

Kaja Urh

Prepletanje | Interlacing

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KiBela, space for art

MMC KIBLA

“Mass media shape our mental images. This is most evident in the more popular cases, such as painting (e. g. Mona Lisa), while on the other hand a lot of images are underestimated. We consume mass media images, which means that our response is predetermined. The viewer does not necessarily establish any kind of contact with the artwork anymore, even though it appears that he is in a seemingly direct connection to the work. The possibility of an artwork having an immediate effect on the observer has virtually vanished. This is why the basis of the works comprises accidental, disregarded images (i. e. amateur, thematically undefined, unpopular etc.) from a digital medium, transferred onto the canvas. In doing so, their meaning is changed – instead of “internet junkyard”, they are placed in the role of an artwork.”

— Kaja Urh

In the past, paintings have served – by way of symbols and clearly postulated attributes - as a way of reading the subject matter. The popular painting motive of the Mona Lisa can historically be established as a synonym for the dividing line that took place during the renaissance period and marked the shift from craftsmen to artists, as in the case of Leonardo da Vinci and some of his fellow guild members, for example Albert Dürer. However, it is the emergence of a new medium, i. e. photography, that is the chronological predecessor of some of the greatest shifts in the world of art and in terms of various global mindsets that appended modernism and all the isms that followed to this day.

The Mona Lisa is on display at the Louvre, protected under a thick, bulletproof glass. The visitors are still plenty, gathering in orderly queues to make use of the strictly limited time to observe the painting. A detailed analysis of the work is enabled by means of printed media and the internet, where we can see its enlargement, with all the cracks, traces of time, and the more-or-less successful restoration process... We know it's not the only copy and that replicas exist; one of them is thus kept at the Prado Museum in Madrid, supposedly it originates from Da Vinci's apprentice workshop... In the age of today, Damien Hirst, a conceptual artist whose works have reached skyrocketing prices, is making a public appeal to young artists skilled in classical artistic depictions, to become performers of his next (market) art opus.

Kaja Urh is an academic artist, one very skilled at the “craft” of painting. She examines various techniques, as well as her own perception and memory. She physically paints painting over painting. Literally and analogically. The computer design serves as a sketch of the mental record of the seemingly effortless combination of *“accidental, disregarded images from web spam”*. This changes their meaning and it is here that an insightful, critical, satirical narrative shift occurs. 21st century symbolism and iconography; the narrative character of interlacing sentences between the lines...

Do we know how to observe a painting? The works of Kaja Urh are a challenge and an educational gesture at the same time. Most combinations of snapshots and movie stills speak about a seemingly effortless narrativeness of joining the images, which, however, in the contact with the artwork inside the gallery space, unfold according to our physical movement closer or farther from them. It is only then that the mechanism of reading the story is triggered inside us. The conceptualism that we perceive by way of the story, by the manner in which two different events are combined, each belonging to *“a movie of its own”*, testifies to a peculiar and original appropriation that discloses the artist’s critical and mature perspective of the world.

The computer screen cannot enable us to read the stories written on Kaja Urh’s canvases – we need a real artwork format. Unlike the Mona Lisa, which we cannot approach in the gallery space – because of the bulletproof glass *“screen”*...

Kaja Urh (b. 1988, Kranj) holds a BA degree in painting. She is currently finishing her MA degree at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (ALUO) in Ljubljana. Her main interest is painting, where she explores various stylistic approaches, but also design (works at the Pangram studio). She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at the Kosovel House (Sežana, 2011), the Dolik Exhibition Salon (Jesenice, 2011), the Mikel House (Ribnica, 2013), the Constantin Brancusi Gallery (Bucharest, 2014) and elsewhere. Awards: Grand Prix ZUŠL, Ive Šubic Ex Tempore 2014/Škofja Loka, Fo.Vi Gallery Award, Ex Tempore Ptuj Karneval 2015.

KiBela / KIBLA Maribor
KiBela, space for art, is open on weekdays from 9am to 10pm,
and Saturdays from 4pm to 10pm.