

Pregledna razstava

Retrospective exhibition

Damijan
Kracina

Ostanki
The Remains

Galerija Alkatraz, 2. - 20. 9. 2019



Galerija Alkatraz in Poslednji muzej sodobne umetnosti predstavljata:
Alkatraz Gallery and The Last Contemporary Art Museum present:

Pregledna razstava
Damijan Kracina: *Ostanki*

Retrospective Exhibition
The Remains: Damijan Kracina

Pri razstavi sodelujejo še/ Others participating in the exhibition: Ivan Jakac, Sašo Kalan, Rok Kunaver, Vladimir Leben, Matevž Paternoster, Jani Pirnat, Ajda Toman, Sebastjan Vodušek

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

7.038.5(497.4):929Kracina D.

KRACINA, Damijan

Ostanki = The remains : pregledna razstava = retrospective exhibition : Galerija Alkatraz, 2.-20. 9. 2019 / Damijan Kracina ; [besedilo Ana Grobler, Sebastian Krawczyk ; prevod Ana Makuc ; fotografije arhiv avtorja ... et al.]. - 1. izd. = 1st ed. - Ljubljana : KUD Mreža, Galerija Alkatraz, 2019

ISBN 978-961-94780-0-4

COBISS.SI-ID 301469696

Kolofon

Založnik/ Publisher:
KUD Mreža/ Galerija Alkatraz
Masarykova 24, 1000 Ljubljana

Glavna urednica/ Editor-in-Chief: Ana Grobler
Besedilo/ Text: Ana Grobler, Sebastian
Krawczyk
Asistentki/ Assistants: Anabel Karolyn
Černohorski, Danijela Zajc

Lektura slovenskega besedila/ Proof-reading
for Slovene: Neja Berlič
Prevod/ Translation: Ana Makuc
Oblikovanje/ Design: Ana Grobler

Tisk/ Printed by: Demat d.o.o.
Naklada/ Edition: 300
Prva izdaja/ First Edition
Leto izida/ Year of publishing: 2019

Credits

Naslovnica/ First page: Ana Grobler, Damijan
Kracina
Zadnja stran/ Last page: Damijan Kracina

Fotografije po straneh/ Photography by pages:
arhiv avtorja/ archive of the author: 7, 14, 15,
17, 19, 28-29, 39, 59
Nada Žgank: 6, 35, 34-desno/ right, 36, 37
Ana Grobler, Sebastian Krawczyk: 9, 13
Urška Boljkovac, arhiv DDR: 23
Tomaž Lunder: 34-levo/ left
Provokart, arhiv avtorja: 25
Matevž Paternoster: 21, 33
Sabina Meke Zalar: 11
Nina Sotelšek: 27




ALKATRAZ
GALERIJA



Ostanki

Za 26. obletnico AKC Metelkova mesto smo se v KUD-u Mreža povezali s Poslednjim muzejem sodobne umetnosti, svetovno znano institucijo, ki stoji v naselju Logje na skrajnem zahodu Slovenije v stavbi častitljive starosti,¹ s svojim nazivom pa izpostavlja, da je sodobna umetnost v današnjem času dosegla svoje robove. Muzej se nahaja sredi neokrnjene narave in z izvajanimi aktivnostmi prevprašuje metodologijo, pristope in stvaritve sodobne umetnosti, kar je povezava par excellence z delom vsestranskega umetnika Damijana Kracine, ki ga ekskluzivno zastopa. Muzej tudi gosti njegovo stalno spreminjajočo se stalno

1 Hiša je stara več kot 200 let. https://www.culture.si/en/The_Last_Contemporary_Art_Museum

razstavo. Akademski kipar in večmedijski ustvarjalec je bil še do nedavnega prisoten v AKC Metelkova mesto, kjer je od leta 2008 uporabljal umetniški atelje. Obdobje se je končalo z letom 2018, ko je kandidiral in bil izbran za uporabnika ateljejskega prostora v Švicariji v parku Tivoli v Ljubljani. Kljub temu je Damijan Kracina v metelkovskem prostoru še vedno še kako prisoten – s projekti, ki jih je izvajal, jih še vedno izvaja ali je bil prisoten pri njihovi zasnovi, ter z mnogimi postavitvami v javnem prostoru, ki dajejo pečat Avtonomnemu kulturnemu centru Metelkova mesto.

V Galeriji Alkatraz redno gostimo pregledne razstave metelkovskih umetnic_kov in za 26. obletnico AKC Metelkova mesto smo se odločili z razstavo Damijana Kracine obeležiti prelomni čas, zaznamovan z odhodom tega relevantnega avtorja iz delovnega prostora. V dogovoru s Poslednjim muzejem sodobne umetnosti smo se odločili, da po uspešnem

vzoru njihove stalne razstave del tudi tu razstavo zasnujemo po zgledu kabineta čudes. Ta princip je pravzaprav značilen za ustvarjalca, saj kabinet(e) čudes “vedno znova konstruira in vanj vključuje kuriozitet, na katere naleti na popotovanju po lastni duševni pokrajini”, kot je poetično povedala Klavdija Figelj ob otvoritvi njegove razstave *Nelagodje smisla* 8. julija 2019 v Knjižnici Cirila Kosmača v Tolminu.

Razstava bo vsebovala prerez desetletnega ustvarjanja Damijana Kracine, “celostne umetnine domišljjsko ustvarjenega sveta”², ki navdih črpa iz živalskega okolja ter avtorjevega odnosa do človeške civilizacije. Evolucijski razvoj je ustvarjalca navdihnil h grajenju lastnih ekosistemov, ki so izvirni konstrukti neznanega sveta in obenem estetsko dovršene umetnine. Kustosinja

2 Jadranka Plut, *Galapagos – vodnik*, katalog, str. 15, Ljubljana, 2007

Mojca Grmek je ob njegovi razstavi *Prehod* (2016) v Hiši kulture Pivka zapisala, da je bil navdih “za ustvarjanje novih življenjskih oblik in futurističnih bitij”³ pravzaprav “vtis krajine, povezane z brutalnim zgodovinskim trenutkom človeškega napredka” lokacije Trinity, kjer je bila 16. julija 1945 prvič preizkušena atomska bomba.

Damijan Kracina že od leta 2002, ko je bil na rezidenci na Tamarind Institutu v Albuquerqueju v ameriški zvezni državi Nova Mehika, ustvarja originalni *animal fiction*, ki prikazuje imaginarne scenarije razvoja živih vrst, kar ga privede h grajenju hibridnih vrst in celo novih ekosistemov. V njegovem umetniškem nagovoru lahko kljub napeti vsebini in vabljeni vizualnosti “slutimo politično opozorilo glede nepredvidljivih posledic ustaljenih postopkov genetskih

3 <http://www.kracina.com/prehod.html>,
ogledano 27. 6. 2019



Stalna razstava v Poslednjem muzeju sodobne umetnosti/ Permanent exhibition at The Last Contemporary Art Museum



Stalna razstava v Poslednjem muzeju sodobne umetnosti/ Permanent exhibition at The Last Contemporary Art Museum

modifikacij organizmov”⁴. Avtorjeve skulpture, risbe, instalacije, fotografije in videi nas vodijo k zavedanju, da smo del bogatega, večdimenzionalnega sveta, ki ga lahko soustvarjamo na več nivojih, obenem pa le-ta soustvarja nas.

Razstava bo prikazala vsebinsko rdečo nit avtorjevega ustvarjanja in širši kontekst nastajanja njegove umetnosti skozi predstavitev številnih aktivnosti, interesov ter medumetniških in širših sodelovanj tega plodovitega ustvarjalca.

4 povzeto po: Dejan Mehmedovič, *Ta mali novi svet*, v: Primorska likovna umetnost: nek drug pogled 1990 - 2013, str. 50, Koper, 2013

Bil je nekoč na Metelkovi

Damijan Kracina je bil na Metelkovi stacioniran 10 let in je eden izmed umetnic_kov, ki so veliko prispevale_i k njeni materialni in vsebinski podobi. Je eden od ustvarjalk_cev, ki so bile_i v različnih vlogah na Metelkovi vedno prisotne_i. Že na samem začetku, pred šestindvajsetimi leti, je bil kot študent vključen v tukajšnje dogajanje. O svojih izkušnjah govori v video intervjuju⁵, ki je del obsežnega sodelovanja med KUD-om Mreža in SCCA-Ljubljana, ki je potekalo med letoma 2011 in 2013 in je bilo realizirano v projektih *Vmesna postaja* in *Končna postaja*. V intervjuju razkriva, da je sicer zasedbo zamudil, ker je, kot sam pravi, na prizorišče prišel šele čez nekaj časa, zaradi česar pridobitev delovnega prostora na Metelkovi ni bila možna. Že leta

5 http://galerijalkatraz.org/?page_id=10652, <https://vimeo.com/105021685>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019



Mesojedke/Carnivores, postavitve v javnem prostoru AKC Metelkova mesto/ public space installation at ACC Metelkova mesto, 2010

1994 pa je imel atelje v stavbi Šola, ki je kmalu po tem žal pogorela. Na tiste čase ima lepe spomine: "Čez kakšno leto [po zasedbi] sem imel atelje v Šoli, ampak nisem dosti delal. Samo ključavnice švasal. Bilo je kaotično." Ne glede na neurejenost razmer v novo ustanovljenem avtonomnem prostoru je sodeloval s tu prisotnimi umetniki, predvsem sošolci z ALUO, ki so imeli dostop do drugih delovnih prostorov, ki jih je lahko koristil. Še preden je pridobil atelje za daljši čas, je bil na Metelkovi že prisoten s svojimi deli, ki so krasila podobo javnega prostora in klubov. O prelomni pomembnosti AKC Metelkova mesto zase in za slovenski prostor dodaja: "Zasedba Metelkove je bil dogodek, drugačen od vsega, kar smo poznali."

