



# Five Ladies

7 December 2018–5 January 2019

KiBela / MMC KIBLA, Maribor, Slovenia

**Sevda Chkoutova** (Bulgaria/Austria)

**Inma Fierro** (Spain)

**Alexandra Roussopoulos** (France)

**Morgan Tipping** (United Kingdom)

**Lučka Šparovec** (Slovenia)

Curated by Brane Kovič



## Inma Fierro

(Spain)

Spain's rich artistic legacy and the particularities of its regions are definitely a starting point worthy of consideration, even when it comes to contemporary art practices of this region. The search for personal identity is therefore always a challenge; it is both a dilemma and an encouragement for any young artist with the ambition of becoming an important player in the game of changes, a part of the current constellation of creative production. With her previous work Inma Fierro has already proven that she is on the right track and that she is bravely developing her own visual language on the back of her great knowledge of modernist discourses. In painting she found the right medium to examine questions about color and form as a way to communicate with herself as well as with the viewer. Through abstract images she attempts to achieve a primal receptivity beyond rhetoric, in that field of perception which is closest to musical perception, which is also unbound to materiality or the imitation of empirical reality. Alternations of collage (photographic) and gestural elements that interchangeably appear on the pictorial surface juxtapose various models of thinking, through which the human personality is formed as a meshwork of mind and emotion in the range from generic to individual. Formal structures are given sense through colors, carefully chosen by the artist from a palette of hues anchored deeply in her unconscious, in her sublimated memories to which she returns during the painting process and visualizes them in their elusiveness and unpredictable combinations. Through her depictions recollections of people and events, landscapes and cities, words and thoughts become lasting manifestations; her personal story turns into an universal narrative of being and cessation, a narrative about what happened and what ended. Not many words are necessary to put together the pieces of this story, what matters more are the gestures and rhythms she uses to recount her creative turmoil. Her expressive power is very much in the language of the unpronounceable, existing in the non-Euclidean space of color relationships and their interferences. In this way, Inma Fierro reveals her path to self-knowledge; the spontaneity of creating her paintings is an indicator of her inner truth, which she wants to share with the viewer, with that stranger who each time enters into dialogue with her at the intersection of the visible and the invisible. The presence of the Other enables her to progress through the labyrinth of the unknown towards horizons of the possible.



## Sevda Chkoutova

(Bulgaria/Austria)

The human figure is, in the art works of Sevda Chkoutova, the subject to which the artist has dedicated most attention. In particular, representations of the female body have undergone numerous transformations through the artist's interpretation: depicted in different positions, in pairs or standing alone, often surrounded with rich linear patterns and suggestive decorative intertwinements, which placed the depicted figures into compositional schemes, any of which presented a perfectly elaborated visual organism, executed with virtuosity. Its mimetic conception allowed for various narrative and imaginative variations, passages from one story to another, and yet at the same time, every image was a concise formulation, a conceptually and semantically attractive impulse for a phantasmatic representation beyond the visible. The erotic undertone in the iconography of each painting intensifies this imaginative aspect even further, and the view tracing the contours of more or less exposed figures often stops at the details, those meaningful fragments which are able to hold the view for a moment, and then release it, so that it can gradually discover all the other imagery-forming elements as well. Precise drawing with lots of details is a characteristic ensuring the works of Sevda Chkoutova a specific recognizability, with all the attributes of a genuine personal touch.

In the artist's most recent works we can, however, sense an additional intervention into the basic motif: seemingly uncontrolled linear strokes with no contour function, a virtually abstract play of graphisms without any significative purpose. It seems that the artist employs them to indicate the primitive nature of the process of depiction, which always begins with basic lines, which, when connected, may lead to arbitrary forms, yet at the same time it is also possible to perceive them directly, as pure graphic signs in which there is no difference between the signifier and the signified. Each creation of an image implicitly contains a reflection on the factors that enable a visualization in the first place, elements which need to be mastered in order to accomplish what was envisioned. The observers' perception of the depiction is most often reduced to the end result, while the question of how the artist arrived to that point is generally of much less interest to them. Sevda Chkoutova reminds them, among other things, of the importance of considering this aspect of image-creation.

