

# Marijan Mirt

## THE ABDUCTION OF EUROPA

5 May–3 June 2023  
MMC KIBLA / KiBela

### Hedonistically lobotomized

The visual language of this year's Glazer Charter laureate, **Marijan Mirt**, is unique and recognizable, looking at the present with traditional methods, quoting ancient art, combining traditional techniques and materials of visual art with contemporary ones, reflecting reality in the face of social and existential circumstances, thematizing and often bringing irony to current events, thus announcing the future of humanity, which of course depends on its own actions. For his sculptures he often uses a clay model that he improves using 3D printing, to which he then adds certain elements, colors or found objects (objet trouvé).

The survey exhibition with the significant title **The Abduction of Europa** spans exactly this arc: the myth of Europa is probably of Cretan origin, since the cult of the bull was prominent in Cretan (Minoan) culture. Europa, in Greek mythology the daughter of the Phoenician king Agenor and the sister of Cadmus, was the mother of the Cretan king Minos, who after his death became judge in Hades.

Europa was gathering flowers in the meadow with her friends when Zeus (Jupiter to the Romans) noticed her and fell in love with her. In order to approach the girl, he transformed himself into a bull. Europa was afraid of the bull at first, but when she realised that the animal was tame, she climbed on its back. Zeus took the opportunity and kidnapped the girl, carried her across the sea, left her on the island of Crete and moved away. Then he transformed himself into a charming young man, pretended to be the ruler of Crete and promised Europa protection if she would make him happy by becoming his. The maiden submitted to the young man. The next morning, while Europa was brooding over her lost virginity, Aphrodite appeared to her and told her that she had been abducted by Zeus and that the foreign part of the world on which she had landed would henceforth be called Europa.

Europa's father Agenor was the son of Poseidon and the Egyptian goddess Libya and king of Tyre. Besides his daughter, he had three sons: Cadmus, Phoenix, and Cilix. After the kidnapping of Europa, he ordered his sons to search for their sister. After an unsuccessful search, none of them returned home. The most important of the brothers was Cadmus, who founded the city of Thebes and introduced the Phoenician alphabet, Phoenix founded Phoenicia, and Cilix founded Cilicia.

But Europa's son Minos was also once deceived by a white bull. The king of Crete found the bull, which came out of the sea, so beautiful that he did not sacrifice it to the god Poseidon, but kept it for himself. Poseidon took revenge on Minos by making his wife fall in love with a bull and beget the Minotaur, who was half bull and half man...

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Marijan Mirt  
The Abduction of Europa  
5 May–3 June 2023

MMC KIBLA / KiBela, Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor  
Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The Cretan queen Europa is first mentioned by the ancient Greek poet Homer (he probably lived in Asia Minor in the 8th century B.C.) in the Iliad; the Roman poet Horace (65-8 B.C.) also tells of Europa in his Odes. Among the poetic adaptations of the myth, the most famous in antiquity is Moschus's epyllion Europa, written around 150 B.C. The Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso (43-17 B.C.) probably also drew on it when he wrote his Metamorphoses.

The Roman writer, scholar, and military commander Pliny the Elder (23-79) also wrote about Europa – in the gigantic work *Naturalis Historia* (Natural History), a collection of some 40,000 elaborated concepts in 37 books, published in 77 A.D. and considered a complete summary of ancient knowledge about the world. However, Pliny also drew on the knowledge of his predecessors – he mentions that there is said to have been a plane tree on Crete that never loses its leaves and that, according to the belief of the people, Zeus and Europa mated under this tree.

In the Middle Ages, the image of Europa and Zeus was often interpreted as the soul taken up to heaven by Christ. Moreover, in the Renaissance, Baroque and up to the present day, Europa is both a historical and mythological figure, as well as a literary, dramatic and poetic one, often depicted in theater, film and visual arts.

