



Damijan Kracina, born 1970 in Kobarid, artist, BFA, MFA. He works in the fields of sculpture and multimedia art. In 1999 he concluded his study of sculpture and video art at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design. After 1998 he enhanced his knowledge in Graz, New York, at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and at the Santa Fe Art Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. In 1992 he was co-founder the art group Provokart. From 1997 to 2000 he was the artistic director of the art center Artilerie Kluže. In 2005 he was co-founder of the artists' group Domestic Research Society. He is a member of the AKC Metelkova group. He has been a professor with the Secondary School of Design and Photography in Ljubljana since 2010. He lives and works in Ljubljana.

Damijan Kracina
CONTROLLED SELF-IGNITION
19 June–19 July 2025

MMC KIBLA/KiBela, Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Foresight and Memory

Damijan Kracina is a Slovenian sculptor who takes nature, the living and the dead as his starting point. But even when he closes the circle, his works of art are biohistorical and apocalyptic. They represent a state trapped in time, physical and metaphysical, and lead us through various forms to the essential. The interweaving of different media such as paintings, drawings, video, sculptures, scenography and light also characterizes this exhibition with images of truly original zoomorphic forms that protrude from the space both allegorically and realistically. Perhaps also rhetorically, given the world we live in, or even historically and futuristically at the same time, as if memory and vision were holding hands.

Kracina combines all the elements into a complex installation that transports us into an imaginary world of images. Using various materials and techniques, he creates an original futuristic landscape of either genetically manipulated or evolutionarily mutated animals that gently seduce us with their beauty as we contemplate the aesthetic perfection of the works. However, their manifest artistic "fragility" is not an expression of the helplessness of these creatures, for it is only apparent, subtly admonishing us through beauty and making us question the catastrophic scenario of the "state of affairs" in which we find ourselves.

Nonetheless, the exhibition can also be viewed through the lens of humor, which is immanent to art but rarely found today, and as an artistic play on the viewer's perception and ability to convey an original message, which is constantly present in Kracina's work. This somehow softens the weight of the extraordinary thoughtfulness regarding the integrity of the presentation, which can make us laugh but also evokes a sense of unease when we contemplate "creatures" that could also come to life, inviting us to build a relationship with them by reflecting on where we come from and where we are going.

Damijan Kracina is our long-standing guest and one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Slovenia. As co-founder of the informal art group Provokart – to which Katarina Toman, Maja Licul and Janja Žvegelj also belonged – which opened the Multimedia Center KIBLA in Maribor on July 4, 1996 with an installation and an interactive performance involving the audience, he has been with us from the very beginning. In 1999, he exhibited in the large group exhibition homo.sapiens.3000, curated by Aleksandra Kostič, which presented 100 original visual works on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Narodni dom Maribor, with which we celebrated our anniversary. In 2000, we invited him to Venice for a group exhibition, which was a side event of the Venice Biennial. In the spring of the same year, he was one of the Slovenian guest artists at the international exhibition Art Space Central Europe (KunstRaumMitteleuropa) in Vienna, Austria. The exhibition traveled to Trnava in Slovakia in the summer, was shown at KIBLA in Maribor in the winter of 2001 and was staged for the last time in Croatia.

In 2010 we saw him in the dance theater project Fundus ZS PP, which comprised forty-five museum objects from the depot of the Ljubljana City Museum and twenty contemporary artworks and represented both a museum exhibition and a performance scenography. In 2013, he was selected by the curator Aleksandra Kostić for the outstanding group exhibition MATERIALITY in the then only a few months old KIBLA PORTAL, once the largest space for contemporary art in Slovenia, which has since been greatly reduced in size. The closest we came to exhibiting him independently was in 2005 in the thematic multimedia installation Galapagos, when he collaborated with Vladimir Leben. The last time he was our guest was in 2022, when he participated with his sculpture in the group exhibition of the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies (ZDSLU) May Salon - BLUE LINE: From the Renaissance to the New Media at KIBLA PORTAL.

