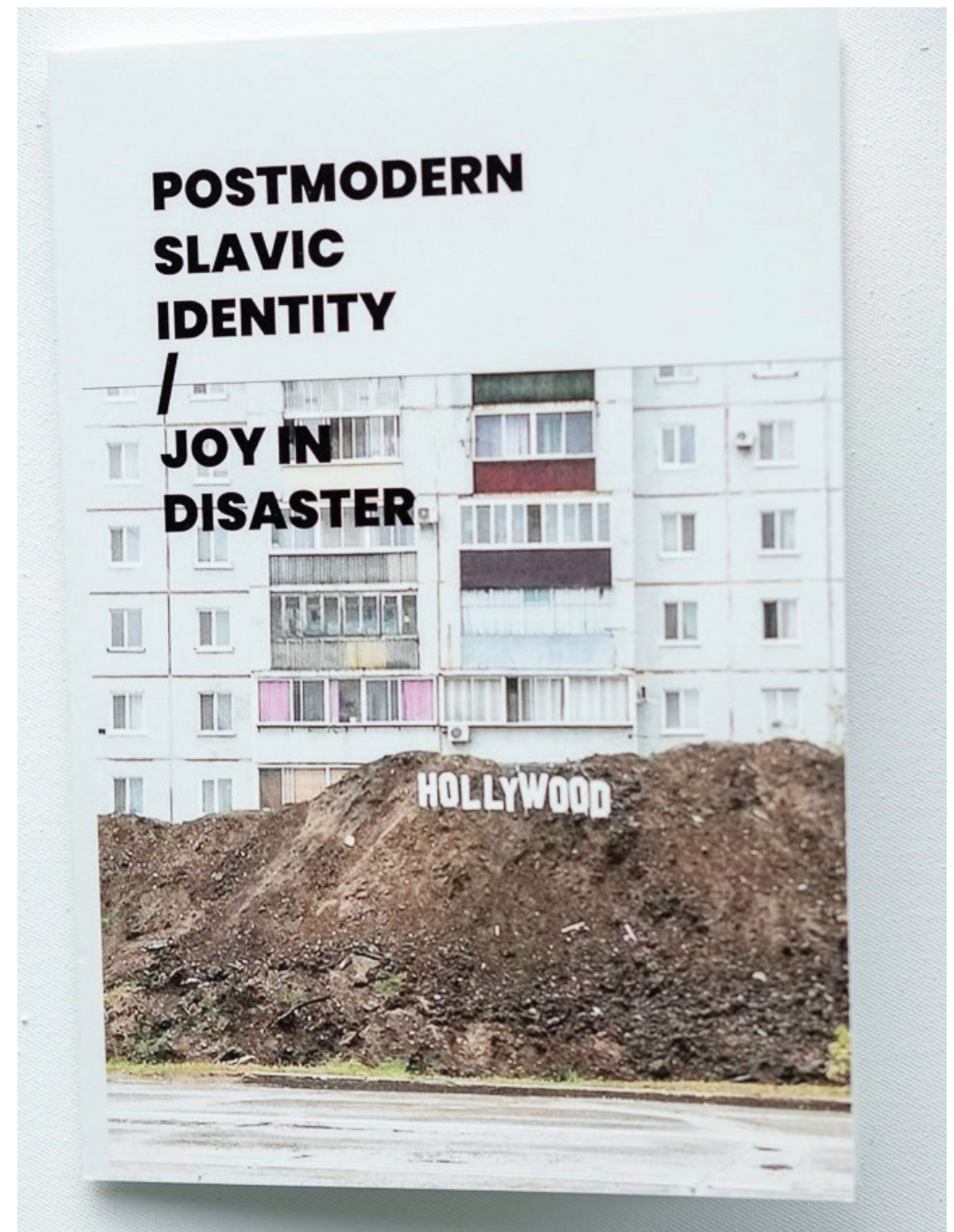


POSTMODERN
SLAVIC
IDENTITY
/
JOY IN
DISASTER

In my most recent project I have been working with an essay that is exploring my identity, our national identity and stereotypization, what is our relationship with sadness and anxiety and how the internet provides a great form of escapism and a space where we can deal with these feelings. The essay is divided into three chapters. In each one I explore different things that are occurring in our identity. For example, our history and its connection to feelings of invisibility, sadness and anxiety or how internet culture provides a tool to examine and humorize bizarre situations that are happening in our culture. And why we seek this kind of amusement as well why we find it interesting and amusing. Essay is illustrated with a collection of memes and my paintings and illustrations.