Pomanjkanje osebnega delovnega prostora znotraj Metelkove v času njenih začetkov za Damijana Kracino ni bila nikakršna ovira. Metelkova je bila in je še vedno zaznamovana

z njegovimi umetniškimi intervencijami. Njegove že praktično slavne, v vsakem kontekstu z globokim premislekom drugače razstavljene *Mesojedke* (2010) so bile leta 2011 v sodelovanju z Edvinom Dobrilovičem postavljene kot del originalne ureditve južne fasade stavbe Garaže. Da bi dopolnil instalacijo, je poleg posadil še trto iz domačega Posočja, ki se že več let v metelkovskem prostoru uspešno bohota in razrašča ter postopoma vedno bolj kuka v ateljeje drugih umetnikov omenjene stavbe. Na *Trto* - živo skulpturo - lahko gledamo iz simboličnega vidika kot na dediščino umetnika v prostoru Metelkove: je navidezno statična in zaključena, vendar se stalno širi in krepi. Obiskovalke_ce Metelkove, nepripravljene na prisotnost hibridnih bioloških vrst v urbanem okolju, tu preseneti še *Kingguru* (2002–2005) – zlitje človeka in kenguruja, katerega telo nevarno čepi na strehi stavbe Garaže. Viden z razdalje številnim gledalkam_cem vzbuja nelagodje od leta 2011, saj njegovo človeško telo kras



Avtor v ateljeju na Metelkovi/ The author in his studio at Metelkova, 2011

dobro izoblikovan rep, ki služi ravnotežju in opravlja vlogo tretje noge.

Delo Damijana Kracine je zaznamovalo prostor AKC Metelkova mesto tudi skozi projekt, ki je imel povsem drugačen fokus. *Soški biser* (1997), ki je nastal v sodelovanju s Katarino K. Toman, nosi referenco (reklamno sporočilo "bistra hči planin" ob plastenki vode) na Gregorčičevo pesem *Soči*. Medijsko prepoznavno umetniško delo je hiperrealistična akrilna slika, ki v oblikovanju in velikosti posnema formo reklamnih jumbo plakatov. Domiselno delo, ki se norčuje iz prenasičenosti z reklamnimi oglasi, se je pojavilo v času, ko podobna oglasna sporočila še niso bila tako javno izpostavljena. Že takrat je bil torej umetnik (in tudi umetnica) pred svojim časom, saj je že mnogo let pred poplavo podobnih plakatov pravilno anticipiral potek dogodkov in kritično razmišljal o strategiji poneumljanja s strani reklamne mašinerije potrošniške

družbe. Z delom je želel prek izmišljenega podjetja z znamko *Soški biser* izpostaviti problem izkoriščanja reke Soče v komercialne namene. Akrilna slika – imitacija oglasa je prepotovala pot od Knjižnice Cirila Kosmača v Tolminu (1998) do Trienala sodobne slovenske umetnosti Vulgata U3 v Moderni galeriji (2000) in zaključila pot v AKC Metelkova mesto (2001–2005), kjer so jo zunanje vremenske razmere postopoma razgradile. Nasprotno kot pri *Trti*, ki se razrašča, se je tu artefakt razkrojil, obe deli oz. njuna procesa razvoja pa vključujeta moment evolucije, osrednje zanimanje Damijana Kracine. Del *Soškega bisera* je bil tudi performans, pokušina vode reke Soče, s katerim sta se avtorica in avtor norčevala iz trženja izdelkov in še posebej naglasila problematiko umetno ustvarjanega občutka ekskluzivnosti prodajnih eksponatov.

To pa še ni vse, njegova umetniška prisotnost seže tudi do metelkovskih klubov, saj se njegovo delo v obliki napisa, *Decoration* (1997),



Kingguru, skulptura/ sculpture, 115 x 190 x 70 cm, 2002–2005



Soški biser/ Soča's Pearl akrilna slika na lesu/ acrylic painting on wood, 400 x 250cm, 1997



Soški biser/ Soča's Pearl, plastenke s potiskanimi nalepkami/ plastic bottles with printed stickers, fotografija/ photo, 1997

ki je bilo premierno predstavljeno v Gradu Podsreda na razstavi *Animalis*, že dolga leta nahaja v Klubu Gromka. Sestavljeno je iz črk, ki so oblikovane s pomočjo avtorjeve razvpite pisave *Proteus font*⁶ (2003), sestavljene iz podob človeške ribice, ponosa slovenstva, s katero slavi biotsko raznolikost domačega okolja.

Damijan Kracina je tudi pobudnik in soustanovitelj Nočne izložbe Pešak⁷, inovativnega razstavnega prostora v stavbi Pešaki, kjer so razstave mimoidočim zgolj vidno in ne fizično dostopne. Postavljene so namreč na oknih stavbe, umetniška dela pa si lahko obiskovalke_ci razstave bolj od blizu ogledajo zgolj skozi daljnogled, ki se nahaja na Stolpu na severnem trgu AKC Metelkova mesto. Tekom let je umetnik kreativno

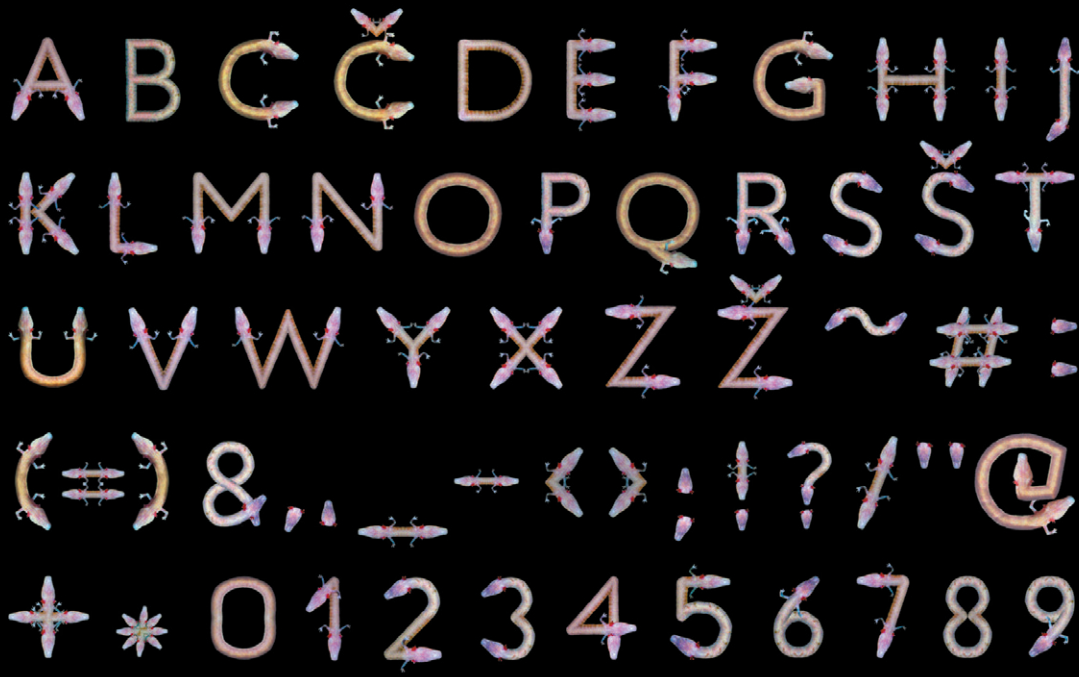
sodeloval pri številnih projektih Zavoda za sodobno umetnost SCCA-Ljubljana na Metelkovi ulici 6. Galerija Alkatraz ga je v tujini predstavljala na razstavah in umetniških sejmi (Volta4, Basel, 2008; Viennafair, Dunaj, 2009 in 2010, Preview Berlin – The Emerging Art Fair, Berlin, 2010 in 2011). Dela so požela veliko zanimanja in v obiskovalkah_cih zbudila notranjo stisko, saj so si želele_i umivati roke z mojstrsko izdelanim milom v obliki neznanega členonožca z ostrimi nogami (*Žajfa*, 2009), podobno kot v radijski igri *Marn Nemarn* (2014)⁸

6 <http://www.proteusfont.org/>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019
7 <https://pesakpesak.wordpress.com/>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019

8 Delo z dvema naslovoma, *Pisoar in Slon z zlomljeno roko*, je namreč služilo kot podlaga za radijsko igro (besedilo: Jani Pirnat; igrajo: Ivan Jakac, Ajda Toman, Rok Kunaver; zvočna podoba: Sašo Kalan, skulptura: Damijan Kracina), ki je bila premierno predstavljena na Metelkovi, točneje v Projektni sobi SCCA-Ljubljana v sklopu Mednarodnega trienala keramike UNICUM 2015 Narodnega muzeja Slovenije. Pripoveduje zgodbo, v kateri umetnica omenjeno skulpturo – nenavadni pisoar – uporabi kot instrument za kaznovanje priletnega seksističnega plejboja z javnim sramotenjem. <http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/studio-6/studio-6-v-letu-2014/>, ogledano 22. 7. 2019, dostopno na: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPT_bwPUpn4.

