

Martina Miholić je od ljeta 2022. godine posvećena razradi ciklusa koji sačinjavaju prostorne instalacije ostvarene na samostalnim,<sup>1</sup> te skupnim izložbama.<sup>2</sup> Radovi kreirani u specifičnim galerijskim i muzejskim kontekstima sugeriraju začudni, distopijski ambijent neimenovanih otoka, arhipelaga i grebena, sazdana od organskih tvorevina, pronađenih predmeta, digitalnih ispisa, fotografija, folija, rasvjetnih tijela i drugih elemenata, karakterističnih za autoričinu estetiku. Odmak od njoj uobičajene poetike evocirana je sumornijom atmosferom, reflektiranom ponajprije prevladavajućim tamnijim spektrom boja.

Jedna od narativnih okosnica ciklusa, koja međutim nije doslovno inscensirana u samim postavima, jest popularna bajka Hansa Christiana Andersena o Maloj sireni. Priča o tragičnom liku koji žrtvuje svoju najveću vrlinu, glas, a potom i tijelo, štoviše čak i postojanje, idealna je referenca na suvremeni imperativ neprestane prilagodbe ženskog izgleda nametnutim kanonima ljepote. Kozmetikom, kirurgijom i tjelovježbom promijenjeno tijelo daljnju transformaciju nastavlja u digitalnoj i viralnoj stvarnosti koja perpetuiira daljnje imperativne artifičijelnih i nepotrebnih ideala.

Baveći se potragom za arhetipom ljepote koji u svojoj srži emanira kompleksna pitanja poput društvene prinuđenosti i komercijalne eksploatacije, Martina ne nudi jednosmjerno kritičko određenje. Naime, manipulaciji fizičke pojavnosti pridružuje se metafore metamorfoze, tranzicije i fluidnosti identiteta. Takvo čitanje otkriva se u analizi genealogije Male sirene. Njezine su pretkinje bića

iz grčke mitologije i Homerova epa Odiseje. U potonjem nalazimo epizodu sa sirenama koje se, jer je Odisej izbjegao smrtni zov njihova zavodljiva pjeva, iz očaja sunovrate u more. Naime, za razliku od uobičajene predodžbe o tijelu koje je umjesto nogu imalo riblji rep, one su imale ptičja tijela. Razlog njihove propasti je, kao i u slučaju sirene iz devetnaestostoljetne bajke, nesposobnost izražavanja glasom. Nisu ga izgubile, no nemogućnost dopiranja do Odiseja jednaka je anihilaciji, koja postaje sirenski usud.

Antipod takve nesretne i u konačnici pasivne situacije, jest ona koju utjelovljuje Inana, sumerske božica seksualne ljubavi, plodnosti i rata, koja se u babilonskoj mitologiji naziva Ištar, a u kasnijim će se kulturama transponirati u Afroditu, Veneru, Freyu, odnosno u Ladu, božicu proljeća, ljubavi i ljepote u staroslavenskoj mitologiji. Upravo je ona bila tematska i konceptualna potka istoimene izložbe koju je Martina realizirala s grupom autorica 2019. godine u Galeriji Bačva.<sup>3</sup>

Ištar ili kraljica noći bila je prikazivana kao žena nagog, idealiziranoga tijela, na kojem se ističu velika krila i duge noge koje umjesto stopala imaju ptičje kandže. Slično je na reljefima bila predočena i Partenopa, jedna od tri sestre sirene koje su pokušale namamiti Odiseja u njegovu smrt. Ištar je pak nadišla svoju smrt, a među njezinim brojnim moćima ističe se ona dodjele spola. Neki su članovi božičina kulta navodno promijenili spol iz muškoga u ženski, što ukazuje da je u državnoj religiji Babilonije spol bio shvaćen kao promjenjiv.<sup>4</sup> Ova fluidnost traženja novih obliča i značenja nadopunjava spomenutu težnju za preobrazbom, otvarajući pitanja slobode i snage u potrazi za vlastitim glasom i identitetom. Dinamika i napetost varijeteta individualne i univerzalne, trenutne i vječne transformacije idealno su podržane oprekom definiriranosti materijalnih objekata i apstrakcije organskih tvorevina. One emaniraju različite simbolike, primjerice voda predstavlja izvor života, a otoci „iskonsko duhovno središte“.<sup>5</sup>

# MARTINA MIHOLIĆ

# GALLERY OF

# FLOATING

# ARCHIPELAGOS

23. 5. - 13. 6. 2023.

