

The background of the image is a dense, textured pattern of dark red and maroon brushstrokes. The strokes are thick and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors vary slightly in intensity, with some areas appearing darker and others catching the light, giving the overall effect a rich, almost metallic sheen.

DRAGAN PETKOVIĆ

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На корицата: Брутално црвено, 1987

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DRAGAN PETKOVIĆ, RETROSPECTIVELY

Zoran Petrovski

"Art is the highest form of hope"
Gerhard Richter

At the exhibition *Six Macedonian Artists*, opened in 1985 in Zagreb¹, which can be considered a milestone that marked the end of the developing phase of the Macedonian modernism and announced its tendencies towards the contemporary post-modern artistic practices, Dragan Petković for the first time showed his new cycle of works *The Joy of Life* (1985/1987), named after Henry Matisse's work *Le bonheur de vivre* and composed of groups of outstandingly vivid and brightly painted cardboards with sharp edges, cut in the form of indefinite associative figures and compositions that bounce in a wild rhythm all over the gallery walls, as if being aroused and carried by a thrilling and passionate dance. Judging by the features like the use of quotations, the ambivalence between the figurative and abstract character of the forms and their ecstatic color and spatial expression, these works of Petković could be defined as close to some of the basic postulates that were in a vigorous and euphoric gust brought about by the post-modern "New Image Painting".

This general title covers the numerous painting occurrences encompassed basically with the terms "neo-expressionism" and "trans-avant-garde", whose common output was the idea of returning to the painting or, as the American critic Thomas McEvilley has put it, "the exile's return".² Following the crisis years of 1970s, when the rigid formalism of the high Modernism, the closed structures of the iconoclastic minimalism and the radical rejection of the art object in the conceptualism resulted in a block of ideas and when "Another kind of cultural impasse seemed to be approaching in which culture would symbolically destroy itself through its auto-critique",³ the reaction in the art at the beginning of the 1980s first came through painting, through the return of some of its suppressed values: subjectivity, expression, narration, return of the figure, decorativeness, media and style pastiche, or the mere pleasure in the act and in the matter of painting. However, that revived painting did not find its landscape in nature but only and exclusively in itself, in its own modern art history and in the media of the popular culture. "As if to offset its former elitism and puritanism, it returned in a costume of rags collected from everywhere. It returned as a Conceptual painting and found a variety of new uses for the medium."⁴ In the years that followed, in the nomadic decade of the 1980s and soon after that, painting underwent a wide range of metamorphoses, returning as a broken film flashback of fragments of its own modern history, deconstructing and reconstructing it in the attempts to once again adapt and define the objectives and means, and finally, the meaning of its existence in a different, post-historic age.

The work of Dragan Petković develops and corresponds to this critical period for the art of painting. The beginning of his painting career was under the strong influence of his studies at the Art Academy in Ljubljana in the mid 1970s which rendered a generation of artists who supported and developed the practical and theoretical postulates of the tradition of the American abstract art.⁵ In the works he made in the years after his graduation in 1977, which he exhibited several years

later at his solo exhibitions in Skopje, first at the Journalists' Club in 1981 and a year later, in a larger scope at the Gallery of the Youth Center, Petković showed a series of works which were an actual compendium of different forms and idioms of the American abstract painting, set one next to the other: from works in the spirit of the Abstract Expressionism and the sublime painting to those close to the post-painterly abstraction, the color-field painting, hard-edge painting and minimalism. Neglecting entirely the modalities of the style and overcoming the conceptual and theoretical differences of each of these abstract idioms, Petković restricted his interest to their formal aspects of reducing the painting to its basic elements: color, drawing and space.

Most of the titles of his works from that period are an exact description of the applied artistic methods or topics. So, for example, in a group of paintings which tackles the complementariness of the colors, like in *Complementary Games 2* (1978, plate 7) or *Games of Simultaneity 2* (1978, pl. 5), the chromatic opposition of two colors, treated as two layered surfaces, emerges as a kind of engraved notches which compose a drawing by means of sharp and short strokes which have no expressive but plastic role, creating a grid, a porous membrane in the game of planes and spaces amidst the colored fields. The spatiality of color and the network structure of the drawing are also included in an impressive group of red monochromes, where his typical short, broken, non-expressive strokes (*Obsessive Red 3*, 1977, p. 3; *Dynamic Surface on Red*, 1977/78, pl. 4) become denser from one painting to another, turning into a powerful chromatic intensity that visually has the tendency to expand beyond the painting frame (*Obsessive Red 2*, 1977, pl. 10); an opposite direction from this extensive spatiality is to be seen in a particular group of monochrome works (*Structures on Yellow*, 1978/80, pl. 6, *Structures on Red*, 1978/80, pl. 8) where by means of layered textures of the painting matter he achieves a dense structure wherein the space is forced out, while the corporeality of the painted field is emphasized.

Although in all of these works he mostly uses the vocabulary and the formal models of the Abstract Expressionism, Petković actually does not show that its expressive contents is particularly close to him; there is not a hint of the existential gesture, the mythical connotation, the tendency towards the metaphysics of the sublime and the transcendental. On the contrary, the analytical, distanced and expressively reduced approach is guided by the logic of the modeling structure and the process of rendering the artwork. It is interesting to note that it is an utterly deliberately chosen approach since his student days and Petković had cherished it all through his career. In his final exam in 1977 he says "I intend to exclude sensitivity from painting since I don't want to flirt with the plot", and he adds "The seeming bloodlessness which the viewer - and I am aware of that - sees in my paintings is actually due to my tendency to harmonize the idea and the execution. The drawing becomes schematic and the paintings possess a pervading symmetry. However, the 'bloodlessness' is deliberate because I would not like to lean on any kind of a chance or to put emphasize on any particular object, any direction or color."

The closest to this program of harmonization of the idea and the execution, which equalizes the tautological consideration of the painting with the means of the very act of painting, Petković approaches with his last paintings from the period of his second solo exhibition at the Gallery of the Youth Center in 1982 (of which only three have survived, due to the extremely self-critical attitude of the artist and his usual practice of frequently re-painting his older canvases: *Quivering*, *Endlessly Red*, pl. 13 and *Endlessly Blue*, pl. 14, all from 1979) and especially with a group of watercolors made from 1980 to 1984. So, in *Pulsating* from 1981 and *Flow* from 1980/81 (reproductions 15 and 16), the former grid of gesture strokes is replaced by a texture of evenly and monotonously repeated, almost identical movements of the brush until the moment the background becomes a solidly structured two-dimensional surface, a self-aware pictorial pulsating organism. With

a tautological repetition of the strokes, which includes a process of employment of the dimension of time as a replacement of the color in the composition and the drawing in the construction of the artwork, Petković approaches to some extent to the art of the post-minimalism from the 1970s and its sub-variants: the analytical or primary painting which tends to reach the so called “zero point” in the semantic decomposition of the artistic elements. But, unlike these tendencies which rely upon or function as theoretical models of the post-structuralism, Petković’s watercolors are made under the influence, or even better, in a concurrence with the minimalist and ambient music of Philip Glass, Terry Riley, Brian Eno and what seemed to be especially significant for him, the work of Steve Reich⁶ *Music for 18 Musicians*, in the obsessive sound pulsating of which⁷ Petković finds an ideal background for the continuous monotone rhythm of his almost meditative strokes which render an utterly rich surface structures.

Although the Macedonian post-war art had been for already for three decades under the absolute domination of the abstract art, the occurrence of this self-reflexive painting of Dragan Petković introduced a radically new attitude, a significantly different understanding of the painting and the art of painting in comparison to that tradition.⁸ Namely, since the beginning of the 1960s the Macedonian art has been developing under the influence of the late European Modernism in its less radical, lyrical variants as derivatives of the Paris school, where the painting, although reduced to abstract image, is still a kind of an imitation or direct association of motifs from nature or real objects, somewhere shown as abstract landscape, somewhere through the language of symbols, and somewhere as a personal expression of those natural experiences. The support of the Abstract Expressionism and the analytical occurrences of the post-minimalism, which are part of Dragan Petković’s experience, are opposite to that kind of thinking. According to that attitude, painting is determined by the awareness that it is part of the historical experience and therefore the question of the illusion of the natural phenomena is completely pushed aside or does not exist at all, making room for the emphasis of the principles of the modernist theory of the pictorial which treat the painting background and the stroke as autonomous, that is, independent elements of the plastic organism which exists in the real space of its background. In other words, we might say that with the painting of Dragan Petković the circle of questions on the modernity in the Macedonian post-war art was definitely closed, regardless of the fact that that chain probably lacks some other important links. But what is also interesting is the fact that this work is also a symptom of a caesura or the shift into the age of post-modernism which begins at the exhibition *Six Macedonian Artists* in the second half of the 1980s, one of the most dynamic periods in the Macedonian contemporary art.

The cycle *The Joy of Life* actually seemed also like a caesura in relation to the other works of Petković. The cardboard Matisse-like cutouts or “decoupages”, formed in a kind of indefinite quasi-anthropo/zoomorphic figures filled with shiny day-glo colors, were a somewhat unusual shift compared to his earlier artistically refined and always maximally finished abstract paintings and drawings.⁹ Besides, their daringly direct decorativeness and aptness for a kind of narrativity in the arrangement and the inter-relations of their setting on the walls was certainly not something that belonged to the repertoire of the abstract purism of any kind, but mostly to the enthusiasm of the liberating impulses of the “new image painting”, which partially touched the works of Petković, as well, and which made almost senseless the dogmas of the opposed couples abstract-figurative and their style variants.

Although the arrangement of the parts is variable and dependant on the space, the cycle *The Joy of Life* still includes a composition which is in the epicenter and which radiates with strokes/figures in their joyous dance: it is an ellipse of seven cutouts which follows the form and the rhythm of *The Dance* by Henry Matisse (*La*



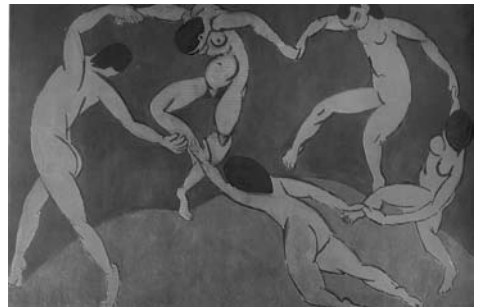
Installation view from the exhibition Six Macedonian Artists in SKC Belgrade, 1985. In front the sculpture from the Kite series from Gligor Stefanov, in the background *The joy of Living* from Dragan Petković

danse, from 1909 and 1919), the artwork which was derived from the painting *Le bonheur de vivre* from 1905/06 where Matisse pictures scenes filled with eroticism, happiness, beauty and “physiological ‘pleasure in life’, by way of analogy with the body.”¹⁰ The ecstatic rhythm of the movement of the strokes/figures in the work of Petković, their powerful, even explosive expansion or cutting into the wall mass was undoubtedly provoked and driven by the same Matisse-like principle of the erotic and “physiological” pleasure in life and in painting.

Nevertheless, what I want to point here is that behind the initial seductiveness of the “new painting” wave, in these works of Petković I can discern some other important components that should participate in the interpretation and evaluation of his work and the relations he establishes in the given context. First of all, I think that the initial impetus for Petković’s cycle came from the wall and spatial drawings of the Macedonian sculptor Gligor Stefanov, exhibited at one of the important exhibitions in the 1980s, the site-specific installation *Linear Intervention*, set in the Youth Center in 1983.¹¹ In these spatial inversions consisting of spatial drawings and rods Stefanov managed to provoke with the viewer a feeling of a two-dimensional space where the viewer is also turned into a kind of a body/drawing in the flat real space. It had a considerable impact on this and on the somewhat younger generation of artists regarding an altered understanding of the sculpture and the nearing of the two media of sculpture and painting, which will be practiced in the art of the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s. For Dragan Petković this experience was probably a stimulus to return, on the one hand, to the ideas conceived in one of his unfinished projects on upgrading of his abstract paintings into spatial/architectural installations (*Variations on a Given Topic* and *Continuance*, pl. 17 - 23); on the other hand, he set to rendering the drawing as an engraved



Henri Matisse, Le bonheur de vivre, 1905/06



Henri Matisse, La dance II, 1910

“allover” network made of his initial paintings (see pl. 5 and 7), which, of course, refer to the abstract expressionists, but also to the Matisse-like “invention of erasing the traditional distinctions between drawing and color”¹² by means of dividing the colored areas. So, the cardboard cutouts were basically devised as fragmentary separated and enlarged strokes/gestures, which in a dynamic game of illusions turn the walls and the space into a painterly conceived and desired totality, bursting at times as engraved notches, and at times as projecting relieves, leaving it to our gaze to decide what is the background and what is the stroke/figure, a procedure known from the Gestalt psychology and which resembles the child’s experiences of gazing into the wall spots which turn into figures in the imagination.

Only a few years later and especially following the exhibition of the six artists, the ambience in the Macedonian art encountered drastic changes. The occurrence of a large group of young artists educated at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje induced great creative energy and quick changes which followed the spirit of the nomadic, inconsistent and fickle 1980s. The deconstruction of the solid modernist discourses by way of ready-made answers to the painting problems and the emphasis on the objectiveness of the painting and the melting of the traditional media were some of the main currents towards the art of the 1990s and the end of the century. The works of Dragan Petković were part of these events, but it seems that some of the dilemmas that were aroused in the cycle *The Joy of Life*, like for example falling into figurative narration or drawing descriptiveness, made him continue to deal with the problems of painting from the point he had started from: the two-dimensional surface and the autonomy of the medium. In a sense, the works of Petković remained close, although on a rather intuitive and formal level than actually theoretically supported, to the concurrent researches of his generation colleagues from Slovenia who worked within the frames of the psychoanalytical Lacanian theory and in general sense within the frames of the concept of the “Modernism after the Postmodernism”, as the renowned Slovenian critique and theoretician Tomaž Brejc¹³ has defined it.

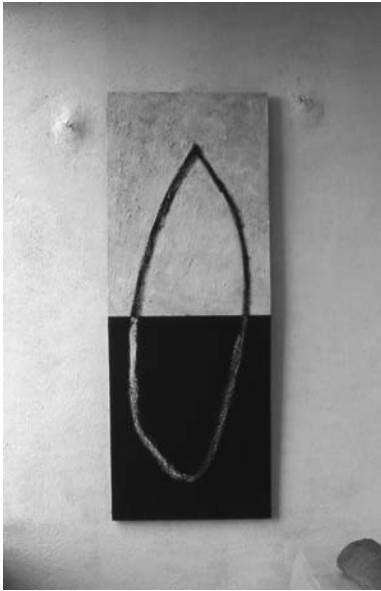
With the paintings *Furioso* (pl. 29), *Brutally Red* (pl. 30), *Fatally Blue* and *Traces* (the last two are destroyed), all from 1987, painted in large formats and with, untypical for him, vehement power, even aggression, Petković seemed to declare with a loud voice of objection his dedication to the space of the painting and to the pleasure in painting. They were all made in monochrome gradations of the blue or red hue, which is almost poured on the canvas with fierce hand movements, but in the same variants of his characteristically broken gestures or regular application of wide strokes. It seems as if Petković wanted to break his own barrier, the guaranteed surface of the grid, that normative membrane against the illusion as a basic concept of our spatial order, which now, after all the painting has passed through, seems to be unnecessary, a long ago overcome obstacle in guiding the



Simbio, installation view at the exhibition 9 1/2: New Macedonian Art, MoCA Skopje, 1995

gaze into the layers of the body of the painted matter. In his following artwork in this period, the large triptych *Tendencies* (1987/88, pl. 31), the inclusion of the viewer in the process of creating of the painted representation became an exciting challenge. Petković lowered the high tone and reduced the color to nuances of white, and beside the white pigments he introduced pencil drawings and white nontransparent and transparent curves, layering it all into a dynamically agitated organic structure which is disclosed only to the curious look in an almost tactile revelation of the interlacements of its open and dimly concealed layers. *Tendencies* showed that Petković remained devoted to his abstract sources and the cherishing of the means, techniques and procedures which defined the basis of his artistic practice; *Tendencies* also showed that now the painting or what it is representing is something which is not anymore analytical and tautological definitions of the form. Now they are ambiguous and multi-layered painted representations which “act as if intuitively painted areas, as metamorphosis of the gaze which has materialized into flexible forms-figures.”¹⁴

In this period and in the following several years Petković intensively worked on a large series of drawings he labeled *Structures* which basically follow the logic of his large triptych; there are series of white and/or black drawings made with rhythmically and evenly layered strokes of pencil or white chalk, that saturate the surface so much that the eye experiences them as skin, as a kind of a tactile body wrapping. Finally, in a span of two years, between 1990 and 1991, Petković worked on a series of completely black and completely white paintings that, despite the differences in the texture, the thick layers of black pigment or the flat, shallow surface, still hardly induce our perception to experience them as representations, association or allusions and, actually, seem to completely alienate from the status of a traditional iconic, representative picture. The only “picture” we see in them comes from the titles which, still, do not possess any logical relation and could hardly suggest any suitable metaphors: some refer to certain moods (*Eutimia*, *Astasia*), some to abstract logical concepts (*Kogito*, *Nocio*), musical terms (*Sordo*, *Gustozo*) or physical phenomena (*Expansion*, *Emanation*). If we call in mind the works of the Informal Art, maybe in their reading we could find the basis for the idea



The initial version of Ellipsis, 1994-1997

of the existential “angst”, or if we consider the minimalism of Ad Reinhardt or the “white desert” of Robert Ryman, we might understand them as an intention to reduce the form to “ground zero” and that Petković was reaching the ultimate questions of the ontology of the painting and the meaning of its existence.

