



Slikarjevi selfiji **BERKO**

*lastne podobe in
podobe sorodnikov*

Galerija ZDSLU

3. - 25. marec 2016

Selfi

Galerija Insula IZOLA

8. - 30. marca 2016

ZDSLU

Zveza društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov
The Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies


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Morda je pri Berku avtorsko izvedbena likovna unikatnost, torej izhodiščni element vsake umetniško relevantne izrazne dejavnosti, izkazana predvsem v vidu dveh neposredno izstopajočih aspektov. To sta izbor izraznega načina, ki ga predstavlja absolutni figuralni realizem in pa tehnična prilagodljivost (iznajdljivost) pri aplikaciji slednjega v podobo. Hiperrealistična izvedbena manira v slovenski likovni produkciji sicer ni povsem unikatna, vendar je v pristopu in pri obdelavi slikovnega ekrana Berkovega tipa dokaj nevsakdanja. Berko kompleksno prepleta formo z vsebino. Vsebinsko polje avtorsko izpovednega dometa je pri njegovem likovnem delu precej jasno zastavljeno in usmerjeno opredeljeno. Pozicija slikarskega dejanja, kjer velja izvedbeni proces kot prestižno udejstvovanje, ki zahteva veliko izkušnje in tehničnega znanja pa odkriva umetniško stališče, da želi ustvarjalec v lastnem izdelku dokazati superiornost. Berko v idejnem ozadju verjetno zastopa princip osebnosti umetnika za katerega je umetniški predmet produkt, ki ga ne more izvesti vsakdo. Kot rečeno, utečeno in konstantno se zateka k artikulaciji realnega v obliki naturalističnega mimezisa. Njegov slikarski govor je zelo »odkrit«.

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Tu se raven umetniškega odreja s sposobnostjo izvedbe objektivnega izdelka, slike, ne pa na podlagi izjave oziroma osebne opredelitve. Relevantno pa glede na čas ob tem gotovo nastopa vprašanje funkcije umetnine oziroma funkcije umetnika samega. Sedanjost je v tem smislu vse bolj problematična, saj v aktualnem družbenem obdobju *borderline*-a, sodobnega »razpada in groze«, ki nastane ob izgubi objekta, vse bolj zadevamo ob pomanjkanje smisla, torej sprejeto paradigmo sodobne umetnosti, ki kot sestavljena razpadajočega sistema, brez smerokaza, apatično in vse bolj brezmočno vegetira in postaja le pohlevna služabnica kapitala.

Vendar Berkova opredelitev je konstanta, ki ima svoj začetek v času pop artističnega evforičnega obdobja. In Berko ostaja vseskozi zvest lastnemu izhodišču. Lastno uravnano, ki jo je v grobem pozicioniral že na začetku, izpeljuje neprekinjeno in korektno vse do danes in morda se ravno v tem nastavlja presežnost, ki prestopa brezizhodnost sedanjosti. Kar bi razumeli, da se likovna umetnost v svoji smiselni in vsebinsko polni pojavnih formi, tudi ob vzporednosti različnih likovnih praks, vselej lahko udejanja v katerikoli obliki, ki odraža kvalitetno idejnost in izvedbenost avtorskega dela.

Obdobje začetka njegovega ustvarjalnega delovanja, ki sega v pozna šestdeseta oziroma sedemdeseta leta dvajsetega stoletja, je s svojimi velikimi preobrazbami,

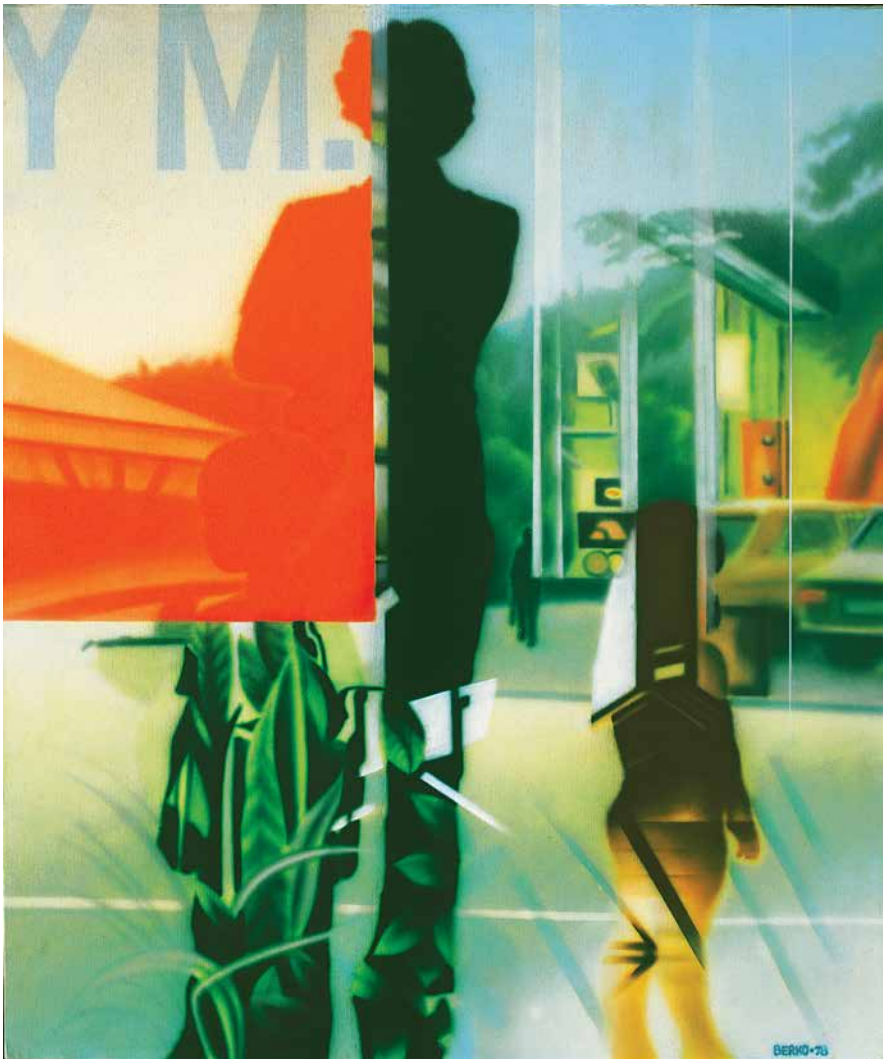


BERKO, "Spomin na Rim" (lastna podoba z Zdenko) 1974, akril, platno, 200 x 150 cm

tako na področju umetnosti, kot drugje radikalno vplivalo na artistske aktivnosti. Slednje vsekakor sovпада z zgoraj omenjeno unikatnostjo njegovega umetniške dela. Omenjeno prilagodljivost v izvedbah pa predstavlja uporaba tehničnih zmožnosti, ki to formalno-vsebinkost najboljše podpirajo. Primarno slikarstvo spremlja pri njem najprej grafični sitotisk, s prestopom v digitalno dobo pa računalniški print. V slikarski obdelavi je indikativna tudi risba, ki je prefinjeno »polna«, volumska, brez izrazitih kontur. Vendar tehnični vidik, izbira ustreznega pripomočka za izvedbo podobe, je samo segment v kompleksu te izpovedne kreativnosti. Na prvi pogled bi rekli, da gre za slikarja, ki z lastnimi jasnimi stališči in komentarji odkriva v svojem delu predvsem okolje in realnost. Vendar ob tem vsekakor opazimo, da njegova tematska naravnost precej obsežno obravnava človeško figuraliko. Berko, v zornem kotu prvega plana, v velikem »pompozem« formatu pogosto slika ljudi. Povsod lahko odkrivamo portrete (v specifični vsebinski nameri avtoportrete) realnih ljudi, ponekod javnih osebnosti, predvsem pa sorodnikov, prijateljev, oseb s katerimi deli določene odnose. V teh delih odločno nakazuje, da ne gre za površinsko brezosebno »razglednic«, ampak pretehtane upodobitve z odrejenim vsebinskim namenom. V določenih primerih gre celo za instinktivno realne psihološke študije, ki izvirajo iz njegove notranjosti, intimnosti (akrilna slika Zdenka iz leta 1995). Vsekakor pa je obravnava medčloveških, medosebnih odnosov velik vsebinski segment, ki ponekod zajema zelo osebne izjave, lahko pa predstavlja določeno racionalno odzivnost na posamezne aktualne dogodke ali celo provokativnost.

