



Mitja Ficko

# TIGROVA MAST

Tiger Balm

Galerija Krško,  
25. oktober 2024—15. februar 2025



Med zgoraj in spodaj, tempera, olje na platno /  
*Between Above and Below, tempera, oil on canvas,*  
2024, 155 x 130 cm

## ***Pikanten balzam za zdolgočasene oči***

Maša Žekš

Mitja Ficko je slikar srednje generacije, ki je na domačih tleh dodobra poznan predvsem po svojih monumentalnih atmosferičnih slikah, ki skozi njegovo lastno izražanje občutenj in slikarsko kilometrino prosejajo nabor izvirnih vizualnih metafor. Svoje podobe, zdaj bolj abstraktne, spet drugič bolj figuralno določljive, gradi z nenehnim perspektivnim poigravanjem in subtilnim prehajanjem med ambivalentnim narativom in suverenim nagovorom, ki je včasih zgolj oblikovno določljiv, nasičen z barvami, oblikami, vzorci ali teksturo. Postopno, s plastenjem in domiselnim konstruiranjem, slikar gradi razgibane privlačne svetove, ki posrkajo v čuten mističen svet in gledalca povabijo k lastni, neobremenjeni, tudi drzni interpretaciji.

Razstava *Tigrova mast* vsebuje slikarska dela večjih formatov, ki so v Leipzigu nastajala v letu 2024. Zaznamujejo jih za avtorja značilna razgibanost, drzna kompozicija in nedoločljiva vsebina, ki na prvi pogled pritiče prikupni, z ognjevitimi barvami ožarčeni fantaziji. Živahne, ponekod skorajda strupene barve se v labirintu prepletenih organskih oblik razgaljajo kot hitro prepoznavni motivi iz živalskega in rastlinskega sveta. Razbrati je mogoče razsejano krdelo strupenih mušnic, pronicljive cifraste oblačke, leve, zvezde, tulipane in prepleten kvartir radovednih lisic. Dopolnjujejo jih geometrijske oblike, nenehni prehodi in zavozlan prostor, ki v slikah povzroči občutek zamaknjenosti, vizualne blodnje ali senzacijo digitalne napake. V prostorski preplet perspektiv je integrirana množica neskončnih majhnih vzorcev, kot so pikice, puščice, zvezdice, nedoločljivi znaki in napisi. Ti še dodatno – na komplementaren način – potencirajo že obstoječe motive na slikah; pasovi pikic denimo preplavijo mušnice, ki se v razploščeni obliki ponovijo pri kockastih lisicah. V spremstvu avtorju ljubih zavitih oblakov, stiliziranega drevja in mavric tokratna sveža produkcija ostaja še naprej igriva, izrazito zoomorfna in polna presenečenj.

Izvirne skice za nekatera dela nastanejo digitalno. Avtor posamezne abstraktne podobe prek asociacij in na račun boljše orientacije primarno snuje s pomočjo računalniške tablice in programov. Ti mu omogočajo postopno vračanje k prvotnemu motivu in oblikam, ki jih lahko na kasnejših slikah ponovno uporabi, prilagodi in stalno nadgrajuje. Na podlagi določenih vizualnih izhodišč lahko posamezne variacije slik vedno znova oživi in prenese na dejansko platno. To je še posebej prikladno pri ugotavljanju različnih zmožnosti prepletanja kompozicij in sopostavljanja pri slikah, ki so si na neki način podobne ali pa izhajajo iz podobnega oblikovnega počela. Kljub temu se nekatera dela – v oziru do narave medija in avtorjevega razumevanja slikarstva – dokončno oblikujejo v procesu samega slikanja, pri katerem v glavnem kraljuje prosta igra formacij, prepletov in nepričakovanih preobratov. Ta princip dela po svoje povzema avtorjevo siceršnjo dolgoletno prakso; vnovično vračanje k prejšnjim delom in motivom, nenehna vaja ter dopuščanje slikam, da se preprosto zgodijo. V tem kreativnem procesu in nenehnem iskanju iznajdbe slike je posredi tudi neizogibno sprejetje dejstva, da le-te včasih zaidejo s poti ali se celo popolnoma izgubijo.

