



# Uroš Weinberger

## Seven Sisters

27 May–18 June 2016

KiBela, space for art

MMC KIBLA, Maribor, Slovenia

### Weinberger's Seven

Uroš Weinberger is an artist – a painter and a musician, which also makes him a performer. His works are complemented and executed by means of a painting technique, and create the sense of a digital image being painted in an entirely traditional manner: oil on canvas. Weinberger's paintings mostly appear on large-scale formats sometimes consisting of two or even more separate sections, but not in the sense of a classic polyptych made up of "panels", where each depiction tells a separate story: here, the idea is simply that of an artwork being made up of individual units, to enable an easier transport of the works.

Large-scale paintings are not a novelty: they used to exceed as much as ten meters in width and height. Initially, such formats appeared during the historical transition of painting techniques from fresco to canvas, their widespread application continuing intensely during the baroque period, which popularized paintings of sizeable dimensions, entwined with tragic motifs and polished by means of diagonal compositions that enabled an even greater dynamic of the figures. By adding the chiaroscuro technique, which employs light to model the figures into a visual 3D image, this "vivification" of the depicted characters becomes even more striking.

Of course, it is not our intention to categorize Uroš Weinberger as belonging to a particular period on the art history timeline, but rather, to draw certain parallels. We can definitely claim that the artist is very well acquainted with the course of development of painting through history; from renaissance landscapes in the background, through baroque absolutism that expressed power and plentitude, all the way to realism (of motifs), and finally topped with a fair share of surrealism. Yet, in spite of all this, the artist remains authentic and creates an entirely new – contemporary – approach to traditional painting. His works are like digital images on a screen, their profoundness intensified by the size of the formats, overwhelming us from close up like some sort of augmented reality that keeps absorbing us into the artwork. By knowing and combining diverse painting techniques the artist achieves maximum involvement and immersion of the observer into the painting.

Weinberger's themes are socially critical; on this occasion we are confronted with a seven-piece series titled Seven Sisters. The painted visual images are presented in the form of oil company "advertisements", with images of people wearing protective gas masks, and various situations that remind of natural disasters, or some sort of crisis, or people migrating, but instead of suitcases, they are carrying petrol cans. The message is all the more straightforward because the paintings include actual oil company logotypes of Shell, Texaco, Gazprom, ExxonMobil, Esso, and BP (British Petroleum).

“Seven Sisters” was a term coined in the 1950’s by businessman Enrico Mattei, then-head of the Italian state oil company Eni, which was rejected membership in the petroleum cartel. Later, in 1975, two years after the oil crisis before which the Seven Sisters controlled around 85 percent of the world’s petroleum reserves, British writer Anthony Sampson took over the term when he wrote the book *The Seven Sisters*, to describe the shadowy oil cartel, which tried to eliminate competitors and control the world’s oil resources, mostly at the expense of exerting considerable power over Third World oil producers. In recent years, the dominance of the Seven Sisters has been challenged, largely due to the existence of the OPEC and the emergence of powerful state-owned oil companies, but the surviving methuselahs remain – BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell, i.e. the four members of the “Big Oil” “supermajors” group, which continue to negotiate as a cartel, to achieve goals by means of a “selective” use of any kind of means, including deals under the table, and being extremely well-organized.

Weinberger’s *Seven* thus form a modern-day socially critical assemblage: the outspokenness of its message, in fact, establishes a sphere, from which further subliminal meanings arise. Giant oil corporations are already associated with aggressive capitalism, shallow commercialization, and exploitation of natural and human resources. The artist thus actually takes us into the good old world of classic horror movies.

Welcome to the Texaco Chainsaw Massacre.

Nina Jeza, *Artists&Poor’s*

**Uroš Weinberger** (1975) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, Slovenia where he completed his MA degree in 2005. In 2001, he received the Prešeren Student Award of the University of Ljubljana. In 2002 he was invited to the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia, Bulgaria. In 2011, he was awarded at the Biennial Exhibition – A Look at Visual Arts in Slovenia 6: I, Here, Now. He participated in an artist residency in Berlin, and later at the Schafhof – Europäisches Künstlerhaus Oberbayern residency in Freising. He lives and works as a freelancer in Novo Mesto and Ljubljana.

<http://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/117403-uroš-weinberger>

The exhibition will be showing until 18 June 2016.

Opening 27 May 2016, at 8 p. m.

KiBela / MMC KIBLA, Maribor

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KiBela, space for art, is open on weekdays between 9am and 10pm and Saturdays between 4pm and 10pm (closed on Sundays).