

FAME

Do sada se Jurica Pušenjak bavio nečime što bismo mogli nazvati ikonama. Na svom monumentalnom slikarskom spomeniku svim nositeljima Ordena narodnog heroja Jugoslavije prikazao je te ličnosti kako bi podsjetio na važnost sjećanja na antifašističku borbu. Nakon toga ukazao je na ideologiju u kojoj živimo – liberalizam. Popartističkom metodom reproducirao je novčanice i njihove segmente, s ponekim semantičkim intervencijama na njihovim porukama. Sada ponovno slika lica, i to ona koja oblikuju naše znanje o svijetu u kojem živimo – portrete političara, disidenata, visokih klerika, poduzetnika, duhovnih učitelja. Onih koji su, naprosto, slavni.

To se može shvatiti kao komentar medijskog utjecaja na našu svijest, na naše svjetonazore i našu svakodnevicu. Neki od likova s Pušenjakovih portreta su nam više, a neki manje poznati, ali svi su oni predstavnici nekih narativa koje pratimo na internetu, na televiziji, ili u novinama. U svemu tome mi nismo samo pasivni promatrači. Jedna od najvećih manipulacija građanskoga društva, iluzija koja ga održava vitalnim unatoč brojnim kontradikcijama i nepravdama ugrađenima u njega je iluzija izbora danog njegovim subjektima. Ona se manifestira na demokratskim izborima, gdje se određena politička opcija

legitimizira relativnom većinom glasova, kao i u (navodnoj) slobodi medija. U narativima o vlastodršcima mi sudjelujemo kao publika u areni ili gledatelji nekog vesterna: biramo pozitivce i negativce te navijamo za njih. Čitajući štampu lijevog ili desnog predznaka, slušajući podcaste i čitajući knjige, mi prihvaćamo argumente određene pozicije i gradimo svoju ideološku personu. Prihvaćenu poziciju pokušavamo i obraniti kada se političke borbe prenesu iz parlamenata za kavanske stolove. Ali svi su ti sukobi iluzorni, jer na koncu, odluke donosi onaj tko je nosilac stvarne moći u društvu, odnosno onaj tko posjeduje kapital (ili – sredstva koja generiraju kapital).

Jurica Pušenjak ne zadovoljava se paušalnim aktivizmom kojemu je dovoljno samo istaknuti narav sustava – u ovom slučaju iluziju demokracije koju stvaraju masovni mediji – i tako umiriti svoju savjest blago posprdnim komentarom, kojim bi, s neke intelektualne visine, cijelo društvo proglasio cirkusom, izuzimajući iz njega svoju posebnu ličnost. Ne, on punim srcem prihvaća svoju ulogu i pokušava djelovati unutar nje – želi sudjelovati u spektaklu kao najglasniji navijač s tribina. Minimalni čin otpora koji može pokazati sastoji se od okretanja naopako portreta ličnosti koje smatra destruktivnima i negativnima za budućnost svijeta (što je gesta za koju ga je inspirirala scena okretanja duceove slike iz Zafranovićeve *Okupacije u 26 slika*). Tako možemo izmjeriti njegovu političku temperaturu. Među pozitivcima će, primjerice, biti osobe koje su svoju hrabrost pri otkrivanju ratnih zločina platile vlastitom slobodom i tako postale moralni svjetionici 21. stoljeća – Julian Assange, Edward Snowden i Chelsea Manning. Tu će se naći i libijski lider Muammar Gaddafi, demoniziran od strane Zapada jer je ostvario blagostanje svojih građana odbijajući gospodarsku kolonizaciju petrodolara. Naopako će visjeti njegov ubojica, dobitnik Nobela za mir, američki predsjednik Barack Obama, kao i Obamin tobožnji ideološki protivnik Donald Trump i nesretna zvijezda ekologije i kapitala Greta Thunberg.