I just sat down in a bar where I have spent most of my puberty and following years. Anxiety, disappointment, frustration, chaos and confusion has taken over my life today. My head was a mess and everything was floating in this chaotic fluidity and seemed far away from my reach. The world has decided to go against me. Every step I took today was leading towards my failure until I sat down and ordered this beer. But I am very certain that is going to be a bad step as well. This invisible weight was crushing my chest and I was digging in it, making it worse. Because that's how I do it. That's the way I learned it. Drowning in self pity and slowly moving towards anger and swearing and subsequently into reconciliation. I unlocked my phone and started browsing. I came across a meme that made my grumpy face smile a little too hard. And I felt something that I haven't felt for a whole day. Someone or something spoke from my soul.

IDENTITY CRISIS /HELLO DARKNESS MY OLD FRIEND



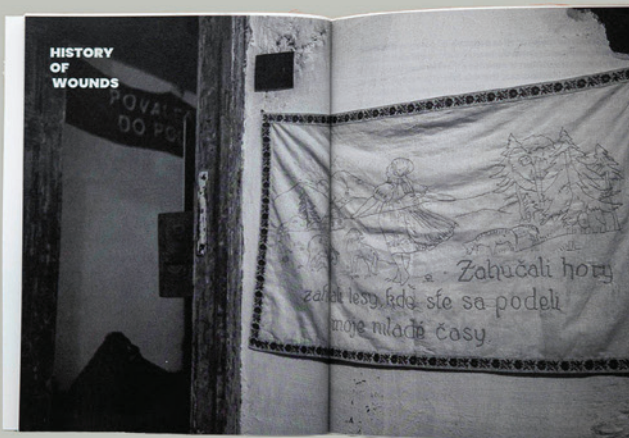
created it as remorse of the presence that embodies that history. So we find ourselves in a country where the strongest emotion is dogmat and sadness. Gloomy heaviness that hovers over all of us. And in my personal case, it is a fundamental pillar of my personality.

I think that the way people are raised in Slovakia does not help to examine this relationship between the individual and identity. I haven't seen many people around me talking about it or talking about it openly. It is something that I gradually began to perceive only in my adulthood. I felt the crisis of identity as a problem that did not concern only me. I saw a similar frustration in my family, with my friends who also didn't know what to do with it, didn't know where it came from, and why there seemed to be no escape. Many times we didn't even know how to name it, and the only thing we knew about this liquidity and gloomy heaviness was that it was in us. As if we were grafted against happiness.



When you search for the word Slav on Google, most pictures are connected to the humorous slavic memes. It could be said that these memes have a role to play in strengthening the relationship between people of Slavic descent through laughter from our shared experiences. They point to commonalities between Slavic countries, such as similar memories, accepting the same culture and coming out of the same social situation. But just as often as we see the common support of the Slavic nations, we also see public disputes about the common history and cultural authenticity. Some countries are set aside and alienated for not being Slavic despite having a similar history and background, and many people may identify with this identity.

HISTORY OF WOUNDS



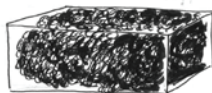
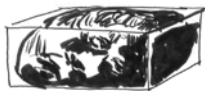
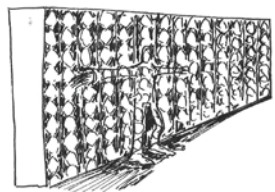
My first contact with humour that ties to national stereotyping were posts on Facebook on sites like Slavorum, Squatting Slavs in Trakuts and Babushka. These were just a few of the millions of random posts that were preceded by an algorithm. But what I felt in this case differently was the feeling that these posts are closer to me than the others. They spoke to me in a bizarrely comical way, and they managed to embody this misery that I have been describing and turn it into light humour. And perhaps more importantly, they knew how to name it and give it a shape. Collapsing healthcare, alcoholism, disoriented people, ornamental rugs and embroidered blankets have become the focus of attention. Something we closed our eyes to and walked around not noticing came into the spotlight not as a failure but as a bitter reality, which is ours and has to be accepted. And the more bizarre the better.

