

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:

Due to the changing epidemiological situation, the accompanying program will be published later on the Škofja Loka Museum website.

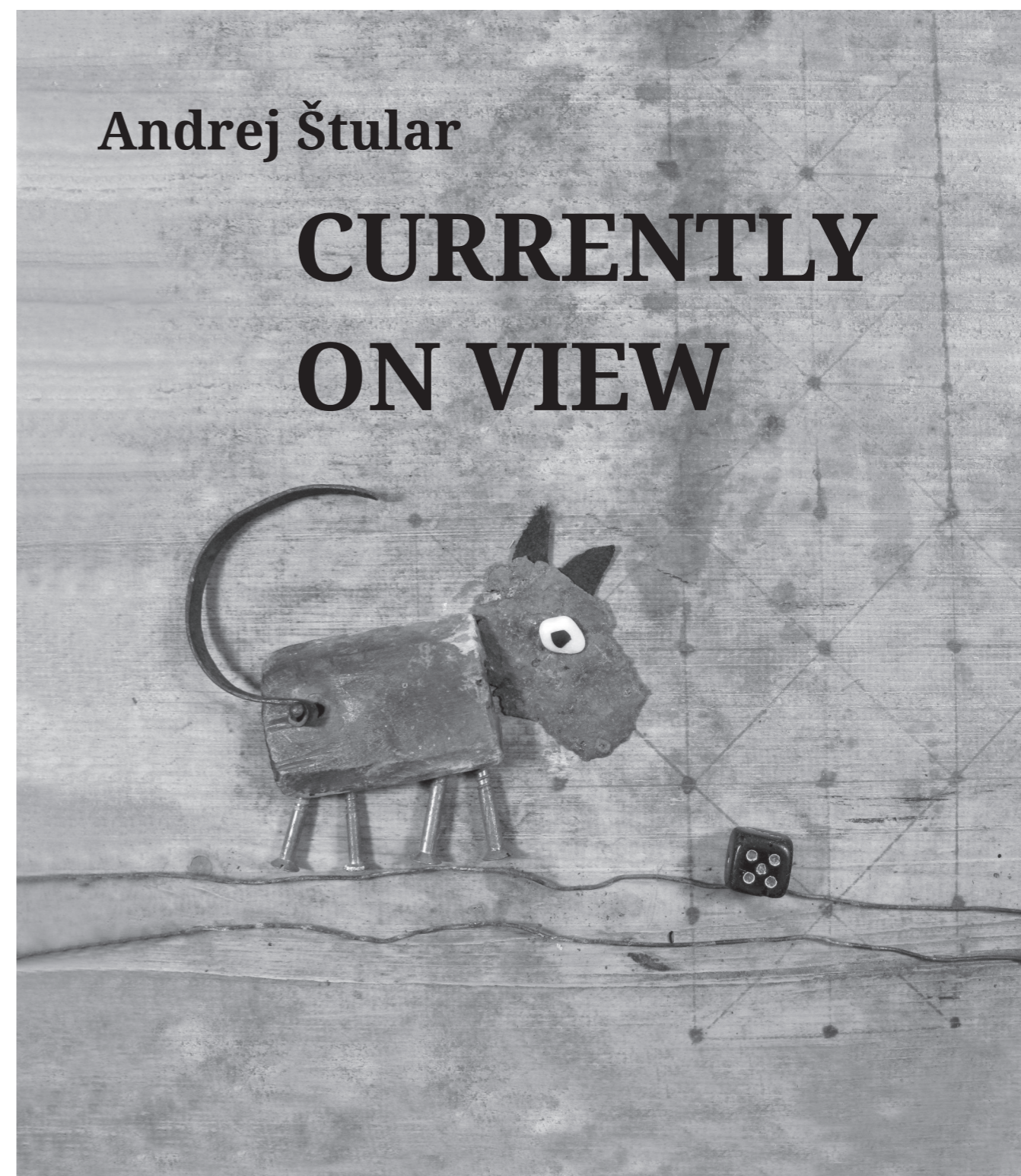


Exhibition Colophon:

Andrej Štular: Currently on View
1 April–16 May 2021

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

Represented by: Aleksandra Saša Nabergoj
Curator: Boštjan Soklič
Proofreading: Branka Gradišar
English translation: Mateja Žuraj
Graphic design: Kolektiv DVA
Exhibition setup: Boštjan Soklič, Andrej Štular
Exhibition technical support: Vida Grah, Boris Krajnc
Co-producer: Strip Core c/o Forum Ljubljana // Institute for Art and Cultural Production



Ivan Grohar Gallery
1 April–16 May 2021

Curator:
Boštjan Soklič

The Ivan Grohar Gallery exhibits more than forty works by the Kranj-based contemporary visual artist Andrej Štular, who uses various art techniques and media. The exhibited works include puppets, illustrations, comic strips, posters, paintings and spatial installations created over the past ten years. The exhibition is divided into two equivalent parts, which are presented in two rooms. The first room features creations intended for children, including the posters created for the Saturday matinees at the Prešeren Theatre Kranj, book illustrations published in the *Stripburger* magazine (*Run, the World Is Coming Down!* from a series of comic albums titled *Beastlings from Resia in Comics, The Bear*), puppets and individual spatial installations. The second room is dedicated to the 'adult section' and includes paintings (the *Fragile set*), sculptures (the *Hypnosis series*) and the visual identity created for the 17th *Animateka* festival in 2020.

