

Repetitio Est Mater Studiorum

Repetition is the mother of learning

Indigo is a color named after the dye derived from the plant *indigofera tinctoria*. When Isaac Newton divided up the spectrum into the seven colors of the rainbow he defined indigo as the sixth one, a hue lying between blue and violet. In the colloquial mother tongue (Serbian) of Dejan Kaludjerović indigo also means carbon paper, a crucial element present in the majority of his handmade artworks. He started utilizing it as an apparent tool while still a student and continued to make use of it less overtly throughout his artistic career. He returns to using carbon paper visibly in his most recent drawings and paintings coming full circle.

The act of outlining and multiplying has always been an integral part in the oeuvre of Kaludjerović. In most cases he begins the work by tracing existing images onto a surface of choice (paper, canvas, table oil-cloth) via carbon paper. The covert activity of following lines or letters is one of the secrets in achieving such a faultless uninterrupted contour in his artworks. The artist renders a perfect image through a very manual process, often labor intensive since his own hand is involved in every step of development, and at the same time employs elements associated with mechanical reproduction and duplicating. Kaludjerović's choice of carbon paper is not coincidental – his interest in the realm of models, blueprints and archetypes of human behavior can be found in most of his compositions. The artist aims to bring to our consciousness our repeating patterns of conduct, often done for the sake of safety and structure, and how we take things around us for granted without questioning. We are conditioned to believe in our realities that are served via facebook, twitter, numerous websites and television channels whether they represent political bodies or spokes people for large multinational corporations. Kaludjerović has always used the past to comment on the present moment and ways it can affect the future. He reminds us that histories often repeat, taking cues from the generation of his own parents who believed in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and were not able to question the state apparatus until it started crumbling in the late 1980's.

Oscar Wilde's fairy tale *The Happy Prince* inspires the artist's latest painting *3478 Words*. Over a period of one year, Kaludjerović has painstakingly delineated every sentence of the fairy tale over an already existing canvas painting *Blue girls* from 2005. The resulting new piece is a multilayered work where the red tones of the previous painting can only be seen faintly through the letters of the fairy tale while an airy image of a hybrid playground motif covers the last coating of the painting. How does one quantify the arduous gesture of painting three thousand four hundred seventy eight words over approximately three hundred sixty five days in an era when time is becoming a luxury and almost every realm of our lives is commercialized? Through this piece the artist consciously decides to recycle himself, quite literally, by using an old painting of his own. Through an anti consumerist gesture, a previous canvas is used in order to create something brand new. Kaludjerović unifies various avenues that are present in his oeuvre in one singular piece, probably the most complex painting to date. The faint depiction of adolescent girls prompts the viewer to reveal the imposed inhibitions and control systems that are present in our paranoid and politically correct societies. The choice of *The Happy Prince* fairy tale is not coincidental, it is a metaphor for ideals that are disappearing from our society: friendship for friendship sake, kindness with no expectations and affection that is not premeditated.

Kaludjerović's latest works on paper eradicate the figure and play homage to children's playgrounds from the past. He retrieves these objects and gives them a new life. His first ready-made sculpture from this series is an electric car, a quintessential object of engagement in amusement parks for boys and girls growing up in the 70's and early 80's. Kaludjerović adds an extra layer to this piece which is not readily visible to the audience. Parts of the interior of the electric car, around the engine, are hand painted with the favorite cartoon character from Kaludjerović's childhood. With this symbolic gesture the artist hints as to how we memorialize certain aspects of our own childhood and our ability to store, retain and recall information from the past. He brings his beloved childhood recollections into a space of art and tries to decipher its meaning today. Another important object from Kaludjerović's past is the swing, since it used to exist

in front of the artist's apartment building while growing up. For a solo exhibition in 2010 at the Steinek gallery in Vienna, he engages his own father in an action of dismantling a swing from a public sphere, and recreates a new habitat for it in the space of the gallery for his own solo exhibition. His father appropriates something from a public area for a private memory of the artist, which then becomes an artifact in the space of the gallery. In return the artist finds another swing that he carefully hand paints using the same favorite cartoon character as in the interior of the ready-made car object. He then places the swing in the same public sphere where the old one once existed. Now the hidden character from the car sculpture becomes accessible to everyone since it resides in the public domain. Kaludjerović takes a photograph of the newly hand painted swing, which he then displays along the one from his childhood that his father secured for the gallery space.

In contrast to *3478 Words* painting where the entire fairy tale is written on one canvas, Kaludjerović divides the story in six equal parts and transfers onto six drawings. Executed on paper with graphite, he superimposes childhood signifiers, such as swings, ladders and merry go rounds that are rendered with acrylic and colored pencils. He again utilizes the technique with carbon paper, transferring each letter on paper, but opts to fully bold only one existing word from the fairy tale on each drawing. The choice of words are the following: fear, power, selfishness, rich, corporation to name a few. In addition he creates a drawing entirely out of used carbon paper that belongs to the part of the story that bolds the word power. On first glance everything seems happy go lucky, yet upon closer inspection one notices that parts of the seesaw are shaped as a canon and certain structures resemble cages and devices for torture. Through these works Dejan Kaludjerović poses an open ended question on the belief system that we find ourselves at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. He comments on the powerless position of the individual within the larger social frame and the imposed ways of being, which seems to be naturalized throughout the world. The artist doubts our liberal democratic model of living, driven by large multinational corporations where very few make decisions for the majority. The selfishness and greed of the rich produces a very small and closed circle of people with power. The global phenomenon of Occupy that we have witnessed in the recent past shows how proportionally very few people do not want to change the current financial system that clearly does not benefit the majority of the population. The installment of fear within societies is the most common way to manipulate the masses and is becoming a modus operandi with the goal of slowly banning freedoms of expression. The word mud appears on one of the drawings acting as a symbol of collapse, yet also represents hope since we are able to generate new realms out of mud - just like in the Mesopotamian literary *Epic of Gilgamesh* the Great Mother Goddess creates Enkidu the wild natural man out of clay and water.

The video installation *Je Suis Malade* consists of children's video portraits from around the world. The artist utilizes the technique of multiplication by depicting young human beings signing the same tune and standing in identical poses. The children perform the song a cappella style, stripped of any artifacts around them, exposing the viewer to the raw sound and beauty of a child's voice. By interpreting the song *Je Suis Malade* originally performed by the Egyptian born singer Dalida, the children sing in French, a language that is foreign to them. They immerse themselves in lyrics that are distant to them as are the experiences they sing about – smoking, drinking and depression. The lack of naturalness and spontaneity becomes an allegory about the maladies of the world that we find ourselves in, where children are often placed in the roles of adults creating a haunting experience for the viewer.

Technologies changed within the last fifteen years but the tracing and multiplying elements stay consistent within the oeuvre of Dejan Kaludjerović. Whether it be photocopying, carbon paper, photoshop or video the artist continuously illustrates his work by compiling elements that already exist yet always contain the meticulous touch of his hand. The history of humankind is enough for the artist to recreate new understandings of our ever-changing world and while the market becomes the regulator of the most important and basic processes in our lives, Kaludjerović hopes to make a shift in our consciousness through his work.