





PETRA GROŽAJ

BACAČ SVJETLA /
LIGHT THROWER

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Galerija Forum, 5. - 28. veljače 2026.
Forum Gallery, February 5 - 28, 2026







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Fedá Gavrilović

U zapadnom slikarstvu velika se važnost daje slikanju „po prirodi“, odnosno prema prisutnom modelu. „Sjediti nekome“ bio je u našem jeziku i poseban izraz („sjedio sam Babiću i Dobroviću“, rekao je Krleža Vaništi, kad mu je ovaj došao za prvi crtež), a na engleskom se model portreta zove „sitter“, dakle onaj koji sjedi pred slikarom. Kada su impresionisti počeli slikati izvan ateljea, u samoj prirodi, suočeni sa svijetom izravno, na čistom zraku, odnosno: *en plein air*, bila je to mala revolucija u slikarstvu. Ona je vodila emancipaciji likovnog govora prema njenoj neposrednosti i specifičnim karakteristikama, koje nisu samo u službi oponašanja videne stvarnosti. Danas, kada slikari rade prema predlošcima nastalima manipulacijom i kolažiranjem digitalnih slika, kada se portreti više rade prema fotografskom predlošku negoli uživo, teoretičari slike i slikarstva takve likovnoumjetničke prakse nazvat će stvaranjem dvostruke distance, odnosno naglašavanjem da je slika, ali i stvarnost u kojoj živimo (jer stvarnost je u našoj svijesti, koju takve tehničke prakse kondicioniraju) simulakr simulakra.

Kada sam prošli put (2022., za izložbu u Centru za likovni odgoj *Jozo Kljaković*) pisao o Petri Grozaj i njezinim slikama na kojima su stilizirana lica podsjećala na maske, inzistirao sam, iz nekog razloga, da ne postoji stvarna ličnost, odnosno da je iluzorno misliti da postoji neko „pravo ja“, kada je svijest sama jedna simulacija. Umjetnica se nije složila s mojom interpretacijom, ali nisam je htio preformulirati, zadržati za sebe. Sada, kad su predamnom slike iste autorice koje preuzimaju likove iz filmova ili videospotova, a koje ona ponekada fotografira s ekrana da sačuva specifičnu teksturu reproducirane slike, opet mi se nameće pitanje o stvarnosti.

S jedne strane, možemo se poslužiti već spomenutom (baudrillardovskom) sintagmom simulakra simulakra i proglasiti ove slike, zbog posezanja za ikonografijom filma i popularne kulture te za sugestijama načina njihove reprodukcije, egzemplarnim umjetničkim ostvarenjima našeg doba u kojemu su slike koje vidimo posredovane manipulirano, uvećano, brzo, hiperrealno. U tom slučaju izbjegli smo vrlo zanimljivo pitanje o onom čisto slikarskom u umjetničinu radu. Jer, ako je riječ tek o reprodukciji načina na koji nam se slike danas prikazuju (nadaju, nameću, ako hoćete), onda shvaćamo ovo slikarstvo kao (samo) reprodukciju stvarnosti, odnosno njezine društveno konstruirane vizije. Ono je, dakako, i to, ali ne samo to.

Za početak, uočimo linearne, tvrde, gotovo kristalične forme slikanih lica Petre Grozaj. Riječ je o stilu koji sugerira posebnu distancu, oštrinu i očudenje svijeta njezinih slika. Tu su i njoj karakteristične boje: zelena, koja se tonski rasvjetljuje do tirkizne, uz blistave intenzitete žute, kojima, također, kreira osjećaj drugačijeg bivanja. Da su te slike samo refleksi našeg suvremenog shvaćanja svijeta, zar bi inzistirale na konstrukciji koja je tako snažno vezana uz medij ili jezik slikarstva? A Petra Grozaj ide još dalje u tom smjeru. Na nekim se novim slikama komadići motiva potpuno osamostaljuju u zasebnim kompozicijama. Način na koji slika valovitu kosu preobražava se u stiliziranu vrpcu, koja nas (kada se odvoji od portreta) može asociirati na rijeku ili vodopad, ali je zapravo samo detalj čije se postojanje u slikarstvu odvojilo od funkcije u većoj cjelini, to jest odvojilo se od reprezentacije bilo čega, pa i neke suvremene vizije stvarnosti.