PROTEUS FONTS

First Slovenian Autochthonic Fonts ©



Proteus font, grafična podoba/ graphic image, 2003

koristiti pisoar, ki spominja na glavo bika (*Pisoar* oz. *Slon z zlomljeno roko*, 2008), se čudile_i nad uganko okostnjaka neopredeljenega mastodonta (*Sanitarium*, 2010) in se pustile_i zapeljati v svet domišljije avtorja, spretnega pripovedovalca zgodb in – kot ga označi Dejan Mehmedovič – režiserja.⁹

Zaradi vsega naštetega se nam pojavlja vprašanje, če je Damijan Kracina metelkovski umetnik. Ali pa je vsaj morda kdaj bil? Sam enigmatično razlaga: “Ne vem, s tem se sploh ne obremenjujem. Kaj to pomeni za mojo produkcijo? Ne vem. Izhajam iz drugih izhodišč. Ne izhajam iz teh političnih, aktivističnih, socioloških, kot mogoče kdo drug in se tega mogoče ne da tako direktno povezati s temi stališči, ki jih zunanji svet povezuje z avtonomno cono. Moja umetniška

dela in produkcija so bolj neodvisna od tega. Sem znotraj tega prostora in znotraj svoje glave. Name vpliva vse od amebe do Metelkove.” Zadnja poved do potankosti oriše njegovo ustvarjalsko pot. Ta se vije skozi lastno konstruirano biosfero, ki jo sestavljajo ekosistemi, polni možnih evolucij živalskih vrst tega ali vzporednega vesolja. Ti so prepleteni z domišljjskimi svetovi ter z angažiranim kolektivnim sodelovanjem, ki v sebi nosi globok razmislek, zaznamuje pa ga tudi družbenokritična ost. Slednja se pogosto fokusira na biološko raznolikost življenja in na to, da je življenje na svetu del velikega, medsebojno odvisnega sistema. Védenje, da je človeštvo integralni del te obsežne skupnosti, od katere je popolnoma odvisno, je dejstvo, ki se ga premalo zavedamo¹⁰.

9 Dejan Mehmedovič, *Ta mali novi svet*, v: Primorska likovna umetnost: nek drug pogled 1990–2013, str. 51, Koper, 2013

10 Ana Grobler in Jadranka Plut, *Galerija Alkatraz na dogodku Open day v LX Factory*, na: <http://galerijalkatraz.org/?p=4127>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019



Marn Nemarn, radijska igra/ radio play, ovitek za gramofonsko ploščo/ cover for the gramophone record, 2014



Žajfa/Soap, instalacija: milo, kovček, brisača
installation: soap, suitcase, towel, 2019

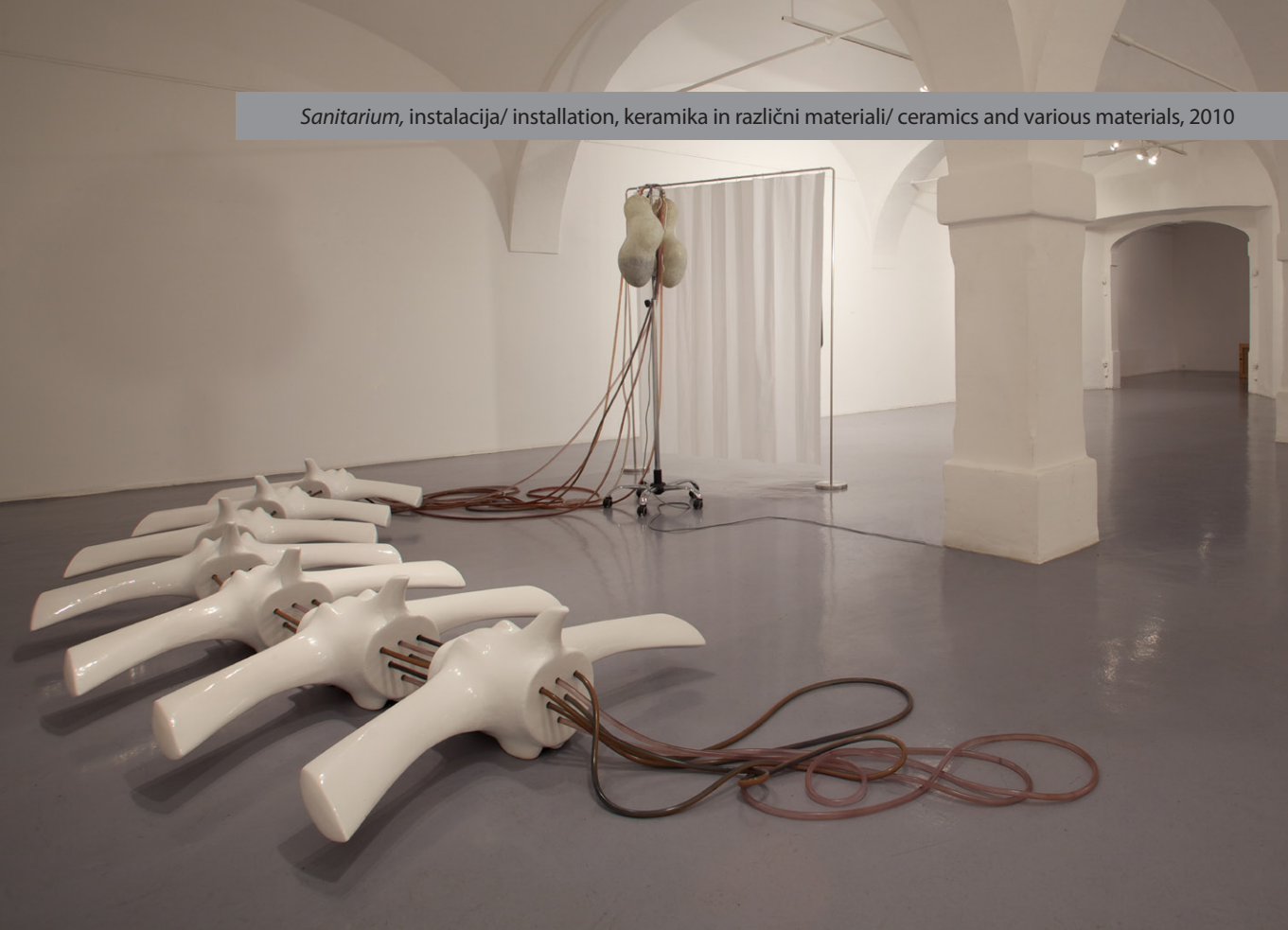
Družbena aktivnost

Umetniška zanimanja Damijana Kracine niso skrivnost. Njegove umetnine so del izvirne vizije, ki ima svoj prostor na umetniški sceni Slovenije. Javnost pa manj ve o Damijanu Kracini – organizatorju kolektivnega delovanja in iniciatorju pobud, namenjenih širjenju tradicionalnih mej sodobne umetnosti. Znotraj AKC Metelkova mesto se izvaja projekt Nočna izložba Pešak, v katerem je do leta 2019 aktivno sodeloval s kustosinjo Anabel Černohorski, producentko Natašo Serec in številnimi umetnicami_ki in idejnimi nosilkami_ci zgornjega nadstropja Pešakov. Je soustanovitelj galerije, bil pa je tudi član njenega programskega odbora (2013–2018). Besede iz video intervjuja kažejo na njegov *modus operandi*: “Rad dajem iniciative za skupno druženje. Na našem hodniku [Terrah, Mitja Ficko, Vladimir Leben, Boško Rakočević in Damijan Kracina

(op. ur.)] je nastala ideja, da bi naredili galerijo, ki naj bi bila odprta navzven. Galerijo naj bi videl od zunaj skozi okna. Mislim, da je na Metelkovi pozitivistična mentaliteta, jo moraš imeti: ko imaš neko idejo, jo moraš sam tudi realizirati. To se mi zdi odgovornost ljudi, ki so tu, da se sami spomnijo in sami realizirajo.” Tako, kot je bilo rečeno, je bilo tudi storjeno in uspešno funkcioniira še danes.

Avtor je tudi član in soustanovitelj medijsko znanega umetniškega kolektiva DDR¹¹ (Društvo za domače raziskave: Jani Pirnat, Alenka Pirman, Damijan Kracina), ki deluje od leta 2004 in je izvedel in ustvaril že veliko odmevnih akcij in stvaritev, med drugim tudi *Razvezani jezik*, odprto spletno platformo in slovar žive slovenščine, ki je zaživel tudi v tisku. Zainteresirano občinstvo ne bo nikoli pozabilo njihovega humorno-resnega projekta *Dobesedno brez besed*, razstavljenega

Sanitarium, instalacija/ installation, keramika in različni materiali/ ceramics and various materials, 2010



v Mestni galeriji Ljubljana (2010), v okviru katerega se avtorja in avtorica niso branili niti masla na glavi (iz sklopa *Imeti maslo na glavi*, 2010).

