

TREES






TREES

PETRA VARL





IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW
WHICH APPEARED FIRST,
THE LINE ON THE PAPER
OR THE THOUGHT,
OR A CONSCIOUSNESS
OF AN INTENTION.
IN A WAY, THE IMAGE
SEEMS TO DRAW ITSELF
THROUGH THE HUMAN HAND.

Juhani Pallasmaa







0 / 1 / 0 / 0










3 / 1 / 1 / 11

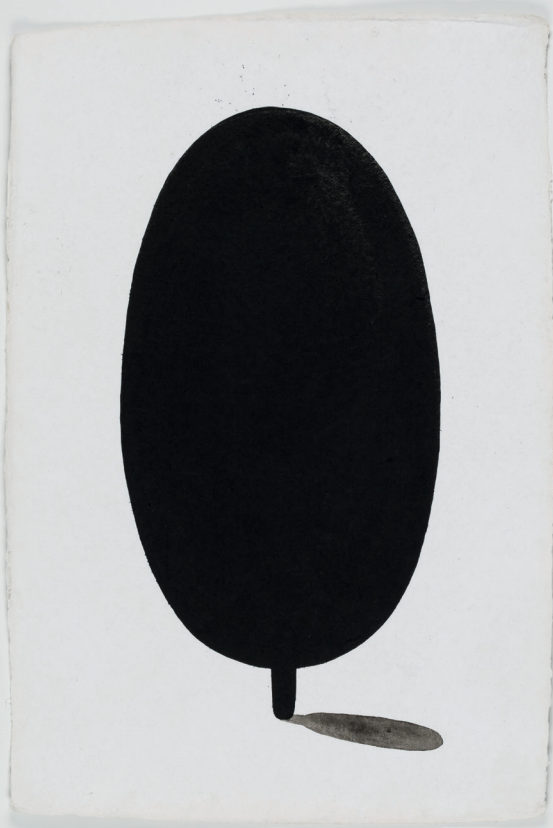




THE TREES I AM DRAWING
ARE VERY SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT
AT THE SAME TIME, LIKE PEOPLE.

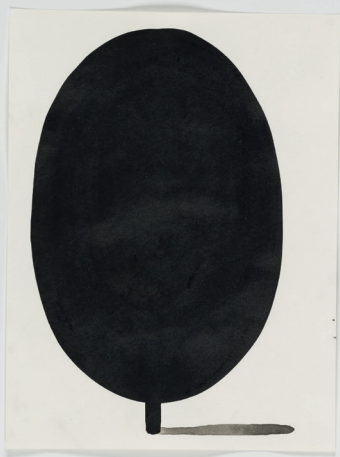
Petra Varl







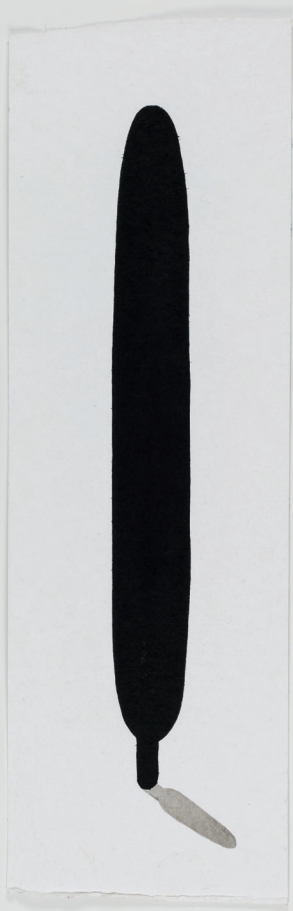


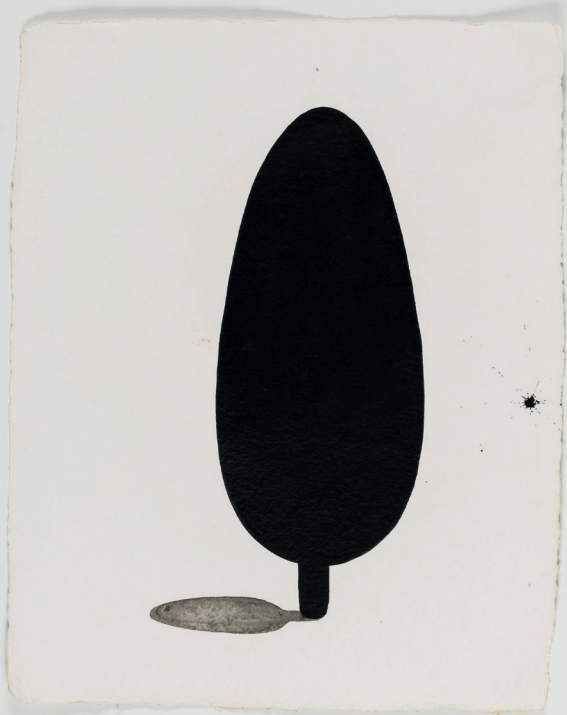






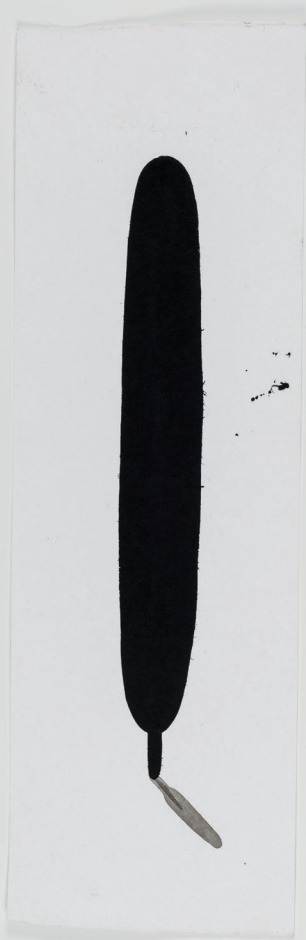








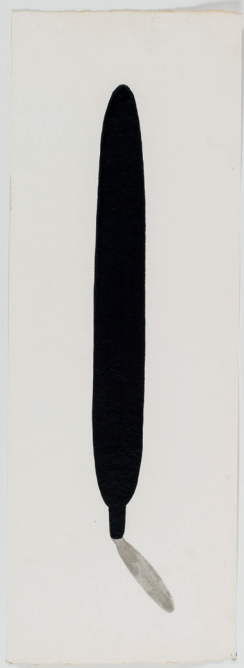




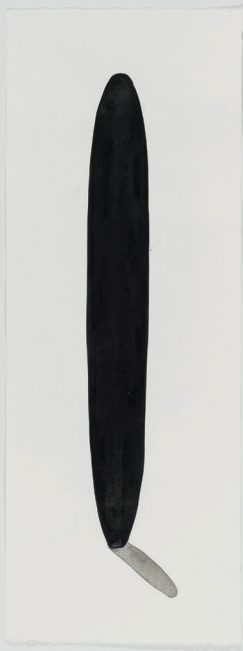










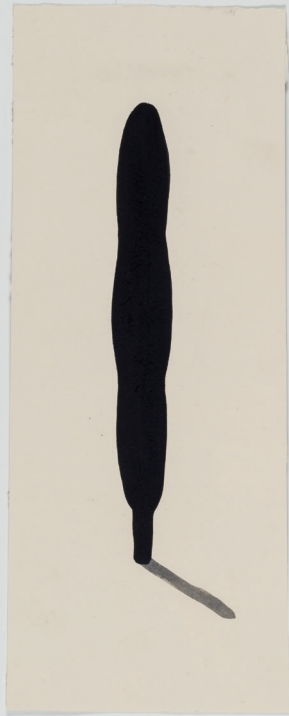




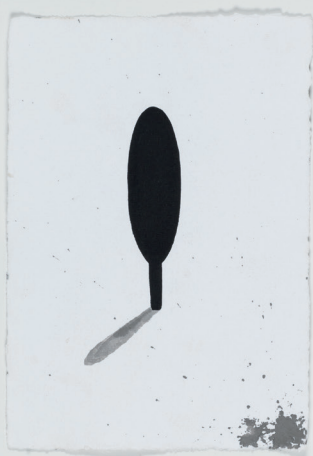




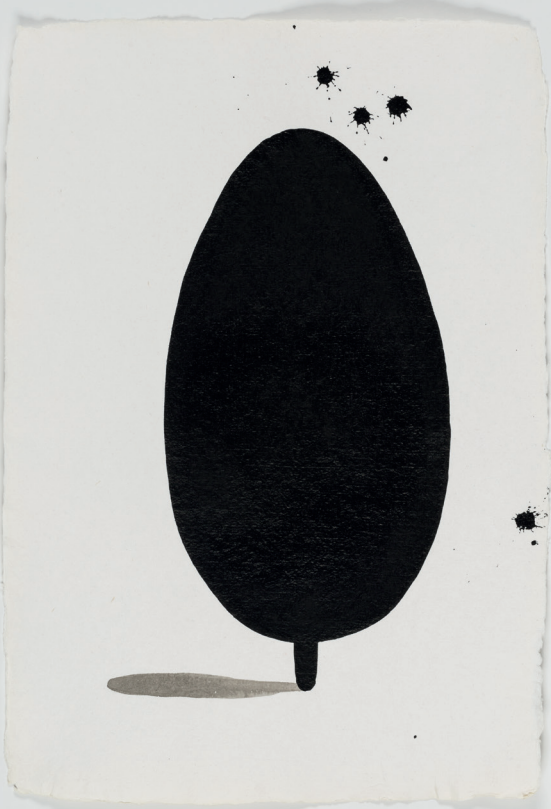








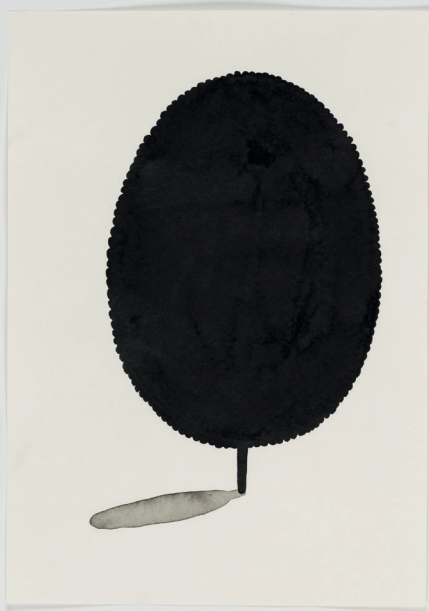


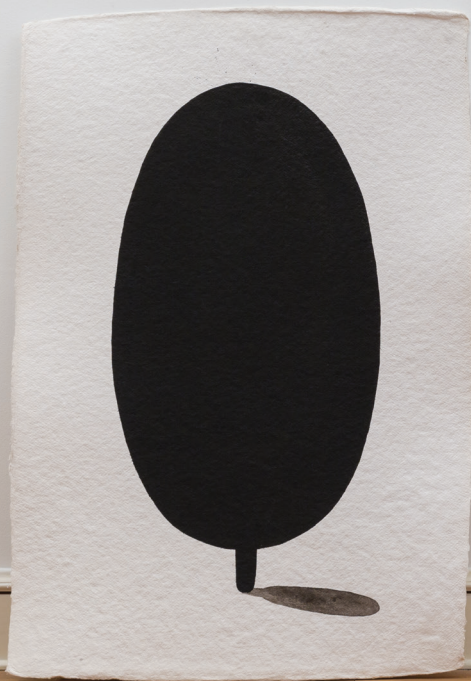




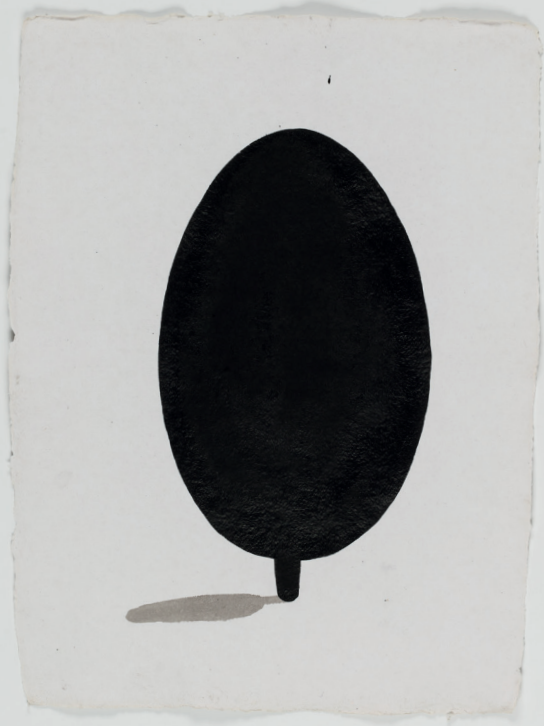


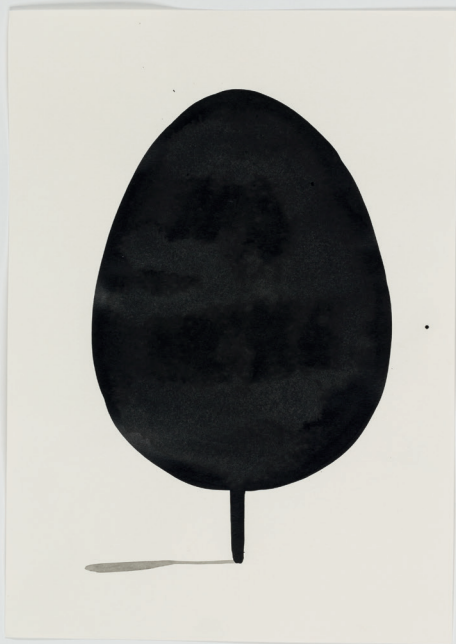
