

Tina Dobrajc

Big girls don't cry

KiBela / MMC KIBLA

19 January – 17 February 2018

Big Girls Don't Cry showcases the artist's more recent works, large-size canvases with painted female images, represented stylistically in a contemporary-traditional manner, which establish an (ever insufficient) communication between the stereotypical, i.e. traditional status related to the historical tradition of the female as wife, and the postmodernist, emancipated shift towards the essence of the female subject.

Using a highly sensitive painting rhetoric, Tina Dobrajc depicts a personal, ritualized transition from girl to woman, clashing against the phenomenon of "socialization" as she faces the real world, a phenomenon that stubbornly continues on the path of segregation even in the 21st century – and not only on pay rolls. The artist focuses constantly on exploring the role of women in the past and present, interweaving it skillfully with the symbolism of female emancipation and traditions inculcated in us, and at the same time warns about the inheritance of socialization and the oppression and stereotypization of women throughout history.

Painting in a realistic style and exploring traditional topics, the artist creates a distinctly modern visual language. An eerie forest landscape, a collage of attached plastic flowers and the massive painted images of young girls wearing traditional folk costumes and surrounded by wild animals: initially, these images provoke a sense of discomfort in the observer, touching upon primal fear, as it were, and connecting to the deepest human essence of loneliness, detachment, reservation. But this kind of Freudian feeling only lasts until the viewer realizes that the images, imbued with a well-versed feminine painting esthetic, are actually extremely attractive. The mere monumentality of the works absorbs us, we do not really need the wild animals, nor the grotesque faces hidden in the dark of night, representing the epic dimensions of modern-day myths as recounted by Tina Dobrajc. The paintings' titles only confirm the unearthly substance. The color palette, too, was chosen very carefully: in a play of powerful color contrasts – especially the pink and the red stand out – the morbidity of the *mise-en-scène* screams even louder.

The artist builds on the content of her works, which is distinctly narrative and is created out of a personal perspective and own experience, such as growing up without a father, which is the reason why the artist became confronted with the transgressive difference between the male and female roles only at a later point in her life.

The works *Horde I.* and *Horde II.* were created as a general response to people's fear of migrants and migrations, with the media directly responsible for this fear. The response to migrants in the artist's local, rural environment, where people do not see a lot of foreigners, was like a reaction to a horde of wild animals, from which only some national folk tale hero, perhaps Martin Krpan with his bat, can save them.

Two most recently created paintings, titled *The Balkan Saga*, depict epic tales of battles and heroic deeds, which could, by the way, fit very well in Homer's mythology, except that in the case of Tina Dobrajc (for a change), they do not portray men, but powerful, fearless, fierce women, who stand tall and firm amidst the cold winter landscape. The artist's visual language typically reveals

the pointlessness of differentiation in general, not just according to gender. What is more, to differentiate people according to visual symbols, including folk costumes, is downright absurd in the eye of the artist. People only come in two forms, and both are human.

The artist, therefore, leans against a modern image of the female, which carries, on one hand, a powerful erotic charge, while on the other it is distinctly – traditionally – shut down and unapproachable. Tina Dobrajc offers a classic re-interpretation of age-old topics with the addition of a personal commentary, through which she articulates her own artistic standpoint according to the individual expressed topic.

Nina Jeza

Tina Dobrajc (1984) holds an MA in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, where she graduated under the mentorship of professor Herman Gvardjančič. She was awarded with the Hinko Smrekar plaque and the Rihard Jakopič recognition award for young artists, and was among the nominees for the 2011 ESSL Art Award. She works as an independent artist (self-employed) since 2011, engaging in various fine art and other visual genres and focusing on issues related to the role of women in society, social (in)equality, national identities, and the iconographies related to them. Her areas of creation include painting, new media, book illustrations, and theater set design. Tina Dobrajc lives and works in Škofja Loka.

More: www.tinadobrajc.com

Works

You Don't Belong to This Century, 2015

Divide et Impera, 2017

The Balkan Saga II, 2017/2018

Devil May Care, 2017

Na senčni strani Alp IV / On the Dark Side of the Alps IV, 2016

This is Bat Country, 2014

Hči / Daughter, 2017

The Balkan Saga, 2017

Horda / Horde, 2017

Tina Dobrajc and unknown vandal, Untitled, 2016

Tina Dobrajc: Big girls don't cry

KiBela / MMC KIBLA

Curated by Nina Jeza

Opening 19 January 2018, at 8 p. m.

The exhibition will be showing until 17 February 2018.

Translation: Helena Fošnar

MMC KIBLA / KiBela, space for art

Open on weekdays between 9 a. m. and 10 p. m., Saturdays between 4 p. m. and 10 p. m.

KIBLA

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