

rain
in
a tent
Mladen
Stropnik

with

Tomaž Furlan

Maruša Meglič

SBD

The artistic expression, message and creative concept of Mladen Stropnik are defined by a radically simple, almost frugal, and completely unspectacular visual and content language. It is diametrically opposed to today's era of omnipresent, dominant optical sensations, media manipulations, the growing power of artificial intelligence, mass digital technologies and the extremely rapid flow of information, all dictated by established social norms. Yet, at the same time, his works are strangely close to these same stimuli, as they are, in their modest appearance, remarkably dynamic, and, in their strangeness, uniquely poetic. The art of this internationally recognised intermedia artist is a postmodern blend of post-conceptualism, metaphysics and surrealism. His performances, video works, paintings, drawings, prints, collages, objects and NFTs transition into fantastic psychological scenes and spatial situations and events through mutual ambient and intermedia correlations. The showcase of his latest works at RAVNIKAR is also based on this mutual correspondence, through which the artist's individual thoughts are metabolised into complex narratives and into an inseparable whole.

Reading Stropnik's works is most similar to reading poetry, especially haiku, in which the content also unfolds between the lines, words, letters, in the rhythm of empty spaces and indeterminate areas, in the unuttered. His works are created in a fast rhythm. The spectrum of the artist's explorations encompasses the phenomena of fleeting, sometimes irrational thoughts, ideas, flashes of inspiration, unusual experiences and unexpected, momentary mental states that captivate his attention, provoke wonder and inspire questioning. In this way, he reveals the vulnerability of human perception. His works are what he sees and what we then see in them. There is no great mystery here. The mystery only arises through the experience of perceiving the limits of the in-visible. His works do not tell long, complicated stories. The messages are short, sparse, concise and direct. We almost get the feeling that they are too simple to require further thought. And this is precisely where Stropnik employs a psychological trick because "something" in the artwork interrupts and disturbs the appearance of this everydayness that holds or arrests the viewer. The works are conceived on the level of a fragment, in which the perceived lack of wholeness prevents completion or finality. As they do not satisfy in terms of content or visual completeness, they trigger a feeling of unease. This leads to a decisive shift in perception, which moves

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in two directions where there is no room for indifference. If there is a willingness to accept the incomprehensible, the irrational, the unknown, without any preconceived ideas about what art must be today and if the viewer invests time, they can go beyond the expected and enter directly into the world of Stropnik's thoughts and narratives. If unwilling, on the other hand, the path can lead to rejecting the work as an artistic experience and immersing oneself into the unknown world of the creator. In either case, Stropnik's creativity harbours the potential to imprint itself into our memory, regardless of whether it changes or disrupts our established, often worn-out and boring perception of the world.

In his works, Stropnik delves into deep, almost meditative layers of dreams, visions and memories. He is interested in the borderline of the ir/rational, the human psyche, the experiential world and the emotions that arise from experiencing the world and are reflected in "discrepant" visual codes in the form of unmaterialised thoughts and the unuttered. The artist draws from the spectrum of experiences of daily life, which for him represents a series of different, parallel realities. These range from the conscious and rational to various inexplicable, unconscious states that simultaneously emerge on fragile verges and in a wide field, somewhere between dream, sleep and wakefulness. For him, these are equally valid realities that form a single, complex world of human experience. In any case, everything is a series of transitions, farewells and transiencies from which we never return the same, not even from sleep, which ancient cultures and mythologies already referred to as the "small death".

The fact that Stropnik never tells it all is not only an artistic and personal strategy, but also because he often has no answers himself. From the very beginning, Stropnik manifests the absent, empty, missing – and thus everything that is difficult to explain – through various visual areas of openings, cuts, punctures and holes. Around them, we see everyday stories that he draws from these different realities. From stories about his friends and family to tales of reading, going for a walk or bike ride, exchanging artworks and more. Yet hidden in the gaps are the levers and sources of these stories, which he usually dedicates to the important people in his life and also names in the subtitles.

