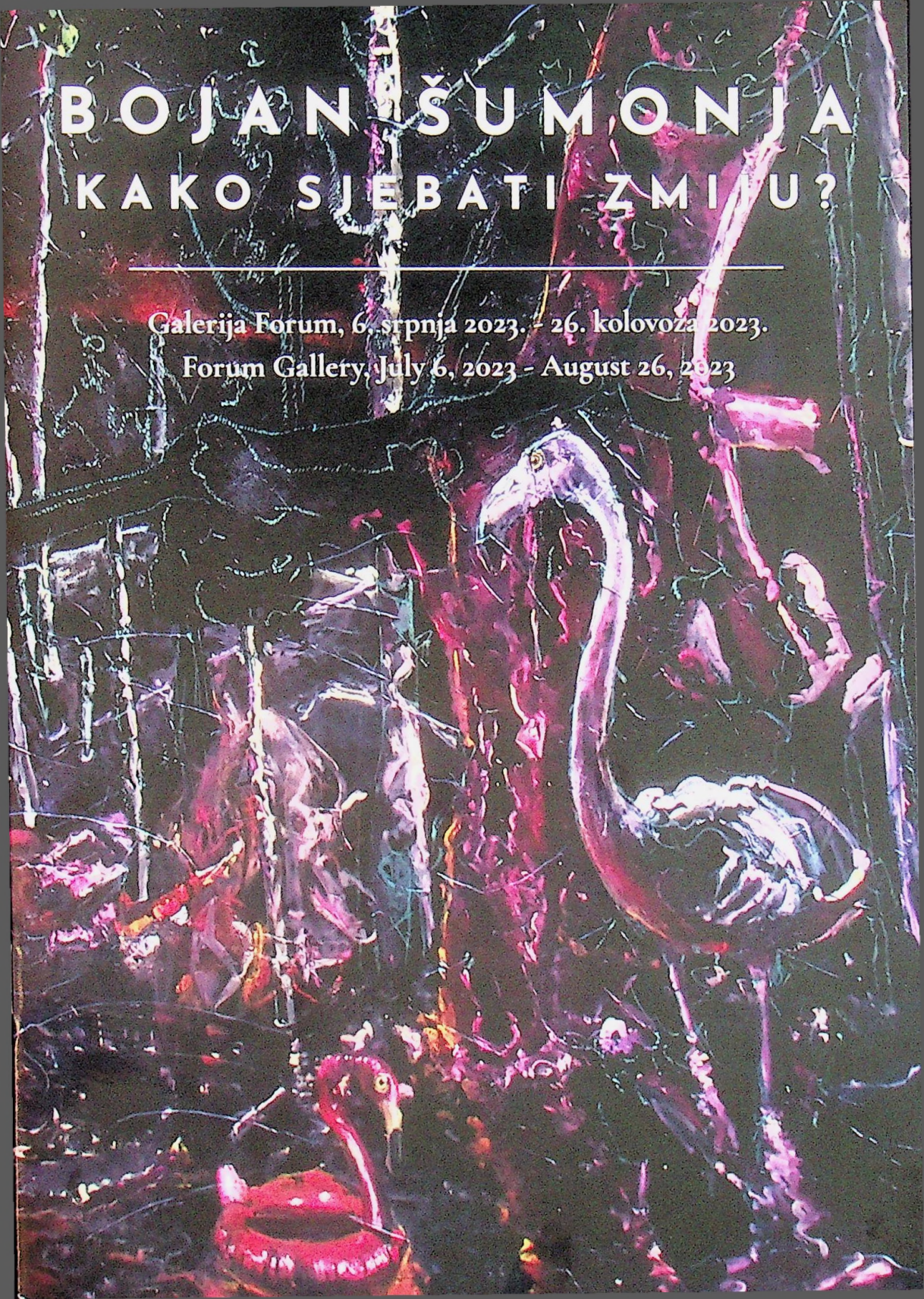


BOJAN ŠUMONJA

KAKO SJEBATI ZMIJU?

Galerija Forum, 6. srpnja 2023. - 26. kolovoza 2023.

Forum Gallery, July 6, 2023 - August 26, 2023



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KAKO SJEBATI ZMIJU?