Da, možda je sve to infantilno i bez ikakvih posljedica osim jalovih rasprava o osobnim svjetonazorima, slaganjima i neslaganjima, nakon otvorenja izložbe, za nekim provincijalnim kavanskim stolom, ali barem se Jurica Pušenjak usudio tako izravno i bezobrazno pokazati vlastita uvjerenja i izložiti ih kavanskoj kritici i poruzi, tim zadnjim, bijednim utvdama slobode, sviju nas podanika kapitala. Prikazane ličnosti svoju slavu koriste na načine koje smatraju primjerenima, uglavnom za vlastitu dobit i za dobit svoga interesnog kruga. Tako je u politici, tako je u biznisu, tako je u umjetnosti. Na prvi pogled može se činiti da je Pušenjak svojih pet minuta slave iskoristio za intimistički, svjetonazorski ekshibicionizam. No, njegova je izložba i pokušaj ispitivanja s koliko odgovornosti javne ličnosti koriste svoju moćnu medijsku poziciju.

Čin bunta je beznačajan. Pušenjakova ili bilo čija osuda ili podrška neke javne osobe neće promijeniti ništa. Ipak, od nekuda se mora početi, ali mora se i nastaviti – izaći iz galerija i ustati od kavanskih stolova.

Feda Gavrilović

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Thus far, Jurica Pušenjak has focused on what might be called icons. In his monumental painting tribute to all bearers of the Order of the People's Hero of Yugoslavia, he depicted these figures to remind us of the importance of remembering the anti-fascist struggle. He then turned his attention to the ideology we inhabit today—liberalism. Using a Pop Art style, he reproduced banknotes and their segments, making subtle semantic interventions to alter their messages. Now, he has returned to portraiture, painting the faces of people who shape our understanding of the world we live in – politicians, dissidents, high-ranking clergy, entrepreneurs, and spiritual leaders. Simply put, those we recognise as famous.

This can be seen as a commentary on how the media shapes our awareness, our views, and our daily lives. Some of the figures in Pušenjak's portraits are more familiar to us than others, yet each represents narratives we encounter through the internet, television, or newspapers. In all this, we are not merely passive spectators. One of the biggest tricks of civil society, an illusion that sustains it despite its many contradictions and injustices, is the illusion of choice given to its subjects. This manifests in democratic elections, where a political option is legitimised by a relative majority of votes, as well as in the (supposed) freedom of the press. In narratives surrounding those in power, play along, like spectators in an amphitheater or viewers of a Western, picking our heroes and villains and rooting for them. By reading left- or right-leaning publications, listening to podcasts, and reading books, we adopt the arguments of a particular stance and build our own ideological identities. We then attempt to defend those views when political debates move from parliamentary halls to our local cafés. Yet all these conflicts are illusory, for, ultimately, decisions are made by those who hold real power in society, that is, those who control capital (or – the means of generating it).

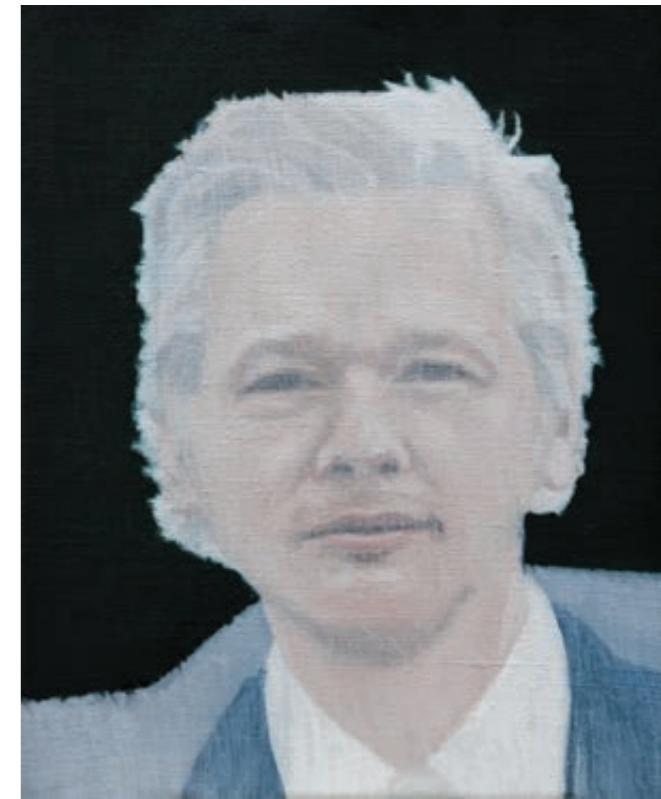
Jurica Pušenjak does not settle for superficial activism that merely highlights the nature of the system—in this case, the illusion of democracy created by mass media—only to appease one's conscience with a mildly sarcastic commentary from an intellectual high ground, declaring society a circus while placing oneself above it. Instead, he wholeheartedly embraces his role and attempts to act within it—he wants to participate in the spectacle as the loudest fan in the stands. His smallest act of defiance involves hanging upside down the portraits of people he regards as destructive and detrimental to the future of the world (a gesture inspired by the scene in Zafranović's *Occupation in 26 Pictures*, where Mussolini's portrait is hung upside down). This gives us a sense of his political temperature. Among the good guys, for instance, are those who have sacrificed their freedom to expose war crimes, thus becoming the moral beacons of the 21st century—Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning. Included here, too, is Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, demonised by the West for achieving prosperity for his citizens by resisting the economic colonisation of the petrodollar. Upside down are his assassin, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and U.S. President Barack Obama, as well as Obama's alleged ideological opponent Donald Trump and the unfortunate star of ecological activism and capital, Greta Thunberg.