112 / 1 / 7 / 11





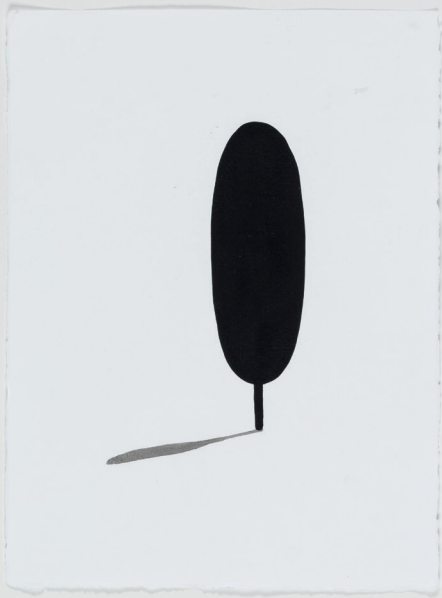


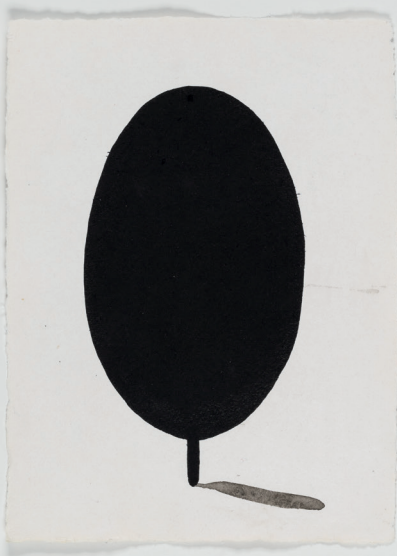




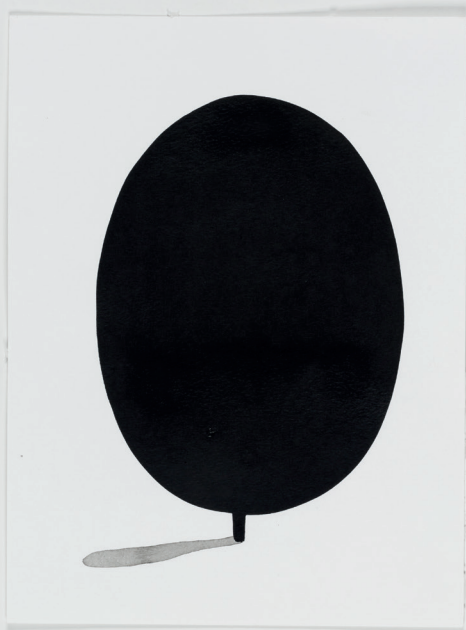

























THE SHADOW GIVES SHAPE AND LIFE
TO THE OBJECT IN LIGHT.
IT ALSO PROVIDES THE REALM
FROM WHICH FANTASIES AND
DREAMS ARISE.

