

Zgodovinski atrij

Osrednji atrij

Stekleni atrij

Desni atrij

Ajda Kalan

Hallucinogenic Fables

Ajda Kalan approaches sculpture with a holistic concept of worldbuilding, otherwise typical of works of fiction in the fields of literature, video games and film. The foundations of the world created stem from establishing nature as a partly imaginary realm of countless magical possibilities, as conceived during the era of oral tradition and superstition. The protagonists are animals that take their biological basis merely as a template for expanding and coming to life as oversized fantasy creatures, living within their own autonomous space. It can be speculated that their transformation is the product of human imagination, dreams, symbolism, or a desire to make sense of the material world; yet the playful yet ominous possibility also looms overhead that these unknown beings are our equals and capable of establishing their own systems. The artist establishes a symbiosis and a narrative thread between the different exhibited sections by interweaving the sculptural practice, records of the animals' poetic thoughts, and drawings that further define the living environment of the sculptural installations. Through this intervention, the Glass Atrium is transformed into an aquarium-terrarium, within which stories are told of magical creatures and their fairy-tale-like, mysterious relationships and ways of life, into which we step as visitors.

Using the title *Hallucinogenic Fables*, curator Maša Žekš highlights the intriguing interplay between the ancient and the contemporary as 'an insight into an imaginative interpretation of hybrid iconography and animal symbolism, taking into account the local environment, particularly the flora and fauna in relation to folk tradition'. The era of stories, fables, superstitions and rituals is closely linked to making sense and expanding the natural world. As people experienced the grandeur and unexplored nature of natural phenomena and human psychology, a spontaneous need arose to represent and contextualise impressions drawn from their living environment. The art of these periods is usually elementary in its physical form, yet charged with symbolism, teachings and insights, which, on the accompanying visual level, were often translated into rich ornamentation or patterns that lend the central motifs a sense of being situated within a world full of abstract, yet consistent, coding of reality. In her sculptural installations, the artist combines the characteristics of classical fairy-tale imagery; yet, this time, the ornaments, patterns, vivid colours and free-form zoomorphic iconography speak to a contemporary need to escape from a system of existence that has become all too familiar, pessimistically predictable and exhausting. Her works appear to the viewer as a psychedelic antithesis to reality. Kalan also distances her sculptural practice from the desire for aesthetically established validation within the realm of traditionally male art, rather infusing it with techniques traditionally associated with women's textile art. At the same time, with her comic-book-style surrealism, she subverts expectations of elegant and rigid 'high' art to create a subcultural, visually striking visual language.

Seen through the eyes of the contemporary viewer, the world created takes on a hallucinogenic quality, i.e., an altered state of perception resulting from the ingestion of a hallucinogenic substance, except that, in this case, the substance triggering this altered perception consists of papier-mâché, varnish, clay, textile structures, and submission to the narrative accompanying the exhibited works. The curator experiences the dialogue between the voluminous, colourful sculptures and the textiles sprawling like mycelium as a skilful manipulation of the viewer's perspective and visual perception in relation to colour, material and nature. Žekš therefore also describes Kalan's works as the aesthetics of an LSD experience in intense contact with nature, when a transcendental sensation is evoked. Certain standard markers of fables are absent: a moral, moralising and a point of reference for contact with the human world. The aim is not to grasp a broader meaning, but to step out of the daily rhythm into a bold and unbridled fantasy. The visual emergence of images of contemporary ritual, storytelling and magical realism can be understood as a need for an alternative existence and the ability to construct one's own space, where the rules of operation are conditioned by surrendering to the unpredictable.