However, a painterly installation with which Petković participated at the exhibition *9 1/2: New Macedonian Art* in 1995, leads to different kinds of interpretations. The installation consisted of two identical rooms, one of which was painted black and on its walls were hung the black paintings of this Petković’s cycle, while the other room was painted white and it contained the white paintings. The floors of the rooms were covered with black and white pigment which was Petković’s way of allowing the viewers to symbolically carry the paintings on their feet and spread them all over the space, turning the floor into a kind of an arena. The title of the installation was *Simbio* (pl. 44) and it was actually a spatial realization of an earlier painting from the mentioned black/white cycle, titled *Noesis* (pl. 45): an artwork consisting of a particular arrangement of geometric forms, reminding of magnet and magnetic fields which attract and reject each other, rendering strong pulsating fields. This was quite unusual work for Petković, both by its form and by the symbolic language, but it also very sincerely and directly reveals the doubts and the faith of Petković in the essence and the power of the painting he’s been knowing and was dedicated to maintain in the time when it became rather obvious that things were moving to different directions. Sharing the same dilemmas Tomaž Brejc noted: “Maybe that ontological effort of the art of painting was just the last ‘religious’ attempt in the world which has become profane to that extent that it does not care any more for the essence of the paintings, it does not care if the painting reclaims at least some of the domains, or an attribute of sanctity, experiences of special values which can be retrieved only by the artist and not the ideologist, or if you wish, the electronic machine.”¹⁵

Starting from 1994 all the way to 1997 Petković had been occasionally working on a quite simple painting which obviously required a lot of his time to decide and declare it completed. Its title is *Ellipse* (pl. 50) and it consists of two black canvases with “sand” texture dominated by a simple white line which outlines a vertically set ellipse and which undoubtedly reminds of a vulva. There is a slide of that painting which shows that the diptych at the beginning consisted of white and black canvases with the same ellipsoid figure of vulva outlined against the contrast of the backgrounds; a black line on the white background and a white line on the black background. This first version of the painting is a synthesized version of the concept of the “petrified gaze” in the series of black and white canvases, where the ellipse had the same integrative function as in *Noesis* and the installation *Simbio*: the idea of connecting and reconciling the contrasts and the erotic connection of the “blood system” suggested by the ellipse from *The Joy of Life*. The final version, however, shows that Petković distances from this, inappropriate for him, kind of rhetorical interpretation of the problem of the picture and returns to the body of the painting itself, revealing it as a compressed symbol, as something similar to the black cross on white background of Malevich, a “zero ground” as the beginning of the reflection of the being.

The display of the black and white paintings in the installation *Simbio* in 1995 was the last significant public appearance of Petković. His later work was rather conceived in his intimacy, in his constant occupation with the drawing, almost on a level of an intimate, diary-like note. Such are the numerous blue watercolors with the ellipsoid, Courbet-like direct suggestion of the vulva which sometimes turns into an eye, into what is its other identity (pl. 51-53). Such are the peculiar and preciously hand-made slides with the central ellipse (pl.

55 - 60). In that period Petković worked on two series of paintings, where in successive change of the form, similar to the film frames, he deals with the idea of motion and time in the painting (see pl. 46 - 49 and 61 - 64). And finally, the motion, the vibration or the existence of the painting in the rhythm of the pulse and the breath marks his last series of drawings with color pencils, made and labeled as *Dialogue with Monet* (pl. 70 - 83). In his home and studio there are still groups of paintings which were obviously a preparation for starting a painterly dialogues with Monet's quivering of the lotus, the symbol of fertility.

1 *Šest makedonskih umjetnika: Od čudotvornosti livade do radosti življenja (Six Macedonian Artists: From the Miracle of the Meadow to the Joy of Living)*, Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 1985. The exhibition was also shown in Belgrade, Skopje and Kavadarci. This exhibition is important because it was the first topic or curatorial project. Curator of that exhibition was Sonja Abadjieva, and along with Dragan Petković it was also participated by: Aneta Svetieva, Gligor Stefanov, Petre Nikoloski, Simon Šemov and Dimitar Manev.

2 According to the title of the book: Thomas McEvilley, *The Exile's Return: Toward a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

5 Igor Zabel, *Disclosed Images: Selected Slovene Works of Art of Eighties*, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana 1989. "The turning point to which led the appearance of these young authors was related to the introduction of the American abstract art tradition (...) This tradition was a sort of novelty in Slovene visual arts, not because artists did not have knowledge of it, but because they were not particularly interested in it in the "heroic" fifties, or even later, in the sixties and seventies."

6 "Now I usually listen to experimental, avant-garde music. Sometimes it inspires me with its rhythm; sometimes it helps me approach with greater concentration to what I'm working on. Music and painting complement each other. Both intermediate through the inner structure and immediately in the so called integral works. In the music we are listening right now (Steve Reich - V. V.) there is a structure which exists in a picture: dark-light contrast, combinations of elements connected into a logical string, possibility for infinite duration given in a time frame." Interview with Valentina Velevska, "*Ova e period na istraživanja*" (*This is a Period of Experimenting*), Mlad borec, Skopje, 10.04.1985.

7 "Rhythmically there are two basically different kinds of time occurring simultaneously in "Music for 18 Musicians". The first is that of a regular rhythmic pulse in the pianos and mallet instruments that continues throughout the piece. The second is the rhythm of the human breath in the voices and wind instruments. The entire opening and closing sections plus part of all sections in between contain pulses by the voices and winds. They take a full breath and sing or play pulses of particular notes for as long as their breath will comfortably sustain them. The breath is the measure of the duration of their pulsing." Steve

Reich in the liner notes on the back cover of the LP record: Steve Reich, *Music for 18 Musicians*, ECM Records, 1978

8 It was noted by some of the Macedonian critics, like for example Konča Pirkovska who wrote in 1982: "Such artworks are not typical for our artistic ambience", in *Petković Dragan - slike i skulpturi*, Youth Center "25th of May", Skopje, 1982; Sonja Abadjieva considered it "an anomaly or irregularity", having in mind the level of "deviating from the artistic norms of the milieu", in: Sonja Abadjieva Dimitrova, *Dragan Petković*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, 1984.

9 In his book dedicated to the post-modernism of the 1980's Nebojša Vilić describes this Petković's shift "quite unexpected and beyond the logic and the tendencies in his art...", in Nebojša Vilić, *States of Changes? Postmodernizmot i umetnost na osumdesettite*, Feniks, Skopje, 1994, p. 195.

10 John Elderfield, *Describing Matisse*, in: *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1992, p. 54. Elderfield actually draws his reference to the physiological pleasure from the American critic Leo Steinberg who is comparing the way the forms of the figures are organized and deployed in *Le Bonheur de vivre* with "a circulatory system, as ... of the blood, where stoppage at any point implies a pathological condition".

11 After Skopje, the installation *Linear Intervention* was set in the Gallery of the Students' Center in Zagreb in 1984 and in the Students' Cultural Center in Belgrade in 1984.

12 Yves-Alain Bois, *The Matisse System*, Artforum, New York, October 1992, p. 92. In conclusion to this paragraph Bois writes: "For me this invention represents a gigantic leap in the history of painting, an extremely serious blow against the dualistic tradition of Western thought (spirit and matter, idea and form, drawing and color). It was a blow that was only begun to be understood later on by Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman. It represent, in short, a fundamental attack on the idealist division between conception and realization: if a color has no identity before it covers a certain quantity of surface, it cannot be thought up beforehand."

13 Tomaž Brejc, *Modernizam posle modernizma? (Modernism After Modernism?)*, *Moment*, 11/12, Beograd 1988, p. 12-16.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

THE CRUELTY OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Sonja Abadjieva

“ ... where to find this living Venus of the ancient people, the one who is many a time called for and is nowhere to be found? We merely may chance upon some of her attractions scattered all about ... I would give up all my wealth for a moment ... in order to see the divine and perfect nature, in brief, to see the ideal”.
Honoré de Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece*

Especially important to art historians is that vigilant keeping of tabs on artists' statements for the mass-media. In the case of Dragan Petković I consider essential his interview “Towards oneself and backwards”, wherein the artist, in few sentences succeeds in sublimating his views on art: The perdurance of the delight in enjoying and absorbing the work of art, only very rarely happens to turn into a delight of the creation ... The artist is consciously making concessions to the society in the attempt to transfer one's own knowledge and culture to the upcoming creative forces or, in exerting himself to surpass the pioneering stages in one of the existing directions thus laying the foundations for the creation of a visual identity where there was none.”¹

It is a fact that Petković had a conflicting relationship with his milieu. There was this mutual disagreement. Being born with a hedonist instinct, he created with an aspiration towards renovating the transcendental beautiful - an aspiration which was constantly disturbed by his dissatisfaction of the results attained. In his view, the mental picture did not had a counterpart in its subsequently acquired material guise, something which was to perpetually rip through his repose. The following text concentrates on the artist's passionate pursue in devising his proper concept of the ideal beauty, a pursue that was constantly followed by resignation. It is uncertain how justifiable or how true his skepticism was. Maybe it was only his imagination which removed him from the vast field of reveries on the beauty which is immanent to both life and art. Actually, we do not have knowledge on the nature and scope of his ideals. However, it appears that some traits of his personality were warranting the success of his endeavor: the unreserved love for arts, the strive to overcome that which is common, the striving for perfection, the well mannered deference for his teachers and paradigms in painting. The artistic genesis of Petković is enfolding along an incessant dialogue of the ever changing ebb and flow of doubts and gratifications.

In search of the beauty

Among the most unrewarding tasks of art theoreticians is the one of defining the notion of beautiful or of that which is aesthetical. For, the attempt of ours at penetrating this secret, means embarking on an eternal voyage which is directed towards the uncertainty. In order to establish a more precise orientation through the search of Petković, I will call upon some views of the great philosophers. Thus, contrary to the great Plato who finds the beautiful in that which is most conspicuous and most attractive, Kant is championing the “disinterested pleasance” which is relieved from the notion of meaning and is indifferent towards that which is visible. Schiller speaks of a “freedom in the phenomenon”, while Hegel propounds a “hidden intimation of the beautiful within the natural - in the self-consciousness - or in the sensory glow of the idea”. Guy Michaud in interpreting Stephane Mallarmé, refers to “the emptiness containing all the possible currents of the beauty”.² Gadamer relies upon “the aesthetic movement of affection without comprehension” thus wondering “how is one meant to benefit from the classical aesthetic means when

confronted to the experimental usage of art in our times?"³. He finds the answer to be the play, the symbol and the festivity. In this inconclusiveness or lack of finality "the beautiful is fulfilled within certain self-determination and is breathing with the delight of self-representation".⁴ For Donald Kuspit "Beauty is a kind of 'egocentric' defense against the body helplessness ... Beauty is in fact an issue of the body."⁵ To this brief "lexicon" of anticipations and reassessments of old interpretations one may include Winckelmann's thoughts on the beauty as an "expression and action accompanied by grace and unity and simplicity."⁶ If we aim for a correct attitude, then we must not circumvent the eschatological version: the beauty as death, suffering or something similar, as the white night or a cup of poison.

Standing on such a slippery terrain as is the concept of the beautiful, the work of Petković appears susceptible to those previously restated definitions of beauty which are having affinity with the metaphysical. Yet, there is also a susceptibility to the classical signifiers: symmetry, proportion, order, coherence, perfectionism, sublime goal ... In a situation like this, one's desire to reconcile academe and modern conceptual aesthetic of the beauty is becoming manifest, as in the attempt of restoring the androgynous (male-female) qualities of that same aesthetic.

The very redefinition of the notions Petković is reducing to the question of what else in the twentieth century the beauty may stand for, provided that the mystery is not relegated to a banality and the esoteric is not demoted to a cheap trick. Thus, he finds his answer pre-formulated in the freshness of the representations which are emancipated from a referentiality, a narrative or an association. Hence, Petković is to embrace the abstraction - that which is faceless and formless - as he is to give in to the feelings of accomplishment and gratification which are imperceptibly present in the shiver, the clouds, the smoke, the dust, the vapor, the movement.⁷ One may recognize in his canvases, as early as 1976/77, that refined semiotic of phenomenological encodings delivered as a cohesive wholeness wherein the airiness of the impression is shimmering, as well as the sound and tone of the color, the intensity and character of the lines. He is interpreting the beauty as a substitute for the imperfection of the world we live in, as a compensation for the negativity, disasters and frustrations, as an egocentric defense against the high tide of that which is unwanted. More to the point, Petković is erecting an emotion of assuredness and happiness, he is restoring the psychical status of the individual (the cycles *Joy of Life* 1985, *In Search of the Enduring Beauty* 1987, *According to Monet* 1997/2004). In order to achieve the abstract ideal of the beautiful, he applies a drastic dematerialization to the reality of his representation, jumping over all conformism and landing onto something different from that which is familiar. By that, he is transforming the factual into something which is timeless and spaceless. The real flowers are thus becoming ideal vibrations while the dance of the figures becomes a choreography of independent lines. Everything needs to be transcended at the level of emotions (about a thing), and everything needs to lose the aura of that which is concrete and which is to be turned into an idea. In order to achieve a definite shape, the true conception of this author calls for a migration in the spheres of certain gallant unnaturalness, of certain artificiality akin to the anonymous ornament, and away, as much as possible, from the familiar images. At this point precisely occurs the clash between his ambitious preconceived ideas and the cruel universe of the painting he is producing. Aiming to accomplish his conception with utter exactness he is filling up portfolios with loads of sketches and drawings, repainting huge canvases and destroying finished works.⁸ The pleasure of painting is hardened by the suffering: "It's been a month since I am in the purest glaciers of the Aesthetics. From the moment I discovered nothingness (le néant), I have found the beautiful" - writes Mallarmé to his friend.⁹ With a firm determination to attain the absolute, to experience a higher/truer self and to pick the marvelous flower of the conceived, Petković is not shunning from the hard work demanded by the research, even when the asking price is his own health. His entire somatic, psychic, spiritual

energy stands united in a single nucleus of cohesion. However, his correct and well mannered comportment, his carefully trimmed appearance, the aristocracy in his views and tastes maintain a continuous communication with his (self)critical frame of mind. The beauty, in order to exist and to be all around him, must be an integral beauty. Marinetti as a founding father of the futurist movement, prefers the racing car's aesthetics over that of Nike of Samothrace. On the other hand, for Petković there are no preferences: the effect of contentedness by pleasures of the eye and soul lays in the dispersion, in things that are always and everywhere around him: in his impeccable road cycle, in the Lennon's trademark granny spectacles he wore, in his Burberry double breasted trench coat, in the music (Steve Reich, Brian Eno, Philip Glass), in the mountain air, to the same extent as in his artistic output. The perfection he sought to attain in the knowledge of techniques, media, styles, art disciplines is identical to the one he aimed to display in his well mannered conduct and tarten demeanor.

