



IDLIR KOKA

Work 2016-18

## THE PAINTINGS OF IDLIR KOKA AS A NARRATIVE OF SOCIETY'S SPECTACLE.

ALBAN HAJDINAJ

The quest of painting is first of all a quest for survival of this contemporary as well as historical genre. Namely, that a good painting needs to manifest an historical consciousness in itself. "It" should not forget where it is coming from with the intention to position itself in time (X) and place (Y). It is the duty of a painting and of the entire genre to capture the essence of the time while also being easily distinguishable from other periods after having dissolving those into its perceptive and absorbent systems. Certainly, there are no longer such things as distinctive styles, that made a painting of an X period immediately comprehensible. There are only views that an author chooses to hold towards his time, the essence of it, if he succeeds in saying something truly important! This is how the latest series of paintings of Idlir Koka "Audiences" emerges, a critical and distancing view about the times that he is destined to live in. I say at first glance, because the solutions offered by the author are simple; descriptive compositions, few plans, rashly and recklessly filled surfaces, as if something is escaping and he has no time to make it "good"! Colors tend to be monochrome. Figures are generic with missing distinctive details, often silhouettes, often-unstable visions that might not refer to studied or observed nature but rather as reconstructions from memory of something almost forgotten. But it needs a more careful examination! This kind of painting, somehow reminds me of the sketchers of mid nineteenth century that with some rapid lines would capture characters and situations on the illustrated pages of newspapers and magazines of that time such as lithography or aqua-forte. It can not be left without being cited the well known essay of Baudelaire "The painter of modern life" and especially the chapter on Sketches of Manners: "For the sketch of manners, the depiction of bourgeois life and the pageant of fashion, the technical means that is the most expeditious and the least costly will obviously be the best. The more beauty that the artist can put into it, the more valuable will be his work; but in trivial life, in the daily metamorphosis of external things, there is a rapidity of movement which calls for an equal speed of execution from the artist. Indeed the paintings of Koka resemble the description of a mundane life in shows and spectacles. The descriptive nature of those paintings is actually blended with other elements that after being mentioned should make space for those. Just one more observation here, referring to Jeff Wall that says that the western art besides revolutionizing and braking with tradition recognizes the continuity or the evolution of the figurative that permits us to deduce and study its dialectics, where the notions of "The Painter of Modern Life" (1846) are still valid imbedded in the continuity of capitalism as a system. The recent painting of Idlir Koka looks like a positioning in this evolution of the figurative painting. It tries to communicate in traditional language "narrative" or "storytelling" even though the depth of it reveals a fusion with modernist tendencies. In his paintings Koka is focused on the audience, the viewers, the spectators attending a show, the ones that in usually are not in the center of the attention or on the other side of the camera. Different from French Masters of the second half of the nineteenth century, Koka does not only depict the show as the most important happening but goes as far as to completely ignore that. The show could be of any kind: drama, comedy, cinema, fashion or a political gathering. The ones that we see on the paintings of the cycle "Audience" are the ones consuming the shows. Obviously Koka is a painter of the twenty-first century. His work synthesizes aspects the continuity of the figurative with his own critical view on the times that he is living in. The diffusion of a modernist painting, or lets call it expressionist, in its own narrative it is neither a coincidence nor a result of earlier experimentation by the author. This is a natural choice of Koka. He searches and finds the elements of his work in the History of Painting. The characters in his paintings are treated with a simplicity that reminds us of the work of Eduard Munch. The groups of the spectator's figures sometimes remind you of the "Anxiety". Especially a female figure that even though she is positioned in profile, her opened mouth reminds you of the "Scream" as they have the same temporary treatment, the same impact and drama. Actually the series "Audiences" is a kind of a chronic that is "documenting" the Munch-enian spectators that fill up the show venues. This is a very meaningful aspect of his paintings but should not mistaken for the drama that is transmitted (we do not see) from the stage to the viewer. In fact it is the with the anxiety of the author that choses to look at the spectators and not the show noticing that they are just captives of a show that is served them by a regime that they do not have any power on. "The spectacle" says Guy Debord "is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which "passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity".

