

An abstract painting featuring a complex composition of geometric and organic forms. The background is a deep, textured blue. In the foreground, there are several prominent elements: a large, dark, almost black shape on the left; a bright yellow rectangular object with an orange circle on the right; and various grey, white, and black shapes that suggest architectural or mechanical structures. The brushwork is visible, giving the painting a tactile, layered quality.

Zen Contemporary Art Gallery

03.10.- 23.11.2025.

MATKO VEKIĆ

Slika iz pozadine Image from the Background

SLIKA IZ POZADINE

Zen Contemporary Art galerija s ponosom predstavlja izložbu *Slika iz pozadine*, koja donosi seriju novih radova hrvatskog akademskog slikara Matka Vekića. Tijekom više od tri desetljeća Vekić je oblikovao prepoznatljiv likovni rukopis i potvrdio se kao jedan od ključnih autora suvremenog hrvatskog slikarstva.

Njegovo stvaralaštvo oblikuje jedinstven i prepoznatljiv umjetnički jezik koji snažno odražava duh vremena, dok njegov opus, ponekad bliži apstrakciji, a ponekad jasno figurativan, otvara prostor za nove interpretacije i suvremene dijaloge.

Vekićevo slikarstvo prepoznatljivo je po energičnoj, ekspresivnoj gestualnosti i naglašenoj materijalnosti boje, po upečatljivim kolorističkim rješenjima – od bogatih i intenzivnih tonova do smirenijih nijansi koje stvaraju harmonične odnose.

Raznovrsne kompozicije, slojeviti planovi i enformelistički pristup obradi površine svjedoče o njegovoj stalnoj potrebi da propituje granice slikarskog medija.

Dinamika i napetosti koje proizlaze iz susreta različitih tekstura i materijala otkrivaju umjetnikovu želju da istraži i iscrpi puni potencijal slike, čineći svako njegovo djelo sugestivnim i vizualno dojmljivim iskustvom.

U dosadašnjem radu Vekić neprestano mijenja i proširuje odabir motiva – od urbanih prizora i predmeta svakodnevice do figura i simbola koji često nose društveno-kritičko značenje. Premda naizgled raznoliki i udaljeni, sve te motive u njegovim slikama povezuje specifičan slikarski jezik i snažan osjećaj za formu, kompoziciju i kolorit.



Lice iz pozadine I, II Face from the Background I, II / ulje i lak na platnu oil and varnish on canvas / 110x90 cm, 2025.

Upravo ta sposobnost da uvijek pronalazi različite teme, a istodobno zadrži prepoznatljiv i dosljedan rukopis, pokazuje njegovu stalnu sklonost promjeni i istraživanju, pri čemu svaki novi ciklus donosi novost i iznenađenje.

Ciklus *Slika iz pozadine* nastao je neposredno nakon umjetnikova povratka iz Indije, a posvećen je, kako sam ističe, vrijednim i neumornim, šarenim dostavljačima brze hrane, koji iz dana u dan sve snažnije preplavljaju sive ulice europskih gradova.

Radovi su nastali iz unutarnje potrebe, u stanju nalik snivanju – posve mirno i bez ambicije, naglašava autor. U ovoj seriji radova u središtu interesa nalaze dostavljači hrane – figure koje sve snažnije obilježavaju vizualni identitet europskih gradova. Umjetnik u njima prepoznaje suvremene nomade, figure globaliziranog svijeta koje neprestano cirkuliraju gradom, neumorno povezujući ljude i prostore. Njihova šarena i ujednačena odjeća unosi neočekivane akcente boje u monotone urbane pejzaže, dok njihova neprekidna prisutnost svjedoči o promjenama u životu suvremenog čovjeka. Kroz ove slike Vekić ne prikazuje samo portret radnika nove globalne ekonomije, već i širu društvenu sliku – ubrzani ritam života, transformaciju javnog prostora, kao i tiho ispreplitanje različitih kultura u gradskim sredinama. No umjetnik ne ostaje samo na prikazu tog uličnog spektakla, već se okreće i skrivenoj pozadini – kuhinjama u kojima neumorni radnici iz dana u dan stvaraju hranu koja pokreće taj sustav. Kuhinjski prostori i predmeti svakodnevice transformiraju se u kompleksne slikarske kompozicije koje nadilaze doslovno prikazivanje. Ono što na prvi pogled djeluje kao fragmentarno bilježenje banalnih prizora – sudopera, čaša, kućanskih aparata – ubrzo se otkriva kao



Lice iz pozadine III, IV / *Face from the Background III, IV* / ulje i lak na platnu oil and varnish on canvas / 110x90 cm, 2025.

istraživanje vizualne percepcije, ritma i dinamike prostora. Vekić se ovdje oslanja na snažnu gestu i bogate, kontrastne plohe boje koje stvaraju napetost između figurativnog i apstraktnog. Predmeti postaju znaci, reduciranih i deformiranih kontura, dok sama struktura slike evocira osjećaj slojevitosti i unutarnje vibracije prostora.