Juhani Pallasmaa

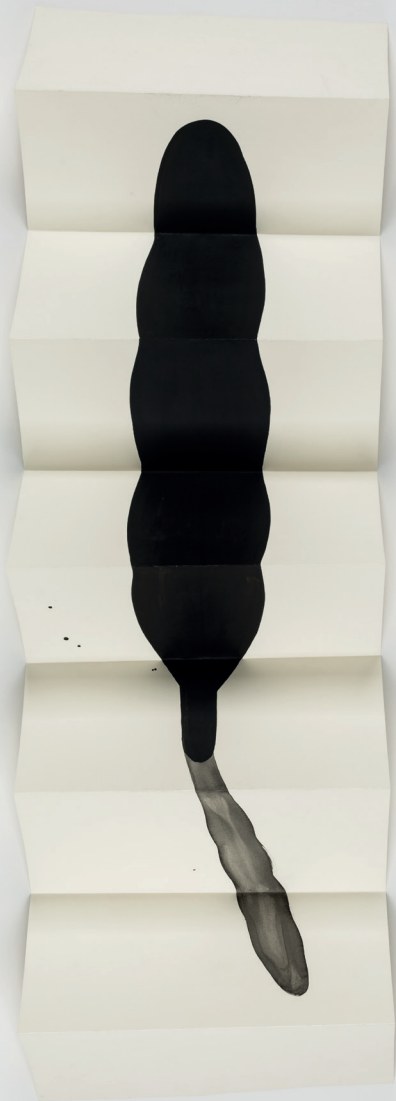




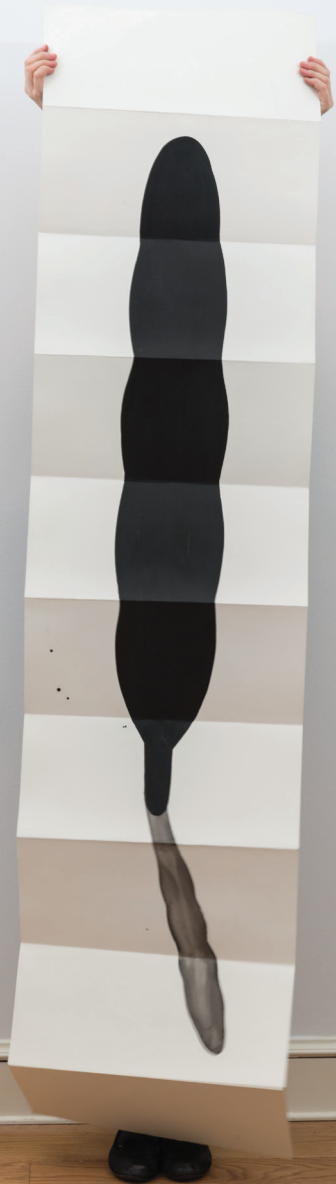


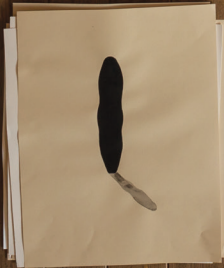












TREES

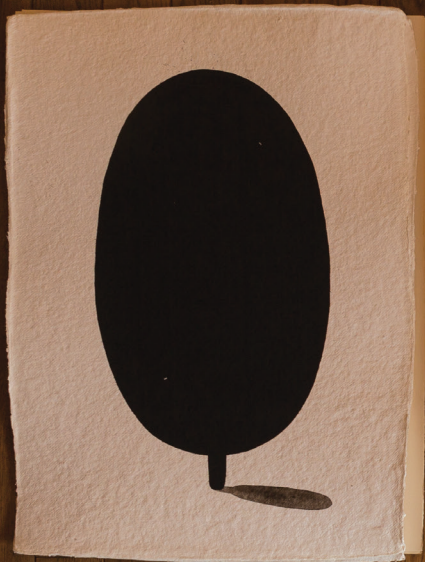
In the paintings of the Old Masters of the Italian Renaissance, the trees on the hillsides in the background of mythological scenes and allegories are typically ornate, idealized and flat. There seems to be a particular cultural code that calls not for a realistic portrayal of the peripheral compositional motifs but, instead, consciously embraces simplification and stylization, just as in architecture, cityscapes and landscapes. You need only go to Tuscany, however, for the realization to set in that, seen from a distance, the trees really do look the way they are depicted: regular, as if drawn, and reduced to the essential elements. A tree is one of the most fundamental motifs in art, able to be rendered with a few simple strokes and remain recognizable. This is not surprising, because wherever there are trees, they represent a symbol that is universally understood. And not only that. Trees are often objects of worship and ubiquitous in ancient beliefs and mythologies, for they can live for centuries. The lives of trees were once unfathomable, often admired for their magnificence and defiance. Today, we know they are extremely complex organisms, which are connected to each other and through whose veins flow vast amounts of life-sustaining liquids, and, it is said, they are also capable of communication. They are the indispensable cells of our planet's lungs.

