

Accompanying programme:

Wednesday, 28 June 2023, at 18:00

A guided tour of the exhibition with the curator



**Exhibition Colophon:**  
Erik Mavrič: Lost Days

24 May – 9 July 2023  
Ivan Grohar Gallery  
Škofja Loka Museum

Represented by: Saša Nabergoj  
Curator: Boštjan Soklič  
Design: Žan Kobal  
Proofreading: Ana Kodelja  
English translation: Mateja Žuraj  
Technical team: Vida Grah, Boris Krajnc, Branko Lampe





The Ivan Grohar Gallery presents the artist Erik Mavrič and two sets of his drawings. The exhibition features eight works of art created between 2021 and 2023, half of which have previously been shown as part of the exhibition titled *Long Black Summer*, which was on view in the Lapidarium of the Božidar Jakac Art Museum in Kostanjevica na Krka. The remaining four works – in terms of their content, similar to the set exhibited in the Lapidarium – are now shown to the public for the first time.

Mavrič is best known to the Slovenian art community for his rare, but always superbly conceived, conceptually monumental exhibitions (*Silence Will Get You Nowhere*, *Metamorphoses*, *The Heavens on Earth*, *Connect the Dots to Make Sense*). An ever-present part of his work is criticism of social anomalies, he is, however, not merely a passive observer, but someone who cares and who – from an artistic standpoint – takes his role within society seriously and works hard on giving it meaning. Each of Mavrič's projects requires absolute commitment in terms of time, persistence and complete focus.

As part of his *Lost Days* exhibition, Mavrič explores a topic that has occupied him for a number of years. He transforms the selected motifs and themes into visual parables – one-of-a-kind codes for understanding the structure of the existing world. For the most part, the scenes of his stories resemble scenes from B-horror movies. He uses gloomy scenes, based on expressive charcoal drawing and effective compositional solutions, to interpret his feelings of the present and premonitions of the time to come. He is filled with fear about the stratification and alienation of human civilisation, which is on the road to collapse. Mavrič explores history and uses mise-en-scène filled with the elements of a devastated (modern) urban landscape to expose the threats and materialise the fears humanity faces in the grip of global disharmonies. He examines socially engaged themes and with this particularly exhibition he (unintentionally) also touches on psychoanalysis and, of course, the history of the place where he currently lives and creates.

Mavrič's work is characterised by elements of fantasy painting and Expressionism, however, in terms of the conveyed messages and directness of expression, it is completely autonomous and topical. Much like in his other works, the choice of technique is a very important part of this project: the charcoal drawing technique

allows him to fully convey the gloom as convincingly as possible, and thus also the mysteriousness of the subjects, which consist of veristically depicted media fragments and figural rudiments; the latter do not stem from the artist's subconscious and dreams, but from an existential necessity for commentary, consisting of critical concerns about the situation on a global level (wars, climate change, migration, etc.) and from philosophical speculations about the future of our civilisation. Mavrič's "allegories of impending disasters" are not coloured by melancholy, but by grotesque humour, which is a sort of common thread that connects the selected works from both cycles. This connects him with a multitude of creators (in the fields of painting, literature and religious eschatological writings) from the treasury of European and Middle Eastern cultural history, who described the state of the world before and after the prophesied apocalypses (Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, John Martin, Geoffrey Chaucer, Boccaccio, canonical and apocryphal (non-canonical) texts by various theologians from Palestine and ancient Judea, etc.).

In the first Ivan Grohar Gallery room, Erik Mavrič presents four pictures from the *Long Black Summer* cycle. These are topographically indefinable apocalyptic depictions of eerie futuristic scenes, in which the artist uses bizarre figural compositional entanglements and fusions to expose the humans' new attitude to time and space. By showing absurd situations and enigmatic gags, he turns the picture into a "dystopian screen". He moves away from the familiar landscape, masterfully transforming it – with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the causes of the absurdity to which man has led himself – into a vision of the future world filled with the material remains of civilization. The painting space is an important content conveyor and is equivalent to the human, semi-human and android heroes who appear in Mavrič's stories. The artist does not say much about them, leaving the interpretation to the viewer. It is unclear if they want to leave the devastated areas or not. Some of them are seemingly torpid, busy doing various enigmatic chores, while others are rushing up high ladders and strange, poppy-like flowers towards the sky (which might represent salvation). It seems that many of them are being transformed into new beings, different ones, who are possibly no longer human. Most of them are somewhere in the distance, without visible faces. The most unusual are the beings that travel through the sky