However, by defining the spectacle as the regime and the spectator as powerless/hopeless Koka's approach is to position his work as a critical documentation. His work is a kind of legend (key) to reality and a critical view towards it. He is not aiming to defuse the show (revolution) as the situationist artist of the fifties and sixties inspired from Debord were claiming. Kokas's work is trying to narrate the story of the society of spectacle through paintings that are synthetic and traditional in the same time. It is the drama of an individual (artist's) living in the era of spectacle knowing that you cannot undo it! According to Debord, the society (of spectacle) has lost the ability to recognize the historical moment in which it is living. This is why the female character mentioned above in the painting that reminds us the "Scream" of Munch might be as well in fact just laughing (out loud), enjoying the show and not at all screaming in horror her own end. On the other hand the painting might as well be trying to bring across both. The anxiety is coupled with the trivial similar to the existence of the artist in the society.

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February 2017

*My work investigates the relation between the spectacle and audience, framing it as a contemporary regime and a new ideology of conformity.*

*It treats the cult of the show as the first mediator of how we perceive contemporary life phenomena, where spectacle and the audience often merge into one giving us fictional imagery.*

*The audience is the show and vice versa. Spectators become the show itself, often hypnotic-oriented and subordinated towards a new self-relationship/reproduction.*

*- Idlir Koka -*

Delirious



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Oil on linen  
80 x 60 cm  
2018



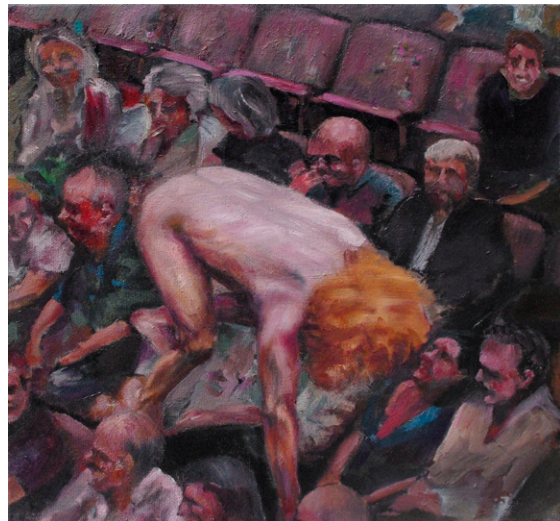
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Oil on linen  
60 x 50 cm  
2018



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Oil on linen  
70 x 60 cm  
2018



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Oil on canvas  
30 x 30 cm  
2018



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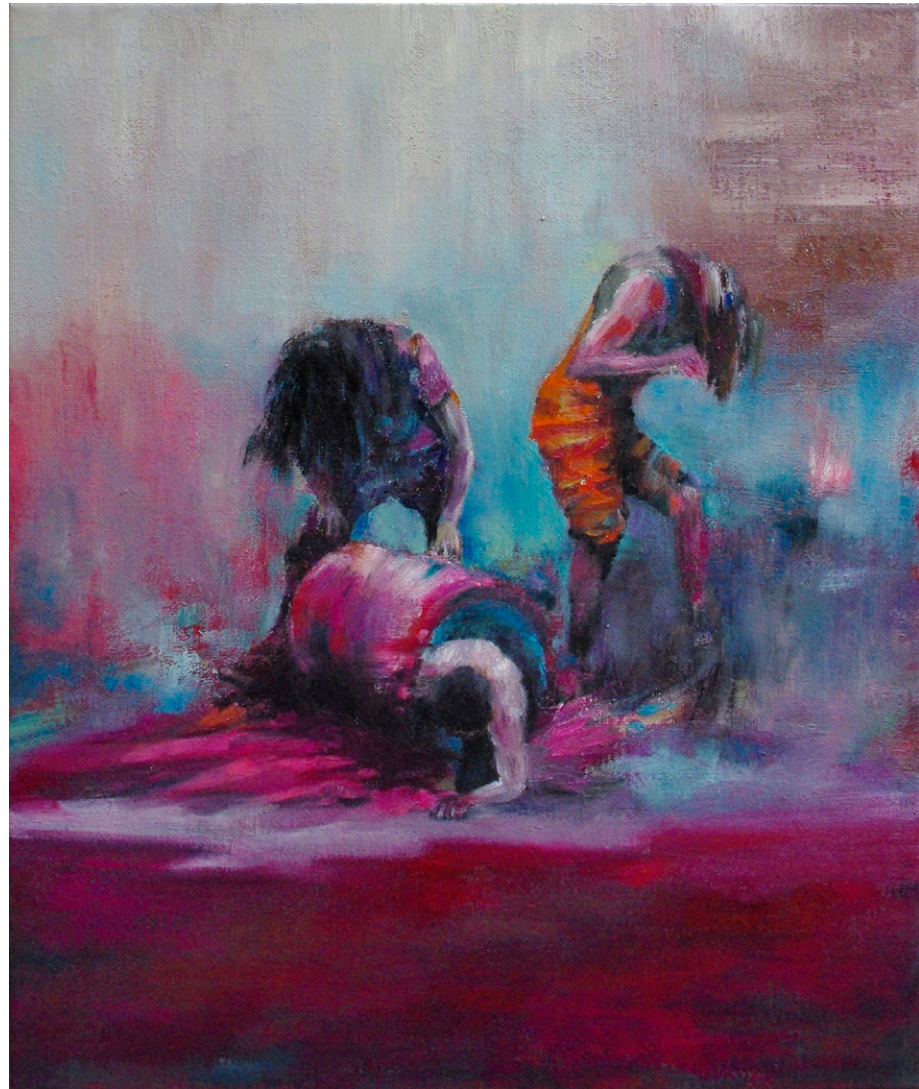
Oil on linen  
60 x 50 cm  
2018



