

Boris Kuk

Paraizložba

14.3. - 24.3. 2023.



katu

na

galerija

Paraizložba

bareljefi hibridnih kovanica

Paraizložba, Zagreb, 2023.

Valjajući se još uvijek u postmodernom dobu u kojem razne stilske i estetske smjernice mogu biti u suživotu te u kojem 'sjedinenost nespojivih stilova' nije kič negoli odraz slobode i urbanosti, naš identitet također je pretrpio svojevrzni udarac. Od onoga rodnog ili spolnog, do nacionalnog ili kozmopolitskog, identitet je nekako postao oportunistička forma. Kako bih preživio postat ću što god treba, poslušan, glasan, depresivan, bilo što i bilo tko ako mi ta metamorfoza donese lakši život. No, jedan dio našeg identiteta ostao je isti, bili mi prodavači magle ili vizionari, karizmatici ili šarlatani, novac je taj s kojim smo ostvarili trajnu vezu koju nijedna trendovska, biološka ili oportunistička stihija neće moći poništiti ni promijeniti. Ta veza će vremenom imati uspone i padove, imati manje ili više razumijevanja i razočaranja, te se razvijati u iskreniji i pažljiviji odnos od onoga koji imamo s onim značajnim drugim ili drugom.

Uz likovne motive, kombinacije riječi i slike, simbole s jasnim ili okultnim značenjima pažljivo odabranim umjetnicima kojima je Država povjerila oblikovanje moneta ili kovanica, dan je privilegij da s lakoćom prodru do našeg identiteta. Poput nakita, novac je uvijek s nama, uz nas, tek koji milimetar dalje on naše kože, grijemo ga našom tjelesnom toplinom, pazimo i mazimo, i na koncu pažljivo biramo kada i kojom prilikom ćemo ga otpustiti u nečije druge ruke.

Često na novac gledamo kao na djelo bez autora, kao da se ni iz čega stvorio, ne vidimo u njemu neku viziju i misiju Države čija je to valuta, ne zanimaju nas detalji nego samo ono što nam on može omogućiti. One koje zanima pronaći će tko su autori jer znamo da novčanice reflektiraju stil likovnog autora, njegovu bliskost s vrhom Države i njegov status u društvu. Oblikovanje novca tako postaje idealan materijal za dekonstrukciju i konstrukciju, pogotovo u ovome trenutku kada i papirnati i metalni novac neminovno odlazi u povijest, nestaje polako ali sigurno. Onaj digitalni nema ništa, ni lice, ni naličje, nije ni lijep ni ružan, ni poučan, ni okultan, ne nosi poruku niti ima ikakvu priču ali ima ono što je njegova esencija – vrijednost.

Pozabaviti se tom dekadencijom klasične prezentacije novca i ideološko povijesnog kaosa u kojem on polako nestaje, materijal je za autora koji je svjedokom svih tih fenomena i koji ima ikonoklastički stav naspram svega, ne samo novca.

Kuk je upravo takav. Akademski grafičar, te osnivač i polovica autorskog tima 'BožeSačuvaj', niz je desetljeća prisutan na umjetničkoj sceni u Hrvatskoj i šire. Kroz rad s 'BožeSačuvaj' u tvrdim '90-ima, nenamjerno ali temeljito, jednostavno silom prilika, snažno zagrizavši u zeitgeist onoga vremena, izaziva preporod grafičkog komuniciranja prenijevši urbanitet, život i satiru s gradskih ulica u nacionalni medijski prostor.

U radovima iz toga doba, za programe glazbenih klubova i potrebe medija, najčešće Radija 101, nikad prežaljenog simbola otpora u prvim godinama hrvatske samostalnosti, Kuk i Uršić ‘strast za novcem’ gasili su detaljno proučavajući njegovu ikonografiju i ikonologiju. Iz toga nauka na koncu su oblikovali seriju radova na temelju poznatih moneta, poglavito famoznih 100 DM (Deutsche Mark). Oslanjajući se na tada sveprisutnu i svemoćnu njemačku marku napravljen je niz radova koji su satirično komentirali hrvatsku tadašnju zbilju, bolni prelaz na tržišnu ekonomiju, međunarodne tijekove novca i hrvatsku opsjednutost kako je tamo u Germaniji uvijek trava zelenija, a pravda i poštenje curi čistim ulicama.

