

Accompanying programme:

Thursday, 8 May 2024, at 16:00.

A guided tour of the exhibition with the curator and artist

27. 3.–19. 5. 2024

Galerija Ivana Groharja
Ivan Grohar Gallery

Kustos / Curator: Boštjan Soklič

Vesna Bukovec

A DIFFERENT WORLD IS POSSIBLE



Exhibition Colophon:
Vesna Bukovec A DIFFERENT WORLD IS POSSIBLE

27 March – 19 May 2024
Ivan Grohar Gallery
Škofja Loka Museum

Represented by: Aleksandra Saša Nabergoj
Curator: Boštjan Soklič
Design: Žan Kobal
Proofreading: Ana Kodelja
English translation: Mateja Žuraj
Technical team: Vida Grah, Boris Krajnc



Vesna Bukovec is a contemporary visual artist who uses a variety of artistic media, her most common mode of expression, however, are video and drawing. Her work critically responds to contemporary issues and comments on various socio-political situations we face on a daily basis, i.e. the all-encompassing neoliberal ideology, the current political climate in Slovenia and around the world, the role of women in contemporary society, refugee crises, the violation of human rights, the climate crisis etc. At the Ivan Grohar Gallery, she presents a selection of her characteristic drawings with texts that not only chronicle the turbulent events in society, but also convey clear and direct activist messages. Vesna Bukovec's depictions encompass her reflections on and ruminations about interpersonal relationships, and above all, they speak of human indifference towards fellow human beings, animals and nature, and the individuals' preoccupation with their own life in the contemporary consumerist world. The artist rejects the negative content we are bombarded with by mass media, replacing it with positive one. Thus, she gives us hope for a different future: a world without hatred, corruption and social differences. As a mirror to society, the depictions reflect the artist's desire and need for empathy, cooperation and understanding.

The exhibition, which was first presented at the Domžale Gallery in December 2023, is dominated by seemingly simple drawings based on photographs found either on the internet or in newspapers, which have become ingrained in our consciousness thanks to the media. As part of her creative process, the artist modifies them by first using a photograph as a basis for a drawing made with ink or a digital brush on a tablet, and then, by changing the depicted subject and adding writing, she transforms the meaning of the original image, adapting it to her own content. Vesna Bukovec's drawings are simplified, yet dynamic and compositionally solid. The message they convey is a mixture of classical drawing expressions and textual fragments, words, reflections and quotations. All the drawings are accompanied by captions with explanations, which are an important component for understanding the situations depicted. The artist's

process is focused on placing a familiar basis – most often this is a constructed photograph, e.g. a key image of certain events, such as the bicycle protests in Slovenia, demonstrations or shocking scenes from refugees' journeys in real space and time – in a new context.

Three projects are on view in the first gallery room: *Solidarity*, *A World Without Borders* and *A Different World Is Possible*. *Solidarity*, created in 2023, is a print of a digital drawing made for the identically-titled exhibition at the raum AU gallery in Slovenj Gradec to mark the end of the research focused on the archive of the artistic practice of the well-known Italian conceptual artist Pino Poggi. The work makes us think about the meaning of solidarity, which is a fundamental value of the welfare state. Vesna Bukovec reflects on the support among people in this day and age, on mutual help and collective action that benefits individuals and the community at large.

A World Without Borders, created in 2021, is a whole composed of nine ink drawings. The project was started at the invitation of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška as part of the regional project titled *Carinthia 100 Years Later* on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Carinthian Plebiscite. Vesna Bukovec used a postcard to ask people the following question: *What would be different in your life (in the past, present or future) if national borders did not exist?* The messages she received, her own research and contemplation about a different and above all fairer society served as a basis for the work that covers various areas, i.e. freedom of movement, respect for the freedom of others, abolition of the military and the police, caring for nature etc.

A Different World Is Possible is a digital drawing from 2021, which shows young protesters demanding a more solidarity-based society focused on climate justice and respect for human rights. The English version of the drawing was made for the cover of the book *Re-Activating Critical Thinking in the Midst of Necropolitical Realities: For Radical Change* (eds. Marina Gržinić, Jovita

Pristovšek, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022).

In the second gallery room, Vesna Bukovec presents three of her projects, namely *The Heritage*, *In Search of Freedom* (Ecce Homo) and *Local Racisms*.

The Heritage is a series of eleven digital A3 drawings, an intimate story about an important history segment of the artist's family, which was involved in the turbulent pre-WWII events related to the labour movement and the 1935 strike at the paper factory in Količevo. Vesna Bukovec's grandfather and grandmother took active part in the strike. The work commemorates the legacy of the organisation of workers and is a tribute to her ancestors and an appeal for people to come together in solidarity for a better world.

In Search of Freedom (Ecce Homo) is the oldest work on view at the Ivan Grohar Gallery. It was created in 2016 in the silkscreen and lithography studio at the MGLC in Ljubljana. It is a selection of three prints and stories from a print portfolio consisting of five silkscreens and five digitally printed stories, conceived as illustrations accompanying the stories by Widad Tamimi, a Ljubljana-based Italian writer of Israeli-Palestinian descent. The aim of the stories paired with the illustrations was to show and make people familiar with the plight of the people on the refugee route that passes through Slovenia, among other countries, and thus tackle the politically-motivated negative perceptions and fear of foreigners that have been spreading through social media and networking sites. The stories and drawings were published weekly from January to April 2016 in the print and online editions of the *Delo* newspaper under the joint title *I Am a Refugee*.

The exhibition concept is rounded off by the 2024 video titled *Local Racisms*, which deals with the pervasiveness of racism in contemporary society. Vesna Bukovec highlights the close links between racism and nationalism, which is based on the glorification of the "true" nation, various minorities and the exclusion of all others, supported by politics and capital.

The video consists of the drawings created on the initiative of the City of Women for the poster campaign and promotion of the 28th International Festival of Contemporary Arts – City of Women.

Visual artist Vesna Bukovec constantly ponders how to change the way we think and act. She ruminates about change and the ways to work towards a better future. She is capable and confident in her actions, which are imbued with a strong social and societal focus – she expresses her concern about injustice clearly, passionately and in a very personal way. She does not hide her political convictions; in fact, she expresses them in a transparent and upright manner, while establishing a dialogue with the viewers. Her art is rooted in a critical practice that exposes the negative aspects of the social environment or reality, uncovering hidden mechanisms and suggesting possible alternative models. Her practice takes place within the framework of contemporary art that constantly questions its foundations, its mission and the role artists occupy in it.

VESNA BUKOVEC (1977) obtained her BA and MA degrees in sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. She is a socially critical artist who expresses herself in a variety of media, with drawing and video being her main focus. She has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions in Slovenia and elsewhere. She is also active works in the fields of graphic design and video art curation. Since 2015, she has collaborated with the DIVA Station, video, film and new-media art archives at the SCCA-Ljubljana as an associate professional.