Kolektivno delo je nedvomno bistven del avtorjevega delovanja, bil je namreč tudi soustanovitelj odmevnega kolektiva Provokart (poleg njega so ga sestavljale_i Katarina Toman, Maja Licul, Janja Žvegelj, nekatere_i študentke_je ALUO in ljubitelji_ ce umetnosti), ki je med letoma 1992 in 1997 zakrknjenim mimoidočim paral živce, ostale pa neizmerno zabaval. Lahko si zgolj predstavljamo kako pogumna je bila realizacija ideje o satiričnem plakatu *AnusA – Družba za vlaganje* (1994), ki se je posmehoval besednjaku mladega slovenskega kapitalizma v času njegovega vzpona, v času oblikovanja in utrjevanja neoliberalne dogme pod pretvezo modernizacije in vesternizacije. Danes je jasno, da je bilo vse le utvara, ki ni prinesla napredka, a

člani_ ce kolektiva so se tega zavedale_i že v devetdesetih letih.

Damijan Kracina je bil tudi umetniški vodja ARTilerije Kluže v vseh treh sezonah obratovanja (1997–2000). Iskanje novih kontekstov in okolij za projekte sodobne umetnosti prek kolektivnih projektov je značilno za njegovo delovanje. Projekt se je realiziral v toposu, ki nima stalnih prebivalk_ cev in ima izrazito drugačen (v tem primeru zgodovinski) kontekst. Organizacija stalnega razstavnega programa in drugih kulturnih dogodkov v okolju, ki ga zaznamujejo drugi močni konteksti, je znak poguma in zaupanja v moč sodobne umetnosti in v njeno sposobnost preglasiti tok reke Koritnice in odmeve preteklosti Soške fronte. Povezovalni duh in domišljajska inovativnost Kracine sta se na podoben način kazala pri projektu *Koralni otok* (2006), ki ga je oblikoval v sodelovanju z organizacijo Art dans la Cité in Galerijo Škuc. Projekt, v okviru katerega je nastala



Dobesedno brez besed, sklop Imeti maslo na glavi/ Word for Word, Without Words from Butter on the Head, projekt Društva za domače raziskave/ project of the Domestic Research Society, 2010

kiparska, slikarska in fotografska produkcija, je organsko vključeval tudi pedagoški program, ki je naslavljal otroke v Pediatrični kliniki Kliničnega centra v Ljubljani. Tudi tam je na svoj način odpiral nove potenciale sodobne umetnosti, umeščene v popolnoma novo okolje. Dialog med umetniško ekipo, ki jo je organiziral Damijan Kracina, in mladimi bolnicami_ki je ustvaril oprijemljive učinke za vse vključene. Podobnega mišljenja glede avtorjevega umetniškega udejstvovanja je Barbara Rupel, ki pravi: "[njegova] sproščenost se odraža tako v svobodni izbiri medijev kot izraznih sredstev"¹², tem besedam pa lahko dodamo še elementa avtorjeve sproščenosti pri odpiranju novih prostorov umetnosti in vztrajanja pri plodnih sodelovanjih z drugimi avtoricami_ji.

Najbolj izstopa dolgoletno povezovanje z

12 Damijan Kracina, *V letu kačjega pastirja*, razstavniki katalog galerije Božidar Jakac, str. 4, Kostanjevica na Krki, 2013

Vladimirjem Lebnom, s katerim sta zasnovala tudi znameniti projekt *Galapagos* (2004), ki je bil med letoma 2004 in 2009 razstavljan v Sloveniji in v tujini. Razstava je potovala po več referenčnih prostorih sodobne umetnosti, začenši z Galerijo Alkatraz, nato je obiskala Ljubljanski grad – Peterokotni stolp, Moderno galerijo v Ljubljani, Likovni salon v Celju, MMC Kiblo v Mariboru, Galerijo Loža v Kopru (del Obalnih galerij), Galerijo A+A v Benetkah v Italiji, Stanica_LAB v Žilini na Slovaškem, Centre Euralille v Lillu v Franciji, Künstlerhaus Graz v Gradcu v Avstriji ter 12. bienale umetnosti Zaščita narave (Odbrana prirode) v Pančevem v Srbiji.

Celostna podoba bogatega izmišljenega ekosistema, ki ga umetnika v starem, kolonialnem slogu odkrivata, raziskujeta in katalogizirata, je zgrajena ne samo iz primarnega slikarskega in kiparskega materiala, ampak bogato opremljena z besedili kustosov (med drugimi Tevža Logarja,

ČUTIMO, DA SMO GA DOBRO VLOŽILI



AnusA – Družba za vlaganje/ AnusA- Investment Agency, plakat/poster, 1994

Janija Pirnata in Jadranke Plut), poezijo Janija Pirnata, kratko zgodbo *Izvajanje velikega blatarja* Tee Hvala, glasbo (Vladimir Leben in Damijan Kracina v vlogi članov zasedbe *Ape boys*), animacijami, eksperimentalnim videom itd. Veličasten mozaik multimedijske sestavljanke zabava s svojo mešanico absurda in humorja, obenem pa na gledalko_ca naredi velik vtis, saj raziskuje vedno bolj aktualne teme načinov sobivanja človeka z naravo. Brez pretiravanja lahko zatrdimo, da je projekt del najnovejše zgodovine slovenske sodobne umetnosti. Sodelovanje z Vladimирjem Lebnom se je nadaljevalo v obliki turneje *Animal tour*, ki je bila nadgradnja projekta *Galapagos*, ter se nato realiziralo tudi v okviru drugih projektov, kot sta bila skupna razstava *Slike in kipi* v Galeriji Eurna (2012) in projekt z naslovom *2πr* (2012), prvotno zasnovan za festival Svetlobna gverila, kjer sta nadaljevala z ustvarjanjem domiselnega habitata, ki je skrit globoko v morju. Tokrat sta ga postavila v panoramsko poslikavo

v notranjosti lesene instalacije. Temačna ambientalna svetloba in glasba Saše Kalana gledalki_cu puščata vtis, da se nahaja daleč od civilizacije, kjer lahko raziskuje očem praviloma skriti naravni svet. Zasedba – Kracina, Leben, Kalan in Pirnat – se je na delo spet vrnila v letu 2016. Oblikovali so *Genski oltar* (prvič razstavljen v Galeriji Krško leta 2016), humorno navezavo na mojstrovino evropske umetnosti, spektakularni oltarni poliptih *Genski oltar oz. Čaščenje mističnega jagnjeta* (1432) bratov van Eyck. Kot je zapisal Jani Pirnat: "Ideja *Genskega oltarja* je čakala na ugodno priložnost za celostno umetnino, ki prevzema cerkveni medij in ga izrablja za dogmatski obrat v sodobnejše znanstvene teorije o življenju iz veselja in umetniškem pogledu ustvarjalcev o prihodnosti življenja."¹³ V zase značilnem slogu Damijan

13 Jani Pirnat, *Genski oltar*, razst. kat., Kulturni dom Krško, 2016, na: http://www.kracina.com/2016/Genski_oltar.pdf, ogledano 27.6. 2019



Genski oltar/ Genetic Altarpiece, postavitev v Galeriji Krško/ installation view, oglje, kreda na kartonu/ charcoal, chalk on cardboard, 2016

Kracina in Vladimir Leben izhajata iz globoke eksistencialne vsebine – tukaj mistično prenapolnjenega *Gentskega oltarja*, ki sta si ga pred leti ogledala v živo in ga v svojem delu napolnila z igrivo vsebino, ki pa ima poleg tega tudi globlji smisel. Oltar à la Leben & Kracina je vizija življenja ob koncu sveta; polna je futurističnih bitij, ki so (v nasprotju s človeško vrsto) preživela apokalipso, ter velikih in malih, tudi raznovrstnih predmetov (kot je npr. kinder jajček). Groteskni portret sveta v gledalkah_cih vzbuja hkrati smeh in strah, saj zares ni tako zelo drugačen od že znanih absurdov sedanjosti.

Z Vladimirjem Lebnom je Damijan Kracina sodeloval tudi v okviru razstave *Spanje razuma* (2014) v Nočni izložbi Pešak. V galerijo pa se je vrnil tudi dve leti kasneje, ko je združil moči z umetnikom iz sosednjega metelkovskega ateljeja –

Misanthropom. Skupaj sta oblikovala razstavo *HiberNacija* (2016). Kracina se poleg vsega naštetega povezovalnega dela poklicno ukvarja s predajo znanja mlajši generaciji, saj je profesor na Srednji šoli za oblikovanje in fotografijo in kot mentor projektno sodeluje s festivalom Svetlobna Gverila.

Damijan Kracina pa s svojimi deli navdihuje tudi druge. Obstajajo vsaj trije znani primeri, ko so leta služila kot izhodiščni navdih za nadaljnja umetniška dela. Jani Pirnat je že omenjeno radijsko igro *Marn Nemarn* začel pisati kot kuratorsko utemeljitev za delo *Pisoar*. Tea Hvala je *Izvajanje velikega blatarja* napisala še preden sta se z Damijanom Kracino spoznala in je šele nato začela z njim sodelovati. Prav tako je tudi Sebastjan Vodušek v okviru študijskih obveznosti napravil umetniški video. To je posnetek, po glasbi in kadrih podoben poljudnoznanstvenim

dokumentarnim oddajam o naravi, ki na poetičen način, z dobro mero umirjene estetike, orisuje njegovo razstavo *Menenitu/ I'm not There* (MGML, 2012).¹⁴

Vse to večletno kolektivno ustvarjanje, ki ga avtor spodbuja in izvaja, si zasluži veliko več priznanja in pozornosti, kot ga je bilo deležno do sedaj, saj na ta način ustvarja izvirno dinamiko in širi ustaljene meje diskurza o sodobni umetnosti bolj kot smo tega na splošno vajene_i.

14 <http://vimeo.com/52862098> MGML 2012, ogledano 27.6.2019

Larpurlartizem Damijana Kracine

Delovanje Damijana Kracine vključuje številna sodelovanja in vsebuje razvidno družbeno kritično noto. Kljub temu umetnik v večkrat omenjenem intervjuju poudarja: "Uživam, ko sem v samoti in delam. Prav, da bi bil prisoten preko tega, da bi delal politični statement, me ne zanima."

Klavdija Figelj je v svojem otvoritvenem govoru ob razstavi v Tolminu povedala, da se, "ko umetnik ustvarja, prepušča toku nezavednega in roki ne želi vsiljevati predhodno zamišljene podobe. Roka, ki je v stiku z notranjimi predstavami, tako riše notranjo duševno pokrajino." To pokrajino je obiskovalka ene izmed njegovih številnih razstav označila z besedno zvezo "lepo naslikana groza". Tudi ustvarjalec se sprašuje, zakaj se v njegovih slikah pogosto pojavlja organski preplet





2πr, instalacija - detalj/ a part of the installation, oglje, kreda na lesu/ charcoal, chalk on wood, 70 x 700 cm, 2012

grozljivih mor in strašljivih občutij. Pri slikanju mu je namreč pomembno predvsem to, da dela niso vnaprej določena, so spremenljiva in spreminjajoča se ter dovoljujejo brisanje in preslikovanje. To je dobro vidno v njegovem videu *Animacija – računalniške risbe* (2008), ki je prikaz spreminjanja in razvijanja nedefiniranih organizmov. V slikah mu to omogoča doseči medij oglja ali airbrush tehnika v kombinaciji z omejeno paleto barv, večinoma črne in bele. Osredotoča se na formo, risbe in slike vidi kot dvodimenzionalne skulpture, ki lahko postanejo izhodišče za skulpturo. To se je primerilo pri *Komarju* (2004), trimetrski skulpturi, ki je nastala po sliki iz rezidence v Novi Mehiki. Tudi letos sta na tak način nastali dve novi skulpturi.

Razvidno je, da je za ustvarjalca poleg mnogih sodelovanj zelo pomembno tudi samostojno ustvarjanje zaradi ustvarjanja. Na videz povsem drugačna od skupnostnih projektov

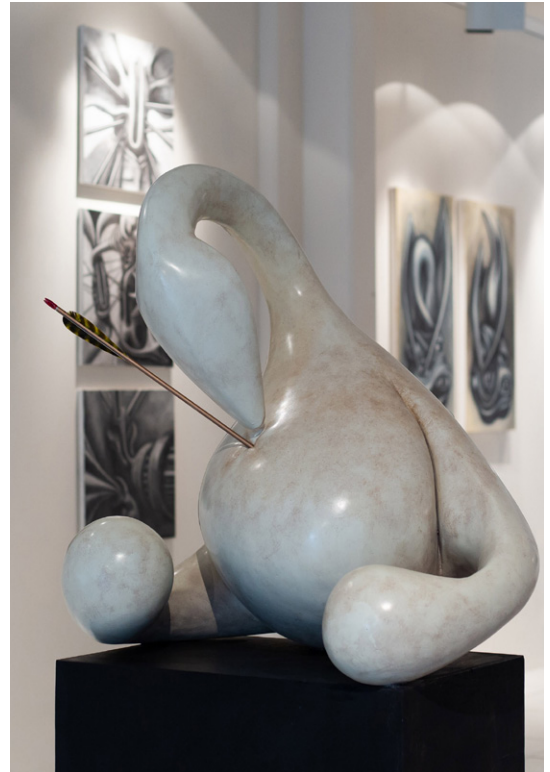
je bila njegova razstava *Čakalnica* v Galeriji Domžale¹⁵, kjer so bile razstavljene nekatere njegove že uveljavljene skulpture, kot je s puščico prebodeni *Labod* (2013), ki ima svojo večplastno razjasnitev tudi v rentgenskem posnetku. Na ogled je bil tudi monumentalni, na rame natakljiv objekt, *V letu kačjega pastirja* (2013), ter črno-bele slike grozljivih humanoidnih in drugih neznanih bitij ter nenavadnih antiutopičnih ambientov, ki po izvedbi spominjajo na njegova zgodnejša dela, po vsebini pa se odmikajo v nasprotno smer evolucije, bolj resno in strašljivo.

Ustvarjalčeva gesta je morda res neprisiljena, nezadržana in tekoča, a je očitno, da ga preplavlja nestrinjanje s trenutno družbeno situacijo, skozi njegovo roko pa se izrisuje okoljska problematika in vre zaskrbljenost glede razvoja, prilagoditve ter bodočnosti vrst.

15 <http://www.kd-domzale.si/damijan-kracina-cakalnica-19-02-2019.html>, ogledano 27.6. 2019



V letu kačjega pastirja/ In the Year of a Dragonfly, skulptura/ sculpture, 50 x 70 x 250 cm, 2013



Labod, 2013, Bijela skulptura / Sculpture as a bird in various materials / epoxy and various materials, 2013



Brez naslova/Untitled, postavitve v Knjižnici Cirila Kosmača, Tolmin/ installation view, keramika in akril na platnu, ceramics and acrylics on canvas, 2019



Brez naslova/Untitled, oglje na platnu/ charcoal on canvas, 50 x 50 cm in/ and airbrush, 100 x 100 cm, 2019



Brez naslova/Untitled, airbrush 100 x 100 cm in/ and 50 x 150 cm, 2019

Zaključek

Damijan Kracina, ki ga gledamo na selfijih z znamenitimi umetniškimi deli (projekt *Selfportraitswithveryimportantartworks*, 2001) z neurejeno frizuro in najstniškim obrazom iz časa, ko še ni nihče vedel, kaj pomeni beseda 'selfie', je vmes postal eleganten mož v črni obleki¹⁶ s častitljivim opusom, izoblikovanim slogom, javnosti poznanimi temami ter skoraj 25-letnimi izkušnjami z razstavljanjem. Nenazadnje pa njegova kipa od sredine leta 2018 krasita fasado Narodnega doma oziroma protokolarnega vhoda Narodne galerije.¹⁷

V času, ko smo še mislili, da bomo lahko le z recikliranjem rešili svet pred ekološko

16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4hEuS4G-BY>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019

17 <https://lj-times.com/idejna-resitev-za-skulpturna-procelju-narodne-galerije/>, ogledano 22. 7. 2019


katastrofo¹⁸, nas je umetnik že soočal z vlogo opazovalk_cev izumirajočih živalskih vrst (projekt *Kracina TV*, 1995; raziskava in video *Thylacinus Cynocephalus*, 1996–1997; video *Intervju z ogroženo vrsto*, 1999/2006). Obenem se je vedno znova vračal k iskanju rešitev s pomočjo utopičnih predstav in scenarijev in k transformativni vlogi nemogočih rešitev, na katere smo v času prevlade neoliberalizma nekoliko pozabili, saj se je uveljavilo prepričanje, da je največ, kar lahko dosežemo, le modifikacija prevladujočega načina razmišljanja o svetu, ki pred naravo in svet v ospredje postavlja kapital in ekonomske kazalnike.

Damijan Kracina si je upal razmišljati o velikih temah in jih v času, ko večina ni imela poguma razmišljati o prihodnosti, bolj oddaljeni kot jutri, raziskovati s pomočjo igrivega humorja

18 <https://www.instagram.com/p/BzLcTUEIUCx/>, ogledano 27. 6. 2019



Skulpturi za pročelje Narodne galerije/ Sculptures for the façade of the National Gallery, avtor/
author in/ and kuža Miša/ Miša the dog, barvan aluminij/ painted aluminium, 230 x 75 x 50 cm, 2019

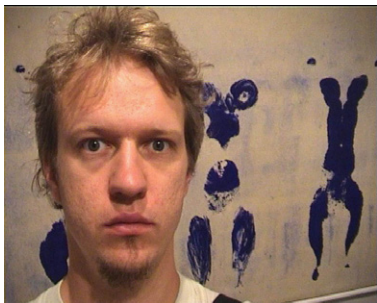
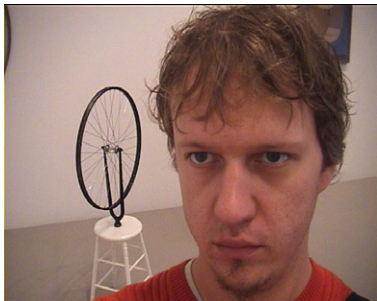


in brezkompromisne domišljije. Poleg izvirne poetike in razločne tematske linije njegov prispevek seže še dlje, saj so njegova dejanja v nasprotju s stereotipom umetnika – genija, ki mu njegov ego dovoljuje le, da deluje sam, prepričan o svoji veličastni vlogi. Umetnikov CV je lahko dokaz nasprotnega: tudi umetnost je lahko timski “šport”, v katerem združevanje moči omogoča nastanek kvalitetne produkcije in ustvarjanje presežka v obliki človeške povezanosti, solidarnosti in ustvarjanja inspirativnih kolektivnih praks, kar je v nasprotju s prevladujočim trendom, ki nas prepričuje, da se mora za svoje cilje vsak_a boriti sam_a.

Izmišljeni svet Damijana Kracine, poln intenzivnih barv in nenavadnih oblik, prežema toplina in upanje na lepši jutri. Ta svet ni prisoten samo v projektih, kot je *Galapagos*, na različne načine je prisoten v vseh njegovih projektih, zato lahko trdimo, da ima njegova umetnost

humanistično sporočilo in je, ne glede na prvi vtis, globoko povezana z našo realnostjo.

Besedilo je nastalo ob pregledni razstavi Damijana Kracine *Ostanki*, v Galeriji Alkatraz, ki je trajala od 2. do 20. septembra 2019.



Selfportraitswithveryimportantartworks, fotografije, selfiji/ photographs, selfies, 2001

The Remains

For the 26th anniversary of Autonomous Cultural Centre Metelkova City (ACC Metelkova mesto), Arts and Culture Association Mreža (meaning 'network') (KUD Mreža) connected with The Last Contemporary Art Museum, a worldly renowned institution, which is located in the settlement Logje, at the extreme west of Slovenia, in a building of venerable age.¹ The title of the museum stresses the fact that, nowadays, contemporary art has reached its edge. The museum stands in the middle of intact nature. With its activities, it questions the methodology, approaches and creations of contemporary art, which is a par excellence link with the versatile artist Damijan Kracina, who it exclusively

represents. The museum also hosts the artist's permanent and permanently changing exhibition. Damijan Kracina is an academic painter and multimedia artist. Since 2008 and until recently, he was using his artistic studio at Metelkova. In 2018, he applied for and won a studio place in Švicarija (meaning 'Swiss/sweat') in Park Tivoli, Ljubljana. Despite this, Damijan Kracina is still very much present in Metelkova City, both with current projects he is executing or helping to conceptualise and with numerous placements in a public space, which leave a mark on Metelkova City.

In Alktraz Gallery, we regularly host retrospective exhibitions of Metelkova's artists. For the 26th anniversary, we chose the exhibition of Damijan Kracina in order to mark the turning point in time, characterised by the leaving of this relevant artist from the working space. According to the agreement with The Last Contemporary Art Museum, we decided to follow a successful model of their

1 The house is over 200 years old. https://www.culture.si/en/The_Last_Contemporary_Art_Museum

permanent exhibition, and conceptualise our exhibition as a cabinet of curiosities. In fact, this principle is typical of the artist, who 'constructs the cabinets of wonder anew again and again by including curiosities he runs into on his journey into his own mental landscape', as Klavdija Figelj poetically contends at the opening of his exhibition, entitled *Discomforting Meaning*, on 8 June 2019 in Ciril Kosmač's library in Tolmin, Slovenia.

The exhibition is an overview of Damijan Kracina's work spanning over a decade, of his 'wholesome imaginatively created world'², drawing inspiration from the animal environment and the author's relationship with human civilization. Evolutionary development inspired the artist to build his own ecosystems, which are both original constructs of an unknown world and

aesthetically perfective works of art. At his exhibition *Passage* (2016), in Pivka House of Culture, the curator Mojca Grmek wrote that he drew his inspiration 'to create new living forms and futuristic beings'³ from 'the impression left by the landscape, connected with a brutal historical moment of human progress' in Trinity, where the atomic bomb was tried out for the first time on 16 June 1945. Since 2002, as an artist in residence at Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the USA, Damijan Kracina has been creating original *animal fiction*, writing imaginary scripts of the evolution of living species and inventing hybrid species or even new ecosystems. Despite tense content and attractive visual image of his artistic address, 'we can have a premonition of a political warning about unpredictable implications of established procedures of

2 Jadranka Plut, *Galapagos – guide*, catalogue, p. 15, Ljubljana, 2007

3 <http://www.kracina.com/prehod.html>, viewed 27/6/2019

genetic modifications of organisms.⁴ The author's sculptures, drawings, installations, photographs and videos make us realise that we are a part of a rich, multidimensional world, which we can co-create at various levels, while it is simultaneously co-creating us.

The exhibition features the underlying theme of the author's artistic work and a wider context in which his art was created, by presenting various activities, interests and inter-artistic as well as wider collaborations of this prolific artist.

4 Summarised by: Dejan Mehmedovič, *Ta mali novi svet (This Small New World)*, in: Primorska likovna umetnost: nek drug pogled 1990 - 2013, p. 50, Koper, 2013

Once Upon a Time at Metelkova

Damijan Kracina was stationed at Metelkova for 10 years and is among the artists who contributed a lot to the formulation of Metelkova's image. He became a part of Metelkova's activity at its very beginnings, already 26 years ago, when he was still a student, and was present there at all times, performing various roles. He describes his experiences in a video interview,⁵ which is a part of an extensive collaboration between Arts and Culture Association Mreža and Centre for Contemporary Arts Ljubljana (SCCA Ljubljana), taking place between 2011 and 2013, and was realised with the projects *A Mid-Stop* and *The Closing Stop*. In the interview, Kracina reveals that he missed the occupation of Metelkova, which is the reason

5 http://galerijalkatraz.org/?page_id=10652, <https://vimeo.com/105021685>, viewed 27/6/2019

why he could not acquire a working space there. But already in 1994, he had a studio in the building Šola (meaning 'school'), which, unfortunately, burned down soon after that. He has good memories of that time: 'A year after [the occupation], I had a studio in Šola, but I didn't work much. All I did was welding locks. It was chaotic.' Despite the disarray of the new autonomous space, he collaborated with the artists present there, predominantly with his classmates from The Academy of Fine Art and Design (ALUO), who had access to other working spaces, he could use. Yet, he was present at Metelkova with his artworks, which were decorating the image of the public space and clubs, even before he had his own studio there. On Autonomous Cultural Centre Metelkova City's importance for himself and Slovene space, he says: 'The occupation of Metelkova was an event different from everything we had experienced before.'

The lack of personal working space inside

Metelkova City at the time of its beginnings presented no obstacle for Damijan Kracina. Metelkova was – and still is – marked by his artistic interventions. His famous *Carnivores* (2010), exhibited differently and thoughtfully each time, according to a new context, were in 2011, in collaboration with Edvin Dobrilovič, mounted as a part of the original arrangement of the southern façade of the building Garaže (meaning 'garages'). To complement the installation, he planted a grapevine from his hometown area Posočje next to it, which has been successfully ramifying and exuberating for years, and gradually, more and more, peeking in the studios of other artists in the aforementioned building. *The Vine* – living sculpture – could be symbolically perceived as the heritage of the artist at Metelkova: seemingly static and completed, but incessantly spreading and toughening. Visitors of Metelkova who do not expect to find hybrid biological species in an urban environment are

surprised also by *Kingguru* (2002-2005), a fusion of human and kangaroo, whose body is dangerously squatting on the roof of the building Garaže. Visible from far away, it makes the spectators uneasy since 2011, as a shapely tail, the function of which is to keep balance and serve as the third leg, decorates its human body.

Damijan Kracina left a mark in the space of the Autonomous Cultural Centre Metelkova City also with a project having a completely different focus. *Soča's Pearl* (1997), done in collaboration with Katarina K. Toman, refers to Simon Gregorčič's poem *To the River Soča* (the ad slogan 'bright daughter of the mountains' on the bottle of water). A widely recognized artwork is a hyper-realistic acrylic painting, which mimics the form of jumbo posters in terms of both the design and size. An ingenious piece of work, which is mocking the oversaturation with ads, emerged at the time when similar ads have not yet been so publicly present. The artists were thus ahead of time, as they correctly

anticipated the course of the events years before the flood of similar posters, and were thinking critically about the strategy of ad machinery of capitalist society, intended to stupefy people. By means of a fictional company with a brand *Soča's Pearl*, the artists' work stresses the problem of the exploitation of the river Soča for commercial purposes. The acrylic painting – the imitation of an ad – travelled from the library of Ciril Kosmač in Tolmin to the Triennale of Contemporary Slovene Art *Vulgata U3* in Modern Gallery (2000) and, finally, to Metelkova City (2001-2015), where the outdoor weather slowly disintegrated it. Contrary to the *Vine*, which is ramifying, the artefact *Soča's Pearl* disintegrated, whilst both works or their processes of development include the moment of evolution – the main interest of Damijan Kracina. An integral part of the artwork was also a performance – the tasting of the water of the river Soča – by means of which the artists mocked the marketing of products and especially addressed the problematics of artificially created feeling of exclusivity of items on sale.

Moreover, Damijan Kracina's artistic presence reaches also Metelkova's clubs: his work in the form of an inscription, *Decoration* (1997), which was premiered on Grad Podsreda, at the exhibition *Animalis*, has been located in the Club Gromka for years. It is composed of letters, designed by means of the author's notorious writing *Proteus font*⁶ (2003), which is composed of images of proteus anguinus, Slovenian pride, with which he celebrates the biotic diversity of home environment.

Damijan Kracina also initiated and co-founded the Night Window Display Gallery Pešak (Nočna izložba Pešak),⁷ an innovative space in the building Pešaki, where the exhibitions are accessible to passers-by visually, but not physically. Exhibitions are situated on the windows of the building. The visitors of exhibitions can see artworks closely through binoculars, located on the Tower, on the northern square of Metelkova City. Over

the years, the artist creatively worked on several projects in collaboration with SCCA – Centre for Contemporary Arts, Metelkova 6. In addition, Alkatraz Gallery presented him at exhibitions and fairs abroad (Volta4, Basel, 2008; Viennafair, Wien, 2009 and 2010, Preview Berlin – The Emerging Art Fair, Berlin, 2010 and 2011). His works drew a lot of interest and, at the same time, caused unease in the visitors, who wanted to wash their hands with a masterfully made soap in the form of an unknown arthropod with sharp legs (*Soap*, 2009), or, similarly as in the radio play *Marn Nemarn* (2015),⁸ use the

6 <http://www.proteusfont.org/>, viewed 27/6/2019

7 <https://pesakpesak.wordpress.com/>, viewed 27/6/2019

8 The work with a double title, *Urinal and Elephant with the Broken Arm*, served as a basis for the radio play (text: Jani Pirnat; actors: Ivan Jakac, Ajda Toman, Rok Kunaver; sound: Sašo Kalan; sculpture: Damijan Kracina), which was premiered at Metelkova, in the Project Room of SCCA – The Centre for Contemporary Arts Ljubljana, as a part of the International Triennale of Ceramic UNICUM 2015, Slovene National Museum. It narrates a story in which the artist uses the sculpture in question – an unusual urinal – as an instrument for the punishment of an elderly sexist playboy, so as to publicly shame him. <http://www.scca-ljubljana.si/studio-6/studio-6-v-letu-2014/>, viewed 22/7/2019, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPT_bwpUpn4.

urinal in the shape of a bull's head (*Urinal or Elephant with The Broken Arm*, 2008), who wondered about the riddle of a skeleton of undefined mastodon (*Sanitarium*, 2010) and let themselves be enticed into the world of imagination of the author, a skilful storyteller and – according to Dejan Mehmedović – a director.⁹

Because of this, the question occurs, whether Damijan Kracina is Metelkova's artist. Or, perhaps, whether he used to be one? He enigmatically explains: 'I don't know, I don't worry about it at all. What does it mean for my production? I don't know. I'm not concerned with politics, activism or sociology, as someone else might be. My standpoints might not be so easily connected with an autonomous zone. My artwork and production are independent

of it. I'm both inside this space and inside my head. I'm influenced by everything, from amoeba to Metelkova.' The last sentence describes his creative path to a T. It is winding through his own constructed biosphere, composed of ecosystems, full of possible evolutionary animal species of this or parallel universe. Those are entwined with imaginary worlds and engaged collective cooperation, characterised by deliberation and social criticism, which is focused on biological diversity of life and life as a part of a huge and interdependent system. The knowledge that humanity is a part of this broad community, on which it completely depends, is the fact we are often not aware of.¹⁰

9 Dejan Mehmedović, *Ta mali novi svet (This Small New World)*, in: Primorska likovna umetnost: nek drug pogled 1990–2013, p. 51, Koper, 2013

10 Ana Grobler, Jadranka Plut, *Alkatraz Gallery at the event Open day v LX Factory*, at: <http://galerijalkatraz.org/?p=4127>, viewed 27/6/2019

Social activity

Artistic interests of Damijan Kracina are no secret. His artefacts are a part of an original vision, which holds its own place at Slovene art scene. The public, though, is less familiar with Damijan Kracina – the organiser of collective activity and instigator of initiatives for expanding the limits of contemporary art. Metelkova City is conducting the project Night Window Display Gallery Pešak, on which Kracina has until recently collaborated with a curator Anabel Černohorski, producer Nataša Serec and numerous artists and others from the top floor of the building Pešaki. He is a co-founder of the gallery and he used to be a member of its programming committee (2013-2018). His own words point out to his *modus operandi*: 'I like to initiate socialising. On our corridor [Terrah, Mitja Ficko, Vladimir Leben, Boško Rakočević and Damijan Kracina], an idea emerged to make a gallery

that would be open outwards. A gallery through windows. I think there's positivist mentality at Metelkova. When you have an idea, you need to realise it. I think this is the responsibility of people who are here. They have to come up with something and realise it themselves.' Indeed, up to this day, Metelkova still successfully functions in this way.

The author is also a co-founder of a widely recognised art collective, Domestic Research Society (DDR),¹¹ which has been active since 2004. It has performed and created a number of attention-grabbing actions and artefacts, respectively, among which is *Unleashed Tongue (Razvezan jezik)*, an open online platform and dictionary of live Slovene, which came to life also in print. Interested public shall never forget their humorously serious project *Word for Word, Without Words (Dobesedno brez besed)*, exhibited at Ljubljana City Gallery in

2010, in the context of which the authors did not mind even butter on their heads (from *Butter on the Head*, 2010).

Collective work is doubtlessly an essential part of the author's activity. He also co-founded the famous collective Provokart (whose members were also Katarina Toman, Maja Licul, Janja Žvegelj, some students of the Academy of Fine Art and Design (ALOU) and art lovers), which was, in the years from 1992 to 1997, jarring the ears of rigid passers-by and immensely entertaining the rest. We can only imagine how brave the realisation of the idea about a satiric poster *AnusA- Investment Agency (AnusA-Družba za vlaganje)* (1994) was. It was parodying the vocabulary of young Slovene capitalism at the time of its rise, when, under pretence of modernisation and westernisation, it was forming and strengthening the neoliberal dogma. Whereas, nowadays, it is clear that it was all just a fantasy, which did

not bring any progress, the members of the collective were aware of that already in the 90s.

Damijan Kracina was also an artistic leader of ARTilerija Kluže during its all three operating seasons (1997-2000). It is typical of this artist to keep searching for new contexts and environments for projects of contemporary art through collective projects. The project was realised in a place, which does not have permanent residents and has a distinctly different (in this case, historical) context. The organisation of a permanent exhibition programme and other cultural events in the environment that does not have permanent residents is a sign of courage and trust into the power of contemporary art, and its ability to drown out the stream of the river Koritnica and echoes of the past of the Isonzo front. The connecting spirit and imaginative innovation of Kracina were demonstrated in a similar way in the project *Coral Island* (2006),

which was designed in collaboration with the organisation Art dans la Cité and Škuc Gallery. The project, in the framework of which sculptural, painting and photographic production emerged, also included pedagogic programme, addressed to the children of the Paediatric Hospital of the University Clinical Centre, Ljubljana. There, the artist was again, in his own way, unlocking the potentials of modern art, situated in a brand new environment. The dialogue between the artistic team, brought together by Damijan Kracina, and the patients created tangible effects for everyone involved. Barbara Rupel holds a similar opinion about Kracina's artistic participation: 'His casualness is reflected in both his choice of media and means of expression.'¹² To this we could add the easiness of opening new spaces of art and

12 Damijan Kracina, *In the Year of the Dragnfly*, exhibition catalogue of the Gallery Božidar Jakac, p. 4, Kostanjevica na Krki, 2013

of persistence in fruitful collaborations with other artists.

What most stands out is Damijan Kracina's long-term collaboration with Vladimir Leben. Together, they conceptualised a renowned project *Galapagos* (2004), which was exhibited in Slovenia and abroad during the years 2004 and 2009. The exhibition travelled through various important spaces of contemporary art, from Alkatraz Gallery to Ljubljana's Castle – Pentagonal Tower, Modern Gallery Ljubljana, Likovni salon Gallery in Celje, MMC Kibla in Maribor, Gallery Loža in Koper (a part of Coastal Galleries), Gallery A+A in Venice, Italy, Stanica LAB in Žilina, Slovakia, Centre Euralille in Lill, France, Künstlerhaus Graz in Graz, Austria, and 12th Art Biennial in Pančevo, Serbia.

The overall image of rich fictional ecosystem, which the artists are revealing, exploring and cataloguing in an old, colonial style, is not built only from primary painting and

sculptural material, but also richly equipped with curators' texts (from Tevž Logar, Jani Pirnat and Jadranka Plut, among others), Jani Pirnat's poetry, Tea Hvala's short story *Explication of the Great Muddigger (Izvajanje velikega blatarja)*, music (Vladimir Leben and Damijan Kracina in the role of the members of the band *Ape Boys*), animations, experimental videos etc. The majestic mosaic of multimedia puzzle entertains with its mixture of absurd and humour, meanwhile making a strong impression on the viewer by exploring current ways of human' cohabitation with nature. Without exaggeration, we can claim that the project is a part of the most recent history of Slovene contemporary art. The collaboration with Vladimir Leben continued in the form of a tour, entitled *Animal tour*, which was an upgrade of the project *Galapagos*, later realised also in the framework of other projects, such as a group exhibition *Paintings and Sculptures* in Equurna Gallery (2012) and the project

entitled *2πr* (2012), initially conceptualised for the Lighting Guerrilla Festival, where the artists continued creating ingenious habitat, hidden deeply in the sea. This time, they placed it into a panoramic painting, on the inside of a wooden installation. Dark ambient light and Sašo Kalan's music leave the viewer with the impression that they are far from civilisation, where they can explore the natural world, usually hidden to the eyes. The cast Kracina, Leben, Kalan and Pirnat returned to work again in 2016. They designed *Genetic Altarpiece* (first exhibited in Krško Gallery in 2016), a humorous reference to the masterpiece of European art, the spectacular *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432) of van Eyck brothers. According to Jani Pirnat: 'The idea of *Genetic Altarpiece* was waiting for a favourable opportunity for a comprehensive artwork. It is appropriating the church medium for a dogmatic shift. It offers more contemporary scientific theories of life in the universe and artists' view of the future of

life.¹³ In their own peculiar style, the artists Damijan Kracina and Vladimir Leben originate in deep existential content – here, a mystical overflowing *Ghent Altar* they saw years ago in person, and filled it up with playful content in their own work, which has a deeper meaning. *Altar a la Leben & Kracina* is a vision of life at the end of the world; it is full of futuristic beings, which survived apocalypse (unlike humans), and various big and small objects (such as a Kinder egg). The grotesque portrait of the world makes viewers both laugh and afraid, as it is not that much different from the already familiar absurdities of the present.