Godinama kasnije, uz sve veće gađenje ili divljenje prema novcu Kuk izlazi iz grafičkog medija i približava se klasičnijim formama, nalazeći u njima prikladan medij za rasplinjavanje ikonologije koja je krasila kovanice tada moćne jugoslavenske monete dinara i njegove najmanje kovanice od 5 para.

Lingvistička igra kojom je ta mala gotovo bezvrijedna kovanica od bakrene legure postala sinonim za bezvrijednost u samome imenu kao da je svih tih socijalističkih godina krila i kodirano, zagonetno sakriveno značenje kroz riječ *para*, kao da je još tada govorila kako taj naš dinar i nije prava moneta. Tako se i dogodilo, ispario je dinar, isparila je i Država koja ga je kovala i upotrebljavala. Novac sam za sebe predstavlja misteriju, onomad je još i bio opipljiv, metalan i papirnat, no sada kada mu se gubi tjelesnost postaje nekako eteričan, a moćan. Poznat je svima, a opet tajnovit u načinu na koji sažima vrijednost i moć u komad papira, metala i računarskog koda.

Kuk istražuje kroz noćna lutanja internetom sljubljenost ikonografije i riječi prisutnih na novcu te kako vladajuća elita kroz razne mehanizme odlučivanja kreira likovnost važnog i moćnog simbola državnosti i identiteta nacije – novca. Hrvati, kao većinski narod na tlu Republike Hrvatske nakon dinara su odabrali, a da ih nitko baš nije previše ni pitao, kunu i na koncu jednako tako Euro. Nacionalni identitet nam se nije istopio ili nestao, ali je zato dobio težak udarac u kojem je mama Europa jednu malu koloniju s lijepom morskom obalom i otocima konačno pripojila u svoj financijski sustav.

Na koncu novac je komad papira ili metalne legure, mrtva stvar, s kojom stvaramo izuzetno čvrstu, gotovo patološku vezu jer je ipak primarni element oko kojega se gradi državni ustroj u svim uređenim i neuređenim društvima. Njegova sveprisutnost i moć koju ima dolazi duboko iz naše ljudske fascinacije posjedovanjem, željom za moć i opsesivnom potrebom za boljim i lakšim životom.

Upravo tu je izazov kojim Kuk dekonstruira famoznu novčanicu od 5 para dajući joj spomenik i mjesto koju zaslužuje u uvećanoj formi, na *Paraizložbi* gdje tih novih pet para iz 2023. godine budi niz uspomena i asocijacija na neka vremena u kojim se živjelo drugačije gdje su “svi bili zaposleni, ali nitko ništa nije radio.”

Novac tako postaje utjelovljenje nas samih, neki Proustov metalni kolačić gdje se možda prisjetimo mirisa kovanica pomiješanih sa znojem naših dlanova gdje smo tako ostavljajući trag na njima slali i dio sebe u jugoslavensko kolanje robe i vrijednosti.

Udar te nostalgične slike djetinjstva može prekinuti samo želja da se što prije oprostimo s hrvatskom kunom koja, možda radi konotacija na Nezavisnu državu Hrvatsku, bolje da nikada i nije postala moneta samostalne Hrvatske, a koja je ipak nekako preživjela na poledini kovanice od jednoga Eura. Dinar i slatka mala kovanica od 5 para sasvim je isparila iz našeg vidokruga, čak mu je i numizmatička vrijednost ravna nuli.

No, za nas koji pamtimo, pet para će nas uvijek vraćati u slatku nostalgiju vremena kojem su svi imali sve, a opet smo svi nešto pomalo i krali.

Spomenik bezvrijednoj kovanici od 5 para s godinom proizvodnje 2023. primjer je naše nemoći da vlastiti identitet, bio on izgrađen u prošlom ekonomsko-ideološkom sustavu ili ovome danas u kojem se svako jutro budimo sa sve većom jezom u kostima, odvojimo od novca i monete, kako god se ona zvala.

Novac gradi nas, mi gradimo njega, a u tom simbiotičkom odnosu koji svi prepoznaju kao bitan i egzistencijalno važan, Kuk u maniri kojom su i 'BožeSačuvaj' pogađali u sridu, rastakanjem onog banalnog dijela popularne kulture stvara pametni populizam s pokrićem.

Emil Matešić

Para-exhibition

bas-reliefs of hybrid coins

Para-exhibition, Zagreb, 2023.

Still wallowing in the age of postmodernity, in which miscellaneous stylistic and aesthetic principles co-exist, while this 'merger of disparate styles' is not perceived as kitsch but as a reflection of freedom and urban spirit, our identity has also suffered a blow of sorts. From gender to sex, from nationality to cosmopolitanism, one could say that identity is now shaped by opportunism. To survive I will become whatever I need - docile, loud, depressive, anything and anybody, provided this metamorphosis brings me an easier life. However, one part of our identity has remained the same, whether we be hoaxers or visionaries, charismatics or charlatans, money is the one thing we have formed a lasting bond with, a bond which no trendy, biological or opportunistic elements can undo or change. Over time this bond will have its ups and downs, its disappointments and mutual understandings, and develop into a relationship more true and considerate than the one we have with our significant other.

Carefully chosen artists have been entrusted by the State to design notes or coins with painterly motifs, amalgams of words and images, plain or occult symbols. This gives them a unique power to shape our collective identity. Just like jewellery, money is always by our side, only a millimetre apart from our skin. We keep it warm with our bodies, we pamper it, and carefully choose when and on what occasion to release it into somebody else's hands.

We often look at money as something authorless, as if it emerged from nothing, we don't see it as the embodiment of the vision and mission of the State whose currency it represents. We don't care about the details, only about what it can provide us. Those who are interested can find who its authors are, for we know that banknotes reflect a certain visual style, its closeness with the State's leadership and its status in society. Currency design thus becomes ideal material for deconstruction and construction, especially at this moment when both paper and metal money is inevitably becoming obsolete, slowly but surely vanishing. Digital currency has no obverse and reverse, its neither beautiful nor ugly, neither illuminating nor occult, it doesn't carry any message or have any story to tell, but it does have its essence – which is value.

The decadence of the classical presentation of money and the ideological and historical chaos in which it is slowly disappearing is of interest to an author who is witnessing these phenomena from the first hand, and who is distinguished by his iconoclastic attitude towards everything, not just money.

Boris Kuk is exactly this kind of author. An academically trained graphic designer, founder and one half of the duo *BožeSačuvaj*, he has been present on the Croatian and international artistic scene for many decades. Through his work as part of *BožeSačuvaj*, during the gritty 1990s, he unintentionally but profoundly, by force of chance, strongly biting into the zeitgeist of the time, provoked a revival of graphic communication and brought urban spirit, vibrance and satire from the city's streets into the national media space.

In his designs from the time, made for music clubs and various media outlets, most often for Radio 101, the never forgotten symbol of resistance during the first years of Croatia's statehood, Kuk and Uršić quenched their 'passion for money' by studying its iconography and iconology in detail. On the basis of this study they ultimately made a series of works inspired by well-known currencies, especially the infamous 100 DM (Deutsche Mark). Relying on the omnipresent and omnipowerful German currency of the time, they made a series of works which satirised current events in Croatia, the painful transition to market economy, international capital flows and Croatian obsession with Germania where the grass is always greener, while justice and honesty pour over perpetually clean streets.

