevo skicirko.

Če parafraziramo Arjana Pregla samega, *risbe, ki prihajajo* dnevno v njegove skicirke, to razodevajo na različne načine, lahko bi celo rekli, da so risbe in slike, ki prihajajo, ves čas že tu, da so pravzaprav že zdavnaj prišle in da nam razodevajo (grozo)dejstva, prebliske, absuradne konstelacije, nenavadne odnose, s katerimi živimo in so nam predočena, pa smo jih pravzaprav nekako tako ponotranjili, da jih ne zaznavamo več.

V teh risbah najprej seveda opazimo celo vrsto referenc, nekatere zadevajo avtorje iz zgodovine umetnosti. Med razvidnimi ali vsaj domnevnimi so Jože Tisnikar (z vrsto risb krokarjev in ženskih trupel na secirni mizi), Philip Guston (z risarskim načinom popreproščenih figur kot iz risank, z aluzijo na njegove KKK bele kapuce iz pozne figuralne faze, ki še danes tako razburja Američane), Keith Haring (znova zaradi sproščene risbe, ki je Preglovi na neki način podobna, s figurami, ki so brez obrazov in se jim okončine gumijasto zvijajo na vse strani), Pieter Bruegel (ki mu je posvečena ena od risb), Hieronymus Bosch (na katerega nas spomni risba s fontano, ki po intuiciji priključuje v spomin *Vrt zemeljskih naslad*, že zaradi množstva golih človeških figur v vseh skicirkah, ljudi, ki so zapleteni v vse sorte zagonetnih erotičnih in nasilnih odnosov), Francisco Goya (z risbo z razkosanim truplom, privezanim na drevo, ki je *hommage* Goyevi grafiki iz cikla *Grozote vojne* in njegovemu nazornemu prikazu brutalnosti nasilja), nenazadnje je med njimi tudi tako nenavadna referenca, kot je Jamie Coreth (britanski slikar, avtor prvega uradnega portreta kraljevega para, princa Williama in njegove žene Kate, sicer anahronistično pogrešljivega slikarskega dela, o katerem pa se je v nekem trenutku v svetovnih medijih pisalo več kot o kateremkoli sodobnem umetniškem delu).

Risbe v skicirkah v velikem deležu prežema nasilna seksualnost, to so prizori, ko se ljudje razkosavajo med orgiastičnimi skupinskimi spolnimi odnosi, se oralno zadovoljujejo, moški si režejo svoje ude v erekciji, nekatere risbe napolnjujejo odrezane glave in okončine, iz katerih se zlivajo mlake krvi ... Med njimi pa je tudi cela vrsta risb, ki kažejo bolj nedolžno goloto, v nekaterih primerih skoraj bukolično ali angelsko (in res tem golim bitjem zrastejo peruti in letajo v nebo kot angeli v baročnih kupolah), ponekod golota sodi v moralno legitimiran mitološki kontekst, a imajo prizori vselej neko drobno »napako«, kot npr. pri Pozejdonu, ki ga riba

grize za nabrekli ud, ali Ledi in labodu ali pa goli moški figuri z obilnim trebuhom, kosmatimi nogami in angelskimi krili, ki stoji na podstavku kakor veličasten kip, čeprav na njem ni pravzaprav ničesar veličastnega, je zgolj še groteska, kar je podton, ki se vleče skozi domala vse risbe v Preglovih skicirkah iz zadnjih dveh let. Potem so tu še risbe nekakšnih nasilnih demonstracij, na katerih se znova prepleta nasilje z razkosavanjem ljudi, mlakami krvi, oblaki solzilcev in strelnim orožjem, ki komu tu in tam odpihne glavo.

Vsej tej nasilni neznosnosti kljubuje risba, kot rečeno takšna, da še najbolj spominja na zgodnje risanke, ki so jih ustvarjali še analogno, gotovo povsem namerno naivna risba brez senc in brez volumna, kar je v primeru Arjana Pregla treba najbrž posebej pozorno izpostaviti. Pregl je namreč izvrsten risar, dovolj je, da se spomnimo njegove serije vrhunsko bravuroznih risb *Tristo kosmatih*. Te *risbe, ki prihajajo*, torej iz skicirk iz poznega leta 2021 in leta 2022, povsem namerno privzemajo likovno poenostavljen dvodimenzionalni slog, realistično komaj zadostno formo, ki prestavlja nenavadno vsebinsko težo na lahkoten izrazni nivo, prežema ga z nekakšno navidezno preprostostjo in sproščenostjo, zaradi katere je prizore nasilja, razkosane ude, brezobrazne figure, mlake krvi, metulje iz falusov, razvpito podobo zapornika iz Guantanamo na pasjem povodcu tudi lahkotneje, pravzaprav skoraj neboleče gledati. V tej bizarni dvoumnosti se namreč izpolnjuje in vztraja temeljna zadrega, ki jo Arjan Pregl s takšnimi risbami postavlja pred gledalca in ki smo jo omenili že uvodoma. Risbe, ki prihajajo, in slike, ki prihajajo iz njih, se zdijo zaradi takšnega navidezno ležernega sloga zgolj oddaljeni prizori, pogovorno bi rekli »plod domišljije«, če bi nas slučajno še vedno toliko zaneslo, da bi mimetični funkciji v slikarstvu pripisovali še kakšno resno veljavo. Mikavnost možnosti, da smo jih s tem odrešili njihove zunajslikarske referenčnosti, je velika in obratno sorazmerna z možnostjo, da lahko tem prizorom kar uidemo.

Zagonetni spoj prizorov, podan v takšnem likovno preprostem slogu, z naslovi slik, kot so *Postfaktična abstrakcija, Revolucionarna slika, Rojstvo slikarstva, Razbiti inceli, Tihožitje s tabletami, Samomor iz zasede*, nas vendarle nelagodno opozarja, da so te slike pravzaprav v še kako neposredni zvezi s svojim predmetom upodabljanja zunaj površine platna ne glede na nezavezujoče lahkotno formo, v kateri so naslikane. Da je v njih vedno še ta preostanek, ki nas bega in zavezuje, ker zanj vemo, da, kakorkoli veselih barv, vendarle ni zgolj »plod domišljije«. Pri slikah iz te serije moramo kljub vsemu poudariti, da četudi nastajajo iz hipno narisanih risb, v slogu, ki se zadovoljuje z minimalnim realizmom, so slike po drugi strani temeljito in dolgotrajno delo, v katerem Pregl uporablja, podobno kot že pri prejšnjih serijah, zamudne postopke polaganja pastozne barve na površino platna, se ukvarja z njeno teksturo, jo mestoma prepušča platnu, ki se prebije skozi reže debelih barvnih nanosov, skratka se z arhitekturo slike ukvarja na zelo temeljit slikarski način. Tudi s tem nas znova napotuje na nekatera ključna mesta, ki jih poznamo že iz prejšnjih Preglovih serij, saj vemo, da v svoja dela, pogosto prav tam, kjer je to najmanj pričakovati, zelo resno in zavzeto vnaša ključne razmisleke o možnosti slikarskega dela danes. Strnemo lahko, da je v Preglovem delu v zadnjih letih stalno prisoten dialog z zgodovino, predvsem visokomodernistično tradicijo slikarstva 20.

stoletja, z raziskovanjem možnosti slikarstva onkraj meja medija, ki si jih je modernizem zastavil kot svoj poslednji horizont. Arjan Pregl pogosto v svojih delih izkazuje sledi tega razmisleka, dileme in zagate, na katere naleti pri iskanju možnosti za avtentično slikarstvo danes.

Trem slikam iz te serije je tako naslov *Postfaktična abstrakcija*, ki je nenavadna, nesmiselna uganka, nekakšen bistroumni nesmisel: prva asociacija je gotovo aluzija na pomembno poglavje iz zgodovine umetnosti, t. i. postslikarsko abstrakcijo iz tradicije ameriškega slikarstva po sredini 20. stoletja, ki je razmerje do abstraktnega razumelo še strožje kot predhodniki in s tem zahtevalo, da se iz abstraktnega slikarstva umakne kakršnakoli povezava z zunajslikarsko referencialnostjo, tudi umetnikovim notranjim psihičnim poljem, ter da se namesto tega slikarstvo osredotoči na gola dejstva svojega medija (ploskovito površino, omejitve nosilca, barvo itd.). Pridrevnik postfaktično iz naslova treh slik je tako v nekem nenavadnem razmerju do tega zgodovinskega slikarskega pojava – abstrakcija je namreč sama po sebi dejansko eminentno faktična možnost, saj deluje izključno znotraj nekaj omejenih dejstev, ki jih edine priznava kot smiselne v okviru raziskovanja meja medija (sliko kot medij je v abstraktni tradiciji slikarstva 20. stoletja mogoče zvesti na ploskoviti nosilec in barvo). Po drugi strani pa je nominalno antifaktična, saj je vendar njeno načelo abstrakcija. V tem pogledu v okviru zgodovine abstraktnega slikarstva postfaktična kategorija nima veliko smisla; pridobi pa povsem novo razsežnost, če vzamemo v obzir njeno današnjo rabo, in sicer (skrajno problematičen) odnos do resničnosti v sedanjem, sodobnem času, ki uveljavlja postfaktičnost kot možno kategorijo družbenega, javnega komuniciranja, in postfaktično politiko kot skrajno (slabo) možnost organizacije vsega skupnega oziroma družbenega. Postfaktična resničnost namreč ni več zavezana dejstvom, temveč njihovi interpretaciji, s tem pa je izgubljena možnost za vsakršno gotovo spoznanje. V tej perspektivi tri slike Arjana Pregla s tem naslovom dobijo povsem novo razsežnost, ki je podobno komplicirana v odnosu do resničnosti, kakor bi utegnili biti zastavitev postfaktične abstrakcije znotraj slikarstva. S tem zastavkom v naslovu nas slikar namreč vrača na izhodiščno vprašanje, kaj na sliki gledamo; od kod izvirajo te podobe, če ne iz resničnosti; so lahko potencialno resnične glede na to, kar vemo o dogajanju v svetu in kaj sploh vemo o dogajanju v svetu v trenutku, ko je merilo resničnosti izenačeno s potencialom postfaktičnega *mnenja* o resničnosti – ta se kaže v obstoju medijev, ki niso več zavezani verodostojni informaciji in preverjanju dejstev, manifestira se v horizontalni enakopravnosti nesortiranih informacij na svetovnem spletu, ki šibijo kriterij verodostojne argumentacije ... Kaj torej lahko pomeni *postfaktična abstrakcija* na Preglovih slikah v času, v katerem se dejansko odvija še ena od brutalnih vojn na evropskem kontinentu (ne da bi ta dela izvorno sploh imela kakšno neposredno zvezo z ukrajinsko-rusko vojno, jo nehote vendarle imajo), na katero smo se v enem letu že povsem navadili, jo tako rekoč abstrahirali in ji s tem že skoraj odvzeli vsakršno *faktično* vrednost? Preglove slike seveda ne dajo nikakršnega odgovora na zapleten skupek vprašanj, kvečjemu ga še bolj zapletejo.

