

## **Dejan Grba**

### ***Oral - Anal - Digital***

*I've never been closer, I've tried to understand  
that certain feeling, carved by another's hand.*

Heaven 17, *Temptation*, Virgin, 1983.

Temptation is one of the key strategies of (popular) culture which exploits the assumption that joy requires some special ingredient whose ultimate lacking sustains the desire. Slavica Panić deconstructs this mystifying algorithm by combining trivial elements into complex, ambivalent structures.

In drawings, objects and digital images, Slavica Panić problematizes the notoriously declarative and dissolute character of the collage technique. She takes her initial visuals from the mass media, modifies them discreetly and assembles them into mute, self-amused compositions that refuse or are at least unconcerned to mean anything in particular. Although it is difficult not to perceive something deeply meaningful in them, after careful observation their formal and symbolic intricacy turns out to be primarily the result of our projections. Their charm and appeal arise from the carefully conceptualized and subtly rendered conflict between desire and pleasure, and, which can be regarded as Panić's specific motif, from the joy of sudden discovering of sexuality, while the hermetic and decorative style masks her bright, oxymoronic humor that merges the childish diminutives such as 'bunnies' or 'doggies' with the slick pornographic euphemisms such as 'golden shower' or 'brown sugar'.

This approach indicates a highly profiled social consciousness but, in shelving the explicit thematization and interpretation, the artist withholds her emancipated reserve towards language-games. It also suggests a fascination with action which is mystified by culture, while Slavica Panić rehabilitates it by turning the manual practice into a perversion of fine art that shifts pleasure from the psychoanalytically regular oral-anal-genital succession towards digital or finger-related. Her works are made in a long sequence of cautiously prepared and fastidiously executed operations whose slight, thoughtfully uncorrected manual errors 'betray' the artistic tradition that usually fetishizes the dexterity. Panić's dexterity, however, functions as a paradoxical threat to the material perfection of her own works, preventing their passive consumption and requiring an intuitive self-apprehension as a catalyst for their true appreciation.

On the edge between the prosaic (genetically tyrannized corporeality) and the sublime (abstract imagery), the reflexive and visual levels of Slavica Panić's works are intertwined by their mutual exclusion- They simultaneously discredit the exclusivity of rational reasoning and indicate the prevailing trends of commodification in which art, no matter how subversive, fails to surpass the event horizon of capital, while the danger itself becomes far more important.

Slavica Panić, *Multiplications*, exhibition catalogue, Remont Gallery, Belgrade, 2001.

*Remont 2002*, annual catalogue, pp. 6-7, Remont, Belgrade, 2002.