

BIOGRAPHY

Jasna Kozar, MA, was born on March 7, 1952, in Murska Sobota, Slovenia. From 1971 to 1975, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana under Professors Gabrijel Stupica and Jože Brumen, where she also completed a postgraduate specialization in painting in 1977 under Professor Jože Ciuha. In 1976, she held her first major solo exhibition in Slovenia. In 1979, she enrolled in postgraduate studies at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. She returned to Slovenia in 1983.

She subsequently established herself as an independent visual artist. In 1986, she received the purchase prize at the Ex-tempore Piran – International Painting and Ceramics festival, and in 1989 she won first prize at the exhibition *Drawing* (Maribor Art Gallery).

Since the 1990s, she has exhibited widely in Slovenia and abroad. She furthered her professional development through a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. Since 2009, she has worked as a mentor at painting workshops and has led art courses. She also regularly participates in artists' colonies. From 2009 to 2021, she organized visual arts events as a gallerist and producer at Gallery 3X in the Lent district of Maribor. She is a member of the Maribor Fine Artists Society (DLUM). She lives and works in Maribor.

Jasna Kozar
EROTICA
17 July–22 August 2026

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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Specially Personal

Jasna Kozar returns to the KiBela exhibition space after nearly a decade. In 2016, her exhibition *Avatar* was thus accompanied: »in Sanskrit the word 'avatar' refers to the reincarnating soul, and this idea is becoming a challenge once again in the realm of contemporary painting. For any painter, limitations of their tactile and creative freedom are simply unbearable. Jasna Kozar's *Avatar* is above all an attempt at a meditative mind shift, a play on the ideal of re-birth. The question remains, whether re-birth happens as a 'returning of the same', or does it merely stumble over something we presumptuously call Karma? What is Jasna Kozar's avatar like in the traditional painting medium? As the artist herself explains, it is a »recycling of my overall experience of India, which lasted altogether for eight years.«

With her present exhibition, we see that 'avatarism' is Jasna's creative essence, her artistic drive, a kind of impetus, which propels her work in the stage of conceptualization, and becomes even more apparent through the painting(s), as her inner 'self' takes control of the brush strokes, leaving traces on canvas through emotional eruptions. In a direct and constant contact with the material, the eye of this volcano erupts colors, and although the artist allows for the colors' automatic effect, at the same time she 'traps' them, opening them up to their own path, so that she may tame them and compose them into dots, lines, objects, images, compositions. Even though this 'conciliation' arises from the artist herself, the dichotomy is conveyed through visual expressions that are sometimes reminiscent of action painting, despite the fact that being familiar with Jasna's extensive body of work, one could easily imagine her paintings being the work of several different artists.

The transitions from intimacy into explosion and back, from rapture to tranquility, point to Jasna's complex nature, her idiosyncratic attitude towards the approach to the beginning of an artistic process, which she retains, allowing for no more distractions of the original concept; sticking with it, living and existing therein, meditating in it up to the end. Therefore, with so many distinct manners, styles, motifs, colors, compositions and themes, each of Jasna's exhibitions is unique, special, particular, different, and challenging both for herself and for us viewers. There are surprises, both planned and spontaneous; and often we find ourselves shocked and fascinated. If Jasna's works provoke you, you should probably look to yourself: all the artist does is to embody, to represent, to carnalize, by offering you a meditative experience as a way into one's own self. Rejection is not an option. Jasna's art offers so many different ways of interpretation, but it is up to you to discover the one that is right for you, the one that is your own.

With KIBLA celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, we have decided together with Jasna to showcase her 'collection' of erotic paintings, which has expanded over so many years, it may as well be referred to as a 'lifelong body of work'. The themes that accompany us from birth to

death, from the cradle to the grave, are the Source of Life. Whatever became of us, what we became, what we are like – all these things do not matter in Jasna's art, but the fact is we were all made from love. *Erotica* is larger than us, it is Life in all its various manifestations of all living creatures, and it does not even matter whether we are familiar with their evolution, or much less whether we understand it. The exhibited artworks may perhaps give the impression that they were not created by the same artist.

Having presented a similar opus of works linked by a common thread of eroticism, Jasna Kozar received a Lifetime Achievement Award during last year's *14th International Festival of Fine Arts in Kranj, curated by the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies (ZDSLU)*. Considered Slovenia's most "democratic" art prize, the award is determined by a vote of artists' associations from across the country. In other words, the recipient is chosen directly by the professional community rather than by a (politically) appointed committee.