Vendar bi na grobo v Berkovem delu morda izločili dva motivično tematska »atributa«, ki sta najboljše zaznamovala oziroma splošno določata njegovo »avtorsko prisotnost«. To sta samopodoba, avtoportret in pa božična zvezda. Upodobitev rože, listnate rastline oziroma konkretno cvetoče božične zvezde zajema v njegovem delu cele cikle, ki so večinoma izgotovljeni v grafični tehniki sitotiska. Verjetno obstaja razlaga zakaj se ravno ta naravni, »vizualnosti naklonjen« objekt, ki lastno »fotogeničnost« oddaja z obiljem rdečega kolorita, znajde v obravnavi oziroma včasih celo simbolizira našega avtorja, vendar o tem tu ne bi špekulirali.

Pričujoča razstavna predstavitev, ki se odvija ob sedemdeseti letnici avtorjevega življenja, je osredotočena v indikativno izpeljavo Berkove avtoportretnosti. Lahko bi



BERKO, "Boney M", 1978, akril, platno, 150 x 125 cm



BERKO, "Lastna podoba", 1978, akril, platno, 100 x 150 cm

rekli, da so pod okriljem te »tematike« v določenem smislu združene problematike in vsebine, ki jih avtor dolgoletno obravnava. Ekskluzivni ekstrovertizem boemične geste nakazuje Berko že z uporabo psevdonima, saj umetnikovega pravega imena (Franc Berčič) skorajda ne poznamo. To je morda Berkov prvi »selfi«, indikativni akt avto-opredelitve in afirmacije. Vendar tu gre le za malo dejanje specifičnega karakterja, praktično pa Berko svoje likovno udejstvovanje nenehno opira na lastno osebnost. Konkretno to pomeni, da je »samoprizoritev«, torej »realistični avtoportretni lik«, zelo pogost protagonist v njegovih podobah. Vsekakor avtorjeva »samopodoba« nosi status veznega člana, ki v precej poglobljenem smislu opredeljuje kompleksno izpovednost umetnikovega dela. Berko izbere hiperrealizem, ker je to zanj najustreznejši operativni modus do hotene vsebine. Prepletenost forme z vsebino pa je vsekakor karakteristika kakovostnega likovnega dela. Že v začetku ga zanima svet, ki ga obkroža, predvsem pa nenavadnost ob prenosu dogodkov »vsakdanjosti« v sliko. Poigrava se s formatom, v sledi omenjene ekskluzivnosti pa eksperimentira in odkriva na različnih ravneh. V aplikaciji natančno mimetično detajlirane reprodukcije objektivnega so odsevi oziroma sledi predmetov, ki jih posredujejo gladke steklene površine poseben



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BERKO, "Helios", 1983, barvni svinčniki, 32 x 41 cm

slikarski izziv. In morda postane prav to odkritje poseben ustvarjalni cilj oziroma osrednja namera njegovega umetniškega raziskovanja.

Kot posledica izvedbenega posega, delovnega procesa izstopi v prepletu forme in vsebine idejni imperativ zavedanje sebe. Skratka, Berko »odkrije sebe« v odblesku stekla. In posledično se racionalno prestavi iz opazovalca oziroma posrednika (slikarja, ki odkriva realno) v akterja, protagonista realnega. Kljub temu, da je navidezno na površju nekakšna odkrito narcisoidna drža, ekstrovertirana narava, postane njegov lik predstavní simbol, ki opozarja na avtonomnost (»samo iz mene lahko vidim«) oziroma simbol, ki predstavlja zavedanje. Zavedanje o globljem predelu eksistencialno-ontološke biti in nelinearnosti časa. Tu je Jaz, ki postavlja svoj resnični svet. Vzporedna realnost, posameznikova realnost je prav tako realnost.

S prodorom digitalizacije in s tem sprostitev brezmejnih možnosti obdelave oziroma



BERKO, "Zdenka", 1995, akril platno, 100 x 150 cm

manipulacije fotografskega materiala, ki ga je prineslo novo tisočletje, je atraktivnost hiperrealistične podobe morda nekoliko upadla in tu nastopa pomembnost vsebine. V holistični kompleksnosti artefakta pa prepriča in doživljajsko prevzame predvsem pravilno razmerje med formo in vsebino. Berkovi vizualni kolaži (slikarski, grafični ali virtualni) so ostali optično zanimivi predvsem zaradi ekskluzivnosti prepleta izvedbe in idejne sfere.