Martinina sposobnost autorske evolucije proističe iz dosljednoga razvijanja i širenja interesa i motiva iz prethodnih ciklusa,<sup>6</sup> koje kontinuirano sagledava iz svježih pozicija osobnog i umjetničkog iskustva. Važno je pri tome njeno utemeljeno razumijevanje aktualnoga društvenog konteksta, ali i prihvaćanja tradicije, to jest prošlosti. Sigurna sam stoga da i nakon ove izložbe ciklus ostaje otvoren daljnjim razrađivanjima, te da će se otoci koje Martina stvara i dalje ulančavati u nove arhipelage.

Barbara Vujanović

1 *Fantasy of Floating – plastično eskapizma*, Galerija VN, Zagreb, 7. – 23. rujna 2022.; *Dark Siren*, Galerija Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 5. – 18. travnja 2023.; *Gallery of Floating Archipelagos*, Galerija Karas, Zagreb, 23. svibnja – 13. lipnja 2023.

2 *XIV. trijenale hrvatskoga kiparstva*, Dom HDLU, Zagreb, 5. srpnja – 28. kolovoza 2022.; *8. Slavovski biennale – Nove paradigme sreće, od osječke dade do suvremenog kaosa*, Muzej likovnih umjetnosti, Osijek, 15. prosinca 2022. – 28. veljače 2023.

3 Lina Kovačević, Martina Miholić, Nika Šimičić, Irena Tomašić, Martina Granić, gošća: Darija Jelinčić, *Island of Inanna*, Galerija Bačva, Zagreb, 28. lipnja – 21. srpnja 2019.

4 „Gender fluidity in Mesopotamia. Room 56“, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/QgXxidm3MO04Jw>, pregledano 29. travnja 2023.

5 Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Rječnik simbola – mitovi, sni, običaji, geste, oblici, likovi, boje, brojevi*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1983, str. 468.

6 Prema umjetničkim riječima recentni ciklusi temelje se na likovnom, odnosno vizualnom istraživanju započetom ciklusom *Perspektive 5* iz 2010. godine. Likovni kritičari su ga prepoznali kao distopijski, ali humani prikaz oronulog okoliša, u kojem ljudska vrste razasuta u virtualnoj memoriji čini gradove duhova.

Since the summer of 2022, Martina Miholić has been dedicated to developing a series of spatial installations exhibited in solo<sup>1</sup> and group exhibitions.<sup>2</sup> The works created in specific gallery and museum contexts suggest a strange, dystopian environment of unnamed islands, archipelagos and reefs, composed of organic formations, found objects, digital prints, photographs, foils, lighting fixtures and other elements characteristic of the artist's aesthetics. A departure from her usual poetics is evoked by a gloomier atmosphere, reflected primarily in a prevailing darker spectrum of colours.

One of the narrative backbones of the series of works, which, however, is not literally staged in the exhibitions, is Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairy tale "The Little Mermaid". The story of a tragic character who sacrifices her greatest virtue, her voice, and then her body, and even her existence, is an ideal reference to the contemporary imperative of constant adaptation of female appearance to the imposed canons of beauty. The body changed by cosmetics, surgery and exercise continues its further transformation in the digital and viral reality, which perpetuates further imperatives of artificial and unnecessary ideals.

Dealing with the search for an archetype of beauty that emanates complex issues such as social coercion and commercial exploitation at its core, Martina does not offer a one-sided critical determination. Namely, the manipulation of physical appearance is accompanied by metaphors of metamorphosis, transition and fluidity of identity. Such an interpretation is revealed in the analysis of the Little Mermaid's genealogy. Her ancestors are creatures from Greek mythology and Homer's epic "Odyssey". In the latter, we find an episode with the sirens who, because Odysseus escaped the deadly call of their seductive song, return to the sea out of despair. Unlike the usual idea of a body with a fish tail instead of legs, they had bird bodies. The reason for their downfall, as in the case of the mermaid in the nineteenth-century fairy tale, is the inability to express themselves with their voice. They did not lose it, but the inability to reach Odysseus is equal to annihilation, which becomes the siren's fate.

The antipode of such an unfortunate and ultimately passive situation is the one embodied by Inana, the Sumerian goddess of sexual love, fertility and war, called Ishtar in Babylonian mythology, and in later cultures was transposed into Aphrodite, Venus, Freya, or Lada, the goddess of spring, love and beauty in old Slavic mythology. She was the thematic and conceptual thread of the eponymous exhibition, which Martina realized with a group of artists in 2019 at the Bačva Gallery.<sup>3</sup>

