

Borut Popenko: Prelomi / Breaks

15 March–3 April 2019

artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor

After debuting in Črnomelj in June 2018, the series Prelomi (Breaks) is now showing in Maribor. Formats vary, sizes become smaller or larger; new paintings and modes of presentation arise and connect into a spatial installation; colors are added, pictorial fields are placed in dialogs, the painted surfaces come alive. Popenko's peculiar work in progress is built on a solid concept, which is enhanced through the power of visual language, and re-defined each time with each new exhibition space. Visitors are therefore able to experience a unique setup, visible only now and only here, with the possibility of following the course of future editions, which the artist plans to install in other venues.

The presented works from his most recent creative period are related to the exploration and continuation of a series of paintings dealing with illusory folds, or breaks, in the two-dimensional surface.

Through a minimum painting intervention, Borut Popenko inscribes his illusions of the space onto shaped canvases, using subtly premeditated color compositions to create an enigmatic appearance of his paintings, which thus become virtual objects of illusory and imaginary spaces.

For the occasion of Popenko's debut exhibition in Črnomelj, fellow painter Robert Lozar wrote that: "... looking at his paintings we might ask ourselves, what is really breaking here: is it the paintings, the space surrounding them, or perhaps ourselves? Most likely, all at once."

If we consider the works from the perspective of three-dimensional space, their geometric minimalism, the orthogonality of form and the reduction of basic visual elements to color and surface, it seems as though the artist is outlining a map of our perceptions of space and the sensuality of apperception, which establish an autochthonous and autonomous *modus vivendi*. With regard to etymology, geometry can be understood as *geo-metron*, the measurement of earth, implying the boundaries of our spaces, delineated by surfaces and defined by individual elements (visual or meritory), such as alternating strokes, linear and surface arrangements and the interplay of the proportions between them, testing colors and layers, exploring hues, shades, tones, searching for the right proportion and assembling the whole into a kind of *arte povera*, whereby 'poor' refers to the elemental composition of structures, internal and external.

Perhaps these processes (at the other side of the spectrum, of course) evoke the memory of the painting oeuvre of Jože Slak Đoka: his works are natural, anthropomorphic, of random forms, as taken from nature and assembled into paintings, whereas Popenko simplifies and minimalizes these relations, and intervenes in them in an almost mathematical manner, pieces them together and demystifies them. Nature can exist in the form of human creation. We take from nature, in order to make something. Rationally and subtly. With sensitivity. An intimate emotion percolates these tiny elements, which are compounded to constitute the painting, to become a mirror, teeming with energy and opening up the expanse of the inner self.

The minuteness of surfaces and colors, through which Borut Popenko guides us across his paintings, is a candid invitation for us to enter these spaces, discover them as a peculiar *modus operandi*, and through them, try to understand ourselves. We may even succeed.

Maribor-based artist **Borut Popenko** works with painting, spatial installations and video art. He is an active contributor to the contemporary art scene in Maribor, working, among other, as part of the local cultural center Pekarna magdalenske mreže. After obtaining his BA degree in Fine Arts Education from the Faculty of Education in Maribor, he continued his studies abroad, first at the Hochschule für Kunst und Design in Halle, Germany (1995–1997, specialization in painting), and later as a scholarship holder of the Greek government at the Athens School of Fine Arts (1998–1999), and finally as a scholarship holder at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (2001). Since 1998 he works as a self-employed person in the field of culture. Apart from numerous exhibitions home and abroad, he participated in several art residencies and colonies, in Slovenia and elsewhere in Europe.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

(translated by Helena Fošnjar)

Borut Popenko: Prelomi / Breaks

Opening on Friday, 15 March 2019, at 7 p. m.

Breakfast with the artist on Saturday. 16 March 2019, at 10 a. m.

On display until 3 April 2019.

Production: Association for contemporary art X-OP

artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor, Slovenia

Tuesday–Friday: 10.00–13.00 and 17.00–19.00, Saturday 10.00–13.00