



PETRA  
VARL



Petra Varl

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**POLJUBI IN OBJEMI:  
NOS OB NOS IN  
USTA NA USTA**

Pri Petri radi govorimo o sproščeni risbi in igrivi vsebini, o intimni zgodbi v razmerju do javnega konteksta. A je zraven zmerom tudi preišljena strategija predstavljanja, zgrajena na intenzivni aktivnosti in zgošeni prisotnosti projektov. Ko pravim, da je Petra pop umetnica, govorim zlasti o učinku njene umetniške prakse: o tem, kako popularna je in kako vsepovsod navzoči so njeni akterji, njena risba pa prepoznavna. Teško pa prezremo tudi nekatere njene navezave na izhodišča *poparta*. Formalno je kar nekaj stičnih točk: repeticija, stilizacija, obrobna risba, variacije, temelječe na barvnih različicah, vključevanje popularnih (*ready-made*) materialov, motivov, prizorov in postopkov popularne kulture, množične proizvodnje, reklamne strategije in oblikovalskega prijema. Njena strategija hita pa je zasnovana na razmerju med zasebnim in javnim, na stereotipni pripovedi in na tehle vizualnih, komunikacijskih in estetskih prijemih in postopkih: jasnost in znakovnost, prepoznavnost in reproduktibilnost, komunikativnost in narativnost.

Petra eksperimentira z različnimi formati, mediji in izraznimi sredstvi, od velikih in monumentalnih reklamnih panojev in oglasnega stebra, kompleksnih ambientov in instalacij, svetlobnih objektov, tabel, akcij in dogodkov do avtorskih knjig, spletnih strani, ilustracij in oglasov v revijah in časopisih, vabil, zloženek in čisto majhnih predmetov in parafernalij, tudi koledarčkov, nalepk, kartic, priponk in domin. Tehnika je bodisi preprosta ali zahtevna: risba, (stenska) slika in najrazličnejše reprodukcijske tehnike. Najprej je bila to litografija, ki ji je kot slikarki najbolj ustrezala. Potem je začela prenašati svoje risbe na stene galerij in zidove stavb ali pa na fotokopirni tisk. Stenske slike in možnosti, ki jih ponuja fotokopirni stroj (povečava, pomnožitev...), in sestavljanje delov v velik plakat je avtorica pogosto koncipirala kot predstavitev zunaj galerijskih prostorov – na odprtem, kjer prihaja do interakcije z (naključnimi) mimoidočimi. Tam so bili njeni projekti podvrženi neizogibnim spremembam in postopnemu uničenju, s čimer so se približali umetniški akciji, sodobnemu urbanemu ritualu. Kot denimo eden zadnjih, ko je po postajah newyorške podzemne železnice v času svoje razstave v MC Gallery skrivoma podtikala nalepke.

## Pripoved in njena bivališča

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Petra riše intimni svet, pri tem pa zabriše svoj osebni dotik, poenostavi, tipizira.

Shematizacija figur temelji na dedukciji podatkov, sproščeni risbi, sklenjenem obrisu, gestualni potezi, poudarjenih linijah, plaskovitosti in jasnih osnovnih konturah. Šablone, vzorci, repeticija, variacije, kombinacije. Ta piktografska metoda omogoči lažje prepoznavanje in pomnjenje. Z redukcijo na osnovne poteze so figure in predmeti postali likovni znaki in podobotvorni elementi trdne likovne kompozicije. Tudi razmerje med liki in podlago vseskozi gradi jasno in prepoznavno, hkrati pa uvede svojevrstno pitoresknost in ritmično razporeditev preprostih oblik, sijočih barv in skorajda arabesknih slikovnih znakov.

Petrina pripoved je zasnovana na stereotipu, na idealiziranih odnosih med prepoznavnimi liki in junaki, na prešernem veselju in vsakdanjih težavah. Pripoved in njeni junaki so vsem dobesedno na očeh, prav hitro postanejo nepogrešljivi del urbanega življenja. Z veliko koncentracijo projektov in dogodkov in z rednim pojavljanjem in predstavljanjem je Petra vedno znova in vseskozi potrjevala svojo navzočnost na izbranih točkah v mestu. Puščala je znamenja in sledi. Like iz njenega sveta smo zlahka prepoznali. Še več, čez čas nismo več dvomili o tem, da zares obstajajo. Z leti jih je vedno več. Prepričani so v svoj prav. Vsi hkrati. In vsak zase. Majhni in veliki, s širokimi klobuki in temnimi očali, od zadaj in od spredaj, v kopalkah ali dolgih oblekah, z nasmehom ali resnih in zaskrbljenih obrazov.

Petra za svoje podobe/junake in junakinje vedno znova išče nenavadna in vznemirljiva bivališča, ki pa so zmerom v kontekstu mesta, mesta kot estetskega fenomena, ki lahko sodobnemu pohajkovalcu ponudi doživetje in presenečenje, tudi radost in užitek. Tako se je že večkrat zgodilo, denimo, da je zavzela in naselila vse mogoče etablirane in obrobne prostore predstavljanja, od galerij do urbanih in medijskih prizorišč. Včasih jih naslika neposredno na steno, drugič jih vtakne v knjigo, skoraj najraje pa jih (ilegalno) (raz)postavlja po ulicah in cestah (vele)mest ali manjših naselij. Takrat so to lahko tudi obcestni znaki, ne čisto pravi prometni znaki, ampak zbirka Petrinih namigov in priporočil mimoidočim ali mimovozečim.



S številnimi sodelavkami in sodelavci, z umetniškimi sredstvi in postopki, pa tudi z oglaševalskimi prijemi tako učinkovito posega v življenje mesta, meščank in meščanov, zlasti Ljubljane in Maribora ali poletnega Suska, hkrati pa smelo preizkuša možnosti in učinke umetniške prakse, ko se ta poda na ulice in trge in preplavi medijski prostor.

### Izriše se podoba: čista in jasna kakor črka

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Povezanost intimnega/zasebnega življenja in javnega delovanja/umetniške prakse Petra udejanja s stalnim »portretiranjem«  
svojih bližnjih, prijateljev in znancev, po spominu ali po fotografiji. Pri tem ji je včasih računalnik v veliko pomoč. Portreti so shematizirani in univerzalni, domala brez osebnih potez, da se v njih lahko prepozna marsikatera obiskovalka in obiskovalec. Z izbranimi podobami iz družinskega foto albuma, ki jih močno povečane izriše na stene galerij, Petra prikaže svojevrstno antropologijo lastnega sveta. Izrisane v enem zamahu in s sklenjeno linijo, vpeljujejo (avto)biografsko pripoved. Standardno okolje in senčica humorja pričajo o slikarkinem ukvarjanju s svetom, ki jo obkroža in ki ga močno določa preteklost. Morda išče srečo, a sreča je slej ko prej zapletena reč. Ko pelje črto na sprehod, nas v svojem nevsiljivem in radoživem ritmu popelje na potovanje po družinskem albumu. Gledanje fotografij in obujanje spominov je lahko tudi kolektivno doživetje. In Petra ga izriše – doživetje, pravzaprav podobe s fotografij in vzdušje, ki jim pripada – in ga prenese na stene galerij, približa obiskovalcem in spremeni v družabni dogodek. Ali pa jih združi in zapre v knjigo, ki je na voljo obiskovalcu, da po mili volji potuje po njej.

Posebno mesto pripada tudi portretom vsakdanjih reči, stvari in predmetov, ki jih srečujemo in uporabljamo ali pa le občudujemo. Postavljajo se pred nas in nas spomnijo, da se bliža poletje ali čas za kavo. Da nas čaka počitniško veselje in da je tudi brezdolje vredno naše pozornosti. Pogosto jih upodablja v dvojicah ali poudari dvojnost prikazanega. To se kaže kot povezovanje ali razdvajanje na več ravneh. Včasih kar s samo postavitvijo v galerijskem prostoru ali s kombinacijo postavitve v notranjem in zunanjem prostoru, drugič v upodobitvi parov nasprotij, ki temeljijo tako na podobi kakor na besedah,

ki pojasnjujejo risbo. Temo dvojnosti pa prikaže tudi na prav poseben način, pri katerem gre morda prej za dvojnost v enem kakor pa za dva pola nasprotij. Denimo, sopostavi dve na prvi pogled enaki figuri, ki skupaj z različnimi besednimi oznakami v dobršni meri rušita stereotipno sklepanje in razumevanje bližine in razlik. Kaj nam, denimo, sporoča obraz z brki in kaj obraz brez njih? Ali nam podobe, ki prikazujejo zamenjavo vlog, govorijo o tem, da ni nič dokončno določeno in da obstaja možnost za svobodno izbiro? Morda. In morda tudi zamajajo naše razumevanje predpisanih vlog in funkcij, ki jih pogosto jemljemo kot samoumevne in o njih sploh ne razmišljamo. Družbene, spolne, družinske in poklicne vloge v Petrinih podobah niso več jasne in prepoznavne. Odpirajo prostor, v katerega se lahko naseli dvom: dvom o trdnih temeljih, o porazdelitvi vlog, kakršnih koli, kjer koli, kadar koli; o razlikah in podobnostih, bližini in sorodnosti. Ista oseba pa je lahko prikazana v različnih situacijah, z različnimi atributi in predmeti. Takrat se lahko v podobe naseli želja, ki je včasih tudi uresničena.

Spomin je prostor, kjer se zgodbe zgodijo še drugič

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Zgodba je bila v Petrinih podobah zmerom navzoča, spletla se je med sodelujočimi, med junaki(njami) na isti podobi, ali pa se je pletla počasi in vztrajno, iz enega prizora v drugega, iz enega prizorišča v drugo, med podobo in dogodkom, protagonisti in občinstvom, med upodobljenimi in umetnico in med umetnico in gledalci. Razmerje med zasebnim in javnim, individualnim in kolektivnim je Petra skozi vizualno govorico zmerom prikazala na igriv in hudomušen način. Za veselje in užitek. Zgodba je osebna, brez velikih tem, polna intimnih namigov, pa tudi družinskih in družbenih situacij. Skratka, ljubezenska zgodba. Zelo pogosto pa se v podobo naseli spomin.

