

Vesna Bukovec

Edina stvar, ki jo imam pod nadzorom, je moj odnos do življenja
The Only Thing I Can Control Is My Attitude Towards Life

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Vesna Bukovec se na razstavi predstavlja z video delom *It Will Be OK* ter serijo risb, s katerima obravnava kulturo samopomoči ter diktakt pozitivnega mišljenja - dve kulturni formaciji, ki pomembno oblikujeta in izražata sodobno subjektiviteto.

Posameznik/posameznica naj bi bila (samo)izpolnjena, srečna in, seveda, uspešna, identiteta pa stabilna in harmonična celota. Da bi se temu lahko čim bolj približali, imamo na voljo številne tehnike – od terapije, knjig za samopomoč, oddaj Opre Winfrey, do izpolnjevanja najrazličnejših psiholoških testov, raznovrstnih treningov in delavnic, kozmetične in modne industrije itn. itn. Kovači smo, oziroma v jeziku sodobne kulture, dizajnerji smo, svoje lastne sreče. Vzporedno s povečevanjem nadzora v sodobni družbi naj bi torej tudi posamezniki povečevali nadzor nad svojim življenjem.

Vesna Bukovec vzame pod drobnogled psihologijo, ki je kot specifična vednost predelana in distribuirana prek različnih oblik popularne kulture. Uporaba angleškega jezika v obeh delih je v tem smislu še posebej pomenljiva, saj kaže na prevladujočo vlogo angloameriške kulture pri razširjanju tovrstne instantne psihologije.

Avtorica uperi svojo ost kritike na pretirano poenostavljanje in sploščitev kompleksnosti naših čustvovanj in življenjskih okoliščin, ki se v kontekstu pretirane pozitivne življenjske naravnosti (*It Will Be OK*) in raznovrstnih psiholoških testov, ki jih naslavlja v

svojih risbah, zdijo zgolj nepomembna opomba. Pri tem kot umetniško strategijo uporablja ironijo, repeticijo ter eklecticism, s katerimi drži ogledalo absurdnosti narcisistične skrbi zase.

Video *It Will Be OK* kaže žensko, ki sedi na zofi, v naročju drži plišastega kužka z velikimi žalostnimi očmi, katerega skuša potolažiti z božanjem in prigovarjanjem, »da bo še vse v redu«. V videu dominirajo bela barva, repetitivnost pozitivnih afirmacij in gibov ter statičnost situacije, ki je še poudarjena z zvokom tiktakanja urinih kazalcev v ozadju. Avtorica belo barvo, ki sicer ponazarja red, čistost in nedolžnost, v videu uporabi kot metaforo popolnosti, h kateri naj bi stremeli posamezniki v sodobni narcisistični kulturi, simboliziranje nedolžnosti pa predela v simboliziranje naivnosti verjetja v dejansko uresničitev izrečenih izjav. Hkrati s tem bela barva meri na kliničnost situacije – ženska (nevrotično) tolaži in prigovarja sami sebi. Vendar pa sta »Freudova zofa« in revolucionarna psihoanalitična »talking cure« zreducirani na scenografijo in izpraznjene mantre, katerih cilj je posameznika/posameznico pomiriti in s tem pasivizirati, na kar napeljuje tudi naslov same razstave. Slednje se zdi paradoks glede na trditev zgoraj, po kateri naj bi kot posamezniki povečali nadzor nad svojim življenjem, za katerega smo polno odgovorni. A s tem, ko se moramo poglobljati sami vase, se ukvarjati z lastnimi problemi, je naš angažma v javni – družbeni, politični – sferi nujno reduciran. Posameznik, ki je polno zaposlen s samim seboj, se nima časa ukvarjati z družbenimi problemi; njegovo stremljenje za osebno rast in srečo ga okupira le do te mere, da bi lahko čim bolj uspešno deloval v obstoječih družbenih razmerjih. V tem smislu je emancipatorni potencial kulture samopomoči vprašljiv, saj subjektiviteto atomizira in izprazni vsakršne družbene in politične vsebine in na ta način ne nudi ustreznih načinov, kako povezati javno in osebno sfero. Vendar pa video podaja še bolj črnogledno videnje stanja stvari – prikazuje, da terapevtski

diskurz v kontekstu pretirane pozitivne življenjske naravnosti pomeni lahko celo odsotnost dejanskega ukvarjanja z lastnimi problemi ter ponazarja brezupnost situacije, kljub zatrevanju protagonistke o nasprotnem.