The artistic encoding of the state of the world, and in particular of man and the individual as such, is immanent in the work of Marijan Mirt. In his animal images, hybrids, perhaps clones, he emphasizes the anthropological and psychological dimensions, drawing from the mythological as well as the historical heritage. He brings together the various layers of his thinking and seeing into a unified narrative in which the real intertwines with the metaphorical, while, as befits his perceptions and insights, he builds up the present with ancient metaphors and allegories, emphasizing his humanistic outlook and holding up a mirror to mankind. Through artistic procedures, humans are transformed into animals (association with Odysseus and the sorceress Circe), and the animals take on human attributes in the role of the author's artistic expression and find themselves in the role of interpreter of "our" world, our history and mythology in the current context.

Although the sculptures appear humorous, there is a sense of fatalism and even catastrophe in them, but also an engaged critique of life and being that blurs the boundaries not only between people, but also between people and animals, as if to add – the anthropomorphic is zoomorphic, everything is in flux, people are animals, beasts, and we are all one big community.

The wild boar or sow (I use both names for a balanced gender representation) lying on the mattress is a metaphor for Europa and Zeus; the abducted Europa as the wild sow and the mattress as Zeus or the bull. If we take what we think about the myth and apply it to the present, all sorts of associations with our lives as we share them today are evoked. Europa is kidnapped and happily relaxes like a pig in the mud, perhaps sleeping the sleep of the righteous, as after a job well done or a hearty meal. She is surrounded by a Herd of boars that can serve as her protection but also as a mere pack going about their regular routine: looking for prey, continuing their crusade, the bulk of the pack has moved on and will soon leave the lying relative behind. We probably don't have to think long to find a number of associations with the world today and the events we're experiencing. The pandemic we have (temporarily) survived has led to wars all over the world for which the members of the NATO pact are/were "responsible" because they either initiated them and are directly involved in them or provoked them and thus caused them.

Europe has been hijacked for a long, long time. Not years, but decades – at least. But in recent years it has become obvious how the interplay of power, mainstream media, and capital manipulates us. The inventor and creator of fascism, Benito Mussolini, defined fascism as a

cocktail of politics and corporations, with the media on board to get the job done. Do you think it's a coincidence that the world turns in such a way that we stumble from one crisis to the next and never get out of it? We sleep ... on, disinterested in what is happening around us, not caring about the causes or the effects, but only about our own gratification and the satisfaction of our own needs. Hedonistically lobotomized. We quietly enjoy ourselves without knowing that we have been kidnapped, that our being has been taken from us and our brains have been consumed.

The other meaning, derived from the adjective *europos*, consists of the roots of the compound *eur-* (broad) and *opt-* (eye). It is believed that the Greeks used the name Europe and its original meaning "wide" to refer to a vast, expansive continent and later to the European area as opposed to Asia and Africa. Considering this additional meaning, we come across the designation »wide« - when not only is our continent shrinking and our living space narrowing, but our broad civilizational view is narrowing, diminishing our intellectual power and dulling our ability to reflect on reality. We are a happy pig whose goal in life is achieved when it can lie down on its mattress like a full, satisfied and exhausted animal that has devoured the last morsel of humanity for its own pleasure.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

## BIOGRAPHY

Webpage



**Marijan Mirt** was born in Zagreb in 1975. He graduated from the School of Applied Arts and Design in Zagreb, Department of Sculpture. In 2000 he moved to Maribor. In 2009, he completed his master's degree at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb with professors Miro Vuc and Robert Emil Tanay. He is the author of several public sculptures in the country and abroad. He has prepared more than twenty solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions. He is a member of DLUM, ZDSLJ and ULUPUH. He exhibits independently and in groups at home and abroad. He has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Rihard Jakopič Award in 2020 and the Glazer Charter in 2023, the Gold Medal for Sculpture at the Salon des Beaux Arts (Carrousel du Louvre, Paris, 2017) and at the Orangerie in the Palais de Luxembourg in 2022, and the Maribor Fine Artists Society's award four times in 2013, 2017, 2018 and 2019. He works with sculpture, painting, computer design, photography and in art education. He lives and works in Maribor.