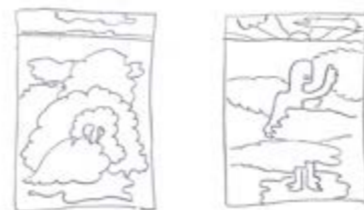
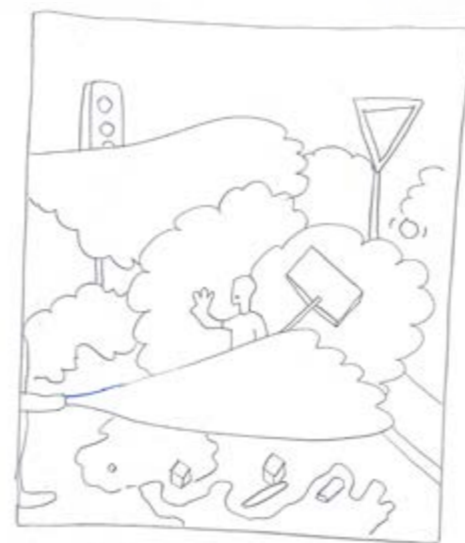
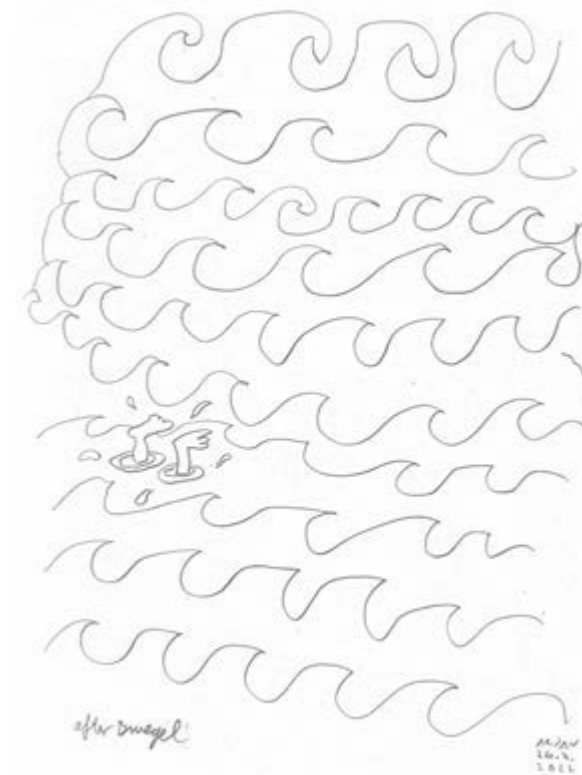
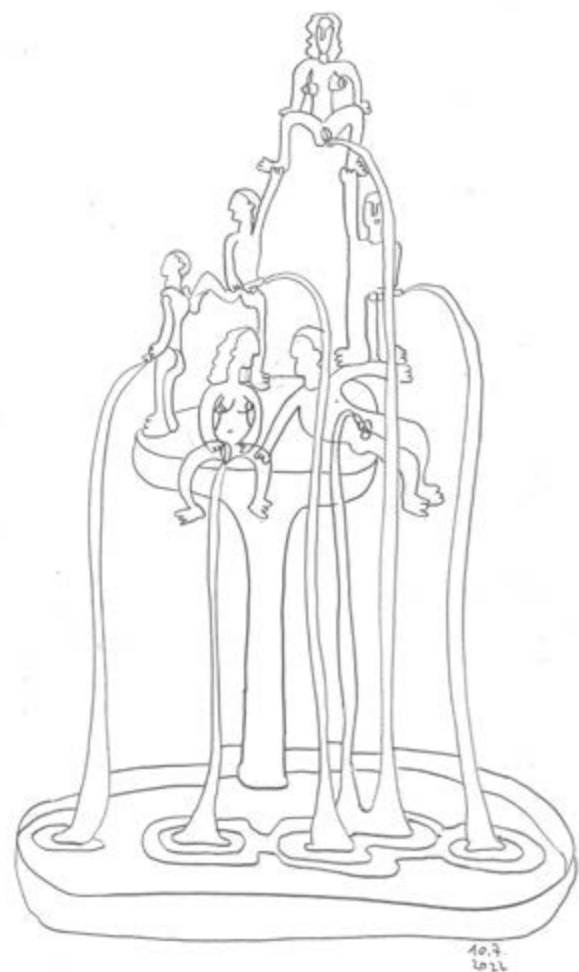


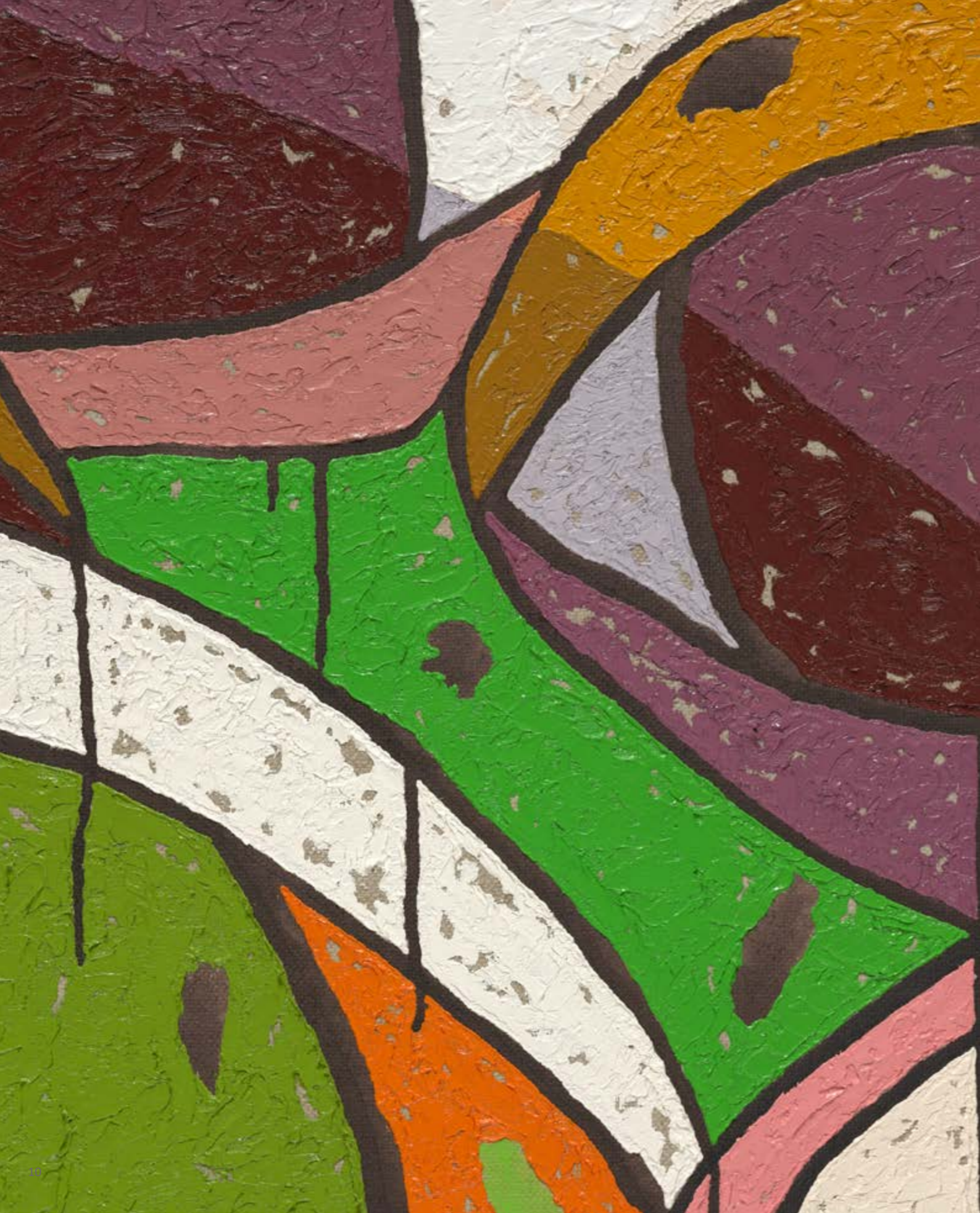
Tej dvoumni dispoziciji sledita tudi sliki z naslovom *Revolucionarna slika*, znova s hudomušno aluzijo na revolucionarnost v umetnosti, ki jo je bila zgodovina umetnosti 20. stoletja polna, danes pa takšno dikcijo resno jemlje zgolj še industrija oglaševanja. Revolucionarni sliki namreč nista po ničemer takšni, ne po slogu in ne po vsebini; potem ko je slikarstvo v zadnjem stoletju preživelo vse možne revolucije, je takšen naslov lahko kvečjemu samoironičen. Tudi v vsebini so te slike dvoumno revolucionarne, najbrž jih je mogoče gledati kot skrajno groteskno revolucionarne, saj množica uličnih demonstracij, ki smo jih priča v zadnjih desetletjih v zahodnem svetu, dejansko nima realnega učinka oziroma je ta lahko kaj hitro relativiziran v poljubno smer v nepredvidljivih odvodih medijskega poročanja, kakor se nam je pred nedavnim pogosto dogajalo tudi v naši državi. Oblast nad dejstvi pomeni oblast nad poročanjem o dejstvih, zato usoda javnih medijev še nikoli ni bila tako kritičnega pomena, kot je danes. Preglovi prizori demonstracij so tako na videz fantastični, hkrati pa vključujejo vse drobce resničnosti: od rumenih jopičev do solzivca in vodnega topa, ki se jih še živo spominjamo ... In vendar se nad zagonetnimi prizori demonstracij v enem primeru pne mavrica čez sinje nebo, v drugem pa se na ozadju nasilnega dogajanja pravkar dogaja veličasten sončni zahod. Navsezadnje je tudi demonstracije mogoče prikazati kot klišejski slikarski (ali pa medijski) kader.

