

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:

Artist and curator talk:

Wednesday, 3 November 2021, at 6.00 pm.



Exhibition Colophon:

Katja Bogataj, *Wrapped in a Cocoon*
22 September – 14 November 2021

Ivan Grohar Gallery
Škofja Loka Museum
www.loski-muzej.si

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Exhibition curator: Boštjan Soklič
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Katja Bogataj
**WRAPPED
IN A CACCOON**

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The Ivan Grohar Gallery presents a conceptual project titled *Wrapped in a Cocoon* by the multimedia artist Katja Bogataj, a member of the Škofja Loka Artists' Association and a representative of a younger generation of artists. Most of her works deal with socially engaged subjects, in her latest exhibition, however, the focus has also shifted onto the fields of archetypes, psychoanalysis and collective consciousness. As part of the *Wrapped in a Cocoon* exhibition, Katja Bogataj explores a topic she has been occupied with for a number of years. Through her exploration of (subjective) spider-related themes, the depths of subconscious and the mise-en-scène with elements of science fiction films, the artist reveals social anomalies, while exposing the stereotypes and fears all of us are faced with in the grip of global disharmonies.

Conceptually, the exhibition is a bipolar whole, consisting of a tunnel form installation in the first exhibition room and an imaginary model of a spider cocoon, a delusive shelter – in the second room. The artistic artefacts are rounded off with an animated film. The installations in the first room consist of different materials and elements, whose content has a common denominator, i.e. a luring trap in this particular case. The artistic language of the wall coverings is based on the haptic nature of conceptually meaningful and convincing textile materials with its own artistic expression. For the viewer, the perception of web-like surfaces is not only a visual experience, but also a haptic one, perceived mainly with the help of light and shadows. In the first room, the artist uses “spider” webs that metaphorically represent the outside world or the illusion of reality to make viewers think about human involvement in the invisible networks which we are all voluntarily or involuntarily part of, caught and wrapped in them in various ways. The spider web is a common symbol of mutual (continuous) bonds and interactions, usually curved ones, with a twofold semantic connotation. On the one hand, it represents patience, creativity, infinity, and on the other, the dark sides of personality. On a spiritual level, spiders are creators that weave the threads of one's destiny and a sign of good luck, they are, however, also a symbol of the primitive instinct and evil. The artist indirectly “touches on” the field of psychology, i.e. a specific anxiety disorder – arachnophobia. This common form

of psychosis is expressed as a deep and persistent fear of hairy, crawly creatures. To a certain extent, it is culturally conditioned as spiders have been the subject of various fears, mythologies, and stories in different cultures throughout history. For instance, in the Middle East and the Far East, the spider represents a cosmic creator, the highest deity, a demiurge, whereas in Ancient Greece, it symbolised the downfall of a being (Arachne) who dared to compete with a goddess (Athena). Psychoanalysis experts believe the interiority, which the spider lurking in the middle of a spider web menacingly draws attention to, is a symbol of introversion and narcissism. In terms of symbolism, for Katja Bogataj the spider is neither an allegory nor a simple symbol; it is an image that can best define the vaguely perceived nature of the spirit of modern society.

In the second exhibition room, the focus of the central installation is an object: the cocoon of a predator spider, which catches its prey in a spider web and wraps it in the web strands, before injecting it with venom. To do this, the spider uses a variety of strategies: it senses the victim through vibrations and when hunting for it, it demonstrates great intelligence in working out the tactics and various strategies to achieve what it has put its mind to. The prey is usually mechanically crushed and the indigestible skeleton remains are discarded. The artist sees the spider and its behavioural characteristics as a metaphor for predatory enterprises (concerns, corporations) – the so-called elites of modern globalised society, which try to subdue our planet and dominate it. A means of achieving this is supposedly the use of a mass media network, which is the most powerful form of mass hypnosis on our planet. According to Katja Bogataj, the ultimate goal is to change our society into a world that is much like the world presented in the film *Fahrenheit 451*, based on a novel by Ray Bradbury. In his visionary work, the writer presents a dystopian society in which critical thinking is unwelcome, even forbidden.

Katja Bogataj pairs the conceptual elements of her bipolar spatial construction with an animated film that is multifaceted in terms of both form and content. An essential element of her animated film is conflict. A dystopian story composed of pure animation and fragments of carefully selected documentary film material

presents the world as one that is the complete opposite of the ideal that society is supposed to strive for; it is a dark and vile place with no room for individuals, but only for the aspirations and power of the authorities. The vision of a world without chaos, discord or famine no longer exists. The only thing left are totalitarian systems, the likes of those described by Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*) and George Orwell (1984), who viewed such systems as the oppression of individuals. Katja Bogataj depicts dystopia through simple yet effective animation and shocking documentary film clips that present the likely sinister future of humanity as a fact: as something that is already here and part of our lives because the modern world is heading towards what was foretold by the gloomiest of predictions. The artist notes that the modernisation and innovation of new technologies, which provide us with a sense of security and are designed to make it easier for us to achieve our goals, actually lead to the Orwellian world characterised by complete control, loss of personal liberties and privacy. The film presents the network of oppressive systems (religion, pharmaceutical companies, artificial intelligence etc.) through the icons of voracious spiders – masters of the universe and also rulers of people, who seem to be fatally trapped in a false virtual world (much like in a spider's cocoon).

The concept of the *Wrapped in a Cocoon* exhibition is not just an artistic expression; it is a conceptual reflection of the modern world, where reality is different from the collective consciousness and from the reality experienced as an absolute thing. Katja Bogataj despises a society without reflection. Like many of us, she is afraid of false reality, global control and the perfidious methods used to control people. As part of the exhibition, she has explored and interpreted the topic in question from several angles, placing it in a contemporary social context. Using her own artistic, sculptural language, she has “invented” completely original means of communication, pairing them effectively with other media. She urges viewers to listen to her conceptual artistic story, to analyse and internalise it, as the premise of her story is a warning against one's own doom and hope for a better future.

Boštjan Soklič

KATJA BOGATAJ (1983)

Katja Bogataj graduated in sculpture from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana in 2015. Her graduate mentor was Professor Alen Ožbolt and she graduated with an installation titled *Fear and Negative Emotions*. She is currently pursuing a postgraduate degree in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lisbon, Portugal. She is a visual artist whose works explore socially engaged subjects. In addition to classical sculpture, as part of which she creates welded metal sculptures, she also pursues photography, video installations, intermedia installations, costume design and dance. She is a member of the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies Ljubljana and the Škofja Loka Artists Association and the organiser of various art exhibitions at the ŠmaR Žiri society. She creates art under her own Dotik Umetnosti brand and is a self-employed artist. She lives and works in the town of Žiri.