Berkova figuralna, super-realna slikarska govorica je izostrena v perfekcijo, ki omogoča iluzijo na podlagi posebne dinamike »zaustavljenega trenutka«, spevnosti in odprtega, kontrastno živega, svetlega kolorita. Njegovo delo vsekakor oddaja določeno svežino in svobodno ležernost. Čista, »oprano« izostrena, površinsko gladka slikovnost foto-realizma, ki lahko, v različnih tehničnih izvedbah, ustvarja irealna okolja je značilnost tega slikarskega diskurza. Berkov vidni nagovor bi kot »objektivnostni surogat«, ki se ponekod manifestira v uprizoritvah znanih urbanih središč okrašeni z nenavadnimi napisi njegovega imena, oznakami oziroma njegovimi identifikacijskimi simboli, lahko



BERKO, "Božična zvezda", 1999, sitotisk, 70 x 100 cm

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BERKO, "Nikoli niste daleč od Berkove zvezde...razstava", 2006, arhivski pigment print, 33 x 48 cm

razumeli kot provokativno izjavo. Vendar v tej zgodbi izzivalne ikonografije, psevdo dokumentacijske reproduktivnosti, ki pa ni le voajerski spektakel obstaja ideja popolnosti sveta. Sveta, ki ga moramo le odkrivati in se igrati.

Tu je čista likovna izostrenost vidnega polja inspirativno polje, ki vizualne strukture likovnega hoteno izpelje v smeri udejanjenja lepotnega kodeksa. Tu gre razumeti slikarsko maniro kot sredstvo, foto-princip, ki je v tem smislu dosleden. Lepota je, ko se nagonkost prepleta z užitkom gledanja (vojaristični hedonizem), zadovoljitev v vizualnem. In v tem smislu je hiperrealizem vseskozi relevanten in aktualen.

Berko skozi celotno, preko štiri desetletja trajajoče ustvarjalno dobo, skorajda ne zapada pod vplive določenih sodobnih izvedbenih trendov, ampak se v likovni narativnosti precej odločno drži pripovedi, ki je zaznamovala njegovo umetniško intenco že v začetku. Berko ohranja optimizem, ki je verjetno dediš

ina poparta. Njegovo delo je ekskluzivno. Vse je nekje v triku predstavitve, v fotoresnični realnosti z igro nenavadnega, iracionalnega, iluzije nastavljenе objektivnosti, v »po-ustvarjanju resnice«. V odklonu od slovenske tradicije je pri njem vse precej svetlo, vedro, živahno in zabavno. Pravi selfi.

Življenjepis

Berko se je rodil 8. marca 1946 v Ljubljani, kjer je končal Šolo za oblikovanje in fotografijo ter Pedagoško akademijo 1968. Od leta 1978 živi kot svobodni umetnik. Imel je več kot 70 samostojnih razstav in sodeloval na mnogih reprezentančnih razstavah jugoslovanske in slovenske umetnosti, ter na več kot 50ih mednarodnih bienalnih, trienalih slikarstva in grafike. Prejel je več nagrad in priznanj. Berkove slike so v stalni zbirki Moderne galerije v Ljubljani in Muzeja sodobne umetnosti v Zagrebu.

Biography

Berko was born on 8 March 1946 in Ljubljana, where he finished The School of Design and Photography and The Pedagogical Academy in 1968. Since 1978 he has been living as a freelance artist. He had more than 70 solo exhibitions and participated in many representative exhibitions of Yugoslav and Slovenian art, and in more than 50 international biennials and triennials of painting and graphics. He has received several awards and recognitions. Berko's paintings are a part of the permanent collection of the Modern Gallery in Ljubljana and also of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb.

THE PAINTER'S SELFIES

The painter's own images and the images of his relatives

Perhaps Berko's artistic uniqueness – a basic element of every artistically relevant expressive activity – is displayed especially in the sight of two salient aspects. The first aspect is the choice of the manner of expression represented by the absolute figural realism, and the second one the technical adaptability (ingenuity) in application of the latter into the image. Although the hyper-realistic manner of implementation in Slovene art production is not entirely unique, Berko's approach and his processing of the "screen" of the painting are quite extraordinary. Berko intertwines form and content in a rather complex way. His art is quite clearly conceived and defined in terms of content and the range of his artistic lyricism. The position of an artistic act, in which the process of implementation is considered a prestigious engagement which requires a lot of experience and technical knowledge, reveals the artistic view in which the artist wants to show his own superiority through his work. In his ideological background, Berko is very likely in favour of an artistic personality that considers an artistic artefact a product that cannot be made by just anyone. As already pointed out, he constantly resorts to the articulation of the real in the form of naturalistic mimesis. His artistic speech is very "honest".