Petro zanimata človek in njegov svet, pa zgodbe in odnosi, ki se spletajo med ljudmi. Družinske in prijateljske zgodbe ali medijski prizori gradijo kulturne vzorce in z imaginacijo segajo v vsakdanjost slehernika. Petrine podobe pa nam pripovedujejo tudi o tem, kako pomembne so okoliščine, prijateljstva in znanstva ter fizični in simbolni prostor, realni odnosi in imaginarna razmerja/želje. Največkrat gre za malenkosti iz vsakdanjega življenja, ki ne zahtevajo posebnega komentarja in ne skri-

vajo smisla, ki bi ga bilo treba razvozlati. Morda je res tako, da sta realnost in celota dogodkov, ki jo sestavljajo, prav taki: enostavni, svojski, enkratni. Na koncu koncev je v ospredju zmerom človek. Tisti na podobi, ki se nam ponuja, da bi se nam prikupil in nas očaral, in tisti, ki ga ta podoba vsaj za hipec zaposli, mu morda spremeni zven in ritem korakov, preusmeri tok misli; ga razveseli ali razjezi, razžalosti ali pusti indiferentnega.

Želja po pogledu, dialogu, odzivu, kretnji, zvoku ali besedi je imela v Petrinem snovanju vedno pomembno mesto. Vprašanje, kako se predstavljati in navezovati stik z občinstvom, tistim strokovnim in onim naključnim, in kako z gledalci ostati v dialogu, je Petra reševala zdaj tako zdaj drugače. Simpatični liki, ki smo jih srečevali, so bili njeni zastopniki, poleg tega pa je gledalcem pogosto delila prikupna darila in jih razveseljevala z malimi presenečenji, ali pa jih je dejavno vključila v svoj projekt, vpletla v igro: jim predlagala, naj kaj najdejo, sestavijo in dorišejo. Ponudila jim je, naj si izberejo najljubšo risbo, domov odnesejo malo grafiko s priljubljenim motivom ali pa si zaželiyo, kaj naj jim nariše ona in podobno.

Ta gesta, ki je obiskovalcem v izmenjavo za njihovo navzočnost ali sodelovanje ponudila umetnino v dar, je ena od značilnosti Petrinega razumevanja umetniške prakse. Dar in prehajanje iz rok v roke, označevanje in puščanje sledi, pretehtana izbira in naključno kroženje, vse to nas napeljuje, da morda le ne živimo v svetu stisnjenih razmerij. Da se med nami utegne splesti prijetna vez in da to lahko stori prav umetnina. Vrednost umetnine je tudi simbolična in subjektivna in ta se poveča pri vsaki menjavi, postaja čedalje imenitnejša, še vedno povezana tako z umetnico kakor tudi z individualnostjo svojih nekdanjih lastnikov.

Tako nekako se Petra poigra tudi z dilemo med zaščitenim avtorstvom in svobodnim kroženjem svojih del. Prav medsebojna izmenjava in deljenje izkušenj poganja Petrine projekte že vrsto let, angažira sodelavce in vzdržuje prav poseben tip priljubljenosti te umetnice, ki jo vse to nadvse veseli in izpolnjuje.

Barbara Borčić

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**HUGS AND KISSES:  
NOSE TO NOSE AND  
MOUTH TO MOUTH**

Viewing Petra's work, is keen on speaking of her relaxed drawing technique and playful content, of the intimate story in relation to the public context; though this always includes a thoughtful presentation strategy built on intense activity and large concentration of projects. When I say that Petra is a pop artist, I am referring to the effect of her art practice: about how popular she is, how ubiquitous her protagonists, and how recognizable her drawings are. In addition, it is hard to overlook some of her references to the initial concept of pop art. Formally, there are several points of contact: repetition, stylization, contour drawing, color-based variations, the use of popular (ready-made) materials, motifs, scenes and procedures of popular culture, mass production, advertising strategy, and design approach. Her strategy of producing hits is based on the relationship between the private and the public, on a stereotypical story and on the resultant visual, communicative and aesthetic approaches and procedures: clarity and symbolism, recognizability and reproducibility, communicativeness and narrativeness.

Petra experiments with different formats, media and means of expression, from large and monumental billboards and advertising columns, complex ambiences and installations, light objects, panels, actions, events, artists' books, websites, illustrations and advertisements in magazines and newspapers, invitations, leaflets, to very small objects and paraphernalia, such as pocket calendars, stickers, cards, badges, and dominos. Her technique is sometimes simple and sometimes complex: drawing, (wall) painting, and various reproduction techniques. She started with lithography, which appealed to her as a painter. Then she began transferring her drawings onto gallery and building walls or on photocopy prints. Wall pictures, the possibilities of copiers (enlargement, multiplication etc.) and composing many parts for a large poster enabled Petra to present her work outside the gallery premises – in the open, to allow coincidental interactions with passersby. There her projects endured the elements and faced gradual destruction, somewhat reminiscent of artistic action as a contemporary urban ritual. Like, for example, in one of her recent projects, when during her exhibition at the MC Gallery she secretly placed stickers around New York subway stations.

## The Narration and its Domiciles

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Petra draws an intimate world but blurs her personal touch, she simplifies, typifies. The schematization of figures is based on the deduction of facts, relaxed drawing, unbroken outline, gestural stroke, on emphasized lines, flatness and clarity of basic contours. It is about stencils, patterns, repetitions, variations and combinations.

This pictographic method enables easier recognition and recollection. Through reduction to elementary strokes, figures and objects become visual signs and image generating elements of a solid visual art composition. Petra also builds a clear and recognizable relationship between the figures and the background. She simultaneously introduces an original picturesque and rhythmic arrangement of simple forms, colors and almost arabesque imagery of the signs.

Petra's narration is based on a stereotype, on idealized relationships between recognizable figures and heroes, on their merry playfulness and everyday dilemmas. The stories and their heroes are literally seen everywhere and soon become an indispensable part of urban life. Every time anew and throughout, Petra has been verifying her presence on selected locations around the city by a large concentration of projects and their regular appearance and presentation. She has left marks and traces. The figures of her world are easily recognizable. Still more, after some time we no longer question their existence. They multiplied over the years. They are assured of being right. All at the same time. And each for itself. Small ones and big ones, with wide-brimmed hats and dark glasses, from behind and from in front, in bathing suits or long dresses, with a smile or serious and concerned faces.

Again and again, Petra seeks unusual and exciting domiciles for her figures and heroes that are continually within the context of the city as an aesthetic phenomenon offering adventure and surprise, joy and delight, to a modern *flâneur*. She often occupied all possible established and unusual spaces of presentation, including galleries, urban and media venues. Sometimes she depicts them directly on walls, or sticks them into a book but, above all, she likes to (illegally) display them in streets and roads in (large) towns or smaller settlements.

Then they become signs, not quite traffic signs, but a collection of Petra's hints and recommendations to all who pass. With her numerous female and male co-workers, artistic means and procedures as well as advertising techniques, she effectively interferes with the town life of citizens, especially in Ljubljana, Maribor and in summer on the Croatian island of Susak. At the same time, she daringly challenges the possibilities and effects of art practice as it ventures into the streets and squares and floods the media landscape.

### An Image Is Drawn: Clean and Clear Like a Letter

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Petra creates the connection of intimate/private life and public action/art practice through constant 'portrayal' of relatives, friends and acquaintances by memory or by photograph. In some way, she keeps making (self-) portraits. Sometimes, the computer is of great help to her. The portraits are schematized and universal, almost without personal features, allowing many a viewer to recognize her or himself in them. With selected images from the family photo album, which, greatly enlarged, Petra draws on gallery walls, she shares with us a unique anthropology of her own world. Drawn in one stroke and with an unbroken line, the works introduce an (auto-) biographical narrative. The everyday environment, along with a touch of humor, testifies to the artist's dealings with the world that surrounds her and that is strongly marked by the past. Maybe she is seeking happiness, but happiness is, more or less, a complicated matter. When she takes her line for a walk, she takes us, in her unobtrusive and cheerful rhythm, for a journey through the family album. So, viewing photographs and recalling memories also can be a collective experience. And Petra draws it, actually, she draws the images from the photos as well as the mood that accompanies them – she transfers this mood onto the gallery walls, brings it closer to the viewer and turns it into a social event. Or, she combines the images and confines them into a book that is made available to the visitor to freely travel within.

A special place appertains to portraits of everyday things and objects that we meet, use or merely admire. They are placed in front of us and remind us that summer or coffee time

is approaching, that holiday pleasure is ahead of us and that idleness is worthy of our notice. She often portrays the images in pairs or emphasizes their duality. This appears as a union or disunion on multiple levels. Sometimes it is the mere placement in a gallery space, or a combination of an interior/exterior set up and sometimes it is the depiction of pairs of opposites that are based on the image as well as the words that explain the drawing. She also emphasizes duality in a way that seems more like a duality within one entity rather than a duality of two opposing poles. For example, the placement of two seemingly alike figures, but with different textual denotations, which, to a great extent, demolishes the stereotypical conclusion and comprehension of closeness and distinction. What, for instance, does the same face, illustrated once with a mustache, and once without one, tell us? Do the images that depict role changes tell us that nothing is ultimately determined and that we are free to choose? Maybe. And maybe they rattle our understanding of prescribed roles and functions that we take for granted and do not think about. The social, sexual, familial and professional roles in Petra's images are no longer clear and recognizable. They make room for doubt: doubt about solid foundations, doubt about the distribution of roles, whatever, wherever and whenever they may be; doubt about differences and similarities, closeness and affinity. The same person can be pictured in different situations with different attributes and objects. In that case, a wish that can sometimes come true captures the images.

### Memory Is a Place where Stories Happen one more Time

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There has always been a story in Petra's drawings, woven among the participants, the heroines and heroes of an image, or woven slowly and persistently, from one scene to another, one setting to the next, among the image and the event, the protagonists and the audience, the portrayed and the artist, and between the artist and the viewers. Petra has always shown the relation between the private and the public, the individual and the collective through her playful and witty visual language. For the sake of joy and pleasure. The story is per-



sonal, without grand subjects, full of intimate hints and also family and social situations. In short: it is a love story. And very often, her image is populated by memories.

