Monika Meglić: *Shadows of Joy*

Somewhere between memory and dream, between what happened and what we may once have merely imagined, Monika Meglić's paintings take shape. The artist draws on experiences from early childhood and everyday events, on things we do not necessarily remember as complete stories, but rather as colours, smells, sounds and conversations. From such fragments emerges a whole painterly world of her own, but also a space of collective experience – the experience of children's play, spontaneity and unrestrained creativity, of a moment when reality has not yet been firmly separated from imagination.

Meglić paints in oils on canvas, most often in medium and large formats, building up dense surfaces of intense colour. Her painterly language moves between expressive painting and illustration, with elements of almost naïve childlike drawing. Her strokes convey the immediacy and playfulness of drawing, but also attention to detail. Naivety here is not merely a formal device but a way of seeing – open and direct, at times ready to reshape reality according to the logic of imagination.

In *Shadows of Joy*, everyday events serve as the starting point for personal, imaginative scenes in which real experience, memory and imagination intertwine. The artist does not necessarily depict events as they happened, but reshapes and connects them from her own perspective, following the logic of association. What was once real thus becomes the starting point for what is remembered, imagined and felt. On some canvases, video games are played; on others, peppers are pickled and roe deer dreamt of; elsewhere, it merely seems as though something is happening. The motifs in the paintings therefore come from a very concrete, often intimate world: a Bosnian kilim, a carnival mask from Međimurje, the artist's cat, her brothers, friends, conversations and small events that might otherwise have passed almost unnoticed outside the paintings. But once they enter a painting, these motifs cease to be mere records of everyday life; they become bearers of meaning and feeling, and the most enduring forms of memory are often hidden in these small, seemingly insignificant moments.

Playfulness here is likewise not just a theme but also a method of depiction: the freedom to connect seemingly incompatible elements, an openness to defamiliarisation, to creating one's own rules and the ability to turn the everyday into something else. *Shadows of Joy* thus opens up a space between what we remember and what we have added over time through our own imagination, while the meaning of these paintings is not confined to the artist's experience but is activated in the encounter with the viewer. Personal experience in them thus ceases to be entirely private and becomes something recognisable to others as well – a feeling that the past never returns in the same form, but is pieced together anew each time from what we have remembered, forgotten, invented or merely sensed.

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Perhaps this is why Monika Meglić's paintings seem like scenes we once dreamt but can no longer quite recall. This space between the known and the unknown becomes a place where we need not name, explain or complete everything, but can simply experience it. Joy here is no grand, loud experience. It is quiet, like a shadow or a trace that allows us to relive the past, reshape it and look at it from another angle. Thus, standing before *Shadows of Joy*, we do not need to recognise every motif or find its 'true' meaning; it is enough to let them take us somewhere – into our own childhood, to some long-gone summer, to a conversation we have forgotten, to the carefreeness of days we may no longer remember quite clearly, but whose feeling remains familiar.

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