Calme, Luxe et Volupté

Là tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, luxe, calme et volupté - Charles Baudelaire

Petković touches upon the tradition but - in what form? As the old adage of Goethe has it, everything is already done and yet, the thing is in the capability of an artist to see in a personal way that which is familiar. "... Every creative spirit is struggling its forerunners but it cannot do without them. History evolves through a constant, reoccurring writing of the past: it is not enough for a man to be original since a proof is required that the works of one's precursors are preparing one's proper work which, in its own turn, stands for overcoming the past achievements as both, confirmation and abolition of theirs."¹⁰ Petković's understanding of the cultural heritage is that of a translation or interpretation, not as something preserved for eternity.¹¹ He is interpreting the tradition as something coming from the past which is concurrently belonging to the present times - because, in the words of Italo Calvino, "the memory is concealed beneath layers of fragmented imagery as if it were a waste ground wherein for a figure to emerge above the rest is becoming an ever more arduous feat."¹² Although Petković is maintaining a close relation with the modernism, the fact of being dissatisfied with himself and having no sense of belonging¹³ directed his search for the ideal of the beauty towards particular artists, whose work he succeeded to internalize without sympathizing and replicating and to whom he only sought to preserve a transcendental relation. His preferred artists are the greats such as Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet, Alexandre Rodchenko, Ad Reinhardt, Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana - all renowned by their scrupulous aesthetical adherence. To the first three of the above mentioned artists Petković dedicated respectively his three series abounding in oil paintings, drawings or collages. The essential in this case is to accurately assess the kind of relation this artist aimed to establish. Immediately one needs to discard the lexical entries such as imitation, quoting, mimicking and impersonating. Maybe assimilation is a more accurate formulation¹⁴, but I would rather name this connection as dialogic, simply because Petković manages to establish an essential communication with his colleagues, he actually creates in parallel with them as an ally, as being of the same mind, as someone sharing their sensibility - certainly not as a prisoner laying in their shadow or as a devotee who would uncritically rip off pieces suitable to the proper artistic outlook. Since he is not a post-modernist or a snap-shooter of cut-and-paste variety, his focus remains affixed on that overwhelming feeling he gets while analyzing certain parts of the antecedent imagery. Most often it is to do with this artist's approach towards the phenomenological details: with Matisse it is the joyous color, the gaiety of the line and that distancing step away from the anachronic bond between the drawing and the skin of the format - actually, it is the departure from the four dimensions of the painting and the development of its subsequent extension into the space; with

Courbet or Fontana, for that matter, it is about the slit that is concurrently striving towards the deep and crawling over the surface; with Monet it is to do with the sense of varying rhythms of the delicate cobwebby line and the overall diffusion of the view; with Reinhardt it is the usage of white as a condition of visibility and not as a signifier; with Rodchenko it is the absolute purity of the color. All of these points of interest are united by an extreme simplicity, by some painterly Dadaism which is limited to a certain phenomena and is breathing through a rather simple form. Would it be far fetching if we are led to believe that Petković absorbs on a nearly somatic level that feeling of abstract beautiful which he unearths with these artists, and that he is doing all this in order to subsequently rework his discovery in an aesthetic model of his own - a model which is in visual terms or by its contents incompatible with the source? This here is, fortunately, not an exaggeration because out of these excerpts, which are culled from the native context of the few poetic contributions, Petković is generating his conceptual model of beauty: that of making an idea from the original model or “intellectualizing” the raw material which was severed from parts of the modern masters’ artistic system.

My attention is retained by the relational analysis of the artist and the three prominenti of the modern painting: Matisse, Monet and Courbet - the masters to which he also dedicated three following series of works: *The Joy of Life* (1984), *According to Monet* (1997/2004) and *According to Courbet* (1995/1997). These series contain the explicit conceptualization of the beauty. Thus, as a most suitable form of my research I have opted for the formula which is comprised in the Baudelaire’s spleen, and which is brilliantly articulated in the words LUXE, CALME, VOLUPTÉ from the poem *L’Invitation à voyage*. The first word (LUXURY) pertains to Matisse, the second (CALMNESS) refers to Monet, while the third word (VOLUPTUOUSNESS) applies to Courbet: those are the three discourses that while different in their appearance, are standing close in their sensuous and emotional transposition of the aesthetic idea.

Luxe

To use green greener than nature - Paul Cézanne

I achieved a very rare voluptuousness and elegance of line. I poured my entire sensibility into them - Henri Matisse

In times when modernists were marginalizing the phenomenon of the beautiful in art, Matisse was firmly inserting himself into its core. The sincerity of that deliberation is due to the natural need of being close to the beauty in order to be happy. The beauty’s quality is transcending stylistic categories and movements as if it were something innate to the life itself. As early as 1976/7 and especially during 1984/5, that is, when the majority of artists was shunning away from the exploration of beauty’s territory, Petković was painting his attractive monochromes and decorative cut-outs, thus demonstrating that - at the end of the day - the beauty is related to the wealth and complexity of expression. Only much later, the critics all over the world had to reconsider their attitude as to their evaluation of this category in the works of Matisse, of Minimal Art adherents or Post-Modernist. Even those floral patterns, as well as the ornamental and decorative instances, which are obviously present with both, Matisse and Petković, critics were interpreting in a rosy outlook and through euphemisms.¹⁵ From the piece *Le Bonheur de Vivre* which he painted at the age of thirty five, up until the cut-outs which he made at the rather advanced age of over eighty, Henri Matisse considered his interest to be unchanged “because all this time I was exploring the same things that I just might have done in different ways”.¹⁶ In course of the mid-eighties of the past century, Dragan Petković had set to unite these two examples from the work of the great Matisse: the *Joy of Life* effectively reduced to the cut-outs. The synthesis of this master’s two extreme discourses - the expressiveness of color-

form (as generated by the Fauvism) and the geometric minimalism - is standing in support of the skilled translation of the tradition into a proper discourse. Petković is building a unity out of this ostensible difference, especially since he himself, not unlike his elder colleague, spent his entire life in thinking beauty as the topos of the creation. That which binds together these two painters on a visual plane is to be reduced to the usage of the pure color, to the dynamics of the gesture, to the stress upon the decorative aspects, to the usage of unpainted parts of the canvas as an extension of space and its airiness. Petković is refuting the significance of form because he finds its alternative in the independence of perduring gesture and line, which is pasted over the wall's surface as a cut-out. Acting as a huge canvas which is compromising that received and rather limiting definition of painting-as-window, the arrangement of cut-outs across the wall offers a de-centered and wider view: the joy is not standing for a concentration in a single point but in the manifold of views.¹⁷ The essential collaboration with Matisse takes shape of a glowing singing, of a musicality in the atmosphere emanating the bliss, of some heaven on earth, of sorts - it is, in the words of Robert Rosenblum, a hedonistic gratification shaped as a "pictorial equivalent of the high gastronomy or fashion".¹⁸ The imagery from Dragan Petković's cycle *Joy of Life*¹⁹ is offering a festive appearance. It is to do with an outpour of fire, of yearnings, lust and eroticism, of bacchanal celebrations and follies coming from an artist that was hitherto unknown as homo ludens. If by his preferred imagery and analytical proclivity Petković makes part of the modernist family, then he is truly distant from the modernism as much as Matisse is when it comes to embracing those unfashionable relations with emotions and beauty. Both are exploiting that pleasure, above all, that pleasure of the desire which is stated with power and conviction - in different ways, with different means and techniques. Only their motive remains the same. While Matisse failed to achieve the effect of the pure form as "presentation of the desire without the object of the desire"²⁰ Petković appears to be closer to this goal, by reducing the emotional aspect to a form which is set free from the reference. To the French artist, the vision of ideal world takes shape in "making art for pleasure and happiness as a defense from the misery and tragedy of the world".²¹ He aims "through art to bestow happiness to the others. Although he was living in tragic times he did not give up the optimism and enthusiasm, as he wanted to damp out man's pains with the beauty in art".²² Matisse himself actually felt lonely and thorn apart by inner conflicts. Maybe that is explaining his statement that his art has to perform "a role which is more therapeutic than an aesthetic one". In order to retain his sanity he was idealizing art as a beauty capable to overcome the illness and despair. Robert Kushner is reading into this "the feeling of melancholy" which is pertaining to the majority of paintings and which is something that many others did not take notice of.²³ Behind Matisse's works ennobled with happiness and joy - apart from his fragile health which caused his acquittal from the compulsory military service - there is actually a disorder in his family life, a series of surgeries, the frustrations by the war, etc.²⁴ This explains the exchange of dissonances in life with the harmony in art, of difficulties with joy, of complexity with simple visual lettering. In times when *Joy of life* takes over the entirety of his being, Petković is truly experiencing a condition of great happiness, of gratification by the topic he is working on and of satisfaction with his autochthonous advancing in devising the language as inspired by Matisse. It appears as if some of the less pleasurable moments of his life²⁵ were pushed at the margins of his attention. Later, in the 1990s, a deep feeling of melancholy bordering the depression will make the repressed negativities to resurface although not sufficiently to disrupt the concept of continual blossoming of beauty on the canvases. Were the unpleasant moments, same as with Matisse, impregnated with the thought that the art is a regimen for troubles? The impression of luxury is also due to the rich sound of pure paints (red, green, yellow, blue), which are, for the first and last time, so resonating and intensive as if they were the triumph of an unlimited gratification. The

artist's palette, which is organized in dynamically controlled gestures, is shamelessly opening up towards an affluent ornamental aesthetics. The above mentioned lack of center in the composition, that is, the diffusion of the field of view, stands out as crucial particularity of the decorative aspects in the Petković's abstraction having its source in the "Matisse's system".²⁶ Moreover, the created situation is an *all over* diffraction of the painting in manifold details with a point of stress in the planar effect, in the poster qualities of the gesture, in the absence of volumes, spatial profundity and perspective ... These details - cut-outs are strengthening the "modulation created by the interrelation of proportions between the surfaces". The ornament as a metaphor of infinity is neutral, disinterested, de-ideologized, it is analogous to the music or abstract art wherefore very close to the beauty. Petković is embracing the ornament during the times when the modern age ban on its usage was lifted and re-evaluated by the post-modernism. Yet there is a peculiarity with this artist regarding his treatment of the ornament. That which is basically decorative, devoid of mythology, drama, tragedy²⁷ or of affects in general - less with Matisse²⁸ than with Petković - is not absolutely neutral and released from emotions, especially in comparison to his monochrome paintings from the 1970s. The closest relation between the two colleagues is established by their even-handed views on the significance of drawing (arche-drawing according to Y. A. Bois) and color. As an aside, Matisse was among the first to offer a solution to the long standing battle of these two artistic phenomena for a higher rung on the ladder of values.²⁹ The beauty for Matisse may also be perceived in the dance. Several of his canvases (*Le Bonheur de Vivre* 1907, *La Dance* 1909, *La Musique* 1910) were inspired by the dancers from the Moulin de la Galette on Pigale, from the folk dances he encountered during his stay in Callioure, from the oriental dances or perhaps, according to Alfred Barr, from the painted Greek vases. With Petković on the other hand, those simple figures dancing over a neutral surface are reduced to a play of drawing gestures. Modeled with scissors, his cut-outs are considerably emphasizing the effect of the movement within the extended space, thus establishing a curious dynamics which is due to the vast proportion taken by the white wall surface. The delicate pieces of unpainted canvas as seen with Matisse, are now with Petković assuming their primary function as a support of the composition and at the same time the unction of the "silence in music, ellipsis in the poetry or stillness in the play". However, the very methodology of execution as well as the interrelations of playful events represented by the drawing gestures over the huge wall panel, are all suggestive of the puerile purity - one that may be seen in his architectonic constructions of little houses from the series *Uninterruptedness 1-5* (1977-1982) and *Variations on a given topic 1-2* (1982). The relevant anthropological signifier of this human activity, in case when it is taking place on the field of arts - "the artistic play" - is something that is surpassing all forms of play in nature ... "a play providing durability".³⁰ Considering that playing is an disinterested activity, as are the music and the abstract art, we may immediately recognize its logical connection with the beauty. Play is there for the sake of playing the way the beauty is for the beauty's sake. There is no associative, political, symbolic or mythological connotation. Simply, it is a "phenomenon of the excess".

The music, too, may be a "phenomenon of the excess", something which is "genetically" connected to the dance, to the beauty and enjoyment. It performs an important function in the oeuvre of Matisse, but it also constitutes a fundamental element in the life and the creative process of Petković. It is no a pure coincidence that Matisse - who watched the dancers in the night clubs of Paris and folk dances at village celebrations - was overwhelmed by the jazz music during his stay in America and that on this theme he had illustrated a book of cut-outs. Even less coincidental is that Petković is considering music as an elementary life substance. He is constantly painting accompanied by the music, that is, in practical terms he

is translating its colors, nuances and rhythms on the canvas, cardboard or in the pigments of the installation art piece *Simbio* (1995). The blood stream of his work is inconceivable without the ever present complement of the music. The two arts for him exist within an earnest cohesive relationship. All the phenomenological aspects of the one are having their counterpart and lexical equivalent in the other. "The formative years of my generation coincide with the arrival of the Beatles. Those were the times when music was connected to life in a different, more fundamental way. Maybe those were the times of illusions but, nevertheless, they left their imprint so that ever since persists this love of music ... Presently I mostly listen to the experimental avant-garde music. At times it inspires me with its rhythm, at other times it enables me to devise a more concentrated approach to the work at hand ... Music and painting are complementing each other. This complementing goes in both senses - indirectly, through the inner structure, as well as directly, in those so called integral works. In this music that we are now listening to (Steve Reich - v.v.) there is a structure which is also extant in a painting: contrasts, dark and light, combination of elements connected in a logical stream, possibility of unlimited duration which is delivered in a single time-frame".³¹ Yet, at this point one needs to stress the distinction in the different approach towards the jazz music, proper to each of the artists. While Petković is embracing that which is timeless, disinterested and phenomenological in the music, Matisse for the illustrations of his book *Jazz*, resorted to concrete mythological themes, popular stories etc.³² After all, to both of them the music means "to be able to sing freely" as Matisse would say.

Matisse was labeled feminine painter: a gentle rendition of the women, of the floral decorative elements, of the rounded uninterrupted line or contour, of transparent airy atmosphere. In accordance with some of the above mentioned statements as well as in accordance with his delicacy, pedantry and strive for perfection³³ Petković too could be labeled the same, of course not in some derogatory sense but as a semantic determinant of his delicate link with the painting which is especially convincingly demonstrated in the series *According to Monet*.

Calme

Water lilies - the tones are vague, lovingly nuanced as delicate as dream

Charles F. Stuckey³⁴

As early as in the previously mentioned term paper he had presented at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, Petković was a supporter of transparency and "pallidness" in the works made with intentionally left white unpainted parts. His writings refer to the need of attaining an impression of dematerialization. Thus he is focusing his attention to the phenomena such as the air, vapor, smoke, mist, clouds, dust or the transparency of the glass, the sooted window pans on the railway coaches or, at best, the transparency of nets. These are enabling him to eliminate the volume and the third dimension and to achieve the effects of transparency and unlimited space. The artist wrote: "I want to represent the space and its wideness in order to represent its illusion, to achieve a shallow ... imagined space ... a space left behind the absent objects ... the illusion they provoke". The silk becomes his material of choice as it is the finest support capable of stressing the effects of immateriality and endlessness.³⁵ In this term paper he is also pointing out his preference for the drawing, for that thin "body-less" line which is not tending towards virtuosity or sensationalism. According to the artist, the drawing gestures need to be slight. Thus, very often in the years to follow, say, in his first monochromes and after that in the entire series dedicated to Monet, his drawing lines are applied with great precision, using matchsticks, rods and spray cans. Apart from the vibrant representation, he is aiming "to accomplish serenity, through an action of calmness and composure". All these procedures are intentionally avoiding the composition, the connection with the reality, the narrative.