Posamezne slike izhajajo iz specifičnih otroških zlagank, kock oz. sestavljanek, pri čemer se v ospredje preriva koncept postopnega rušenja in ponavljajočega se sestavljanja na prvi pogled preprostih, stiliziranih podob. Navdih, ki je med drugim posledica avtorjevih življenjskih okoliščin, manipuliranje z omenjenimi kockami manifestira v slikarskih delih, kjer se fragmentirani prizori venomer spodmikajo, izmikajo, množijo, rušijo, zopet zgradijo, tudi opustijo ali izničijo; zaznamuje jih odmikanje od prvotnega motiva, ki je gledalcu sicer jasen in hipoma prepoznaven, a še vedno dovolj konfuzen in v svoji slikarski naravi dekonstruktiven, da ostaja zanimiv in očesu dražljiv. Te zložene in premetene delčke podob v kombinaciji s pravokotnimi kompozicijskimi razkoli avtor pregiba po namišljenih robovih, prek katerih spaja različne podporne ornamente; bodisi so to kontrastni barvni preseki, elegantne povezovalne linije, pas miniaturnih geometrijskih teles bodisi detajli stiliziranih kosov sadja in zvezdic, pa vse do detajla skritih hčerkinih nožic (na katere copatih je upodobljen samorog) in celo že obstoječih kongruentnih umetniških del. Slednji maneuver opazovanje slik pretvori v igro primerjalnega pogleda, pri čemer se hitro razkrije avtorjev ponavljajoči se način ustvarjanja, kjer je vsaka nova slika povezana s svojo predhodnico.



Barjanska zlaganka, olje na platno /  
Marsh Puzzle, oil on canvas,  
2024, 155 x 130 cm





K neobremenjenemu duhu in sproščujočemu vzdušju predstavljene serije pripomore tudi izbrani naslov razstave. Po eni strani se nanaša na posamezne motive divjih zveri, ki v sferi oranžne brkate zvitorepe beštijade odigrajo namišljeno vlogo naključnega protagonista. Po drugi strani apelira na vizualne zaznave in občutke, ki so zaradi napol porušenih, a funkcionalnih ter estetsko zadovoljivih slik pogosto nenavadni, a prijetni hkrati; podobno kot dotično mazilo lahko pečejo, skelijo, a delujejo nasladno, blagodejno. Ideja tigrove masti je posredno v skladu s ščepcem orientalizma in nasičenostjo učinkovin, ki v kontekstu izboljševanja psihofizičnih stanj preči mejo duhovnega. V prostorih desakraliziranega objekta v kombinaciji s hudomušnimi gobami nastopa kot nabrit namig k novodobnosti; pozitivno potovanje preplavijo vizualno prepleteni svetovi, čuteči prividi, leteči tigri, zamotane gozdne živali, neskončno vesolje, pomnoženo vzorčenje in oblikovna neskladnost. Kljub temu posamezni motivi niso zavezujoči in gledalcu omogočijo samostojno, neodvisno izkušnjo razumevanja in čutenja slik. Mitja Ficka v njegovi neobremenjenosti glede interpretacije namreč zanima predvsem to, do kolikšne mere jih lahko denaturalizira, kje je meja okusne polabstraktne prepoznavnosti, koliko jih še lahko fragmentarno premeče, celo popači in spremeni. Ob vsem tem pa (ne)zavestno ohranja igrivost in svobodomiseln pristop, ki sliki omogoča, da se kot samostojna intenzivno poraja, mestoma razdraži in peče v oči.

## *A Fiery Salve for Bored Eyes*

Maša Žekš

Mitja Ficko is a painter of the middle generation, who is best known on the local scene for his monumental, atmospheric paintings that emanate a range of original visual metaphors through his own expression of emotion and painterly mileage. His images, sometimes more abstract, then again more figuratively definable, are built up by the painter through a constant play with perspective and a subtle alternation between an ambivalent narrative and a confident address, sometimes only formally definable, saturated with colours, shapes, patterns or textures. Gradually, through layering and imaginative construction, the painter builds up dynamic, captivating worlds that draw the viewer into a sensual, mystical world and invite them to make their own unburdened, even daring interpretations.

