

Accompanying programme:

Wednesday, 19 June 2024, at 16:00

A guided tour of the exhibition with the curator and artist



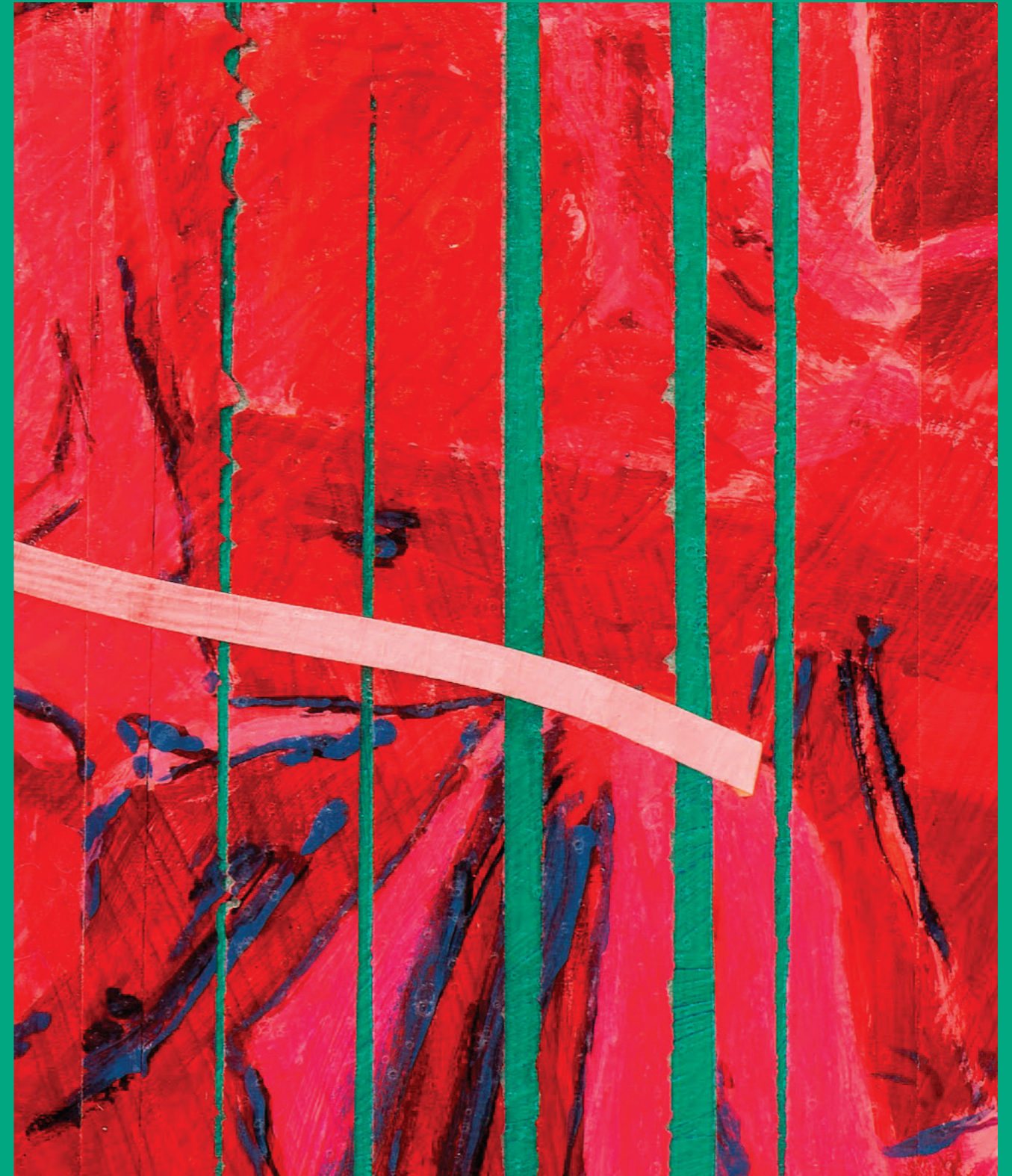
Exhibition Colophon:
Mito Gegič: You Are a Provider. With a Stolen Voice.

29 Maj – 14 July 2024
Ivan Grohar Gallery
Škofja Loka Museum

Represented by: Aleksandra Saša Nabergoj
Curator: Boštjan Soklič
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MITO GEGIČ: YOU ARE A PROVIDER. WITH A STOLEN VOICE.

29. 5.–14. 7. 2024



Galerija Ivana Groharja
Ivan Grohar Gallery
Kustos / Curator: Boštjan Soklič
Vstop prost / Free entrance

Mito Gegič is a prominent representative of Slovenian so-called post-medium painting; in addition to painting, he also works with video production, multimedia installations and performances. Since the turn of the millennium, he has been incorporating selected screenshot images from the mass – mostly digital – media into his creative process. As part of the process, he modifies these images, transforming and adapting the meaning of the originals, taken from the internet, to the mostly hunting-themed content, which is thoughtfully placed within the current socio-political context. Gegič's distinctive creative process is based on the concept of cut and reassembled images: he usually covers the painting support (a stretched canvas on a frame) with strips of adhesive tape, paints a screenshot image on top of the strips, then peels them off, transfers them to another support and uses them to construct a new painting on the final support. He uses hunting as a metaphor to critically analyse the entrenched, traditionally established, almost archetypal notions of ethically controversial rituals that are part of domestic folklore, and cynically comments on the constitution of toxic social structures. In doing so, he touches upon migrant politics, human rights violation, the climate crisis, the patriarchy, power holders, abuses of all kinds, the cruelty inflicted on animal species by humans, environmental issues, etc.