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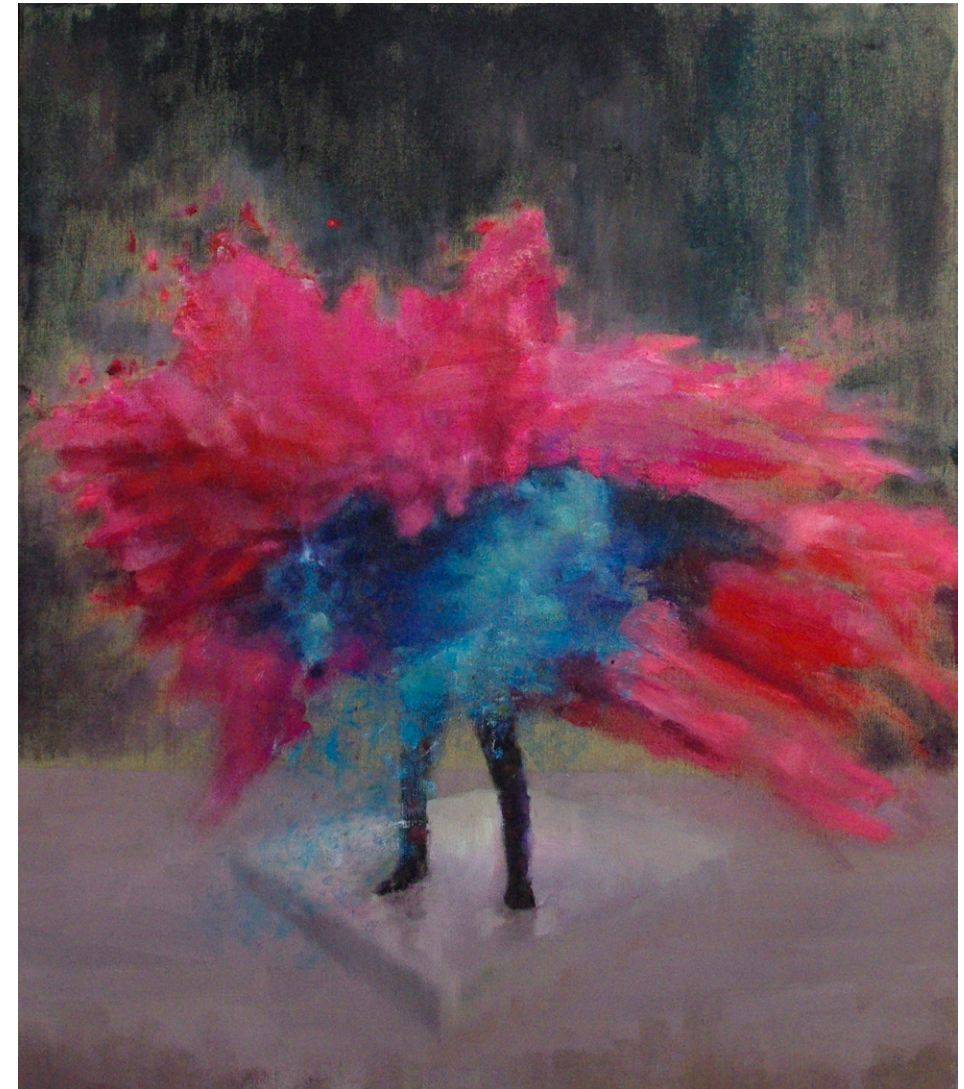
Oil on linen  
70 x 60 cm  
2018