The calmness, the silence and the sensations of the view are very closely related to the artistic methodology of Monet.³⁶ The act of painting the impressions from the changing light conditions during the day and, in the *Water lilies*, the impressions of the interlocking skies and waters of the pond of Giverny where he lived during his last decades, contain identical attraction. That which Monet aims to additionally represent in the *Water lilies* is the feeling of the vanishing horizon and the impression of limitlessness as an “asylum of peaceful meditation”. The point he seeks to make is about enjoying the beauty of the calmness and silence.³⁷ The series *According to Monet* by Petković is also relying on the delicate shimmering of the matter, on the blotting colors, on the minutely applied pigmentation and on the discontinuous drawing lines. Of course, his initial motives are not the water lilies, wisterias or the water and the skies above Giverny. On the contrary, his motive is the very ignoring of that which is referential, it is the very maintaining of the vitality and magic of the phenomenal which is to remain at the level of desired immateriality of the beauty per se - the visual absolute of things. Much more important relation between Monet and Petković is established by their persistent suggestion of peaceful and silent mood. The notion of silence “assumes that the realm of the art is in the beauty, implying that which is untold, indescribable, intransitive” (Susan Sontag). It enables the colors, lines and generally the atmosphere to obtain visual resonance and at the same time to offer a virginal and more sensible communication with the public. Calmness in the silence is something that is inducing Petković to stress the absence of narrative and the estrangement from the associations. This permits the extension of the painting into the domains of the thought. This replaces the rhetoric with emotions. The ascetic “landscapes” stretching over the white canvases and drawings of the artist are made as open fields whereupon the imagination of the observer at free will may write down its proper narratives and experiences.³⁸ The white unpainted surfaces and the calmness are engaging the discourse of the “art dandyism” with Petković. “The clean sheet of paper defending itself with its whiteness” of the dandy poet Mallarmé, the Gustave Courbet’s aristocratism, the conduct of Baudelaire as an predecessor of the 20th century avant-garde, the indifference of Duchamp, the dandiest of artists, all the way up to the Warhol’s inertness and in general to the disregard that all of these artists had for conventions in fashion, behavior and, in particular, for the conventions in the artistic language - all this is explicitly opening (tackling) the problems of a socio-cultural demeanor which is in conflict with the received norms. The very act of offering a sophisticated resistance and casting the glove as a token of challenge to the social systems and artistic standards speaks of “the history of the modern culture as of an account about the struggle of the individual against the institutions”.³⁹ As concerns Petković, there are sufficiently convincing arguments favoring the recognition of his attitude as a dandy posture and of his creative dedication as art dandyism:⁴⁰ his delicate taste and refined perceptiveness, his dissatisfaction with the milieu, his awareness of the conservativeness of the system and its institutions, of the alienation and haughtiness, his lack of interest in the comments of the others, and most of all, his countercurrent position in respect to the artistic trends and his stubborn defense of the abstraction.⁴¹

Volupté

Maybe in life one is looking for the greatest possible sorrow ..., so that one becomes a human before one dies

Céline

Is there anyone oblivious of the marvelous short story by Balzac “The Unknown Masterpiece”, wherein the colleague artists Nicolas Poussin and Francois Porbus looking at the vision of the old painter Frenhofer of his beloved Catherine Lescault, are ill at ease to discern anything else but paint wantonly thrown upon the canvas

instead of perfection. "... On drawing nearer, they spied in one corner of the canvas the end of a bare foot standing forth from that chaos of colors, of tones, of uncertain shades, that sort of shapeless mist; but a lovely foot, a living foot! They stood fairly petrified with admiration before that fragment, which had escaped that most incredible, gradual, progressive destruction. That foot appeared there as the trunk of a Parian marble Venus would appear among the ruins of a burned city."⁴² In this story Balzac is anticipating the abstract painting, while his main character, the painter, suffering from an undetermined condition between "clairvoyance and mental debility" is withdrawing into himself and is sinking into loneliness. The closure of the scene consists of him setting the canvas on fire and of his subsequent suicide. Relegating the beloved woman to a foot has its counterpart in the *Origin of the World* (1866), a provocative work by Gustave Courbet, which was disturbing the French intellectual milieu in the mid-nineteen century.⁴³ It was made as a counter-thesis of *Olympia* and *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* by Edouard Manet wherefrom we are being watched by the seducing eyes of the female nudes. The Courbet's realism escalates in the translation of that idea: from the spread out feminine body with cropped head and arms, we are stared at by the opening of the female genitals: arrogantly perched up and aiming at our gaze.⁴⁴ This kind of inversion is used by Petković in an even more simplified form: a crack-hole⁴⁵, positioned within a lush structural and colorful setting made in collage. Speaking in visual terms, this work marks the artist's first more decisive move out of the field of the abstraction as well as his development of an intimate realism which is suggestive of some desire for closeness and acts of love. His "female" as it is the case with Courbet, wants us regressing towards the source or to "the native obscenity", even to the "femininity of the painting itself".

This turnaround accounts for the need of the painter, in parallel to the existing phenomenological space, to construct one which is emotionally more dynamic and sexually more explicit. He is aiming at revealing the desire as something which is concurrently standing for both, the objective and subjective energy of the beauty in art. The response to the carnal calling, the act of listening in to the proper soul, the inner landscape stripped bare and the touch of the golden ecstasies - Petković is embodying all this into an ideal of the eternal female, shivering in her beauty and perfection and yet, untouchable. The opening-vulva is but a bait. The profundity needs to be hidden at the surface (Hofmannsthal) since what is concealed is not interesting (Wittgenstein). The alluring, mysterious and pink heaven with its pulsating center is, in essence, a persistence of some unrecognized hope from the bottom of the artist's being. In that supra-universe of his, it is the pain that is destroying the beauty. It's time to turn our attention to the melancholy which is deconstructing the pleasure. When one's love is lost, be it some ideal/idea or be it a person, the subject assumes the guilt and is withdrawing into oneself. The self-punishment is defined as melancholy - running away instead of a face off and struggle - "loosing oneself in the night of the body". When the object of the desire disappears, the sorrow rears its head since love is the principle of renovating the other in oneself.⁴⁶ This is proving that the beauty, as it is unable to substitute all the values because of its temporal limits, may itself find its substitute in the sorrow. When one arrives at the conclusion that it is impossible to turn love into immortality, one realizes that it is to do with a riddle which hardly anyone managed to solve. "Aristotle likened the melancholy to the spermatic foam and eroticism, invoking exclusively Dionysius and Aphrodite".⁴⁷ During the making of the series *According to Courbet*, Petković was living as if he were in some de-centered temporality, stuck in the past entrenched in his attachment to the beautiful memories but devoid of future. He is painting a homage of absence, an erotic yearning entwined with a voluptuous sorrow. His dissatisfaction comes from the high expectations he devised for himself. Coveting that which is sublime and still feeling helpless - there lay the inner conflict and anxiousness. The feeling that the end of a beautiful day is growing near, is turning the walk down the eudemonic road into a crack. "Can anyone really take a good look into the naked face of an ideal? ... And

what is to remain then save a huge emptiness?"⁴⁸ Baudelaire's spleen - a condition of spirit which is compatible with the premonition of a catastrophe - gives an argument for that void of the eroticized agony.

In the view of Ernst Bloch, the pipe is the beginning of the music. It is an expression of that which we lack.⁴⁹ "This playing the pipe is an existence of that which is no more ... The vanished Nymph remained as sound". When life retired from Dragan Petković, we were left with his work, which not only was a sound but also a material and spiritual argument of his dedicated search for the beauty.

1 Драган Петковиќ, in: Софија Ѓуровска, До себе си и назад (interview), Нова Македонија, Скопје, 8. 3. 1995;

2 Guy Michaud, *Mallarmé: L'Homme et l'œuvre*. Paris: Hatier, 1953

3 Ханс Георг Гадамер, Актуелноста на убавото, Магор, Скопје, 2005, p. 46;

4 Ibidem;

5 Donald Kuspit, *Idiosyncratic Identities*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 169;

6 Idem, p.51

7 These are the phenomena that he explicitly approaches in his term paper at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana: Permutations on the Problems of Illusion of Space in my Paintings (Permutacije rešitve iluzije prostora v mojih slikah), 1976/77(?)

8 Claude Monet was known to having destroyed some of his canvases: he would cut them with knife or set them on fire. Henri Matisse who was too rather self-critical, would take photographs of every stage his work were to pass through. Ad Reinhardt would constantly emphasize: "To paint and repaint incessantly the one and the same thing, to rectify and to make more accurate one and single motif. Vigour, consciousness, perfection in art may be attained only after a painstaking, tiresome work and preparation". In: Ad Reinhardt, *Art-as-Art, Environments I, FI*, Autumn 1962, p. 81;

9 Op. cit. No. 2 (Guy Michaud, Mallarmé ...), p. 67;

10 Марио Перниола, Естетика Двадесетог века, Светови, Нови Сад, 2005, p. 202/3;

11 Cf. Op. cit. No. 3 (Ханс Георг Гадамер, Актуелноста на убавото ...) p. 128;

12 Итало Калвино, Американски предавања, Темплум, Скопје, p. 113;

13 Cf. Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 24-27;

14 This term is used by E. H. Gombrich In: *Norm&Form*, London, Phaidon, 1966, p. 123 ("as the bee transforms nectar into honey, or as the body assimilates its nourishment");

15 Cf. John Perreault, *The Cultivated Canvas*, In: *Art in America*, New York, No 3, March 1982, p. 100;

16 Cf. Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1993, p. 54;

17 Leaving unpainted, white stretches on the canvas was initiated as a procedure by Cézanne, while Y-A. Bois is calling this *jumpy procedure*;

18 Robert Rosenblum, *Matisse: A Symposium*, In: *Art in America*, No. 5, 1993, p. 75;

19 His first work on this topic is dating from 1976;

20 Donald Kuspit, *Armchair Agonist*, In: *Art Forum*, New York, October, 1992, p. 95;

21 Ibidem

22 A. Izerghina In: Henri Matisse, *Aurora Art Publisher's*, Leningrad, 1986, p. 17; "His art it seems to have smiled all through the Nazi occupation". In: Robert Rosenblum, Op. cit. No. 18 (*Art in America*, No. 5, 1993, p.75);

23 Robert Kushner, In: *Matisse: A Symposium*, In: *Art in America*, No. 5, 1993, p. 82;

24 Cf. Op. cit. No. 20, p. 96 (Donald Kuspit, *Armchair Agonist* ...); When he fell ill at the age of 20, his mother presented him with a box of water-colors to alleviate his healing. Since that moment he follows the pleasure principle - the painting as a priority in life, instead of reality principle - the pressure from his father to become lawyer. All representation of women on his canvases are homage to his mother and are having no erotic connotation, according to Kuspit;

25 The divorce, the period of social transition, the insignificant interest of his milieu in art produced around his eudemonistic approach;

26 About 1908 Matisse became the grand master of the "decorative", something which is established in his statement that expression and decoration to him are one and same and that it is "a grave mistake to speak of the decorative in pejorative terms ... The things need to be decorative because I am not painting things but the differences among the things". In: Ad Reinhardt, *Timeless in Asia*, *Art News*, No. 9, 1960, p. 34. This line of reasoning is also finding a support with Gombrich, Gianni Vattimo. Oleg Grabar thinks that "the work of art may exist without the ornament but that it can not exist as a work of beauty and to be communicative in a fundamental way". For Heidegger the ornament is "a central phenomenon of the aesthetics in the final analysis of the ontological thinking", In: from Đani Vattimo, *Kraj Moderne*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 1991, p. 91

27 Cf. Massimo Carboni, *Infinite Ornament*, In: *Art Forum*, New York, September 1991, pp. 106-111;

28 The affinity of Matisse for the ornament derives indirectly from the linear calligraphy of Van Gough, while its direct source is his admiration for the Islamic and, in general, oriental culture;

29 Op. cit. No. 16, p. 21, (Yve-Alain Bois, Painting as Model ...), "Matisse discovered the fundamental inseparability between drawing and color";

30 Cf. Op. cit. No. 3, p. 13 (Ханс Георг Гадамер ...);

31 Драган Петковиќ. In: В(алентина) Велевска, Ова е период на истражување, Млад Борец, Скопје, бр. 1480, 10. 4. 1985, p. 11;

32 Cf. www.gregkucera.com/matisse.htm;

33 Matisse has said that "I myself redo the composition every time. I never get tired. I always rely on the preceding state to help me begin again". Lydia Directorskaya writes how Matisse used to take photographs from all stages of the painting because every morning he would find imperfections remained from the preceding day that he would subsequently repaint. " ... even if it meant many extra days of struggle before finding a new solution that would satisfy him ... Matisse always erased at least compartments of undesirable color". Lydia Directorskaya In: Henri Matisse, Peintures de 1935-1939, Paris, Galerie Maeght, 1986, p. 23; When I visited Petković on several occasions in his studio, I could not help noticing that there are missing paintings that I have seen previously. He explained to me that he was dissatisfied and thus had to repaint the canvases. In order to achieve the conceived beauty in a fervid tide of self-criticism he would constantly find his works flawed and constantly in need to be reworked;

34 Charles F. Stuckey, Blossoms and Blunders: Monet and the State II, Art in America, NY, September 1979;

35 "I did not gave up on "beautiful painting" so that I have found materials that are reminding of the nature. I exchanged the linen canvas for a silk fabric. The silk is smooth and shiny, and is by itself with an ethereal and abstract effect. It is smooth because it is neutral ... The color on such a surface becomes transparent and as such it is also acquiring the airy and spacey quality. When it is stretched on a frame it appears as if it were glass" says Petković in his term paper. I would like to point out that in the artist's heritage I did not encounter an oil on silk;

36 Yet, with the great master of the impressionism, behind the abstract sensation there is the serious problem of impaired sight. Monet was subjected to twenty surgeries of the cataract as he was ailing from hanthopsia - for a period he was seeing either the yellow or the blue part of the light. In 1922 in a letter to his friend Marc Elder he is writing about the several works of his that he had destroyed, about his becoming nearly blind and of the necessity to give up painting altogether. In the artist's studio Marc Elder noticed ... "a wild butchery of canvases, massacred works, bloody as wounds". In: Op. cit. No. 34, p. 119 (Charles F. Stuckey ...); It maybe too far fetching to explain the aesthetics of this master with a sight problems, since what Monet started in his youth is not that different from his latest works - the Water Lilies commissioned by Clemanceau for the Orangerie in Paris.

37 "Considering the delicate spectacle Monet had attempted to depict-photosensitive water lilies floating on the surface of his garden pond along with the reflected images of passing clouds, the miraculous illusion of the world overhead interwoven with his feet ... as if horizontal, vertical, behind, before, proximate and distant were useless concepts ..." In: Op. cit. No. 34, p. 121 (Charles F. Stuckey ...)

38 "Clarity of the white as a first color is the container of all others". In: Robert Ryman, Art Forum, Summer, 1992, p. 92;

39 Carter Ratcliff, Dandysm and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton, Art Forum, NY, No. 4, 1988, p. 89;

40 Idem, p. 85; Carter Ratcliff is defining the pictural autonomy in the abstraction as dandyism.

41 In the essay cited above, Carter Ratcliff is recognizing the existence of dandyism in the dressing manners which is subsequently translated into the field of art. Petković is entirely entitled to be labeled as dandy, among the rare ones on the artistic scene of ours. Maybe the only other deserving of this designation is the great master Nikola Martinoski - the predecessor of Petković.

42 In: Оноре Де Балзак, Филозофске приче, Непознато ремек дело, Култура, Белград, Загреб, 1949, p. 407;

43 "In those times it was literally qualified as "swinery". The Courbet's realism was immediately recognized as an attack against the good taste and the hypocrisy of the Second Empire ..., as a vulgarity and obscenity". In: Bernard Marcadé, Devenir femme de l'art, In: Feminimasculin, Gallimard/Electa, Paris, 1995, p. 25;

44 "The female genitalia that is watching us" ("un sexe de femme qui nous regarde");

45 Associations may be found in the work *Etant donnés* by Marcel Duchamp; in *Concetti spaziali*, the lacerations or punched through canvases by Luccio Fontana who said that his "discovery is but a hole and a spot, and that's all so that I don't care if I die after this discovery" (Ma découverte c'est qu'un trou et un point, c'est tout, et ça m'est égal de mourir après cette découverte");

46 Јулија Кристева, Црно сунце, Депресија и меланхолија, Светови, Нови Сад, 1994, p. 252;

47 Idem, p. 13;

48 Op. cit. No. 3, p. 31 (Guy Michaud ...);

49 According to Ovid, the flute expresses the sorrow that the forest god Pan experienced after the nymph Syrinx;



Sordo, 1999

SHUT YOUR EYES AND YOU SHALL SEE

Miroslav Popović

Shut your eyes and you shall see
James Joyce, Ulysses

There is this question - the one which doesn't force us to provide an unequivocal and immediate answer - what is the specificity of a black painted surface? When we are looking at the canvases of Dragan Petković from an ideal point of view, that is, from close range and under the sweep of a side-light, we will notice the exquisitely rich facture of his paintings. Therein, in the techniques spanning refinement to that which is spontaneous, raw and crude, one may experience the neat, nigh fused brushwork, the traces and sediments of paint as well as ridges remaining from the previous, unsatisfactory and partially scrubbed-off layers. By that, the material body of the paintings proper is reaffirmed as it is by resorting to frequent reworking and perfecting touches until the desired result and the air of time is attained. As if by the rule, a twofold dating appears on most of the works wherein the later date indicates that the pictorial result adequately met the painter's exacting criteria.

In front of these black painted surfaces we feel as if we were in front of a dark, somewhat disturbing space which is virtually impressing upon us the evocation of a "negative theology". Moreover, there are these titles such as, for example, "Deaf" (Sordo) or "Disturbance" (Astasia), which are accordingly denoting the apprehensive nature of the artworks.

The opaque surfaces wherein "there's nothing to see" while, at the same time, "there is so much to be looked at" are standing as an iconographic "Ground Zero" in want for their referential strongholds. Their detachment puts into question the very act of seeing, as well as of its aesthetic, psychological and ethical implications. Thus, moving the centre of gravity towards the act of seeing proper, appears to be a logical consequence which is actually confirmed by Petković himself: "... the vision is changed and upgraded when it touches the matter. The paintings - as a final result - are leading an independent life irrespectively of the explanations and narratives of their author".¹

"That with which we see is important to us and is present in our eyes - only because it concerns us (or because it looks at us)".²

In the mentioned work of Georges Didi-Hubermann there are two distinct types of "viewers" and two unfit comportments. The first type of viewer is always prepared to believe, as an apostle before the Christ's tomb who, regardless of the view, is transcending that which is seen onto some different level. On the other hand, the other type of viewer is firmly entrenched in the seemingly obvious apparency of things, in the tautology according to which "what is visible is visible" and there is nothing more to it. This position is grounding the act of seeing as a tautological act within some "planar truth" which is stating that "what I see - I see", something which, in the end, may be labeled as a veer into the obvious banality asserted in the spirit of a "Lapalissade".³

Actually, it is a victory of language over the act of looking - the language which being enclosed in itself as a "Lapalissade" claims that in front of us there is nothing else but a black surface, and that it is not something that would be different from itself. Thus, it is evident that the tautological approach means discarding the hidden aspects of the work, while at the same time it is merely corroborating the work's

nominal tautological identity. In this way the temporal dimension of the work is rejected from consideration, as well as the action of time, the alteration of the very piece, the function of the memory or - the obsession of the regard. It is to do, in terms of W. Benjamin, with rejecting the aura of the artwork which concurrently indicates an indifference towards that which is beneath, hidden and delayed.