Sara Nuša Golob Grabner

Ajda Kalan (2002) is completing her undergraduate degree in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. Her artistic practice stems from an interest in form, materials, and the relationships between humans and animals. She explores questions of identity, social roles, and humanity's relationship with the natural world by combining human and animal characteristics to create hybrid figures. Recently, she has increasingly linked her sculptural exploration with storytelling. Rather than viewing sculptures merely as standalone objects, she considers them as characters within a scene that, together, can form the beginning or a fragment of a story or a poem. She develops her work at the intersection of sculpture, installation and narrative, exploring how sculpture can convey stories about the relationships between people, animals and the natural world. She has presented her work at numerous group and solo exhibitions, including 'Cabinet of Curiosities' (University of Ljubljana Gallery, 2023), 'It Is November' (Faculty of Arts, 2023), 'Prints and Poetry: A Dialogue' (DobraVaga, 2025), Fresh Fish #winterstore (DobraVaga, 2025) and 'RUPA: What Blooms in the Dark' (Historical Atrium of Ljubljana Town Hall, 2026). Her solo exhibitions include 'Hop Across the Meadow' (Zorica, 2024), 'The Big Ear of Secrets' (RUPA, 2025) and 'Stuck' (Mostiček – ground-floor studio flat, 2025). She has also taken part in exhibitions at the Volčji Potok Arboretum (2023, 2024, 2025) and in the exhibition Ponjava s5 (34 Miklošičeva Street, 2025).

Accompanying event: crochet workshop with Ajda Kalan on Wednesday, October 7, 2026, 5 pm

Curator: Maša Žekš



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Ajda Kalan

Halucinogena basen

Ajda Kalan h kiparstvu pristopa s celostnim konceptom grajenja svetov (»worldbuilding«), značilnega za domišljajska dela v polju literature, videoiger ali filma. Temelji ustvarjenega sveta izhajajo iz vzpostavljanja narave kot delno imaginarnega območja neštetihi magičnih možnosti, sprva načrtanega v obdobju ustnega izročila in vraž. Protagonisti so živali, ki svojo biološko osnovo jemljejo le kot predlogo za razraščanje in oživljenje v predimenzionirani fantazijski bitji, živeča znotraj lastnega, avtonomnega prostora. Slutiti je, da je njihovo preoblikovanje plod človeške domišljije, sanj, simbolizma ali želje po osmišljanju snovnega sveta, a nad nami lebdi tudi igrivo zlovesča možnost, da so nepoznana bitja nam enakovredna in zmožna vzpostavitve lastnih sistemov. Umetnica simbiozo in pripovedno nit med posameznimi deli razstave vzpostavlja s prepletom kiparske prakse, zapisov poetičnega mišljenja živali ter risb, ki kiparskim instalacijam dodatno definirajo življenjsko okolje. Stekleni atrij se prek intervencije spremeni v akvarij-terarij, v katerem se pripovedujejo zgodbe magičnih bitij in njihovih pravljичno skrivnostnih odnosov ter načinov bivanja, med katere vstopamo kot obiskovalci.

Z naslovom *Halucinogena basen* kustosinja Maša Žekš izpostavlja vznemirljiv stik med starodavnim in sodobnim kot »vpogled v domiselno interpretacijo hibridne ikonografije in živalskega simbolizma, upoštevajoč lokalno okolje, predvsem floro in favno v odnosu do ljudskega izročila«. Obdobje pripovedi, basni, vraž in ritualov je tesno povezano z osmišljanjem in razširjanjem naravnega sveta. Ob doživljanju veličine in neraziskanosti naravnih pojavov ter človeške psihologije se je spontano oblikovala potreba po reprezentaciji in umeščanju vtisov iz življenjskega okolja. Umetnost teh obdobjev je v fizični formi običajno elementarna, a nabita s simbolizmom, nauki in spoznanji, ki so se na spremljajoči likovni ravni pogosto prevedli v bogat ornament/vzorec, ki osrednjim motivom dodaja nadih umeščenosti v svet, poln abstraktnega, a konsistentnega kodiranja resničnosti. Umetnica v kiparskih instalacijah združuje značilnosti klasično pravljичnega, a tokrat ornamenti, vzorci, žive barve in svobodna zoomorfna ikonografija pripovedujejo o sodobni potrebi po umiku iz sedaj preveč dobro poznane, pesimistično predvidljive in utrujajočega sistema bivanja. Njena dela na gledalca delujejo kot psihedeličen antipod resničnosti. Kiparsko prakso Kalan umika tudi od želje po estetsko ustaljenem dokazovanju v polju tradicionalno moške umetnosti in jo dodeluje s tradicionalno ženskimi tehnikami oblikovanja tekstilne umetnosti. Obenem s stripovsko nadrealističnim slogom subvertira pričakovanja elegantne in toge »visoke« umetnosti ter oblikuje subkulturno zaznamovano, vizualno glasno likovno govorico.