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Oil on linen  
50 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
50 x 60 cm  
2017



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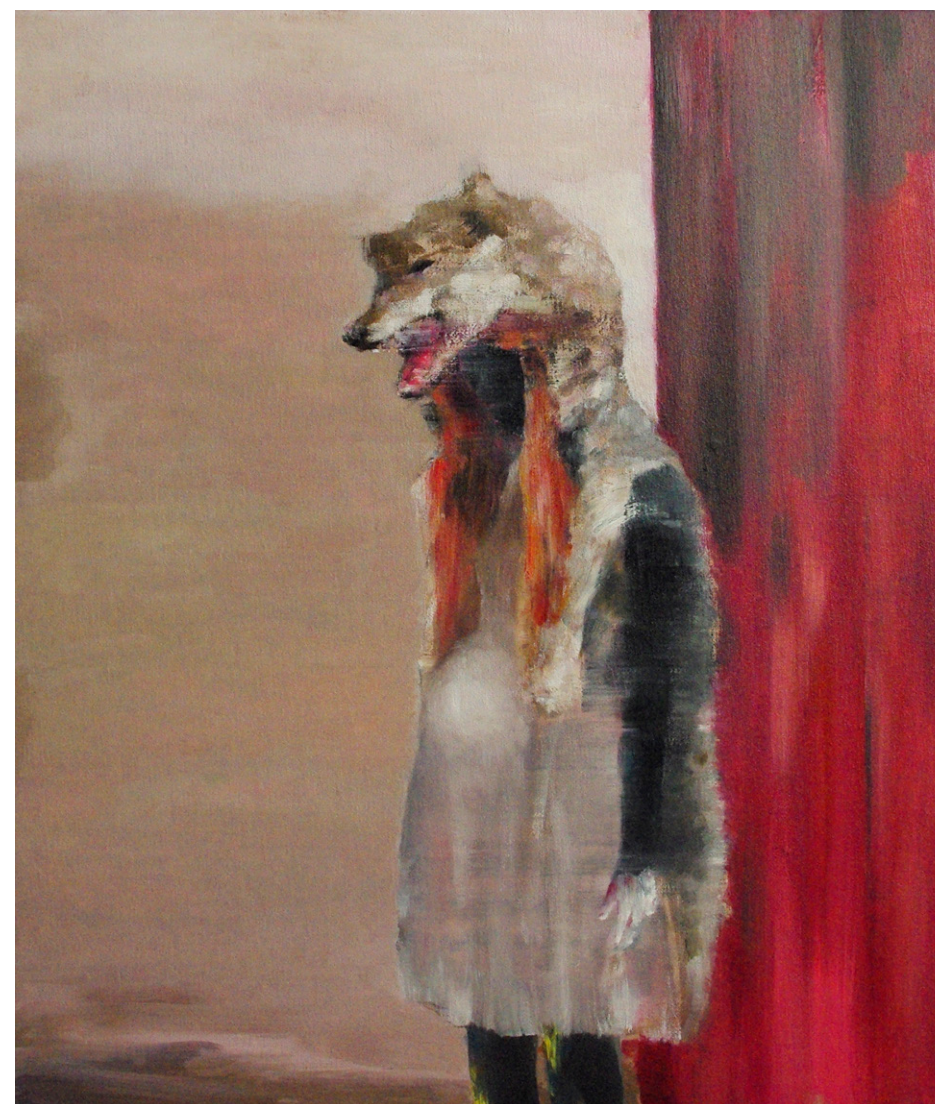
Oil on canvas  
50 x 60 cm  
2017

