

Mošćenički Pinel 2016 – a review of the artworks

The topic of this year's *Mošćenički Pinel* arts workshop, *Mošćenice reality and fantasy*, is closely related to Slavic mythology. Continuing the research and reflections on the influence of this mythology in the Liburnia area in the projects of the *Katedra Čakavskog Sabora* Association of Mošćenička Draga, the participants of this art colony have become explorers of real and imaginary landscapes which they have tried to convey in their artworks using different artistic visions and expressions.

The mythological stories depict the world as a holy tree, usually an oak, whose branches and bark represent the living world of the heavens and mortals, the sky and the earth, while its roots symbolise the underworld and the world of the dead. The ruler of the world of the living is the god Perun, who is constantly challenged by his opponent Veles, the water god of the underworld. Apart from stealing cattle from Perun, Veles also kidnaps his son Jarilo and his wife. In return, Perun hurls lightning at Veles, who turns into various animals and hides behind trees, houses or people. In the end, in Veles's ritual death, rain falls from his body, after which the sun begins to shine again, establishing the balance between the earth and the underworld. In the past, people used these myths to explain daily weather conditions. Another myth served as an explanation for the change of the seasons: spring started when Perun's son Jarilo escaped from Veles, and his entering the holy community with his sister Morana marked the summer period. Autumn started when Morana discovered Jarilo's infidelity, and when he was banished into the underworld. Without her husband, Morana, as a nature deity, started to slowly wilt. This caused the arrival of winter and death.

The Austrian artist Ellen Semen depicts the Slavic motifs in completely simplified landscapes, marked here and there only by a tree, beach or street. Using acrylic on paper, she applies translucent strokes to paint scenes as backgrounds in which characters and items from various recent publications, ranging from tourist brochures to advertising flyers, play the main role. Her deities are actually modern artisans who use contemporary tools to create thunder and lightning, or who fly happily like children above the surface of the sea with the help of magical red cloaks. The arrival of spring is signalled by the appearance of a rainbow and various flowers, and the beginning of winter by heavy clouds and large raindrops. Continuing the pop-art tradition of the second half of the 20th century, Ellen Semen introduces into her imaginary landscapes, which are based on real exploration of the area around Mošćenice, shapes and objects from everyday life, and gives them equal status within the painting with regard to the painted parts.

The arrival of spring and the lush awakening of nature has inspired the Slovakian artist Miloš Prekop, who uses the mixed technique of acrylic, permanent marker pen and spray paint to depict several variations of red poppies. They seem to emerge from the darkness after the long winter nights, the darkness being depicted by tiny droplets of black paint and dark purple strokes which flow to the bottom, seemingly forming the stems of the flowers. Miloš Prekop adds yellow flowers to the red poppies on his meadows, thus giving liveliness to his rather abstract images of nature. The floral compositions are positioned in the centre of the canvas or in the right half of the painting, and the remaining two-thirds of the canvas is left unpainted. In this way, the idea of painting has been deprived of the presentation of perspective, and the representation is achieved by rapid brush strokes that vary from almost translucent layers of colour to *impasto*, which indicates the plasticity of

the flowers. The mystic atmosphere of these artworks is enhanced by the randomly scattered incomprehensible words known only to the artist, which additionally draw the attention of the observers and connect them to the paintings.

The Dutch artist Nenad Fišer connects the fantasy of the Slavic myth of the god Perun with the reality of the art colony. In his view of the world, the painter can depict a realistic representation of a fantasy, so he depicts the god Perun as a deity covered with oak leaves, holding the trunk whose roots cling firmly to the stone stairs while the branches enter the houses of Mošćenice. The represented painter, who turns his back to the observer like the 19th-century pleinairists, transmits reality onto the canvas. The painting technique and method of forming the composition, as well as the detailed indication of the architecture, give the impression of a skilful illustration that could be used to bring this Slavic mythology closer to a wider audience in a different way, and one that is particularly interesting for children. This spontaneity, childlike honesty, and naturalness of representation recall the paintings of the naïve artists of the 20th century. However, Nenad Fišer masters perspective foreshortening and does not oversize objects.

