

More And More Thoughts About Other Thoughts

Driton Selmani

Curated by Lora Sariaslan

26 September—19 October 2019

U10 Art Space, Belgrade

The solo exhibition of the multivalent Kosovo-born and based artist Driton Selmani focuses on the dominant role of humor, questioning its capacity as a tool to magnify the meaning of the (un) familiar. Elemental, human, and yet at times difficult to analyze, humor is an entry point into diverse cultures and a strategy to survive within it. We see how in Selmani's work humor works as a captivating mode of expression, transitional and (trans) national cultural product, and topic for discussion, despite its levity. In spite of its 'lightness' humor is indeed a complex topic, and this exhibition presents it as a means of identity negotiations and queries how humor shapes the artistic language and production of Selmani. What makes humor active is that it is not a one-sided action, but a dialogue not only initiated by (in this case) the artist but also relies on the viewer, resulting (in successful examples) in an active, immersive, and provocative dialogue and discourse. What Selmani does is to create an engaged and engaging dialogue.

Humor surprises and grabs our attention, and that is precisely why artists employ it... and what better place to start but the self. In "They say you can't hold two watermelons in one hand", Selmani challenges both himself and an old Albanian saying implying one's inability to be in two places at the same time as he creates a self-portrait.

The ordinary takes on a fresh meaning through the creative improvisation of the artist as the banal and environmentally hazardous plastic bags turn into a humble platform for genuine thought sharing. And delivery trucks do not deliver goods, but the distilled and minimalistic brainy quotes of Selmani.

In "Lorem ipsum", the placeholder text commonly used in the graphic, print, and publishing industries for visual mockups Selmani shuffles the purpose of the two words to turn them into the most vital message, a message in a bottle. Hence, the meaningless filler text morphs into a confessional or a lifesaver.

With biting irony and provocative critical attitude, Driton Selmani speaks in metaphors and allegories as he questions the certainty of existing conditions and situations, fabricated structures, and existing taboos. Conceived as a form of continuous cultural study, "More And More Thoughts About Other Thoughts" investigates the socially shifting landscape(s) both personal and public. Everyday objects and linguistic phenomena provide points of departure which end up in a diverse format ranging from personal sketches to installations, demonstrating social processes and historical links, often employing absurdity and humor. As he turns objects and situations into artistic poetry in the form of small and meaningful actions, the work subtly engages with something familiar yet alien, both here and there. Driton Selmani is a keen observer and storyteller of our times managing to put a smile on our face.

Driton Selmani

Born in Ferizaj, Kosovo in 1987. He currently works and lives between Prishtina and Doganaj. He completed his MA at The Arts University Bournemouth UK.

Selmani approaches the idea of perceived reality by deconstructing formations of social, political and cultural topics that have been embodied around him. At a young age, he was told to worship a country that no longer existed, which caused him to form a basis of skepticism towards any supposedly given reality. He later used this as a beneficial tool to reconstruct his beliefs into visual artefacts. In 1999, old simulacra have been replaced by new simulacra; the ornaments of a previous space have been refurbished in order to unfold with new meanings but also new uncertainties. Selmani confronts himself as a spectator of this "on-going event", and positions himself as an actor, enacting his performances based on his personal histories, beliefs and doubts.

He has exhibited at solo and group exhibitions in Stacion Center For Contemporary Art Prishtina, Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest, "Kunstraum Niederosterreich" Vienna, "Casa Contemporanea" São Paulo, Mediterranea Biennial 16 Ancona, U10 Belgrade, 5th Marrakesh Biennial, "Amsterdam Light Festival, Fabbrica del Vapore" Milan, Bregenz Biennale, "Ex Chiesetta" Polignano a Mare, National Art Gallery Tirana, Thessaloniki Center of Contemporary Art, Eugster in Belgrade, "Norrköping Light" Festival, among others. www.dritonselmani.com

Lora Sariaslan

Art Historian & Curator—Lora Sariaslan was curator at Istanbul Modern (2005-2011) in Turkey and prior to that was assistant curator at the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas, USA (2001-2005). She has curated exhibitions internationally. Selected exhibitions curated/ co-curated include "World and Dreams of Salvador Dalí" Dallas Museum of Art (2004); "Before Impressionism: French 19th-Century Art at the Dallas Museum of Art", Dallas Museum of Art (2005); "Ryan Trecartin: Any Ever" Istanbul Modern (2011), "Life in the UK/ Balance of Probabilities" as part of the 2nd Asia Triennial Manchester, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2011); 2nd Mardin Biennial: "Double Take", Mardin (2012), "This yearning is ours!" Center of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu, Torun, Poland (2016), "What We Forget", "NieuwDakota", Amsterdam (2019).

She went to Knox College, USA, where she received her B.A. in Art History and Integrated International Studies, and her M.A. in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin, USA.

She contributes to publications on modern and contemporary art as a member of AICA (International Association of Art Critics) and the National Correspondent for EMF (European Museum Forum) for Turkey.

Opening hours:

Tuesday—Saturday: 12–20h / Sunday & Monday: closed

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