

pomlad / spring 2022

LIKOVNE BESEDE

120

revija za likovno umetnost / ARTWORDS



ISSN 0352-7263

Izdajatelj / Publisher: Zveza društev slovenskih likovnih umetnikov / Association of the Slovenian Fine Artists Societies; **Zanjo / Represented by:** mag. Zoran Poznič

Glavna in odgovorna urednica / Editor-in-Chief: dr. Narvika Bovcon

Pomočnica glavne in odgovorne urednice / Editor-in-Chief Assistant: mag. Mojca Zlokarnik

Uredniški odbor / Editorial Board: dr. Uršula Berlot Pompe, dr. Elke Krasny, dr. Mojca Puncer, dr. Jurij Selan, dr. Aleš Vaupotič, mag. Mojca Zlokarnik

Časopisni svet / Newspaper Committee: dr. Simona Erjavec (predsednica / president), Robert Lozar, mag. Zoran Poznič, dr. Jurij Selan, dr. Aleš Vaupotič

Oblikovna zasnova revije / Graphic Design: Ciril Horjak

Oblikovanje ovitka / Cover Design: mag. Mojca Zlokarnik

Lektoriranje / Proofreading: Tadeja Šergan

Angleški prevod / English Translation: mag. Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

Angleška lektura / English Proofreading: mag. Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

Prelom / Layout: Leon Beton; **Tisk / Print:** Tiskarna JANUŠ; **Naklada / Circulation:** 600 izvodov / copies

Naslov uredništva / Address of the Editorial Office: LIKOVNE BESEDE / ARTWORDS, ZDSLJU, Komenskega 8, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija

Tel.: +386(0)1 433 04 64, Fax: +386(0)1 434 94 62; e-mail: likovne.besede@zveza-dslu.si, <http://likovnebesede.org/>, <http://www.facebook.com/likovne.besedeartwords>

poslovni račun 02222-0253786586, sklic na št. računa oz. položnice ID številka za DDV: SI 235 55 858

Uradne ure uredništva so vsak torek od 16.00 do 18.00. / The Editorial Office is open every Tuesday between 4 pm and 6 pm.

Naročnine na revijo in naročanje preteklih izdaj sprejemamo na naslovu uredništva ali po elektronski pošti. / To subscribe or order back issues please contact us at the office or via e-mail.

Revija izhaja s podporo Javne agencije za knjigo Republike Slovenije / The magazine is published with the support of the Slovenian Book Agency.

Stališča, zapisana v člankih, niso nujno tudi stališča uredništva revije. / The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily the views of the journal's editors.

ZDSLJU

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

KIBLA PORTAL

ZORAN POZNIČ: *ZDSLJU 2022 May Salon: Blue Line,
From the Renaissance to New Media | 3*

OLGA BUTINAR ČEH: *Past, Present, Future | 4*

PETER TOMAŽ DOBRILA: *Art and Peace | 6*

ALEKSANDRA KOSTIČ: *Inclusion Rather Than Exclusion | 8*

MOJCA ŠTUHEC *The May Salon In Maribor | 10*



Zoran Poznič, President of ZDSLU

ZDSLU 2022 May Salon: Blue Line, From the Renaissance to New Media

In the contemporary society of today, everything is changing with great speed, not only in the field of culture and its trends but also in other areas important for human existence. It is certainly true that it is difficult to keep up with and follow these changes. The spectrum of different genres that belong to contemporary visual art is vast and colourful, and the resulting crucial shifts and emerging trends are rapidly permeating and expanding the field of culture in which we as visual artists are important players.

Despite the indescribable general hustle and bustle that prevails everywhere, there is, fortunately, a traditional exhibition at ZDSLU that has remained essentially the same over the long span of a century and is an irreplaceable constant of our association and its members. It is the *ZDSLU May Salon exhibition*.

