

Self-portraits

„Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the colored canvas, reveals himself.“

Oscar Wilde, „The Picture of Dorian Gray“

Portrait is a group of elements, which can form different combinations. The sum of these elements is limited, but by combining them the widest variety of human faces is achieved. There are such border points where a portrait loses its plastic art qualities and becomes something else. Who is the subject- matter that interests the portraitist: the one who is portrayed, or does the way he views the other one merely provide the portraitist with the space for revealing himself? Starting off by assuming this, Zoran Kuzmanović questions in his self-portraits the understanding of the individual, the subjective, the personal.

Portrait is a whole, elements are a function of it. In the work „An adjustable self-portrait“ this principle is perverted. Kuzmanović creates a profile starting from a limited group of elements. The linear structure of the work is accentuated by the individuality of each element-eye, nose, mouth. These elements are so simplified that they are reduced to symbols. If the starting point is portrait's function of transferring certain facial features , then such reducing destabilizes the portrait's function. On the other side, the author enables the spectator to intervene, which is also humorously pointed out in the title. Thus the unchangeability of expression and work completion are called into question. At the same time> portrait's nature is re-examined in a new way.

In the work „Three states“ the profile linear form from the previous work is tripled: identical profiles are put in three different positions and they are mutually connected. Unlike the previous work where details, the element of movement are accentuated, here the stress is put on the whole. However, the principle of the wholeness of the portrait is brought to its border point, as the accomplished form does not in fact look like a portrait at all: it resembles an arabesque, an abstract form that is, one might say, the opposite of self-portrait. Nevertheless, there is some resemblance on another register. The arabesque decoration and plastique overwhelm, but its system of combining abstract, geometrical forms is in a certain sense non-transparent to the spectator just as portrait always bears some secretiveness and many meanings which are difficult to define.

Separate work consists of four roughly treated self- portraits modelled after a cast of the head of the author. The lack of psychological deepness in these self- portraits results in grandeur and expressiveness. Contribution to that is also a helmet shape or a mediaeval armour shape in the base of these self- portraits. This shape changes and evolves towards gradually opening of the originally completely closed form which is characteristic for one of the portraits from this series that is deprived even of the most basic elements such as eyes, nose, mouth. The initiated form opening process takes a different course in its development. Another self- portrait from this series has an aperture instead of a nose so that the compactness characteristic for the previous self-

portrait is interrupted even in an unexpected way. The result of this process is the perforated surface of the third self- portrait with recognizable motifs- simplified representation of ghost figures and other unusual shapes like the ones outlined in coffee grounds.

These self- portraits are actualh/ a combination of different recognizable forms: a mask, a helmet, a vessel. At **the** same time, the function of each of these objects is annulled: the one with a handle has a perforated surface, so it does not have a function of a vessel or a helmet (to protect- which is the basic role of a helmet, or it does not have eye holes, and yet it resembles a mask). That is the key point where also the representational role of self- portrait is brought to a borderline case outlined in the distinction portrait - self- portrait - antiportrait.

All portraits are made of aluminium: cold and gray, this material resists portraying with its characteristics and thus the initial question of the author is sharpened: when does a portrait lose its function and ceases to be a portrait?

Reliefs (embossed work) named „ Packaging" are different from the previous works. Only in traces can in them be recognized portrait elements combined with floral and animal motifs similar to the imaginary world of children' s drawings. The title of the work is contrary to the previously mentioned motifs. It directly refers to stamps for making medication packages, and those are the rectangular constructions that predominate within reliefs.

In these works portrait disappears as a defined plastic art form, except for the several of its elements. At the first sight, it is difficult to observe the connection between these reliefs and the self - portraits because they refer to two completely different registers: portrait reproduces facial features of some person and in that sense it is individualized and irreversible unlike the endlessly repetitive stamps for making medication packages. On the other hand, a package is a defined form, just like portrait, it consists of a certain group of elements (again, just like portrait). Bringing these two registers together redefines the understanding of the personal, the subjective: losing individuality, emancipation of behavior reduced to a matrix and transferred through various registers - from economy to culture - onto an individual.

With such reducing, almost degrading of self *m* portrait, Zoran Kuzmanović re - examines the problem of identity. His self - portraits point at the process of destabilizing an individual, losing identity taken as an entity, a whole, embodied in portrait or self - portrait. Identity becomes variable which constantly forms, builds and changes itself in comparison to the movement, the context. For that reason, Zoran Kuzmanović draws various objects in self -portrait register: a mask, a helmet, a vessel, a package, an arabesque or all that at the same time. In the culture originating at the beginning of the twentieth century identity appears as some sort of wrapping for changeable content, a group of elements of non - defined character, or it is just a new model of endless originating of identity, a work in progress that one has to adapt oneself to.

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