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Here the degree of artistry is determined by the ability of making an objective product – a painting – and not on the grounds of statements or personal definitions. As far as the time when this is occurring is concerned, a relevant question certainly appears to be that of the function of the work of art or even of the artist himself. In this sense, the present is more and more problematic due to the current state of society, the period of "being borderline," of the modern "decay and horror" that occur when the object is lost. In this period we are increasingly faced with the loss of purpose – the accepted paradigm of contemporary art, which as a jigsaw of a decaying system, without direction, apathetically, and more and more helplessly vegetates and is becoming merely a humble servant of the capital.

However, Berko's disposition has been a constant that has its beginnings in the time of the euphoric period of pop art. Berko has remained constantly loyal to his ideal. He has been acting according to his stance, which he had managed to roughly establish as early as at the beginning of his work, continuously and consistently until the present day. Perhaps precisely due to this fact there exists an opportunity to transcend the hopelessness of the present day. It is important to understand that despite the multitude of different art practices, art in its logical and content-full form can always be implemented in any of its forms, which reflects the quality of ideas and the author's

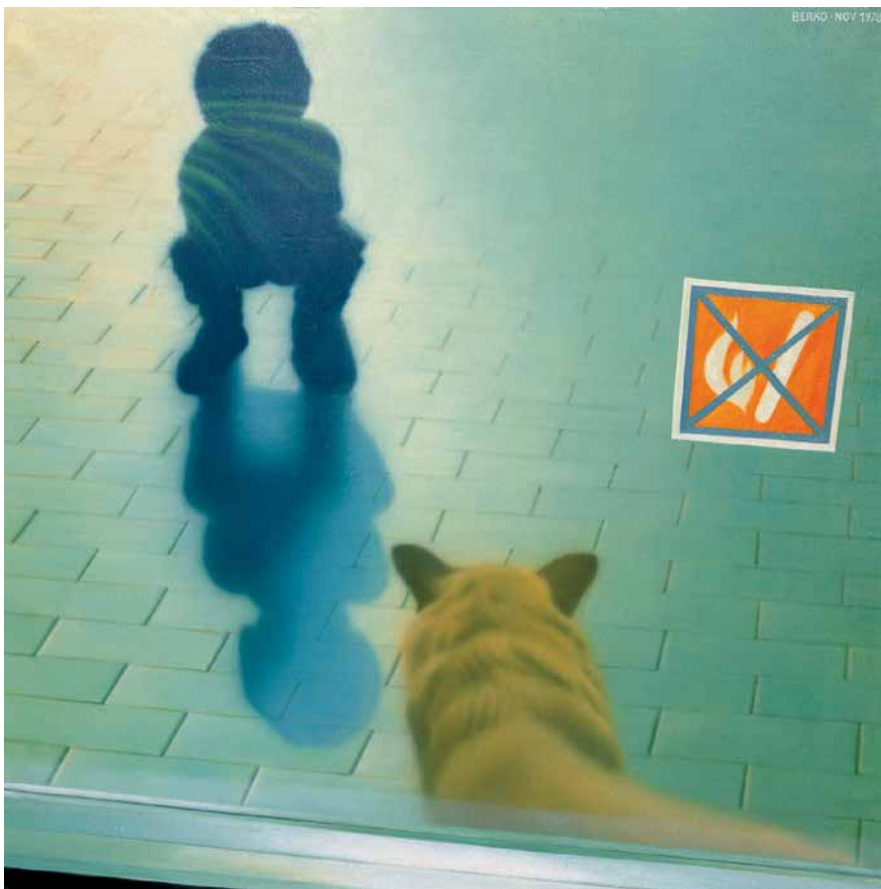


BERKO, "IDA", 1975, akril, platno, 150 x 150 cm

ability to actually carry them out.

The period that marks the beginning of his creative activity, dating back to the late sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, has radically influenced various artistic activities due to its great transformations in the area of art as well as elsewhere. This fact certainly coincides with the above mentioned uniqueness of his artistic work. The flexibility of designs is represented by the use of various technical capabilities, which best support this formal content. What used to be primary in Berko's painting was the graphic screen printing, since the beginning of the digital era replaced by computer print. What is also indicative of his work is the drawing, which is sophisticatedly "full," voluminous, and without distinct contours.