Feda Gavrilović

Čini mi se da tumačenja umjetničkih djela u posljednje vrijeme pate od velikog problema: često pokušavaju sadržaje tradicionalnog mističizma ugurati u jezik pozitivizma, to jest znanosti i logike. Umjesto toga, strogu racionalnost znanosti i intuitivnu neposrednost mističizma možemo shvatiti kao dva nerazdvojna dijela istog sustava, recimo neke metodologije ili interpretacije pojedinačnog ostvarenja ili opusa. Tada se može doći do puno zanimljivijih pristupa umjetnosti od deskriptivnog seciranja forme, nabiranja kulturoloških asocijacija i društvenih aktualija ili bilježenja vlastitih emotivnih reakcija. Kada prihvatimo da se neke stvari ne mogu i ne trebaju prenijeti razumom, ostaje nam ta (u tom slučaju – neizreciva) suština umjetničkoga.

Slike Bojana Šumonje istovremeno su aktualne i klasične u svojim motivima. Arhetipskog neprijatelja koji u brojnim mitologijama – od biblijske do mezoameričke – ima lik zmije, on postavlja kao nevidljivog i neizrecivog, nepoznatljivog animusa iza ljudske kreativnosti i ljudske destrukcije. Tu kreativnost kod Šumonje predstavlja suvremena umjetnost, preciznije, suvremeno slikarstvo (što slikama daje i autoreferentnu crtu), a destruktivnost pustopoljine na kojima se ističu nakupine otpada, odnosno ostaci civilizacije koji imaju svoju materijalnu tvornost i svoje simboličko značenje. Drugim riječima, zagađuju prirodu, ali i um.

Animozitet čovjeka prema zmiji ima izvor u našim genima, što dobro objašnjava Edward O. Wilson, u jednom dijelu opširne i briljantne knjige *Pomirenje: Jedinstvo znanja* (*Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, izdane 1998., a u hrvatskom prijevodu Nebojše Budanovca, 2010.). Strah od zmija bio je evolutivna prednost naših predaka prije nego li su njihove fizionomije bile one *Homo sapiens*. Zmije su opasne, dobro se prikrivaju i lako je poginuti od njihova otrovnog ugriza. Urođene predispozicije za odbojnost prema zmijama pretočile su se u mitove i bajke u trenutku kada su naši preci razvili jezik, imaginaciju i, kasnije, civilizaciju.

I sada jedan slikar imaginira kraj te civilizacije, pozivajući se na duhove drevnih bogova i simbolične prikaze kozmičkih sila koje vole zavodljiv lik zmije. Urođeno i naučeno dvije su sile koje grade naš svijet. S jedne strane su tu urođene potrebe za hranom, skloništem, sigurnošću, a s druge obrasci usvojeni kulturom – od poljoprivrede do moralnih uzusa – koji bi trebali osigurati stabilno ispunjenje tih potreba zajednici i njezinim članovima. Nesklad u društvu kao i devastacija prirode nastaju kada se stvori disbalans tih dviju sila. Kada želja za komforom individue nadvlada osjećaj za zajednicu, ili kada želja za širenjem komfora počne uništavati resurse koji su preduvjet kvalitetnog života zajednica, ostaje nam pustoš. U njoj prebiva Bojan Šumonja.

To je (vrlo eliotovska) pustinja, ispunjena citatima, simbolima i predstavljena gustim, titravim rukopisom. Naglašavanje nanosa boje osvještava nas kako je upravo slikarstvo jezik u kojemu percipiramo ove pojave. Time se ističe i trenutačna i neposredna prisutnost slikarove vizije, te njezina razina stvarnosti koja je istovremeno materijalna i mentalna, ili bolje rečeno: ni jedno ni drugo. Ovi su pejzaži ispunjeni znakovima bez značenja – predivnim i kičastim plamencima ili igračkama koje sugeriraju i nostalgiju za djetinjstvom i bespotrebno gomilanje predmeta. Njihova pojavljivanja ovdje su i autorov komentar na ikonografiju suvremenog slikarstva koja se silno

trudi biti neobična, ekstravagantna i bizarna. Ponovno, forma i sadržaj su nerazdvojni. Svi likovi i predmeti tu djeluju kao da su u mimikriji s pozadinom. Poput zmija koje, skrivene u lišću, čekaju žrtvu – pažljivog gledatelja koji će pokušati razgrnuti slojeve značenja, nepripremljen na njihov smrtonosni ugriz.

