

## Vampire Ball

It seems as though all promises of a better and fairer future are false, and history is betraying us once again. Therefore, the question may no longer be what the future will be like, but whether we have a future at all. Through his paintings and texts, Oštarčević offers a decomposition of a potentially decadent future; he builds the “Great Narrative” that consists of four visual-conceptual units. The ideas that feed the narrative threads are expendable, non-existent, ideas outside the classical norms. The shifts that arise from the diverse stratification of historiographical pages give us the opportunity to complement the narrative – the narrative that the work itself creates. Through his works, the artist questions what happens within our imaginary realities, and the images are so strong, so traumatic, so real that they do not exist – let us think about the monsters, the monstrous bodies that we can(not) perceive.

Known for his use of symbolism and pop culture, Oštarčević once again creates a new metaculture with his work, a new panorama where time intertwines with contemporary ideas. The conceptual starting point, presented in the style of science fiction literature, through writing, storytelling, and micro-signs, results in a visual and intellectual meditation on our future and invites us to contemplate our role in shaping the world to come.

*Vampire Ball* was created as a reference to the eponymous song by the band Saučešće and is a deconstruction of the present: a perverse dance of vanity and transience where the elite toast while the world collapses in the background. The painting is accompanied by a text about the inhabitants of our future, through which the artist speaks about environmental and political issues, scrutinizing human “values.” In this record, in which we read the testimonies of the Ball's attendees, the personal and the collective mix, and thus Oštarčević, reflecting on his own, current position as an artist, becomes a literary reference for himself.

Then follows the first future – man, in fear of the extinction of his species, creates sculptural works in the form of skulls, which then become the only sign that we once existed. *Preserving the Message* is a series of small-scale works in which the artist quotes lyrics from Green Day's album *21st Century Breakdown*, and the skulls here become a paradoxical symbol of death and eternity, both a memento mori and vanitas.

In the second future that follows, humans survive on Earth and send the works of skulls of prehistoric beings into space. With this series, the

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artist quotes the album *When You're Through Thinking, Say Yes* by Yellowcard and talks about our need to be remembered, to control the rhythm of the story ourselves, even in an almost desperate, absurd gesture of sending objects into the vastness of space.

In the third act, further into the future, New Humans find a way to finally leave the planet. The works featuring the skulls of King Kong and Godzilla, in which the album *Neighborhoods* by Blink-182 is quoted, thematize pop culture creations, monsters that remain on the planet despite all the absurdity.

The final, most distant future represents a time when humans inhabit space. In this era, the Explorer's text is created, which acts as an epilogue. The Explorer comes across the works of art sent into space, now artefacts, and through correspondence with a friend, tries to determine when they were created and what is their socio-historical context.

Oštarčević's work reflects deep dilemmas and paradoxes of the human condition, raising questions about our ability to change and survive. Through the symbolism of skulls, the artist reminds us of the transience and fragility of human life while simultaneously exploring our attempts to remain relevant even after our own extinction. These themes are classically associated with philosophical reflections on existential fears, the search for meaning, and the pursuit of immortality through the creation and preservation of culture.

With *Vampire Ball*, Oštarčević affirms human immutability and inertia, creating a kind of time capsule filled with human vanity and efforts to survive and outlive both their own and future times. Dystopian thoughts about future times nonetheless suggest that it is time to look at the here and now – our present becomes our future unless significant changes occur. It is up to the observer to decide whether *Vampire Ball* is merely satire or a real possibility of a broken tomorrow.

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