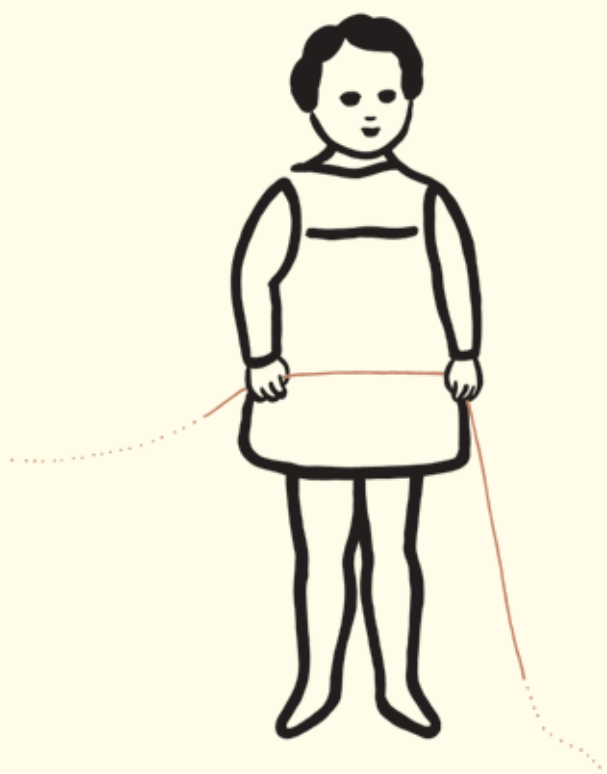
Petra is interested in people, in their world and the stories and relationships they weave. Family and friendship stories or media views construct cultural patterns and, with imagination, reach into everyone's daily life. Petra's images also talk about the importance of circumstances, friendships and acquaintances, of physical and symbolic space, of real and imaginary relationships and wishes. Most often, they are about the little things from everyday life that do not require a special comment and do not have hidden meaning to be unraveled. It may well be that reality and the sum of the events that make up her story, boil down to being simple, special and unique. In the end, people are always in the foreground. Be it those in the images who offer themselves to us, to endear themselves and charm us, or those, whom this image, at least for a brief moment, preoccupies, or maybe whose sound and rhythm of steps it changes and whose train of thoughts it redirects, makes happy or enrages, saddens or just simply leaves indifferent.

The thirst for a glance, a dialogue, a reaction, a gesture, a sound or word has always played an important role in Petra's planning. Petra solved the dilemma of how to present herself and make contact with the audience, the professional and the coincidental, and how to keep this dialogue alive, in various ways. The likeable figures we have met were her representatives and, in addition, she often gave out small gifts to the spectators, cheered them up with little surprises, or involved them in her project, her game: she would ask them to find, put together or finish drawing something. She would suggest that they choose their favorite drawing, take home a small graphic with a favorite motif, or pick one that she would draw for them etc.

Petra's gesture to offer some of her artworks to visitors as a gift in exchange for their presence and collaboration, is one of her characteristics in understanding art practice. Presenting and changing hands, denoting and leaving traces, considered choice and random circulation, it all leads to the conclusion that maybe we do not live in a world of distorted proportions. It is possible that a pleasant bond can develop

between us and that a work of art can trigger it. The value of an artwork is also symbolic and subjective as it grows with every exchange, becomes increasingly distinguished, and yet still be connected to the artist as well as to the individuality of all its previous owners.

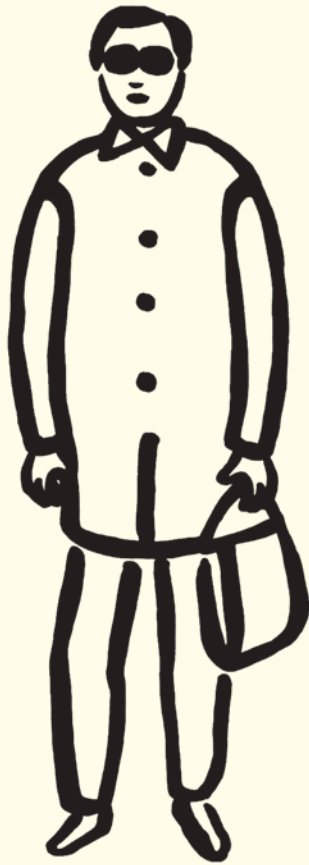
This is how Petra also plays around with the dilemma between protective copyright and the free circulation of her works. It is the mutual exchange and sharing of experience that has for years been propelling Petra's projects, engaging co-workers and maintaining a special kind of popularity of the artist, who finds great delight and fulfillment in this.



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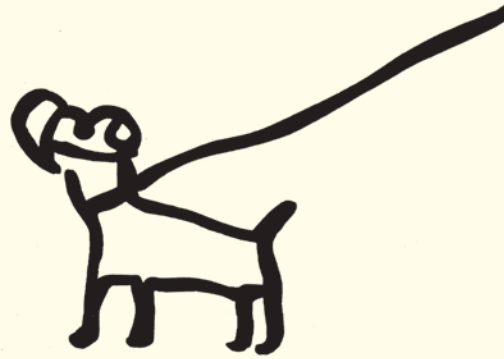