Damijan Kracina collaborated with Vladimir Leben also in the context of the exhibition *Sleep of Reason* (2014) (Night Window Display Gallery Pešaki). He returned to

the gallery two years later when he joined forces with the artist from the neighbouring studio at Metelkova, Misanthrope. Together, they prepared the exhibition *HyberNation* (2016). In addition to the connecting work and the aforementioned, Damijan Kracina professionally transmits knowledge to younger generations. He works full-time as a professor at the Secondary School for Design and Photography and occasionally works as a mentor at Lighting Guerrilla Festival.

With his works, Damijan Kracina is also an inspiration to others. There are at least three known cases of his influence on others' art. Jani Pirnat began writing his radio play *Marn Nemarn* to critically justify the work *Urinal*; Tea Hvala wrote *Explication of the Great Muddigger* before she met Kracina and then started to collaborate with him; and Sebastjan Vodušek made an artistic video in the context of his study obligations. The video is a recording,

13 Jani Pirnat, *Genetic Altapiece*, exhibition catalogue., Cultural Home Krško, 2016, at: http://www.kracina.com/2016/Genski_oltar.pdf, viewed 27/6/2019

which is, in terms of music and shots, similar to popular-scientific documentaries about nature. In a poetic way, with a good measure of calm aesthetics, it outlines his exhibition *Menenitu/I'm not There* (Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana, 2012).¹⁴

The collective creativity, spanning over many years, which the author has been both encouraging and performing, deserves more recognition and attention than it had received until today, as in this manner, and more than we are generally used to, the artist is creating an original dynamics and broadening the settled borders of discourse about contemporary art.

14 <http://vimeo.com/52862098> MGML 2012, viewed 2/6/2019

Damijan Kracina's larpurlartism

Damijan Kracina's creativity comprises of numerous collaborations and contains evident socially-critical elements. Regardless of the latter, the artist, in the aforementioned interview, contends: 'I enjoy when I'm alone and I work. I'm not interested in making a political statement out of this.'

In her opening speech at Kracina's exhibition in Tolmin, Klavdija Figelj said that 'when the artist is creating, he is indulging in the stream of consciousness and doesn't want to force a previously imagined picture. The hand, which is contact with internal images, thus draws internal mental landscape.' A visitor of one of his numerous exhibitions, described this landscape as 'beautifully painted horror.' The artist himself also wonders why his paintings manifest an organic intertwining of gruesome nightmares and spooky feelings.

What he finds most important in his painting is that his works are not defined beforehand, and that they are changeable and changing, and allow erasing and copying. This is visible in his video *Animation – Computer Drawings* (2008), which is a demonstration of changing and developing of undefined organisms. In painting, he achieves this with the medium of charcoal or airbrush technique, in combination with the mentioned pallet of colours, black and white mostly. He is focusing on the form, and sees drawings and paintings as two-dimensional sculptures, which can become the basis for a sculpture. This is the case with *Mosquito* (2004), a three-metre-long sculpture, which was made after paintings created during his artistic residency in Mexico. This year, two new sculptures were created in this way.

It is evident that in addition to numerous collaborations, what the artist also finds important is independent creative work for

the sake of creative work itself. The exhibition *The Waiting Room* in Gallery Domžale,¹⁵ where some of his already established sculptures have been exhibited, is, at first glance, completely different from his collective projects, such as the *Swan* (2013), pierced with an arrow, which, when X-rayed, shows its multiple layers. We could also see a monumental object *In the Year of a Dragonfly* (2013), which one could stick to one's shoulder, and black and white pictures of gruesome humanoid and other unknown beings and unusual dystopian elements, the rendition of which reminds us of his earlier works, whereas content-wise, they move away into a different direction of evolution, more serious and spooky.

Even though the artist's gesture might be natural, unrestrained and flowing, it is obvious

15 <http://www.kd-domzale.si/damijan-kracina-cakalnica-19-02-2019.html>, viewed 27/6/2019

that he is overwhelmed by the disagreement with the current social situation, whereas his hand is outlining environmental problematics and boiling with concern about the development, adjustment and future of species.


Conclusion

Damijan Kracina, who we watch on selfies with renowned artworks (the project *Selfportraitswithveryimportantartworks*, 2001), with messy hair and teen face from the time when no one knew what the word 'selfie' means, meanwhile became an elegant man in black suit¹⁶ with venerable opus, established style, publicly known themes and 25 years of experience in exhibiting. Finally, but importantly, since mid-2018, his statues adorn the façade of the protocol entrance of National Gallery.¹⁷

In the time when we still thought that we could save the world from ecological disaster only by means of recycling, the artist was already

16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4hEuS4G-BY>, viewed 27/6/2019

17 <https://lj-times.com/idejna-resitev-za-skulpturina-procelju-narodne-galerije/>, viewed 22/7/2019



ascribing us the role of observers of dying animal species (the project *Kracina TV*, 1995; research and video *Thylacinus Cynocephalus*, 1996–1997; video *Interview with Endangered Species*, 1999/2006). At the same time, with the help of utopian notions and scripts, the artist kept searching for impossible solutions and their transformative role. In the time of the supremacy of neoliberalism, with an entrenched belief that the most we can achieve is a modification of the prevalent way of thinking about the world, which puts capital and economic indicators before nature, we have somewhat forgot about those solutions.

Damijan Kracina dared to think about large topics and explore them by means of playful humour and uncompromising imagination at the time when the majority of people did not have the courage to look far into the future. In addition to his original poetics and distinct thematic thread, his contribution goes even further, as his actions are in contrast to the

stereotype of the artist – a genius, whose ego allows him to work only alone, convinced about his magnificent role. The artist's CV is a proof of the opposite: art can also be a team 'sport', where joining forces can bring forth quality production and create surplus in the form of human connection, solidarity and formation of inspirational collective practices. This is in contrast with the prevalent trends, trying to convince us that we should be fighting to achieve our goals alone.

The imaginary world of Damijan Kracina, full of intense colours and unusual shapes, radiates warmth and hope for a better tomorrow. This world is not present only in such projects as *Galapagos*, but in various ways, in all his projects. Thus, we can argue that Kracina's art has a humanistic message and is, despite the first impression, deeply connected to our reality.

The text was produced at the retrospective exhibition of Damijan Kracina *The Remains* at the Alkatraz Gallery, from 2nd to 20th September 2019.



Življenjepis/ Biography

Damijan Kracina (1970) je leta 1996 zaključil študij kiparstva na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani ter leta 1999 magistriral iz kiparstva in video umetnosti na isti instituciji. Izpopolnjeval se je v Grazu v Avstriji ter v New Yorku, na Tamarind Institutu v Albuquerqueju ter na Santa Fe Art Institutu v ZDA. Bil je ustanovni član umetniške skupine Provokart ter ustanovitelj in nekaj časa tudi umetniški vodja centra za umetnost ARTilerija Kluzhe. Je tudi soustanovitelj umetniške skupine Društvo za domače raziskave. Od leta 2010 je profesor na Srednji šoli za oblikovanje in fotografijo v Ljubljani. V letu 2015 je ustanovil Poslednji muzej sodobne umetnosti v Logjeh. Živi in ustvarja v Ljubljani.

Damijan Kracina (1970) completed his graduate studies in Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Art and Design (ALOU) in 1996, where he also obtained his MA in Sculpture and Video Art in 1999. He was improving his knowledge in Graz, Austria, New York, at Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, and at Santa Fe Art Institute in the USA. He was a co-founding member of the art group Provokart and a co-founder and, for a while, artistic director of the centre for art ARTilerija Kluzhe. Moreover, he is a co-founder of the art group The Domestic Research Society (DDR). Since 2010, he has been working as a professor at the Secondary School for Design and Photography. In 2015, he established The Last Contemporary Art Museum in Logje. He lives and works in Ljubljana.

www.kracina.com

Program Galerije Alkatraz/ KUD Mreže podpirata Ministrstvo za kulturo RS in Mestna občina Ljubljana, Oddelek za kulturo./The programme of the Alkatraz Gallery/ KUD Mreža is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia and the City Council Ljubljana, Department for Culture.



Mestna občina
Ljubljana



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA KULTURO



Ape Boys (del projekta *Galapagos*/part of the *Galapagos* project), podoba iz videa/ video still, 2004

