



KADA RUŽE VIŠE NE MIRIŠU  
60x80 cm/komb. tehnika/2021.

# SANDRA RADIĆ PARAĆ

## The inner bridges



NISAM VIŠE TU  
80 x 30 cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2020.

## INTRODUCTION

We are living in times where someone's success is measured by the accumulation of material goods. One's status, success and desired position in society are achieved through purchasing and owning, with everything imaginable being purchased – affection, love and respect in society. The identity of an individual is being established and defined based on the realised income and assets. Consequently, due to such a twisted scale of values, many wonder what true happiness is.

We are witnessing a mass exodus from Croatia and while one would expect it to be the result of people striving for existence, recent research shows that people are not leaving the country for primarily financial reasons but rather because they do not see a real long-term opportunity for advancement, development and happy life in their homeland. The primary reasons for this exodus further confirm the fact that the foundation of an individual's happiness is not to be searched for in accumulated material goods, success and position of power in society but in those values that we have suppressed and neglected such as spiritual wealth, good relationships with family, friends and acquaintances, gaining experience and creating memories based on the lived experiences that have enriched our soul.

Emigration, as one of life's greatest challenges, implies leaving home, family, friends, i.e. everything familiar to us that has formed, defined and made us a unique individual as well as making a new beginning in order not to forget our heritage, thus preserving our own identity. Artist Sandra Radić Parać interpreted her experience of leaving the country, lived experiences and inner conflicts in her latest cycle of works entitled *The Inner Bridges*.

## DECISION ON LEAVING THE COUNTRY

The cycle comprises a total of 21 works that serve to the artist to develop her intimate visual diary created as a result of intensive internal turmoil, states and emotions that the author experienced when she made the agonising decision to leave the country. Sandra Radić Parać moved from her native Dalmatia to the large cosmopolitan city of Berlin. Her inner conflicts, stress and strains as well as mixed emotions resulted in a new cycle of paintings created from 2015 to 2021. As the author herself states, her work focuses on a rush of intimate emotions ranging from bitter disappointment, melancholy, apathy, depression to freeing up her inner strength and arising of a new hope for people that make this world a better place for all of us.

The uncertainty, pressure and expectations of a new environment, new people and, after all, a new life required courage, determination and incredible energy while adapting, familiarising with and finding her own place in the new environment. The artist was expected to simultaneously provide for herself, raise a family, reconcile her private and business life and dedicate herself to art, her true vocation in life. Apart from all the aforementioned concerns and preoccupations, Sandra Radić Parać found herself *on the other side* of the border for the first time in her life, thereby becoming a member of the diaspora, which opened up a whole new range of emotions and thoughts as well as new perspectives, while pointing to the deep-rooted problems such as the relationship between the emigrants and their homeland. The existing gap between them has come to the fore, which is constantly getting deeper due to numerous examples of prejudice and growing animosity on both sides. Sandra Radić Parać transformed a whirlwind of strong emotions, states and thoughts that marked her personal experience of living outside her own country into a series of self-portraits and portraits in order to cease the long-standing prejudice and construct inner bridges between individuals on both sides of the border.

## GETTING RID OF THE PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES

The artist chooses the theme of self-portraits so that on the example of her own human being she can express the suffering of all those struggling for their realisation and finding themselves under new circumstances. Getting to know ourselves requires focusing on our personal self, which enables us to explore ourselves from the inside out. These are the most intimate insights that can be adopted by diving into our own thoughts, feelings and actions. Prepared to take that step, Sandra Radić Parać, an author whose work is characterised by an authentic expression, develops a palette of human emotions through the subject matter of self-portrait in the works of art featuring emphasised intimism. The characters depicted in the paintings are self-portraits of the artist or portions of her personality that are fragmented, i.e. divided into emotional and experiential categories. A self-portrait is not a mere set of physical characteristics but rather it reflects emotional states, desires and needs, values and roles we keep hidden within ourselves, thereby emerging as a natural choice when it comes to the interpretation of the sensitive, profound and complex theme of emigration, prejudice and identity issues. An individual living outside his/her



PRVI LET  
80x40cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2020.