Years later, with a growing despise or admiration of money, Kuk puts aside graphic design and employs more classical forms, finding a suitable medium for shattering the iconology

which used to adorn the coins of the once powerful Yugoslav currency *dinar* and its smallest coin of 5 *para*.

It is as if the play of words through which this small, almost insignificant coin, made of copper alloy, became the synonym for worthlessness, during all those years spend under socialism, hid in its name a coded, enigmatic hidden meaning – the word *para* exposing our *dinar* as a mock currency. And so it happened – *dinar* disappeared, and with it also the State that forged and consumed it. Money itself is a mystery. It used to be palpable, made of metal or paper, but now that it is disembodied, it is becoming somewhat etheric yet powerful. It is known to everybody, and yet mysterious in the way it condenses value and power into a piece of paper, metal and computer code.

During his nocturnal roaming through the internet Kuk explores the bond between iconography and words written on money, and how the ruling elite, through various mechanisms, creates the visual identity of an important and powerful symbol of statehood and national identity – money. Croats, the majority nation on the soil of the Republic of Croatia, after *dinar* chose, although nobody really asked them, kuna as their new currency, and recently in the same way they 'chose' *euro*. Our national identity has not faded away or disappeared, but it has suffered a strong blow - Mother Europe has finally annexed a small colony, along with its delightful coast and islands, into its financial system.

Ultimately money is just a piece of paper or metal alloy, a dead thing, with which we form a remarkably strong, almost pathological bond, for it is still the primary element around which the state system is built, in all organised and disorganised societies. Its omnipresence and power comes from our deep seeded fascination with possession, lust for power and obsessive strive for a better and easier life.

Here lies the challenge with which Kuk deconstructs the infamous 5 *para* banknote, providing it with a monument and the space it deserves in a magnified form. At the *Para-exhibition* these new 5 *para* banknotes from 2023 arouse many memories and associations of different times when "everybody was employed but nobody worked."

Thus money becomes the embodiment of our being, Proust's metal cooky which makes us remember the smell of coins mixed with the sweat of our palms – by leaving our trace on them we also sent a piece of ourselves into Yugoslav circulation of commodity and value.

The sudden impact of this nostalgic childhood image can only be disrupted by our desire to say goodbye to Croatian *kuna* as soon as possible. Because of its connotations with NDH , it would be better if it never became the currency of the post-Yugoslav independent Croatia. Yet it managed to survive on the back of the 1 *euro* coin, while the *dinar* and its sweet little 5 *para* coin completely vanished from our sight - even its numismatic value is close to zero. But for all of us who remember, 5 *para* will always take us back into sweet nostalgia for a time when everybody had everything, while at the same time we all stole a little.

The monument for the worthless 5 *para* coin which was produced in 2023 is an example of our inability to separate our identity - whether it was forged in the former economic-ideological system, or the current one in which we wake up every morning with more and more dread - from money and currency, whatever its former or current name may be.

Money builds us, we build money, and within this symbiotic relationship which everybody recognizes as essential and existentially significant, Kuk hits the bull's eye once again, in a manner reminiscent to *Bože Sačuvaj* – shattering a banal piece of our popular culture and creating clever and sound populist art.

¹ The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was a World War II-era puppet state of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

Text by: Emil Matešić
Translated by: Dina Pokrajac

Boris Kuk, 1967. Zagreb. Nakon Škole primijenjene umjetnosti u Zagrebu (odjel grafike), diplomirao je na zagrebačkoj Akademiji likovnih umjetnosti (prof. likovne kulture) i specijalizirao grafiku i primijenjenu grafiku. Suosnivač je umjetničko-dizajnerskog dvojca "Božesačuvaj", 1992. i od tada djeluje na hrvatskoj likovno-dizajnerskoj sceni, izlaže paragrafije, koristeći standardno dizajnirane komunikacijske klišee u izmijenjenom i ironičnom kontekstu.