Šumonja nabraja različite znakove ne želeći ulaziti u ono što oni nose. Produkcija značenja danas buja poput produkcije predmeta, a njezina prekomjernost dovodi do njihove inflacije i relativizacije, to jest do sveopće beznačajnosti. Ali, i ovo je jedna interpretacija! Može li se ikako slikar sakriti od njih, mimikrirajući se, na prvi pogled u svoj postapokaliptični krajolik, ali zapravo u slikarstvo samo? No, čemu onda to slikarstvo, ako je i ono prazan znak, to jest tek lijepa tehnika koja će narcisoidno upućivati na sebe samu i na svoju vještu primjenu?

Ali, zmija, kako je kroz ove kriptične slike provlači Bojan Šumonja, nije samo iznenadna prepreka svakom tumačenju. Ona je, istovremeno, i sam tumač. Naš um. Elegantni antagonist koji se izvija po slojevima boje ovih slika i traži značenje koje će ubiti sva druga. Ona je, dakle, i mudrost i smrt. Blagodat znanja, kao i opasnost koju ono nosi. No, ona je i zadnji referent. Bez nje ove slike (i umjetnička djela općenito) nemaju smisla. Borba sa zmijom potraga je za krajnjim značenjem koje dokida i samo sebe. A poznata nam je i zmija koja sebe proždire – Uroboros.

Ipak, i taj konflikt tumača i tumačenog, kao i konflikt uma i intuicije, ili znanosti i mistike, može se preokrenuti u produktivnu suradnju. U spomenutom djelu Edward O. Wilson navodi i ovu anegdotu: „Jednog dana 1865. godine, drijemajući kraj vatre, njemački kemičar Friedrich August Kekule von Stradonitz sanjao je o Uroborosu i tako zamislio molekulu benzena kao krug od šest atoma ugljika od kojih je svaki vezan za atom vodika. Zbog te inspiracije, riješeni su neki od najviše zbunjujućih problema organske kemije devetnaestog stoljeća.“

O našem složenom odnosu sa zmijama Edward O. Wilson piše u istoj knjizi: „Reakcija na prijetnju nije jednostavno izbjegavanje na način na koji izbjegavamo određene vrste bobica koje su se pokazale otrovnima, već i osjećaj straha i morbidne fascinacije koje primati pokazuju u blizini zmija.“ I reakcija na umjetničko djelo obično je negdje između straha (to jest osupnutosti) i morbidne fascinacije. A odgovor na pitanje zašto su zmije u mitološkom imaginariju čovjeka zauzele značajnije mjesto od otrovnih bobica, prostor je rezerviran za recipijenta umjetničkog djela. Prostor moje tišine i vaše reakcije.

BOJAN ŠUMONJA rođen je u Puli 1960. Diplomirao je na Odsjeku za kiparstvo Umjetničke akademije u Veneciji (Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia) u klasi prof. Tramontina 1984. godine. Jedan je od osnivača Hrvatskog društva likovnih umjetnika Istre. Godine 2007. u izdanju HDLU-a Istre izlazi monografija o njegovu radu. Radovi mu se nalaze u stalnom postavu Nacionalnog muzeja moderne umjetnosti, Muzeja moderne i suvremene umjetnosti Rijeka te u mnogim gradskim i privatnim zbirkama.

Moja prva slika s temom feniksa (plamenaca ili žar-ptica) koje sam smjestio u brezovu šumu, to jest u ambijent u kojemu feniks nije boravio nikad. Možda je ovo moja prva distopijska slika. Zašto baš brezova šuma? I zašto baš flamingosi ili srne koje će doći kasnije?

Kontemplirajući nad recentnim stvaralaštvom suvremene slikarske produkcije, uočio sam da su to već toliko komercijalizirani motivi da sam ih počeo doživljavati kao *izluzane suvremene arhetipove*. Oni su postali idealni motivi za izrugivanje s trendovima, koji su daleko od suštine. /

My first painting revolves around the theme of the phoenix (flamingos or firebirds), placed amidst a birch forest, a setting where the phoenix has never dwelled before. This could be considered my inaugural dystopian artwork. Why a birch forest? And why the inclusion of flamingos or deer, which will appear later?

Reflecting on the recent creations of contemporary painting production, I have come to realize that these motifs have become overly commercialized, to the point where they now embody *clashed contemporary archetypes*. They have transformed into ideal subjects for satirizing trends that have strayed far from their essence.

