

KUZMANOVIĆZORAN

SELF-PORTRAITS

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Personified forms of material thinking

These self-portraits are not reducible to products of author's visual meditations on his image, translated into particular materials. Lightness of aluminium, as well as its strength, plasticity and elasticity, and the capacity to control its reflexivity did play a significant role in the production of immediate formal and spatial effects to the visual and corporeal experience of the onlooker, so that one can state that the exhibited sculptural works, regardless of their undoubtable iconic and narrative aspects, are still manners of personifying the specific material constellations made by exploring the expressive potentials of working with the given material. The exhibited painterly representations of the dominant motive (of a head), as well as the involvement of other materials just made the statement the exhibition was making in the particular spatial setting more complex.

Even though the exhibited works were mainly made earlier, and some of them were already exhibited in different contexts, this exhibition was conceived as a spatial and thematic whole that was produced through a dialogue with the exhibition space. The specificities of that space were considered in the course of selecting the works and deciding on the way they were installed, but they were also used to expand the logic upon which the specific works were being made to spread onto the whole exhibition. In that sense, the relation between the exterior and the interior, which is quite important for the author, was, by installing one work in the exterior of the gallery, in this specific display, extended to the building as such, while in that specific work displayed in the exterior were included elements from the local surrounding. On the other hand, the way of displaying the works in the interior did stress some of its characteristics. Its fragmentary structure, as well as some of the details present in it were not negated

but activated, in order to produce a sensory-spatial setting joining the manifold details to the integrity of the whole, so that moving through the exhibition would connect those details in different manners. To make that possible, the display was optimized to the flow of visitors and the ways they are viewing the exhibition.

The sculptures effect the viewers by their physical presence in the given surrounding. They appear in their field of immediate sensory experience, relating to their bodies moving through the exhibition space, being liable to the effects of the aesthetic aspects of the works, that came out of the selection of materials, the manners they were worked upon, and the ways in which they were put into relations with the given aspects of the exhibition space. But, besides that, they also participate in the artworld, as well as in the world of contemporary culture, in the intersection of institutionally constituted and through education enforced paradigms of art, as well as inherited paradigms of art, either through education, and via different conscious or unconscious channels.

The motive that joins them is anthropomorphic, and, via the title of the exhibition, it is linked to the representation of the character and some emblematic features of individuality, as well as the self-reliant personality of the artist, that authored them. In the scope of influence of some actual art project that interprete that motive within the realm of mediatic and geopolitical conditionalities to viewing the place and the role of contemporary art in today's globalized society, two common places could be considered as dominantly defining the perception of that motive in some visual representation. One is linked to the so called „time of the Anthropocene“, the theme of the artistical project that begun five years ago in the Berlin based „House of the World Cultures“, and the other to the „culture of the selfies“, as the perspective from which the „Saatchi“ Gallery in London did display a history of self-portraits from Rembrandt to nowadays.. If we accept that we are living in the „time of the Anthropocene“, which has arrived after about 12.000 years of „Holocene“, in order to render all material world according to the human measure, and in harmony with his image of himself and his surrounding, that we can arrive at the conclusion that the artworks could no longer be treated as material sets and linguistic statements, that one has to perceive and experience, contextualize, analyze and interpret,

but only as a reflection of the personality of the author. On the other hand, if the self-portrait in the media older than the photograph is we are to consider only as predecessors of today's selfies, which link individuality to the visually recognizable identity which is being placed in different contexts, then everything turns into the game of mirrors, in which only one reflection replaces the other.

The anthropomorphism which we face in these works is only a strategic one. Its influence is not pointed towards the fixation of some identity, nor the proliferation of various forms of its different visualisations, but towards the personification of material and spatial constellations, that strengthen their rhetoric effect. Even though they are representations, these works are primarily objects. They are tangible in their physical characteristics which make impossible to be reduced to the pure representational image, and which cannot be exhausted by any symbolization process. They cannot be dematerialized even by that mentioned rhetorical effect, that would make them into signifying assemblages that are effective mostly in the framework of a symbolic economy. In their signifying aspect, they are mainly indexical. One can detect traces of their making on them, tracing the signature of the artist, as well as the way in which he brings the material constellations into the frame of a beforehand projected form, which was developed from the investigation of specificities, potentials, and limitations characteristic to the selected material. The form is not being imposed onto them, but is positioned as a recognizable and communicable frame for sculptural research, as well as a trigger for the imagination of the onlooker, that builds on the immediate impressions of the presented works. In that setting the motif is being introduced only to demonstrate how a commonplace can be transfigured into something specific.

„Heads kicked, heads slain, heads mindfull... totems, masks“, all that is, according to the author, his words using which he has at the time described one of the segments of here exhibited works, relevant as part of the sedimented visual content that breaks out of the unconscious of the viewer, by means of associations, activating his imaginary capacity to aid the viewed. These works require an active onlooker. One should move around them, look at them from different perspectives, and from various distances, in order to see them in the totality of

the form realized in relation to the exhibition space, as well as in small details, to peek into their cavities and slots, and even sit into the work that calls for that. All that acquired experience is then needed to be synthesized in the go, and linked with all those contents that are recalled in the mind of the onlooker. They are not used to present some ready-made theory, nor are they means to demonstrate a concept that the visitors were to adopt, or to discursively relate themselves to. These works are being exhibited for the public not to convey some knowledge, nor to confer or denounce some doctrine, not even to demonstrate the skill, experience and talent of the author. They are being exhibited to enable a specific relation with the visitors, that become its interpreters, translating the inbuilt elements of material thinking into a symbolic systems that are familiar to them, articulating their experience in the manner that does not reproduce, but produce meanings. The public is to bring these works into the discourse.

All that idiosyncrasy, particularity and irreducibility of these objects to the domain of validity of some theoretical meta-objects, for which would they then count as singular cases, is their specific quality. They leave quite some symbolic space for the public to think them over and come to some very specific personal interpretations. Using their material and spatial structure, they initiate a specific type of relation to them, developing questions quite specific to them. These questions are usually not metaphysical ones, and mostly they do not even cross the borders of the field of art. But, in within those borders one can today think of whatever is relevant for the contemporary human of today, and that is because of the field of art has become inclusive to the various types of discourse, and at the same time, divided by all the antagonisms that divide the local segments of this now already totally globalized society. Some types of artistic practices in the field of art start from a meta-level, making bridges between the society and art, while this kind of practices act from the field of immediate material production, not replacing metaurgy with semiurgy. They leave the field of signification open to all those personal interpretations of the sensual assimilation of artworks.

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