Na podobno zagato nas napeljujeta deli *Rojstvo naroda* in *Rojstvo slikarstva*, ki nas po eni strani znova vračata k večnemu vprašanju geneze slikarstva oziroma umetniškega dela na sploh, na drugi pa k neposredni kulturni referenci, ki je veličasten Griffitov film *Birth of Nation*, *Rojstvo naroda* iz leta 1915. Kultni film velja hkrati za rojstvo filmske umetnosti zaradi pionirske uporabe mnogih filmskih tehničnih, režijskih in montažnih postopkov, ki so omogočili filmsko gramatiko celovečernih filmov 20. stoletja, obenem pa velja za kontroverzno rasistično propagando, s pomočjo katere so se rekrutirale vrste Kukluksklana in legitimirala bela supremacistična ideologija kot temelj ameriške nacije. Neposredni citat kontroverzne reference odzvanja v naslovu slike *Rojstvo slikarstva*, ki prikazuje golo moško figuro pred šafelajem, po frizuri in brčicah prepoznamo v njej Hitlerja, sicer plavolasega in z modrimi očmi, faliranega slikarja, ki je svojo zloglasno zgodovinsko vlogo prav tako utemeljil s promocijo rasizma z monstrozni zgodovinskimi posledicami. Zagonetka, ki jo pred nas postavlja ta prizor, je humorna pravzaprav le prvi hip (odzvanja namreč v pogostih dovtipih o obžalovanju, da Adolfu Hitlerju niso omogočili spodobne umetniške kariere, saj bi potem bila zgodovina 20. stoletja gotovo svetlejša itd.), saj gre za grenko duhovitost, kajti vloge nacifašizma v zgodovini sodobne Evrope ni mogoče kar odmisлити kot nekaj preseženega, potem ko s sodobnimi tendencami zgodovinskega revizionizma, vznikom antidemokratskih režimov in politik povsod po svetu ter ksenofobnimi migracijskimi politikami postaja jasno, da ta ni bil nikoli zares izkoreninjen. Slika *Rojstvo naroda* je v tem kontekstu zanimiv pendant, kajti na glavi stoječe ženske figure rojevajo nove pripadnike naroda, dobesedno rojevajo nacijo. Znova ne gre zgolj za neslano domisljico, temveč za komaj verjetno zmago konservativnih politik, ki si ponovno prilaščajo oblast nad ženskim telesom; spomnimo, da so bile pred nedavnim v nekaterih državah ZDA in na Poljskem že pridobljene reproduktivne pravice žensk, kot je pravica do splava, ženskam odvzete.

Dve nenavadni deli v tej seriji slik dopolnjujeta zadnji Preglov slikarski cikel, čeprav s tem nikakor ni rečeno, da se je serija z njima tudi dopolnila. To sta sliki z naslovoma *Rabelais* in *Eyeyeye*, ki bi obe lahko stali tudi povsem sami zase, saj gre likovno za nekoliko drugačni deli, zunaj opisanega konteksta lahko tudi povsem razvezani nakazani vsebinski asociacij. *Rabelais* je slika množice odprtih režečih se ust; v naslovu se poklanja enemu največjih renesančnih avtorjev in humoristov, ki je v svojih delih s satiričnim, opolzkim in grotesknim pisanjem smešil državo in Cerkev ter tako na komičen in satiričen način opozarjal na nepravilnosti v družbi svojega časa (najbrž je botroval zanimiv splet okoliščin dejstvu, da ima najdebelejša od Preglovih skicirk naslovnic, ki je reprodukcija Gallimardove izdaje Rabelaisove knjige *Gargantua*, druge knjige iz njegovega znamenitega cikla *Gargantua in Pantagruel*). Moč smeha kot orodja za družbeno kritiko in subverzijo ima v evropski kulturni zgodovini dolgo tradicijo, vsekoli je blizu tudi Arjanu Preglu, prehaja med njegovim slikarskim delom, literarnim ustvarjanjem in siceršnjim družbenim aktivizmom, za katerega najpogosteje uporablja najbolj razširjena socialna omrežja. Če slika *Rabelais* kaže množico režečih se ust, slika *Eyeyeye* prikazuje množico široko razprtih oči: prva je bučna od grotesknega smeha in hkrati nema, saj gre za »naslikani smeh«, druga je nema, a fonetično njen naslov zveni kot v usodo predano jadikovanje, kot *ajajaj* ... Kajti večini teh preprostih človeških likov v Preglovih skicirkah in na slikah (z izjemo plavolasega Hitlerja) manjkajo oči in usta – največkrat imajo namesto ust le votlo luknjico – manjka jim torej tisto poglobitno, kar človeka dela človeškega, namreč zmožnost komunikacije, zmožnost dialoga, ki je sploh predpogoj za vsakršno smotrno skupno delovanje. To množstvo človeških figur prej spominja na homunkule, zagonetne človečke, zapletene v svoje brutalne in nesmiselne dejavnosti, v nasilno in slepo mrgolenje, ki pa ni brez posledic. Tako kot vsako umetniško delo vsaka izjava celo v postfaktičnem času ni povsem brez posledic.

Martina Vovk, kustosinja v Moderni galeriji





In recent years Arjan Pregl's work has been characterised by a complex interdependence between his artistic output (his painting cycles, including *Five-Minute Revolutions*, *Carnival*, *Gugu Gaga*, and *Childlike Paintings*) and the reception thereof generated by his socially critical stance in the public arena, in particular on social networks. In cycle after cycle, Pregl has entered the precisely cogent coordinates of these complex relationships earnestly and with commitment, as if to show that he can take reactions to his work, even when they are unsubstantiated, lack reasoned criticism, and are at the same time clearly hateful at a personal level, as a true challenge to reflect on what he does in his art and how he can address the dilemmas he has been confronted with by using the tools of the painting medium. He has contemplated the motives behind painting and the artist's gesture (both conceptually and in purely artistic terms), dwelt on whether a painting can deal with both intra-visual and intra-painting issues, and reflected on the perception and interpretation of his work, over which he cannot have control, least of all when it is as publicised and unexpected as the reactions triggered by his latest works on social media. These cycles of paintings build on one another, concisely and with the requisite breadth. This is the successful strategy that was the subject of a recent examination which involved a wide range of topics and issues that both determine painting as an artistic practice in the broader field of present-day contemporary art, and affect the conditions and consequences of our shared political statements, thinking, and actions in the broadest sense.

Childlike Paintings eventually came to an end. One could say that the cycle exhausted its possibilities and any continuation in that direction would probably have sooner or later petered out in repetition. At that point, in the autumn of 2021, Pregl started drawing more frequently, sketching spontaneous drawings in his sketchpad or sketchbook almost every day, without a particular plan in mind. At the outset, these drawings did not have a real purpose; even the author was not really sure where they came from and what, if anything, they might turn into. In the history of art, sketches and drafts have always played an important role in the creative process, but we almost never perceive them as finished works intended for the eyes of the public. Painters have always used them as notes on-the-fly, much like writers tend to jot down thoughts that pop up in their heads to make sure they do not forget them. Because fleeting thoughts and images can quickly disappear, we do not take them seriously enough, we do not create them studiously, and we do not always keep a close enough eye on them. Some such visual and verbal ideas subsequently grow into something bigger through a process of iteration, maturation, deletion, omission, and addition. Some that contain a solid enough original idea evolve into more complex works of art through a nexus of multiple fortuitous circumstances.

There have been such moments in Pregl's past, in 2011 and 2012, when he created a cycle of small-format watercolours that were produced almost spontaneously, without prior reflection on what the watercolours would become, what the issues are that intrigued him the most, or whether he would be able to evolve them into a future work. What was decisive at that time in Pregl's watercolour production, and conceptually completely different from the accidental and spontaneous creation of watercolours,

was his personal circumstance of living in a foreign country for several years, his diplomat partner having been posted abroad and him receiving the bureaucratic status of "diplomat's partner". This situation prompted Pregl to reflect on whether he could connect his status (which formally defined him as dependent and subordinated) with his artistic work. As a result, it defined a fairly narrow space of a specific position that blended the artist with his formal status as a diplomat's partner. He started making watercolours (traditionally, watercolours have been considered a simpler technique that is not demanding in terms of material and space and had in the past been attractive for women from the aristocratic elite, a part of their mandatory curriculum of landscape and nature painting). These miniscule works featured texts, typically light-spirited, senseless, and even absurd phrases put on pedestals in seemingly idyllic environments, such as well-groomed parks or bucolic landscapes. This was a personal experiment of sorts for Pregl, who was confined to a role that diplomats' wives are typically compelled to perform, expected as they are to support their husbands in posts important for the state by performing utterly unproblematic tasks, such as taking part in charity activities, preparing traditional meals, and entertaining guests – roles that are not significantly different from those designated for women at the top rungs of society by the courtly and bourgeoisie societies of centuries past. The framework he selected was radically constrictive, and yet it meant that the author voluntarily tested on himself the weight of patriarchal social conventions that almost as a rule constrain women in such positions and which women are forced to accept as a given. This experience resulted in the cycle *Sunday Watercolours*, an allusion to Sunday painters, artists who do art out of passion but are otherwise amateurs, painting mostly in their free time because they probably do other things for a living. *Sunday Watercolours* is a self-deprecating metonymy of sorts for all those invisible artistic productions that have never been taken or evaluated seriously, productions by either women or amateurs that are inherently not intended for earnest public scrutiny and are in fact not meant for the eyes of the public. And this is precisely what has happened to *Sunday Watercolours*, which hitherto have not been exhibited.

It is not particularly relevant whether Pregl thought about that when he returned, in the autumn of 2021, to drawing, to almost daily sketching in sketchpads and sketchbooks that had no underlying plan or reason. This newly acquired daily habit was simply intriguing enough that he did not immediately abandon it. His previous works – cycles of paintings – including those mentioned at the start, were typically very carefully designed. At a minimum, he would identify the basic coordinates, and the direction which he sought to pursue (naturally not knowing whether he would arrive there and what he would find along the way, or what awaited him in the end) was clear, at least in its broad strokes. This is also the reason why every cycle of his to date has been an internally completed whole which had its own reasons, idea, and execution, even as it left sufficient room for inadvertent and welcome surprises. One major feature of Pregl's work is that he plans most of his paintings by means of computer programs. This is not just the handiest and most efficient tool for the job: from the very beginning, starting with Pregl's cycles with flowers and cats, online images, simple to access and available in

overabundance, have been an indispensable source of imagery and meaning in his works. For Pregl's generation, painting with digital preparation is no longer something new; artists of what is known as post-media painting have succeeded in incorporating it into their artistic practices sincerely, clearly, and without reservation.

That is why for the artist himself – and he has said so – this newly discovered “old fashioned” sketching without a particular purpose was a key discovery in some sense, even though it may seem completely marginal and insignificant. We can assume that this arbitrary, almost liberating game of sketching, this senseless doodling, provided – to resort to a trite phrasing – the pleasure of pure creation, a game that facilitated an unstated sense of freedom, which made it possible to aimlessly wander in a strange place or discover untouched places in an alien landscape. Pregl has so far filled several sketchbooks with his drawings and sketches and their variety is utterly fascinating. Over time, some of these sketches have evolved into paintings, a new cycle that he first presented at the Galerija Gallery in Ljubljana in the spring of 2022 entitled *Images to Come*.