The series of illustrations titled *The Bear* is based on a Russian tale, which was translated by France Bevk and published in the *Ciciban* magazine in 1964. This is a story about a grandfather who goes to the forest to cut some firewood in the winter and about a bear that wants to eat him. Štular adapted and revised the tale in collaboration with Petra Stare. The tale's setting has been changed from an urban area to the infinite freedom of unspoiled nature in the Russian northeast, and the content has been adapted for contemporary times. Illustrations for the book were created by Štular, who combined collage with assemblage, which is one of the least commonly used techniques in children's book illustrations. He composed the images from the fragments of discarded (and found) objects from the urban environment, such as old buttons, corks, paper, ceramic splinters and mirrors, as well as remnants of nature – stones, bark, river debris and twigs. As part of the artistic process, Štular first assembled individual scenes, tied them together to form a whole, photographed them and, in the final stage, added classic comic elements, i.e. speech bubbles and typical comic

frames. He set up a new (stand-alone) composition for each scene and the story consists of a total of forty. All the images in the picture book have been printed without any elements added during post-processing and no digital alterations have been made to the original art piece.

Štular's comic *Run, the World Is Coming Down!* is based on a folk tale from the collection of well-known Slovenian folk tales titled *Beastlings from Resia* and is one of three comics on this particular theme published in the *Stripburger* magazine in 2014. It is a tribute to Slovenian folk literature and the treasury of folk tradition, which is rich in metaphors that describe nature and, even more so, human characters in a simple yet witty way. The beastlings from Resia behave and act much like humans, doing the same silly things. Štular has masterfully intertwined a series of curious little things that happen in the story *Run, the World Is Coming Down!* with his artistic approach. His well-thought-out images are based on collage, created from various found objects (stones, iron, pieces of wood, rusty keys, pencils, draperies and the like). It is obvious that the artist believed these found materials to be photogenic in their one-of-a-kind way and has skilfully used them in the medium of his choice. Although Štular's comic *Run, the World Is Coming Down!* is not a comic work of the conventional kind (it is more of a picture book with elements of comics), its expressive nature paired with spontaneity and relaxation makes it one of the highlights of Slovenia's 'ninth art'. The relationship between the text and Štular's images is ideal and what makes his artistic poetics so unique and individual is reflected in few scenes where the artist has even gotten very close to the shadow play.

In addition to devoting a lot of his time to creating readymade art, Štular also draws and makes puppets, and occasionally also creates prints. His drawings, which are applied to various art media, are especially noticeable on the posters for the Prešeren Theatre

Kranj's Saturday matinees. Owing to Štular's original drawings, these posters created for children of all ages go beyond their functional framework. They are filled with expressive elements and details, inventive design, expressive colours and drawing-related unconventionality, which is reflected in a one-of-a-kind typography. The artist combines unusual pictorial elements with contemporary visual language, adding new narrative dimensions and symbolic values to the message conveyed by the posters.

In the second room of the Ivan Grohar Gallery, Andrej Štular is presented as a resident artist of the 17th *Animateka* (International Animated Film Festival), which took place in 2020, and as the designer of the festival's visual identity, which is based on the assemblage technique much like his unconventional comics and picture books. Štular's images come to life through used things with a focus on alluvial fragments of our modern-day life. In his creative practice, these fragments serve as building blocks of his confident artistic narrative, composed of various historical contexts. They are proof that any discarded object (regardless of its form), found either in a dump or anywhere else, can be the vital element of an interesting story for the artists or the viewers, because one can get immersed and emotionally invested in it within a new (artistic) framework. An example of this is *Animateka's* typography, constructed from rubbish. Through his recyclable form of artistic creation, Štular brings up a fundamental question: What is rubbish anyway? Is it a result of man's failed contact with nature? Rubbish is a dubious achievement of our civilization, one we have an extremely intimate relationship with. On the one hand, we despise all forms of rubbish, preferring to keep our distance to it, but on the other hand, we hide our own rubbish as we feel ashamed of it.

All the works of art exhibited in the gallery's second room are in one way or another connected with rubbish. They include wall installations created us-

ing a three-dimensional collage technique, sculptural works and spatial installations. Štular has been working on – i.e. developing, refining and upgrading – two series of images titled *Trash* and *Fragile* continuously since 2000. With the two series in mind, he finds interesting or discarded objects, but does not really dwell on their original function; using various art media, he first takes them apart in stages and then reassembles them, using them to create parallel universes, while also providing his commentary on what is happening in the world. The *Trash* series is characterised by found, damaged and no-longer-used images from rubbish dumps – images that get to convey a new message only through additional assemblage interventions. The artist transforms trash or kitsch that has served its turn into a new artistic reality with meaningful – sometimes also socially critical – content; a fine example of this is an image titled *Afghanistan*, created using the mixed-media technique in 2001. With the *Hypnosis* installation, the artist ventures in the fields of the unconscious and psychoanalysis. He presents an imaginary world composed of entirely different, unexpected, even contradictory sources, both historical and contemporary ones, combining them with various techniques and materials. As a visual artist, he is inspired by constant experimentation, trying out unusual materials that he incorporates into the structure of his compositions. In a comprehensive and eloquent manner, the complex ideational and artistic layering of his works reveals the very process of seeing – perception, observation and reflection.

Through selected works from his different creative periods, Andrej Štular is presented as one of Slovenia's most individual, expressive, daring and prominent multimedia artists.

Boštjan Soklič,
Curator, Škofja Loka Museum