PLAVA KIŠA  
28,5 x 50 cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2017.

native country is often torn between reality, desires and expectations, i.e. between what he/she really is, what he/she would like to be and what others expect him/her to be. According to the artist, the purpose of her works is to get rid of the existing stereotype *home-land – diaspora* and vice versa and to construct inner bridges that would use their structure to strengthen an individual in his/her confrontation with the trauma of *transplantation*, or a situation in which that individual literally changes his/her whole life including his/her job, environment, language, circle of friends and habits.

## LEARNING ABOUT THE DEPTH OF YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

The titles of her works are pronouncedly associative, occasionally melancholic, while indicating internal turmoil and a whirlwind of emotions that follow the key turning points in the artist's life (*First Flight, Before Dawn, A Long Farewell, The Autumn with the Sorrow of the Blue Sea, Inner Universe*) and with their symbolism and associations they can initiate in the viewer a reflection of similar experiences, memories, and aspirations. As a substrate for her works Sandra Radić Parać opts for wood as a living substance whose rings record and preserve traces of time. Different formats and shapes as well as substrate textures and sporadic gaps (*Fire in the Head, 2017; The Blue Rain, 2017*) outline the focus, determinants and direction; they also define the composition of a work of art, with occasional placing of a frame within a frame (*Self-portrait,*

*2017; Self-portrait – outside the Frame, 2020*) lending an additional dimension and depth to the presentation itself. The wooden substrate conveys a symbolic message of the space of spirituality and driving force in our life, thus inviting us to distance ourselves from the material world and focus on our own spiritual development. The focus is maintained on the human figure, especially on the face created through layered stains of colour, which expresses inner states and changes. These are not some instant reactions like anger or rage but emotions forming an integral part of human soul, which shape the essence of an individual. Sandra Radić Parać places her self-portraits in an abstract environment, sporadically defined by the element of a tree, the surface of water or the sky, i.e. segments from the world of nature. As often as not, the original surface of the wooden substrate forms an integral part of the composition, thus highlighting the centrepiece. By applying elements such as lace, golden leaves, an old key, nails and sawdust, the author accomplishes different textures and structures, which contributes to the creation of an intimate, immediate atmosphere that awakens a reminiscence of long-forgotten human values. All the elements are well-known to us and they bring back memories of some past times – carefree childhood, nurturing old crafts and trades, family gatherings, intimacy and connection of the human being to his/her roots. A key, a lace mat or diary covers represent nostalgic building blocks that awaken a reminiscence of some forgotten values – family, attachment, support, teamwork and growth. It seems that we keep forgetting that we are not just what we are today.



AUTOPORTRET LEŽEĆI  
46 x 25 cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2018.

Even if we leave our country and change our environment, job and people, our core essence is still comprised of everything we have experienced in our life. The interwoven threads of growing up, upbringing, family, friends, first loves, maturation, gained experiences and decisions we have made make up the weaving of our personality. Just as many customs and crafts from the past required time, skill and complete devotion, so too the creation of each work of art from Sandra Radić Parać's new cycle implies an image constructed from a living substrate with her own predispositions, which serves to the author to form a desired idea through the implementation of different techniques (acrylic, oil, felt-tip pens, pencil) and through the application of the elements from her own past, which demands exceptional devotion, an inner sense of harmony, an innate ability to convey emotions, and visualisation of a completed work. Colours play an important part in creating an atmosphere of an individual work and they range from gentle pastel shades of blue, green and lilac to a deep and intense blue colour that is a sort of reminiscence of *The Blue Ether*. The works vary from a completely natural wooden surface, with a figure being erected in its centre (*Inner Universe, 2020*) to pronouncedly diverse compositions with prominent textures (*Self-portrait, 2017; Self-portrait – outside the Frame, 2020*), where the self-portrait is placed in the centre of the frame within the frame, while the work itself fluidly transforms from the two-dimensional surface of the painting into three-dimensional building blocks of tree bark that *penetrates* the inner frame and opens up the