The exhibition *Tiger Balm* comprises large-format paintings created in Leipzig in 2024. They are marked by the artist's characteristic dynamism, bold composition and indefinable content, which at first glance belongs to an endearing fantasy irradiated with fiery colours. In a labyrinth of intertwining organic forms, vivid, sometimes almost toxic, colours reveal themselves as unmistakable motifs from the animal and plant kingdom. It is possible to decipher a scattered pack of poisonous toadstools, insightful fancy little clouds, lions, stars, tulips and an intertwined crib of curious foxes. They are supplemented by geometric shapes, constant transitions and a knotted space that gives the paintings a sense of displacement, visual illusion or sensation of a digital error. The spatial interplay of perspectives integrates a multitude of infinite small patterns such as dots, arrows, asterisks, indefinable signs and inscriptions. These additionally potentiate – in a complementary way – the motifs already present in the paintings. For example, bands of dots inundate the toadstools, which are repeated in flattened form in the cuboid foxes. Accompanied by the artist's favoured rippling clouds, stylised trees and rainbows, this new production remains playful, decidedly zoomorphic and full of surprises.





**Konec dneva**, grafika, riso print /  
*End of the Day*, graphic print, riso print,  
2024, dimenzije papirja / *paper size* 42 x 30 cm



Veliki rdeči tulipan in samorog, tempera, olje na platno /  
*Big Red Tulip and Unicorn, tempera, oil on canvas,*  
2024, 205 x 180 cm

The original sketches for some works are created digitally. Using a computer tablet and software, the artist begins with abstract images formed through associative processes for better orientation. These tools enable him to revisit original motifs and forms, which he can reuse, adapt and continuously develop in later paintings. Based on specific visual starting points, he repeatedly breathes new life into individual variations of the works, ultimately transferring them onto the physical canvas. This is particularly useful in recognising various compositional and juxtapositional possibilities of paintings that are in some way similar or based on a similar formal conception. Nevertheless, some works – in view of the nature of the medium and the artist's understanding of painting – only take on their final form in the process of painting itself, where the free play of formations, interweavings and unexpected twists reigns. This principle of working in a way summarises the artist's longstanding work ethic; the revisiting of earlier works and motifs, constant practice and simply letting the paintings happen. In this creative process and the constant search for the invention of the painting, it must also be accepted that they sometimes go astray or even get lost altogether.

The individual paintings are derived from certain children's puzzles, cubes or jigsaws, with the concept of gradual demolition and repeated reassembly of seemingly simple, stylised images pushing to the forefront. Inspired in part by the artist's life circumstances, the manipulation of the mentioned cubes manifests itself in the paintings, in which fragmented scenes are constantly being drawn away, bypassed, duplicated, demolished, rebuilt, even abandoned or destroyed. They are marked by a deviation from the original motif that, while clear and immediately recognisable to the viewer, is nevertheless sufficiently convoluted and deconstructive in its painterly nature to remain interesting and alluring to the eye. These stacked and ingenious pictorial sections, combined with rectangular compositional columns, are folded by the artist around imaginary edges over which he fuses various supporting ornaments; be it contrasting colour cross-sections, elegant connecting lines, a band of miniature geometric bodies or details of stylised pieces of fruit and stars, or even a detail of his daughter's hidden feet (whose slippers sport a unicorn), and even pre-existing congruent artworks. The latter manoeuvre turns the viewing of the paintings into a game of a comparative gaze and quickly reveals the artist's repetitive way of creating, in which each new painting is linked to its predecessor.

The title of the exhibition also contributes to the unburdened spirit and relaxed atmosphere of the series. On the one hand, it refers to the individual motifs of the wild beasts that play an imaginary role of the accidental protagonist in the realm of an orange-hued, whiskered and tail-twisted animalistic frenzy. On the other hand, it appeals to visual perceptions and sensations that are often odd and agreeable at the same time thanks to the half-demolished yet functional and aesthetically satisfying images; like a touch of the ointment in question, they can burn and sting, but also have a delectable and beneficent effect. The idea of tiger balm implicitly corresponds to a pinch of orientalism and saturation with active ingredients that crosses the line into the spiritual in terms of mental and physical states. In the spaces of the desacralised building, in combination with the roguish mushrooms, it appears as an impish allusion to a new age; the positive journey is flooded by visually intricate worlds, sentient apparitions, flying tigers, entwined forest animals, infinite space, multiplied patterning and considered incoherence. Nevertheless, the individual motifs are not binding and allow the viewer an independent, autonomous experience in understanding and feeling the paintings. In his unburdened interpretation, Mitja Ficko is primarily interested in the extent to which he can denaturalise them, where the limit of tasteful semi-abstract recognisability lies, how much he can still fragment, even distort and alter them. In doing so, he (un)consciously retains a playfulness and a liberated approach that makes the painting appear intensely independent, sometimes irritating and stinging to the eye.