Postupak ove slikarice govori u prilog njezinu stalnom produbljivanju razmišljanja o jeziku slikarstva, njezinu osobnom *plein airu*. Uzevši iz nekog medija (što znači: iz stvarnosti koja ju okružuje) motiv, ona ga bez puno priprema (jedine skice koje radi odnose se na konstrukcije sjena na određenim teksturama, a i to radi rijetko) prenosi na platno, rekli bismo: iz ruke. Asimilira ga u svoj slikarski jezik. Dakle, čini mi se da ona shvaća da se

u svijetu sveprisutne tehnike dogodio pomak u našoj percepciji stvarnosti (kao što su to shvaćali i njezini prethodnici), ali ona (opet, kao i spomenuti prethodnici) ne staje komentirajući specifičnosti i kaprice takve percepcije, nego je koristi kao poticaj za ponovno otkrivanje onog specifičnoga u jeziku slikarstva. Specifičnoga i za taj jezik i za ovaj (povijesni, sociološki) trenutak njegova korištenja.

Mogu reći samo da je stvarnost relativna. Što znači da je u relaciji (u odnosu) s onim tko je percipira. Slikarstvo nam pomaže da uvidimo tu relativnost, ali i da u stvarnosti i njezinoj nestabilnoj višestrukosti pronademo neku ljepotu, fascinaciju, neko pitanje koje nam se postavlja i kada smo pred slikom i kada je napustimo. A što je drugo smisao, ako ne sve to? I ti su doživljaji, baš kao i stvarnost, relativni, ovisni o načinima na koje doživljavamo svijet. Petra Grozaj nudi svoj način nošenja s problemom stvarnosti. Slikarski način. Neposredan, zagonetan i ubitačan, poput Sfingina pitanja.

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Light thrower, ulje na platnu, 190 x 130 cm, 2017. /