# Alexandra Roussopoulos

(France)

Various definitions of space are one of the key proposals in the visual research of Alexandra Roussopoulos. In specific stages of her artistic development, her works – ranging from predominately monochrome paintings to interactive collages – were concerned with a series of questions already addressed by the modern classics, which are still a source of inspiration and a sort of a challenge for contemporary artists. Their formal variations and basic reinterpretations generate new, original inventions, which address the viewer with their freshness, and at the same time appeal to the viewer's sensibility, which derives from their visual memory and their ability to connect the perceived with the logic of morphogenesis.

In her latest series of works, Alexandra Roussopoulos opted for an apparently antagonistic concept of constructing the image on a silk-screen base, onto which she intervenes with combinations of color surfaces in acrylics. The suggested spatial structure becomes, due to its duality, a strong impulse to the viewer's imagination, as their view tries to connect both seemingly exclusive picture planes, the painterly one obviously dominant, because it is derived from her previous searches for optimal relations between form and color. The unconventional shape receding from the traditional orthogonal carrier was already an essential spatial entity for the painter, therefore she did not need to use perspective illusions within the pictorial surface as such. The artist has already applied the collage process as a working method before, but from other starting points and consequently to different effect. As she returns to it now, she actually returns to her belief about the necessity of dialog, which may be a manifestation of harmony between time and space, between past and present, between subject and object, between continuity and discontinuity and numerous other juxtapositions which intrigue the creative individual. For Alexandra Roussopoulos, collaborating with other artists, whether by re-interpreting the works of old masters, or by confronting her peers and younger contemporaries, is actually a way of life, an existential urge to realize her worldview as a constant exchange of experiences, as a need to share thoughts and emotions, as a constant affirmation that one belongs to a community where there is no hierarchic divisions.



# Lučka Šparovec

(Slovenia)

The transformations in Lučka Šparovec's artistic oeuvre are a result of her committed efforts to further elaborate her personal expression within the context of modern articulation of the language of non-figurative painting. Drawing, which always had an extremely important role in her work, is joined by a reflection on the autonomy of color as an essential constituent element of the image, liberated of allusive and associative functions. The principles upon which the modernist discourse as a historical category was based are now the object of deconstruction and the establishment of a new symbolic order from a necessary critical distance, without repetitions and without experimenting with practices from past stylistic periods. The chromatic basis and the linear drawing, which develops spontaneously in the picture plane, are not in dichotomy, rather, they act as equivalent constituents of the compositional whole, not only complementing each other but also upgrading one another to consequently reach the optimal harmony of the visual statement. Their semantic noise is released independently from earlier patterns of significations, since the artist builds on the concept of emotional resonance triggered by perception. Thus a direct vision, unconditioned by the surplus of external information, can activate other mechanisms of sensory response that reach into the sphere of subjective psychic dispositions, which are transformed during the creative process into iconic signs, not necessarily of the allusive type. Drawing as 'thinking with forms' functions similarly to a language, yet its logic is different, less normative, more subtle, it generates meaning by means of rhythm and linear movement. The space generated in this way is not comparable to real space, it is a reality in itself, a self-reflecting process.

For Lučka Šparovec the painting strategies are a continuous invention of the discursive tactics, with which she maintains a dialog between lines and surfaces, whereby the pictorial surface (the plane) is a static color entity, and the intertwinement of lines is its dynamic antipode. However, the apparent arbitrariness of the drawing interventions into the color surface is actually a well thought-out and continually controlled rational and emotional operation, serving to the artist as a means of 'translating' her intimate experience into a play of gestures and strokes which require, through their openness and unpredictability, different protocols of viewing each time.





## Morgan Tipping (United Kingdom)

It is not unusual for contemporary artists to use a wide variety of media to realize their ideas, from easel painting and sophisticated graphic techniques, to video works and the wide range of possibilities offered by computer technology. Morgan Tipping has experimented with all of these practices, including such ephemeral art forms as performance, which became established in conceptualism, as well as in similar forms of dematerialization of the art object. She is also interested in acting in the social field, not only from the aspect of exchanging experiences but also on the level of communication in the expanded notion of art that she often uses when contacting various communities and teaching at schools.

Her painting developed through testing different representational approaches, articulation modes through which she focused on a specific art problem she was currently exploring. The strategies and tactics of her research differed greatly from one another, and for that reason the achieved results were quite heterogeneous, sometimes even contradictory for the viewer. Yet if we look at each painting or series separately, we need to step away from comparison and resemblances to what we had previously experienced, and focus on the interpretation of the work in front of us. This undoubtedly holds true for the selection included in the present exhibition, which surprises us with a meticulous execution of the motif, not in a realistic manner, but none the less with certain associations to an empirical objectivity in a fantastic, somewhat bizarre presentation. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic allusions bound into an autonomous form on a black non-spatial background, initially evoke a kind of discomfort in the viewer, however, this is just a momentary sensation, which is overruled by the consistency of the image. The subject, composed of controversial components, is mainly an invention of form which, together with color, appears as a new entity in the endless dimensions of the painter's imaginative potential. This excludes generic interpretation, as every image requires a separate approach that needs to consider its basic concept, as well as its structural qualities. It is only in this way that the paintings of Morgan Tipping can reveal themselves to us in all their multiple meanings and sensually persuasive perfection.

**Sevda Chkoutova** (b. 1978, Sofia) after finishing the Secondary School of Applied Arts in Sofia, Bulgaria, she studied art history at the New Bulgarian University and later continued her studies at the University of Vienna, Austria, graduating in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts (1998–2002). She stayed in Chicago (USA) for a year. Her works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across Austria and Germany, receiving numerous awards.

**Inma Fierro** (b. 1985, Sevilla) graduated from Seville University in Seville, Spain and later obtained an MA from the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Barcelona (2012). She perfected her studies in Florence, Berlin and Brussels. Inma Fierro has received numerous international awards in recognition of her works, which have been shown in solo and group exhibitions in Spain, USA, Brazil and Portugal.

**Alexandra Roussopoulos** (b. 1969, Paris) began studying in London (Heatherley School of Fine Art and Camberley School of Art) and continued at the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, where she later graduated. Her works have been shown in solo exhibitions since 1998; she has participated in group exhibitions and symposiums in Europe, USA and China. Her works have won several awards. Apart from art, she has also been engaged in pedagogical work.

**Lučka Šparovec** (b. 1984, Kranj) studied painting at the College of Visual Arts (College for Drawing and Painting) in Ljubljana (2005–2010), and is currently finishing her MA at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (ALUO), University of Ljubljana. She has received several awards, including the Student Prešeren Award awarded by the ALUO. Her works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Europe, USA and Asia.

**Morgan Tipping** (b. 1982, London) graduated in 2006 from the Byam Shaw School of Art (Central St Martins) in London. She works in the fields of painting, video and performance. Apart from her art work, she has kept herself busy teaching at various communities and schools. She has participated in numerous exhibitions in the UK, Spain, USA and Singapore. During 2013 and 2014 she was a resident artist in Škofja Loka.

Five Ladies  
Text by Brane Kovič  
Translated by Tanja Cigoji

Opening: Friday, 7 December 2018, at 7 p. m.  
On display until 5 January 2019.

MMC KIBLA / KiBela, space for art, Maribor, Slovenia  
Open on weekdays between 9 a. m. and 10 p. m.,  
Saturdays between 4 p. m. and 10 p. m.

ACE KIBLA is co-funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the Municipality of Maribor. Project RISK CHANGE (2016–2020) is co-financed by the Creative Europe program of the European Union.