Dok dostavljači predstavljaju vidljivi, gotovo simbolički znak današnjeg gradskog života, prizori kuhinja otkrivaju drugu, često neprimijećenu stranu istog fenomena. Na taj način Vekić bilježi cijeli lanac, od anonimnog i tihog rada iza zatvorenih vrata do šarenih figura koje oblikuju ritam gradske rutine. Iako posvećeni konkretnom motivu, novi radovi odišu univerzalnošću, otvarajući pitanja o vrijednosti rada, ljudskoj izdržljivosti i tipičnim prizorima koji oblikuju vizualni identitet naših gradova. Istovremeno, oni suptilno ukazuju na proces u kojem se različite kulture i običaji postupno isprepliću, stvarajući nove urbane obrasce, ujedno dovodeći u pitanje očuvanje izvornog obilježja grada i jedne kulture.

Ova izložba potvrđuje ne samo Vekićevu umjetničku zrelost nego i stalnu otvorenost promjenama, koje unose svježinu i otkrivaju nove mogućnosti unutar jasno izgrađenog jezika. Njegove slike svjedoče o neiscrpojnoj energiji i intelektualnoj znatiželji, ali i o rijetkoj sposobnosti da različite motive i tematske zaokrete uvijek pretoči u snažan i vizualno sugestivan izraz. Matko Vekić se time potvrđuje kao autor iznimne stvaralačke snage i širokog opusa, čiji rad nadilazi lokalne okvire te zauzima relevantno mjesto u širem kontekstu suvremene umjetnosti, istovremeno ostajući nezaobilazna figura hrvatskog slikarstva.



Slika iz pozadine V, VI Image from the Background V, VI / ulje i lak na platnu oil and varnish on canvas / 150x150 cm, 2025.



Slika iz pozadine II *Image from the Background II* / ulje i lak na platnu *oil and varnish on canvas* / 140x140 cm, 2024.

IMAGE FROM THE BACKGROUND

Zen Contemporary Art Gallery is proud to present the exhibition *Image from the Background*, featuring a new series of works by Croatian academic painter Matko Vekić. Over the course of more than three decades, Vekić has developed a distinctive artistic signature, establishing himself as one of the key figures of contemporary Croatian painting.

His work shapes a unique and recognizable artistic language that powerfully reflects the spirit of the times, while his oeuvre – at times closer to abstraction, at times clearly figurative – opens space for new interpretations and contemporary dialogues.

Vekić's painting is marked by energetic, expressive gestures and a pronounced materiality

of color, with striking chromatic solutions ranging from rich, intense tones to more subdued hues that create harmonious relationships. Diverse compositions, layered spatial planes, and an art informel approach to the treatment of the surface testify to his constant need to probe the limits of painting. The tensions arising from the interplay of different textures and materials reveal the artist's desire to explore and exhaust the full potential of the medium, making each work a suggestive and visually compelling experience.

Throughout his career, Vekić has continuously shifted and expanded his range of motifs – from urban scenes and everyday objects to figures and symbols often imbued with socio-critical meaning. Although seemingly diverse and distant, all these motifs are bound together in his works by a specific painterly language and a strong sense of form, composition, and color. It is precisely this ability to consistently discover new themes while maintaining a recognizable and coherent style that reflects his enduring inclination toward change and exploration, with each new cycle bringing novelty and surprise.

The cycle *Image from the Background* emerged shortly after the artist's return from India and is dedicated, as he himself notes, to the tireless, vibrant food delivery workers who, day by day, increasingly occupy the streets of European cities. The works, created out of an inner need and in a state akin to reverie, came into being calmly and without ambition, the artist emphasizes. At the center of this series are food delivery drivers – figures that increasingly define the visual identity of European cities. In them, the artist recognizes contemporary nomads, figures of a globalized world who endlessly circulate through the city, tirelessly connecting people and places. Their colorful, uniform clothing introduces unexpected accents of color into monotonous urban landscapes, while their constant presence bears witness to the transformation of everyday life. Through these paintings, Vekić depicts not only the portrait of workers of the new global economy, but also a broader social image – the accelerated pace of life, the transformation of public space, and the quiet interweaving of diverse cultures within urban environments. Yet the artist does not remain solely with this street spectacle: he turns instead to the hidden background – the kitchens in which tireless workers, day after day, produce the food that sustains the system. Kitchen interiors and ordinary household objects are transformed into complex painterly compositions that transcend literal representation. What at first glance seems to be a fragmentary record of banal details – sinks, glasses, household appliances – soon reveals itself as an exploration of visual perception, rhythm, and spatial dynamics. Here, Vekić relies on vigorous gesture and bold, contrasting fields of color that generate tension between figuration and abstraction.