Stropnik used to manifest openings in masks that have since become hollow spheres. Today they are mostly circles, swirls, punctures, torn edges, as if he is observing everything through a kind of increasingly enlarged third eye that feels and knows everything and sometimes even closes. Sometimes he pricks these spheres or their surroundings with the tips of wooden sticks. This eye can be a colour in some places, a dent in others; it can glide across the screen surface of a video or be an actual mirror object, which can also be understood as a collective looking glass whose experience is like Alice's leap down the "rabbit hole" (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), into a world of imagination that exists within each individual. In his works, Stropnik unlocks precisely this place, where playfulness, absurdity and humour collide and the horrific and childlike mingle with transience and death. When you enter it, you enter a space in which absurdities, irregularities and errors are permitted. When Stropnik occasionally uses a mask today, the image underneath can also be completely sealed with glossy foil. This is a thin layer that is both liminal and final at the same time. It is an anti-mirror in which we see neither the person underneath nor ourselves in its reflection, and they do not see themselves either. Is it like a test of the end? His

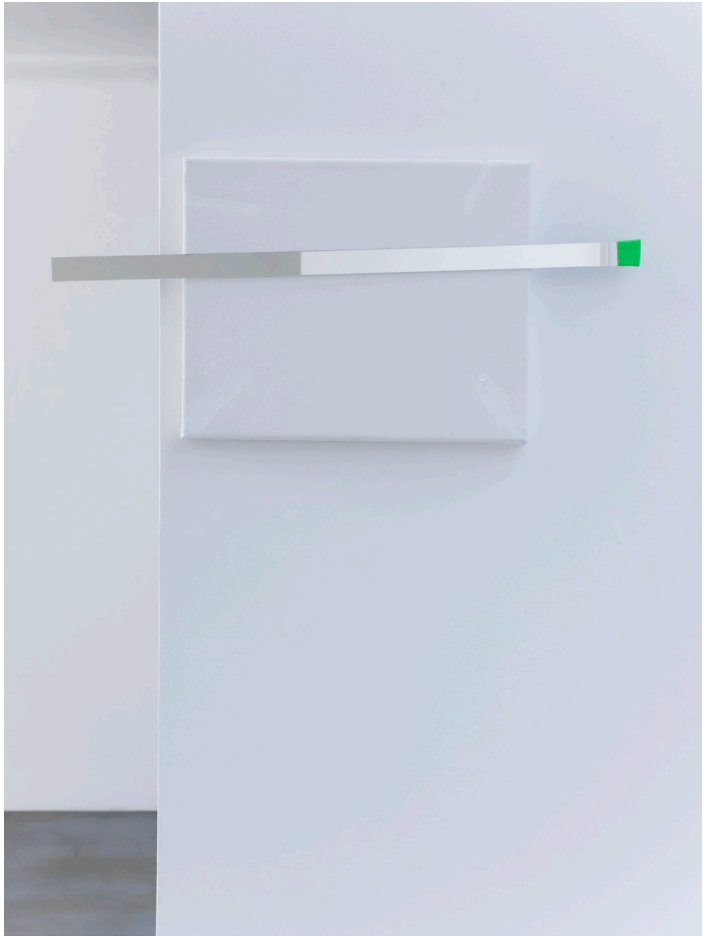
latest works are like up till now enigmatic records of thoughts – daily, nightly, morning reflections, some also the result of prolonged mulling over ideas. The materially tactile iconographic spectrum of images and symbols in the exhibition is typically Stropnikesque. The narrative unfolds through seemingly banal things, which can also have a "trash" appearance – from the shiny reflective surfaces of balloons, aluminium foil and screen pixels, through to simple wooden sticks, paper strips, circles, cutouts and strings, to the hairy bristly textures of brushes that erase traces, soft fluffy balls, marker-drawn human silhouettes and black square surfaces, etc. He always equips them with titles that are simultaneously independent artistic entities and are thematic keys for a deeper understanding of his works.

