



STJEPAN ŠANDRK

WHO THE FUCK IS TINKY WINKY?!

Galerija Forum, 15. listopada - 6. studenoga 2021.
Forum Gallery, October 15 - November 6, 2021

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Feda Gavrilović

U posljednje vrijeme povjerenje u medije nevjerovatno je nisko. Teme dana su načini kojima vladajuća klasa putem medija nameće svoje interese masama – nekada se to jednostavno zvalo ideologijom ili propagandom, a danas su sve popularniji nazivi „manufacturing consent“ („proizvodnja pristanka“, što je naslov poznate knjige o toj temi Edwarda S. Hermana i Noama Chomskog iz 1988.), „simulakr“ (Jean Baudrillarda) ili „fake news“ („lažne vijesti“, danas najpopularnija fraza za diskreditiranje političkih protivnika). Znamo da snažna vizualnost izrazito doprinosi prijemčivosti poruke. To je klima u kojoj savršeno uspijevaju umovanja o odnosu slike i istine. A posebno kada je riječ o slikarstvu nekoga poput Stjepana Šandrka, koji visokorealističnim postupkom na slikama spaja povijest umjetnosti, videoigre, politiku, dnevne događaje i društvene trendove, miješa virtualno i realno, simulaciju i istinu i tako dalje, i tako šire.

Ali, „Što je istina?“, pitam se zajedno s Pilatom.

Naš pogled je plod složene kemijsko-optičke igre živčanog sustava, naša svijest je paradoksalna projekcija, neka priča koju neprestano pričamo sebi i na taj način konstituiramo ono što tu priču priča. Da, ljude se oduvijek manipuliralo narativima – konstruirali su ih šamani, svećenici, monasi i svi oni koji tvrde da imaju (a ne odbacujem mogućnost da neki uistinu imaju) odnos s bilo kakvom višom stvarnošću. Da, mediji lažu za kraljeve, bankare i predsjednike, a i umjetnost laže za njih, što je tu novo? Možda danas lažu bolje nego prije, a možda mi danas sebi bolje lažemo da možemo raskrinkati njihove laži?

Probajmo prići svemu s druge strane.

Svijest, što god da ona bila, prije svega je narativ. Priča o jednom kontinuiranom „ja“, podržavana memorijom, pripovijest o entitetu koji ima svoje uspone i padove, trijumfe i traume. To je priča s kojom se identificiramo, a ono što zovemo „stvarnost“ scenografija je operete koju nazivamo svojim životom. Lako je prepoznati vjerne prikaze stvarnosti na Šandrkovim platnima. Montaže naizgled nespojivih konteksta ili unošenje digitalnih likova u mimetički prikazan svijet mogu se protumačiti kao komentar današnjeg života u nekakvoj hiperrealnosti, u medijski i ideološko oblikovanoj stvarnosti koja je tobože specifikum današnjeg doba. Ali, ideologija je oduvijek oblikovala ljudsku svijest. Za srednjovjekovnog zapadnog čovjeka kršćanski panteon i posmrtni svjetovi bili su jednako stvarni i prisutni (stvarni na posebnoj razini koja je na granici fikcije), kao i Instagram i Facebook profili ljudima našeg doba. Umjetnost je uvijek ili doprinosila održavanju vladajuće ideologije, ili kritički komentirala prizore iz te kolektivne imaginacije. Sve su to prastare stvari.

Naša svijest, u stalnoj kreaciji same sebe, vrlo je prijemljiva za bilo kakav vanjski narativ koji bi je oblikovao. Možda čak žudi za njim. On joj daje identitet, tu najslabiju od svih laži i očajnički potrebnu pomoć, taj topli pokrivač u ledenoj pustinji stvarnosti koja sama po sebi nema neki smisao i u kojoj je „ja“ samo još jedna iluzija.

Zato trebamo bogove i zvijezde. Da njihova snažna pojavnost u našoj imaginaciji sakrije činjenicu kako živimo u svijetu simulacija, svijetu u kojemu smo najveća simulacija, ona iz koje sve proizlazi – mi sami. Kada tako gledamo, Šandrкова platna nisu nikakav društveni komentar dnevne politike ili utjecaja tehnologije na našu svijest ili na ekonomski sustav. Po čemu su kriptovalute drugačije od litografija koje zovemo novčanicama? Po čemu je neki globalni vođa koji aktivno koristi elektroničke medije drugačiji

od svih vladajućih manipulatora, još od druida u Stonehengeu? I zašto je vrijeme provedeno u videoigramama manje kvalitetno utrošeno negoli vrijeme provedeno u često monotonim, jednoličnim i zatupljujućim druženjima ili ubijeno bijegom u druge opijate? Iza različitih strana ovih usporedbi stoje samo drugačije konstrukcije iluzije. Sve dihotomije kao što su, primjerice, „prirodno i umjetno“, „slika i stvarnost“ ili „istinito i lažno“, proizlaze iz naše svijesti, koja je i sama svojevrsna projekcija.

Digitalni psi iz *Minecrafta* zapravo se sasvim skladno i prirodno uklapaju u Šandrkov idiličan zimski pejzaž. Balon na njegovoj slici, kojim su navodni neistomišljenici htjeli ismijati ljutitog američkog predsjednika, samo je ideološki *doppelgänger*, odnosno duhovni dvojnik tog političara koji, jednako kao i on sam, iskrivljuje zbilju za narod. A narod uživa u toj igri i manipulaciji, jer mu je svijet izvan nje strašan i nezamisliv.

Stjepan Šandrk, kao i svi mi, voli neke iluzije. Jedna od dražih mu je priroda, pa se često upušta u šetnje šumama. Dva puta je na takvim šetnjama naišao na identičan, zastrašujući prizor koji je, potom, ovjekovječio na platnu – raskomadnu plišanu lutku Tinkyja Winkyja,* jednoga od junaka *Telletubbies*a. Riječ je o televizijskoj emisiji namijenjenoj bebama u kojoj se bucmasti izvanzemaljci ograničenih verbalnih sposobnosti (dakle, kao i njihova ciljana publika) igraju na idiličnim proplancima i gledaju televizijske programe koji se emitiraju u njihovim tibicama (odatle i naziv *showa*). Dakle, namjera je *Telletubbies*a djecu od najranijih dana pacificirati ekranima i projekcijama. Tinky Winky je bio nositelj tih projekcija i iluzija, a sada igračke s njegovim likom, koje su djeci iluziju i njezinu utjehu produljivale i

* Budući da ne znamo morfosintaksu teletabijskog jezika, odlučili smo sklanjati imena prema hrvatskom jeziku. Nadamo se da se poznavatelji neće uvrijediti i molimo ih za konzultacije kako bismo što uspješnije ostvarili transliteracije.

nakon završetka epizode na televiziji, leže odbačene u blatu. Što samo znači da su neprestano potrebne nove iluzije – i pojedincu u osobnom razvoju i cijelom društvu. Lakše je u šumi pronaći raskomadanog plišanca i sjetiti se djetinjstva kada smo voljeli njegov lik, ili svijeta od prije dvadesetak godina kada su ga voljeli mališani manji od nas, negoli se suočiti, ili se barem poigrati, s mogućnošću da su i naše ličnosti zapravo takve plišane, smiješne i simpatične, ali i potrošne i konstruirane lutke. Simulakri simulakra, zabavne i utješne laži, teške droge o kojima smo tragično ovisni. Kad smo toga svjesni, možemo prepoznati sebe u svakom raspadajućem Tinkyju Winkyju.

STJEPAN ŠANDRK rođen je 1984. godine u Osijeku. Diplomirao je na slikarskom odsjeku Akademije likovnih umjetnosti u Zagrebu 2006. godine u klasi Igora Rončevića. Godine 2015. doktorirao je na istoj Akademiji. Dosad je izlagao na 20 samostalnih i na više od 50 skupnih izložbi u Hrvatskoj i inozemstvu.

Dobitnik je nekoliko nagrada, uključujući nagradu publike „T-HTnagrada@MSU.hr“ 2012., nagradu „Ex aequo“ 22. Slavenskog bijenala 2010., te nagrade Hrvatske gospodarske komore i Vijeća profesora ALU-a za najuspješnijeg diplomanta 2006. godine.

Redovni je član udruge MENSA-e.



Crypto punk, 2021., ulje na platnu, 70 x 50 cm/
Crypto Punk, 2021, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm



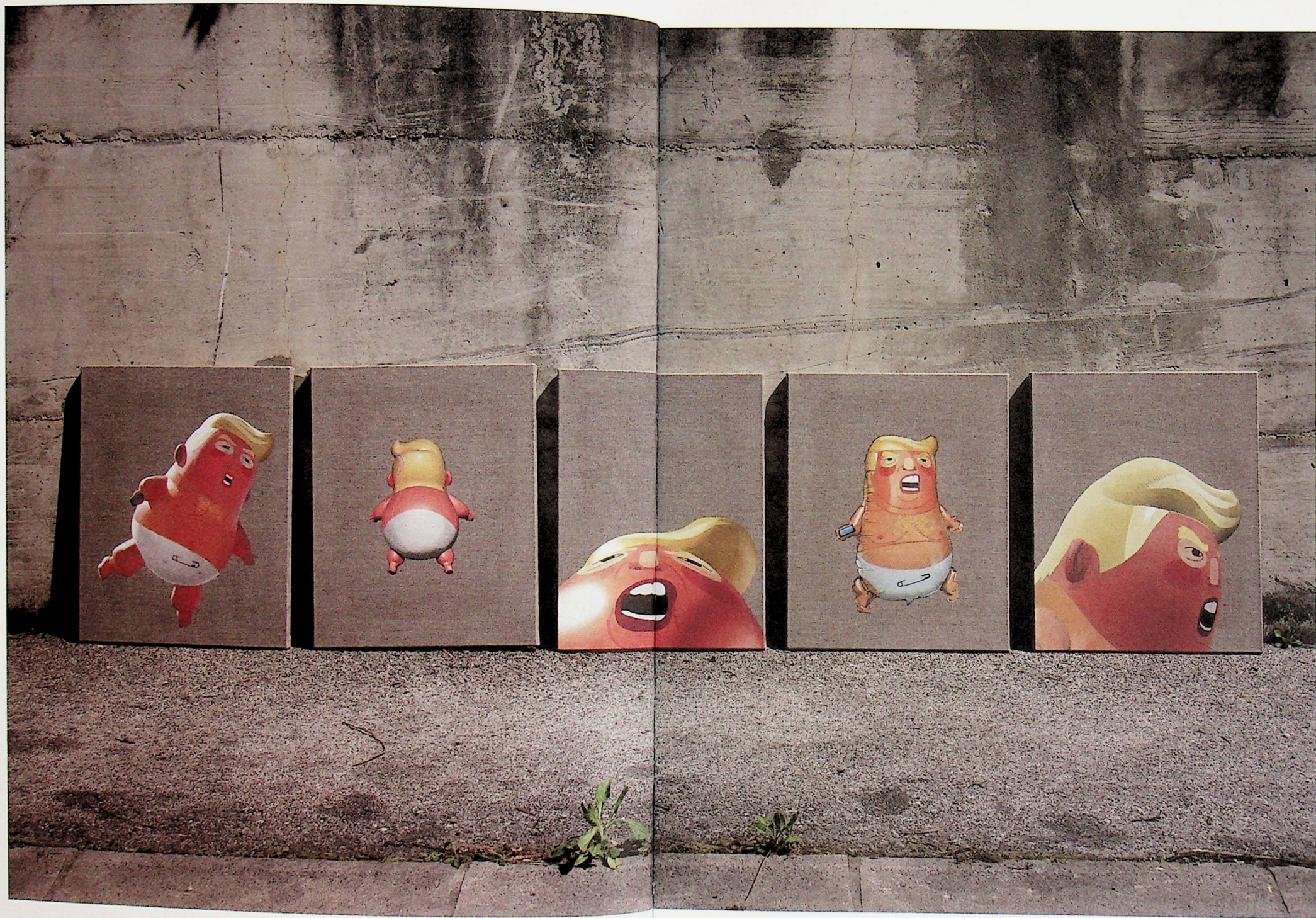
Nyan cat, 2021., ulje na platnu, 150 x 120 cm/
Nyan Cat, 2021, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm

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Čudna smrt Tinkyja Winkyja 2, 2021., ulje na platnu, 225 x 180 cm/
The Strange Death of Tinky Winky 2, 2021, oil on canvas, 225 x 180 cm

Čudna smrt Tinkyja Winkyja, 2020., ulje na platnu, 50 x 65 cm/
The Strange Death of Tinky Winky, 2020, oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm





stranice 10,11 / pages 10,11 :

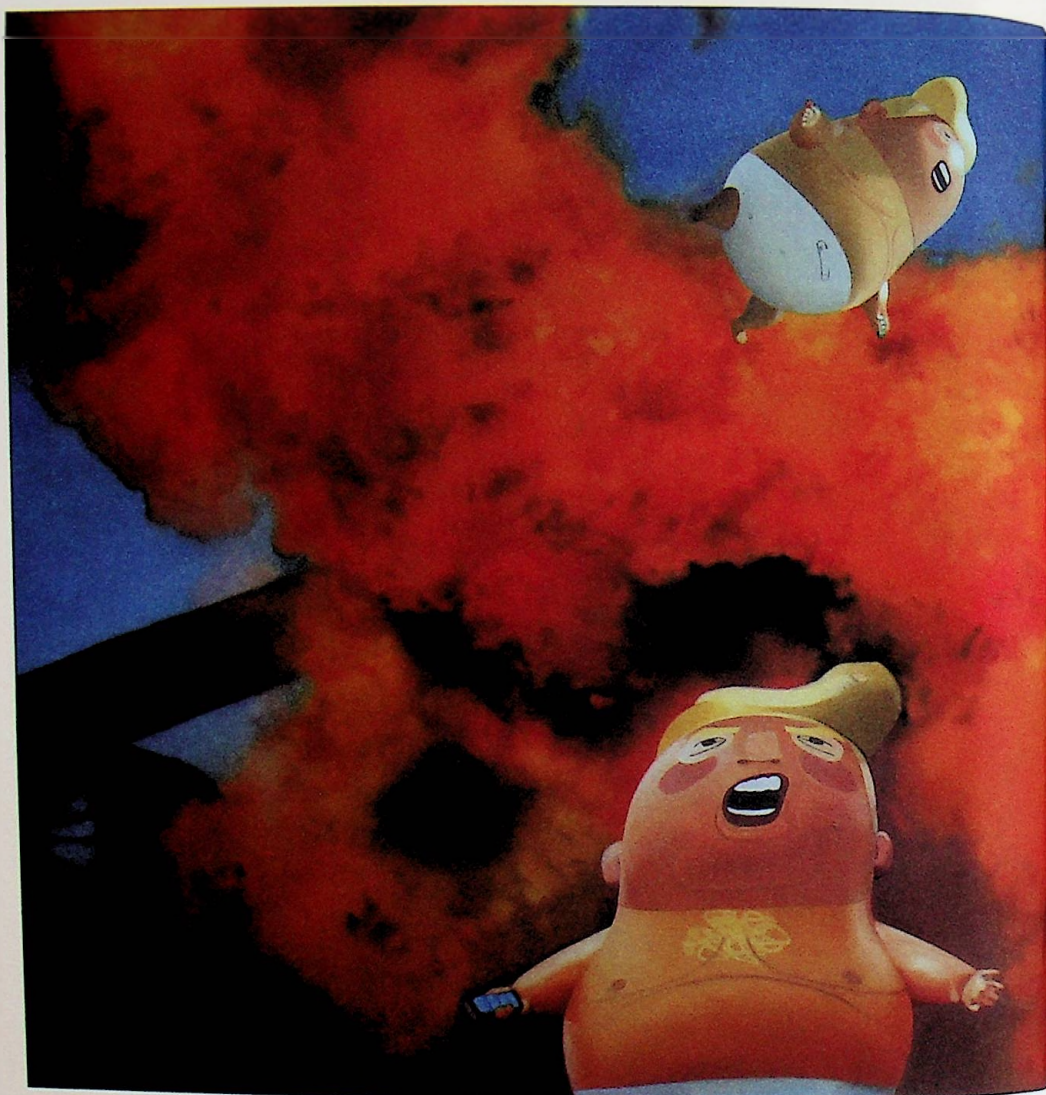
Fake news Serie A, 2020., ulje na platnu, 50 x 40 cm, 5 komada/
Fake News Serie A, 2020, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm, 5 pieces

stranica 13 / page 13 :

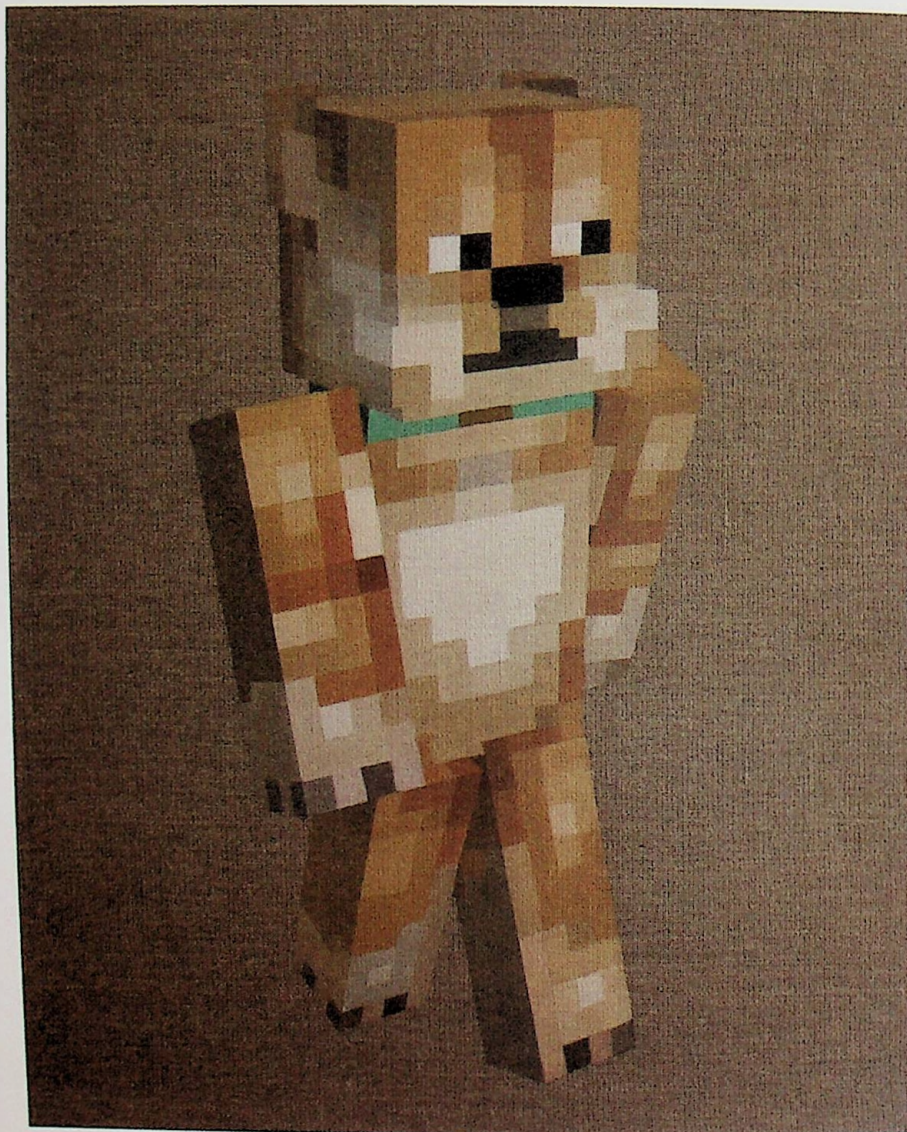
Minecraft, 2020., ulje na platnu, 60 x 40 cm/
Minecraft, 2020, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 cm

Digitalni psi, 2021., ulje na platnu, 120 x 150 cm/
Digital Dogs, 2021, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm





Fake news, 2019., ulje na platnu, 100 x 200 cm/
Fake News, 2019, oil on canvas, 100 x 200 cm



Shiba Inu, 2021., ulje na platnu, 50 x 40 cm/
Shiba Inu, 2021, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm



Spiderman, 2020., ulje na platnu, 80 x 60 cm/
Spiderman, 2020, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm



*Pokémoni, 2021., ulje na platnu, 40 x 80 cm/
Pokémon, 2021, oil on canvas, 40 x 80 cm*

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The trust in the media has been unbelievably low lately. Topics of the day are ways in which the ruling class imposes its interests on the masses via media – once that was simply called ideology or propaganda, and today the terms “manufacturing consent” (title of the well-known book on the topic by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky from 1988), “simulacra” (by Jean Baudrillard) or “fake news” (the most popular phrase today to discredit political opponents) are gaining in popularity. We know strong visuality extremely contributes to a message’s receptivity. It is a climate in which intellectualizing about the relationship between image and truth thrive perfectly. And especially when dealing with the painting of artists such as Stjepan Šandrk, whose highly realistic process in paintings merges art history, video games, politics, daily events and social trends, blends the virtual and real, simulation and truth, and so on and so forth.

But, “What is truth?”, I ask along with Pontius Pilate.

Our gaze is the result of a complex chemical and optical game of the nervous system, our consciousness is a paradoxical projection, a story we continuously tell ourselves and therefore constitute that which tells that story. Yes, people were always manipulated with narratives – they were construed by shamans, priests, monks, and all those who claim to have (and I’m not rejecting the possibility that some truly have) a relationship with some higher reality. Yes, the media lies for kings, bankers, and presidents, but art also lies for them, what else is new? Maybe they lie better today than they did before, and maybe today we lie better to ourselves in order to see through their lies?

Let’s try to approach all of this from another angle.

Consciousness, whatever it might be, is first and foremost, a narrative. A story of a continuous “I”, supported by memory, a tale of an entity which has its rises and falls, triumphs and traumas. It is a story we identify with, and that which we call “reality” is the set design of the operetta we call our life. It is easy to recognize truthful depictions of reality on Šandrk’s canvases. Montages of seemingly incompatible contexts or introducing digital characters in a mimetically depicted world can be interpreted as a commentary of present-day life in a kind of hyperreality, in a reality shaped by media and ideology, which is seemingly specific to the present age. However, ideology has always shaped the human consciousness. For the medieval Western man, the Christian pantheon and afterlife worlds were as equally real and present (real on the special level which borders with fiction), as Instagram and Facebook profiles are to present-day people. Art has always either contributed to maintaining the ruling ideology or has critically commented on the scenes from that collective imagination. Those are all ancient things.

Our consciousness, in the constant creation of itself, is highly applicable to any kind of external narrative which would shape it. Maybe it even longs for it. That gives it identity, the sweetest lie of them all and desperately needed help, that warm blanket in the cold desert of reality which in itself does not have some sense and in which the “I” is merely another illusion.