V seriji risb Vesna Bukovec sopostavlja besedila, ki jih je našla v različnih psiholoških testih o pozitivni življenjski naravnosti, in podobe, ki jih je prevzela iz komercialnih internetnih foto arhivov. Risbe so reducirane na enostavne linije in tako odlično dopolnjujejo »tankost« izpisanih izjav/vprašanj. Izbor podob ironizira pripadajoča besedila, njih učinek pa je še posebej poudarjen v *en face* portretih, ki so deformirani v strašljive grimase z razpotegnjenimi nasmehi, zaradi česar delujejo kot maske v igri prisilne sreče.

Zajemanje podob iz komercialnih spletnih foto arhivov ni naključno. Umešča se v linijo dela Vesne Bukovec, v katerem obravnava zakonitosti potrošniške kulture in njen vpliv na sodobnega posameznika/posameznico. Kultura samopomoči in diktat pozitivne življenjske naravnosti lahko uspešno perpetuirata prav v sodobni potrošniški kulturi, ki posamezniku/posameznici nudi obilico sredstev, ki jih še potrebuje, da bi lahko uresničil/a svoj zadani cilj: samoizpolnitev in srečno življenje. Ker pa je celovita in harmonična identiteta dejansko nekaj vedno spodletelega, so posamezniku/posameznici na voljo tudi vedno novi izdelki in storitve, da bi le bil/a kos tej brezkončni nalogi, v katere uspešni konec mora seveda verjeti.

Urška Jurman

The Only Thing Under My Control Is My Attitude Towards Life

At this exhibition Vesna Bukovec presents the video *It Will Be OK* and a series of drawings. Both works deal with the self-help culture and the dictate of positive thought as two cultural formations that importantly form and express the contemporary subjectivity.

An individual is supposed to be (self)fulfilled, happy and successful, with a stable and harmonious identity. There are numerous techniques that will lead us closer to this goal – from therapy, self-help books, Oprah Winfrey shows, to answering various psychological tests, attending various trainings and workshops, to making use of various cosmetic and fashion industries, etc. It is all up to us; we should design our own happiness. Parallel to the increase of control in contemporary society individuals are also supposed to increase control over our own lives.

Vesna Bukovec takes a closer look at psychology, which is worked and distributed through the various forms of popular culture. The use of English language in both works is especially important for it indicates the dominating role of the Anglo-American culture at the dissemination of such instant psychology.

The authoress directs her criticism towards the over simplification of the complexity of our emotions and life circumstances, which – in the context of exaggerated positive orientation (*It Will Be OK*) and the various psychological tests that she addresses in her drawings – seem as a merely insignificant comment. At this she

uses irony, repetition and eclecticism as her artistic strategy, with which she holds a mirror against the absurdity of the narcissistic care of oneself.

The video *It Will Be OK* shows a woman sitting on a couch, holding a plush dog with big sad eyes in her hands. She is trying to cheer up the plush dog by stroking it and telling it that »it will be OK«. The video is dominated by the white colour, the repetitive positive affirmations and movements, and the static situation emphasised by the tick-tacking sound of the clock in the background. In the video the authoress uses white colour that stands for order, cleanness and innocence as a metaphor for perfection towards which individuals should aspire in the contemporary narcissistic culture. At the same time she transforms the symbol of innocence into a symbol of naivety as the individual believes in the actual fulfilment of the expressed statements. The white colour also indicates the criticalness of the situation – the woman is (neurotically) trying to comfort herself. However, »Freud's couch« and the revolutionary psychoanalytical »talking cure« are reduced to the scene and empty mantras, the goal of which is to calm and pacify the individual – as indicated also by the exhibition title. If we take the above stated – according to which individuals increase control over their lives for which they have full responsibility – into account it all seems paradoxical. But as we dig deeper into ourselves, deal with our own problems, our engagement in the public (social, political) sphere is reduced. The individual who is fully employed with herself/himself has no time to tackle social issues; while striving for personal growth and happiness she/he is occupied only to the extent, to which she/he could function successfully in the existing social relations. In this sense the emancipating potential of the self-help culture is dubious, for the subjectivity is atomised and emptied of all social and political contents and thus fails to offer appropriate ways in

which one could join the public and personal spheres. However, the video offers an even darker image of the conditions – it shows that within the context of overzealous positive life orientation the therapeutic discourse can even mean the lack of actual dealing with one's own problems and depicts the hopelessness of the situation regardless of the endeavours of the protagonist.