Od 1995. profesionalni je umjetnik, radi samostalno i surađuje s mnogim kulturnim institucijama, umjetničkim projektima i dizajnerskim studijima; suosnivač je dizajn-studija "Hammer-Kreator" 1996.

Od 1998. član je Hrvatske zajednice samostalnih umjetnika (HZSU) do danas. Izlagao je u zemlji i inozemstvu, sudjelovao na mnogim skupnim domaćim i međunarodnim izložbama. Autor je nekih značajnijih hrvatskih plakata, grafički je uredio i likovno opremio više stotina knjiga više nakladnika, desetke časopisa, nosača zvuka i vizuala raznih kulturnih manifestacija. Živi i radi u Zagrebu.

Neke od publikacija:

Feda Vukić: Stoljeće hrvatskog dizajna

Kuk, Uršić: Božesačuvaj – do jaja

Mirko Ilić i Milton Glaser: The Design of Dissent: Socially and Politically Driven Graphics (objavljena u SAD-u 2006.)

Krešimir Bauer: Drugi dizajn – O složenim problemima dizajna

Subjectivities in Investigations of the Urban

(The Scream the Shadow and the Mirror), IKI, International Keio Institute. 2014., Tokyo

Boris Kuk was born in 1967 in Zagreb. After attending the School of Applied Arts in Zagreb (Department of Graphic Design) he graduated from the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts (gaining the title of art professor) and specialised in graphic design and printing.

In 1992 he cofounded the artist-design duo Božesačuvaj and has been a part of the Croatian artistic and designer scene since then. He exhibits paragrafias, using standard designer communication cliches in a modified and ironic context.

He is a professional artist since 1995, he works independently and collaborates with numerous cultural institutions, artistic projects and design studios. In 1996 he cofounded the design studio Hammer-Kreator.

He is a member of the Croatian Association of Freelance Artists (HZSU) since 1998. He exhibited at home and abroad, participating in numerous domestic and international group exhibitions. He authored several important Croatian posters, and has designed several hundred books for various publishers, as well as dozens of magazines, CDs, and promotional materials for various cultural manifestations.

He lives and works in Zagreb.

Publications (a selection):

Feda Vukić: The Century of Croatian Design

Kuk, Uršić: Božesačuvaj – do jaja

Mirko Ilić and Milton Glaser: The Design of Dissent: Socially and Politically Driven Graphics (published in USA in 2006.)

Krešimir Bauer: The Second Design – On Complex Design Issues

Subjectivities in Investigations of the Urban (The Scream the Shadow and the Mirror), IKI, International Keio Institute, 2014, Tokyo

PARAIZLOŽBA / PARA-EXHIBITION

14. 3. – 24. 3. 2023. - Galenja na katu

IZDAVAČ / PUBLISHER: Kulturno informativni centar, Preradovićeva 5, Zagreb

ZA IZDAVAČA / FOR PUBLISHER: Hrvoje Hnbar

VOĐITELJI / KUSTOSI GALERIJE NA KATU /

COORDINATORS AND CURATORS OF THE UPPER FLOOR GALLERY:

Andrea Grgić i Emil Matešić

POSTAV IZLOŽBE / TECHNICAL SETUP: Vedran Gradinović

TEKST / TEXT: Emil Matešić

PRIJEVOD / TRANSLATION: Dina Pokrajac

OBLIKOVANJE PLAKATA / POSTER DESIGN: Emil Matešić

OBLIKOVANJE DEPLIJANA / BOOKLET DESIGN: Vedran Gradinović

TISAK / PRINT: KOLDING

NAKLADA / PRINTS: 100

Zagreb 2023.

Izložba je ostvarena uz potporu Gradskog ureda za kulturu Grada Zagreba,

This exhibition is made possible by City of Zagreb,

SPONZORI / SPONSORS: TISKARA KOLDING, Bensiavićeva 8



KULTURNO
INFORMATIVNI
CENTAR