The second experience of looking is related to the religious act and its verity which is presented as being superior, heavenly and authoritative - which is how the dogmatic stance always assumes a theological and metaphysical sense for the obviousness. It is that great phantasmal construction which is directing our view towards the aesthetic (the sublime) and at the same time towards the temporally defined (as hope and fear) universe.

Both distinctions appear to be functional within the indicators which are relying on the phenomenology of perception: it is about distinguishing the visible from the visual. This may be rendered as an illustrative explanation: it is like being awake during the night-time when nothing can be seen and yet knowing from the experience that this does not mean looking at the invisible since the eyes are open, which only agrees with the fact that it is actually a matter of visual experience.

To us, in this sense, Merleau-Ponty represents an excellent guide: "When, for example, the world of clear and articulated objects is invalidated, it is upon our perceptive being, which is torn away from its proper universe, to outline the spaciousness without the objects. It happens at night. The night is not an object standing before me but rather a wraparound, it is entering through all of my senses, it is repressing my memories and is all but wiping out my identity. I am no longer nailed to my view-point wherein I can make out the distance and contours of the objects. The night has no outlines. The night itself is touching me so that our unity is the unity of *mana*⁴. Hence, besides its resident voices and the distant light, the night is experienced in its entirety as a deep without planes, without surface, without a distance from oneself. In view of reflection, the space consists of thoughts, of thoughts that connect the parts, while during night-time that awareness is lacking its proper *place*. On the contrary, it is incorporated within the night space in the heart of that same space."⁵

When we are experiencing the night without restrictions, the night becomes the perfect *place* wherein we dwell in its centre in an absolute way, and it will remain a point in the space where we are. In this invocation of the night where one is losing the visual stability, the night is revealing before us the meaning of the objects and the essential fragility of theirs, that is to say, their aptitude to vanish just when they are closest to us. At the level of perception, the night manifests itself as a factor of the "voluminosity" of the place while at the level of the signified, the absolutely neutral character of that which is barely discernible is transformed into a significant operation wherein the constitution of senses is based on absence. The paradigm of night with its concomitant visual anxiousness (an additional reflex that is related to the paintings of Petković) which is, by the by, assumed self-evident, encourages us to label the artist's works as "sleeping" surfaces or volumes - in a way only the night can be.

There is yet another dialectic image that seems appropriate to approach the parable of the view - that image is the door or the doorstep. The black surfaces with Petković do not appear like doors, but their dialectic nature accurately condenses the two spatial conditions. Actually, we are either in front of or inside. We all know only too well the riddle of the doorstep from the metaphor presented in 1927 by Marcel Duchamp in his *Porte 11, rue Larrey*. Namely, Duchamp had noticed the ambiguous coalescence of the arrival and departure - an act that is regularly associated with the door. Thus, he had set up a door between two doorsteps forming two doorways that are inevitably and simultaneously open and closed. The artist is reminding us that the sensibility and senselessness are coexisting in the very

paradox, practically bordering the absence of sense. In many a plot and conundrum used in the mythical constructs there is this ambivalent property of the door (as a place of crossing from here to over there or, as a spot of transition or, finally, as a location that cannot be passed across). The door stands as a figure of the opening, or more to the point, of a conditional opening, the one which is blackmailed and blackmailing, capable of taking or giving everything. In front of the painting we stand as if we were in front of an open door whose doorstep we cannot pass over: the believer wants to see what is on the other side, while the man of tautology will turn away since he thinks that he knows the door simply by glancing at it. Looking means simultaneously taking into consideration that the painting is structured as *in front of-inside*, as a doorstep. The image of the open door is indicative of the unity proper, of the intertwining of that which is open and closed. As for the canvases of Petković, the riddle or ambiguity of the doorstep originates in their inter-space. There, a meeting is taking place between, on one side, the obscurity itself - an ingesting obscurity or the one that is created upon its proper diluteness or its absolute denseness, and on the other side, the physical traces and facture, the free handwriting or simply the liberally applied dreg.

While looking, it is important for us to understand the form as a process of deformation or as a figure of perdition. A place where *to see* means *to lose* and wherein the losing object is not seeing, represents a place of weirdness (*das Unheimliche*) which on the other hand corresponds to the auratic image that Benjamin called "strange" (*sonderbar*) and "unique" (*einmalig*). With auratic objects, Freud's *Unheimlich* reveals the powerful hold of the viewer by that which is looked upon. The object of disturbance is attracting us by obsessively mixing the attraction and uneasiness, because the condition of distress exposes us to a risk of not seeing it anymore.

The distress is disorientating. We do not know exactly what lies ahead and what is not there and whether the place we are taking our orientation from is *inside*. The disorientation of our view is separating us from ourselves, within ourselves. Thus we are held to ransom by the absent. This division in us (we look at and we are looked at) is initiated by the doorstep. We are between something which is in front of and something which is behind. In case we name the object of our observation as painting, then in front of the painting one is standing as if it were an open door which cannot be entered. We carry the space by way of our body and this space may solely appear within the dimension of the encounter: releasing it from the limitations, separating it from that which is *here*, from the visual closeness; concurrently, the space is presenting itself in that which is *there*, in an "opening" distance that allows to be opened respectively. The threshold between the memory and expectations, between that which already had met the ending and that which is yet to see the closure. Every painting is a doorstep that opens toward its deepness - retrieving it, retreating from it and attracting it. From the painting proper our gaze can discern the sorrow and the desire as it can simultaneously feel the time slipping by and its own perdition.

1 Interview, Nova Makedonija, 26.04 1988., p.9;

2 Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Il gioco delle evidenze*, Fazi Editore, Roma 2008;

3 It is an expression denoting a truism, a banal obviousness which originated in the renaissance song dedicated to the perished Marshal La palice (La palice is dead/Dead in front of Pavia / A quarter hour before his death / He was still quite alive).

4 *Mana* is a term of Malaysian origin denoting an impersonal supernatural and immoral power which is manifesting itself in particular natural phenomena. On a social and political level *mana* stands for a symbolic way of accepting the special values of some person as well as the basis of this person's authority.

5 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia della percezione*, Bompiani, Milano 2003, p. 372

Plates



1. Дематеријализација на Перо Санџак, 1976/77
The Dematerialisation of Pero Sandzak
Масло на платно/Oil on canvas
100x70cm



2. Разрувачко бело, 1976
Destructive White
Акрилик на платно/Acrylic on canvas
70x100cm



3. Опсесивно црвено 3, 1977
Obsessive Red
Комбинирана техника/Mixed media
70x100cm



4. Динамична површина на црвено, 1977/78
Dynamic Surface of Red
Комбинирана техника/Mixed media
119,7x50,1cm



5. Игри на симултаноста 2, 1978
Games of Simultaneity 2
Масло на платно/Oil on canvas
50x36cm

6. Структури на жолтото, 1978
Structures in Yellow
Масло на лесонит/Oil on plywood
47x35cm



7. Комплементарни игри, 1978/80
The Complementary Games
Масло на лесонит/Oil on plywood
51,6x34,2cm



8. Структури на црвеното, 1978/80
Structures of the Red
Масло на лесонит/Oil on plywood
55x33,3cm



9. Комплементарност 10, 1982
Complementation
Комбинирана техника на платно/Mixed media on canvas
100x60cm
сопственост: Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје
collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje



10. Опсесивно црвено 2, 1977
Obsessive Red 2
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
200x130cm



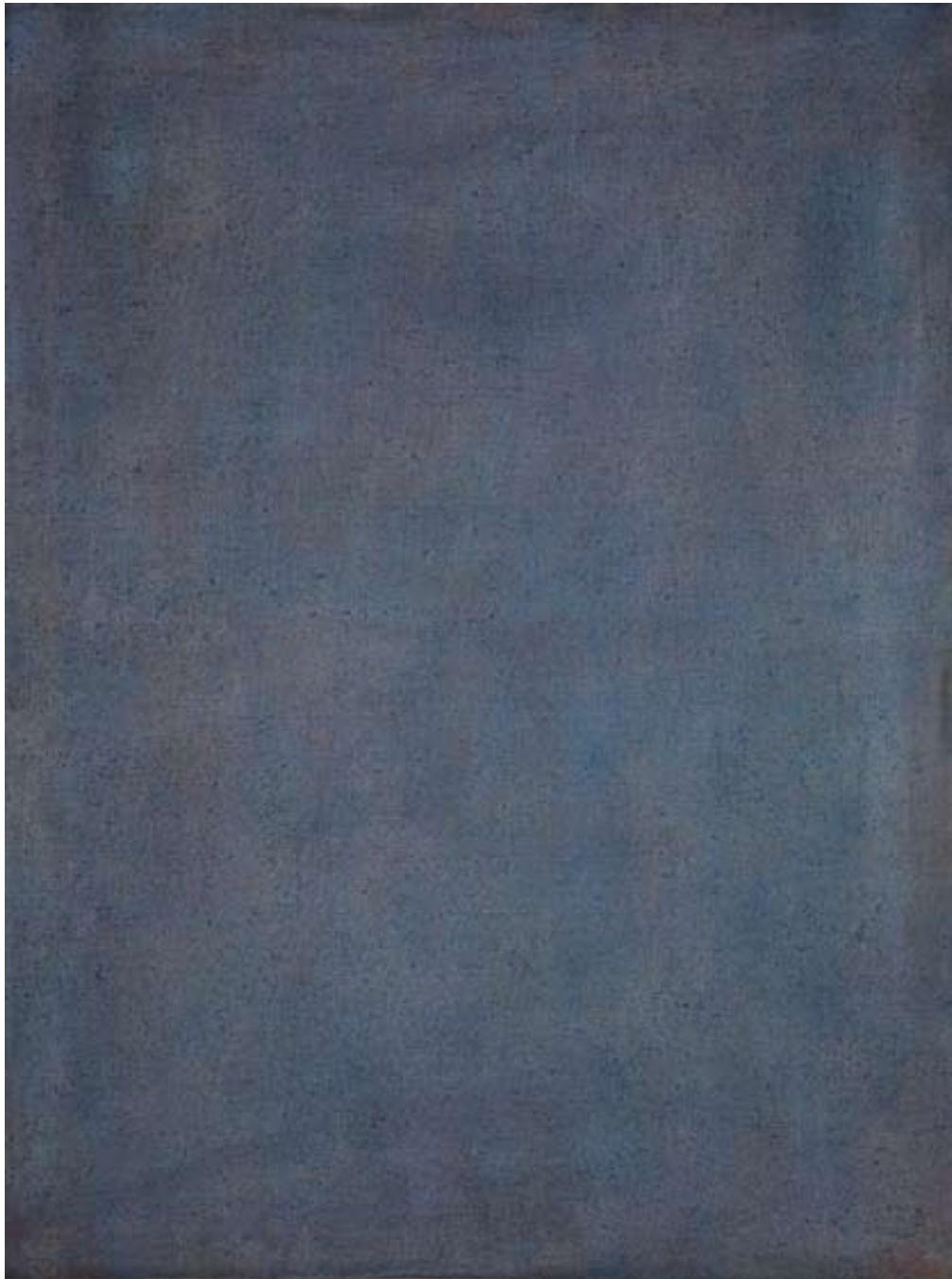
11. Комплементарност 1, 1981
Complementary 1
Масло на платно/ Oil on canvas
74,5x35,4cm



12. Формирање на синото, 1981
Shaping of the Blue
Акварел/Watercolor
64,8x50,2cm



13. Бескрајно црвено, 1979
Endless Red
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
119x89cm



14. Бескрајно сино, 1979
Endless Blue
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
119x89cm



