

Sislej Xhafa

Opportunistisch Naturalistisch

May 23 – June 18, 2006

**You are kindly invited to attend the opening on May 23rd at 8 pm.
Opening performance “T” at 8 pm.**

Curated by **Alenka Gregorič**

Sislej Xhafa belongs to a generation of artists who made their impressive debut on the international arena in the first half of the 1990s and who have been categorised from the very beginning due to a great number of exhibitions on the 'Balkans' theme. As soon as a wide interest in the art from this region emerged, expectations that the art from this region would fill the void of the West with its sociological, socially-critical and documentary works, sprung up. The artists and their work were categorised with names they mostly could not identify with. However, the challenge proved to be too tempting, as for many this was their first step onto the market scene and into the domain of the capital, which is ruled by the West. Rebellion would not have made much sense.

Somewhat later, when a polemic discussion (which is always difficult to escape) on the theme of the Balkans and 'other' Europe developed, the artists distanced themselves from stereotypical representations of their region. However, this does not imply that they changed their creative expression, but only that they established their position in relation to other artists, regardless of which passport they held. Separation from the group they supposedly belonged according to the Western criteria was a relief; however, it also resulted in merciless struggle for survival on the market. Some have succeeded, while others have remained faithful only to their local audience.

Sislej Xhafa, who is presenting his work at his first solo exhibition in Ljubljana, is certainly not one of the latter. In his works Xhafa criticises the political, economic and military monopoly, which lies in the hands of a few individuals, in a refined and ambiguous way, ironically responding to time and space in which he lives and/or works. A special place in his art is attributed to the involvement of the public, which is as imperative in art as it is in all other spheres of social life. Xhafa appeals to the society time and time again to re-consider the time and space they live in. Despite the veil that shadows the immediate message of his work, his

appeals are discernible, inescapable and, if there is only a touch of sensitivity hiding in us, impossible to ignore.

Adapting one's thinking to the given circumstances for one's own benefit, in short – *opportunism*, is the common denominator of the author's exhibition in the Škuc Gallery, which reflects the environment, i.e. space and time in which it appears. Thoughtlessness and greed of contemporary consumer society, which are spreading around the countries of the 'New Europe' like a virus, are, among other not exactly commendable attributes of the human kind, becoming virtues that can be easily applied to the current condition of our society and the local context. Sislej Xhafa's exhibition does not offer answers to the burning issues of the contemporary society, but it does encourage the visitor to reflect upon them and be self-critical, if this is at all still possible. The exhibited works are integrated into the physical space – the gallery, but also refer to the broader context in which the gallery is set.

Sislej Xhafa is an internationally acclaimed artist, who lives and works in New York. He has participated at many major exhibitions of contemporary art, including the Venice Biennale (1999), Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana (2000), the Istanbul Biennial (2001), the Tirana Biennial (2001 and 2003), Gwangju Biennale (2002), Sevilla Biennial (2004), and many other group exhibitions. At the last Venice Biennale (2005) he exhibited in the Albanian pavilion. He has also presented his work at solo exhibitions in New York, Paris, Rome, Florence, Brussels, Milan, and Zagreb.

For further information contact Alenka Gregorič, artistic director of the Škuc Gallery on +386 1 251 65 40, galerija.skuc@guest.arnes.si.

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