The very title of this cycle, which the author later abandoned, invites us to reflect on the origin of drawings, paintings, artworks, and art in general. The sketchbook drawings were images that came unexpectedly, surprising even the author himself by blending a variety of imagery, imagery that comes from somewhere, although in this case seemingly without intermediaries, for the hand directly and spontaneously draws that which the artist has in front of his (“internal”) eyes at that moment. This concept steers us towards some interesting cultural and historical references, chief among them automatic writing and drawing. After the turmoil of the 19th century, when all sorts of parasciences, parapsychologies and spiritualisms competed with science under the victorious banner of the Enlightenment tradition, automatic writing (after a few interesting episodes, including one featuring the illusionist Harry Houdini and an amusingly long epilogue of serious research into a method of remote viewing and automatic writing in the “Stargate” covert US military operation, which was finally abandoned in 1995 due to unreliability and the abundance of wrong information provided by the participating “psychics”) found its way into the history of avant-garde movements, in particular the French surrealists, who attempted to discover in automatic writing a method that, combined with coincidence, gives the creative spirit the most direct and genuine expression of the unconscious, liberated from the shackles of reason. The surrealists, and the Dadaists before them, underpinned their conceptual resistance to the conservative tradition in art in various ways, and one of the major ways was to discover the potential of the unconscious (and the absurd, the senseless, the incidental, and children's creativity). When it comes to Pregl, the invocation of the surrealist tradition is not spurious: one of the drawings, dated 12 July 2022, bears the inscription *Cadavre Exquis*, the name the Paris group of surrealists (Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, Marcel Duchamp, and André Breton) gave to a game of theirs in which every participant wrote a word on a piece of paper, folded the part with the word on it and handed it to the next player, who added his own word, folded the paper, and so on, until what emerged was a surrealist

poem composed of a completely idiosyncratic sequence of words often full of absurd, senseless, and randomly generated humour. Pregl's drawing *Cadavre Exquis* is a repetition of sorts of the surrealists' gesture, only that he created the disjointed drawing with a sequence of dismembered or otherwise slain cadavers himself, with the same hand and consciousness; having created a series of disjointed corpses in many of his previous drawings, such a game-of-one can only be considered ironic.

And yet, can we still trust the concept of the unconscious in such a genuine and innocent way? Is it possible that at this point in time anything can still come out of nowhere, from a beyond that is not accessible to consciousness, for example from a suspicious place such as the “human soul” or “internal psyche” allegedly isolated and separated from the world with some filter for all the detritus that comes built into civilised man? Now, after the lessons of the post-modern age, psychoanalysis, and post-structuralism, it is already clear that there is no such place, that an individual's solid core does not exist, and that the subject is by no means whole – and most importantly, that he is not the master of his own consciousness and was never really the author of his own words, images, and visions, no matter how spontaneous they may be, for example scribbles on a bar napkin, a movie ticket, or a painter's sketchbook.

To paraphrase Pregl himself, the *drawings to come* appearing daily in his sketchbook reveal this in a multitude of ways, one could even say that the drawings and paintings to come have been there all the time, that they in fact arrived long ago and that they reveal the (horrible) facts, insights, absurd constellations, and unusual relationships that we live and are faced with, but which we have in fact internalised to such an extent that we no longer perceive them.

Naturally, we first see a plethora of references in these drawings, some of them invoking authors from the history of art. Those we recognise, or at least think we recognise, include Jože Tisnikar (from a series of drawings featuring ravens and female bodies on an autopsy table), Philip Guston (drawings of simplified, almost cartoonish figures, allusions to the white KKK hoods from Guston's late phase, which continue to upset Americans to this day), Keith Haring (again, due to the relaxed style of drawing akin to Haring's, with faceless figures and rubbery limbs twisting in all directions), Pieter Bruegel (one of the drawings is dedicated to him), Hieronymus Bosch (we are reminded of him by a drawing with a fountain that recalls *The Garden of Earthly Delights* due to the sheer number of naked human figures in all his sketchbooks, people entangled in all sorts of perplexing erotic relationships), Francisco Goya (invoked with a drawing of a dismembered body tied to a tree, an homage to Goya's print from the series *The Disasters of War* and its explicit depiction of the brutality of violence), and even unusual references such as to Jamie Coreth (a British painter who is the author of the first official portrait of the royal couple, Prince William and his wife Kate, an anachronistically expendable painting that at one point received more global media attention than any other contemporary work of art).

The sketchbook drawings are permeated with violent sexuality, featuring scenes of people dismembering each other during orgiastic group sex or satisfying each other orally, of men cutting off their erect members; some of the drawings are filled with severed heads and limbs from which puddles of blood ooze out. There is also a whole series of drawings depicting more innocent nudity, sometimes almost bucolic or angelic (indeed, these beings grow wings and fly into the sky like angels in baroque domes). Sometimes the nudity is placed in a morally legitimised mythological context, but these scenes always have a slight “error”, for example one where a fish nibbles on Poseidon's erect penis, or the one with *Leda and the Swan*, or the naked male figure with a bulging belly, hairy legs, and angelic wings stood on a pedestal like a magnificent statue, even though there is nothing magnificent about him – he is grotesque, which is a sentiment that forms an undercurrent that has been running through Pregl's sketchbooks over the past two years. Then there are also drawings of violent protests where violence once again combines with the dismemberment of people, puddles of blood, clouds of tear gas, and firearms that occasionally blow someone's head off.

Defying this violent unbearableness is a style of drawing reminiscent of early cartoons, back when they were analogue, a style without shading and without volume that is surely intentionally naive – this must be strongly emphasised when it comes to Pregl. That is because Pregl is a master of drawing; one need only recall his supremely deft cycle *Three Hundred Hairy Beasts*. These *drawings to come* – drawings from the sketchbooks made in late 2021 and in 2022 – intentionally pursue a visually simplified, two-dimensional style, a realistically barely adequate form that shifts unusual substantive weight to a light-hearted level of expression, saturating it with an ostensible simplicity and relaxation due to which one can watch the scenes of violence, disjointed bodies, faceless figures, puddles of blood, butterflies made of phalluses – or the notorious image of a Guantanamo prisoner on a dog leash – in a relaxed manner, almost painlessly. It is in this bizarre ambiguity that the fundamental predicament which Pregl puts in front of the spectator and which we mentioned at the beginning is fulfilled and persists. This seemingly laid-back style makes the drawings to come and the paintings that come out of them seem like distant scenes, one could even say “figments of imagination” if we were to accidentally get carried away into attributing any serious value to the mimetic function in painting. The temptation of the possibility that we have thus saved them from their reference framework outside painting is great and inversely proportional to the possibility of simply escaping these scenes.

Yet, the perplexing amalgamation of scenes mediated in such a visually simplistic style, with titles of paintings such as *Post-Factual Painting*, *Revolutionary Painting*, *The Birth of a Painter*, *Busted Incels*, *Still Life with Pills*, and *Ambush Suicide* queasily reminds us that these paintings are very much directly related to their subject matter outside the canvas, notwithstanding their nonchalant form. It reminds us that they still contain a residue which confounds and obligates us because we know that, no matter how cheerily colourful this residue is, it is not just a “figment of the imagination”.

One thing to note about paintings from this cycle is that even though they are based on spontaneous drawings and made in a style at peace with minimalist realism, they are studious and laborious works. Much like in his previous cycles, Pregl uses a lengthy procedure of layering dense paint on canvas, he dwells on texture, occasionally letting the canvas peer through gaps in thick paint – he deals with the architecture of the painting in a visually very thorough way. This is another way for him to lead us to important places known from his previous cycles: we know that he is very serious and committed to adding fundamental reflections on the possibilities of present-day painting, often in places where we least expect it. It has been written about at length before, but to sum it up here: in Pregl's recent work there is a permanent dialogue with history, in particular with the high modernist tradition of 20th-century painting, and an exploration of the possibilities of painting beyond the boundaries of the medium that modernism set as its ultimate horizon. Pregl's works often contain traces of these reflections, dilemmas, and quandaries, which he encounters as he explores the possibilities of authentic painting in the present era.

Three paintings from this cycle are called *Postfactual Abstraction*, a title that poses an uncanny, absurd puzzle, an oxymoron of sorts: the first thing that comes to mind is an allusion to an important chapter in the history of art, the post-painterly abstraction from the tradition of American painting after the mid 20th century that interpreted the relationship to abstract painting in even stricter terms than preceding movements and demanded that abstract painting abandon any connection to references outside painting as an art form, including the artist's internal psychological world, and that it instead focus on the pure facts of the medium (the flat surface, the limitations of the canvas, paint, etc.). The adjective *postfactual* in the three paintings is thus in a remarkable relationship with this historical movement in painting – because abstraction as such is a notably factual possibility since it operates exclusively within certain constrained facts that it recognises as the only sensible things in exploring the boundaries of the medium (in the abstract tradition of 20th-century painting, the painting as a medium can be reduced to a flat surface and paint). On the other hand, it is nominally anti-factual given that abstraction is its principle. In this framework of abstract painting, the postfactual category does not make much sense, it does, however, take on a completely new dimension if one takes into account its present-day use – its (utterly problematic) attitude to contemporary reality, which establishes post-factuality as a possible category of societal, public communication, and post-factual politics, a radical (bad) way of organising that which is common or social. Post-factual politics are not committed to facts, they are committed to their interpretation and therefore any possibility for final realisation is lost. In this context, Pregl's *Postfactual Abstraction* paintings take on a completely new dimension – one that is as complicated in its relationship to reality as the affirmation of postfactual abstraction would have been in painting as an art form. By using this title, the author returns us to the original question of what it is that we see in a painting; where the images come from if not from reality; and can they be potentially real considering what is going on in the world at a time when the criterion of reality is equated with the postfactual



opinion about reality, this being evident in the existence of media outlets that are no longer committed to credible information and the verification of facts, and manifested in a horizontal equality of unsorted information on the World Wide Web that weakens credible argumentation? What does *postfactual abstraction* mean in Pregl's paintings at a time in which yet another brutal war is being waged on the European continent (originally, the works have no direct connection to the Ukrainian-Russian war, but they do so inadvertently), a war that we have completely got used to in a year, a war which we have almost abstracted, hence depriving it of any *factual* value? Naturally, Pregl's paintings do not provide an answer to this conundrum, if anything they make it even more complicated.

This ambiguous disposition is followed by two paintings with the title *Revolutionary Painting*, yet another jocular allusion to the revolutionary in art, which was abundant in 20th-century art, but is now a concept taken seriously by nobody but the advertising industry. The revolutionary paintings are not revolutionary in either style or content; after painting as an art form survived all manners of revolution in the previous century, the only way to interpret this title is as being self-deprecating. Even in terms of content, these paintings are ambiguously revolutionary at best. Perhaps they can be seen as revolutionary in a radically grotesque way given that the multitude of street protests in the Western world in the last several decades have either not had a real impact, or the impact was quickly watered down in arbitrary directions in the unpredictable meanderings of media reporting, which was often the case in Slovenia not so long ago. Power over facts no long means anything but power over the reporting of facts, which is why the fate of public service media has never been more critically important than it is today. Pregl's scenes of street protests may seem fantastic, but they contain fragments of reality that are still vivid in Slovenian collective memory, from the so-called yellow jackets to tear gas and a water cannon. And yet in these perplexing scenes of protest there is a rainbow stretching over a clear blue sky in one painting, and a glorious sunset in the background of violent action in another. After all, even protests can act as a cliché in painting (or in the media).

