**Natalia Borčić, *Travel Guardians***

After the series of paintings “Dodir“ [Touch] and “Samo sa sobom“ [Just with Myself] the series “Čuvari putovanja“ [Travel Guardians] comes as the continuation of the previous ones, but also as a change and shift in the focus of the painter Natalija Borčić. All of these series are characterized by intimism, painting meditation that establishes a relationship with the outside world manifested in the internal one and corresponds to it, as well as by an individual relationship with colours and the painting surface. Borčić relates her painting motifs: the nude and antique coins, as well as amphorae that are not exhibited on this occasion, with travel. Although one could assume that travel, represented with a human body, is primarily physical in nature, it is closely related to essentially more important emotional and spiritual knowledge, which the painter visually represented with her own nude, a theme present in her previous series as well. The body is shown in an undefined space and by using much more subdued shades, almost earthy red in colour. To be able to understand one's own life path, it is equally important to be physically aware of oneself, because the body, like a temple, preserves the soul of a man's journey.

The nude, or the body and money, are the motifs that the artist unites in the role of “guardians of the energy of life“. View of the body is the view of “guardian of the soul“. The motif of money or coins she paints, objects used since ancient times, can be seen in a myriad of ways. In her grandfather's old coin chest, Borčić found an antique coin with the figure of the goddess Vesta, guardian of the hearth, which made her ponder on the relationship between the sacred and the material. In ancient times it was believed that the ferryman Charon ferried the souls over the River Styx to Hades, and the money “was used“ to pay for this service.

With its primary, money also has an antique value, the value of time, and without the component of time travel makes no sense. Money has always had a strong energy, but the connotation to it is often negative. One of the reasons is also that humans often abuse what they should use in moderation: the body or treasure in amphorae ... and show no respect for their primary value – ensuring subsistence. In this sense, a moderate relationship is today an ideal, because the need for money, as well as relationship with corporeality, point to differences between people. However, by painting coins Borčić also perceives their other dimension, not primarily utilitarian, but also the visual one. She perceives them by painting their motifs, such as landscapes, plants or animals: flowers, leaves, butterflies, shells, jellyfish, octopus...or the Venus of Willendorf figurine. What particularly sets apart the motifs on the antique coins are their colours, the way they are processed in the interrelationship of vivid and subdues colours, and it seems like their forms are impressionistically vibrant, creating painterly textures to the point of materiality. It is especially impressive to observe the coins in large formats in which she slowly broke away from pure representation, which is where we notice her sensibility to colours that reveals universal forms seen in nature. Thus, even the cosmic dimension (large in small) we carry within ourselves, is partly reflected in the visual, and we become aware of it if we truly travel, seek or, in the case of Borčić, paint. Can it be found even in the motif of money?

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