The exhibition at the Ivan Grohar Gallery features a selection of works from Mito Gegič's series titled *You Are the Provider. With a Stolen Voice.*, which also serves as the title of the exhibition. The exhibited works are formally related to his previous series, they are, however, different. A special feature of the presented artworks is that this particular time Gegič pairs the scenes with attributes of hunting (hunted deer displayed in a show-offy way), supervision (a hunting blind) and male toxicity (weapons) from the local environment with the theme of pandemic in a global context. An example of this is the painting

Carnival II, created in 2023, which shows preparations for the incineration of pig carcasses infected with the African swine fever virus (G4), which is believed to be highly contagious for humans.

The difference between Gegič's earlier works and the more recent ones lies in the introduction of new iconographic elements and the painterly approach, however, regardless of format, all the works all stunningly monumental. At the same time, Gegič also does some controlled experimentation and introduces a new collaging strategy that turns his (hitherto) typical reinterpretation of digital images upside down. New characteristics of Gegič's artistic practice are noticeable in both the content and his painting style, marked by transitions from a restrained monochromatic palette to areas with bold, almost fluorescent colours. The contrast between the whiteness of the basic support (the canvas) and the strips of masking tape (this time relegated to the background) is less pronounced compared to his earlier series, the surface dichotomy is toned down, and the light-coloured fields are filled with relaxed strokes in shades of turquoise, pink, yellow and red pop-artistic colours. As a rule, the latter, should previously have been foreign to Gegič's 'hunting' art. Two fine examples of the change in the artist's approach are the large-format paintings *You Are Trapped on Earth so Your Dicks Will Explode* and *Savour Kindness Because Dicks Are Always Possible Later I*, painted in 2023.

Mito Gegič fills the painting field with a variety of structures and sharp contrasts between the tape and the acrylic layers. The contours blur and merge with the background, the depictions turning into emanations of an atmospheric flickering of intertwining impressions. The listed characteristics of the painter's way of layering and choice of subject matter are not at odds with his previous works; in fact, they enhance and complement them. Gegič used a surface interplay of vertically (and

(sometimes horizontally) placed strips and figures, which merge from the background into the foreground density, to create a dynamic structural stranding, and along with it a "grid-like" tension of the painting field (the painting *Prime Time*, 2023). The strips function as cruel incisions or as "furrows of truth", adding a moment of coincidence, sharpness and suspense to the poetic painterly interpretation of structural violence.

With the seemingly enigmatic exhibition title *You Are the Provider. With a Stolen Voice.*, Mito Gegič allegorically presents a symptomatic state that is strongly present in contemporary society on a number of levels. It is based on an unshakeable authority represented by the figure of the "father" – the master, the ruler, the sovereign", i.e. the one person who is at the very top of the pyramidal structure of patriarchal society (at the systemic level). Gegič ironically reveals him through a blood-red screen, showing him with his legs man-spread in a harlequin pose in the smaller depiction titled *My Father My King*, which represents the culmination of the exhibited set of paintings. The provider is in a dominant position as the holder of power – economic, political, physical, psychological power etc. The artist holds up a mirror to the "master", who can easily be applied from the family intimacy to the level of the state, the state apparatus, the authorities and the repressive governmental organs; using subjects and scenes from the hunting culture, violence and horror in general, he holds up a mirror to him, asking him questions that remain unanswered. The master gives no answer, his voice has been stolen. He does not respond. The personality of the one who feeds, provides and makes decisions is ambivalent. This raises the question of whether a positive alternative to the existing imposed, often morally questionable authorities in the field of the family as the basic unit of society, politics, economy and religion is even possible. In Gegič's new series, the depicted hunting attributes

naturally "spill over" into scenes of actual animal abuse, chaos, violent masculinity and domination as a consequence of traditionally "unhealthy" cultural patterns from the past.

The exhibition *You Are the Provider. With a Stolen Voice.* by the visual artist Mito Gegič is a fine example of socially engaged art with a strong social and societal focus, which shocks us, making us think critically about the dark sides of the structure of the contemporary world. It uncovers our own situation and urges us to assume responsibility for it.

Mito Gegič (1982) graduated from the Ptuj Grammar School in 2002 and enrolled in the Department of Painting at the University of Ljubljana's Academy of Fine Arts with Prof Emerik Bernard as his mentor. In 2006, he attended the Department of New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb through the CEEPUS student exchange programme. In 2008, he graduated with a bachelor thesis titled *The Edge and the Field of Power* with Prof Herman Gvardjančič as his mentor and Zmago Lenárdič as the co-mentor. In 2016, Gegič completed his postgraduate painting studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana under the mentorship of Zmago Lenárdič with the title *The Captured Image*. He has exhibited at numerous exhibition venues in Slovenia and in other countries, including India. He also works in film, graphic design and is the co-creator of the O.B.O.D. genre podcast. He lives and works in Škofja Loka.