The paintings *The Birth of a Nation* and *The Birth of Painting* present a similar predicament: on the one hand they invoke the perennial issue of the genesis of paintings and artwork in general, but they also contain a clear cultural reference, David W. Griffith's epic 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*. This cult classic is considered the birth of film as an art form due to the pioneering use of many technical, directorial, and editing techniques that paved the way for the cinematic language of 20th-century feature films. At the same time, it is considered controversial racist propaganda, which the Ku Klux Klan leveraged to recruit new members and which legitimised supremacist ideology as the bedrock of the American nation. A direct quote from this controversial reference resonates in *The Birth of an Artist*, which depicts a naked male figure in front of an easel, recognisable by the hair and moustache as Adolf Hitler, even though he is blonde and blue-eyed, a failed painter who cemented his notorious role in history through the promotion of racism and caused monstrous consequences. The humorous riddle that this scene evokes is humorous only at first glance (it

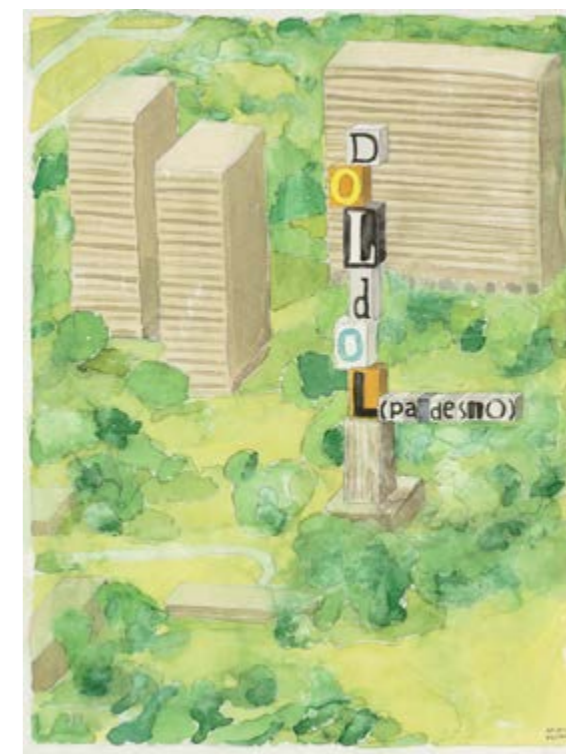
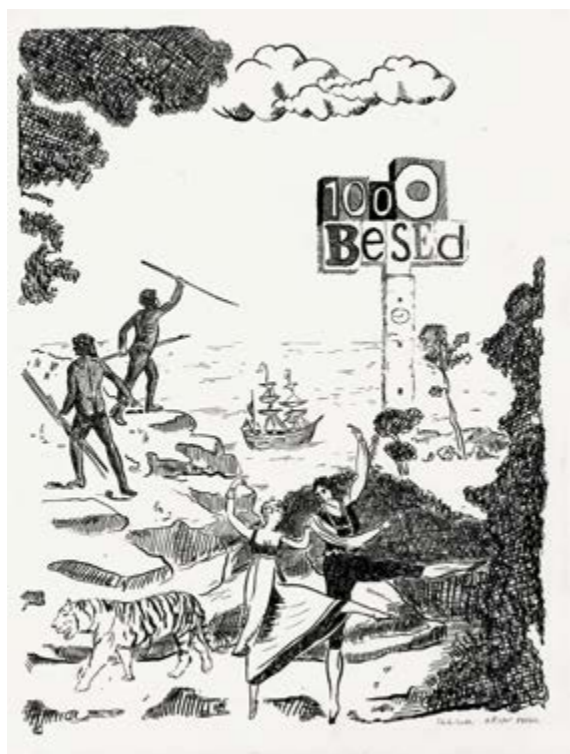
resonates in frequent jokes about it being a shame that Hitler had not been given the chance to pursue a decent artistic career, for the 20th century would have surely been brighter if he had), rather it is a bitter quip: the role of Nazi-Fascism cannot simply be struck out from the history of modern Europe as something that has been overcome: the contemporary tendencies of historical revisionism, the rise of anti-democratic regimes and policies around the globe, and xenophobic migration policies make it clear that it has never been truly uprooted. In this context, *The Birth of a Nation* is an interesting addition because the female figures standing on their heads give birth to new members of the nation, they are literally giving birth to a nation. Again, this is not a tasteless artifice, it symbolises a barely imaginable victory of conservative policies that are once again gaining control of the female body: lest we forget, just recently, in countries such as the US and Poland, reproductive rights, including the right to an abortion, have been taken away from women.

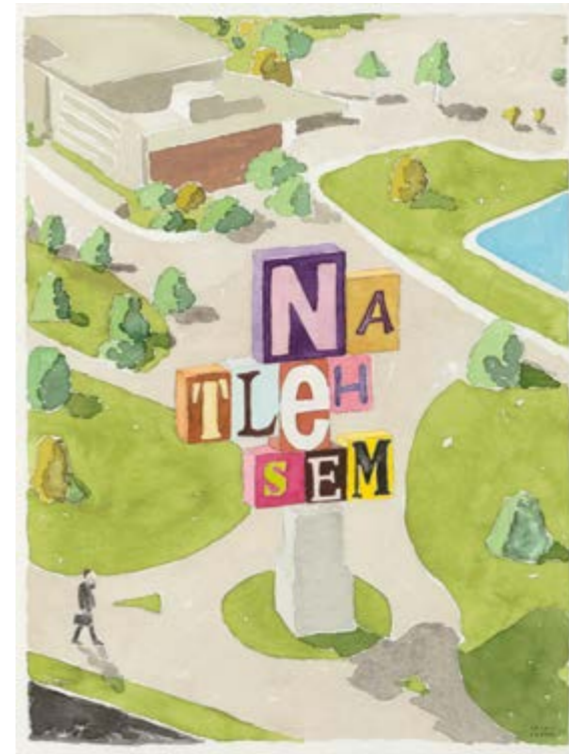
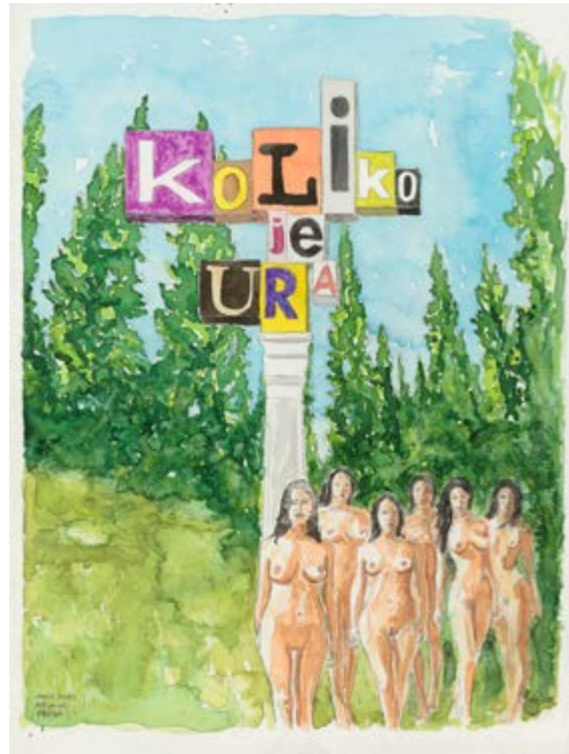
Two unusual works supplement Pregl's last painting cycle, although this does not imply that the cycle has been complemented with the addition thereof. *Rabelais* and *Eyeeye* could perfectly well be stand-alone works given that they are visually slightly different and could be liberated of the implied associations outside the described context. *Rebelais* depicts a mass of people roaringly laughing, with its title paying homage to one of the greatest authors and humourists of the Renaissance, a man who ridiculed the state and Church with his satirical, lascivious, and grotesque writing, who used comedy and satire to highlight the wrongs of the society of his era (it is probably due to an interesting set of circumstances that the cover of Pregl's thickest sketchbook is adorned with a reproduction of the Gallimard edition of Rabelais's book *Gargantua*, the second book in his famous cycle *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*). The subversive power of laughter as a tool of social critique and subversion has a long tradition in European cultural history and is close to Pregl's heart, spanning his visual and literary endeavours and social activism, the latter of which he typically exercises on the most popular social networks. Whereas *Rebelais* depicts a mass of laughing mouths, *Eyeeye* brings a mass of eyes wide open; the former is roaring with grotesque laughter yet mute by virtue of "painted laughter", the latter is mute but phonetically its title sounds like resigned yammering. The majority of these simple human characters in Pregl's sketchbooks and paintings (with the exception of the blonde Hitler) lack eyes and mouths. Instead, all they have is a small hollow hole, lacking the essential attribute that makes a human human – the ability to communicate, to engage in dialogue, which is a precondition for any reasonable common action. Instead, this mass of human figures is reminiscent of homunculi, enigmatic little humans engaged in brutal and senseless activities, violently and blindly swarming – which is not without its consequences, just like no artwork and no statement, even in the post-factual world, is completely without consequences.

Martina Vovk, Curator, Moderna galerija



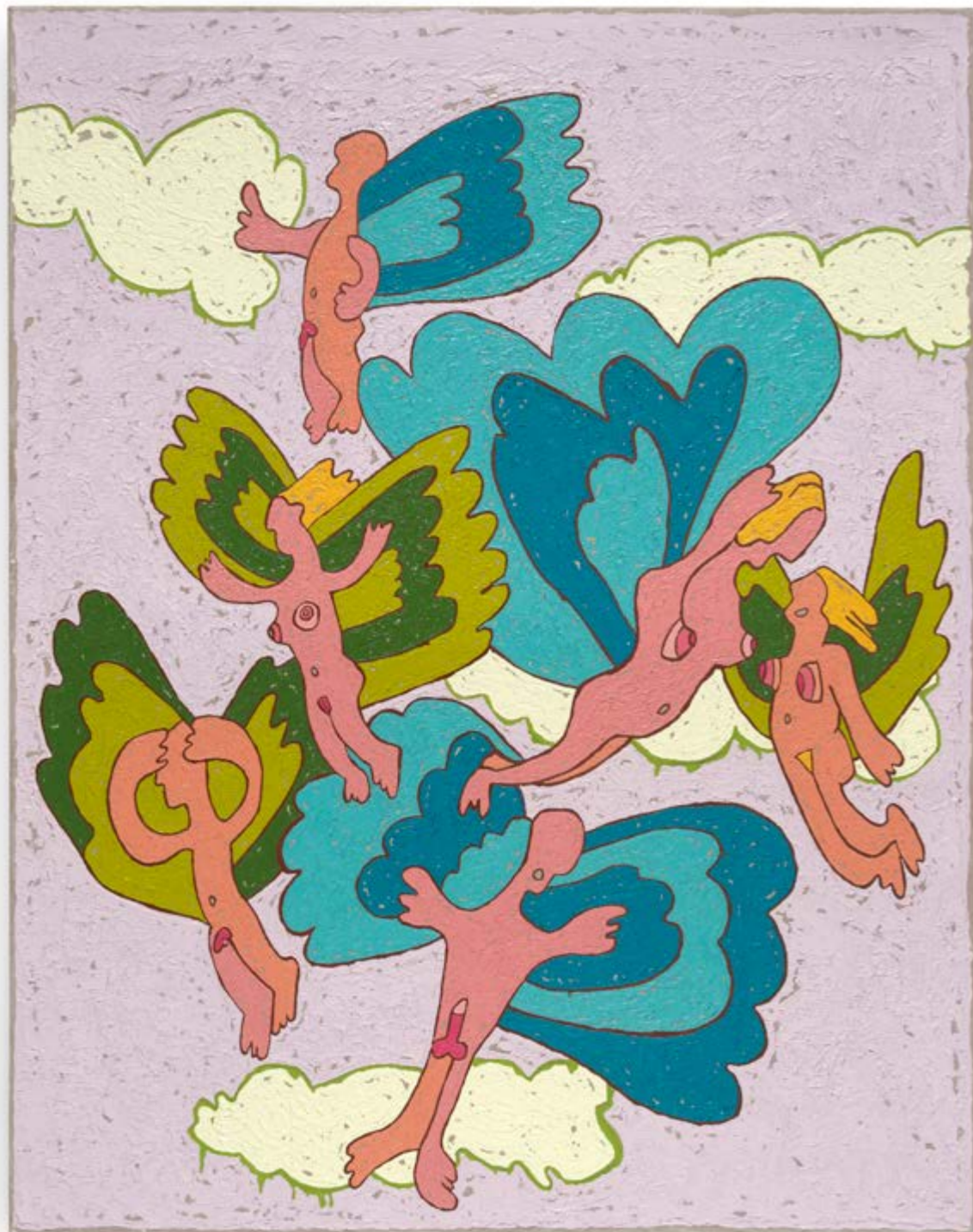
NEDELJSKI AKVARELI /
SUNDAY WATERCOLOURS







PODOBE, KI PRIHAJAJO /
IMAGES TO COME



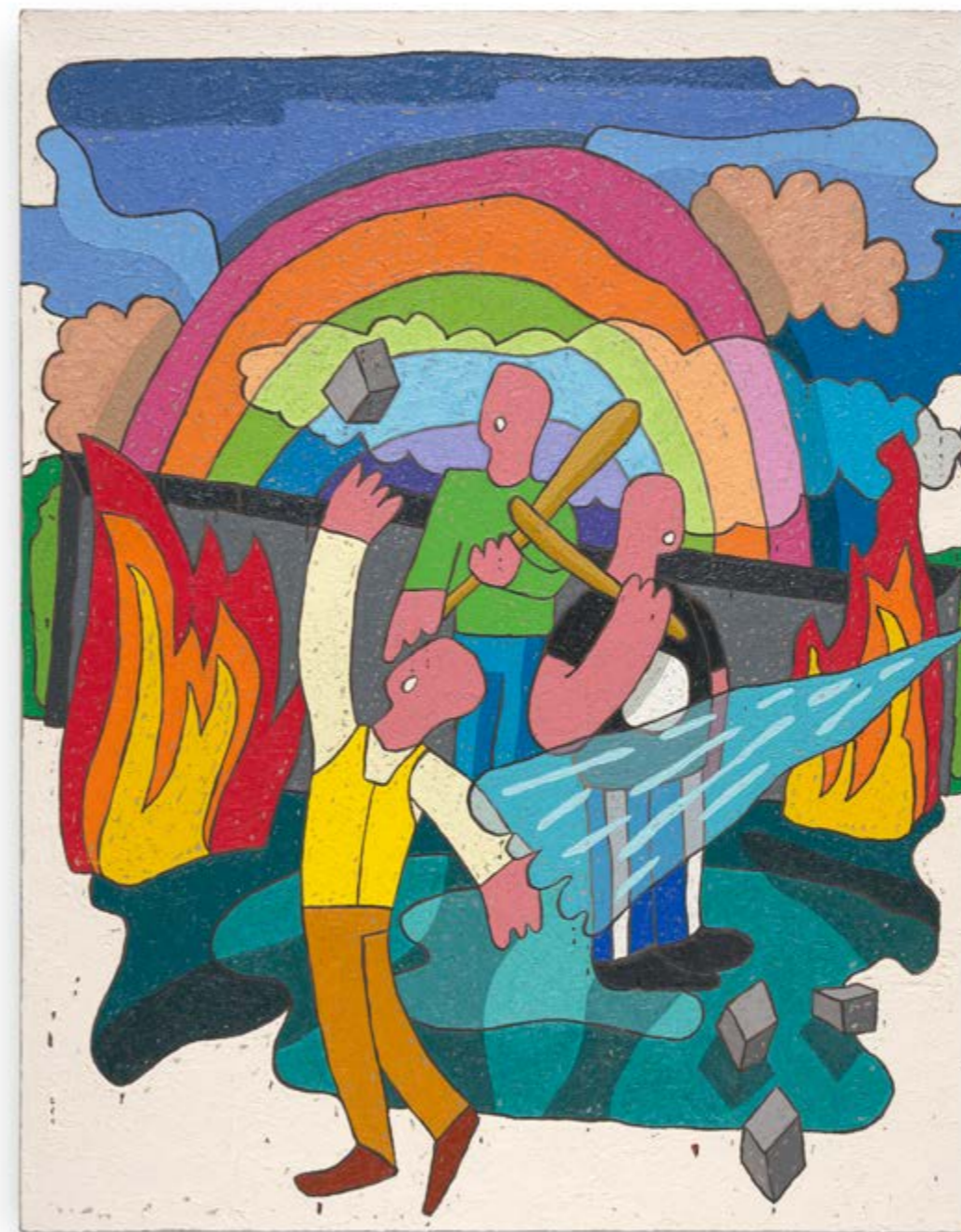
Mi nismo angeli / We Are No Angels
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 140 cm x 110 cm



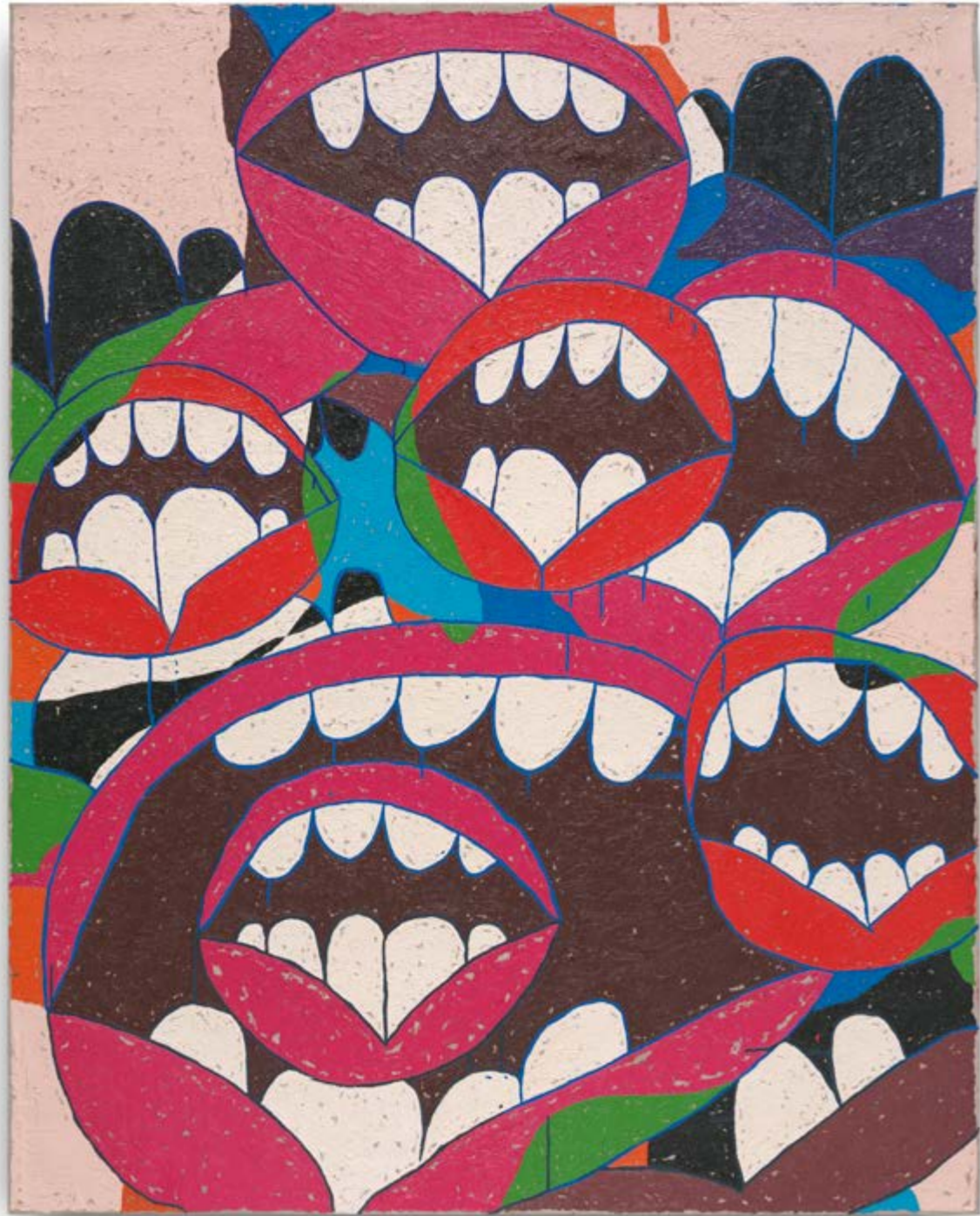
Rojstvo slikarstva / The Birth of Painting
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 140 cm x 110 cm



Revolucionarna slika / Revolutionary Painting
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 140 cm x 110 cm



Revolucionarna slika 2 / Revolutionary Painting 2
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 140 cm x 110 cm



Rabelais / Rabelais
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 150 cm x 120 cm



Več glav / More Heads
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 150 cm x 120 cm



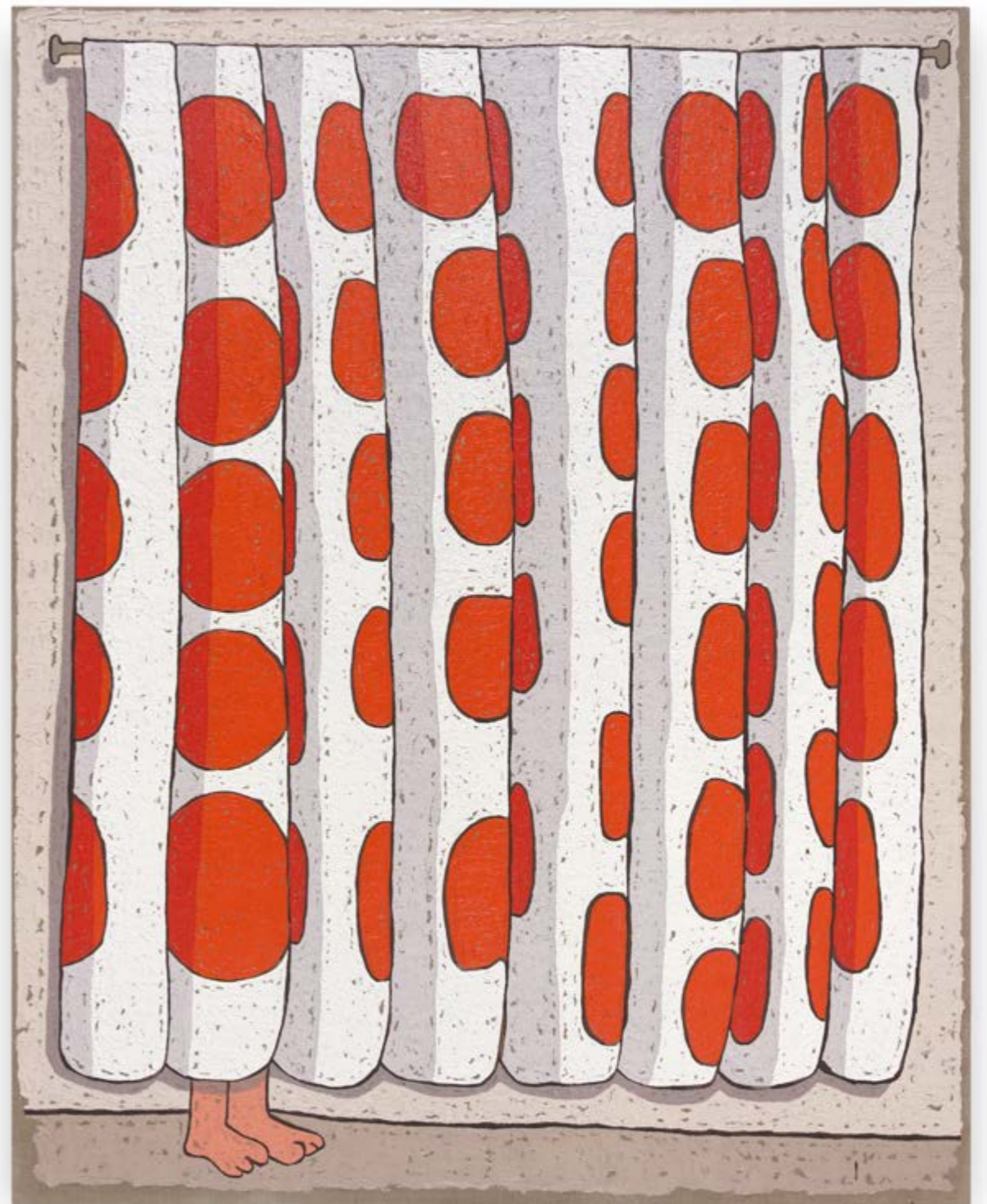
Tihožitje s tabletami / Still Life with Pills
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 150 cm × 120 cm



Eyeyeye / Eyeyeye
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 150 cm × 120 cm



Samo naravnost / Just Straight
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 150 cm x 120 cm



Samomor iz zasede / Ambush Suicide
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 200 cm x 160 cm



Razbiti inceli / Free Incels (Free in Cells)
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 100 cm x 120 cm



Eyeyeye 2 / Eyeyeye 2
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 200 cm x 160 cm



Postfaktična abstrakcija / Post-factual Abstraction
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 120 cm × 100 cm



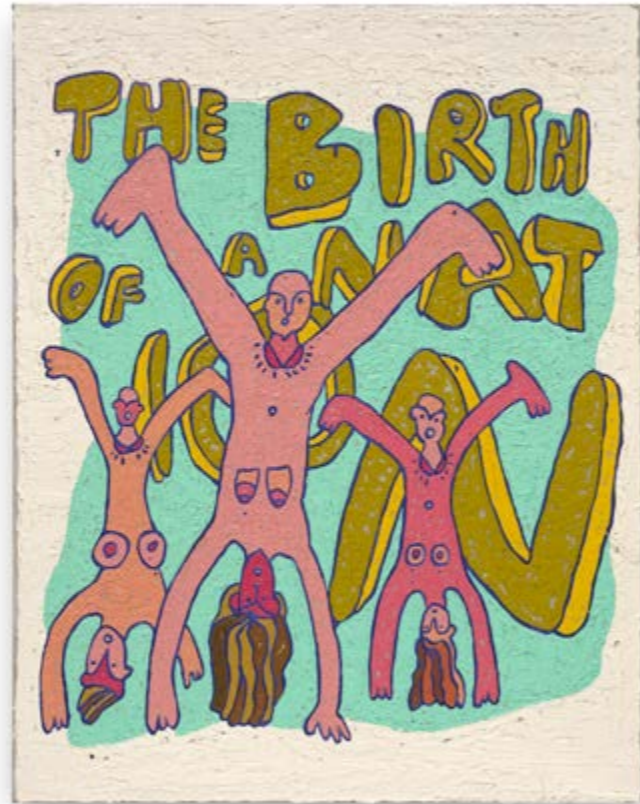
Postfaktična abstrakcija 2 / Post-factual Abstraction 2
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 200 cm × 110 cm



Abu / Abu
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 85 cm × 67 cm



Postfaktična abstrakcija 3 / Post-factual Abstraction 3
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 85 cm × 67 cm



Rojstvo naroda / The Birth of a Nation
2022, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 85 cm x 67 cm



Triglav (Bum) / Triglav (Boom)
2021, olje na platnu / oil on canvas, 60 cm x 80 cm

Tuš na papirju / Ink on paper



ARJAN
11.9.
2011



29.10.2011
ARJAN



29.10.2011
ARJAN



30.10.2011
ARJAN



6.12.2011
ARJAN



8.12.2011
ARJAN



ARJAN
10.9.
2011



ARJAN
10.9.
2011



7.12.2011
ARJAN



ARJAN

8.12.2011



23.11.2011

ARJAN



ARJAN



ARJAN
10.9.
2011



ARJAN
2011
15.9.



16.9.2011
ARJAN



20.9.
2011
ARJAN



25.11.2011



ARJAN



ARJAN



ARJAN
13.9.2011



ARJAN



15.9.2011



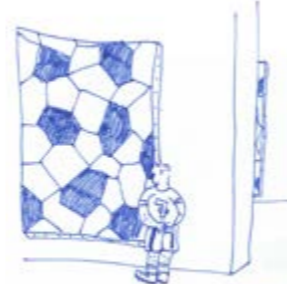
ARJAN



16.10.
2011
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ARJAN
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2011



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20.9.
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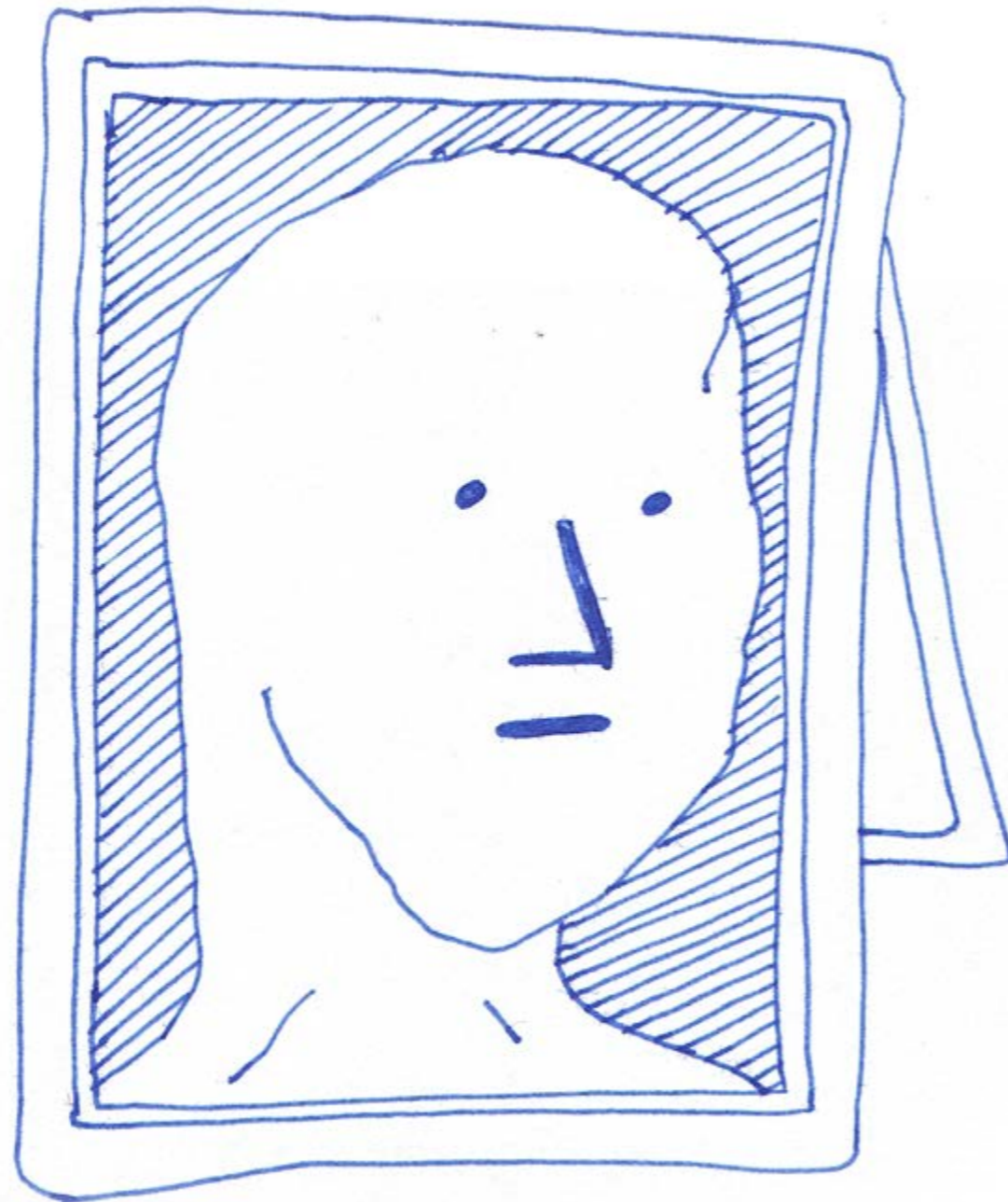
27.11.2011

ARJAN

ARJAN PREGL

Rodil se je 5. julija 1973 v Ljubljani. Leta 1998 je diplomiral na Akademiji za likovno umetnost v Ljubljani pod mentorstvom profesorice Metke Krašovec in profesorja Bojana Gorenc. Leta 2001 je na isti akademiji zaključil magistrski študij slikarstva pod mentorstvom profesorja Gorenc. Zadnji semester magistrskega študija slikarstva je obiskoval na IUP Indiana University of Pennsylvania (ZDA). Nato je vpisal magistrski študij grafike in ga pod mentorstvom profesorja Lojzeta Logarja končal leta 2004. Ukvarja se s slikarstvom, grafiko, ilustracijo, pisanjem (strokovnih člankov, kolumn, leposlovja) in pedagoškim delom (učí na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani, na Akademiji umetnosti Nova Gorica in na Pedagoški fakulteti Maribor). Živi in dela v Ljubljani.

Born in Ljubljana on 5 July 1973, Pregl graduated from the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts in 1998 under the mentorship of professors Metka Krašovec and Bojan Gorenc. In 2001 he completed the master's programme in painting there with Gorenc as mentor, having spent the last semester at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) in the United States. He subsequently enrolled in a master's programme in graphic arts, which he completed in 2004 under the mentorship of professor Lojze Logar. Pregl is a painter, graphic artist, illustrator and writer (of journal papers, opinion pieces and fiction). He also teaches at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design, the Nova Gorica School of Arts and at the Maribor Faculty of Education. He lives and works in Ljubljana.



SAMOSTOJNE RAZSTAVE (IZBOR) / SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2001 ○ Galerija P74, »Preboj v sončna sončna jutra«, Ljubljana
- 2002 ○ Mestna galerija Nova Gorica, »Slike in grafike«, Nova Gorica
- 2003 ○ Galerija Equrna, »Slike z napakami«, Ljubljana
- 2005 ○ Galerija Rika Debenjaka, »Slike 2002–2005«, Kanal ob Soči
- 2006 ○ Galerija Equrna, »Abstrakcije«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Šivčeva hiša, »Ilustracije«, Muzeji radovljiške občine, Radovljica
- 2007 ○ Sedež Banke Koper, »Prelepe slike / Mirabili dipinti«, Obalne galerije Piran
- Savinov salon, »SpLoščena Slovenija«, Žalec
- Galerija Alkatraz, AKC Metelkova mesto, »SpLoščena Slovenija«, Ljubljana
- Dvorana Gustaf, Kulturni center Pekarna, »SpLoščena Slovenija«, Maribor
- 2008 ○ Shanghai Zendai MoMa, »Serija dvanajstih znamk: Različni isti Šanghaj / Series of twelve stamps: Diferent same Shanghai«, Šanghaj, Kitajska, 15. 9. 2008 (s Huiqin Wang)
- 2009 ○ Galerija Ganes Pratt, »Rad imam mucike in druge slike«, Ljubljana
- 2010 ○ Mestna Galerija 2, »299 kosmatih in bobu Bob / 299 Hairy Ones and Broad Bean Bob«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Equrna, »Razstava z razmeroma dolgim naslovom, sestavljenim iz devetih besed«, Ljubljana
- 2012 ○ Mestna galerija Nova Gorica, »120 dni Arjana Pregla«, Nova Gorica
- 2013 ○ Galerija Simulaker, »Kdo se boji finančnih trgov«, Novo mesto
- 2014 ○ Muzej sodobne umetnosti – MSUM, »Petminutne revolucije«, Ljubljana
- 2015 ○ UGM Studio, »Imena sodobnega slovenskega slikarstva«, Maribor
- 2016 ○ Muzej sodobne umetnosti – MSUM, »Prekarni dan«, Ljubljana
- Rezidenca umetnika, »Names in Contemporary Slovenian Painting«, London, Anglija
- 2017 ○ Galerija Velenje, »1000 besed in druge slike«, Velenje
- 2018 ○ Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti, »MONUMENT« (skupaj s Tomom Jeseničnikom), Slovenj Gradec
- 2019 ○ Likovni Salon Celje, »GUGU GAGA«, Celje
- 2020 ○ Galerija Tobačna 001, »Otroške slike«, Ljubljana
- 2021 ○ Mestna galerija Ptuj, »Iz ♥ rojena umetnost«, Ptuj
- Galerija Instituta »Jožef Stefan«, »Strašljivi infantilizem«, Ljubljana
- 2022 ○ Galerija Gallery, »Podobe, ki prihajajo«, Ljubljana
- 2023 ○ Mestna galerija Nova Gorica, »Rojstvo slikarstva«, Nova Gorica

SKUPINSKE RAZSTAVE (IZBOR) / GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 1997 Collegium artisticum, »Študenti akademije likovnih umjetnosti: Ljubljana, Dunaj, Tbilisi, Sarajevo,« Sarajevo, BiH
- 2000 Kipp Gallery, »10 paintings«, Indiana, Pennsylvania, ZDA
- 2001 Galerija P74, »Revizija. Slika 70+90«, Ljubljana
- 2002 Mestna galerija, »Vordemberg-Gildewart foundation«, Ljubljana
- 2003 Space Gallery, »Slovenian Young Artists«, Sakaide, Japonska* Dvorac Petrovića, Podgorica, Centar savremene umjetnosti Crne Gore, »Aktualni trenutek v sodobni slovenski umetnosti / Aktualni trenutak u slovenačkoj savremenoj likovnoj umetnosti«, Podgorica, Črna gora
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »6. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- 2005 Moderna galerija, »Slovenska umetnost 1995–2005: Teritoriji, identitete, mreže«, Ljubljana
- 2006 »Septième triennale de Chamalières Mondial de l'estampe et de la gravure originale«, Chamalières, Auvergne, Francija
- 2007 Mednarodni grafični likovni center, »27. grafični bienale«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Velenje, »Politično«, Slovensko društvo likovnih kritikov in Galerija Velenje, Velenje
- Različne lokacije, »Festival Break 2.4 – Potemkinova vas«, Ljubljana
- BiB, »21. Bienale ilustracije«, Bratislava, Slovaška
- Galerija Progres, »44. zlatno pero Beograda«, ULUPUDS, Beograd, Srbija
- Galerija Ganes Pratt, »Slikarski projekt – Viktor Bernik, Janez Janša, Arjan Pregl, Sašo Vrabič«, Ljubljana
- 2008 Hotel de Ville de Bruxelles / Mestna hiša, Bruselj, »Slovensko slikarstvo po letu 1945 iz Umetniške zbirke NLB«, Bruselj, Belgija
- Galerija Miklova hiša, »Slikarski projekt – Viktor Bernik, Janez Janša, Arjan Pregl, Sašo Vrabič«, Ribnica
- Kharkov Arts museum, »In touch with Slovenia – The Factor Bank art collection«, Harkov, Ukrajina
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »8. slovenski bienale ilustracije – Podoba knjige, knjiga podob«, Ljubljana
- Mednarodni grafični likovni center, »Tretji pogled: Raznolikost grafike danes«, Ljubljana
- 2009 Mestna galerija, »Risba na Slovenskem II«, Ljubljana
- 2010 Mestna galerija Nova Gorica, »Kaj dogaja? / Šta ima novo? / What's happening?«, Nova Gorica
- ArsIn, »Figura v postmedijskem času (Ana Sluga, Arjan Pregl, Bogoslav Kalaš, Miha Štrukelj, Mladen Stropnik, Žiga Kartiž)«, Društvo za umetnost in kulturo Arsin, Velenje
- Jarmuschek+Partner (Project Space Sophienstrasse), »Renaissance Nostra«, Berlin, Nemčija
- Muzej sodobne umetnosti Zagreb, »Risba na Slovenskem II«, Zagreb, Hrvaška
- Mestna galerija Ljubljana, »Dobesedno brez besed«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »9. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- Alkatraz, Metelkova mesto, »To ni politična razstava«, Ljubljana
- Mednarodni grafični likovni center, »Hočemo biti svobodni, kot so bili očetje / We Want To Be Free As The Fathers Were«, Ljubljana
- 2011 Evropski parlament, »Umetniška zbirka Evropskega parlamenta«, Bruselj, Belgija
- 2012 Ganes Pratt, Mala galerija, »To je bilo najslabše leto mojega življenja«, Ljubljana
- SWAB, Barcelona, Španija
- Mednarodni grafični likovni center, »Slovenska grafika zadnjih treh let«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »10. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- Umetnostna galerija Maribor & Slavija No 11, »SKORAJ POMLAD – 100 let slovenske umetnosti«, Maribor
- Evropski parlament, »Parlamentarium – Art Collection«, Bruselj, Belgija
- 2014 University of Maine, »De.fragmentation«, Maine, ZDA
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »11. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- China art Weekly 2014, »International Print Exhibition«, Kitajska
- Muzej sodobne umetnosti – MSUM, »Sedanost in prisotnost – ponovitev«, Ljubljana
- 2015 Galerija Equrna, »Pop«, Ljubljana
- Muzej sodobne umetnosti – MSUM, »Krise in novi začetki – Umetnost v Sloveniji 2005–2015«, Ljubljana
- 2016 Mestna galerija Ljubljana, »BETTER DOGGY STYLE THAN NO STYLE – Slikarstvo po koncu stilov«, Ljubljana
- Miklova hiša, »Preseki – izbor del iz Likovne zbirke Riko«, Ribnica
- Muzej sodobne umetnosti Metelkova, »Krise in novi začetki: Umetnost v Sloveniji 2005–2015«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »12. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- 2017 Umetnostna galerija Maribor, »Heroes we love«, Maribor
- Galerija Sodobne umetnosti Celje, »Vedno bom tu. Vedno.«, Celje
- BiB, »26. Bienale ilustracije«, Bratislava, Slovaška

- 2018 KIBLA Portal, »Prisotnosti – Metka Krašovec in umetniki«, Maribor
- Salone degli incanti, »IMAGO MUNDI – dela iz zbirke BENETTON«, Trst, Italija
- 2019 Moderna galerija, »Čas brez nedolžnosti. Novejše slikarstvo v Sloveniji.«, Ljubljana
- Galerija Cankarjevega doma, »13. slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- BiB, »27. Bienale ilustracije«, Bratislava, Slovaška
- Galerija Y, »Nove pozicije«, Ljubljana
- Muzej sodobne umetnosti – MSUM, »Izbor del iz zbirke Moderne galerije | Arteast 2000+ in iz nacionalne zbirke«, Ljubljana
- 2020 Mestna galerija Ljubljana, »Svobodno sonce / Free Sun«, Ljubljana
- 2021 Maison de l'Estampe des Grands Moulins, »11. grafični triennale Chamalières«, Francija
- SULUV, »Link It Mark It«, Novi Sad, Srbija
- EU Parlament, »Živimo v vznemirljivih časih. / Razstava slovenske zbirke EU parlamenta«, Bruselj
- Cankarjev dom, »14. Slovenski bienale ilustracije«, Ljubljana
- MSUM Ljubljana, »Spoznanje! Upor! Reakcija!, posvečena političnemu performansu devetdesetih let.«, Ljubljana
- 2022 Festival RAČKA 2022, »Po resničnih dogodkih / Based on True Stories«, Celje
- MGLC – Mednarodni grafični likovni center, »Odtisi in vtisi II.«, Ljubljana
- Miklova hiša (Likovna zbirka Riko), »Neznosna lahkost bivanja«, Ribnica

DELA V ZBIRKAH (IZBOR) / WORKS IN COLLECTIONS (SELECTION)

- Moderna galerija / Muzej sodobne umetnosti MG+MSUM, Ljubljana
- Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana
- Evropski parlament, »Art Collection«, Bruselj, Belgija
- Nova Ljubljanska banka, »Umetniška zbirka NLB«, Ljubljana
- Likovna zbirka RIKO, Ribnica
- Mestna galerija Nova Gorica, Nova Gorica
- Faktor Banka, »Umetniška zbirka Faktor Banke«, Ljubljana

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