

(moment al) MENTE Vivid Paintings))

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The relatively intense post-war period in painting that reached its pinnacle with **Pregelj=Stupica=Bernard** was followed by decades of suppression of painting, especially in the main national exhibition space. However, some artists persisted nonetheless: the dark **Dušan Kirbiš** and **Ivo Prančič**, the (in)imitable **Aleksij Kobal** and the "black" **Sandi Červek**, as well as **Mitja Ficko** and others, regardless of the quality of their works. A watershed event in that time was **Živko Marušič's** retrospective exhibition at the Moderna galerija under the slogan: "Painting is dead, long live painting!" Then, suddenly, in **Year Zero**, at the start of the new millennium, there was a wave of new painting, especially by female artists. **The most prominent among them were Suzana Brborović, Joni Zakonjšek, Nika Zupančič, Ira Marušič and the rising star Maruša Šuštar.**

Now = today those at the forefront of Slovenian painting are the eternally young **Marko Jakše**, the miraculous **Živko Marušič** and the renewed, albeit familiar **Aleksij Kobal**, the "romantic" **Staš Kleindienst** and **Matej Čepin**, the dark **Ivo Prančič** and **Mitja Konić**, and the mysterious, eloquent **Miha Štrukelj**, while among the younger female painters there are **Ira Marušič**, so different from her father, the deep blue **Nika Zupančič**, the bright **Suzana Brborović** as a pioneer of the new painting movement, and **Nina Čelhar**, who is always committed to a single colour. The subtle, syncretic **Maruša Šuštar** also plays with monochrome visual scenography, as do **Robert Lozar**, who transforms lines of colour and the colour scale into sculpture, and the blooming, ever young, familiar, but never behind the times **Joni Zakonjšek**. Finally, the revelations of this exhibition: the abstract, expressive **Barbara Drev** and the monochromatic **Katja Pál**.

MEDIUM: THE WEALTH OF COLOURS: Marušič and Jakše. Kobal and Lozar

Marušič's wondrous paintings remain figurative, from his beginnings in the 1980s, through a variety of stylistic periods, right up until the present day, when the reduced figure is once again captured in some sort of empty space that is in reality not empty, but a full/empty space connected by vital, vitalist "ribbons", some sort of umbilical cords that revive the floating, fantastic figures in a new space, in a new, upgraded figurative art that actually comes to life as an independent form, with its own dynamics and singular rhythm.

The striking **Jakše** builds his world on three basic elements. First and foremost, animals - realistic, fairy-tale, phantasmagorical, real/ideal, fictional, surreal and unconscious, but never truly terrifying

or threatening, aggressive. The second element in his paintings is fantastic, phantasmagorical architecture, either pushed into the background or co-creating the phantasmagorical image in which miniature humans, homunculi from another world, live. However, humanized animals are essential, most often represented by a rabbit and a long-necked phantom as a miraculous, immortal bird.

The (in)imitable **A. Kobal** never repeats himself. His imaginary realm arranges and rearranges the world and the entire universe over and over again, every time with a different, changing colour scale, with different, changing living spaces, and with different existential messages. As an artist, Kobal constantly takes us by surprise - with a new reality and a new, revised message about the world and ourselves. His paintings constantly define and redefine us with unique, possible and impossible, experiences - artistic, existential, and (all) worldly.

Robert Lozar is a painter who transforms colour, or specifically bands of colour, into some kind of chromatic "sculpture". In this, he is original and remarkable. His works need to be viewed in their current, momentary, unique whole, as there is no unbroken hierarchy of individual forms compatible in their interconnections. Lozar's paintings evade the gaze and cannot be related to the traditional concepts of painting and support. The latter is now completely independent, self-sufficient, living according to its own internal rhythm like a well-ordered organism: a sort of chromatic "body without organs", on all artistic levels, in a kind of circular, spherical process.

DARKENING: Prančič, Konić, Čepin and Štrukelj

Ivo Prančič has come a long way in the development of his painting: over time and through a variety of periods, his exceptional artistic expression has evolved from unique, chromatically intense compositions of interweaving colour bands into a sophisticated artistic image with an emphasis on various, formally imaginative frames, which he has recently perfected and turned into diptychs and triptychs or single and enormous black pictures, with added threadlike spatial drawings. **Konić's painting** is twofold: on the one hand, it is like a cut-out, a flat painting with uniform, repeated folds, an undulating platform, moving and stationary, a contracted and once again relaxed surface, a repetitive, cut-up body, flexible and fixed. The painting changes in the process of work, **Amor fati**, a teeming, intense movement of artistic, optical, and colour effects. The reality of **Čepin's landscapes** does not lie in the specificity of the painted objects, but in his intensity and emotional approach. What stands out is the emotional charge invested in painting the image. Čepin filters his emotions directly into the work, without the need to preserve a distance. Indeed, there is no distance, all that matters is empathy, i.e. the mental approach, now definitive and binding both for us and the painter. The representations of landscapes and miniature figures, not portrayed in terms of physical characteristics, do not allow any comparisons with reality; the painter does not need a "live" model, building his images instead on an invented, inner vision. **Miha Štrukelj's** images are snapshots of side streets in large cities that do not direct our gaze to a vertical viewing dal sotto in su, moving from the bottom upwards. Instead, his

images are based on a combination of linear aerial perspective and a perspective of shadows, as Henri Focillon would say. Rather than pure figurative art, the focus is on insertions and effects of various forms, functioning only on the level of self-verification, dependent on the specular author-work system.