The first May Salon was organised by the Slovenian artists who gathered in the Jakopič Pavilion in 1909. This was when the exhibition venue was ceremoniously opened. It was designed by the architect Maks Fabiani and financed by Rihard Jakopič himself, with the help of his members, who at that time presented and exhibited their artworks at the *3rd Slovenian Art Exhibition* including 22 artists. The pavilion hosted the May exhibitions more or less every year until 1961, when the exhibition venue, the only one of its kind of members of the Association, was demolished despite the protests of the artists and the citizens of Ljubljana.

The City of Ljubljana initially made the Jakopič Gallery available to the Association as an alternative exhibition venue, but withdrew it in the 1990s, leaving the most

important and largest exhibition in Slovenia without an adequate exhibition space. Therefore, the artists had to move the exhibition around and look for other suitable exhibition venues. In recent years, the *May Salon* exhibition was held four times in a row in the Slovenian National Museum at Metelkova, and last year a large show was put on in Koper, in the Libertas exhibition venue, in the Gravisi Buttorai villa and on the squares and streets of Slovenia's largest port city.

This year we were warmly welcomed in Maribor, in the largest Slovenian exhibition venue KIBLA PORTAL, and in collaboration with its renowned curators, who are also internationally known and appreciated far beyond the borders of Slovenia, we managed to organise the largest May Salon to date. It includes 220 of our professional members with over 700 exhibits, and the exhibition, which is part of the programme unit of ZDSLU's renowned problem-, theme- and study-oriented exhibition and festival programmes, will finally be able to show the greatness of current Slovenian visual art production.

Allow me to congratulate all the artists and exhibitors, the entire team of KIBLA PORTAL and thank the Municipality of Maribor for opening its doors to us, as well as the entire team of ZDSLU. Without all of you, the project would not have been so great and would not have managed to surpass all the exhibition programmes. Thank you! Citizens of Maribor, I invite you to visit our traditional exhibition ZDSLU 2022 May Salon. ■

Olga Butinar Čeh, Curator of ZDSLU

Past, Present, Future

For as long as we can remember, art has been an essential part of our lives. It is a form of creativity unique to human-kind, it visualises our thoughts, brings forth dreams, sets up visions, reveals the fears and worries that weigh us down, but also the joys and happiness that bubble within. Art fills our senses, speaks to us and, through its own universal visual language, talks about the values of the society we live in, critically observes the events we are caught up in, and is also the prophet and harbinger of the future.

The ZDSLU May Salon is the largest traditional visual and fine arts event organised by a professional visual and fine arts guild association that currently includes over 800 professional artists from all over Slovenia. The foundation of the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies (ZDSLU) dates back 122 years, and the *May Salon* exhibition has been held almost continuously since 1909.

This was a time when Art Nouveau predominated in Vienna, in Paris Claude Monet had just finished his famous large-scale *Water Lilies series*, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque took on painting in the spirit of analytical cubism, and Rebert Delaunay depicted the famous Cathedral of *Saint-Séverin No. 3* in the cubist manner. That was the time when the former Jakopič Pavilion in Ljubljana hosted an impressive group exhibition by the members of the Association of Fine Artists of Slovenia, who gathered around the central figure of Rihard Jakopič. This tradition of annual presentations by professional artists and members of ZDSLU continues to this day with the May Salon exhibitions.

Thematic starting points give the event a special seal that expands the concept of the group exhibitions beyond their usual boundaries and directs the artists, at least in part, within the framework of the given subject. In the thematic chain that refers to different areas of visual arts, different genres and symbolisms, followed and represented during the decade, we have broadened the content of this year, from tradition and traditional techniques, to natural elements, and all the way to contemporary pictorial poetics in new media.

All the harbingers tell us that we are entering a new era, in art as well as culture, and in the society and environment that surrounds us. Most norms and rules are in flux, and the

predictions of a better tomorrow are crumbling inexorably. A thorough reflection and summary of the past turbulent ten years of the Association's activity have led us to the conviction that in a time when much that has been started is coming to an end and is being reborn and reawakened, we can approach the content from different angles with the theme of this year's *May Salon* to be able to connect the past, the present and the future. The exhibition opens up an insight into the diverse morphological and visualisational capacities of fine artists, into various poetics within which individual artists of all generations and all genres work and question themselves: painters, printmakers, sculptors, illustrators, photographers as well as representatives of new media art and contemporary art practices. Each artwork is an interesting story in itself, depending on the author's artistic desires and his or her perception of the world.