In the exhibition catalog released to accompany this international group exhibition entitled *Erotika (Erotica)*, one of the curators, Nina Jeza, wrote about one of the oldest yet always topical art motifs: »[Erotica] transcends the mere depiction of bodily desires; it is a complex field in which intimacy, power, societal norms, forbiddance and emancipatory impulses are intertwined. In the context of contemporary society in which corporeality is increasingly becoming a digitally mediated experience, sexual identity a fluid-, and intimacy a socially conditioned quality – an artistic interpretation of eroticism is gaining new influence as a critical apparatus, as reflection, and as an expression of subjective experience.«

She adds: »Eroticism has occurred in the arts as one of the most consistently present visual archetypes. Tightly knit with corporeality, desire, intimacy, but also with questions of power, forbiddance, mythology and spirituality. The presence of eroticism throughout history has been extremely heterogeneous – from explicit sexual scenes to symbolic allusions, from pure corporeality to spiritual sublimation. Through different historical periods, artists have employed eroticism to explore not only the sensual but also the social, cultural and political fabric of time.

Since time immemorial, prehistoric art has in itself, consider the Venus of Willendorf for example, expressed an interest in the human body as the source of life, where erotic connotations are linked to fertility and the collective imaginary of the feminine. The body is symbolically re-designed into a universal mark of generative power – without a face, without individuality, but with an emphasis on corporeality. This was the earliest form of symbolic eroticism, which is not necessarily explicit, but is imbued with the archetypal power of creativity and carnality.«

Eroticism, one of the two fundamental creative impulses embodied in the eros–thanatos duality, has been a constant presence in art. In Jasna's work, it is a recurring thread that runs throughout her artistic career, including the eight years she spent in India, where vibrant colors infused her visual language with a new intensity. Stylistically unfettered, she moves freely between motifs while remaining committed to the brush and the tradition of easel painting. For Jasna, any constraint on tactile or creative freedom is intolerable. Consequently, the many shifts that define her work, together with her departures from well-trodden paths – including her own – may at first seem surprising. In time, however, it becomes clear that this is simply who Jasna is.

Nina Jeza concludes, »eroticism in the arts today is no longer simply a motif or esthetic category, rather, it is a discursive instrument through which we as humans are allowed to explore our essence, our corporeality, our identity, and our attitudes towards representation, subjectivity, the politics of the body, and technology. It is a space of criticism, pleasure, reflection and

intimacy, and remains one of the most powerful channels for expressing human nature in all its complexity. In this sense, it is increasingly becoming established as a mirror of time, unmasking emotions, repressions, liberties or longings, as every historical period depicts it differently and understands it through a different lens of corporeality, religion, science and power. Erotica – sometimes implicit, other times exposed; often symbolic, yet at other times straightforward, but always critical towards societal representations of the normative, the permissible and/or the forbidden.

From the point of view of art history, one can trace the shifts in the perception of eroticism, from archaic images of fertility, through classical ideals of bodily esthetics, medieval censorship and the baroque ecstatic, to contemporary art in which corporeality and sexuality are intertwined with issues of identity, politics, technology and intimacy. In the contemporary artistic context, therefore, Erotica is no longer present as an accompanying or decorative motif but rather as an independent, articulated discourse – a conceptual and visual means through which artists uncover their dynamics of view, domination, desire and subjective experience.

In the curatorial discourse, this represents a challenge towards a reflection on how to present artworks that are sensual, provocative, subversive, yet at the same time critical and reflective. Erotica is no longer just an object of desire, it is becoming a field for discussions about the corporeal experience in contemporary society, torn between control, digitalization, morality and liberation.

If art is the language of that which cannot be expressed in a different way, then *Erotica* is its whisper and its scream – not as a final image of pleasure, but as a question that remains to be answered: what is today's perspective on the body, on human desire, and on intimacy?«

Expressionism, pop art, collage and assemblage, figuration, portraiture, abstraction, cityscapes, and landscapes all find their way into her erotic paintings, which pulse with boldness, confident brushwork, and layered humor. Through them, she casts an "eternal light" into the chambers of our lives, where questions outnumber answers. She does not seek to explain, but simply to show – to turn the image outward, where we may, in one way or another, catch a glimpse of ourselves. She invites a response without ever tempering her inner impulse or restraining her artistic gesture, unconcerned with whether her work soothes us, unsettles us, or simply imbues us with the energy entrusted to her to convey through the medium of painting.

She is the medium herself. She connects us. She builds and transforms, layering the elements of a painting into the desired motifs, refining and reworking them over time. Sometimes years pass before a painting finally comes into being. Eroticism has accompanied her from the very beginning, appearing continuously and consistently – not as a byproduct, but as one of the central threads of her artistic practice, a distinctive artistic credo. It offers all of us a *raison d'être*, a reason for being, understood first and foremost in a natural sense, but also, if we choose, in an existential one. This becomes especially resonant in a time when neoliberal ideologies, through social engineering, elevate the sociological over the natural, sever human beings from nature, and use them as "guinea pigs" according to methods reminiscent of attempts to create a perfect "Aryan race".

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila