

Transformation of Shape and Material in Zoran Kuzmanovic's Works

Rados Antonijevic

Anyone who has ever witnessed "looking into a cup", perhaps the most widespread way of foretelling the future, will not find it hard to conceive of vivid images made by coffee grounds. In the depths of a shaman's concentration the dark matter of ground coffee transforms into a rabbit, a horse, a human, an eye, into whatever can be shown in an image.

One of Zoran Kuzmanovic's small sculptures, which I happened to see among his works twenty years ago while we were students at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade, looked like stains forming the shape of a cup. This terracotta sculpture, which might have come into being while the sculptor was playing with the material, stepped into the realm of the unconscious and, in retrospect, it heralded the sculptures which he now exhibits at the Third Belgrade Gallery.

In my opinion, the topic of the latest sculptures is a female countenance, namely, the depiction of the anima, a female hidden in the male archetypal part of psyche. The artist uses fragments of the face, putting them together and thereby making three separate installations, using walls for support, and cables and weights as joining material for integration with space. The first installation, which could be named a princess or beauty, represents an ideal, a beautiful and complete woman's face. It is stretched by cables and weights; nevertheless, it successfully preserves its completeness. In the second installation the princess's face has been broken down and transformed into a serpent-like form joining two walls together. The beautiful face disappears, but the balance demonstrates the natural forces, such as pressure, Earth's gravitation, friction, strength of materials, etc. The third installation has also been made out of identical cast fragments of the face, which have now been bound into a cyclic form similar to that of a harp, by means of cables. This is the ancient alchemist symbol of *uroboros* (a serpent eating its own tail), which symbolizes the process of metamorphosis and continual circular movement in time. Zoran Kuzmanovic's works are cast in aluminium, in a miraculous process of re-melting and re-shaping. In the process of casting, almost ninety per cent of the material comes from used objects, only ten percent being the new material from mines and melting plants. This means that all cast objects, including these sculptures, contain the same material as certain old artefacts previously made. Fragments of the material might have been an engine lid, an electric cord or a spoon used by someone to eat, and now they are aluminium lumps which look like a nose, an eye, an ear or a mouth. Everything swirls like in a large cup of coffee, man being but a grain of consciousness in which the image of the world is mirrored.