So before us is the catalogue of the *ZDSLU 2022 May Salon: Blue Line, From the Renaissance to New Media*, in which we aim to present a wide range of activities and genres from the local art world in which we live. This year's Guild Exhibition of the members of the Association is an ode to art and a presentation of pictorial and visual creativity in Slovenia today, and this year we have also boldly crossed borders and included both Slovenians who do not live in their home country and foreign artists with whom we have been friends for years.

With the hope and wish to accommodate the exhibition in the Styrian capital, we have sent our largest and oldest art manifestation on its path to be presented in Slovenia's biggest exhibition venue KIBLA PORTAL in Maribor. Our idea and strategy of finding suitable new exhibition spaces outside Ljubljana, throughout Slovenia, and filling them with novelties and representative presentations of artists, was positively received by the renowned top curators who have been successfully running the gallery for a decade and opening its doors to national and international visual arts.

Exactly now that the *59th Venice Biennale*, the international showcase of contemporary art entitled *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani, has opened in Venice, in the Giardini, Arsenale and throughout the lagoon, in

Slovenia we open the exhibition *ZDSLJU 2022 May Salon: Blue Line, From the Renaissance to New Media* at KIBLA PORTAL in Maribor, curated by Aleksandra Kostič, Mojca Štuhec and Peter Tomaž Dobrila, dedicated to Slovenian art production and its recent survey. It would be difficult to draw parallels between the two events, but it is not superfluous to mention that 213 artists from 58 countries of the world are represented with their projects in Venice and 218 artists, ZDSLJU Guild Members from 14 countries, are participating in the *May Salon* in Maribor.

The experiences that artists bring from the field of visual arts and present to us in the context of their own artefacts are always intended to create an open dialogue about contemporary art. The aim is to exchange different knowledge and insights, ideas and reflections and to end the whole, including artistic provocations, in the labyrinth of the search for a coherent whole that speaks of the positioning and *being-there* that we call contemporary art. The story that unfolds from image to image in the exhibition, which the curators assemble like mosaic stones into a kind of cohesive group of exhibits that speak of visual art, is incomplete since the viewer is the one to complete it. It is a process defined in the terminology of various relationships between artefacts – objects, forms, ideas and spaces. All in all, it is more reminiscent of an art research centre than a mass production of artworks. And this is what makes the *May Salon* exhibition this year all the more different given the space and hence even more interesting and unique.

We want to hijack the viewer into the salon-pictorial-visual world of art, we want him/her to be addressed by the deep intensity of the artworks at the *May Salon* and not by individual categories that look at works without individual influences, e.g. the genius loci of the individual. Despite the title, which flirts with bygone art eras, the exhibition is by no means conceived historically or linearly but consists of a colourful palette of superb works by artists from different visual art genres and different generations, who do their best to address specific notions of art and contemporary life.

The concept of the exhibition aims not only to glorify the visual, but also to enrich and reflect on art with joy, by exposing concerns, disorders and flaws in contemporary society, and that the artworks express a realistic, sometimes poetic image of today.

Some of the *May Salon* exhibits aim to provoke, both politically and aesthetically. This is certainly nothing new, as scandal and provocation have been companions of the visual arts for centuries and in contemporary times. One only has to think of Dadaism and the fact that provocation could otherwise become an artificially induced intention, which hardly works anymore. The use of already produced artefacts, which were essentially not intended for art, is also not overly represented in this year's exhibition. However, it is still a held fact to this day that the end of the 19th century

saw a break with tradition. Painters began to problematise their works until the content itself overtook them. Objectless paintings no longer tell their own story; their content is closely linked to their form. The use of readymade materials, everyday objects therefore, even put conventional sculpture under question during the last century. What remains is artistic storytelling, often used in the performing arts such as performance, video, projection or even in the advertising industry and architecture. Paintings are still alive, even though painting has been proclaimed dead. These often appear in large-scale formats and we are indeed finding that classical and traditional painting, which takes on various unusual subjects, is irrepressibly returning to galleries, commercial spaces and homes. However, some new images and stories of contemporary visual art are tied to new technologies, algorithms and artificial intelligence. We have put all of this on show in Maribor this year.