Ishtar, or the queen of the night, was depicted as a naked woman with an idealized body, with large wings and long legs that have bird claws instead of feet. Parthenope, one of the three siren sisters who

tried to lure Odysseus to his death, was similarly portrayed on reliefs. Ishtar, on the other hand, transcended her death, and among her many powers, she was known for the ability to assign gender. Some members of the cult of the goddess supposedly changed their gender from male to female, indicating that in the state religion of Babylon gender was perceived as changeable.<sup>4</sup> This fluidity in seeking new forms and meanings complements the aforementioned aspiration for transformation, opening up questions of freedom and strength in the search for one's own voice and identity. The dynamics and tension of the variety of individual and universal, momentary and eternal transformations are ideally supported by the contrast between the defined nature of material objects and the abstraction of organic creations. They emanate different symbolisms, for example, water represents the source of life, and islands are the "primordial spiritual centre".<sup>5</sup>

Martina's ability to evolve as an artist stems from the consistent development and expansion of interests and motives from previous series, which she continuously approaches from fresh positions of personal and artistic experience. Her well-founded understanding of the current social context, but also the acceptance of tradition, that is, the past, is important. I am therefore convinced that even after this exhibition, the series will remain open for further elaboration, and that the islands that Martina creates will continue to link into new archipelagos.

Barbara Vujanović

1 *Fantasy of Floating – The Plasticity of Escapism*, VN Gallery, Zagreb, 7 – 23 September 2022; *Dark Siren*, Matice hrvatske Gallery, Zagreb, 5 – 18 April 2023; *Gallery of Floating Archipelagos*, Karas Gallery, Zagreb, 23 May – 13 June 2023.

2 *13th Triennial of Croatian Sculpture*, Home of the Croatian Association of Fine Artists, Zagreb, 5 July - 28 August 2022; *8th Slavonian Biennale - New Paradigms of Happiness*, from Osijek Dada to Contemporary Chaos, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, 15 December 2022 – 28 February 2023.

3 Lina Kovačević, Martina Miholić, Nika Šimičić, Irena Tomašić, Martina Granić, guest: Darija Jelinčić, *Island of Inanna*, Bačva Gallery, Zagreb, 28 June – 21 July 2019.

4 „Gender fluidity in Mesopotamia. Room 56“, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/QgXxidm3MO04Jw>, accessed on 29 April 2023.

5 Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols - Myths, Dreams, Customs, Gestures, Shapes, Figures, Colors, Numbers*, Matice hrvatske Publisher, Zagreb, 1983, p. 468.

6 According to the artist's words, the recent series are based on visual research, which began with the *Perspectives 5* series in 2010. Art critics recognized it as a dystopian but humane portrayal of a dilapidated environment, in which human species scattered in virtual memory form ghost towns.

## IMPRESUM / IMPRESSUM

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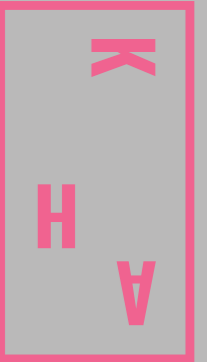
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Working hours Gallery Karas: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 4pm - 8pm | Tuesday, Saturday 10am - 1pm | On Sundays and Mondays closed.

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**MARTINA MIHOLIĆ** diplomirala je na grafičkom odjelu Akademije likovnih umjetnosti u Zagrebu 2004. godine, a 2011. magistrirala je na Central Saint Martins College u Londonu. Godine 2006. postaje umjetnička ravnateljica Međunarodnog festivala studentskog kazališta i multimedije Test! koji vodi do 2010. Od 2010. do 2012., unutar udruge ULAZ te u kolaboraciji s Veleposlanstvom RH u Londonu, provodi projekt "Export – Import". Godine 2016. s Mijom Orsag bila je kustosica 33. salona mladih. Producentica je brojnih kulturnih manifestacija poput Salona mladih, Bijenala slikarstva i drugih. Od 2021. članica je kulturnog vijeća Inovativnih kulturnih praksi pri Ministarstvu kulture.

Miholić je sudjelovala na brojnim samostalnim i grupnim izložbama te na filmskim festivalima u zemlji i inozemstvu. Boravila je na nekoliko rezidencijalnih programa i dobitnica je nagrade 14. trijenala hrvatskog kiparstva.

**MARTINA MIHOLIĆ** graduated from the Graphic Arts Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 2004, and in 2011 she received her master's degree from Central Saint Martins College in London. In 2006, she became the artistic director of the International Festival of Student Theatre and Multimedia - Test! which she managed until 2010. From 2010 until 2012, as part of the ULAZ association and in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in London, she implemented the project "Export - Import". In 2016, together with Mia Orsag, she was the curator of the 33rd Youth Salon. She has produced numerous cultural events, such as the Youth Salon, Biennale of Painting, and others. Since 2021, she has been a member of the Cultural Council of Innovative Cultural Practices at the Ministry of Culture.

She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions, as well as film festivals in the country and abroad. She has attended several residency programmes and is the recipient of an award at the 14th Triennial of Croatian Sculpture.