composition. The creation of the accompanying motifs and elements is often stylised and repetitive – raindrops, autumn leaves or the surface of water. The symbolism of various accompanying elements is highlighted, thus introducing dynamics but also encouraging the diversity of the composition itself. It is the treatment of the theme of migrations through a combination of complete mastery of oil on canvas technique in the spirit of old masters and emotions woven through different old-fashioned elements of emphasised symbolism that makes these works timeless. They do not belong to any epoch but unite the classical with the contemporary; in doing so, they interpret the all-time theme of migrations, changes and sense of belonging, thus providing an opportunity for reading and re-reading the introduced content.

## CONSTRUCTION OF INNER BRIDGES

Through her 21 works, Sandra Radić Parać interprets the emotional and experiential stages through which she has gone from moving abroad until today. One of her earlier works entitled *The Blue Rain* from 2017 depicts the sorrow and melancholy caused by leaving the homeland and *the key of her studio in Trogir* and as the author says, it also depicts the preparations for the hard days to come, when rain will wash away the blue colour of the *blue ether*. The work represents a symbolical farewell to her homeland and accommodating to a new environment in which an individual becomes just a number, while losing his/her personality, identity, language and habits. Her shifting emotions

and attitudes towards change can be noticed in the work *Self-portrait – outside the Frame* from 2020, which captures the author's moment of making an intimate life decision in an effort to redefine herself; "the frameworks of my life imposed constraints on my creativity and artistic work, which I found intolerable. Therefore, I decided to break these constraints and try to find myself and my new reality again. Even if I fail, I will not give up trying." The exceptionally powerful work presents the artist who is determined to bring necessary changes. Sandra Radić Parać depicts herself while looking straight at the viewer and holding the frame that transforms from a two-dimensional surface

into a three-dimensional frame made of tree bark that penetrates the original frame of the work. On its edges there are blossoming roses that represent a symbol of the victory of love over life's obstacles, i.e. the victory of the artistic vocation over precarious life circumstances that captured the artist's soul. On the other hand, in her work *Utopia or the Spring of Life* from 2020 the author depicts the growth and maturation of a young human being, while pointing to the primordial connection between man and nature. The subtly depicted immersion and intertwining of the growth of the heart and the growth of the tree emanates pulsating life energy, thus suggesting that it is not important



UTOPIJA ILI PROLJEĆE ŽIVOTA  
39,5 x 39,5 cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2020.

where we are but whether we have attained self-realisation and created a fulfilling life on a stable foundation. A large number of works focus on the issue of current values, needs, relationships and communication or interaction between human beings – how much we really hear, feel, understand and listen to other people in a world where everything seems overemphasised and in the times when we are in a hurry, when we rush around, pay attention to ourselves only, when we want everything right now, without hesitation (*Jupiter and Io*, 2017; *The Touch That Nobody Has Seen*, 2021). The only work with the depiction of an old woman *I'm Not Here Anymore* from 2020, as the culmination of the whole cycle, is placed on a narrow vertical format



PRIJE SVITANJA  
80 x 40 cm/komb. teh. na drvu/2020.

that symbolically joins the sky and earth as well as the material and the spiritual. The work depicts an elderly woman with a slight smile on her face, her head raised and her gaze directed towards the future. The rings of the wooden substrate and the experiential lines on the woman's face are intertwined and they define an expression that radiates happiness and satisfaction with what has been experienced, achieved and realised. It is a face that records life experience and all the emotional conflicts that had to be faced, which eventually found its inner peace; it is a face that all of us should seek for.

## THE UNPARALLELED POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The works from the cycle *The Inner Bridges* are deeply emotional, surrounded by an aura of calm but they also possess immense power of feelings expressed through one's look, body position or hand movement. They vary from determination, melancholy, sadness, nostalgia, sometimes happiness and hope to inner peace. The introspective character of the works is stressed, in fact, they focus on her inner self, whose exposing at the most profound, rather vulnerable level makes the artist reveal her soul and put her trust in the viewer with the hope that the revelation of the hidden corners of her soul will encourage those on the other side to do the same. The interpretation of each individual work is intentionally omitted because each work communicates directly through emotions and states that have been experienced; if an individual sees himself/herself reflected in a work of art, he/she will offer possibilities for recognising and identifying with lived experience, which denotes the beginning of the construction, growth and development of inner bridges reaching the viewer, who is ready to learn about someone else's inner self (fears, hopes and victories) in order to learn about his/her own inner self.