But each *May Salon* is also a place and space for discussion, research and critical investigation. In confronting many questions raised by the process of creativity and creation that penetrates almost all pores and especially deep into the body of contemporary society, we can be satisfied with the present exhibition and proud of our members. A broad spectrum of practically all genres of art opens up before the viewer and we find works of all formats, but also small, almost intimate artworks, art videos, sculptures in various materials and forms, drawings, caricatures, conceptual and composite projects. Many printmakers are presented, surprising us with their novelties, whereas photographers increasingly blur the boundaries between photography and painting, ... In the end, we can safely say that art celebrates by exhibiting its images and that our idea to: "Let us enjoy contemporary visual art and its diversity," is worth a look.

We have known for some time that it is extremely difficult to find a single dominant artistic doctrine or style. It would be difficult to argue whether or not art today is in crisis, as the creative search is very fertile and almost limitless. However, we know that society as a whole is in a serious crisis and that this crisis is getting worse. Despite all-encompassing globalisation and multiculturalism, we only expose artists as individuals who have mastered the dominance over the media by entering the world of communication links and networks, which are often volatile and whose rules and canons are relentlessly enforced by the global market and capital. Unfortunately, with its dominance, it generates its own preeminence, the decay of the individual, unstoppable violence and even death, and above all, it generates and causes extreme superficiality, hedonism and false glamour. In times like these, history clearly shows us that only art and artists can help to show new ways of living together and endless new possibilities for change, and that only their ability to think abstractly can again help to create a brighter tomorrow. ■

Peter Tomaž Dobrila

Art and Peace!

The oldest visual and fine arts event in Slovenia, held since 1909, will be the biggest yet this year, on its 113th anniversary. 228 artists, both members and non-members of ZDSLJU, responded to the public call for entries and proposed almost 700 works for the exhibition in the art space KIBLA PORTAL. The broad thematic base and the dimensions of the space in Maribor's industrial heritage, a former textile factory and later printing house, have inspired participants to use different media and formats; regardless of size, in fact, large formats are even encouraged, which will work perfectly in this specific environment of one of the most fascinating, inviting, complex and high-quality venues for exhibition, presentation, mediation and production in Slovenia with an international reputation, on – simply put – a world scale.

As curators, we decided not to make a selection, which is still present in today's world and is often the key element in classifying who can be included and who cannot, but we decided to exhibit all the works submitted. On the one hand, we were guided by the idea of providing an insight into the visual art of today's Slovenia and its border region, with all its strengths and weaknesses, experiments and attempts, attractions and reflections, peaks, good and not so good. At first, I had the idea of setting up a kind of wall with the unaccepted works next to the selected ones, a kind of *Salon des Refusés*, with the argument that even if an "exhibition of the rejected" does not sound nice, these works would still be exhibited, which would not otherwise be the case. In this way, the public would be the judge of our decisions as selectors. Our decisions can also be left to the judgement of history. However, this has proven to be unnecessary.

We have unanimously decided that the possibility of showing the flourishing fine arts of creators of all generations to the widest possible audience of all generations is a great responsibility that cannot only emphasise artistic criteria but must also take into account educational, informative and formative dimensions. Especially since this is possible. Instead of exclusivity, we have opted for inclusivity. A kind of abstraction. We saw it as a particular challenge to exhibit established and emerging, lesser-known artists together, as well as those who have not yet made a name

for themselves. The division into professionals and amateurs did not seem appropriate to us. After all, who is still a professional today, a professional who earns his living (by working and selling his art? Not many are. In general, most "hobby artists" work in many fields to earn a living: They teach art in primary and secondary schools, academies and colleges as well as privately, design visual communication, printed matter, catalogues and books as well as content on the internet, design sets for theatre and television and much more. In fact, there are few real artists who can make a living from their main activity – the visual arts.