Light Thrower, oil on canvas, 190 x 130 cm, 2017

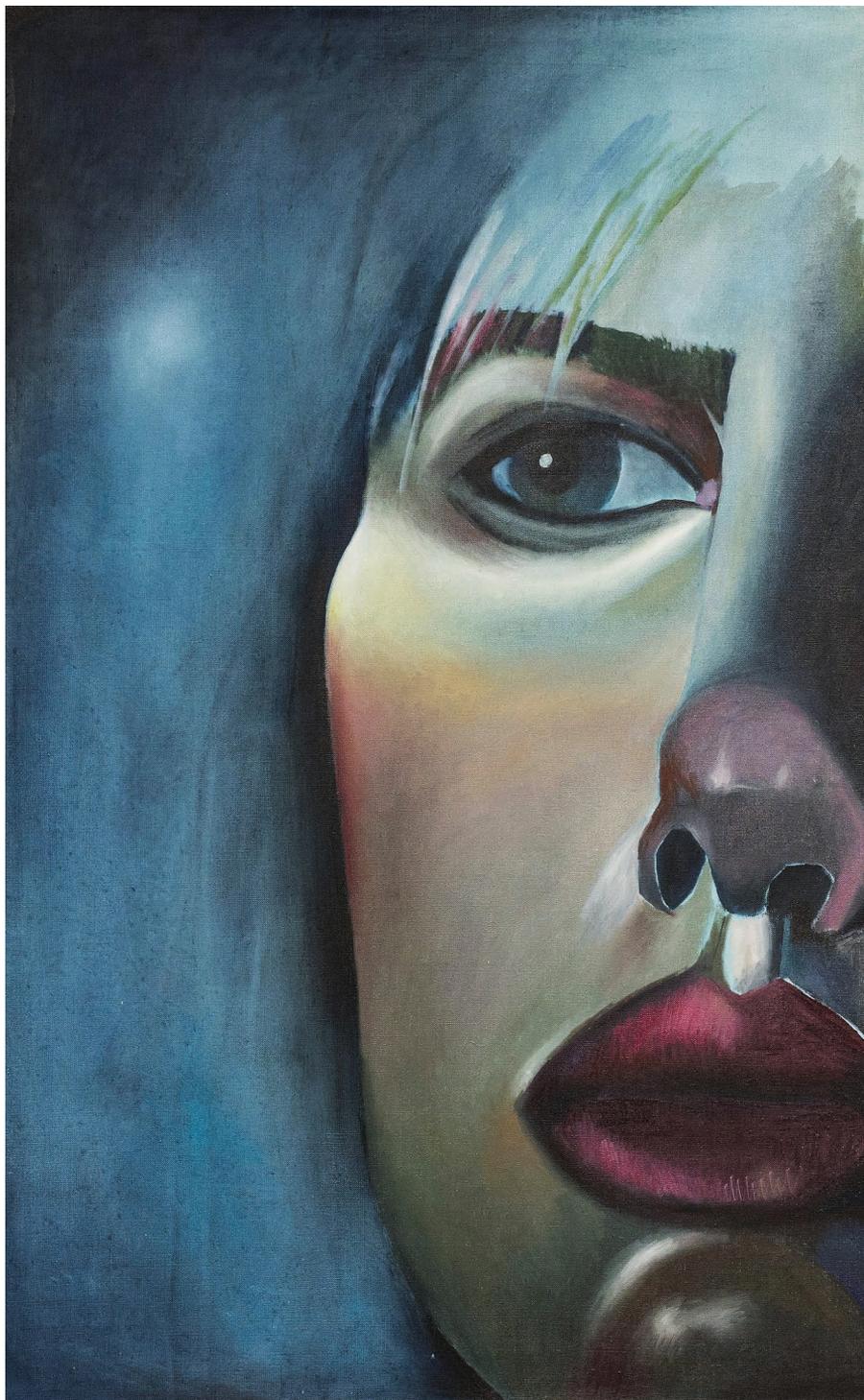




The old one, ulje na platnu, 200 x 160 cm, 2025. /
The Old One, oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm, 2025



Čudoređe, ulje na platnu, 170 x 120 cm, 2026. /
Morality, oil on canvas, 170 x 120 cm, 2026





Pris se sjeća,
ulje na platnu,
140 x 170 cm,
2025. /

Pris Remembers,
oil on canvas,
140 x 170 cm,
2025



*Olivera sklopjenih ruku, ulje na platnu, 50 x 40 cm, 2019. /
Olivera with Folded Hands, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm, 2019*

stranice 14,15 / pages 14,15;
Unfolding, ulje na platnu, 120 x 170 cm, 2025. /
Unfolding, oil on canvas, 120 x 170 cm, 2025



Lucy in the sky with diamonds, ulje na platnu, 170 x 140 cm, 2024. /
Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm, 2024