In a world that is obsessed with the accumulation of material goods, Sandra Radić Parać speaks out boldly and points to the unparalleled power of the human spirit, while encouraging people to focus on spiritual growth and development, which would enable living in harmony with nature. In this visual and emotional search for happiness we realise that neglected human values are what can enable us to establish connection, grow, develop and act for the common good, while also offering a different version of the future – the future we would really like to live.

Sonja Švec Španjol,  
mag.hist.art.

## ŽIVOTOPIS:

SANDRA RADIĆ PARAC' (1981.) je samostalna umjetnica, prof. likovne kulture i likovna pedagoginja, odrasla i školovana u Dalmaciji. Diplomirala je 2005. godine na Umjetničkoj akademiji sveučilista u Splitu (klasa prof. Željka Marovića), a iste godine, kao najbolja studentica, primila je rektorovu nagradu. Godinama živi od svoga rada kao samostalna umjetnica u Trogiru gdje vodi svoju galeriju - atelje, te radi u struci. Nakon uspješno završenog rezidencijalnog programa „Kunstraum Tapir“ u Berlinu, 2014. se tamo seli, studira njemački jezik i 2018. se upisuje na Deutsche Angestellten-Akademie. U Berlinu otvara vlastito umjetničko poslovanje, stvara u svom ateljeu i radi kao umjetnički pedagog. Inspiracija su joj poezija i priroda, a duga kosa i frizure su joj strast. Članica je HULU-a Split. "Autentičnost i iskrenost prema sebi i svom radu. Sve ostalo će nadoći." joj je moto.

## BIOGRAPHY:

SANDRA RADIĆ PARAC' (1981) was raised and educated in Dalmatia. She is an independent artist and art educator who holds the academic title Magister Artium (M.A.). She graduated in 2005 at the Academy of Arts of University of Split (class of Prof. Željko Marović). In that same year she received the Rector's Award as the best student. She has lived off her work as a freelance artist in Trogir where she ran her gallery studio and worked for a few years in art business. After successfully completing the residential program "Kunstraum Tapir" in Berlin, she moved there in 2014. She studied German, and in 2018 she enrolled in Deutsche Angestellten-Akademie. She has opened her own art business in Berlin. Now she works as an art educator and is creative in her studio. Her inspiration is poetry and nature and her passions are long hair and hairstyles. She is a member of HULU Split. Her motto is: "Be authentic and honest with yourself and your work. Everything else will follow."

### SAMOSTALNE IZLOŽBE / SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- Dvorac Vitturi, Kaštel Lukšić, 2002.,
- Općina Okrug, Vijećnica, Okrug Gornji, 2006.
- Muzej grada Trogira, 2014.
- Salon Galić, Split, 2015.
- POUMAR, Nova Gradiška, online izložba, 2020.

### VAŽNIJE ŽIRIRANE IZLOŽBE / JURIED ART EXIBITIONS:

- Genova, Italija, V. skup mediteranskih akademija, Commenda di Pre, 2004.
- Muzej Mimara, Zagreb, skupna izložba Hrvatske pasionske baštine, 2005.
- Kunstraum Tapir, Berlin, Njemačka, 2013.
- Galerija Sebastijan, Sv. Vlaho u suvremenoj umjetnosti, Dubrovnik, 2014.
- Galerija Prica, Samobor, 4. međunarodni trienale autoportreta, 2017.
- Perceive Art – Leave a Trail, Galerija Zvonimir, 2018.
- Utopija - distopija, mjesto kojeg nema i unutarne borbe, online izložba, 2020.
- Galerija Prica, Samobor, 5. međunarodni trienale autoportreta, 2021.

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