14 However, the technical aspect – the choice of an appropriate accessory for carrying out the image – is merely a segment in the totality of his expressive creativity. At first glance we could say Berko is primarily a painter who is discovering the surroundings and the reality in his work, by means of his own clear points of view and comments. Nevertheless, we certainly notice that his thematic stance is quite extensively dedicated to human figural art. Berko often paints people in a large "pompous" format. Everywhere, we can discover portraits (due to the specific intent as far as content is concerned – self-portraits) of the real people, sometimes public figures, but especially of relatives, friends, basically of those with whom he shares certain relations. These works strongly suggest that it is not about the superficiality of impersonal "postcards", but rather about the carefully considered depictions with a purpose regarding the content. In some cases it is even about instinctively real psychological studies arising from Berko's inner life, from his intimacy (for example the acrylic painting Zdenka from 1995). In any case, the focus on interpersonal relations represents a great segment of Berko's work, which at times includes very personal statements or represents a particular rational response to specific current events or even provocativeness. Roughly two "attributes" in terms of motif and theme could be pointed out in Berko's work, which have most extensively characterized him and determine his "authorial authenticity" in general. These are the painter's own image – self-portrait and poinsettia. The depictions of a flower, a deciduous plant, in concrete the blossoming poinsettia, represent the whole cycles in Berko's works, usually in the graphic technique of screen printing. There is probably an explanation why precisely this natural object that is "in favour of visuality," an object that emanates its own "photogenicity" with an abundance of red colour, finds itself at the centre of his attention or sometimes



BERKO, "Boštjan", 1978, akril, platno, 100 x 100 cm



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BERKO, "Selfi", 2015, akril, platno, 100 x 150 cm

even symbolises the author. This is, however, neither the time nor place to speculate about it.

This presentation of the exhibition occurring to commemorate the author's seventieth birthday is focused on the indicative derivation of Berko's self-portraits. We could say that this "theme" in a sense combines issues and topics that the author has been addressing throughout the years. Already with the use of a pseudonym, Berko announces his exclusive extrovertism of what can be called a bohemian gesture; his real name (Franc Berčič) is virtually unknown. Perhaps this is Berko's first "selfie," an indicative act of auto-identification and affirmation. However, this is only about a tiny action of a specific character, while practically, during his artistic pursuits Berko constantly relies on his own personality. This means that "auto-presentation," therefore a "realistic self-portrait character" is a very common protagonist in his images. The author's "self-image" certainly carries the status of a link which in a rather deep sense defines the complex lyricism of the artist's work. Berko has chosen hyperrealism, because this seems to be the most adequate modus operandi to take him to the intended content. The intertwinedness of form and content is most definitely characteristic of



BERKO, "Model, slikar in gledalec", 2013, akril, platno, 100 x 200 cm

a quality work of art. From the very beginning Berko has been interested in the world surrounding him, especially in the peculiarity of transferring ordinary events to a painting. He is playing with the format, and due to aforementioned exclusiveness, he likes to experiment and discover at different levels. In the application of the precise mimetically detailed reproduction of the objective, the reflections or traces of the objects – a result of the smooth glass surface – prove to be a special challenge for the painter. Maybe this discovery becomes the special artistic goal or the main purpose of his artistic exploration.

As a consequence of the working process, the imperative of self-awareness emerges in the intertwinement of form and content. In short, Berko "discovers himself" in the reflection of the glass. Consequently, he rationally moves from being a spectator or a mediator (a painter who is discovering the real) to being the agent, the protagonist of the real. Despite the fact that on the surface, this is an openly narcissistic attitude, an extroverted nature, his character becomes the representative symbol that draws attention to autonomy ("only from myself can I see"); it becomes a symbol of awareness. This is the awareness of a deeper part of the existential-ontological being and the non-linearity of time. There comes the I that is constructing its own real world. The parallel reality, the individual's reality is reality nevertheless.

Since the beginning of digitalisation and the emergence of endless possibilities of processing and manipulating the photographic material, brought by the new mil-



BERKO, "Timotej", 2015, akril, platno, 100 x 150 cm

lennium, the attractiveness of hyper-realistic image might have somewhat declined. Here is where the importance of content comes forward. What is especially convincing and experientially overcoming in the holistic complexity of an artefact is the correct relation between form and content. Berko's visual collages (painting, graphic or virtual) remained optically interesting especially because of the exclusivity of the interlacement of performance and the conceptual sphere.