These memes often go beyond visual representation, they are part of the recreation of a specific subculture of the countries of Eastern Europe. It is about creating an identity that exists in a virtual context. And for many people a chance to claim this identity and be perceived as part of their own phenomenon, which is becoming more and more of a sensation. And suddenly, thanks to the Internet, the small, local and the unknown became something exciting that is functioning on a global scale. I was fascinated by how it is possible that something tragic in our context, is suddenly taken as something funny and something we want to be a part of. Something we take as part of our identity and connect it with our tradition and culture. To such an extent that it not only shapes the visual culture but also influences the way Slavic people are seen in Western Europe.

Squatting Slavs in Trakuts

Ex-prime minister of Slovakia Vladimir Mediar is the most slavic thing you will ever see





Illustrations in zine, 2021
27,9x21cm
MArker on paper



Holding on, 2021
40x50cm
Acrylics on canvas



Wounded Attachments, 2021
30x20cm
Acrylics on canvas

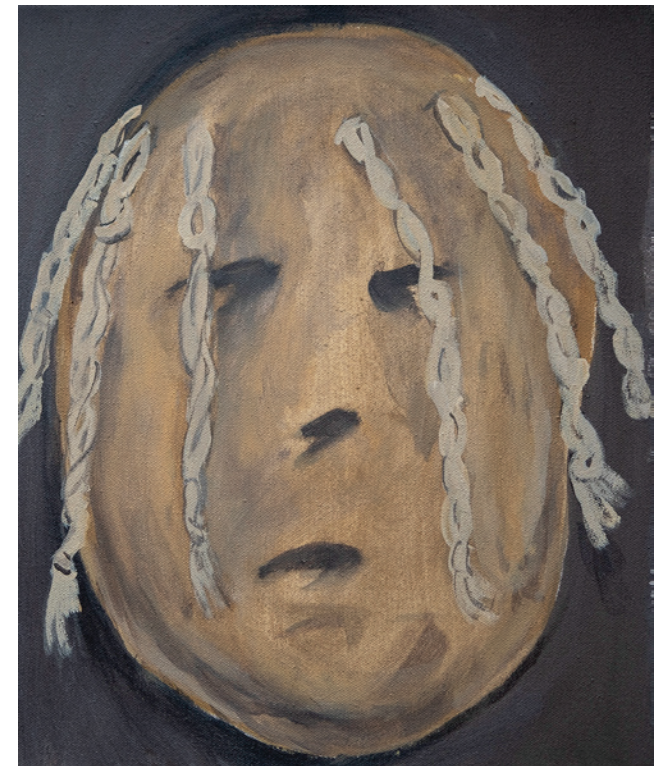
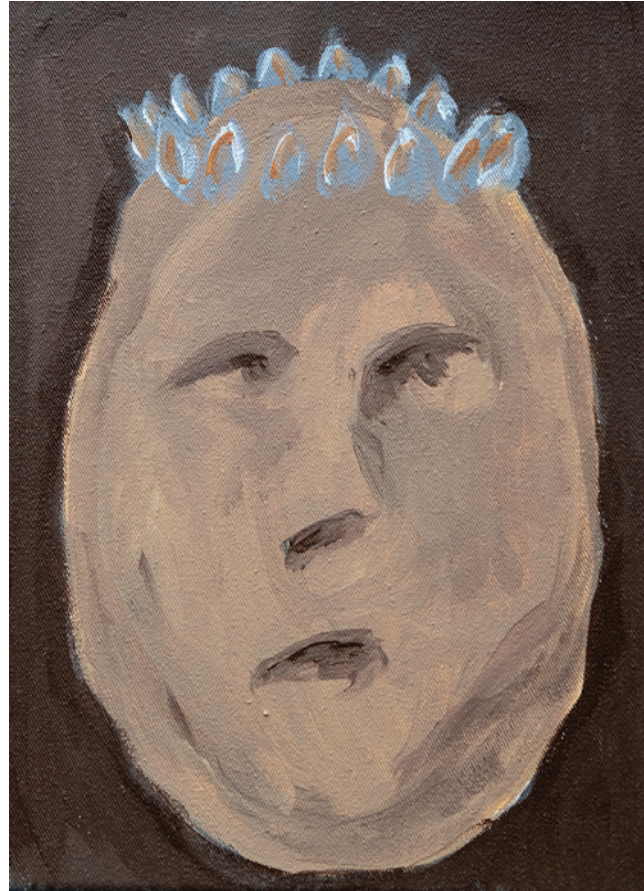