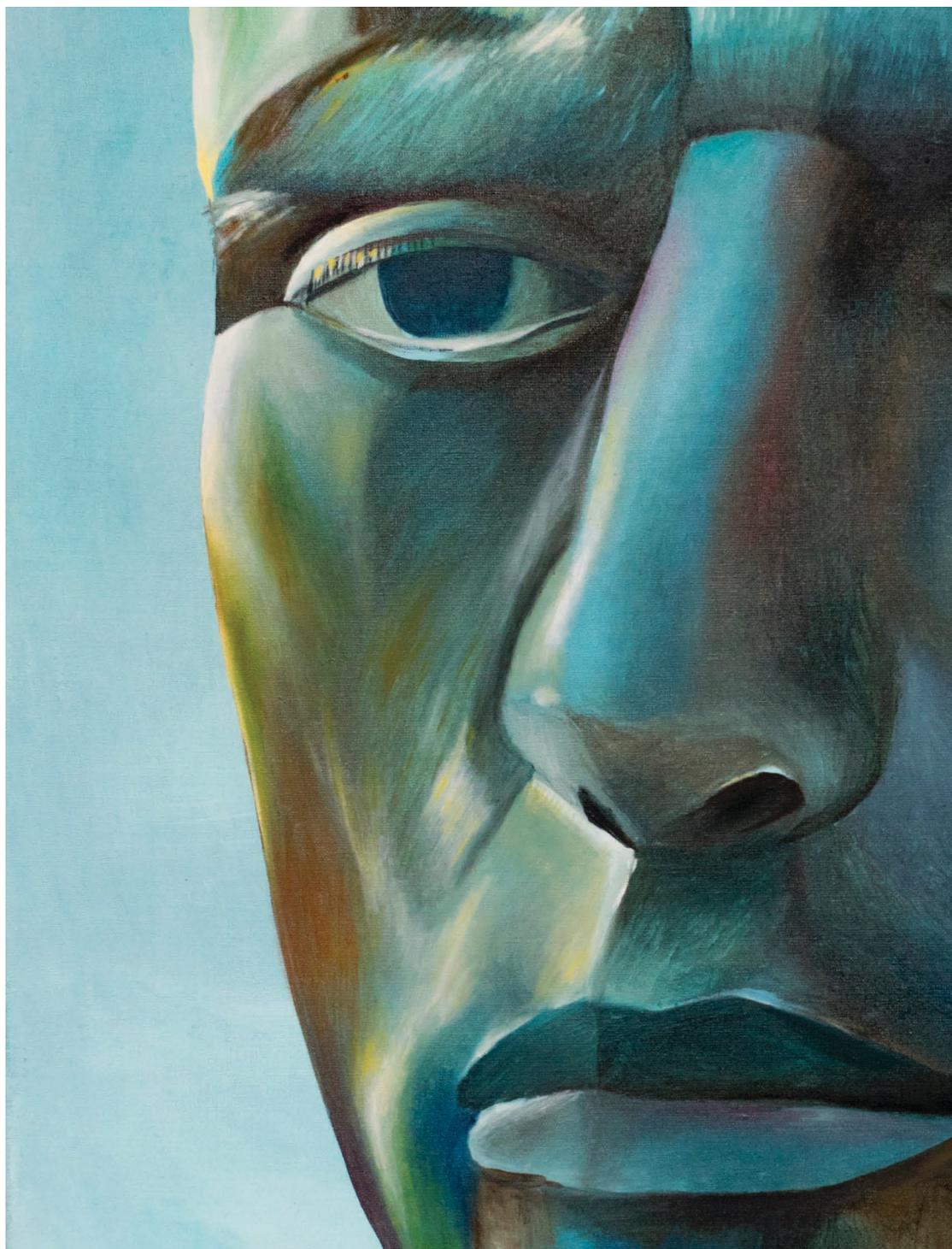


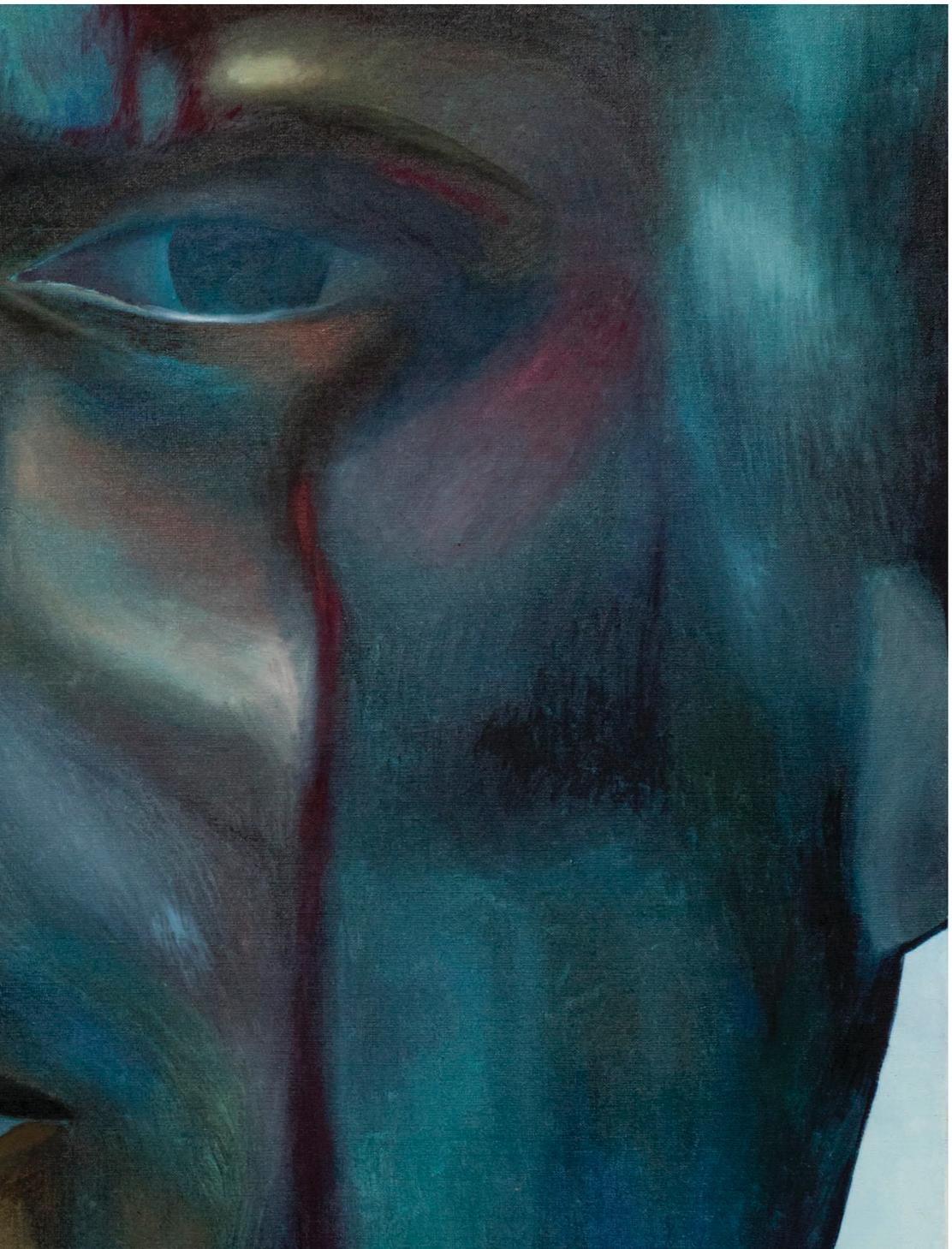
Stormbringer, ulje na platnu, 200 x 160 cm, 2025. /
Stormbringer, oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm, 2025