(B. S.)

Here we are, jebiga, 2020., ulje na lanu, 150 x 120 cm /

Here we are, fuck it, 2020., oil on linen, 150 x 120 cm



The end is only beginning, 2023., katran, ulje, uljani pasteli, crni emajl na platnu, 210 x 260 cm /

The end is only beginning, 2023., tar, oil, oil pastels, black enamel on canvas, 210 x 260 cm

*We are all
coming from
somewhere,*
2021.,
ulje na platnu,
210 x 260 cm /

*We are all
coming from
somewhere,*
2021.,
oil on canvas,
210 x 260 cm





WTF is Rudy?,
2021.,
ulje i emajl na
platnu,
210 x 260 cm /

WTF is Rudy?,
2021.,
oil and
enamel on
canvas,
210 x 260 cm



Tarring and feathering – katran i perje, kazna, pravda, osveta, izgon, javna kritika, nepovratno izgubljena šansa, osuda, nemogući pokušaj leta ako je okrenuta naopačke... tarot-slika koja govori o tome da je došlo vrijeme da niskovi plate.... 2021., katran, ulje, uljani pasteli, crni emajl, akril i BLK 3.0 na platnu, 210 x 260 cm /

Tarring and feathering - tar and feathers, punishment, justice, revenge, expulsion, public criticism, irrevocably lost chance, denunciation, impossible attempt of flying if upside-down ... tarot image saying the time has come for scoundrels to pay.... 2021. tar, oil, oil pastels, black enamel, acrylic and BLK 3.0 on canvas, 210 x 260 cm



WOOD WIDE WEB, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /

WOOD WIDE WEB, 2022, oil on linen, 210 x 260 cm



Plastic God from the woods, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /
Plastic God from the woods, 2022, oil on linen, 210 x 260 cm



Nove situacije traže nove grimase, ident ja sad, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /
New situations call for new grimaces, and off I go, 2022, oil on linen, 210 x 260 cm



La Festa Dopo La Partenza Degli Umanoidi, 2022., ulje na lanu, 202 x 260 cm /
La Festa Dopo La Partenza Degli Umanoidi, 2022, oil on linen, 202 x 260 cm

E sad, zadnja slika iz ovog ciklusa trebala bi dati odgovor na pitanje svih pitanja.

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Zmija koja je zavela i prevarila Evu povezana je s osjećajima iskušenja, seksa, s upitnom vjerom i nečime što staje između vas i vaše religije. Sumnja je stanje nepotpune vjere u nekog ili nešto, a isto tako i metoda propitivanja datosti.

Dakle, zmija, koja je probudila sumnju, učinila je da čovjek padne u grijeh te raskine izravni odnos s bogom, postala je amblem zla.

Pitanje „Kako sjebat zmiyu?“ je ontološko, a pomalo i kozmogonijsko pitanje. To pitanje implicira i niz drugih pitanja tipa: „Kako izaći iz kaosa, kako pronaći mir i želi li uopće ljudska vrsta mir?“

Zmija je, u isto vrijeme, i bolest i lijek, slično kao što se cjepivo proizvodi od tvari koja uzrokuje bolesti, a protuotrov od otrova. /

Now, the last painting in this cycle should provide an answer to the ultimate question.

The snake that seduced and deceived Eve is intertwined with feelings of temptation, sexuality, and a wavering faith, representing something that comes between one and one's religious beliefs. Doubt is a state of incomplete faith in someone or something, serving as a method to question established truths.

Thus, the snake that stirred doubt led mankind into sin, rupturing the direct connection with God and becoming the symbol of evil.

The question "How to fuck up the snake?" is not only ontological but also carries a hint of cosmogonic inquiry. This question implies a cascade of other queries such as "how to emerge from chaos, how to find inner peace, and does the human species truly desire tranquility?"

The snake is, simultaneously, both a malady and a remedy, resembling how vaccines are derived from substances that cause diseases, and antidotes from poisons.

(B. Š.)

How to fuck up the fucking snake, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 202 cm /

How to fuck up the fucking snake, 2022, oil on linen, 210 x 202 cm





Čudna ekipa iz Lobarike, 2023., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /
Weirdos from Lobarika, 2023, oil on linen, 210 x 260 cm



Čudna ekipa iz Lobarike II, 2023., ulje na lanu, 205 x 260 cm /
Weirdos from Lobarika II, 2023, oil on linen, 205 x 260 cm

HOW TO FUCK UP THE SNAKE?