Yes, maybe all this seems childish and inconsequential, leading only to futile debates over personal beliefs, agreements, and disagreements, in some provincial café after an exhibition opening. But at least Pušenjak has had the nerve to put his convictions on display so boldly and provocatively, exposing them to coffeehouse criticism and

mockery, to those last, miserable bastions of freedom left to us as subjects of capital. The depicted personalities use their fame as they see fit, primarily for their own benefit and that of their inner circles. Such is the nature of politics, business, and art. At first glance, it might look like Pušenjak has used his “fifteen minutes of fame” for intimate, ideological exhibitionism. However, his exhibition is also an attempt to question the responsibility with which public figures use their powerful media position.

The act of rebellion is insignificant. Pušenjak's, or anyone's, condemnation or endorsement of a public figure will not change anything. Still, one has to start somewhere, and then keep going – moving beyond galleries and getting up from the café tables.

Feda Gavrilović



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JURICA PUŠENJAK

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JURICA PUŠENJAK

Rođen 1996. u Zagrebu. Godine 2020. diplomirao je na slikarskom odsjeku ALU u klasi Zoltana Novaka. Od 2018. djeluje kroz dvadesetak skupnih-žiriranih te četiri samostalne izložbe od kojih se ističu 5. i 6. Bijenale slikarstva (HDLU, Zagreb), 16. i 19. Erste fragmenti (Lauba, Zagreb), izlaganje i koautorstvo na izložbi "Tartagline police" (Galerija Forum, Zagreb), "Ljubav na posljednji pogled/novac je vječan, a ljudski život je prolazan" (Galerija Bačva, HDLU, Zagreb), "Iluzije" (Galerija PM, HDLU, Zagreb) te "£ I ⌘ € R Ⓐ £ I \$ M" (Galerija Poola, Pula). U travnju 2022. izlaže prvi puta samostalno izložbom "Heroji" (Galerija Bačva, HDLU, Zagreb). Dobitnik je Nagrade Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Iva Vraneković - Umjetnici umjetniku.

JURICA PUŠENJAK

Born in 1996 in Zagreb. In 2020, he graduated from the Painting Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in the class of Zoltan Novak. Since 2018, he has participated in around twenty group-juried exhibitions and held four solo exhibitions. Notable group exhibitions include the 5th and 6th Biennial of Painting (Croatian Association of Fine Artists, Zagreb), the 16th and 19th Erste Fragments (Lauba, Zagreb), *Tartaglia Shelves* (Forum Gallery, Zagreb) where he also contributed as a co-author, *Love at Last Sight/Money is Eternal, and Human Life is Ephemeral* (Bačva Gallery, Croatian Association of Fine Artists, Zagreb), *Illusions* (PM Gallery, Croatian Association of Fine Artists, Zagreb), and *£ I B E R Ⓐ £ I S M* (Poola Gallery, Pula). In April 2022, he held his first solo exhibition titled *Heroes* at Bačva Gallery, Croatian Association of Fine Artists, Zagreb. He is the recipient of the Vladimir Dodig Trokut, Iva Vraneković – Artist to Artist Award.