Rudger, ulje na platnu, 170 x 140 cm, 2025. /
Rudger, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm, 2025

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LIGHT THROWER

Feda Gavrilović

In Western painting, great importance has traditionally been given to painting “from nature”, that is, from a live, present model. In Croatian, to “sit for someone” was even a specific expression (“I sat for Babić and Dobrović”, Krleža told Vaništa when the former came to him for his first drawing), while in English the model for a portrait is called a “sitter”, literally, the one who sits in front of the painter. When the Impressionists began painting outside the studio, directly in nature, confronting the world at first hand, in the open air, *en plein air*, this constituted a small revolution in painting. It led to the emancipation of visual language toward immediacy and toward its own specific qualities, which are no longer solely in the service of imitating visible reality. Today, when painters work from source material created through the manipulation and collage of digital images, when portraits are more often produced from photographic references than from live sittings, theorists of images and painting describe such artistic practices as the creation of a double distance. In other words, they emphasize that the image, and the reality in which we live (since reality exists within our consciousness, which is conditioned by such technical practices), has become a simulacrum of a simulacrum.

When I last wrote about Petra Grozaj and her paintings (in 2022, for the exhibition at the Jozo Kljaković Centre for Art Education, in which stylized faces resembled masks), for some reason I insisted that no real personality exists, that it is illusory to believe in the existence of a “true self” when consciousness itself is a simulation. The artist did not agree with my interpretation, yet I chose not to revise or keep it to myself. Now, as I find myself confronted with works by the same artist that appropriate figures from movies or music videos, which she sometimes photographs directly from the screen in order to preserve the specific texture of the reproduced image, the question of reality once again imposes itself.

On the one hand, we may resort to the already mentioned (Baudrillardian) notion of the simulacrum of a simulacrum and, given the recourse to the iconography of film and popular culture, as well as to suggestions of their modes of reproduction, proclaim these paintings exemplary artistic expressions of our age, an age in which the images we see are mediated through manipulation, enlargement, speed, and hyperreality. In doing so, however, we evade a highly compelling question concerning what is purely painterly in the artist's work. For if these works were merely reproductions of the ways in which images are presented to us today (offered, imposed, if you will), then we would understand this painting as a (mere) reproduction of reality, that is, of its socially constructed vision. It is, of course, also that, but not only that.

To begin with, let us observe the linear, hard, almost crystalline forms of the faces painted by Petra Grozaj. This is a style that suggests a particular distance, sharpness, and *ostrannenie* ("making strange") of the world of her images. There are also the colours characteristic of her work: green, tonally lightened toward turquoise, alongside the brilliant intensities of yellow, through which she likewise creates a sense of a different mode of being. If these paintings were merely reflections of our contemporary understanding of the world, would they insist on a construction so strongly tied to the medium or language of painting itself? And Petra Grozaj goes even further in this direction. In some of her newer works, fragments of motifs become fully autonomous, forming independent compositions. The manner in which she paints wavy hair is transformed into a stylized ribbon which, once detached from the portrait, may evoke associations with a river or a waterfall, yet is in fact merely a detail whose existence in painting has separated from its function within a larger whole, that is, it has detached itself from the representation of anything at all, including any contemporary vision of reality.