15. Пулсирања, 1981
Pulsing
Акварел на хартија/Watercolor on paper
55,2x41,9cm

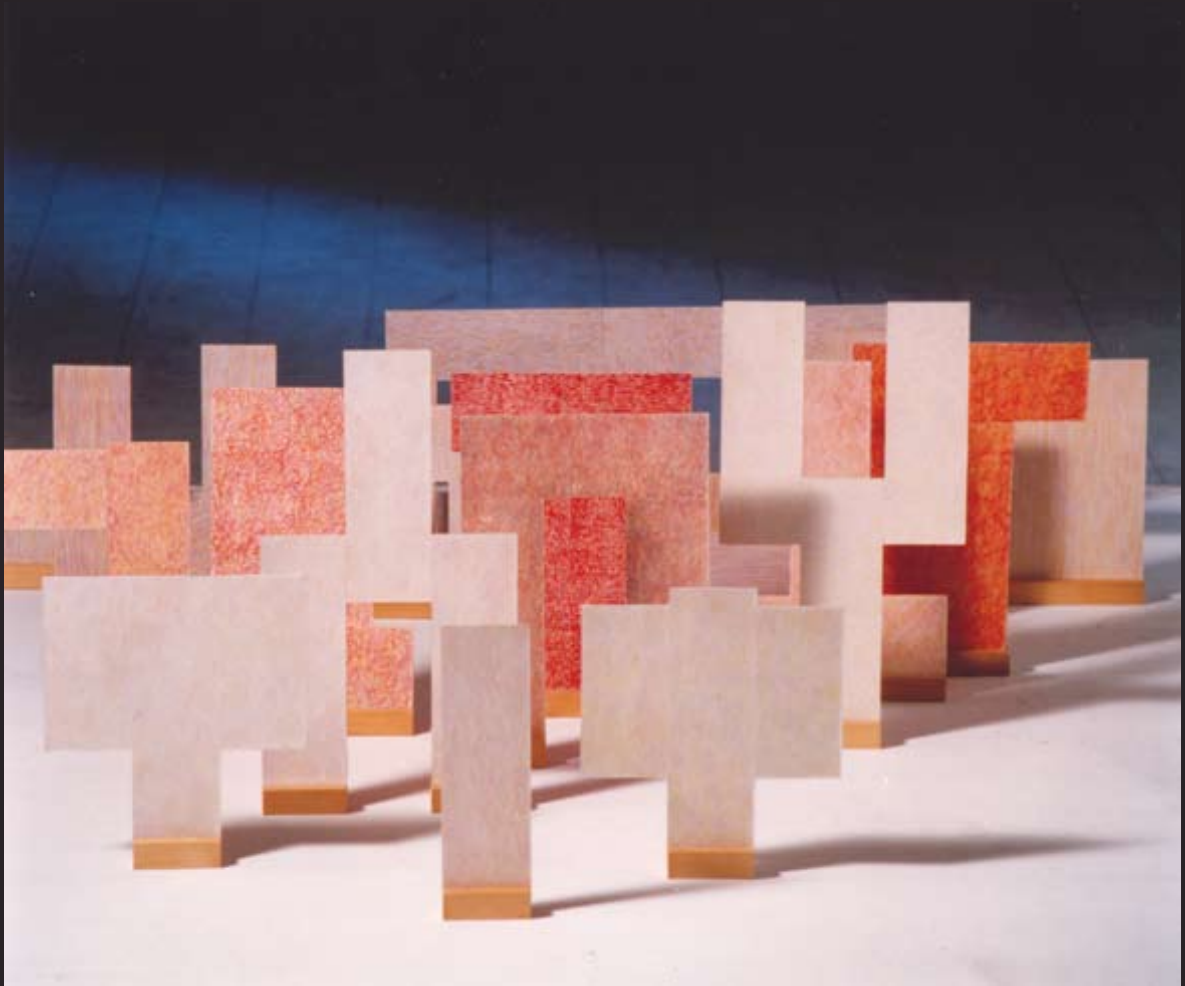


16. Тек, 1980/81
Flow
Акварел на хартија/Watercolor on paper
48x32cm

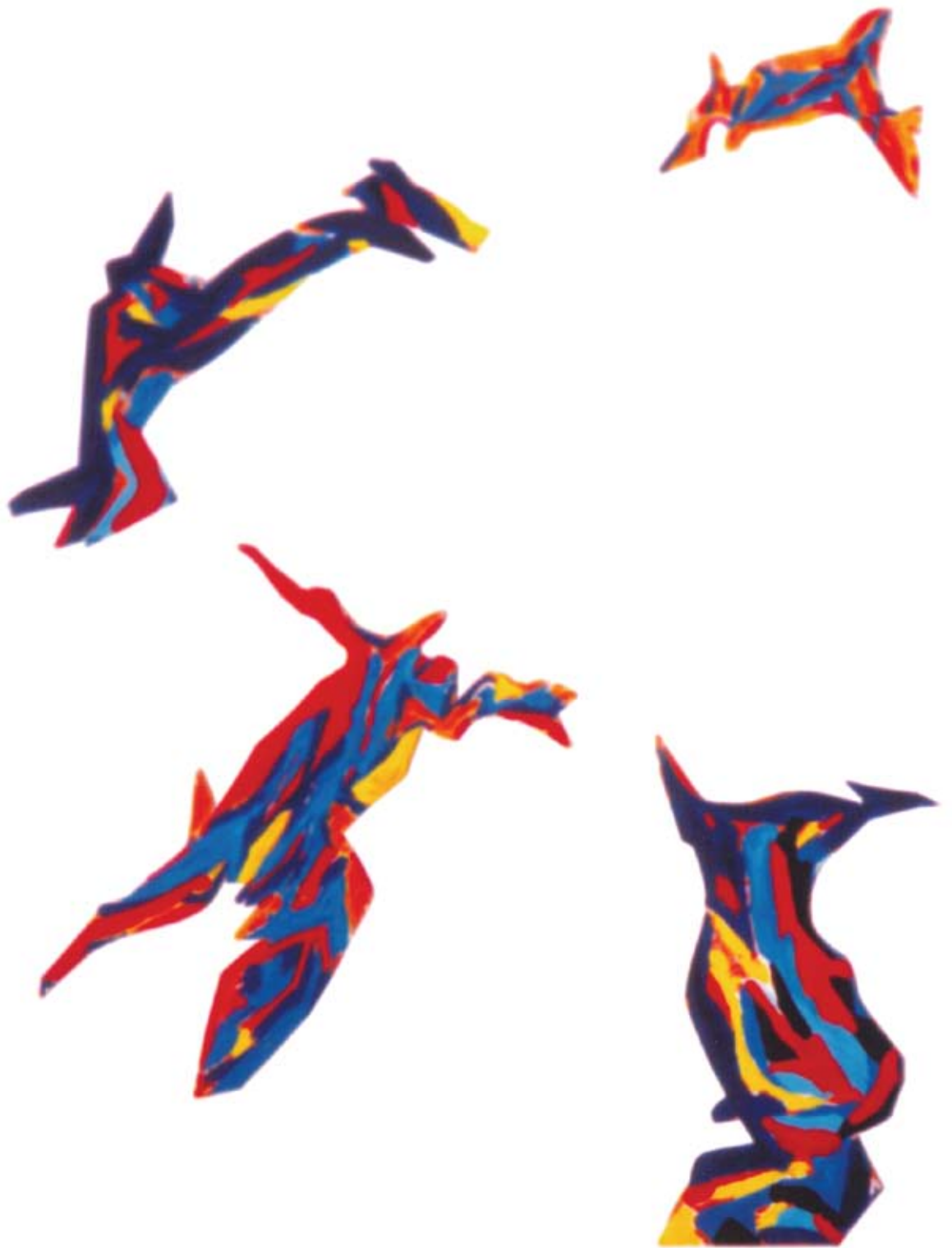


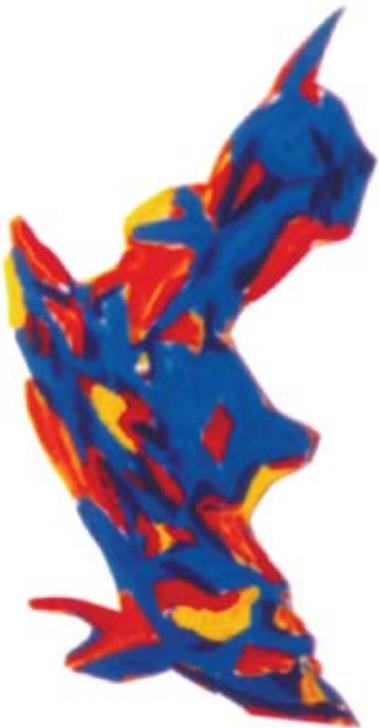
17 - 20. Објекти од циклусот Варијации на зададена тема, 1982
Objects from the series Variation on an Assigned Theme
Комбинирана техника на картон/Mixed media on cardboard
Димензии варијабилни/Variable dimensions

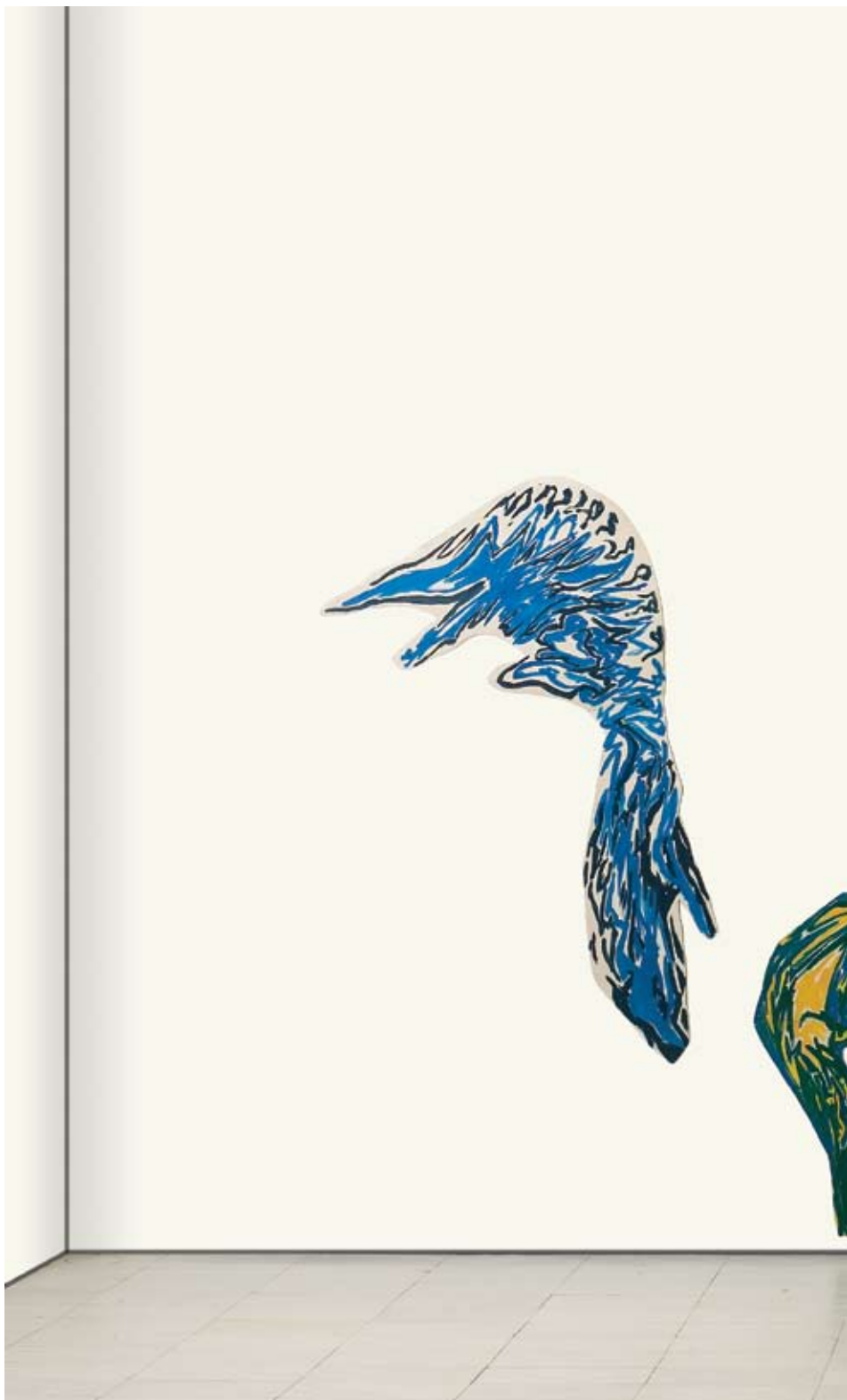
21. и 22. Објекти од циклусот Непрекинатост, 1978/82
Objects from the Continuity series
Комбинирана техника на картон и дрво/Mixed media on cardboard and wood
Димензии варијабилни/Variable dimensions



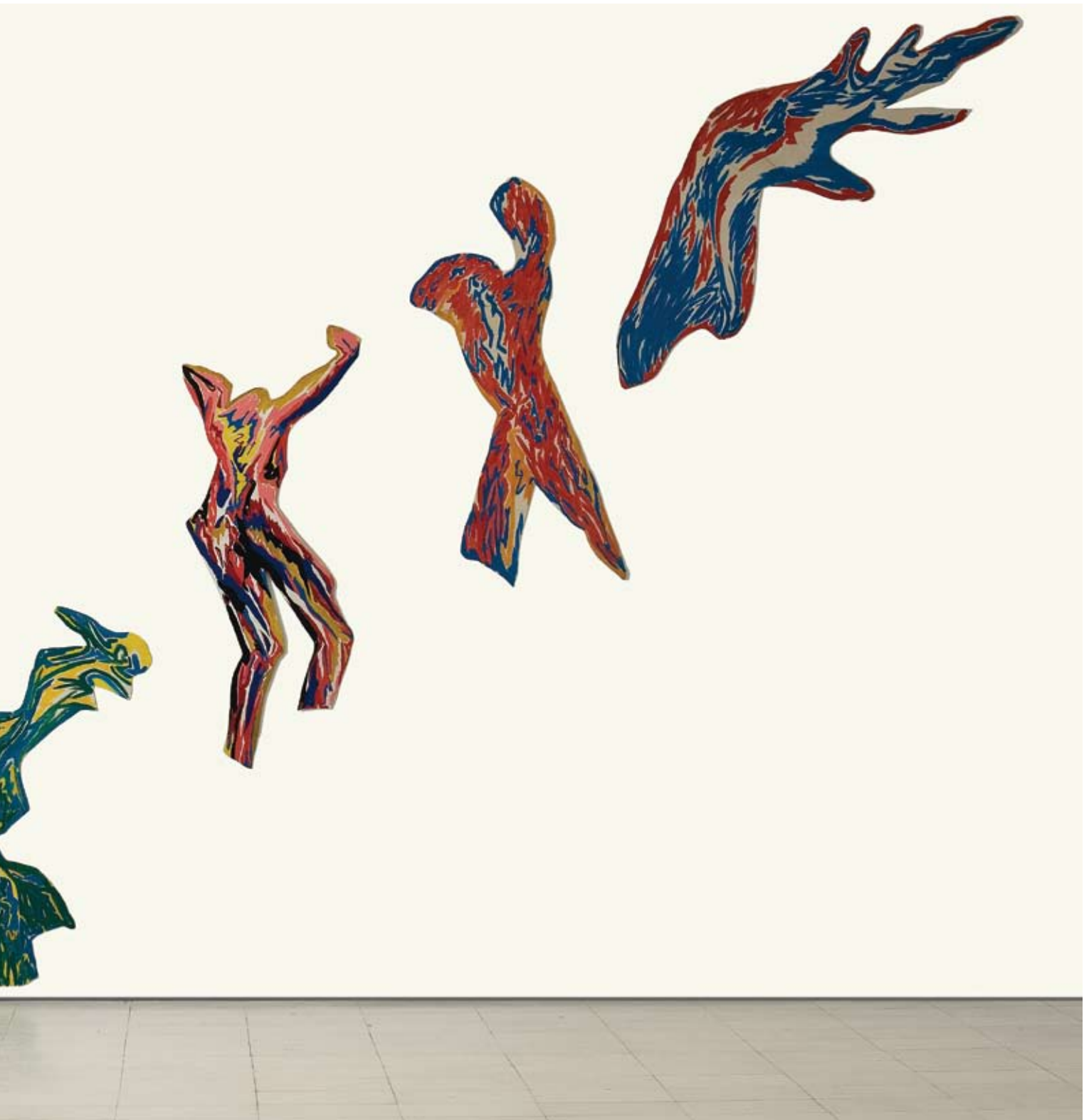
23. Непрекинатост, 1978/82
Continuity
Комбинирана техника на картон и дрво/
Mixed media on cardboard and wood
димензии варијабилни/variable dimensions

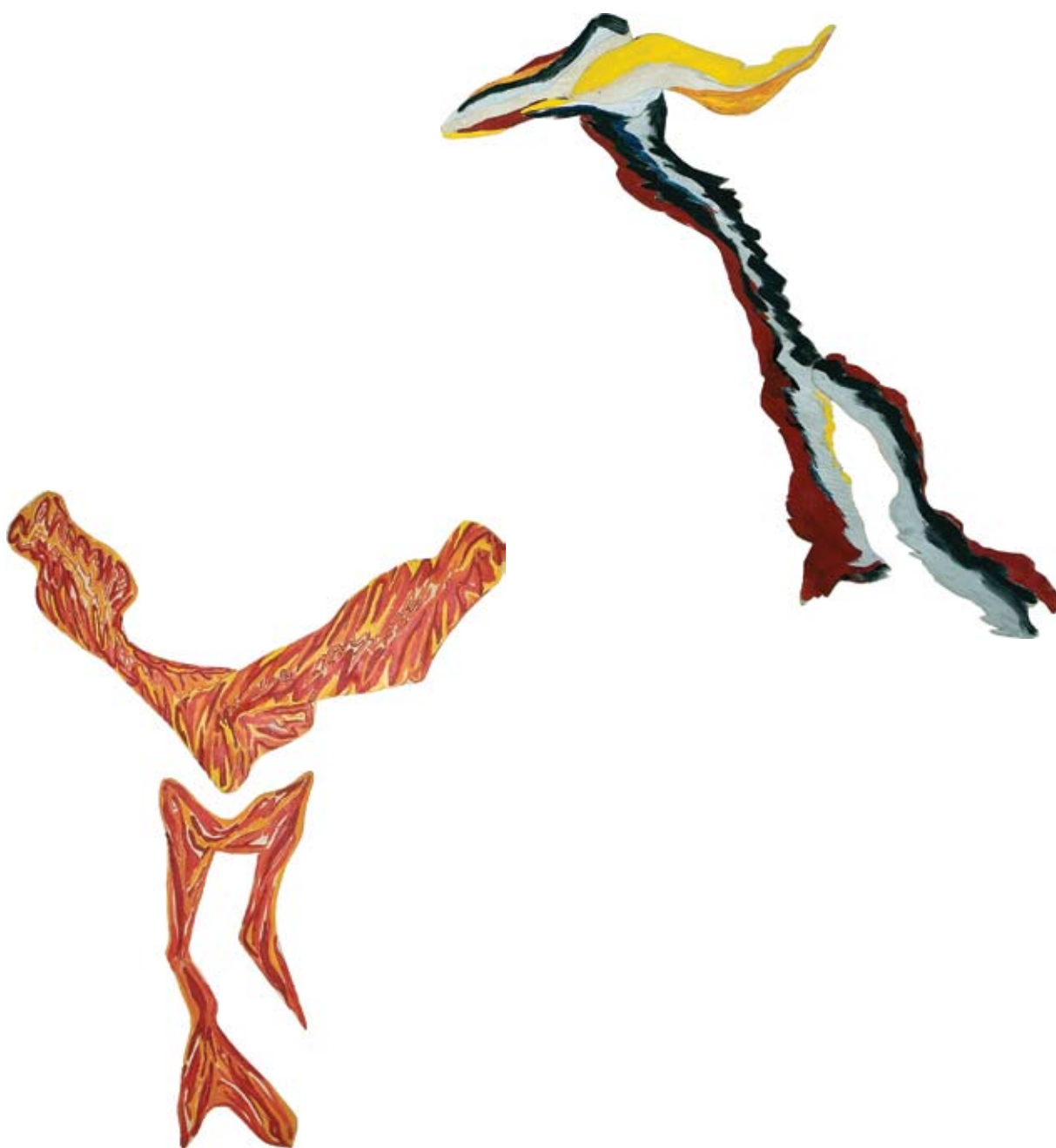






25. (на претходните две страни) и 26. (горе)
Композиции од циклусот Радоста на живењето, 1985/87
Objects of the series Le Bonheur de vivre
Комбинирана техника на картон/Mixed media on cardboard
Димензии варијабилни/Variable dimensions





26. Од циклусот Радоста на живеењето, 1985/87
Object from the series Le bonheur de vivre
комбинирана техника на картон/
mixed media on cardboard
223x110cm

27. Од циклусот Радоста на живеењето, 1985/87
Object from the series Le bonheur de vivre
комбинирана техника на картон/
mixed media on cardboard
193x135cm



28. Од циклусот Радоста на живеењето, 1985/87
Object from the series *Le bonheur de vivre*
комбинирана техника на картон/
mixed media on cardboard
230x148cm
сопственост: Музеј на современата уметност - Скопје
collection: Museum of Contemporary Art - Skopje