BRIGHTENING: Brborović and Joni, Nina Čelhar and Maruša Šuštar

Suzana Brborović, a pioneer of the new painting, foregrounds a heteroclitic yet simple linear drawing, multiplied and uniform, yet unique and always different. Never banal and dispersed, and presented in a great variety of forms: strict and geometric, extremely dynamic, "baroque". Sometimes a quick gesture prevails, at other times a calm gesture leading into new and revived labyrinths, in which the represented subject is not blurred or hazily veiled, but brilliant in the colourful strokes, in the pure glow of the applied paint. **Joni Zakonjšek's** art does not look for artistic impulses outside of its own space, in the objecthood of natura naturata and natura naturans, but remains faithful to the artist's inner experience, safely hidden in the inner experience of her own development. A special sensitivity, a conversation with art as such, which the artist has completely decentralized. We can talk of a painting labyrinth of a kind, free of historical clutter and with emotions belonging exclusively to the present moment. **Nina Čelhar's** paintings are poetic oases that reject the former intellectual way of interpreting the subject of a painted image. Čelhar's images are extremely refined, in fact ad absurdum, with a single colour predominating throughout. Everything is merged, fused into a single sign and a single colour scale, everything is a unique experience, everything is combined with nature and the immersion in a painting. Čelhar's paintings are constructed on full and condensed figures, occupying the entire surface of the canvas flatly, without depth. **Maruša Šuštar's** painting taps into prehistoric images like an inner body of painting, both in her approach to the pictorial space and in the treatment of the figures. An emblematic structure of sliding, undulating, layered figures and space that is in reality unreal and in which figures and bodies are not tangible, obvious, or evident, but neither are they completely emptied, absent, or vague. It is this approach that enables the painter to create monochrome, analytical, and postmodern pictorial spaces.

THE DISCOVERY OF NEW PAINTING: Barbara Drev and Ira, Staš Kleindienst and Katja Pál

Relatively speaking, **Barbara Drev** is an "abstract" painter. But we could also reject this conditional, approximate definition. All forms are topical for this painter: mycelial, amoebic and abstract. Even figurative and ornamental ones. In several layers, across several planes, filled to the capacities of the support. Barbara Drev is playful, witty and grotesque; overabundant and baroque, arabesque. There is magic in her paintings, a magic that instantly fills the space around the contracted strokes, painted with vehemence, originality, primality, in all directions, deliberately rough, but in reality refined, drawn with a masterful stroke. **Ira Marušič's** images are spaces that expand from one edge to the other as spaces of chromatic,

also monochromatic texture inundating the picture. In the centre, in the core, there is a figure, a "thing": a lung, a fruit, an independent form that is in no way subordinated to the organism of the picture, but lives in its own way, originally, primordially, inwardly and outwardly. The space of the painting opens like a vertical sky, filled with numerous figurative meanings and artistic functions. **Staš Kleindienst** is a neo-romantic painter. He paints portraits in landscapes, in almost (un)determined spaces, somewhat like postcard images of mountainous vistas. But the main points are nonetheless the purity of colours, the softness of lines and strokes, and the fusion and balance of chromatic nuances, the portrayed figures and the momentarily captured landscape. The subject might seem banal, but is in reality mysterious, since the relationships between the figures are both simple and enigmatic. With her cut-outs in a single colour, **Katja Pál** brings a new approach to contemporary painting. Her works are not characterized by externalized, loud colourism, but by a subdued colour landscape, originating as a sublimation of inner emotional and intellectual (primordial) relationships. The entire pictorial surface is permeated by infinite peace, with no astonishment or subjective distress, just the solitude and silence of an infinite, eternal and monochromatic moment.

NIKA'S DEEP BLUE: Nika Zupančič

Zupančič's Labyrinth is really a "beehive" composed of numerous colour planes, a figure-body, a metaphor and/or an allegory of the pictorial body. An enormous, "hollow", indivisible, clothed, agglomerated, inverted and undressed body; an allegory of the sacred and profane, historical and prehistoric bodies. A body-icon, a picture-in-motion, even an image in ecstasy. It is also a connection between dye and a virtual figure disappearing in the shades of blue. It is not only the figure that is suspended, absent, but also the colour, which is actually a fiction of a body and space.

Participating artists: Suzana Brborović, Nina Čelhar, Matej Čepin, Barbara Drev, Marko Jakše, Staš Kleindienst, Aleksij Kobal, Mitja Konić, Robert Lozar, Ira Marušič, Živko Marušič, Katja Pál, Ivo Prančič, Miha Štrukelj, Maruša Šuštar, Joni Zakonjšek, Nika Zupančič

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