The working process of this painter speaks in favour of her continual deepening of reflection on the language of painting, her own personal *plein air*. Taking a motif from a given medium (which is to say, from the reality that surrounds her), she transfers it onto the canvas with little preparation (the only sketches she makes concern the construction of shadows on certain textures, and even these only rarely), we might say, directly from the hand. She assimilates it into her painterly language. It therefore seems to me that she recognizes that, in a world saturated with technology, a shift has occurred in our perception of reality (as her predecessors also understood), yet she does not stop at commenting on the specificities and caprices of such perception. Rather (again, like those predecessors), she uses it as an impetus for rediscovering what is specific to the language of painting: specific both to that language itself and to this particular (historical, sociological) moment of its use.

I can say only that reality is relative, which means that it exists in relation to (in dependence upon) the one who perceives it. Painting helps us to recognize this relativity, but also to discover within reality, and within its unstable multiplicity, a certain beauty, a fascination, a question that confronts us both when we stand before the painting and after we move away from it. And what else could meaning be, if not all of this? These experiences, like reality itself, are relative, dependent on the ways in which we perceive the world. Petra Grozaj offers her own way of grappling with the problem of reality: a painterly way. Immediate, enigmatic, and lethal, like the Sphinx's riddle.

PETRA GROZAJ (Zagreb, 1974.) diplomirala je na Akademiji likovnih umjetnosti u Zagrebu. Izlagala je na nizu samostalnih i grupnih izložbi u Hrvatskoj i inozemstvu (Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb; Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, Casoria; Nacionalni muzej moderne umjetnosti, Zagreb; Kunstlerhaus, Graz; Galerija Westpol, Leipzig; Muzej moderne i suvremene umjetnosti, Rijeka; DLUL, Ljubljana). Predstavljala je Hrvatsku na XII. Bijenalu mladih umjetnika Europe i Mediterana (BJCEM) u Napulju 2005. Boravila je na studijskim i rezidencijalnim programima u Veneciji, Napulju, Parizu, Berlinu i Leipzigu. Njezini radovi nalaze se u privatnim i javnim zbirkama.

PETRA GROZAJ (Zagreb, 1974) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. She has exhibited at numerous solo and group exhibitions in Croatia and internationally (the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Casoria; the National Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb; Kunstlerhaus, Graz; Westpol Gallery, Leipzig; the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka; DLUL, Ljubljana). She represented Croatia at the 12th Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean (BJCEM) in Naples 2005. She has participated in study and artist-in-residence programs in Venice, Naples, Paris, Berlin, and Leipzig. Her works are held in private and public collections.

1. *Stormbringer*, ulje na platnu, 200 x 160 cm, 2025. / *Stormbringer*, oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm, 2025
2. *Rudger*, ulje na platnu, 170 x 140 cm, 2025. / *Rudger*, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm, 2025
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8. *Lucy in the sky with diamonds*, ulje na platnu, 170 x 140 cm, 2024. / *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, oil on canvas, 170 x 140 cm, 2024
9. *Olivera sklopljenih ruku*, ulje na platnu, 50 x 40 cm, 2019. / *Olivera with Folded Hands*, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm, 2019

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IZDAVAČ / PUBLISHER: Kulturno informativni centar, Preradovićeva 5, Zagreb ZA IZDAVAČA / FOR THE PUBLISHER: Hrvoje Hribar, ravnatelj / director VODITELJ GALERIJE, KUSTOS IZLOŽBE, AUTOR PREDGOVORA / GALLERY MANAGER, EXHIBITION CURATOR, AUTHOR OF THE FOREWORD: Feda Gavrilović DIZAJN KATALOGA I PLAKATA / DESIGN OF CATALOGUE AND POSTER: Ivana Vulić LEKTURA / PROOFREADING: Mateja Fabijanić PRIJEVOD / TRANSLATION: Nina Pisk FOTOGRAFIJE ZA KATALOG I PLAKAT / PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE CATALOGUE AND POSTER: Mario Kučera, Vedran Benović TEHNIČKI POSTAV / TECHNICAL SET-UP: Vedran Grladinović NAKLADA / PRINT RUN: 300

ISBN: 978-953-7356-88-0 CIP zapis je dostupan u nacionalnom skupnom katalogu knjižničnog sustava Bukinet pod brojem 991005931061509366. The CIP record is available in the national unified catalogue of the Bukinet library system under the number 991005931061509366.

Izložba je ostvarena uz potporu Gradskog ureda za kulturu i civilno društvo Grada Zagreba i Ministarstva kulture i medija Republike Hrvatske. / The realization of the exhibition is supported by the City of Zagreb's Office for Culture and Civil Society and the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia.



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