At the end of the day, it is a salon. A word that has a "bourgeois" ring to it. The name dates back to the 16th century and means something like "retreat room" or "retreat chamber", to which the residents with certain guests withdrew when they wanted more privacy. It then became a place of entertainment, also called a "drawing room", a room for meetings, conversations and serious discussions and decisions, also for art and a reception hall; today it would probably be called a living room, although this has nothing to do with its original function. The drawing room as a place for entertaining visitors gave its name to drawing room plays, a genre of theatre performances and films. Starting with early forms of drama, the drawing room play evolved to encompass comedy and included forms of dramatic monologue. The format of the play itself also evolved from the traditional drawing room performance back to street theatre and film.

In such rooms, which are still called salons in some places, there is usually a private (central) collection of art and pictures on display. Sometimes there are also books and it may be a home library. However, the Salon, also called the Paris Salon (French: *Salon de Paris*), was the official art exhibition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which began in 1667 and was probably the largest annual or biennial art event in the Western world between 1748 and 1890. Without having such lofty ambitions, we wanted the *May Salon 2022* to transcend differences in expertise, quality, concept, medium, motif, material and approach. We gave up interfering with art as curators and simply distributed the richness of visual creation, leaving it to people

to engage with and feel this breadth, to decide, perhaps to choose their favourite works, and in any case, most importantly, to get to know the art that flows among us.

In a time of separation and idolisation of small differences, segmentation in all areas and invocation of individuality, concealment of information and manipulation, concerted one-sided truths and relativisation of criteria, we have taken the path of openness of form to make content come alive. Opinions should be diverse, as should critiques, questions should follow that we can also answer for ourselves. In view of the lowering of cultural levels, the reducing of social standards, the contempt for cultural work and the neglect of art, which we have not been able to bring to a decent civilisational level for at least 15 years, which would take into account a few percent of the funds for artworks in public investments, the decision to abandon all salons is the most constructive and subversive enough. Constructive for creativity and subversive for the general situation that escalated into war after the pandemic, which is by no means to Slovenia's credit.

It is precisely in this space-time that one could think about art and its historical role. And of course also, or rather above all, about artists. Also because of the theme *Blue Line: From the Renaissance to New Media*, which covers the most comprehensive period of artistic and humanistic creation in Europe and is essentially a drive and a call for openness, acceptance, coexistence, curiosity, search, experiment, connection, exchange and collaboration. Instead of a competition that gets us nowhere in what is arguably the most important debate of our solar system – environment, climate and change. In short, in life. In life, however, competition can sometimes seem like an opportunity, a chance, or at least a vanity to which we succumb far too quickly. The climate is also, shall we say, “capricious”, but we should not be the same and think the same.

When we are forced to face such and other losses, when we are ruled by the postulates of selectivity, when the criteria of exclusion apply, when we abandon one and reject the other, when we undergo mass psychoses that divide us into such and such, this and that, ours and not ours, when we and they speak, the personal is reduced to mere identification with a select or predetermined group. About belonging

or coercion. To choose someone, to determine, to separate, to exclude, to set up, to overthrow. We discarded these dichotomies when we decided on this year's *May Salon*, and we offer this decision to open deliberation. It is certainly not offensive or hostile to anyone. It does not use language or the written word but consists of visual language, it takes from the vocabulary of art and assembles, paints, draws, photographs, designs, models, sets, edits, stages, installs, establishes.