Stropnik never underestimates the viewer as he himself assumes this role in front of his works and constantly explores the relationships between them and himself as well as the audience. He often invites artists that he likes to participate in his projects. By including their works, he openly admits that they speak to him and influence him, becoming his legitimate frame of reference. For him, creating is an escape from society's expectations, a thinking beyond bounds, a release from the dilemmas of what art and life should be like, what the viewer's reaction to his work should be and countless other things we do not understand or know and may never know. At the same time, for him, creating is also a confrontation with all these things, with the viewer's reactions, a constant analysis of life, himself and the world around him.

Barbara Sterle-Vurnik



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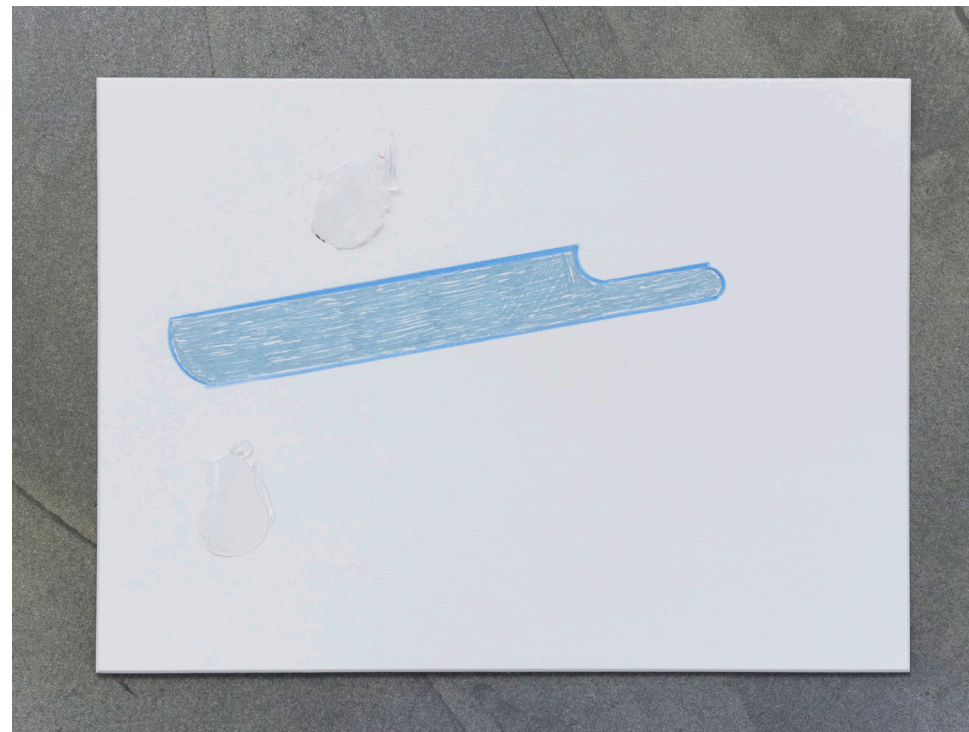
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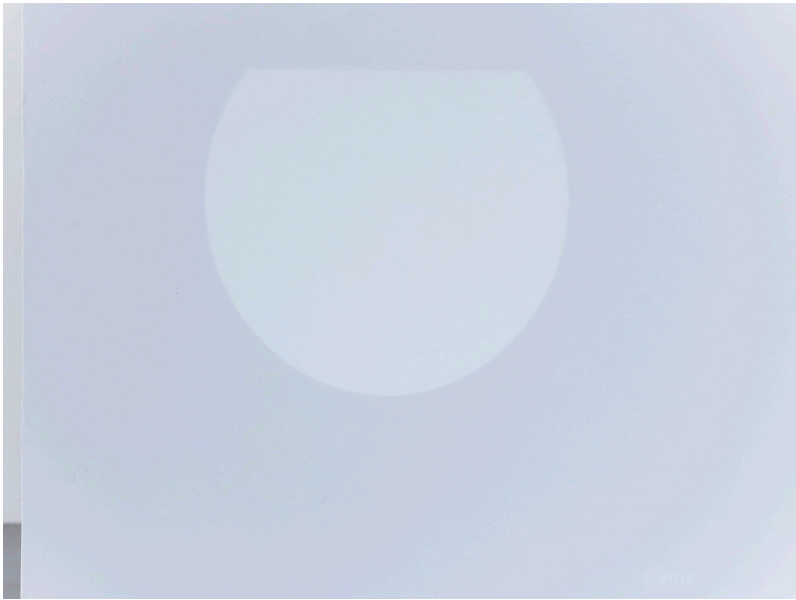
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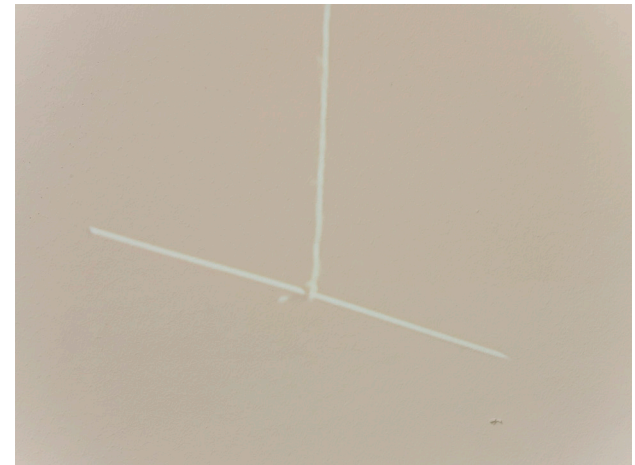
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name