Nena Šešić Fišer from the Netherlands paints her view of the world ruled by the Slavic god Perun. She depicts him as a large sun with small oak leaves that radiates winding rays over Kvarner Bay. The village of Mošćenice is indicated only by the school building, and beneath there is a canyon that symbolises the god Veles. Her artwork is directly inspired by the Slavic myth and indicates the basic division of the world, with a clear distinction between heaven and earth. Inspired by the attractiveness of Glagolitic letters, the artist decorates her symbolic representation with individual letters without joining them in words. By doing so, she encourages the observer to reach for a handbook and read and learn this alphabet. Nena Šešić Fišer is inclined to studying different techniques and changing her artistic expression. It is therefore no wonder that her next artwork is a collage composition rounded off by the application of a wooden twig which has the function of holding the paper. In this way, she points to the continuous reassessment of her artistic achievements in order to better express her emotions and her own vision of reality.

The Croatian artist Željko Pavić depicts elements and figures from Slavic mythology in the form of a picturesque language which is at first very simple with regard to the form but also rather complex in terms of its insight into the idea of painting. The motifs of his works are indicated by incised lines or made of rope and applied to rough surfaces of rich layers of colour. In his paintings, we recognise the divine trident, the face of the deity, lightning, Glagolitic letters and numbers that indicate the direct inspiration of Mošćenice. Although these are traditionally chosen motifs, the artist scatters them seemingly randomly across the surface of the canvas, though he actually very carefully examines the relationship between the forms and colours in the composition. This is a kind of crypto-modernist style of painting which awakens in the observer the desire to discover the subject of the artwork, and indicates a strong and daring artistic expression.

The abstract works of Katarina Novaković from Serbia indicate an artistic expression that nurtures the aesthetics of speed and a creative restlessness in which emotions, lyrical accents and youthful passion intertwine. Mošćenice and Mošćenička Draga are the titles of two paintings that the artist has conceived as a diptych. They consist of numerous surfaces of various bright colours that symbolise motifs from the real world, such as the forest or sea. The forest surrounds Mošćenice, illuminated by the sun, which is shown by a golden colour, while the border of the shore in

Moščenička Draga is indicated by a bronze colour. These are actually hidden panoramic landscapes shown from a bird's-eye view that are reminiscent of Edo Murtić's paintings. In the absence of recognisable elements that inherit real shapes, they are revealed to the observer only through the title of the work.

The *plein air* painting of the 19th century is present in the artistic expression of the Italian painter Livio Zoppolato. He complements it by applying an *a fresco* painting technique that was used by the most prominent representatives of the Italian Renaissance. His many years of experience and previous studies of various techniques have led this artist to explore the application of paint with the addition of sand, so-called *pittura materica*, which emphasises the nature of painting. The result is an illusionist art and direct observation of nature with the aim of transforming the world into an image. Livio Zoppolato depicts the spirit of Mošćenice with precise perspective foreshortenings, and with the exact placement of the elements of the architecture of the town and vegetation.

Using the simple technique of translucent acrylic layers on canvas as an imitation of watercolour, Sonja Škalamera Novak from Croatia depicts simplified perspectives of Mošćenice. Exploring her surroundings, she has chosen a view of the town that she sketches like a pleinairist and transforms on canvas. The reality of Mošćenice is clearly visible in her painting, while fantasy emerges under the cover of night, when the entire town is shrouded in darkness. This is when fantasies happen to its inhabitants.

With regard to the style of painting and the choice of motifs, the artworks created during the Moščenički Pinel 2016 art colony represent an excellent overview of completely different influences from the end of the 19th century until the 1960s. Some artists come closer to the followers of certain past art trends, while others establish entirely new ways and explore a variety of techniques. The result is a lavish cross-section of contemporary trends in art.

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