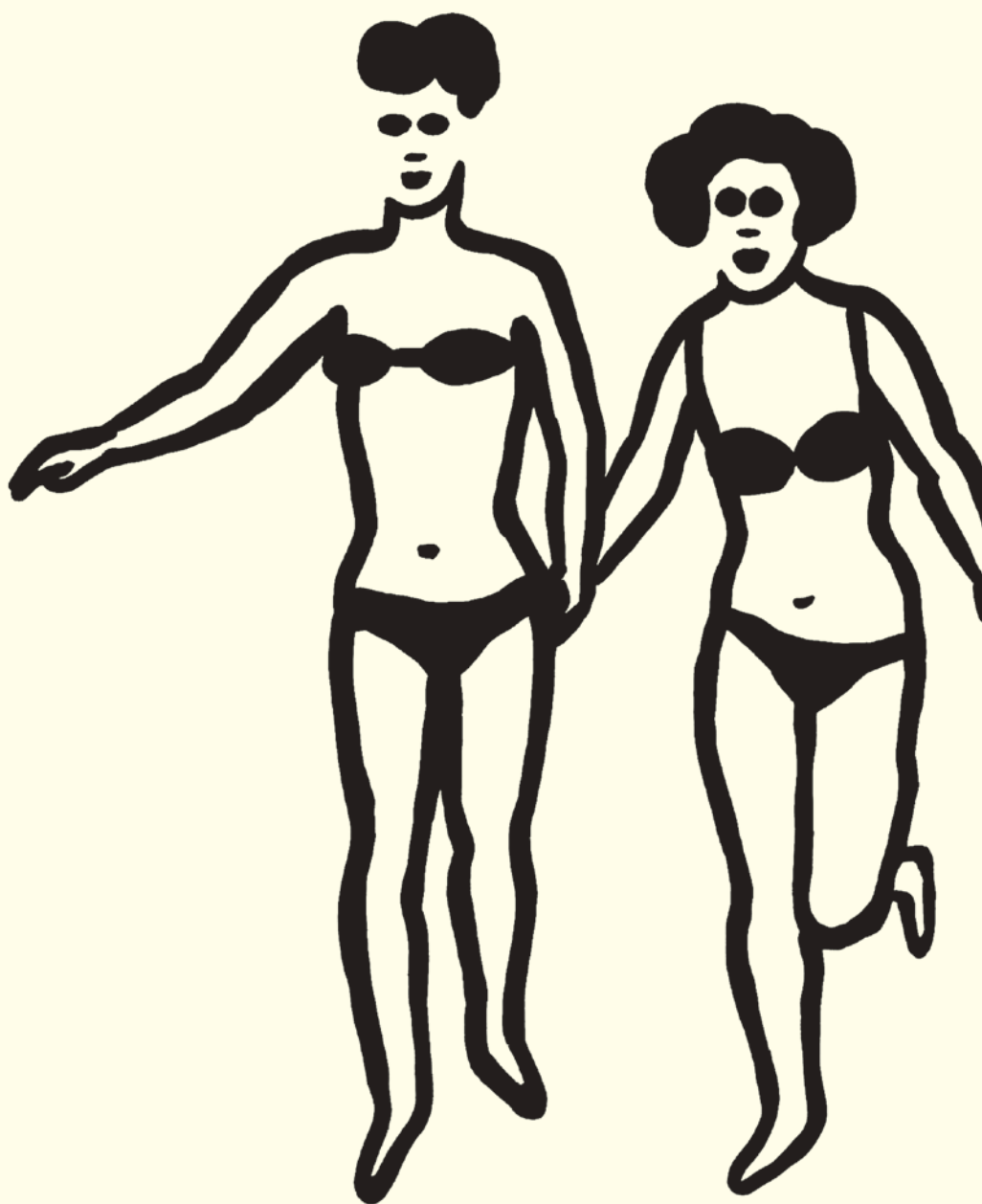


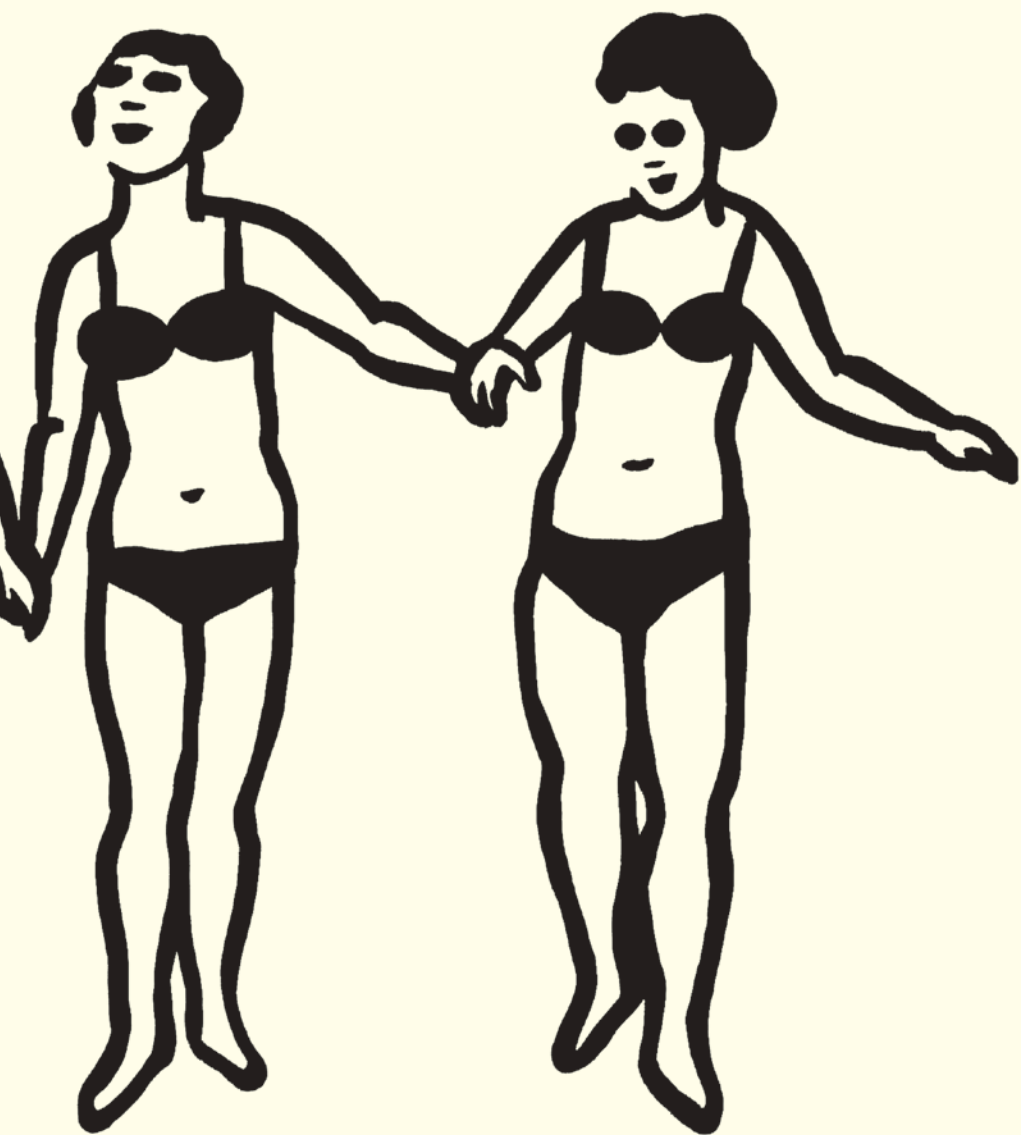






















YOU ARE DRIVING ME CRAZY



























I ALWAYS GET WHAT I WISH FOR







PROFESSOR



DOCTOR





Boy



GIRL





WOMAN



WOMAN





MOM



DAD







HULA



HUP





COWBOY



INDIAN





SMART



PRETTY





SMART



STRONG







SEXY



SHY









RICH



POOR





YESTERDAY



TODAY

















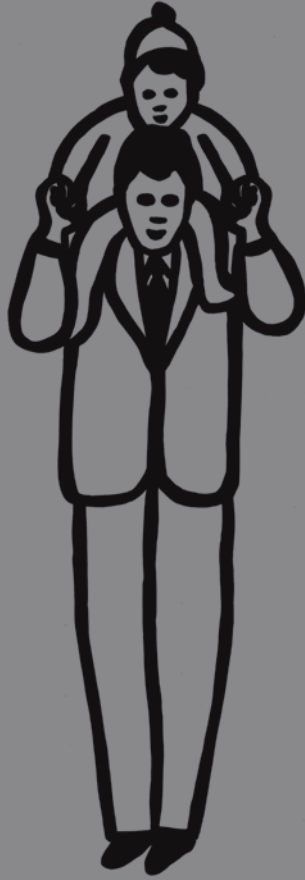






























Sošolca / Schoolfellows, Ljubljana, 2011



Kuža / Dog, Ljubljana, 2013



Par na sprehodu / Couple walking, Maribor, 2012



Skakalca / Jumpers, Maribor, 2012





















Kopalke/Bathers, Susak, 2010



Stari prijateljici/Old Friends, Susak, 2010



Poljub / Kiss, Graz, 2012





Vedro doma / Bucket at Home  
Ljubljana, 2010



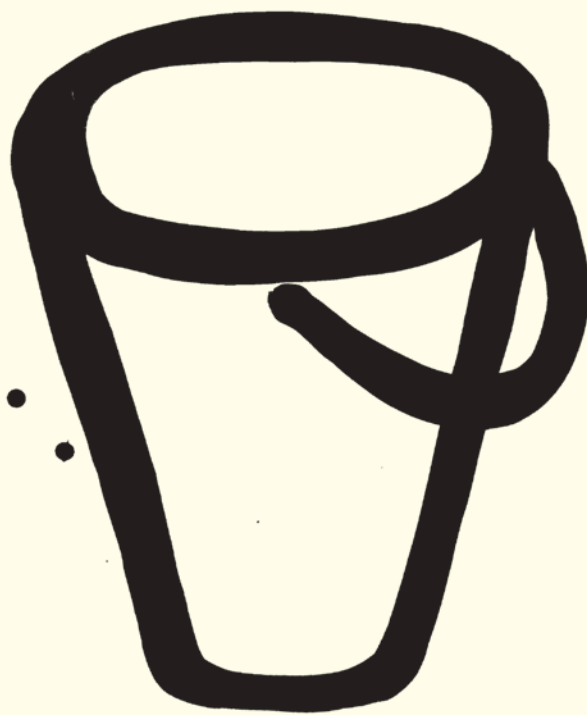


Vedro/Bucket, 18. međunarodna izložba crteža/18th International Exhibition of Drawings, Muzej moderne in savremene umetnosti, Rijeka, 2013



Vedro/Bucket, Doma: Arhitekta France in Marta Ivanšek / At Home: Architects France and Marta Ivanšek, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2010







VAŽNA JE  
VSEBINA.

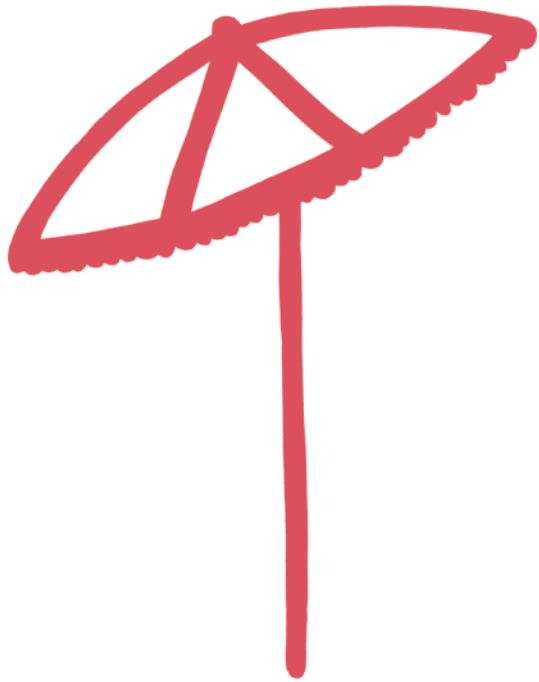




Fotografije na predhodnjih dveh straneh/  
Photographs on previous two pages by Matija Pavlovec