Animals, which were the main subject of this installation, are a kind of “blue thread” for him. His first projects, which he realized while still a student, had to do with endangered species. I saw his first exhibition, the installation Kracina TV, in 1995, when he placed light boxes with photos of cats run over in the street around his realistic self-portrait, which he had taken during the Balkan war, as a kind of reaction to the political events, as people tend to react more emotionally when they see violence and death in animals than in humans. It was around that time that I got to know him, or rather we got to know each other. In 1997 he developed the indigenous Slovenian typeface Proteus with letters in the shape of an olm, but he also experimented with the Isonzo trout, the Tasmanian tiger, fossils and so on. His interest in biology and science, which he contrasts with man’s vanity towards nature, runs through his entire artistic career. Today, his animals have turned into mutants, because “nature was not created for a specific purpose. Only those who adapt more successfully survive in it. My works contain some of that – as in evolution, some of my projects fail, while some ideas succeed.”

In 2004, together with Alenka Pirman and Jani Pirnat, he founded the Domestic Research Society, which records, collects, researches and presents domestic phenomena and works in the fields of culture, art, research and education. He has also collaborated with numerous artists and musicians, has been active in Metelkova, where his sculptures are constantly exhibited, and has continuously exhibited and developed his art and life credo, which places his art at the highest level and makes his sculptures, in which he often incorporates motors, lights, heat spirals and connects them with electricity, as well as his drawings and paintings recognizable. He is less interested in exploring the painterly field than in exploring the form that can be sculpted or painted. He is drawn to organic forms associated with the combination of animal and human. These forms often emerge through a drawing or sketch, which for him is a kind of surface that he understands in a very sculptural way, even if his drawings and paintings appear three-dimensional and spatial. But while painters use color as a building block of a painting, Damijan Kracina incorporates color only as a background.

While at the beginning of his career he was more interested in making a socially engaged statement, although his interest in the environment and all living beings always had a critical edge, today he also tries to achieve technical perfection in his work, above all out of a sense of responsibility towards himself. Visually, his works seem to be taken from a science fiction film that has not yet been shot, while the storyboard has already been written and is waiting for a producer and director. We don’t know what genre the film will belong to, but since his works are humorous and frightening at the same time, we can choose from the whole range of possibilities up to a “horror comedy” or a “humorous horror film” in Slovenian style. Apart from that, his works constantly play with meaning in a unique, mischievous way that never takes itself too seriously. Moreover, his sculptures were selected in a public competition to be installed on the façade of the National Gallery, where they can be seen today.

Damijan Kracina is a “spatial” artist, as the current exhibition at MMC KIBLA proves. For him, the most important thing is that he has control over the entire space, because after all, his goal is to create a space. A sculpture is not just something that stands on a plinth, a drawing, a painting or a video, and not just on a wall either. His exhibitions have the effect of a holistic experience for the visitor, like a comprehensive spatial and multi-sensory work of art. A play with the senses and emotions. Beauty that hits us. A dramaturgical “punch in the gut”, as the author of this quote, the French painter and artist Antonin Artaud (1896–1948), who worked in various media and is best known for his writings and his work in theater and cinema, would say if he were to come across his art.

Characteristic of contemporary art, but also of KIBLA and Damijan Kracina, is the collaboration between science and art, which is also reflected in the current installation. Each exhibition element has a zoomorphic form and can be imagined as something alive, either in the distant future, when mutations change the physical characteristics of living beings, or even in the past, when such beings may even have lived and are recorded somewhere in the collective memory, only to show themselves before us now.

Undoubtedly, our life and the manifestation of all life on Earth are also the result of mutations lasting 14.5 billion years (the Big Bang and the “beginning” of the universe) or 4.5 billion years (the formation of planet Earth), and Kracina’s works are just that – a foresight or a memory. From his sculptures made of different, mixed materials and his paintings and drawings, which he makes in the techniques of acrylic on canvas or charcoal on wood, emanates the life that was, is or could be in certain time zones and spatial dimensions, which are his additional element, because he transforms each exhibition into a scenography that opens the door to the unknown. When we enter it, we are confronted with his world. And with ourselves in it.

Welcome ...

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila