

## **ARMY OF NO GOOD.**

### **TRUE STORY.**

The exhibition *Army of No Good* by Ivan Fijolić brings together, in one space, the sculptures that the artist has created over the years. He has thoughtfully selected them, emphasising both his early works (e.g., *Duel*, 2002) and more recent ones (e.g., *Mišo*, 2022). The sculptures are arranged frontally, in a somewhat threatening manner, ready for any sudden confrontation. However, this is far from a typical army where individual qualities of an individual are often lost in the uniform rhythm of the collective.

Fijolić's volunteers resemble those last-resort options in action movies, called upon in desperation when it turns out they are humanity's only hope. These are always individuals embodying the best of everything, yet together they seem irreconcilable, torn between their egos and *the fight for a greater cause*. Transpose this concentrated Hollywood scenario to sculpture, dilute its plot over more than twenty years of Fijolić's professional engagement, and the action film can be experienced as a *fast-forwarded* journey of a sculptor's growth, defined by all the insights gained through constant confrontation with form. In this film, the (anti)hero becomes the sculptor, and the army becomes the evolving sculptures he sets before himself as a kind of polygonal challenge. And he masters them, transforming them into a rich sculptural arsenal for the future.

To avoid a general interpretation, I will explain using the exhibited works... If Fijolić established a complex, unstable equilibrium with his cowboys in the aforementioned *Duel*, *Bruce Lee* (2005) opened up possibilities for exploring texture, which he managed to polish to a metallic shine even in polyester. If with *The Dorky* (2006), he ventured into playing with proportions, affirming sculptural monumentality in every size, with *Three Kings* (2012) he demonstrated that strong contrasts of light and shadow could be articulated on an entirely shallow, practically relief-like surface. These are all small victories when it comes to form, but to focus solely on form in the context of Fijolić would be like ignoring *the elephant in the room*.

No matter how much he cares about sculptural skill, Fijolić uses it as a means, not an end, while his real impulses for creation lie elsewhere—in stories, comics, films... These are realms of imagery that defined the last decades of the past century and the beginning of this one, the imagery that has raised many of us. In it, television is still some kind of authority, America is the promised land, and the distinction between good and evil is clear, even when good is represented by outcasts with machine guns blazing through the jungle. It is therefore

not surprising that Fijolić's sculptures often feel like old acquaintances that just need a button pressed or a coin inserted to light up and share their memoirs with us.

With *Rectum* (2012), the story is more or less clear. He would be one of those who fell into some radioactive fluid as a child. What happened next stemmed from an inevitable change in his DNA, earning him superpowers and a split personality. *Inri* (2006) is also a story about a superhero, though much more controversial, as happens when we begin to graft our generational idols onto some eternal truths, attempting to give our observations a new, albeit entirely naive, outline.

While dealing with male figures is somewhat easy, as they have always occupied the extremes of life, women create confusion. This is most evident with *Jovanka* (2012), whose duality is difficult to decipher. She can only feel the way I felt when I saw her at Lauba in Zagreb about ten years ago and perhaps for the first time genuinely felt ashamed of my persistent ignorance of the sculptural realism from the People Liberation Struggle (NOB) period, as well as the realization that it only happened when Fijolić placed a female head on the dictator's body.

From sculpture to sculpture, stories could be told, relationships among them imagined, and different plot possibilities suggested. This is how Fijolić works with his sculptures, never *actually* serving these stories to us. In interviews, he sometimes describes some of his observations and highlights influences, and areas of inspiration, but that's all. For him, the sculptures are primarily there to form his sculptural gallery of characters, among which, I am sure, there are saboteurs, but also plenty who would serve Michael Bay well for drilling asteroids in space. The essence of this gallery is its diversity, its *no-good* nature, as only such a gallery can be flexible, alive, with a strong sense of the individual and the collective, and all the contradictions and tensions that such awareness entails. In short, it acts as a curious equivalent of Rancière's democracy, which collapses into violent order and symmetry the moment it falters in its constant struggle.

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