Code adn bread, 2021
30x20cm
Acrylics on canvas

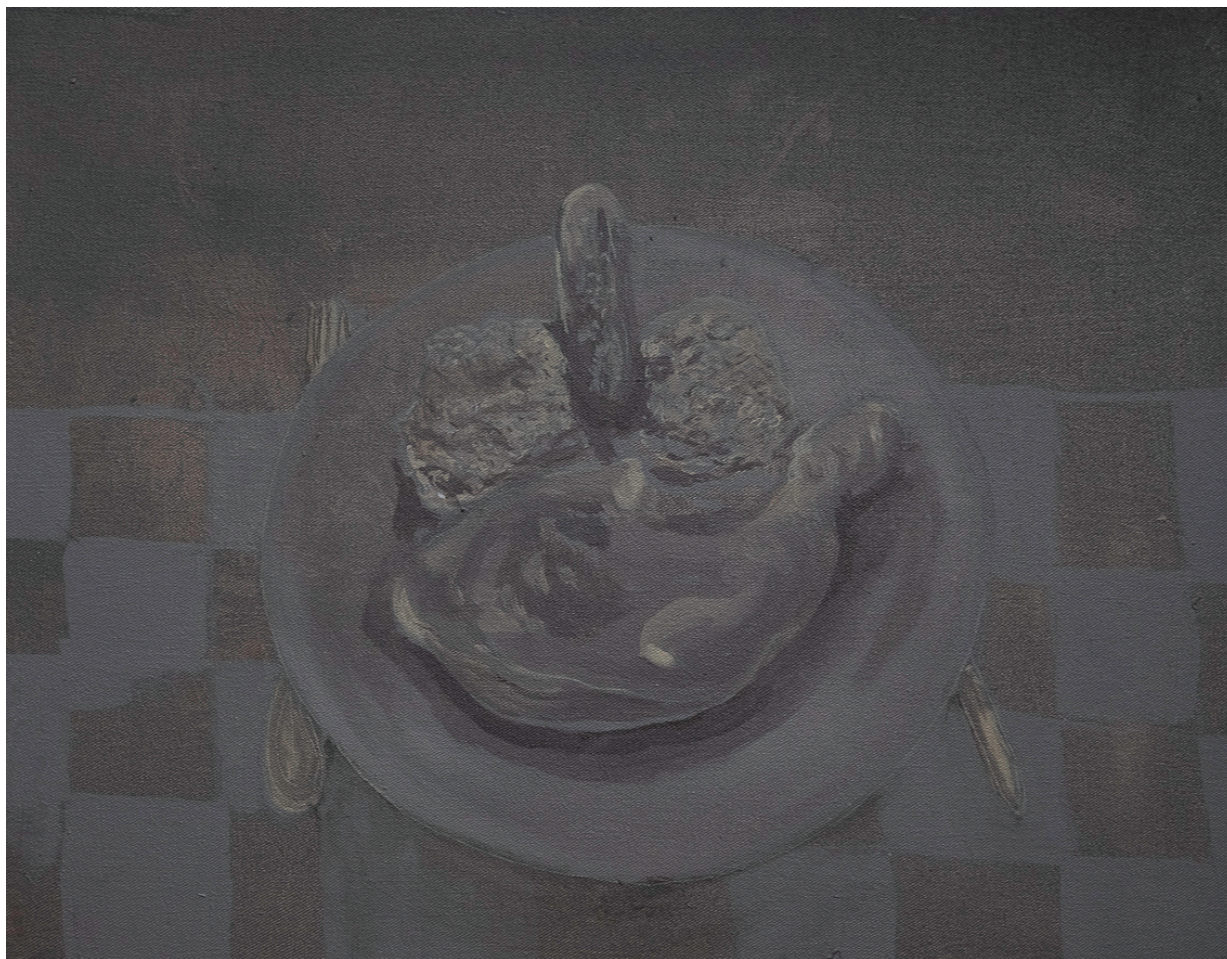
STILL LIFE

In these series, I am exploring our culture through dynamic of still life. Each object that I choose, have some cultural significance in Slavic culture.