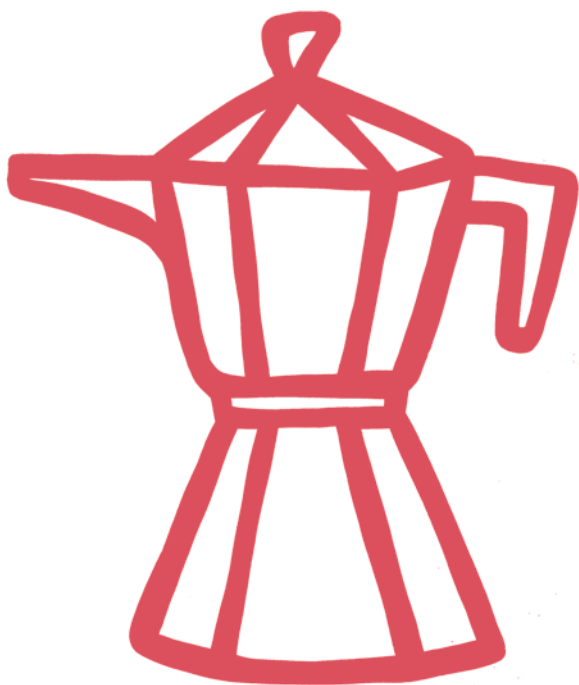


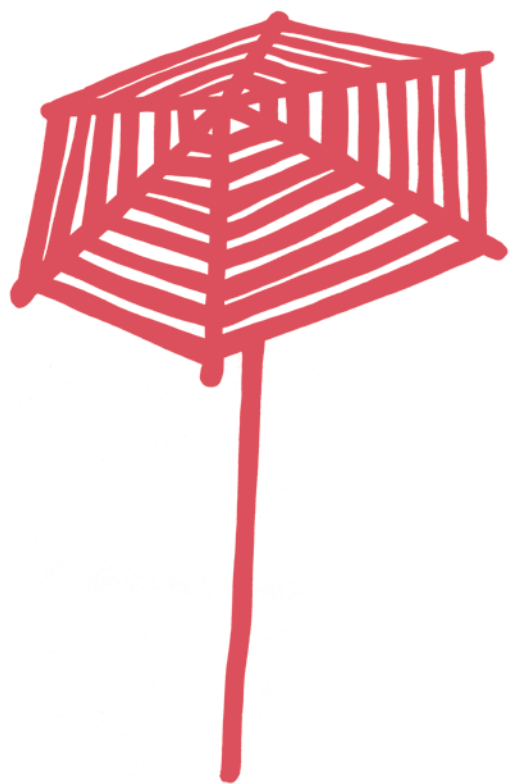










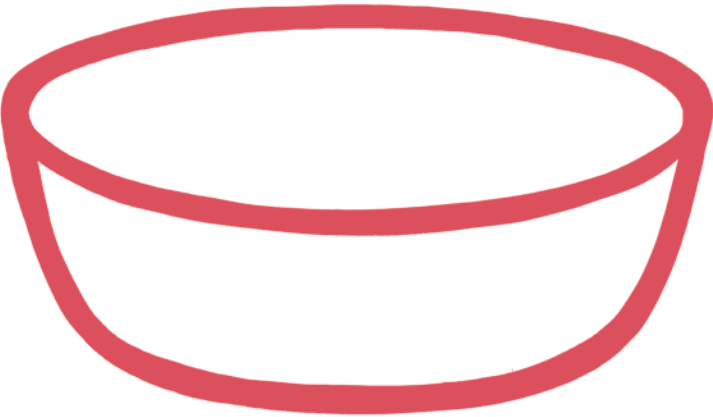


















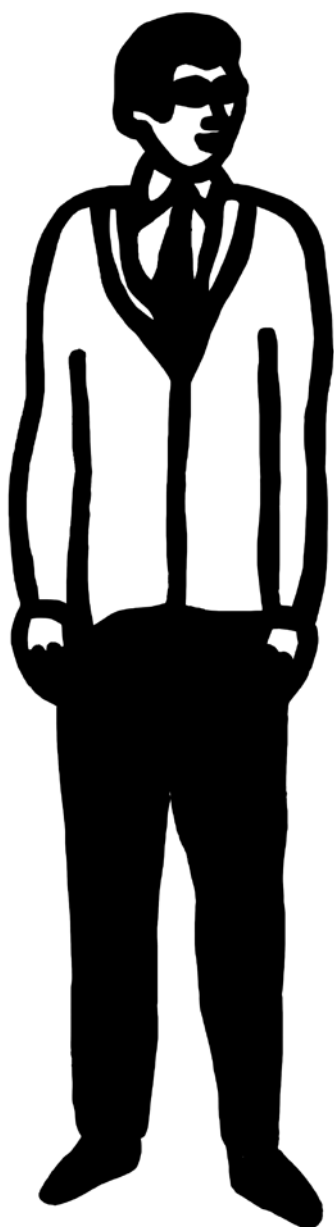




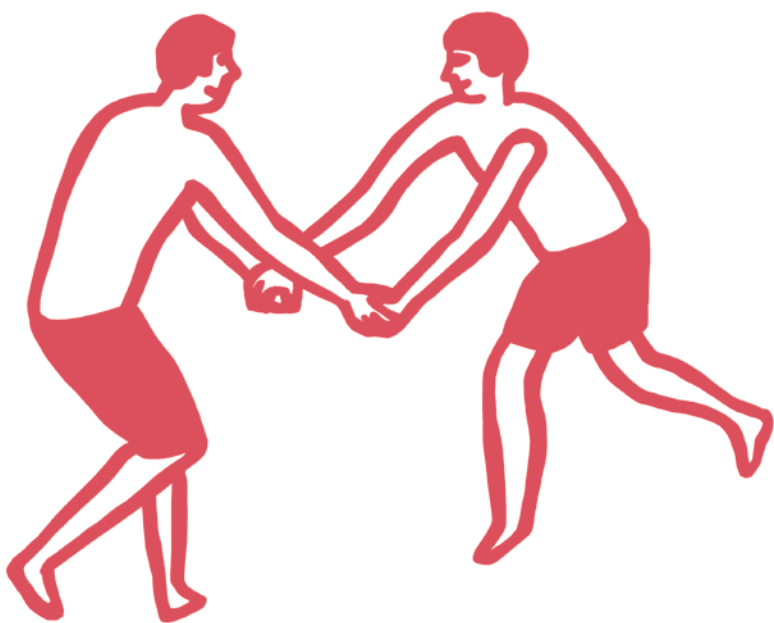














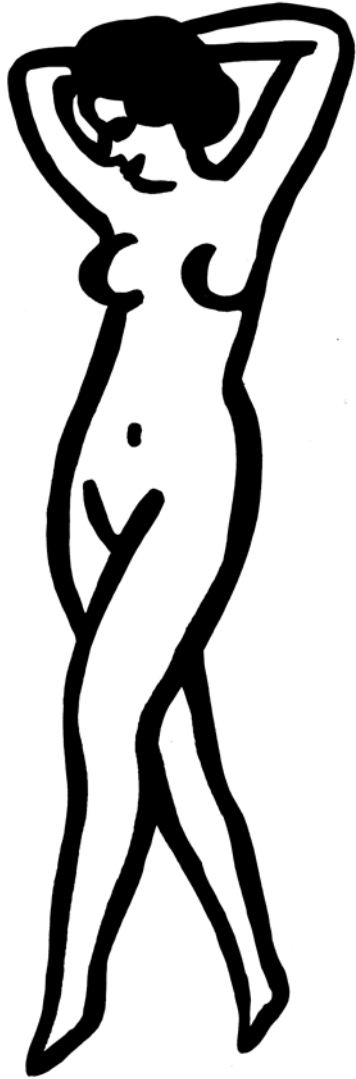








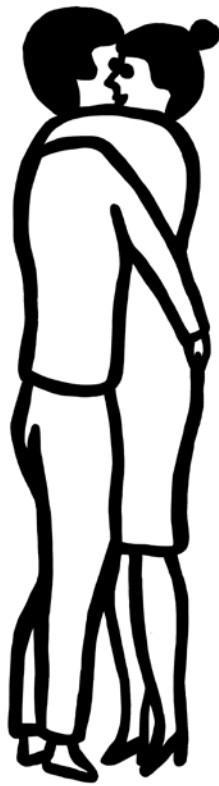
















Knjiga serigrafij / The Book of Serigraphs (natisnil / printed by Slavko Pavlin),  
Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2010 (foto / photo by Dejan Habicht)



Lepa Pametna / Pretty Smart  
Stikh, Fürstova hiša, Ptuj, 2014 (foto / photo by Boris B. Voglar)



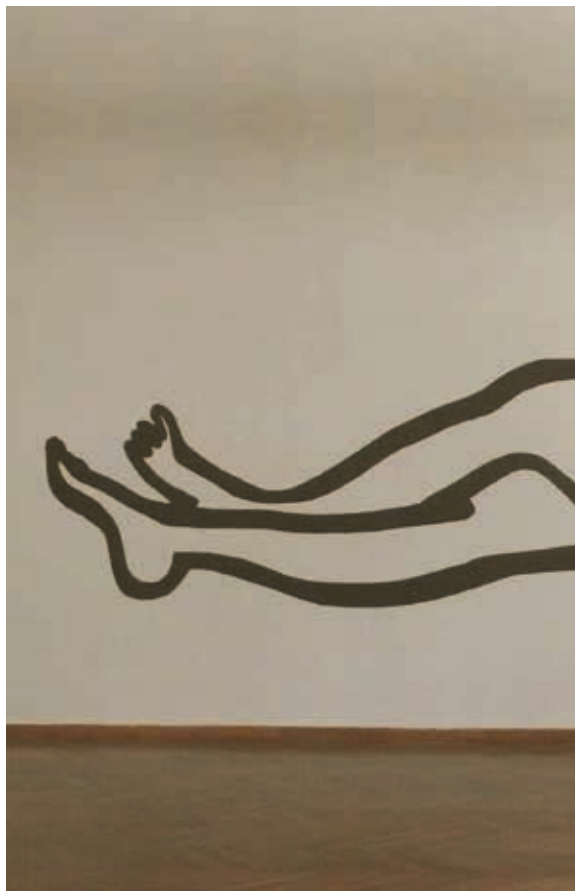


Rich Poor, Od črte do črke / Line Stroke The Letter  
(SCCA-Ljubljana), Vžigalica, Ljubljana, 2013

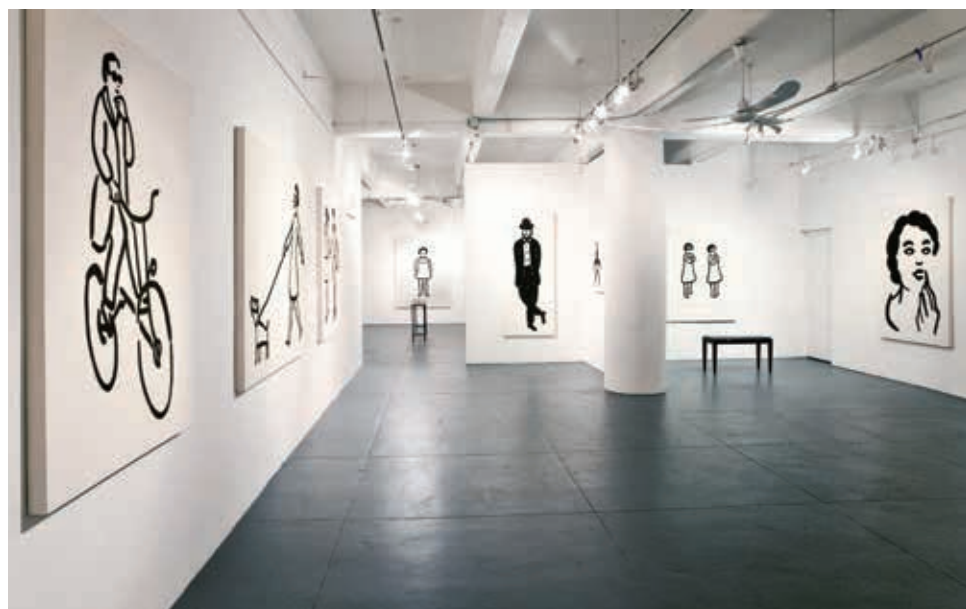


Zvezda & Odeon, Gender Check,  
MUMOK, Wien / Vienna, 2009

Risbe / Drawings,  
Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Maribor, 2010



Kar želim tudi dobim / I Always Get What I Wish For,  
Gallery MC, New York, 2011 (foto / photo by Alenka Slavinec, Jaka Vinšek)





Dedek v topolinu / Grandad In Topolino, Domovina / Heimat,  
Museum Moderner Kunst, Klagenfurt, 2010  
(foto / photo by Ferdinand Neumüller)



Teta Raša/Aunt Raša,  
Galerija Loža, Koper, 2014  
(foto / photo by Jadran Rusjan)



Maček / Cat, Produkcija 2010–2012 / Production 2010–2012,  
Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2013 (foto / photo by Borut Krajnc)