in balloons; the most eye-catching one is a figure with a quasi-cardinal headwear and a wide skirt. The architecture drawn with great precision also features a multitude of original fantasy-hybrid architectural elements interlaced in a stalagmite-way, such as small towers (architectural hybrids between phallically protruding stalagmites and Sumerian terraced temples with cone-shaped top elements, often combined with an organic columnar envelopment); sharp-edged obelisks or towers reminiscent of church belfries or minarets; simple (vertically divided) geometric architecture; living chambers (hoods) in the form of upper parts of car bodies and cars half-buried (sunken) in the ground; the remains of an unknown civilisation in the form of viaducts, concrete motorway fencing, S-bends and power lines; cloudy water or floral surfaces (likely destroyed by radiation); flying and hovering meteorites, cosmic light, clouds, dramatic events in the sky.

In the *Long Black Summer* cycle, Mavrič perfectly pairs his drawing expression with a monumental compositional frame, as well as with the large picture format chosen especially for him; this might be a distant "relative" of medieval winged Gothic altarpieces, which as part of sacral art and Christian iconography directly or indirectly depict apocalyptic scenes (for example: Isenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünevald, "The Temptation of St Anthony" scene.

In the second Ivan Grohar Gallery room, Erik Mavrič exhibits four works from the ongoing *Lost Days* cycle. In these works, he uses allegories to relate to the Slovenian peasant revolts (the revolt headed by Matija Gubac), however, he uses more contemporary images in lieu of old ones. In the *Long Black Summer* cycle, he sets the mood by using dark hues, ranging between black and white, and in the more recent cycle, the background is slightly lightened (yellowed). The more recent works from the *Lost Days* cycle (which actually starts with the eponymous depiction in the *Long Black Summer* cycle) mostly depict scenes in the middle of desolate urban or natural landscapes, littered with industrial items (discarded car tyres) and abandoned buildings, which represent the collapse, decline of civilisation and transience (vanitas). The difference between the two cycles is noticeable in the depiction of the landscape. In the older cycle, the depicted landscape is distinctly fantastic (gigantic vegetation, surrealistic architecture), while in the last cycle, the artist pairs it with events from history (in a formally reduced way), changing

only the spatial frame reserved for the story. In the *Long Black Summer* cycle, more purposeful figural deformations and alogisms are noticeable in figurativism and there is also a greater number of surrealistic details (the depiction of heads hit by the hammers in the picture titled *A Single Tear is Enough* and also in the works *Cessation of Movement*, *Lost Days*).

Mavrič's reinterpretation of dramatic events from centuries ago in the *Lost Days* cycle is an allegory that comes closest to the authenticity of the depiction of historical facts in the torture scene (hanging, castration, cutting the throat) – without doubt the ultimate depiction of violence. With an effective, fundamentally simple, yet direct drawing, Mavrič reveals his vision of the bloody events that took place in the second half of the 16th century – the executions of the peasant rebel leaders by the nobility. With the subjects and scenes from both cycles, Mavrič brings a synthesis of phantasmagoria and grotesque to the Slovenian art scene, creates a dialogue with the tradition of European fantasy painting and self-reflexively comments on the occurrences surrounding him. In a figurative sense, he depicts a rebellion against malignant social phenomena, while also expressing his desire for the society to change fundamentally.

The *Lost Days* exhibition is not just an artistic expression, it is a reflection of the modern world – a universe of false reality, global control and perfidious manipulation techniques of all kinds. Erik Mavrič's works of art are there for us to listen to, analyse and internalise, so we can wake up and throw off the shackles that bind us.

**Erik Mavrič (1979) is a contemporary visual artist whose primary medium of artistic expression is drawing. He studied painting at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design, where he graduated in 2004, followed by a master's degree in 2009. During his studies, he received the Student Prešeren Award and in 2012 a special recognition award from a panel of expert judges at the 16th Slovenian Sculpture Exhibition. He has exhibited his work at several solo exhibitions, including at the Krško Gallery (2014), the DoubleRoom arti visive gallery in Trieste (2018), and the Alkatraz Gallery in Ljubljana (2018), as well as at numerous joint exhibitions. He currently lives and works close to Krško.**

Boštjan Soklič,  
curator, Škofja Loka Museum