**Igrišče**, grafika, riso print /  
*Playground, graphic print, riso print,*  
2024, dimenzije papirja / *paper size 42 x 30 cm*







Lisičja zlaganka I, tempera, olje na platno /  
*Fox Puzzle I, tempera, oil on canvas,*  
2024, 170 x 145 cm



## BIOGRAFIJA

**Mitja Ficko** (1973, Murska Sobota, Slovenija) je leta 1999 pod mentorstvom prof. Janeza Bernika in prof. Gustava Gnamuša diplomiral iz slikarstva in leta 2002 magistriral pri prof. Metki Krašovec na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani. Med letoma 2004 in 2024 je deloval kot samozaposleni v kulturi. Vmes je kot zunanji sodelavec poučeval na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani in leta 2018 pridobil naziv docent, od leta 2024 na tej ustanovi poučuje slikarstvo. Redno sodeluje v mednarodnem rezidenčnem programu Leipzig International Art Programme (LIA). Njegova dela so uvrščena v zbirke MG+MSUM Moderne galerije Ljubljana, Muzeja in galerij Ljubljana, Factor banke, Umetnostne galerije Maribor, Galerije Miklova hiša Ribnica, Mestne galerije Nova Gorica, Gorenje Velenje, SØR Rusche Sammlung Oelde/Berlin, Nemčija, Evropske centralne banke, Frankfurt, Nemčija, LIA Programme Leipzig, Nemčija. Živi in dela v Ljubljani.

**Maša Žekš** (1993, Ljubljana, Slovenija) je diplomirana kulturologinja Vzhodne Azije, umetnostna zgodovinarica in likovna kritičarka. Na Filozofski fakulteti v Ljubljani končuje magistrski študij na katedri za umetnostno zgodovino na temo geneze čebelje emblematike ljubljanskih operozov. Od leta 2016 je sodelavka spletne platforme Koridor, kjer piše kritike razstav, intervjuje in reportaže s področja sodobne likovne produkcije. Na isti platformi od leta 2022 deluje kot urednica redakcije Podobe. Pisala je za revije Outsider, Membrana, Dialogi in Likovne besede ter Radio Študent. Sodelovala je pri kuriranju razstav v Mestni galeriji Nova Gorica, Miklovi hiši v Ribnici, Layerjevi hiši v Kranju, Galeriji Ivana Groharja v Škofji Loki in Likovnem salonu Kočevje. Je sodelavka ljubljanske Galerije Y in galerije DobraVaga, kjer skrbi za zine arhiv in galerijsko čitalnico, ter soavtorica paraumetniškega podkasta Kritiški pose(la)dek, ki se posveča lokalni umetniški produkciji.

## Biography

**Mitja Ficko** (1973, Murska Sobota, Slovenia) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, where he completed his BA in Painting in the class of Prof. Janez Bernik and Prof. Gustav Gnamuš in 1999 and went on to complete an MA under the supervision of Prof. Metka Krašovec in 2002. Between 2004 and 2024 he worked as a freelance artist, accredited by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, during which period he also taught at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana as an external collaborator. He was nominated as Assistant Professor in 2018 and has been teaching Painting since 2024. His works can be found in the collections MG+MSUM of Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Museum and Galleries Ljubljana, Factor banka, Art Gallery Maribor, Miklova hiša Ribnica gallery, Nova Gorica City Art Gallery, Gorenje Velenje, SØR Rusche Collection Oelde/Berlin, Germany, European Central Bank, Frankfurt, Germany, LIA Programme Leipzig, Germany. He lives and works in Ljubljana.