Feda Gavrilović

It seems to me that interpretations of artworks have been facing a significant problem lately: they often attempt to fit the content of traditional mysticism into the language of positivism, that is, science and logic. Instead, we can view the strict rationality of science and the intuitive immediacy of mysticism as two inseparable parts of the same system, perhaps a methodology or interpretation of individual achievements or artistic oeuvres. This approach can lead to much more intriguing approaches to art than merely descriptive dissection of form, listing cultural associations and societal issues, or recording personal emotional reactions. When we accept that certain things cannot and should not be conveyed through reason alone, the essence of art remains (in that case - inexpressible) for us to grasp.

Bojan Šumonja's paintings are simultaneously contemporary and classical in their motifs. He portrays the archetypal enemy, often represented as a serpent in various mythologies from biblical to Mesoamerican, as an invisible and indescribable animus behind human creativity and human destruction. Šumonja associates this creativity with contemporary art, specifically contemporary painting, which adds a self-referential quality to the paintings. On the other hand, the desolation of the landscapes, emphasized by accumulations of waste and remnants of civilization, which possess their own tangible materiality and symbolic meaning. In other words, they contaminate both nature and the human mind.

The animosity between humans and snakes can be traced back to our genes, as thoroughly explained by Edward O. Wilson in his extensive and brilliant book "Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge" (1998). The fear of snakes was an evolutionary advantage for our ancestors even before their physical features resembled *Homo sapiens*. Snakes are dangerous, adept at camouflage, and their venomous bite can be deadly. Ingrained predispositions for aversion towards snakes transformed into myths and fairy tales as our ancestors developed language, imagination, and eventually, civilization.

And now, a painter imagines the end of that civilization, invoking the spirits of ancient gods and symbolic representations of cosmic forces that favor the alluring form of the snake. Innate and learned, these are the two forces that shape our world. On one hand, there are innate needs for food, shelter, and security, while on the other hand, there are cultural patterns - from agriculture to moral customs - that should ensure the stable fulfillment of those needs for the community and its members. Disharmony in society and the devastation of nature arise when an imbalance between these two forces is created. When the individual's desire for comfort overrides the sense of community, or when the pursuit of expanding comfort begins to destroy the resources that are crucial for a quality communal life, all that remains is desolation. It is within this desolation that Bojan Šumonja resides.

This is a (very Eliot-esque) wasteland, brimming with quotations, symbols, and presented with dense, quivering handwriting. The emphasis on color layers heightens our awareness that painting itself is the language through which we perceive these phenomena. It underscores the immediate and unmediated presence of the painter's vision, and its level of reality that is both material and mental, or rather: neither one nor the other. These landscapes are filled with meaningless signs - exquisite and kitschy flamingos

or toys that evoke nostalgia for childhood and the unnecessary accumulation of objects. Their presence here also serves as the artist's commentary on the iconography of contemporary painting, which earnestly strives to be peculiar, extravagant, and bizarre. Once again, form and content are inseparable. All the figures and objects appear as if in mimicry with the background. Like snakes concealed in the foliage, they lie in wait for their prey - the observant viewer who will attempt to unravel the layers of meaning, unsuspecting of their venomous bite.

Šumonja lists various signs without delving into what they signify. The production of meaning today flourishes like the production of objects, and its excessiveness leads to their inflation and relativization, that is, to a universal insignificance. But even this is one interpretation! Can a painter somehow hide from them, blending in, at first glance, with their post-apocalyptic landscape, but actually within the realm of painting itself? But then, what is the purpose of painting if it too becomes an empty sign, merely a beautiful technique that narcissistically refers to itself and its skillful execution?

However, the snake, as Bojan Šumonja intertwines it through these enigmatic paintings, is not merely an abrupt obstacle to any interpretation. It is simultaneously the interpreter itself. It embodies our own minds—the elegant antagonist slithering across layers of color in these artworks, seeking a meaning that annihilates all others. It represents wisdom and death simultaneously, carrying the boon of knowledge and the perils it entails. Yet, it also stands as the ultimate point of reference. Without it, these paintings (and art in general) would lose their purpose. The struggle with the snake becomes a quest for ultimate significance that undermines even itself. And we are familiar with the snake that devours itself - the Ouroboros.