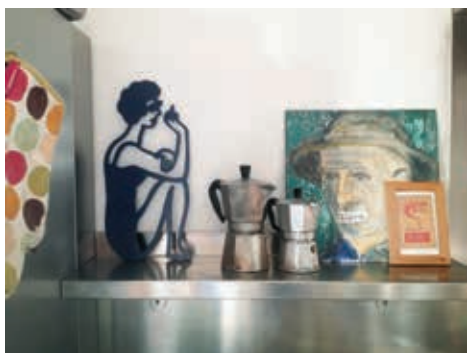




Kadilka / Smoker, delo s študenti / work in progress with students, Don't Be Afraid You Are The Best, Kibla Portal, Maribor 2014

Kadilka v kuhinji / Smoker In The Kitchen, izrez, barvana kovina / cut-out, painted metal, Ljubljana, 2014

Kadilka na plaži / Smoker On The Beach, izrez, barvana kovina / cut-out, painted metal, Susak, 2014







Kadilka/Smoker, Don't Be Afraid You Are The Best, Kibla Portal, 2014  
(foto / photo by Andrej Petelinšek)







Štuparamo/Piggyback, Izobraževalni center Osnovne šole Poljane,  
Zavod Janeza Levca, Ljubljana, 2014



Usta na usta/Mouth To Mouth,  
Parkirišče pri Pravni fakulteti/Parking lot at Law Faculty, Maribor, 2012  
(foto / photo by Branimir Ritonja)

Miha Colner

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# Pogovor s Petro Varl

V preteklih (dobrih) dveh desetletjih je Petra Varl zasedala prav posebno mesto na domačem prizorišču sodobne umetnosti. Številnim tektonskim premikom navkljub je vselej ostala zvesta medijema risbe in grafike, s pomočjo katerih ustvarja specifično imažerijo. Njene na osebnih izkušnjah in nazorih temelječe podobe običajno prikazujejo stilizirane človeške figure v brezprostorju, ki predstavlja njihovo vsakdanje okolje. Vzdušje je dobrodušno in pozitivno. Avtorica namreč obravnava tiste plati posameznikovega življenja, ki kljub nestabilnosti današnjega trenutka ostajajo relativno nespremenjene in dodobra univerzalne.

Marca 2012, ko je bila v Galeriji Eqrna na ogled ljubljanska edicija razstave 'Kar želim, tudi dobim', sva s Petro Varl nekoliko podrobneje spregovorila o njenem avtorskem delu in nazorih, ki določajo smernice njene izraznosti.



Naslov razstave 'Kar želim, tudi dobim' je povzet po eni izmed risb. Gre za dvojni portret – in teh dvojnih podob je v pričujoči seriji veliko – torej za portret deklice, ki je sprva videti malce namrščena s prekrižanimi rokami, nato pa nasmejana s sladoledom v rokah. Koliko sta motiv in izjava avtobiografska?

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Upodabljam vloge, v katerih se soočam s svojo preteklostjo, živim v sedanjosti ali se podajam v prihodnost. Ta deklica sem jaz, in četudi pravi, da dobi vse, kar si želi, marsikdaj ni tako. Tako kot jaz, tudi deklica dvomi in ta dvom sem izpostavila zlasti v prvem delu, pri risbah dvojic. V drugem delu sem narisala motive, v katerih so protagonisti drug drugemu naklonjeni in je vse videti lepo in prav. Vsi so prijazni in se imajo radi – kot v nekem popolnem svetu. Prav povezovanje in iskanje ljubezni je rdeča nit celotne razstave. Tega si tudi najbolj želim: ljubezni in povezanosti.

Protagonisti tvojih risb so videti povsem običajni ljudje, kot odraz vsakdanjega življenja, ki je prikazano iz pozitivne, dobrodušne perspektive. Od kod izhaja ta pozitivizem, ki je danes v umetnosti (in življenju) pravzaprav dokaj redek?

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Verjamem, da se to, kar si želiš, o čemer razmišljaš in čemur posvečaš pozornost, tudi zares zgodi, da s svojim odnosom do sveta ustvarjaš svojo stvarnost in pišeš svojo zgodbo. Te risbe so na nek bizaren način napovedi prihodnosti in prav iz tega razloga namenoma ne upodabljam slabih stvari. Vprašala sem se, s kakšnimi podobami bi želela biti obkrožena, in temu v svojih delih sledim. Motivi, ki jih upodabljam, so del mojega neposrednega okolja, hkrati pa jih idealiziram. Mislim, da je smotrnejše ustvarjati in opozarjati na dobro kot usmerjati svojo energijo v nekaj slabega in motečega.

Sicer pa je tako tudi v življenju. Ti motivi bi lahko bili običajni prizori z ulice, medtem ko za travmatične dogodke, ki se v naši neposredni okolici odvijajo dokaj redko, običajno izvemo iz sekundarnih virov, na primer množičnih medijev.

Mediji nas iz dneva v dan bombardirajo s slabimi novicami. Kadar je vse v redu, o tem ni vredno izgubljati besed, ker je preveč normalno. Zase lahko rečem, da imam srečo (potrka na leseno mizo; op. a.); sem v dobrem obdobju in to se odraža tudi v mojih delih. Vedno rada poudarim dobre plati zgodbe in to je po mojem mnenju tudi namen umetnosti – da nas navdihuje, da lahko spet verjamemo, da je marsikaj mogoče.

Protagonisti tvojih del so stvarni ljudje, vzeti iz različnih kontekstov, ki pa dajejo vtis neke univerzalnosti.

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Ponavadi rišem svoje bližnje, medtem ko sem za ta projekt začela iskati motive ljudi na fotografijah iz spleta, knjig ali revij. Najdene motive sem nato predelala v sebi lastni maniri na način, da se lahko z njimi poistovetim. Ustvarjam jih v prvi vrsti zase, šele potem za druge. Osebe na podobah so odsev tega trenutka, hkrati pa želim ustvariti vtis brezčasnosti. Všeč mi je, ko so motivi videti, kot da so bodisi nastali danes bodisi pred petdesetimi leti. Starejše gospe, ki pridejo na razstavo, se zlahka poistovetijo z deklico na risbah ali obratno, dekcle se lahko poistoveti z upodobljeno starko. Osrednja protagonistka je torej ženska, ne glede na starost.

V tvojih delih sem pravzaprav zaznal načelo ikoničnosti; torej, ilustriraš idejo, ki je postavljena popolnoma izven prostora in časa.

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Figure so brez ozadja, risbe nimajo okvirjev in tako lahko podobe plavajo v prostoru. To odstranjevanje odvečnega pa tudi precej pripomore k občutku brezčasnosti. Dolgo je trajalo, da so risbe postale takšne, kakršne so zdaj. Gre za proces, ki se stalno odvija, razvija, raste. Postopoma gradim na vsebini in obliki, najsi bo izmenično ali vzporedno.

Zdi se, da je v ospredju formalni učinek risb, pa vendar za njimi vselej stoji neka zgodba, četudi nelinearna.

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Pravzaprav tako tudi ustvarjam. Vselej sta na delu dva možna pristopa. To pomeni, da najprej narišem deklico, ki v rokah drži



nit, in jo potem kontekstualiziram. Prav ta punčka pa lahko pride iz neke povsem druge zgodbe. Pred leti sem bila povabljena v Avstrijo na skupinsko razstavo z naslovom 'Domovina', za katero sem naredila portret svoje družine. Glavna junakinja je bila prav ta deklica. Torej sem motiv in protagonistko vzela iz nekega drugega konteksta in ju pripeljala v ta projekt. Slučajno sem narisala rdečo linijo, ki jo drži v roki. Tedaj sem ugotovila, da je prav ta detajl pravzaprav vse povezal, četudi je bila zgodba ustvarjena skoraj nezavedno.

Drugi pristop pa je takšen, da v enem samem večeru narišem celo skicirko zamislic in tako zastavim zgodbo. Nato jo udejanjim v risbi, ki po pretečenem času in vmesnem raziskovanju počasi postane končna podoba, kot sem jo želela. Ta značilna linija je torej rezultat mnogih poskusov in napak, četudi na koncu navadno pridem do rezultata, s katerim sem zadovoljna.

Kakšen je pravzaprav proces dela? Tvoje risbe so predstavljene (in tudi nastajajo) v zelo različnih formatih?

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Izkazalo se je, da moja dela najbolje učinkujejo kot celota, da se zgodba hkrati odvija na več ravneh, v več prostorih in oblikah, v času. Delo, ki ga pokažem v galeriji, skušam dopolniti z drugim delom izven nje, na ulici ali v parku. Pri tem projektu so to znaki z motivi poljubov in objemov. Tudi postavitve v galeriji je večplastna: obsega knjigo, v kateri je predstavljena celotna zgodba, velike formate na lesenih ploščah ter male grafike velikosti razglednic, ki jih obiskovalci lahko vzamejo. To mi je všeč, še posebej, ko mi ljudje pripovedujejo, kako zelo so se razveselili teh malih grafik in kako so jih podarili naprej. In potem naključno spoznam nekoga, ki je na takšen način dobil mojo grafiko. Dogaja se natančno to, kar si želim: da moja dela krožijo.

Tako kot slikar polaga barve na platno v plasteh, da ustvari globino, jaz s svojimi motivi poseljujem različne oblike. Zame je ves projekt kot ena sama slika in ko se vsaka stvar postavi na pravo mesto, čutim, da sem svoje delo dobro opravila.

Slediš torej ideji, da se mora delo širiti in živeti neodvisno življenje? Obenem se zdita reproduktibilnost in množična naklada nekakšen odmik od običajne unikatnosti?

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Podobe imajo svoje življenje, saj ne morem predvideti, kje bodo pristale. Male grafike so narejene v tehniki sitotiska, ki je pravzaprav tradicionalna grafična tehnika in ima neskončne možnosti reproduciranja. Grafik, ki jih obiskovalcem podarim, ne oštevilčim, vsak odtis pa oplemenitim s svojim reliefnim žigom. Poudariti želim prav to, da kljub veliki nakladi te podobe ne izgubijo na vrednosti. Z uporabo kakovostnega grafičnega papirja, klasičnega tiska in reliefa nastane odtis, ki ga z reprodukcijo ali digitalnim tiskom ne bi mogla ustvariti. Ko tak grafični list primeš v roke, veš, da je pravi, čeprav ni unikatnen. Duhovna vrednost je enaka pri enem ali tisočerih odtisih.

