

# Bojan Šumonja

There is nothing higher than offering yourself to the infinite

17 February 2017–04 March 2017

KiBela, space for art  
MMC KIBLA, Maribor

Bojan Šumonja is a leading Croatian painter, whose typical Istrian canvases have been occupying gallery spaces since the 1980's onward. His début exhibition in this region, at the Multimedia center KIBLA in Maribor, features a solo exhibition covering a very condensed overview of his creative efforts, from existentialist, Mediterranean paintings, to expressionist, mythological works; from politically committed to the more intimate individual motifs; from existentialistically personal to socially historical stories. One of his typical features is the use of an extensive color palette, which often emphasizes the selected color scheme depending on the story it conveys, and weaves it into the composition.

We can thus make a distinction between his individual painting periods in terms of blue (which he emphasizes very often), yellow, red ... The material aspect of his works could be further defined by the use of bitumen, which he incorporates in various ways, by weaving it with the color into the integral visual contour, which results in a raised-relief surface, a paste-like quality of the material, and a certain kind of "proper blackness", with an appealing fragrance radiating from such an oil-based mixture. In quite a few works he plays with the idea of a painting inside a painting, where the outer edge is at the same time part of the painting, and a frame, which takes the story forward to some kind of an extended reality, as if he wanted to juxtapose it on a different level.

To Bojan Šumonja, the perpetuation of a proper artistic expression is both an experiment, and a search for new possibilities offered by the selected motif, once he places it inside a different context and alters its color palette. We could say more or less the same about his more recent works, which perhaps cannot be simply linked to the earlier paintings, although we certainly recognize his stroke. The color scheme is more modest, with white, blue and black prevailing. Their message is much more straightforward, it can be entirely political, and it differs from the earlier, more covert narratives in the sense of responding to current events.

The first exhibition of Bojan Šumonja in Maribor features an overview of his more recent works, created within the time span of the past decade, and including the latest works as well. The emphasis is on the not so colorful paintings, as most of the selected works evolve around a blue-white-black color scheme, while the multi-colored pieces are – much like the next phase, again – in the minority. It is as if his initial practice in terms of style, the use of different materials, color layers and painting backgrounds, followed by a play of the contents, i.e. of the various, yet emblematic themes typical of his environment, has become upgraded – by experimenting with the forms; by placing a painting inside a painting by means of mimicry, mimesis, or narrative; by intertwining motifs from reality, history, and mythology – to the point of using less colors and conveying more message, like in his two cycles, Tiepolo's Sons and Sheep.

While the former is characterized by an air of (art) history, in Sheep we cannot overlook the direct political, and, of course, social connotations. Only superheroes can save us, the artist would add, as he spices up this integral display of his recent works by a selection of small-scale formats, which reveal to us his specific feel for details, and disclose the last corner of his (spiritual) atelier, which we were invited to visit.

Peter Tomaž Dobrila

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*Bojan Šumonja* graduated from the School of Applied Arts in Pula, Croatia. He then continued his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, department of sculpture, class of prof. Gianfranco Tramontin and graduated in 1984. In 1985 he took an additional class in graphic design in Milan, Italy. He has exhibited in over 200 group exhibitions and over 100 solo shows in Croatia and abroad. He lives and works in Pula, Croatia, where he also runs the Poola Gallery.

More: <http://bojansumonja.net/>

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The exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Municipality of Maribor, and the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

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The exhibition will be showing until 4 March 2017.

Opening 17 February 2017, at 8pm.

KiBela / MMC KIBLA Maribor, Slovenia

KiBela, space for art,

is open on weekdays between 9am and 10pm and Saturdays between 4pm and 10pm.