

KUZMANOVIĆ ZORAN

SELF-PORTRAITS

Contemporary Art Centre of Montenegro

The Experiment

All the Faces of Zoran Kuzmanovic

One of the most representative and ancient motifs in fine arts is the presentation of the human figure, in which features of a portrait or self-portrait can be recognized. It has been extending over centuries as an artistic genre and has been treated differently through diverse historical and stylistic periods, up until the present time.

The perception and manner of treatment, self-representation or the way others perceive us is just one of the infinitely different approaches to portraiture and self-portraiture. On the other hand, the glorification or idealization of the portrayed, criticism or caricature, the emphasis on the emotional condition, the aiming to achieve greater similarity and recognisability or the resolution of artistic issues are just some of the aspects thematised through a portrait. The approach to portrait and its presentation have been conditioned mainly by the time and social context in which it was created.

Today, contemporary self-portrait as a form of the artist's re-examination of his identity, as an overall experience that an individual has of himself is not actually possible in that traditional form of comprehension. The contemporary art theory treats the concept of portrait and self-portrait in a new manner, introducing new perspectives by means of which it examines the issue of identity and the relationship between artists and society, dealing with a symbolic analysis of social reality.

Zoran Kuzmanovic belongs to the group of sculptors to whom portrait, as a theme or motive, helps materialize inspirational situations through personal artistic speech, by treating it in a new manner, through a modern sculptural procedure thus revealing abundant creative energy and a vigorous temperament. Although in his sculptural interpretation of the self-portrait he starts from the seemingly classic sculpture, through the process of reshaping, transformation of sculptural material and its large dimensions he suggests that verism is not his tendency but the intention to give this motif a different context and, definitely, to provide the viewer with the opportunity to communicate with the newly created reflective, visual and emotional content while providing us with countless possibilities for their interpretation.

As a prominent representative of the contemporary concept of sculpture, through the process of transformation, reshaping and experimentation Zoran makes it possible for us to interpret these sculptures-objects also as metaphors of resistance and divergence from the traditional understanding of sculpture. In his interpretation, the sculpture becomes the form, material as well as the space itself in which it functions as an integral ambient entirety where sculptures, spaces and interspaces are equally important.

The challenge of the theme of the human head i.e. the face is represented at the exhibition entitled "Self-Portraits".

Here Zoran continues the tradition of developing the motif of self-portraits as the "Concept of Self" by emphasizing the symbolic meaning and encouraging us to multi-layered reflection. The exhibition setup consists of spatial installations, individual sculptures and drawings which are part of the study series "Heads" and "Relief Heads" which he intervenes with in the exhibition setting and the exterior of the Petrovic Palace in Podgorica. The viewer's first

encounter with Zoran's exhibition is with the sculpture

"The Balkan Man", which is set

in the exterior, in front of the Palace; this is, at the same time, an introduction to the story that the author is presenting us through his works in the gallery itself.

As is the case with his earlier works, the object of the artist's research this time, too is a stratified world of associative human heads which are enlarged, of emphasized dimensions, reduced to a sign - they reveal his interior, intimate world. Through a play of form, volume, emptiness, fullness and continuous rhythms he develops the motif of a face without contours and of reduced simple forms with a modern interpretation of the ancient and archaic overtone into a series of variations, giving them a permanently different meaning. The head he creates is not a portrait as in classic sculpture but an abstract form reduced to a sign and a symbol.

The artist constructs a human face with no character, in the form of a rounded silhouette, mostly from profile and executes it with a thin line in metal, creating simple forms of full - empty geometric shapes. The heads have no faces; their faces are a reflection of the shadows appearing due to the interaction of the rim that should be carrying the "surface of the face" and the open hollow, with a special emphasis on the eye, the nose and the mouth. Forms are often made out of several integral parts and are joined with screws, weights and cables; later on, following a unique logic, they are assembled and unified into a new entirety. This is revealed at its best in the installation "Head 1" which is, at the same time, the main exhibiting object of the display at the Petrovic Palace.

However, the greatest attention is drawn to the hollows that should represent the eyes since they identify the human as he actually is. This is particularly emphasized in the sculpture "Reminiscence" that was made following the pattern inspired by the author's head. The sculpture is of large dimensions and calls on the viewer who is sitting on the bench - an integral part of the object-sculpture - to perceive the reality and invoke his own memories and experiences. To have eyes actually means to be able to see the real truth that is buried deep under various masks of fear and restraint; these characters are turned to themselves and their inner eye, to their inner reconsideration offering thus the impression of passivity and loneliness.

The artist created these objects-sculptures and reliefs in aluminium but also in combined materials - glass, epoxide resin, cables, steel and bronze which almost perfectly correspond to the given space. The well selected material in which the sculptures are carried out is completely in function of the artist's concept. However, it seems that aluminium is occupying a special place. Although this metal has a cold overtone in its structure the artist is well aware of the technical possibilities of its processing and freely enters the research and experimental procedure. As a result, he succeeds in giving the aluminium a completely different dimension by patinating it in yellow-green tones so that it starts spreading warm energy.

The series "Self-Portraits", presented at the Petrovic Palace, expresses the true essence of the psychology of the portrait itself, as the perception of personal, subjective and autonomous while, at the same time, inviting us to get assured and acquire personal experiences, by entering into communication with the artwork itself.

Maja Dedić