29. Фуриозо, 1987
Furioso
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
200x130cm

На стр. 58/59
30. Брутално црвено, 1987
Brutal Red
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
200x260cm









31. Настојувања, 1987/88
Strivings
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
200x390cm





32. Сепарации 1/2, 1987
Separations
Комбинирана техника на картон
Mixed media on cardboard
100x140cm



33. и 34. Од циклусот Структури, 1988
From the series Structures
Комбинирана техника на хартија /
Mixed media on paper
65,9x50,6cm



35. Од циклусот Структури, 1988
From the series Structures
Комбинирана техника на хартија/
Mixed media on paper, 65x45cm

37. Од циклусот Структури, 1989
From the series Structures
Крејон на хартија/Crayon on paper
65x45cm

36. Од циклусот Структури, 1990
From the series Structures
Крејон на хартија/Crayon on paper
100x70cm

38. Од циклусот Стуктури, 1990/91
From the series Structures
Крејон на хартија/Crayon on paper
70,5x50,2cm



39. Без наслов, 1987/8893
Untitled
Комбинирана техника на хартија/Mixed media on paper
60x43cm



40. Стенија 1, 1989/90
Stenija
Масло на платно/Oil on canvas
70x50cm



41. Густозо, 1989/93
Gustozo
комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
90x120cm

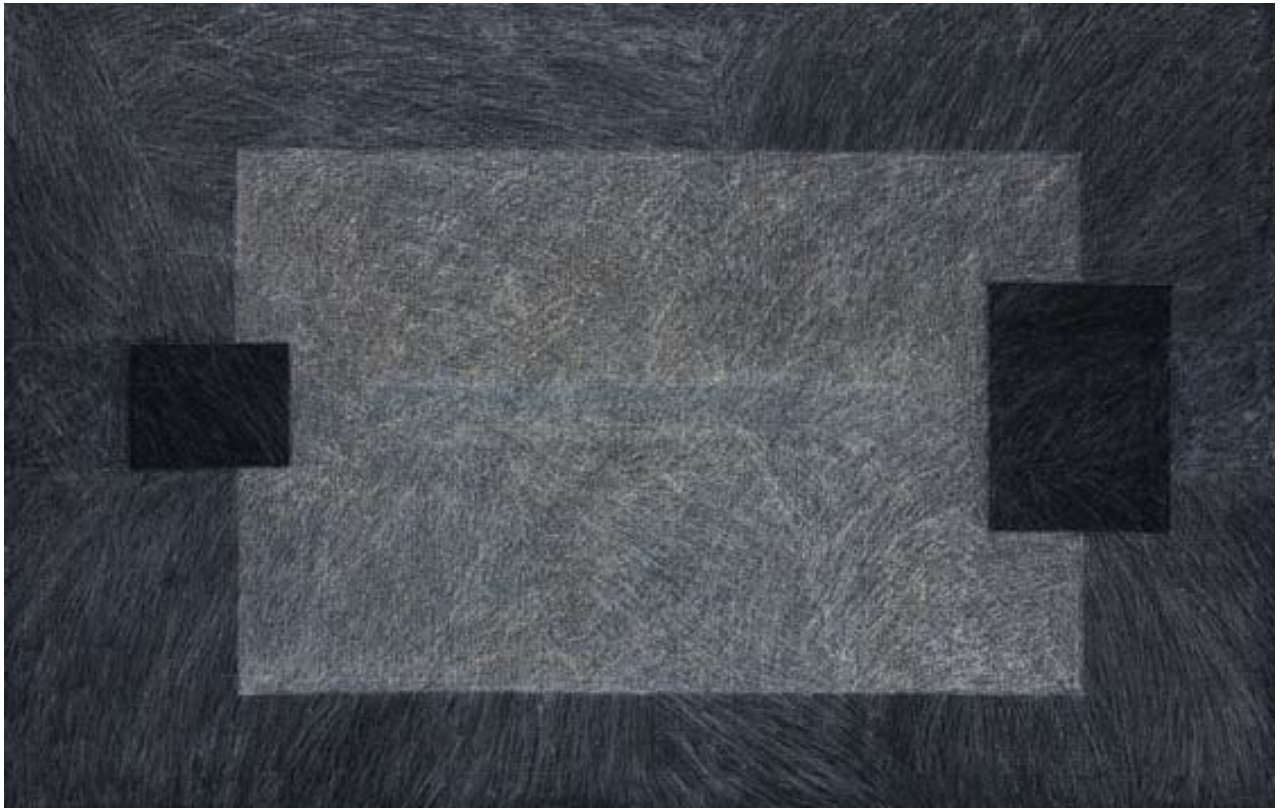


42. Експанзија, 1989/93/94
Expansion
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
400x130cm

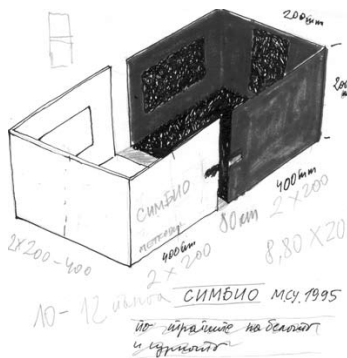


43. Астазија, 1989
Astazija
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
240x80cm

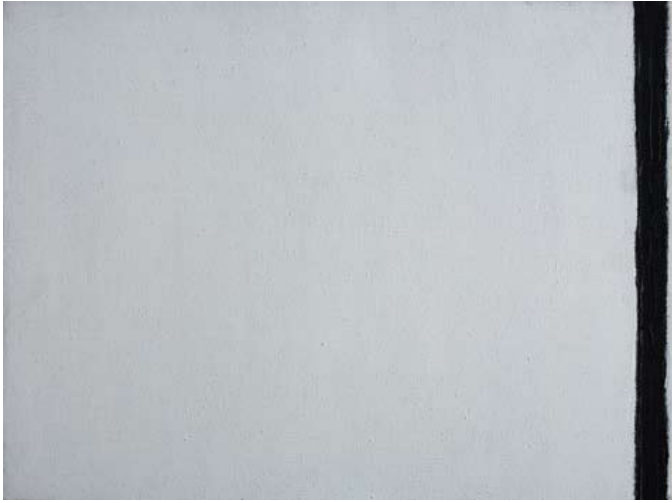


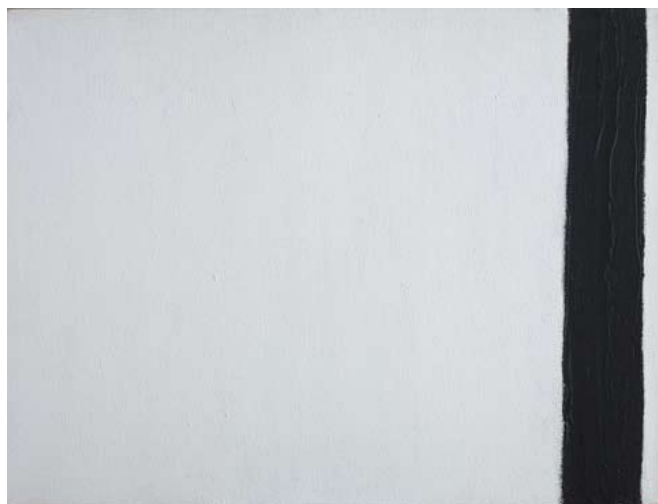


45. Ноеза, 1990
 Noezis
 Комбинирана техника на платно/
 Mixed media on canvas
 200x130cm



44. (лево и на претходната страна) Скица и фотографија од инсталацијата Симбио на изложбата 9 1/2: Нова македонска уметност, 1995 (left and the previous page) Drawing and a photograph from the installation of Simbio, shown at the exhibition 9 1/2: New Macedonian Art, 1995
 Соба со слики и црн и бел пигмент на подот/
 A room with paintings and black and white powder on the floor
 880x400cm





46 - 49. Без наслов (серија од 16 платна), помеѓу 1995 и 2000
Untitled (series of 16 paintings), between 1995 and 2000
Акрилик на платно/Acrylic on canvas
секое/each 30x40cm

50. Елипса, 1994/97
Ellipsis
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
50,3x130,8cm





51. Без наслов, 1996
Untitled
Акварел на хартија/Watercolor on paper
65x50cm

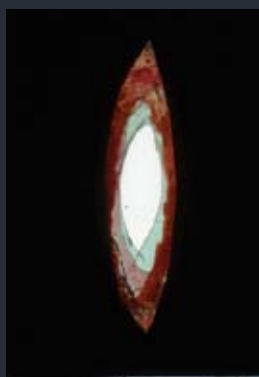
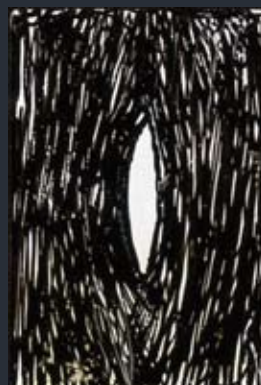
52. Без наслов, 1996
Untitled
Акварел на хартија/Watercolor on paper
50,8x36cm



53. Без наслов, 1996
Untitled
Акварел на хартија/Watercolor on paper
50,8x36cm



54. Без наслов, 1997
Untitled
Комбинирана техника на платно/
Mixed media on canvas
60x20cm



55 - 60. Без наслов, 1996/1997
Untitled
Колажи на 35мм. слајд филм/
Collages on 35mm. slide film





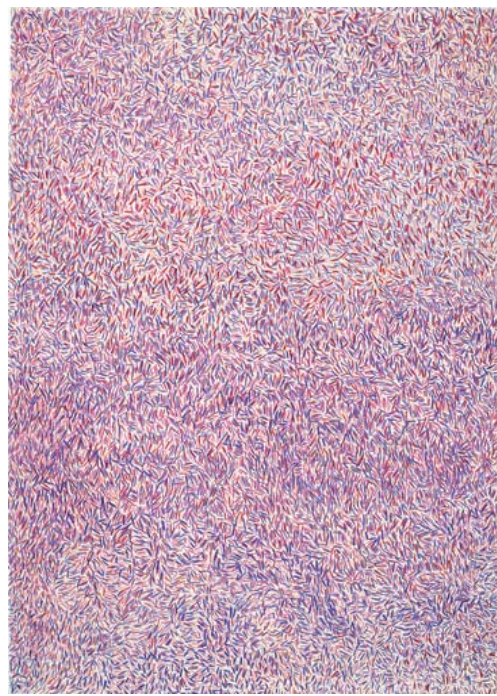
61 - 64. Без наслов (серија од 10 платна), помеѓу 1996/98
Untitled (series of 10 paintings), between 1996/98
Акрилик на платно/Acrylic on canvas
секое/each 80x100cm



65. Без наслов, 2001/02
Untitled
Акрилик на платно/Acrylic on canvas
35x45cm



66 - 69. Без наслов, 2003
Untitled
Акрилик на платно/Acrylic on canvas
секое/each 35x35cm



70. Дијалог со Моне XXXVII, 09.2001
Dialogue with Monet XXXVII
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 42x29,7cm
72. Дијалог со Моне XX, 21.06.2001
Dialogue with Monet XX
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 42x29,7cm

71. Дијалог со Моне III, Дојран 19.06.1999
Dialogue with Monet III, at The Lake of Dojran
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 37,5x24,5cm
73. Дијалог со Моне VI, 15/16. 10. 1999
Dialogue with Monet VIII
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 40x29cm



74. Од циклусот Дијалог со Моне, 05/07. 12 2001
From the series Dialogue with Monet
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper
37,8x31,1cm



75. Дијалог со Моне XVI, 20. 06 2001
Dialogue with Monet XVI
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 42x29,7cm

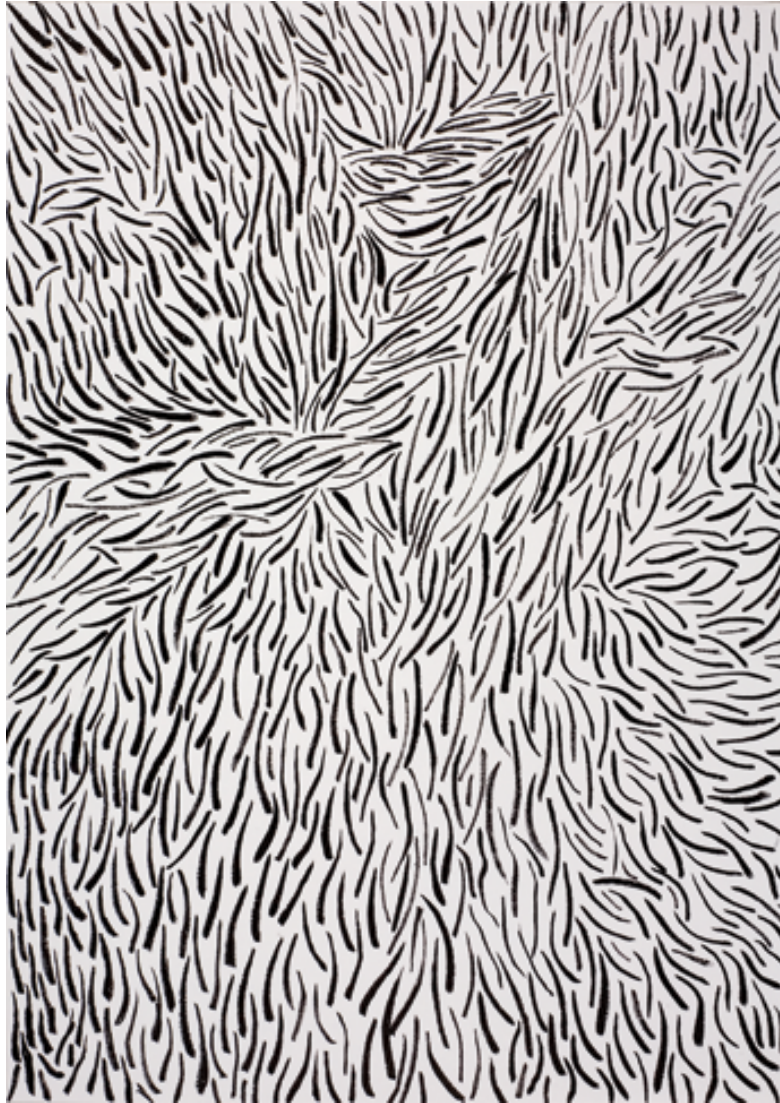


76. Дијалог со Моне XIII, 30. 05 2001
Dialogue with Monet XXXVI
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 40x29cm

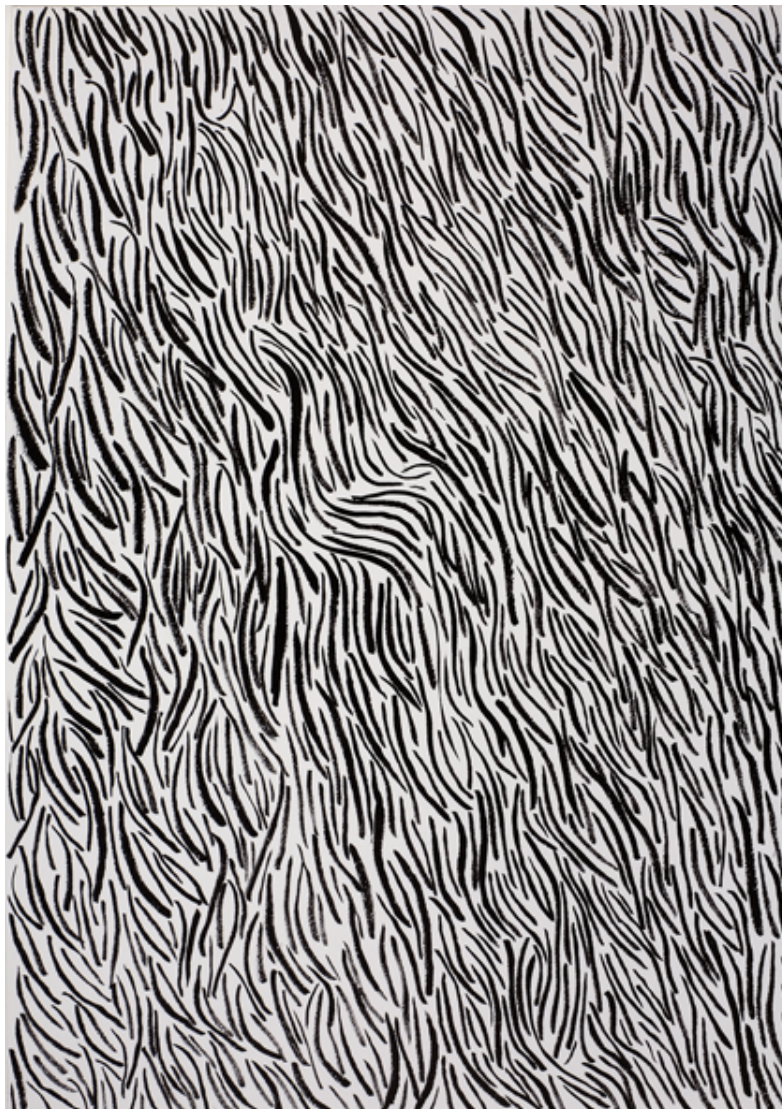
78. Дијалог со Моне XII, 08. 06 2001
Dialogue with Monet XII
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 40x29cm