The parable of man and the human is reflected in action and creation. Unfortunately also in destruction, collapse, dissolution, labelling, division. And it is precisely the latter that we have given up. There will be no inside and outside – we all belong. Even if we do not like someone or can not stand each other. It is supposed to be rean “acquainting salon”. This “retreat room”, “drawing room” or space for – if I may adopt the title of the painting-drawing-mask by Sašo Marković Mikrob, artist, journalist, radio presenter, social worker, performer and one of the most important representatives of the Serbian alternative and contemporary art scene – “Sport and Reincarnation”. A reviving Salon. An uplifting *Salon*. A relaxing *Salon*. A *Salon* of perception and insight. A *Salon* of encounters with artworks and with each other. Touch is not excluded, not even artistic touch, with human touch being particularly welcome.

The fact that we have taken the *May Salon* literally and arranged the reception room as a common/collective space where we receive and to which we do not withdraw may be debatable from a professional, curatorial point of view, but the decision is a conscious one. We have chosen art and have linked it to society, to the social and communal, to enthusiasm, colour and form, to intimacy, gaze and insight, to reflection and perception, understanding and behaviour. When there is too much of everything, when supply and demand fight each other, when they kill each other because of it, there is not enough art. Always. Immeasurable. Limitless. It was a brave and arduous decision to accept everyone. You accept them too. And look around the landscape of visual art. On the vast tapestry, the criteria are personal. Encouraging affection, attraction, telepathy, therapy, impression, expression, empathy, transgression, (trans) formation. *Welcome to the Salon of Life, Art and Peace.* ■

Aleksandra Kostič

Inclusion Rather Than Exclusion

The ZDSLU 2022 May Salon, entitled *Blue Line*, brings together artistic and creative ideas, from classical to new technological media. It combines 500 years of easel painting with creative action in digital media, opening up the artistic possibilities of media that support augmented reality and the advancement of visual arts in conjunction with science and technology. The intrusion of new technologies has become evident in supporting artists' work as well as in creative work and not least in planning contemporary gallery activities. The greatest challenge of the May Salon is to present a spectrum of different artistic approaches, media and visions in a common space where they coexist.

The creativity of traditional media is important for enriching electronic media, for raising the professional level of art and for integrating visual language into electronic media. The installation organised by the KIBLA Association for Culture and Education, which mainly deals with inter-media and interdisciplinary art, underlines this interest in the way Slovenian artists work with digital media and how they transfer the visual language of colours, shapes and compositions into digital technologies. In the case of the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies, it is mainly video and some experiments with sensory and interactive art, but most insist on classical painting and sculptural media that can be executed independently in studios. Artworks influence creation with electronic and digital media, where technical knowledge and offered software often impose aesthetically and artistically unsatisfactory models. The construction of pictorial space, composition, colour, light and contrasts is intrinsic to all visual media, from the classical to the virtual.