Berko's figural, super-realistic language of painting is sharpened to perfection which enables illusion on the basis of a special dynamics of the "paused moment," a melody and the colour which is open, lively with contrast and very bright. His work most definitely emanates certain freshness and free leisureliness. What is characteristic of this painting discourse is a clean, focused as to look "washed," and smooth graphic of the photo-realism, which has the ability to create the surreal surroundings in different technical designs. Berko's visual address viewed as an "objective surrogate" that sometimes manifests itself in the depictions of famous urban centres decorated with the unusual inscriptions of his name and his identifying symbols could be understood

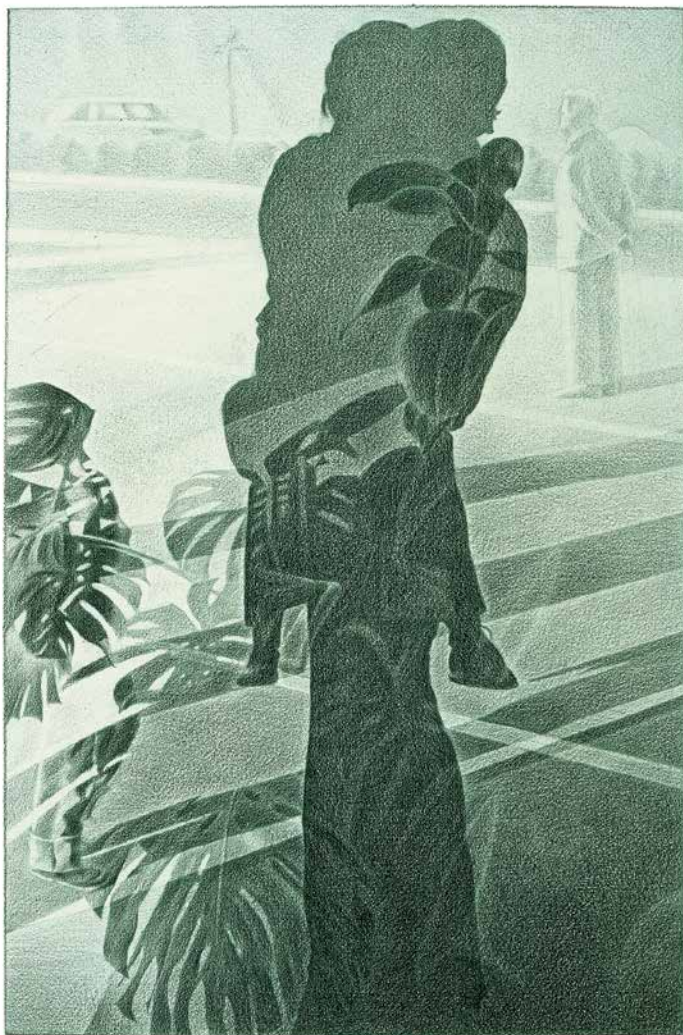


BERKO "V muzeju", 2013, akril, platno, 75 x 150 cm

as a provocative statement. However, in this story of the daring iconography, of the pseudo documental reproductivity, which isn't merely a voyeuristic spectacle, exists the idea of the perfection of the world. The world which we only have to discover and play.

The field of inspiration, which intentionally carries out the visual structures of the artistic in the direction of the actualisation of the beauty codex, is a pure artistic enhancement of the visual field. Painting should be understood as an instrument, a photo-principle which is consistent. Beauty is an intertwinement of instinct and the pleasure of looking (the voyeuristic hedonism), the satisfaction in the visual. In this sense, hyperrealism is relevant and popular at all times.

Throughout his over four decade-long creative period, Berko has almost never fallen under the influence of contemporary trends, but has been persistently following a narrative that marked his artistic idea early on. Berko remains optimistic, which is probably the legacy of pop art. His work is exclusive. Everything lies somewhere amid the relocating trick, in the photo-real reality of the game of the unusual, irrational, in the illusion of a set-up objectivity, in the "re-creation of the truth". Deviating from the Slovene tradition, everything is pretty bright, cheerful, lively and fun in Berko's work. A true selfie.



BERKO, "Družinska 1", 1982, barvni svinčniki, 32 x 48 cm

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Ljubljana, 2016