Trees are also the subject of Petra Varl's new work. This is not merely because of a fascination with natural history, historical references or ecological awareness, although all of that can be felt as undertones in the series. At the forefront are mainly the repetition of the motif and the artist's creative process. Varl's instincts are entirely visual, emotional and experimental. In this way, an extensive series creates a multifaceted discourse on ways of seeing, understanding and perceiving images. The tree images are not identical; each one is different, unique and special, just as trees themselves are. Through her endless repetition of the subject Varl is also alluding to the common saying, "You can't see the forest for the (individual) trees." This calls into question the limits of the

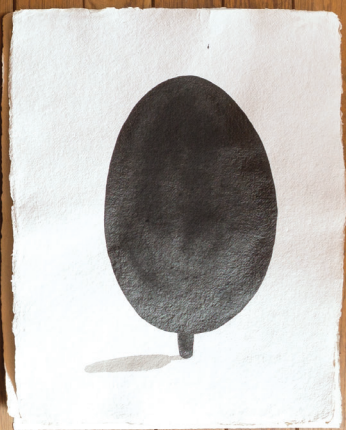
human perception of things, because our sensitivity to certain impulses diminishes when there are too many of them. The creative process here was similar: at first intuitive, then repetitive. Nevertheless, the artist has followed certain protocols. All the images are stylized in similar ways and contain the same three elements: a trunk, a crown and a shadow. The shadow, always falling in a slightly different direction, at least minimally locates the trees in the space of the picture.

This is in keeping with Varl's practice up to now: for more than twenty-five years she has been creating mostly stylized figurative drawings in total spacelessness. In previous works, she usually constructed evocative stories with a fairly pronounced narrative, while the Trees series aims at a more radical minimalism. The earlier work, which in fact celebrates the joys of life, was created in an almost comic strip manner, often accompanied by captions that inevitably became the vehicles of the story. While the captions toyed with the multilayered meaning of words and offered witticisms, the stylized drawings were set free from any redundant context and reduced to only a few basic strokes. Although the present series is similarly stylized, the narrative element has mostly fallen away, shifting to a less cognitive and more experiential level. There are no more stories, but only images pointing us to the original intention that led the artist to treat this motif at all – a motif she then elevated to a theme. Varl undoubtedly admires trees and is fascinated by their appearance, strength and resilience. She presents them from her own personal perspective, as incomprehensible but benevolent living beings, which are one of the basic elements of our common culture and our understanding of the environment. At the same time, she wonders just how rational these beings are and how they must see us, people, the self-proclaimed masters of the planet.

Miha Colner



PETRA VARL IS A SLOVENIAN ARTIST WHO WORKS MOSTLY IN THE MEDIA OF DRAWING AND INSTALLATION. SHE TEACHES DRAWING AND PRINTMAKING AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR. PETRA HAS A WONDERFUL DAUGHTER AND LIVES WITH HER FUTURE HUSBAND IN LJUBLJANA. LATELY, SHE HAS BEEN DRAWING TREES AND COOKING DINNERS.



T R E E S P E T R A V A R L

Author Petra Varl
Editing Petra Varl
Design Jana Jazbec
Photography Jaka Babnik
Text Miha Colner
Proofreading Rawley Grau
Publisher KOFEIN design
 Ljubljana, Slovenia
 www.kofein.si
 Zarja Vintar, Director
Printing Tiskarna Januš

March 2017

First edition, 500 copies

© 2017 Petra Varl, KOFEIN

All rights reserved

Printed in Slovenia

€10 / \$10



CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

741(497.4):929Varl P.

VARL., Petra

Trees / Petra Varl ; [text Miha Colner ; photography Jaka Babnik].
- 1st ed. - Ljubljana : Kofein dizajn, 2017

ISBN 978-961-93613-3-7

289344512