77. Дијалог со Моне IX, 04/05. 11 2001
Dialogue with Monet IX
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 42x29,7cm

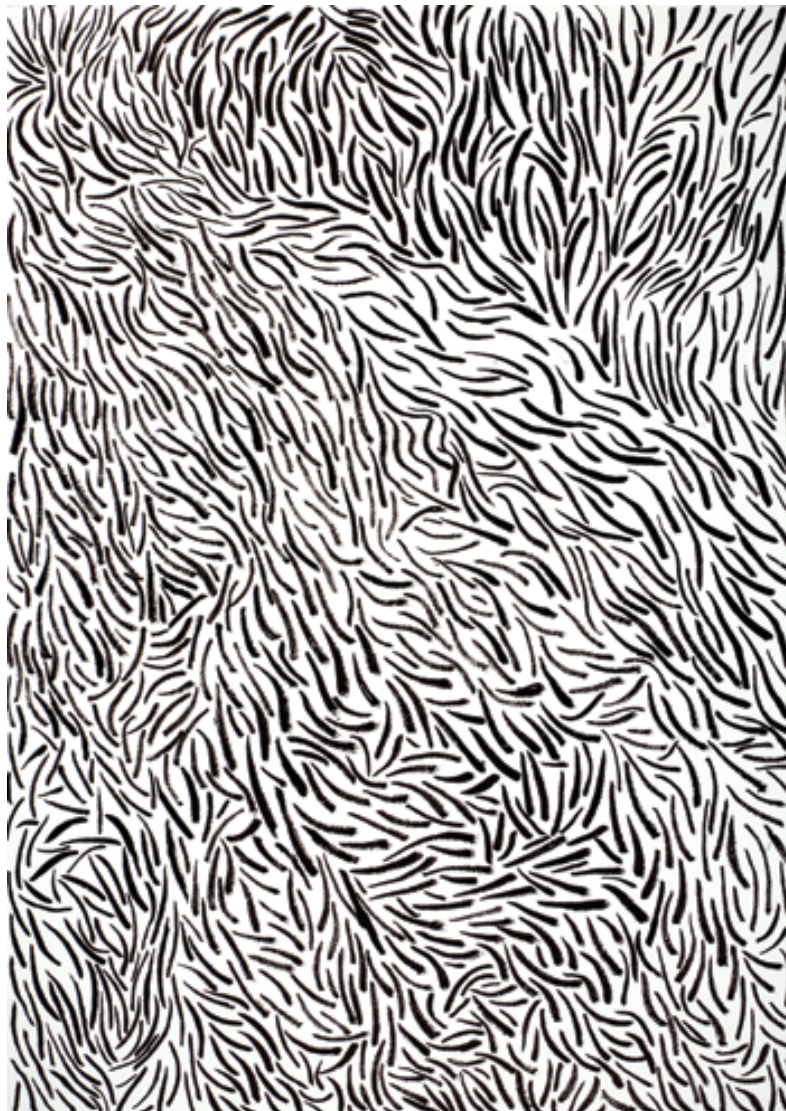
79. Дијалог со Моне VIII, 02/03. 11 1999
Dialogue with Monet VIII
Моливи во боја на хартија/
Color pencils on paper, 42x29cm



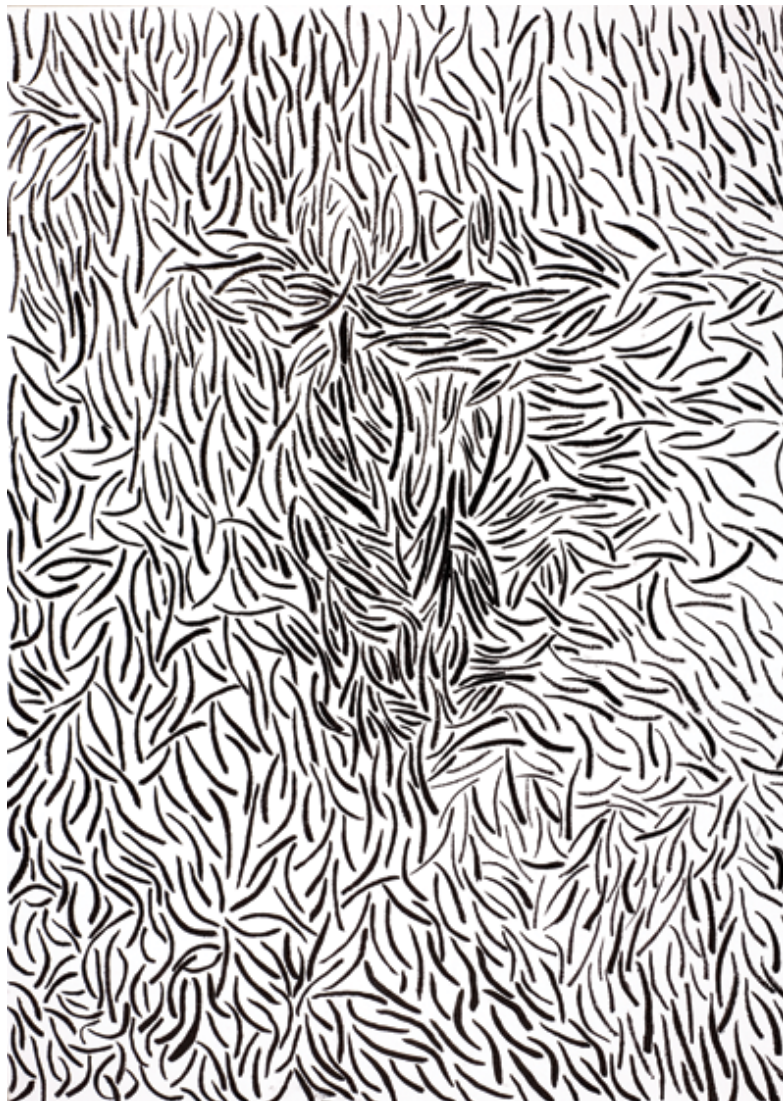
80. Од циклусот Дијалог со Моне, Хамбург, 18. 10 2004
From the series Dialogue with Monet, Hamburg, 18. 10 2004
Молив хартија/Pencil on paper
42x29cm



81. Од циклусот Дијалог со Моне, Асен, 13. 10 2004
From the series Dialogue with Monet, Assen, 13. 10 2004
Молив хартија/Pencil on paper
42x29cm



82. Од циклусот Дијалог со Моне, 22. 10 2004
From the series Dialogue with Monet, 22. 10 2004
Црн креон на хартија/Black crayon on paper
42x29cm



83. Од циклусот Дијалог со Моне, Хамбург, 27. 10 2004
From the series Dialogue with Monet, Hamburg, 27. 10 2004
Црн крејон на хартија/Black crayon on paper
42x29cm





Skulptur Projekte Munster, Минстер, Германија 1997. Пред скулптурата на Пер Киркеби. Фотографија: Мирослав Поповиќ



Во Средното уметничко училиште со Милош Коџоман и Оливер Златку, 1969

Биографија

1952 - Драган Петковиќ е роден на 30 март 1952 година во Скопје, како прво дете на Владимир и Видосава Петковиќ

1966/1971 - Ученик е во Средното уметничко училиште “Лазар Личеновски” во Скопје

1973/1977 - Студира на Академијата за ликовна уметност во Љубљана. Дипломира на отсекот за сликарство во класата на Јанез Берник

1982/2004 - Работи како ликовен уредник во Просветно дело во Скопје

2004 - На 11 декември Драган Петковиќ трагично го загуби животот во сообраќајна несреќа.

Самостојни изложби

1981 - Прва самостојна изложба во Клуб на новинарите во Скопје.

1982/83 - Дом на младите “25 мај”, Скопје;

1988 - Галерија СКЦ, Белград (со Јован Шумковски и Благоја Маневски);

1988 - Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје;

Групни изложби

1979 - Ликовна колонија на млади ликовни творци, Младински рекреативен центар Далјан, Охрид

1980 - Изложба на млади ликовни творци, Дом на младите “25 мај”, Скопје (јануари) и Музеј - галерија, Кавадарци (февруари)



Хипи излет во близина на Скопје, 1973.



На Академијата во Љубљана (Драган сосема лево)



Владимир, Дивна и Видосава Петковиќ, пред заминувањето на Драган на отслужување на воениот рок во 1977



Од отворањето на самостојната изложба во Музејот на современата уметност во Скопје, 1988



На изложбата Шест македонски уметници во Загреб, 1985. Од лево: Петре Николоски, Глигор Стефанов, Анета Светиева, Соња Абаџиева, Драган Петковиќ и Симон Шемов

- Изложба на новопримени членови на ДЛУМ, Дом на младите “25 мај”, Скопје

1981 - 36. изложба на ДЛУМ, Уметничка галерија, Скопје

1982 - Современи македонски уметници - Млада генерација 4, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

1983 - Критичарите одбраа, Дом на младите “25 мај”, Скопје

1984 - Нови појави во македонската ликовна уметност во последната деценија, Дом на младите “25 мај”, Скопје

1985 - Современа македонска уметност (од колекцијата на МСУ), Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

1985/1986/1987 - *Šest makedonskih um(j)etnika*, Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Загреб, Хрватска (ноември-декември 1985); *Шест македонски уметници: Од чудотворноста на ливадите до радоста на живеењето*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје (јануари-март 1986); *Šest makedonskih umetnika*, Салон Музеја савремене уметности, Белград (октомври-ноември 1986); Музеј - галерија, Кавадарци (април-мај 1987);

1986 - 19. Херцегновски зимски салон, Галерија “Јосип - Бепо Бенковиќ”, Херцег Нови, Црна Гора

1986 - 80-те години во македонската ликовна уметност, Музеј на Македонија, Скопје

1986 - Шемов-Фидановски: Акции и интервенции 1973-1985, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје



Со Глигор Стефанов на изведба на заедничкото дело Интеграл како дел од изложбата Шемов-Фидановски: Интервенции во простор во Музејот на современата уметност, 1986



Со Благоја Маневски на отворањето на изложбата Петковиќ/Шумковски/Маневски во Студентски културни центар, Белград 1988



Петковиќ остава значајна трага во графичкото уредување на учебниците за основно и средно образование.



- *Современи македонски сликари (од збирките на МСУ-Скопје), Уметничка галерија, Куманово*

1987 - *Подарени дела 1983-1986, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје*

- *Аквизиции 6 - 1986, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје*

- *Геометризмот и неговите видови во македонското сликарство, Музеј на Македонија, Скопје*

- *Биенале на младите, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје*

- *Ликовна колонија Комуна-Скопје, Хотел Континал и Дом на младите "25 мај", Скопје*

1988 - *Ликовен круг "25" цртеж...цртеж - објект, Дом на младите "25 мај", Скопје (март-април) и Дом на културата "Јосип Броз Тито", Куманово (април)*

- *Тријенале југословенске ликовне уметности, Београдски сајам, Белград*

- *Македонска ликовна уметност во Уметничката галерија Скопје 1948-1988, Уметничка галерија, Скопје*

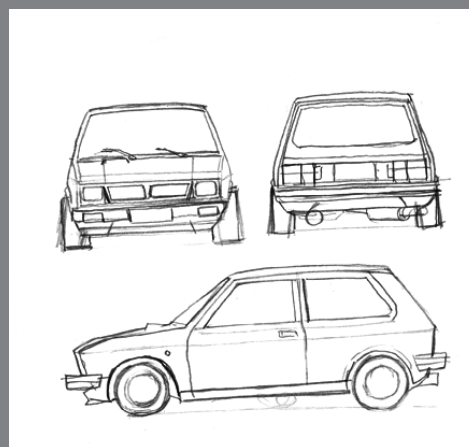
1989 - *Blagoja Manevski, Jovan Šumkovski, Dragan Petković, Stanko Pavlevski, Margarita Kiselička-Kalajdzieva, Moderna galerija, Риека;*

- *Млади македонски сликари (од збирките на МСУ, Скопје), Уметничка галерија, Куманово;*

- *Аквизиции 8-1988, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје;*

- *Jugoslovenska dokumenta 89, Olimpijski centar "Skenderija", Сараево;*

1989/1990 - *29 Ликовна јесен - Сомбор (2 изложби): Примарност пиктуралног крај деценије*



Цртежи на Петковиќ за постојаното дотерување на Југото, кое е слично како и велосипедот, една од неговите големи пасии



- време синтезе, Галерија “Ликовни сусрет”, Суботица, Србија (декември 1989-февруари 1990) и Галерија “Ликовна јесен”, Сомбор (март 1990), Србија

1990 - 23. Херцегновски зимски салон, Галерија “Јосип-Бепо Бенковић”, Херцег Нови, Црна Гора

- XXX Anale: Novi ekleticizam slikane slike, Istarska sabornica, Пореч, Хрватска

- 16. Меморијал “Надежда Петровић”, Уметничка галерија “Надежда Петровић”, Чачак, Србија

1991 - 13. Zagrebačka izložba jugoslovenskog crteža, Kabinet grafike JAZU-Umjetnički paviljon, Загреб

- 10 Macedonian artist, New Literatures and Arts Sallon, Pastarea, Вашингтон

1991/1992 - *Нова постојана поставка*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

1992 - *Апстрактното сликарство во Македонија 1960-1990*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

- *Современи сликари и скулптори (од колекцијата на МСУ, Скопје)*, Уметничка галерија, Куманово

1993 - *Љубљанска школа - македонски автори*, Младински културен центар, Скопје

1994/1995 - *Антологија на македонската ликовна уметност 1894-1994*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

1995 - *Mednarodna likovna delavnica “Slovenija odprta za umetnost”*, Сињи Врх, Словенија; Местни музеј, Идрија, Словенија





Амстердам, ноември 2004. Во сликарската школа на пријателот Шучо Шаркиновиќ (лево од Петковиќ)



Хамбург, ноември 2004. Една од последните фотографии на Драган Петковиќ, снимена за време на работата на последните цртежи од циклусот Дијалог со Моне. Фото: Мирослав Поповиќ

1995/1996 - 9 1/2: *Нова македонска уметност*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

1997 - *Art City* - приказна за новиот град, X'взи пашини конаци, Скопје (с. Бардовци)

2000/2001 - *Преобразби: Модалитети на македонското модерно и современо сликарство*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

- 15. *Medjunarodna izložba crteža*, Muzej moderne i suvremene umjetnosti, Риека, Хрватска

2003 - *Идеја-тека: Документи за концептуалната уметност во Македонија*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

- *Изложба од колекцијата на МСУ*, Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

2004 - *Македонски сликари и скулптори* (од колекцијата на МСУ), Музеј на современата уметност, Скопје

2007/2008 - *Супер (X)Ерос: Типолошки нарации на еротскиот дискурс во македонската ликовна уметност во 20 и 21-от век*, Национална галерија на Македонија, Скопје



Работната соба и ателјето со неговата драгоцената музичка колекција и библиотеката на Петковиќ

Biography

1952

Dragan Petković was born 30th of March 1952 as the first child of Vladimir and Vidosava Petković

1966/1971

Studies at the Art School Lazar Licenovski in Skopje

1982/2004

Works as a graphic designer in the educational publishing house Prosvetno delo

2004

December 11th Dragan Petković was killed in a tragic traffic accident

Solo exhibitions

1981

Club of the Journalists, Skopje;

1982/83

Gallery of the Youth House "25. May", Skopje;

1988

Gallery of SKC, Belgrade (with Jovan Sumkovski and Blagoja Manevski);

1988

Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje;

Selected group exhibitions:

1980

New Members of DLU, Gallery of the Youth House "25. May", Skopje;

1982

Contemporary Macedonian Art-Young Generation 4, Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje;

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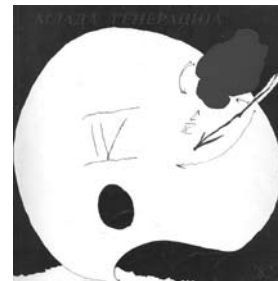
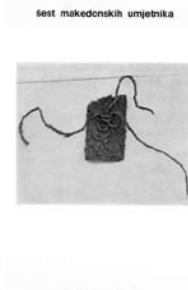
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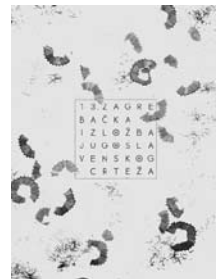
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