That is why we need gods and stars. So their strong appearance in our imagination hides the fact that we live in a world of simulations, a world in which the biggest simulation, that from which everything arises – is us. When seen from that perspective, Šandrk’s canvases are no social commentary of daily politics or the influence of technology on our

consciousness or the economic system. What makes cryptocurrencies different from lithographies we call banknotes? What makes a global leader who actively uses electronic media different from all the ruling manipulators, ever since the druids in Stonehenge? And why is the time spent in video games any less qualitative than the time spent in often monotonous, uniform, and numbing social events or killed in the escape to other opiates? Behind the different sides of these comparisons are only different constructions of illusion. All the dichotomies such as, for instance, "natural and artificial", "image and reality" or "true and false", arise from our consciousness, which is a kind of projection itself.

The digital dogs from *Minecraft* in fact completely harmoniously and naturally fit into Šandrĳ's idyllic winter landscape. The balloon on his painting, with which the apparent dissidents wanted to mock the angry American president, is only an ideological *doppelgänger*, i.e., the spiritual double of that politician who, as much as he himself, twists reality for the people. And the people enjoy that game and manipulation because the world outside it is terrible and unimaginable.

Stjepan Šandrĳ loves some illusions, as do we all. One of his favorite ones is nature, so he often indulges in walks in the woods. On two such occasions, he came upon an identical, frightening scene which he then immortalized on canvas – a torn stuffed toy of Tinky Winky, one of the heroes of *Teletubbies*. It is a television show for toddlers in which the chubby aliens of limited verbal abilities (the same as their target audience) play on idyllic hills and watch television programs broadcasted in their tubbies (thence the name of the show). Therefore, it is the *Teletubbies'* aim to pacify children from the earliest age with screens and projections. Tinky Winky was the main figure of these projections and illusions, and now Tinky Winky toys, which extended the illusion and its comfort for children even after the episode aired on TV, lay discarded in the mud. That only means new

illusions are constantly needed – both for individuals in personal growth and the whole society. It is easier to find a torn stuffed toy in the woods and remember our childhood when we loved his character, or the world from twenty years ago when toddlers smaller than us loved it, than to face, or at least toy with, the possibility that our personalities are also such stuffed, funny, and likable, but also expendable and constructed dolls. Simulacra of simulacra, entertaining and comforting lies, hard drugs to which we are tragically addicted. When we become aware of that, we can recognize ourselves in every decaying Tinky Winky.

STJEPAN ŠANDRK was born in 1984 in Osijek. He graduated painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 2006 under Igor Rončević. In 2015, he received a doctorate at the same Academy. He has exhibited in 20 solo and more than 50 group exhibitions in Croatia and abroad.

He has won several awards, including the audience award "T-HTnagrada@MSU.hr" in 2012, the "Ex aequo" award of the 22nd Slavonian Biennale, and the award of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and Council of professors of the Academy of Fine Arts for the most successful graduate of 2006.

He is a regular member of MENSA.

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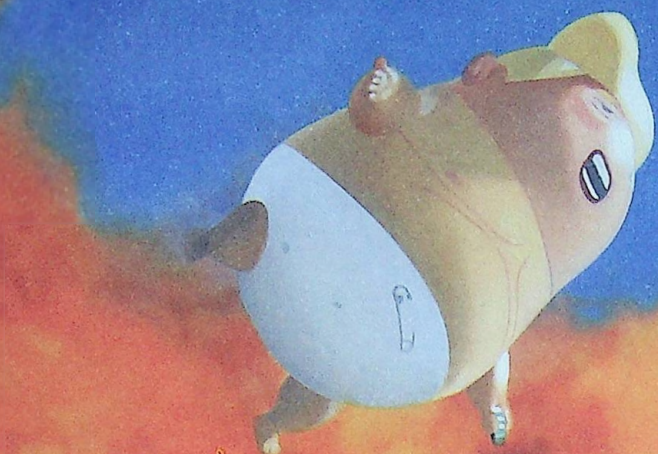
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