**Maša Žekš** (1993, Ljubljana, Slovenia) is a graduate of East Asian cultural studies, an art historian and an art critic. She is completing her master's degree in the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana on the subject of the genesis of bee symbolism among the Ljubljana Operosi. Since 2016, she has contributed to the online platform Koridor, writing exhibition reviews, interviews and reports on contemporary art. In 2022, she became the editor of the Images section on the same platform. She has written for the magazines Outsider, Membrana, Dialogi, Likovne besede / Art Words and Radio Študent. She has curated exhibitions at the Nova Gorica City Art Gallery, Miklova hiša gallery in Ribnica, Layerjeva hiša in Kranj, Ivan Grohar Gallery in Škofja Loka and Likovni salon Kočevje. She is an associate at the Ljubljana Y Gallery and DobraVaga Gallery, where she manages the gallery's zine archive and reading room, and a co-author of the para-artistic podcast Kritiški pose(la)dek, dedicated to local art production.



Levo / Left: **Lisičje leto**, tempera, olje na platno /  
*The Year of the Fox*, tempera, oil on canvas,  
2024, 160 x 135 cm

Desno / Right: **Lisičja zlaganka II**, tempera, olje na platno /  
*Fox Puzzle II*, tempera, oil on canvas,  
2024, 170 x 145 cm



Rdeči tulipan, tempera, olje na platno /  
*Red Tulip, tempera, oil on canvas,*  
2024, 170 x 145 cm

# REFERENCE / References

## IZBRANE SAMOSTOJNE RAZSTAVE / Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 *Babica moje ikebane je Ikona*, Galerija Kresija, Ljubljana
- 2023 *Skok čez plot*, Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana
- 2022 *Z neba v nebo*, Mestna galerija Ljubljana (skupna dela z Markom Jakšetom)
- 2019 *Die Unfassbarkeit der Dinge*, Städtische Galerie Villingen-Schwennigen, Nemčija (z Mandy Kunze)
- 2017 *Verspätete Rückkehr*, Galerie Sechzig, Feldkirch, Avstrija  
13te Haltestelle, Kunsthalle Ravensburg, Nemčija
- 2016 *Prosim, čuti namesto mene, medtem ko me ni*, UGM Studio,  
Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Maribor  
*Potenciali, talenti in pacienti*, Obalne galerije Piran, razstavišče Monfort,  
Portorož (skupna dela z Markom Jakšetom)
- 2015 *Nazaj v votlino*, Mestna galerija Mostovi Balkana, Kragujevac, Srbija
- 2013 *Das Ende von Labyrinth*, Galerija Zink, Berlin, Nemčija
- 2011 *Zbirka SØR Rusche*, Veleposlaništvo Republike Slovenije v Berlinu,  
Nemčija
- 2009 *Mali svet*, Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana
- 2002 *Gorčično seme ali umetnost*, Galerija Equrna, Ljubljana

## IZBRANE SKUPINSKE RAZSTAVE / Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Seeing Double*, Archiv Massiv, Spinnerei, Leipzig, Nemčija
- 2019 *Čas brez nedolžnosti. Novejše slikarstvo v Sloveniji*,  
Moderna galerija Ljubljana  
*Sedimente, 10 let LIA programa (Leipzig International Art Programme)*,  
Spinnerei, Leipzig, Nemčija
- 2014 *60! PANORAMA*, Zbirka UGM, Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Maribor
- 2013 *Schöne Landschaft – Bedrohte Natur, Alte Meister im Dialog mit zeit  
genössischer Kunst: Landschaftsbilder* iz zbirke SØR Rusche Oelde/  
Berlin (*Stari mojstri v dialogu s sodobno umetnostjo*),  
Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Nemčija  
*Tierstücke* iz zbirke SØR Rusche Oelde/Berlin (Nizozemsko slikarstvo  
živalskih motivov iz 17 st. v dialogu s sodobnim slikarstvom), Museum  
Abtei Liesborn des Kreises Warendorf, Wadersloh, Nemčija
- 2012 *Changing Perspectives, 15 let zbirke Evropske centralne banke (ECB)*,  
Frankfurt, Nemčija  
*Die Sterne am Himmel über mir*, Galerija Zink, Berlin, Nemčija
- 2011 *Figuralno, figurativno, figurabilno*, razstavišče Monfort, Portorož  
(kustos Andrej Medved)



Barjanska zlaganka, olje na platno /  
Marsh Puzzle, oil on canvas,  
2024, 155 x 130 cm

**Mitja Ficko**

**TIGROVA MAST / Tiger Balm**

**Galerija Krško / Krško Gallery**

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