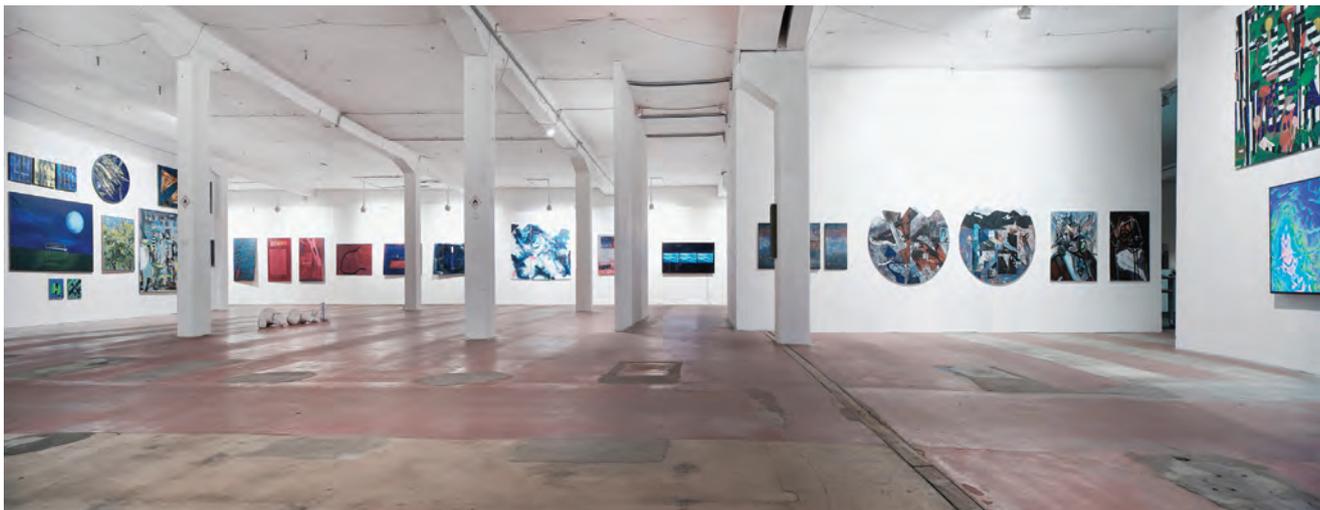
For the artist, it is a great challenge to bring a work of art from his studio into the light of the gallery and to establish a relationship with the other works of art in the group exhibition of more than two hundred artists. For the curator, it is an even greater challenge to place them in reciprocal relationships. The exhibition venue KIBLA PORTAL in the former industrial hall in Studenci in Maribor offers space and support for these many artistic visions and approaches in a different way. The artworks are placed in the space from the point of view of an inclusive, all-encompassing line-up of artworks – different artistic aesthetics and techniques, contents and the choice of media that the artists use creatively mix with each other and present many dialogues,

commonalities and contradictions. The basic idea is that of an interweaving, as opposed to a stringing together of artworks by the artists in the space.

The title itself, which in a sense foregrounds the colour blue, has provoked a response from artists to the title theme with a greater number of artworks in blue. With such a variety of artworks, a method of ordering based on the artist's use of the predominant colour spontaneously emerged when looking at all the works received, unpacked and randomly placed in the exhibition space. However, if this concept could not be maintained in some places, the arrangement was made according to themes or other common denominators. From the basic structural order, the curator is thus led to the dialogical placement of the individual works.

The basic structure of the *ZDSLU May Salon: Blue Line* is divided into thematic pavilions. In the central blue pavilion, the colour blue flows in multiple abstractions with few figurative accents to the edges, to green and purple. The black and white pavilion is a mosaic of whites, greys and blacks arranged like unrepeatable Lego cubes in an orderly sequence of different media, from printmaking, collage, drawing, photography, painting, sculpture, assemblage and video. The colourful pavilion plays with the spectra of the intense colours yellow, red, blue and pink. The earthy pavilion is dominated by earth tones and reds. The floral one is characterised by flowers and plants, the ephemeral one is on the border between the visible and the tangible, and the fairytale-mythical pavilion combines representations of stories. In the darkened area, there is an electronic corridor with video and other works of various poetics on screens and with projections. What remains is the entrance pavilion, which addresses the visitor with videos from the studio and other contrasting works in large format.

The *ZDSLU May Salon: Blue Line* is the largest visual arts event in Slovenia with almost 230 exhibiting artists and around 600 works of art on display. This year it coincides with the *Venice Biennale*. The latter is one of the world's largest visual arts events, where Slovenia is represented this year by Marko Jakše, a painter trained at the Academy. The Biennale is only a few hundred kilometres away from Slovenia, from which we can conclude that we are at the epicentre of the European and world art scene.



Majski salon ZDSLU: Modra črta, Od Renesanse do novih medijev, 2022, KIBLA PORTAL, postavitve razstave: Aleksandra Kostič in Borut Wenzel, foto: Damjan Švarc, © KID KIBLA

The ZDSLU May Salon can be seen as a good vibration of a strong fine arts guild, the Association of Slovenian Fine Arts Societies, which has as many as 800 members. This Slovenian guild enriches our small national arena with many individual visions. With its activities, it fights against the unequivocal dominance of information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence that flood the globally controlled world. Individual, uncontrolled creative actions are the fine capillaries of the human living organism.