Sleepers



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Oil on linen  
50 x 60 cm  
2017



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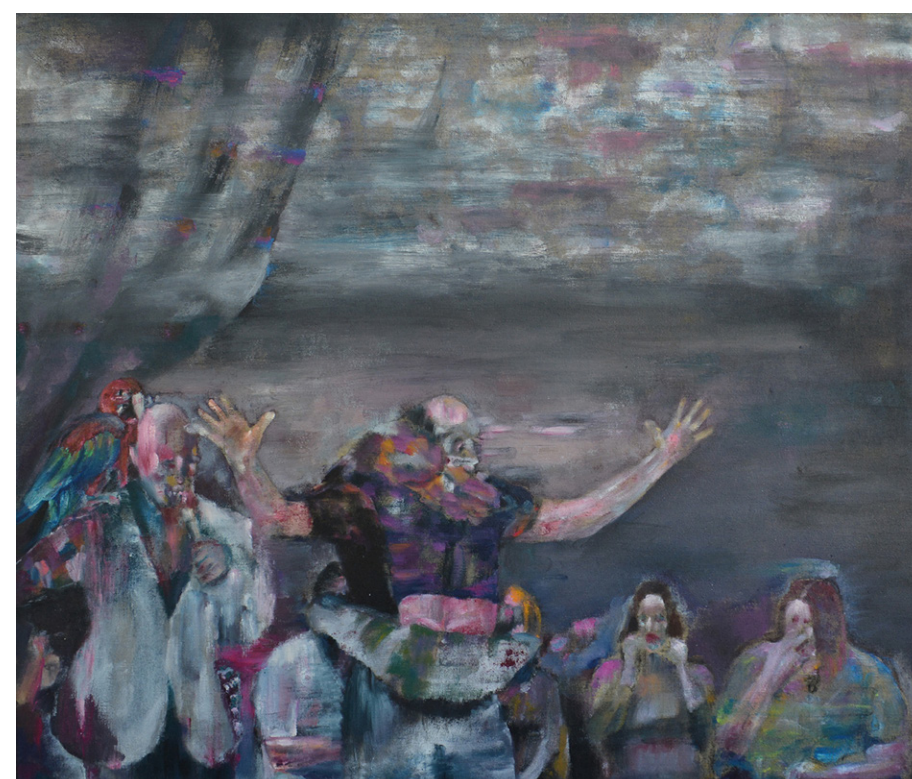
Oil on linen  
65 x 75 cm  
2017

Audience



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
30 x 30 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
80 x 70 cm  
2017





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Oil on canvas  
80 x 70 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
70 x 60 cm  
2017



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Oil on canvas  
65 x 55 cm  
2016



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Oil on canvas  
110 x 110 cm  
2016



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Oil on canvas  
90 x 70 cm  
2016



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Oil on canvas  
110 x 70 cm  
2016

Idlir Koka  
Born in Tirana in 1979.  
Lives and works in Tirana, Albania.

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2017

- Artist in Residence / Künstlerhaus / Salzburg / Austria
- Comfort/Discomfort / GALERIA KALO / Tirana

2016

- Neomigjeniane / National Gallery of Arts / Tirana
- Imago Mundi / Albania/Knots - Luciano Benetton Collection

2009

- Così vicina così lontana / Albania prima e dopo 1990 / Museo d'arte contemporanea di villa Croce / Genova
- Living together/ National Gallery of Arts / Tirana
- Biennale dell' Mediterraneo/ Lecce/ Italy

2008

- Do you know a place where the paradoxes blossom? / Onufri prize/ curator Ricardo Caldura / National Gallery of Arts, Tirana
- Art & Architecture / Cities, realities & visions / National Gallery of Arts, Tirana

2007

- The betrayal in art / Onufri Prize / National Gallery of Arts, Tirana
- Contact / Galeria e Vogel / Tirana

2006

- There is no place like home / Onufri Prize / National Gallery of Arts, Tirana
- Expoarte / Artfair / Montichiari Italy
- Group show / Zenit Gallery Tirana

2005

- Onufri Prize / National Gallery of Arts Tirana

2004

- Ashamed of being happy / Galeria e Vogel / Tirana

#### Public Collections

National Gallery of Arts, Tirana, Albania  
GALERIA KALO, Tirana, Albania

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