In the series of drawings Vesna Bukovec took texts that she has found in various psychological tests on positive life orientation and placed them in a dialogue with images that she has taken from internet stock photography libraries. The drawings are reduced to simple lines and thus successfully complement the »thinness« of the written statements/questions. The selection of images offers additional irony to the accompanying texts, the effect of which is emphasised by the *en face* portraits that are deformed into spooky grimaces with broad smiles, which make them function as masks in the game of forced happiness.

Taking images from internet stock photography libraries was also not a coincidental choice. This places the work in the same line as other works by Vesna Bukovec that treat the laws of consumer culture and its influence upon the contemporary individual. The self-help culture and dictate of positive life orientation can successfully be perpetuated in the contemporary consumer society in which the individual needs innumerable means in order to fulfil her/his goal: self-fulfilment and happy life. However, because it is impossible to achieve a wholesome and harmonious identity, the individual constantly has new products and services at her/his disposal, that will hopefully lead her/him to the fulfilment of the endless task that she/he has to believe will end successfully.

Urška Jurman

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In uncertain times I usually expect the best

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree



I don't get upset too easily

1

2

3

4

5

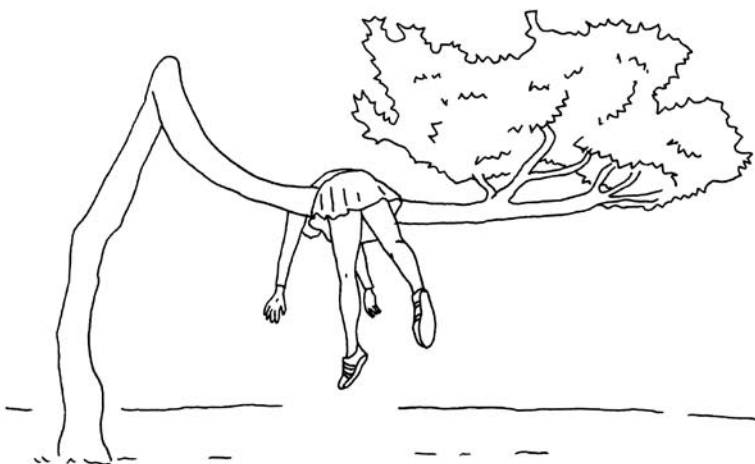
Strongly
Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly
Agree



I worry about my health

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Definitely
False

Mostly
False

Somewhat
False

Slightly
False

Slightly
True

Somewhat
True

Mostly
True

Definitely
True



There are lots of ways around any problem

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Definitely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Slightly False	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Definitely True



Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

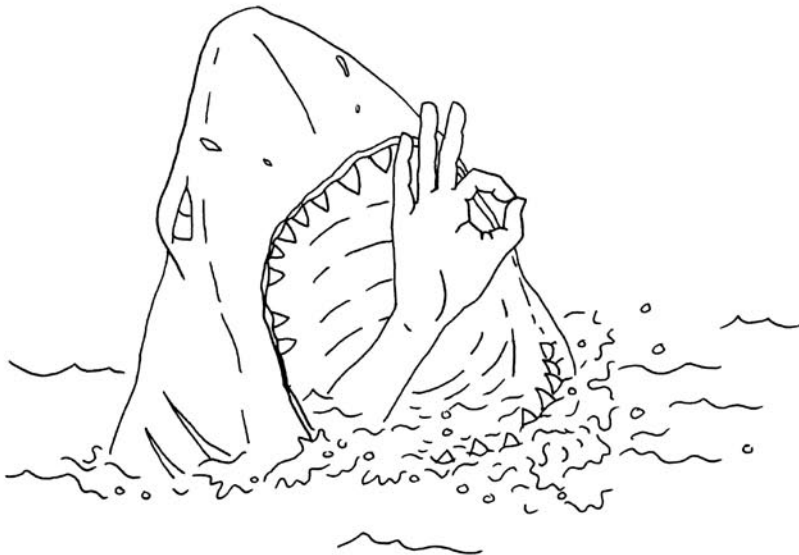
not
at all

a great
deal

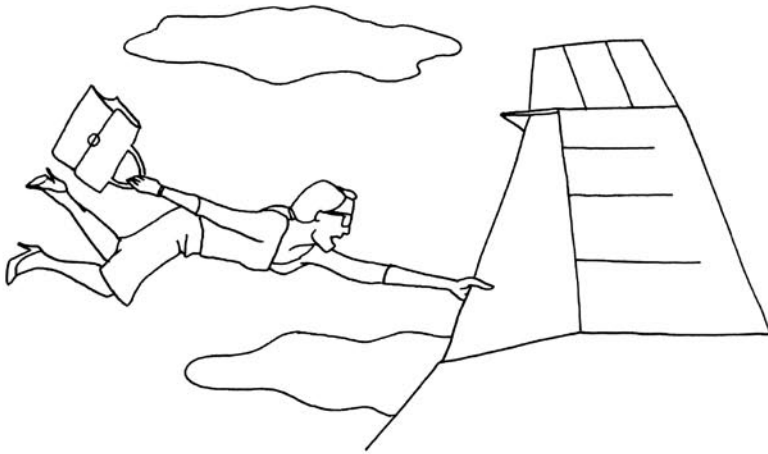


If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree



- 1 Anything is possible
- 2 I create my circumstances, my circumstances don't create me
- 3 The only thing I can control is my attitude towards life
- 4 I always have a choice



- 1 I can find balance in my life
- 2 Love opens all doors
- 3 I have a wonderful and satisfying job
- 4 The Universe supports my every effort

VESNA BUKOVEC



- 1977 Rojena v Ljubljani
- 1995–96 Študij filozofije in sociologije kulture na
 Filozofski fakulteti, Univerza v Ljubljani
- 2002 Diploma na Akademiji za likovno umetnost
 in oblikovanje, Univerza v Ljubljani
- 2006 Magisterij na Akademiji za likovno umetnost
 in oblikovanje, Univerza v Ljubljani

IZBRANE SAMOSTOJNE RAZSTAVE

- 2008 Special Place in the City, Umetnostna galerija Maribor, Razstavni salon Rotovž, Maribor
- 2007 Special Place in the City, Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana
- 2006 Video stena: Vesna Bukovec, Galerija Meduza, Obalne galerije Piran, Koper
- 2006 Nakupovanje/Shopping, Galerija Simulaker, Novo Mesto
- 2006 Special Place in the City - Graz, Galerija Centrum in medien.KUNSTLABOR (Kunsthhaus), Gradec
- 2005 TV, Center in galerija P74, Ljubljana
- 2005 Osebna povezava*, Likovni salon Celje, Celje
- 2004 Odrazi intime, Galerija Nova, Zagreb
- 2003 Lokalna problematika, Center in Galerija P74, Ljubljana

IZBRANE SKUPINSKE RAZSTAVE

- 2009 Ars Electoronica, Postaja DIVA_predstavlja, Projekcije GAMA, Brucknerhaus, Linz
- 2009 Value Point - Siemens_artLab hosted by Hilger Contemporary, Hilger Contemporary, Dunaj
- 2009 Finalisti nagrade Skupine OHO 2009, Center in galerija P74, Ljubljana
- 2009 DIVA v galeriji Škuc, Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana
- 2009 Photonic, Luminatic: Nova slovenska fotografija in video, Kulturzentrum Korotan, Dunaj;
 Galerija Photoport, Bratislava
- 2008 Necessary Discourse on Hysteria, Koroška galerija likovnih umetnosti Slovenj Gradec

- 2007 Vsak človek je kustos / Jeder Mensch ist ein Kurator, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana
- 2007 Festival Tina B., Mobile Video Art, Praga
- 2007 Some Other City, Sarajevska zima, Galerija ICP, Sarajevo
- 2006 Videodokument & Eyedentify Yourself, Sparwasser HQ, Klub Z, Berlin
- 2006 Narratives, -35/+65: Two Generations, Kunsthaus Graz, Gradec
- 2006 Fragmented Show, C/O Careof, Milano
- 2006 Arsenal sztuki, Galerija Arsenal, Białystok
- 2005 Teritoriji, identitete, mreže; Slovenska umetnost 1995–2005, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana
- 2005 26. Mednarodni grafični bienale, Prva linija, MGLC, Ljubljana
- 2005 How to Speak of Contemporary Art?, Galerija Arsenal, Białystok
- 2005 Young Art Europe, MOYA Museum of Young Art, Dunaj
- 2004 Breakthrough, Grote Kerk, Haag
- 2003 Fair-Play, Galerija Play, Berlin
- 2003 25. Mednarodni grafični bienale, Ljubljana, MGLC in Moderna galerija, Ljubljana
- 2003 11. Bienale mladih ustvarjalcev Evrope in Sredozemlja, Atene
- 2002 Start, Mestna galerija, Ljubljana