Objects become signs, reduced and deformed in contour, while the very structure of the painting evokes a sense of layered space and inner vibration.

While food delivery drivers represent the visible, almost symbolic sign of contemporary urban life, kitchen scenes uncover another, often overlooked side of the same pheno-

menon. In this way, Vekić records the entire chain – from the anonymous and quiet labor behind closed doors to the colorful figures who set the rhythm of city life.

Although anchored in concrete motifs, the new works resonate with universality, raising questions about the value of labor, human resilience, and the ordinary images that shape the visual identity of our cities. At the same time, they subtly point to the process in which different cultures and customs gradually intertwine, creating new urban patterns while at the same time questioning the preservation of the city's and a culture's original features.

This exhibition confirms not only Vekić's artistic maturity but also his enduring openness to change, which brings freshness and reveals new possibilities within a clearly established painterly language. His works bear witness to inexhaustible energy and intellectual curiosity, as well as to the rare ability to transform varied motifs and thematic shifts into a powerful and visually evocative expression. In this way, Matko Vekić affirms himself as an artist of exceptional creative strength and a wide-ranging oeuvre, whose work transcends local frameworks to assume a relevant place in the broader context of contemporary art, while at the same time remaining an indispensable figure of Croatian painting.



Slika iz pozadine VIII / *Image from the Background VIII* / ulje i lak na platnu / oil and varnish on canvas / 100x120 cm, 2024.

ŽIVOTOPIS

Matko Vekić (Zagreb, 1970.), diplomirao je slikarstvo na ALU u Zagrebu 1995. u klasi prof. Đure Sedera. Do sada je izlagao na brojnim skupnim te više od 50 samostalnih izložbi, od toga nekoliko monografskih izložbi: 2005. *Životinjski krug – zodijak* u Umjetničkom paviljonu, 2008. *Simbol, znak, amblem, ornament i zločin* u Gliptoteci HAZU-a, 2010. *Okrutnost kruga* u HDLU u Galeriji Bačva, 2016. *Orijentalizacija* u Muzeju za umjetnost i obrt, 2019. *Dvojbe i komplementarnosti* u Laubi te 2021. *Arhipelag* u Muzeju suvremene umjetnosti u Zagrebu. Predstavljao je Hrvatsku dva puta u Kairu, 2006. na 10. i 2010. na 12. međunarodnom bijenalu, te 2009. godine u Veneciji, na 53. međunarodnom bijenalu. Njegova se djela nalaze u fundusima istaknutih hrvatskih muzeja i galerija te privatnim kolekcijama u zemlji i inozemstvu. Za svoj rad višestruko je nagrađivan, među ostalima na 6. bijenalu slikarstva, nagrada Slavko Kopač Grand Prix te državnom nagradom Vladimir Nazor za najbolju izložbu (2022.). Od 2017. godine je redoviti profesor na ALU u Zagrebu. Član je HDLU-a.

BIOGRAPHY

Matko Vekić (b. 1970, Zagreb) graduated in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 1995, in the class of Professor Đuro Seder. He has exhibited widely in group shows and held more than 50 solo exhibitions, including several major monographic shows: *Animal Circle – Zodiac* (Art Pavilion, 2005), *Symbol, Sign, Emblem, Ornament and Crime* (Gliptoteka HAZU, 2008), *The Cruelty of the Circle* (HDLU, Bačva Gallery, 2010), *Orientalization* (Museum of Arts and Crafts, 2016), *Doubts and Complementarities* (Lauba, 2019), and *Archipelago* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2021). He represented Croatia twice at the Cairo International Biennale (10th edition, 2006; 12th edition, 2010), and at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. His works are part of the collections of leading Croatian museums and galleries, as well as private collections in Croatia and abroad. He is a multiple award-winning artist, including the Slavko Kopač Grand Prix at the 6th Painting Biennale, and the Vladimir Nazor State Award for Best Exhibition (2022). Since 2017, he has been a full professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. He is also a member of the Croatian Association of Artists (HDLU).

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