Ustvarjeni svet skozi oči sodobnega gledalca pridobi občutek halucinogenosti, prilagojenega načina dojemanja kot rezultat vnosa halucinogene snovi v telo, le da snov, ki v tem primeru sproža prilagojeno dojemanje, sestoji iz papirmašaja, laka, gline, tekstilnih struktur in prepustitve spremljajoči pripovednosti razstavljenih del. Dialog med voluminoznimi, barvitimi plastikami in razraščanjem tekstila kot micelija kustosinja doživlja kot spretno manipulacijo z gledalčevo perspektivo in očesno zaznavo v odnosu do barv, materiala in narave. Žekš zato dela Ajde Kalan opisuje tudi kot estetiko LSD izkušnje v intenzivnem stiku z naravo, ko se vzpostavi transcendentni občutek. Odsotni so nekateri standardni označevalci basni: nauk, moralizem in točka opore za stik s človeškim svetom. Cilj ni v dojetju širšega pomena, temveč izstop iz dnevnega ritma v drzno in nebrzdano fantazijo. Likovne vznike podob sodobne ritualnosti, pripovedništva in magičnega realizma lahko dojemamo kot potrebo po alternativnem obstoju in zmožnosti gradnje svojega prostora, kjer so pravila delovanja pogojena s prepustitvijo nepredvidljivemu.

Sara Nuša Golob Grabner

Ajda Kalan (2002) zaključuje dodiplomski študij kiparstva na Akademiji za likovno umetnost in oblikovanje v Ljubljani. V svoji umetniški praksi izhaja iz zanimanja za obliko, material ter odnose med človekom in živaljo. Osredotoča se na vprašanja identitete, družbenih vlog in človekovega odnosa do naravnega sveta, pri čemer združuje človeške in živalske značilnosti ter ustvarja hibridne figure. V zadnjem obdobju svoje kiparsko raziskovanje vse bolj povezuje s pripovedjo. Skulpture razume ne le kot samostojne objekte, temveč kot like v prizoru, ki lahko skupaj tvorijo začetek ali fragment zgodbe oziroma pesmi. Svoje delo razvija na presečišču kiparstva, instalacije in pripovedi ter raziskuje, kako lahko skulptura postane nosilec zgodbe o odnosih med ljudmi, živalmi in naravnim svetom. Svoja dela je predstavila na številnih skupinskih in samostojnih razstavah, med drugim na razstavah Kabinet čudes (Galerija Univerze v Ljubljani, 2023), Novembra smo (Filozofska fakulteta, 2023), Grafika in poezija: dialog (DobraVaga, 2025), Sveže ribe #ozimnica (DobraVaga, 2025) in RUPA: Kar cveti v temi (Zgodovinski atrij Mestne hiše v Ljubljani, 2026). Samostojno je razstavljala na razstavah Hop čez travnik (Zorica, 2024), Veliko uho skrivnosti (RUPA, 2025) in Zagozden (Mostiček – pritlična garsonjera, 2025). Sodelovala je tudi na razstavah v Arboretumu Volčji Potok (2023, 2024, 2025) ter na razstavi Ponjava s5 (Miklošičeva ulica 34, 2025).

Spremljevalni dogodek: delavnica kvačkanja z Ajdo Kalan v sredo, 7. 10. 2026, ob 17. uri

Kuratorka: Maša Žekš



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