another new



klopotec



puhek



play ball



glava

stab the meat



Maruša Meglič
Pastirček



Small but dangers - SBD
Mici



DEC 2019



an unusual cry

dež v šotoru



More Local Than Me

seznam del

1. Mladen Stropnik
s poti
2024
Collage on Paper
34 x 25 x 2 cm

2. Mladen Stropnik
oun room
2024
Mixed Media on Canvas
30 x 24 x 2 cm
Unique

3. Mladen Stropnik
sito
2024
Mixed Media on Canvas
40 x 50 x 13 cm
Unique

4. Mladen Stropnik
igralka
2024
Coloured Pencil on Paper
30 x 21 cm
Unique

5. Mladen Stropnik
maslo na kruh
2024
Collage on Paper
23 x 32 x 1 cm
Unique

6. Mladen Stropnik
vitez
2024
Art Video
5 / 5

7. Mladen Stropnik
name
2024
Art Video
5 / 5

8. Mladen Stropnik
another new
2024
Mixed Media on Canvas
40 x 50 x 2 cm
Unique

9. Mladen Stropnik
klopotec
2024
Art Video
5 / 5

10. Mladen Stropnik
puhek
2024
Collage on Paper
21 x 15 x 3 cm
Unique

11. Mladen Stropnik
play ball
2024
Art Video
5 / 5

12. Mladen Stropnik
glava
2024
Concrete
Unique

13. Mladen Stropnik
stab the meat
2024
MRČ Collague

14. Maruša Meglič
Pastirček
2020
Modifi ed found object
10 x 6 x 6 cm
Unique

15. Small but dangers - SBD
Mici
2013
Found Object
11 x 6 x 6 cm

16. Mladen Stropnik
DEC 2019
2024
Mixed Media on Canvas
24 x 30 x 12 cm
Unique

17. Mladen Stropnik
an unusual cry
2024
Mixed Media on Canvas
30 x 40 x 35 cm
Unique

18. Mladen Stropnik
dež v šotoru
2024
Print on Paper
30 x 21 cm
Open Series

19. Tomaž Furlan
More Local Than Me
2021
Stone, Golding
31 x 45 x 2 cm

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