Umetnost oziroma umetniški trg se vedno gibljeta nekje med željo po unikatu na eni strani ter idejo o demokratizaciji in večji dostopnosti umetnosti – torej, da se dela razdelijo med ljudi, da so poceni ali celo zastonj – na drugi. Ti pravzaprav ničesar ne izključuješ, saj so tvoja dela lahko na prodaj, lahko pa tudi brezplačna.

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Ne vem od kod ta obsedenost, toda na vsak način si želim svoje risbe deliti. Veliko mi pomeni, da jih lahko dobijo prav vsi, če si jih le želijo. Ko sem postavljala razstavo v mariborski Umetnostni galeriji (2010), sem nameravala vse risbe, ki sem jih obesila na steno, podariti obiskovalcem, ki so prišli na otvoritev. Te ideje nisem uresničila, ker sem ugotovila, da bi risbe lahko odneslo domov samo toliko ljudi, kolikor je bilo risb, medtem ko bi bili vsi ostali nezadovoljni, česar pa nisem hotela. Dve leti pozneje sem to idejo nekoliko modificirala in uspela realizirati z majhnimi grafikami, o katerih sem govorila prej.

Vrniva se k procesu dela. Tvoje risbe so videti kot bi bile sestavljene iz hitrih, hipnih potez, torej na zelo striparski način, kjer z rutinirano gesto ustvarjaš linije. Kako pravzaprav delaš? Kje začneš, na majhni skici ali na velikem formatu?

Med stotinami malih risbic izberem tiste najbolj prepričljive. S pomočjo projektorja izbrano podobo narišem na večji format, pri tem pa prenesem samo osnovno linijo, nato še precej časa pilim detajle. Namenoma pustim majhne napake, kot je recimo "dripping". Ko sem po nesreči na podlago pokapala nekaj barve tam, kjer ni bilo treba, sem ugotovila, da mi je to pravzaprav všeč. Gre za nek mali detajl, ki pove, da so risbe ročno delo, kar je po mojem mnenju izjemno pomembno.

Na samih risbah pa se najbolj ukvarjam z obrazi, četudi so vsi zelo tipizirani. Kako naj bo torej nek človek videti? Nočem, da je preveč vesel ali preveč žalosten, da ima neumen ali komičen videz. To je zelo pomembno in pogosto dodajam veliko popravkov prav na obrazih. Vse ostalo pa mora biti narejeno v eni potezi, preprosto, kljub temu, da je veliko t. i. pred-procesa. Če mi roka "ne teče", se to seveda občuti na risbi.

Risbe delujejo zelo striparsko, le da nimajo linearne naracije, ki bi pomagala pri razumevanju. Značajske poteze figur morajo biti v vizualni umetnosti še izraziteje poudarjene, saj edine nakazujejo vsebino. Tudi besedila, ki so pripisana tvojim risbam, so zelo odprta, brez eksplicitne naracije. Je torej tvoj namen puščati stvari odprte?

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Prav to želim doseči – odprtost. Pogosto naslov, ki se mi zdi pri določenih podobah sprva primeren, pozneje odstranim, medtem ko ga pri drugih obdržim. Preprosto: če je dovolj dober in močan, vzdrži. Risba parčka v avtomobilu s pripisom 'You're driving me crazy' je ena izmed teh kombinacij, ki so mi še vedno všeč. S podnapisom je podoba dobila dodatno konotacijo, pri kateri se ohranja dvojnost – fraza lahko pomeni, da imaš nekoga noro rad, hkrati pa ti gre neznansko na živce.

Ravno v tem se kažejo razlike med deli, ki jih naredim za galerijsko postavitev ali ilustracijo, ki se navezuje na neko določeno zgodbo. Nekatere moje risbe sodijo v svet likovne umetnosti, nekatere pa obvisijo nekje vmes in zanje sploh ne vem, kam naj jih vtaknem. Nekatera dela recimo niso "odprta", pa vseeno delujejo. Tako sem naredila 'Poljub', ki je samo poljub, torej znak. Tu ni ničesar drugega.

Pripisi so ključnega pomena pri risbah dvojic, kjer se podoba figure bistveno ne spremeni, napisi 'Lepa/Pametna' ali 'Močan/Pameten' pa izražajo vsebino prav s temi nasprotji. V tem primeru tematiziraš družbene identitete in se poigravaš s stereotipi.

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To je pač najosnovnejše branje: imamo dve figuri, ki sta videti enaki, a predstavljata pomensko nasprotje. Če vidimo lepo žensko, bomo najprej pomislili, da je lepa, a morda je obenem tudi pametna. Torej sta ti dve značilnosti lahko tudi v eni osebi. A znotraj te serije je še več različic. Nekatere dvojice so identične, druge se zgolj malenkostno razlikujejo, pri nekaterih pa je razlika zelo očitna. Slednje imajo običajno dodane attribute, ki presegajo neko golo oblikovalsko berljivost reklamnih oglasov. Zavestno sem iskala različice, ki bi to lahko predstavile na različne načine.

Uporabljaš zelo raznolike nosilce – risba na papirju, knjiga, lesena tabla, razglednica ali stvari v prostoru, na zidovih. Kako se odločaš zanje? Ali za risbe že vnaprej veš, da potrebujejo na primer velik format?

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Ne vem, če se ravno tako odločam. Nekatere stvari zagotovo učinkujejo bolje, kadar so monumentalne. Velik format me je od nekdaj privlačil. Uživam, kadar lahko narišem ogromno risbo na kakšni fasadi v mestu ali pa na steni kakšnega muzeja z velikimi zidovi in visokimi stropovi. Moje preproste risbe z velikostjo pridobijo dodatno vrednost. Tako sem letos na steni parkirišča pri Pravni fakulteti v Mariboru narisala zelo velik 'Poljub' usta na usta. Srečen konec in filmski poljub. To je bilo neke vrste nadaljevanje prvega eskimskega poljuba 'Nos ob nos'. Zanimivo je naključje, da sem tudi tega ustvarila na parkirišču, na Metelkovi (1994).

Pri projektih 'Kar želim, tudi dobim' in 'Poljubi in objemi' sem motive predelala nazaj v majhen format, s tem pa so risbe postale prav takšne, kot so bile na samem začetku risanja. Zgodil se je reverzibilen proces: potem ko so risbe nekaj let nastajale in se večale, sem jih ponovno pomanjšala in ustvarila igro s pari (Spomin) ter nalepke, ki sem jih v New Yorku lepila po

postajah podzemne železnice. Vedno znova se poskušam prilagoditi prostoru, v katerega bom dela umestila.

Se ti zdi, da se z leti dopolnjuješ in izpopolnjuješ?

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Tega si želim, seveda. Trenutno delam risbe stvari, aktov in portretov, kar vse hkrati in vsakega od teh motivov posebej, v veliko različicah. Vse skupaj pa se dogaja na morju. Portreti, profili nekoliko spominjajo na serijo 'Zvezda in Odeon' (1995).

Tokrat torej izpopolnjujem stare poteze, spet me vleče nazaj. Ampak narisani obrazi so lepši, boljši in pametnejši. Risbe aktualnega projekta so zelo disciplinirane, zelo dolgo jih popravljam, medtem ko pri novejših delih poteza nastaja neposredno. Na začetku je vse dokaj nejasno, zgolj nek občutek, ki mu skoraj slepo sledim. Nato je potrebnega precej dela, skozi katerega se vse razjasni. Najboljše pa je, da je na koncu videti, kot da je nastalo samo.

Prvič predvajano na Radiu Študent (28.03.2014)

# Interview With Petra Varl

For at least two decades, Petra Varl has occupied a special position on the domestic contemporary art scene. Despite numerous tectonic moves, she has always remained loyal to the drawing and graphic media that has enabled the creation of her specific imagery. Her images, based on personal experience and principles, usually display stylized human figures in spacelessness, which represents their everyday environment. The atmosphere is good-natured and positive. To wit, the artist deals with those sides of an individual's life which stay relatively constant and quite universal, despite the instability of the present moment.

In March 2012, when the Ljubljana edition of the exhibition 'I Always Get What I Wish For' was displayed at the Eburna Gallery, I discussed Petra's authorial work at great length with her as well as the maxims that define the guidelines of her expression.

The exhibition title 'I Always Get What I Wish For' is a resume of one of the drawings. It is a double portrait – of which there are many in this series – of a girl who at first appears to be frowning with folded arms and then stands smilingly with an ice cream in her hand. To what extent are the motif and the statement autobiographical?

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I depict roles in which I face my past, I live the present, or I reach for the future. This girl is me, and even though she says she gets everything she wishes for, many a time this is not the case. Like me, the girl has doubts too and I have exposed these doubts particularly in the first part – in the drawings of pairs. In the second part, I have drawn motifs in which the protagonists are inclined towards each other and everything looks good and right. Everyone is nice and fond of the other, like a perfect world. Connection and search for love are the underlying theme of the whole exhibition. This is something I also want most: love and connection.

The protagonists in your drawings seem like ordinary people, like a reflection of everyday life that is shown from a positive, kind perspective. Where does this positivism which is actually quite rare in today's art (and life) come from?

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I believe that what one wishes for, what one reflects upon and focuses one's attention on really happens; that our attitude towards the world creates our reality and writes our story. In a bizzare way, these drawings are predictions of the future and for this reason I do not depict bad things. I ask myself what kind of images I would want to have around me and I simply follow this paradigm in my works. The motifs I depict are a part of my closest environment and I idealize them at the same time. I think, it makes more sense to create and point out the good than to focus one's energy on something bad and disruptive.

Like in life. These motifs could be common street scenes; while from secondary sources, like the mass

media, we learn about traumatic incidents that are rather rarely occurring in our own vicinity.

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The media bomb us day by day with negative news. When everything is alright, it is not worth mentioning, it is too normal. I consider myself lucky (she knocks on the wooden table; author's comment); I'm in a good period of life which also reflects in my work. I like to emphasize the good sides of a story and I think, this is the purpose of art – to inspire us to believe again that anything is possible.

The protagonists in your works are actual people, taken from different contexts, but giving the impression of some kind of universality.