On the one hand, it is a socially important, albeit marginalised, activity, fraught with many existential problems; on the other hand, it is a foundation for the field of contemporary art as a whole, creativity and, not least, design for various fields of application. The history of art has taught us that the great flags, the supreme artists, Michelangelo, Leonardo and others, would not have flourished if there had not been a strong guild base as the foundation and motor for the development and spirit of a particular time. ■

Mojca Štuhec, Curator of DLUM

The May Salon In Maribor

This summer, Maribor will be marked by a manifestation of contemporary Slovenian fine arts. The *May Salon*, a traditional exhibition of Slovenian artists who are members of nine regional societies, will be held outside Ljubljana for the second time in its history. After last year's excellent presentation in Koper, this year's "caravan of creators" will be presented in the capital of the Štajerska region. ZDSLJU has entrusted the KIBLA Association for Culture and Education with curating the exhibition, a difficult task in terms of production. This is a leading Slovenian and internationally established non-governmental institution active in the fields of the creative industries, interdisciplinary, intermedia, multimedia, visual, musical and AV arts, culture and non-formal education.

The KIBLA PORTAL exhibition venue, located on the site of the former Studenci industrial estate, presents the extremely diverse and varied creativity of 218 artists in a well-considered floor-to-ceiling salon set-up. One-fifth of the exhibitors come from the Maribor Fine Artists Society (DLUM), which is about half of the members of the society.

At a time when creativity is tied to individual poetics while everything pictorial and visual is primarily geared towards international and thus a universal mode of expression, the number of participants in the exhibition is high. Such a response was to be expected since the ZDSLJU call for entries does not specify applications on a predefined theme. The only clue for the artists was the title *Blue Line: From the Renaissance to New Media*.

In contemporary art, there has long been no predominant artistic style. Creativity is intertwined with various humanities, natural sciences and technologies. The concept of the artefact is often obsolete or of secondary significance in a purely classical aesthetic sense. The focus is increasingly on universal, engaged themes. Individuals and artist collectives use their creations as project solutions for research purposes. They present them outside gallery spaces, at specific contemporary art festivals that are equally successful at home and abroad. The *May Salon* opens its doors to a wide

circle of artists and is important because it promotes dialogue between different generations and artistic profiles. By communicating different, even opposing artistic views and perspectives, new ideas are dynamised, the expressive possibilities of pictorial language are expanded and impulses for new creations present themselves. Visibility is ensured by an independent team of curators who oversee, interpret and combine the exhibitions into high-quality and attractive individual and group events.

The *May Salon* will be a resounding event in Maribor. When it was announced, the thought of the first art exhibition in this city more than a century ago came to mind. In 1920, it was held in the kazina building of SNG Maribor by the first organised artists' association, the Grohar Art Club. We must admit that the first art exhibition in Maribor and the club founded at the same time took place at completely different times. The national-political and cultural-historical turn after the First World War in the city on the Drava influenced the general development of Slovenian culture and the flourishing of art institutions. Today, art's presence in Maribor's cultural offer is increasingly diverse. In addition to the central Maribor Art Gallery (UGM), KIBLA, which is one of the most resounding in the city, there are a number of cultural non-governmental organisations and societies (DLUM, EPEKA, Fotoklub Maribor, MKC, Sonda + GT22 Foundation, etc.). They all attract a wide audience with their exhibition programmes.

The *May Salon* will undoubtedly be one of the highlights, but there is a lot going on elsewhere too. Dear readers, dear lovers of visual art, I would also like to invite you to the DLUM Gallery, where artists will be advocating for peace in Ukraine with a group exhibition. In June, the doors are traditionally opened to young artists who have yet to establish themselves, and at the height of the summer, the prize-winners of the last association exhibition are given the opportunity to present their works. The exhibition of the *14th Biennial of Slovenian Illustration*, which will be hosted at UGM until the end of July, is also not to be missed. ■