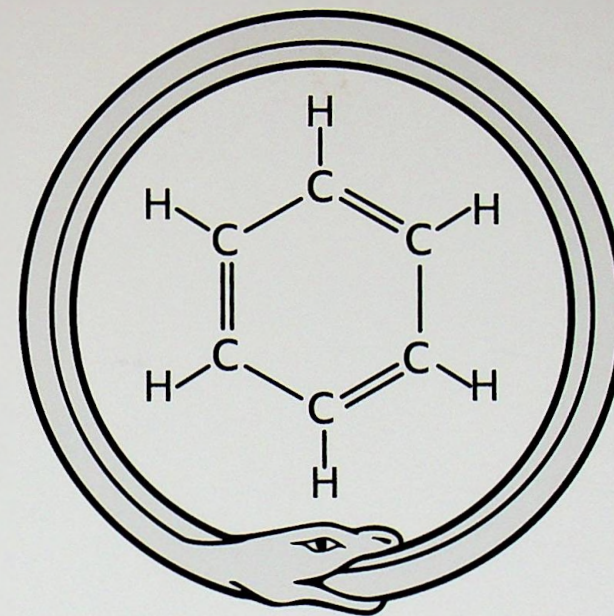
However, even this conflict between the interpreter and the interpreted, as well as the conflict between the mind and intuition, or

between science and mysticism, can be transformed into a productive collaboration. In his aforementioned work, Edward O. Wilson also shares the following anecdote: "One day in 1865, while dozing by the fireplace, the German chemist Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz dreamt of the Ouroboros and envisioned the benzene molecule as a ring of six carbon atoms, each bound to a hydrogen atom. This inspiration led to the resolution of some of the most perplexing problems in nineteenth-century organic chemistry."

In the same book, Edward O. Wilson writes about our complex relationship with snakes: "The response to a threat is not simply avoidance, like we avoid certain types of poisonous berries, but also a sense of fear and morbid fascination exhibited by primates in the presence of snakes." The reaction to a work of art usually falls somewhere between fear (or astonishment) and morbid fascination. And the question of why snakes have occupied a more significant place in human mythological imagery than poisonous berries is a space reserved for the recipient of the artwork. It is the realm of my silence and your reaction.

BOJAN ŠUMONJA was born in Pula in 1960. He graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia, department of sculpture, under prof Tramontina in 1984. He is one of the founders of the Croatian Association of Fine Artists of Istria. A monograph of his work was published in 2007 by the Croatian Association of Fine Artists of Istria. His works are part of the National Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, and at many city and private collections.

1. *Here we are, jebiga*, 2020., ulje na lanu, 150 x 120 cm /
Here we are, fuck it, 2020, oil on linen, 150 x 120 cm
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3. *We are all coming from somewhere*, 2021., ulje na platnu, 210 x 260 cm /
We are all coming from somewhere, 2021, oil on canvas, 210 x 260 cm
4. *WTF is Rudy?*, 2021., ulje i emajl na platnu, 210 x 260 cm /
WTF is Rudy?, 2021, oil and enamel on canvas, 210 x 260 cm
5. *WOOD WIDE WEB*, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /
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La Festa Dopo La Partenza Degli Umanoidi, 2022, oil on linen, 202 x 260 cm
9. *How to fuck up the fucking snake*, 2022., ulje na lanu, 210 x 202 cm /
How to fuck up the fucking snake, 2022, oil on linen, 210 x 202 cm
10. *The end is only beginning*, 2023., katran, ulje, uljani pasteli, crni emajl na platnu, 210 x 260 cm /
The end is only beginning, 2023, tar, oil, oil pastels, black enamel on canvas, 210 x 260 cm
11. *Čudna ekipa iz Lobarika*, 2023., ulje na lanu, 210 x 260 cm /
Weirdos from Lobarika, 2023, oil on linen, 210 x 260 cm
12. *Čudna ekipa iz Lobarika II*, 2023., ulje na lanu, 205 x 260 cm /
Weirdos from Lobarika II, 2023, oil on linen, 205 x 260 cm



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BOJAN ŠUMONJA

KAKO SJEBATI ZMIJU? / Galerija Forum

HOW TO FUCK UP THE SNAKE? / Forum Gallery

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BOJAN ŠUMONJA KAKO SJEBATI ZMIJU?

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