Still life represent a genre which works with different objects and as a viewer can read through this objects different meanings. I am inspired by Slavic memes that also work with objects that represent some type of sign or stereotype.



Both works untitled, 2021
1 from left: 18x24cm 2: 24x30cm
Acrylics on canvas



Lunch time, 2021
40x50cm
Acrylics on canvas



Congrats, it's a potato, 2021
51x45cm
Acrylics on canvas



Family gathering, 2021
30x20cm
Acrylics on canvas



Borka, 2021
??
Acrylics on canvas



Tulip and carrot, 2021
50x40cm
Oil on canvas

APART FROM DRINKING ,THERE 'S NOTHING TODO HERE

My most recent project engages with the visual characteristics of the post-soviet era. What interests me, is why these characteristics attained a meme-worthy quality for my generation. I developed a theory that for a small country of 5 million people at the centre of Europe, post-soviet visuals represent a glimpse of authenticity in a context where it is hard to pinpoint characteristics that are uniquely Slovak.

I find inspiration in the online sphere, where people engage with the visual language and symbols of the former East-Bloc. I am keen to explore how boundaries between reality and fiction are blurred within Slavic images, as people fashion themselves hyper- eastern European. Expanding upon the alternative personalities people create through post-soviet jokes on social media, I set out to analyse and reflect upon the characteristics of an alternative Slovak culture unfolding in the same space.





Patiently waiting for a brighter future 2021
190x180cm
Acrylics on canvas

Balkan music playing in background, 2021
160x140cm
Oil on canvas





In carpet, 2020
70x60cm
Oil on canvas



Thank you, you are free to go, 2021 100x80cm, Acrylics on paper



Thank you, you are free to go, 2021
100x80cm
Acrylics o paper



Untitled, 2020
140x120cm
Oil on canvas



Untitled, 2020
70x80cm
Acrylics on paper





Waiting for love, 2020
30x20cm
Oil on wood



Untitled, 2020
100x72cm (each)
Acrylics on paper



Palo, 2021
100x80cm
Acrylics on paper



AMBER ROAD/ INFORMAL MONUMENTS

In summer 2020, I took part in a project called Amber Road- Informal monuments. Our goal was to create an object in public space, inspired by the characteristics of the Petržalka district of Bratislava. As a team formed of artists from across disciplines, we took inspiration from the concept of desire lines originating in urban planning. Our object thus reflect on routes created by people within a part of Petržalka. Namely, it is a cast of a particular route placed in a different location, creating avenues for new possibilities of route-making. This project won architect price CEZAR price in category Outdoor.





Desire Lines, 2020
polyurathane foam
foto: Šimon Parec

LANDSCAPE

In this series, I reflected on landscape painting as a genre. I was particularly interested in detecting the characteristics essential for one's ability to identify a painting as a landscape. In addition, how can one break away from the genre's status of kitschy escapism? Over the years of its existence, landscape painting served as a plane for painters' expression of poetics, mood, and sentiment.

In my view, at a time when we are witnessing the tangible effects of a global climate crisis, landscape painting can no longer be perceived as a romantic, dreamy or utopian genre. Rather, it has to be re-adapted for our context. Today, we return to landscapes not to draw its beauty, but because we find in nature the darkness, harshness and fury reflective of the state of humans today.



Lessie's home, 2019
30x25cm
Acrylics and graphite on canvas



Untitled, 2020
30x20cm
Oil on canvas



Preparinf for attack, 2020
160x140cm
Oil on canvas

Preparing for attack II, 2020
160x140cm
Oil on canvas





Untitled, 2019
100x120cm
Acrylics on canvas



Mountain, 2020
160x140cm
Oil on canvas



Island, 2020
21x15cm
Watercolor on paper



Untitled, 2019
29,7x21cm
Graphite on paper



Lakeside 2020
40x29,5 cm
Oil on canvas

THE MORE I GET TO KNOW PEOPLE, THE MORE I LIKE DOGS

As part of my landscape painting series, I visited the small town of Kremnica in 2019. Each year, students from my university are sent there to boost their landscape painting skills. Aiming to disrupt the continuity of landscape pieces traditionally expected from students, I chose to paint portraits for local dogs staring at me from behind fences of old townhouses. To me, dogs represent a feature just as characteristic of landscapes, as are fields and patches of vegetation.