ŠTIPENDIJE IN REZIDENCE

- 2007 Some Other City, Sarajevska zima, Sarajevo, BiH
- 2006 Visura Aperta, Momiano 2006, Momjan, Hrvaška
- 2006 Advanced Course in Visual Arts, Como, Italija
- 2006 Imagining Common Lands, Gorica, Italija
- 2006 Štipendija CCN Graz, Gradec, Avstrija
- 2004 Parallel, Nottingham, Velika Britanija
- 2002 G.A.R.Ba 2002, Montescaglioso, Italija

Vesna Bukovec deluje kot samostojna avtorica in v skupini KOLEKTIVA z Lado Cerar in Metko Zupanič.

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VESNA BUKOVEC

- 1977 Born in Ljubljana
1995–96 Study of philosophy and sociology of culture, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana
2002 BFA, Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana
2006 MFA, Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2008 Special Place in the City, UGM Gallery Maribor, Razstavní salon Rotovž, Maribor
2007 Special Place in the City, Škuc Gallery, Ljubljana
2006 Video Wall: Vesna Bukovec, Meduza Gallery, Obalne galerije Piran Gallery, Koper
2006 Nakupovanje/Shopping, Simulaker Gallery, Novo Mesto
2006 Special Place in the City - Graz, Galerie Centrum and medien.KUNSTLABOR (KunsthauS), Graz
2005 TV, P74 Center and Gallery, Ljubljana
2005 Personal*, Likovni salon Gallery, Celje
2004 Intimate Images, Nova Gallery, Zagreb
2003 Local Issues, P74 Center and Gallery, Ljubljana

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 DIVA Station_presents, GAMA Screening, Ars Electronica 2009, Brucknerhaus, Linz
2009 Value Point - Siemens_artLab hosted by Hilger Contemporary, Hilger Contemporary, Vienna
2009 OHO Award Finalists 2009, P74 Center and Gallery, Ljubljana
2009 DIVA at Škuc Gallery, Škuc Gallery & SCCA-Ljubljana, Ljubljana
2009 Photonic, Luminatic: New Slovenian Photography and Video, Kulturzentrum Korotan, Vienna;
Photoport Gallery, Bratislava
2008 Necessary Discourse on Hysteria, The Gallery of Fine Arts Slovenj Gradec, Slovenj Gradec
2007 Every Man Is a Curator / Jeder Mensch ist ein Kurator, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana
2007 Tina B. Festival, Mobile Video Art: The Intimate Life of the Global Village, Prague
2007 Some Other City, Sarajevo Winter Festival, ICP Gallery, Sarajevo

- 2006 Videodokument & Eyedentify Yourself, Sparwasser HQ, Klub Z, Berlin
- 2006 Narratives, -35/+65: Two Generations, Kunsthaus Graz, Graz
- 2006 Fragmented Show, C/O Careof, Milan
- 2006 Arsenal sztuki, Arsenal Gallery, Białystok
- 2005 Territories, Identities, Nets; Slovene Art 1995–2005, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana
- 2005 26th International Biennial of Graphic Arts Ljubljana; The First Line, International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC), Ljubljana
- 2005 How to Speak of Contemporary Art?, Arsenal Gallery, Białystok
- 2005 Young Art Europe, MOYA Museum of Young Art, Vienna
- 2004 Breakthrough, Grote Kerk, The Hague
- 2003 Fair-Play, Play Gallery, Berlin
- 2003 25th International Biennial of Graphic Arts Ljubljana, MGLC, Ljubljana
- 2003 11th Biennial of the Young Artists of Europe and the Mediterranean, Athens
- 2002 Start, Mestna Gallery, Ljubljana

GRANTS AND RESIDENCES

- 2007 Some Other City, Sarajevo Winter Festival, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 2006 Visura Aperta, Momiano 2006, Momjan, Croatia
- 2006 Advanced Course in Visual Arts, Como, Italy
- 2006 Imagining Common Lands, Gorica, Italy
- 2006 Grant CCN Graz, Graz, Austria
- 2004 Parallel, Nottingham, Great Britain
- 2002 G.A.R.Ba 2002, Montescaglioso, Italy

Vesna Bukovec works as a solo artist and is also a member of the art group KOLEKTIVA together with Lada Cerar and Metka Zupanič.

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