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I usually draw people who are close to me, while for this project I started to look for motifs of people on photographs on the internet, in books and magazines. I reshaped the motifs in my own manner in order to identify myself with them. Initially, I create them for myself, only later are they for others. The persons in the images are a reflection of this moment, as at the same time I want to create the impression of timelessness. I like it, when the motifs look as if they could have been made in the present or fifty years ago. Older female visitors to the exhibition can easily sympathize with a girl in the drawings, or vice versa, a girl can identify herself with a depicted old woman. The central female protagonist is the woman, regardless of her age.

I actually perceived the principle of iconic reference in your works; meaning you illustrate an idea, which is set up completely out of space and time.

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The figures are without background, the drawings without frames and thus the images can float around the space. This elimination of redundancies contributes a great deal to the feeling of timelessness. It took a long time for the drawings to become what they are now. It is a constantly evolving and growing process. I gradually develop the content and the form, either in alternating or parallel processes.



It seems that the formal effect of the drawing stays in the foreground, and yet there is always some, even though non-linear, story behind.

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Actually, this is my process of creation. There are always two possible approaches to work; meaning that I first draw a girl who holds a thread in her hands and then I contextualize her. This girl can derive from a completely different story. Some years ago, I was invited to a group exhibition in Austria entitled 'Homeland', for which I made a portrait of my family. The main protagonist was this very girl. Now, I took the motif and the female protagonist from another context and put them into this project. By chance, I drew a red line, which she holds in her hand. Then I realized that it is this very detail that connected everything, although the story happened almost subconsciously.

The second approach is to draw a whole sketchbook of ideas in one evening and thus devise a story. I accomplish this in a drawing, which after some time and interim research gradually becomes the final image that I want. Consequently, this characteristic line is a result of many attempts and failures, even though I reach a satisfying outcome in the end.

How does the work process function? Your drawings are presented (and created) in very different sizes.

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It turned out that my works function best as a whole. That the story develops simultaneously on several levels, in several spaces and forms, and in time. I try to complete a work shown in the gallery with another work outside the gallery, on the street, in the park. In the present project, these are the signs with the hugs and kisses motifs. The set up in the gallery is many-layered as well: it encompasses a book containing the whole story, large-scale formats on wooden panels, and small graphics in postcard size as take-aways for visitors. I like it, especially when people tell me how delighted they were in these small graphics and how they gave them away as presents. Thus by chance, I get to know someone who has received one of my graphics. It happens exactly as I want it – my works are circulating.

Like the painter applies colors in layers on the canvas in order to create depth, I populate different forms with my motifs. For me, the whole project is like one picture and when everything is in its place, I feel that I have done a good job.

So you follow the idea that work needs to spread and live an independent life? Yet, reproducibility and mass printing are a kind of deviation from the usual uniqueness.

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The images have their own life, I cannot predict where they will end up. Small graphics are made by a screen printing technique, which is actually a traditional graphic art technique and has indefinite reproduction possibilities. I don't number the graphics that I hand out to visitors as gifts, but I do authenticate each copy with my embossed stamp. Here, I want to emphasize that, despite the large number of copies, the images don't lose their value. With the use of quality graphic paper, classic and relief printing, I produce a copy, which could not be created by reproduction and digital printing. When you hold a graphic paper like this in your hands, you know that it's authentic, although not unique. The spiritual value is equal in one or in thousands of copies.

Art and the art market respectively always hovers between the wish for a unique specimen and the idea of democratization of and broader access to art, meaning that artworks are distributed among people, that they are inexpensive or even for free. You don't exclude anything, since your works can be for sale or for free.

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I don't know, where this obsession comes from, but I want to share my drawings by every means. It means a lot to me that anyone can get them, if they want them. When I set up the exhibition at Maribor Art Gallery (2010), I intended to give all the drawings hanging on the walls to all the visitors at the opening. I didn't put this idea into practice, since I realized that only a limited number of visitors, namely equaling the number of drawings, could get one to take home, and I didn't want the others to be discontented. Two years later, I modified

this idea somewhat and managed to implement it using the small graphics, I have described.

Let's get back to the work process. Your drawings look as if they are composed of quick, instant strokes, in the manner of a cartoon where lines are drawn with a routine gesture. What does your work process look like? Where do you start, on a small sketch or a large-scale format?

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Out of hundreds of small drawings, I pick the most convincing ones. I draw the selected image by the use of a projector onto a bigger format, but I only transfer the basic lines and refine the details for quite some time. I deliberately keep small errors, such as dripping, for instance. When I accidentally dripped some color onto the surface, where I not supposed to, I discovered that I actually liked it. It's a small detail indicating that these drawings are handmade, which, I think, is quite important.

As for the drawings, I'm most engaged in the faces, although they are quite typified. What should a human look like? I don't want him or her to be too sad, or to look stupid or even funny. This is very important, I often make most corrections on the faces. Everything else needs to be drawn in one stroke, simple, even though there is a lot of preparation, of pre-process. You can feel it in the drawing, if the hand "doesn't flow".

The drawings seem very cartoon-like, except they don't have a linear narration that would help to understand them. The typical features of the figures need to be more strongly accentuated in visual art, since they alone indicate the content. The texts accompanying your drawings are quite open too, they have no explicit narration. So, is it your intention to leave things open?

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This is exactly what I want to achieve – openness. I often remove a title which at first seems appropriate for certain images, while I keep it with others. It's simple: if the title is good and strong enough, it stands. The drawing of a couple in the car with the caption 'You're Driving Me Crazy' is one of these

combinations that I still like. With the caption, the image receives an extra connotation, which preserves the duality – the phrase expresses that you love somebody crazily and at the same time she or he can still drive you mad.

Here one can see the distinctions between the works that I create for a gallery set up or an illustration that refers to a certain story. Some of my drawings belong to the world of fine art, some are caught somewhere in-between and I have no idea where to place them. For instance, some works are not "open", yet they function perfectly. This is how I made 'The Kiss', which is merely a kiss, a sign so to say. There is nothing else to it.

The captions are of key importance in the pair drawings, where the image of the figure does not significantly change, but the captions 'Beautiful/Smart' or 'Strong/Smart' express the content precisely through these opposites. In this case, you thematize social identities and play with stereotypes.

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This is the basic reading: we have two figures which look the same but represent opposing content. When we see a beautiful woman, we first think of her as being beautiful, and maybe even smart as well. Thus, these two characteristics can both pertain to one person. There are more different variants in this series. Some pairs are identical, others differ only insignificantly, in some the difference is obvious. Usually, the latter have some added attributes that exceed the bare readability of advertising design. I consciously search for variations, which are to present the different methods.

You are using quite diverse supports – drawing on paper, books, wooden panels, postcards, or things in space, on the walls. How do you pick them? Do you know in advance for drawings, for instance, that they need a large-scale format?

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I'm not sure I decide it like that; some images certainly function better when they are monumental. I always liked large formats. I enjoy it, when I can draw a huge drawing on a city

facade or a museum with large walls and high ceilings. My simple drawings gain added value with size. This year, I drew on the wall of the Law Faculty parking lot in Maribor a huge lips-to-lips 'Kiss'. A happy ending and film kiss. This seemed to follow the first Eskimo kiss 'Nose to Nose', which, in an interesting coincidence, was made at the Metelkova parking lot in Ljubljana (1994).

In the projects 'I Always Get What I Wish For' and 'Hugs and Kisses' I changed the motifs back to a small-scale format which turned the drawings into what they were at the beginning. A reversible process has happened: after the drawings were created and enlarged for some years, I reduced them again and produced a play with pairs (Memory) and stickers that I pasted around New York subway stations. I repeatedly try to accommodate to the space, into which I'm going to place my works.

Do you reckon that you complete and improve yourself throughout the years?

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Of course, I want that. I currently produce drawings of things, nudes and portraits – all at once and each of the motifs separately, in many varieties. They all take place at the seaside. The portraits, the profiles, are a bit reminiscent of the series 'Zvezda and Odeon' (1995).

This time, I have improved the old strokes, something is pulling me back again. Yet, the drawn faces look prettier, better and smarter. The drawings of the current project are very disciplined, I have been correcting them for a very long time. In recent works, the stroke is commenced directly. It is all quite dim at the beginning, there's just a feeling that I follow almost blindly. Then, there's a lot of work, through which everything becomes clear. It is best when in the end everything looks like it arose from itself.

First broadcasted at Radio Študent (March 28, 2012)



## Seznam risb / List of drawings

### Kar želim tudi dobim / I Always Get What I Wish For

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- |       |   |
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| 65    | Black White / Črno Bel                              |
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83	Nuša
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85	Stric Ivo / Uncle Ivo
86	Na triciklu / On Tricycle
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93	Objem / Hug
94–95	Poljub / Kiss
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106	Vedro / Bucket
107	Važna je vsebina / Content Matters
108	Vedro / Bucket

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112	Zložljiv stol / Folding Stool
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Petra Varl je bila rojena leta 1965 v Ljubljani. Študirala je slikarstvo na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani, kjer je leta 1997 tudi magistrirala. Deluje kot vizualna umetnica, na področju risbe, grafike, slikarstva, ilustracije in prostorskih postavitev. Svoja dela je predstavila na samostojnih in skupinskih razstavah, na Bienalu Sao Paolo (1996, Sao Paolo), v Muzeju Mudzarnok (1996, Budimpešta), Muzeju moderne umetnosti MUMOK (2009, Dunaj), v Narodni galeriji Zaceta (2010, Varšava) in drugih. Od leta 2000 je zaposlena na Oddelku za likovno umetnost Pedagoške fakultete Univerze v Mariboru, kjer kot redna profesorica poučuje risbo in grafiko. Živi in dela v Ljubljani in Mariboru.

Petra Varl was born in 1965 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. In 1997 she obtained a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. Petra Varl works as a visual artist in the media of drawing, graphic arts, painting, illustration and installations. She has shown her work in numerous independent and group shows, including the Sao Paolo Biennial (1996, Sao Paolo), Museum Mudzarnok (1996, Budapest), MUMOK (2009, Vienna), National Gallery Zaceta (2010, Warsaw). Since the year 2000 she has been teaching drawing and graphic arts at the Fine Arts Department of the Teacher's College of the University of Maribor. She lives and works in Ljubljana and Maribor.



Petra Varl  
Risbe / Drawings

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