

Tomislav Vignjević

Insight into body matter – Bodyfraction by Uršula Berlot, 2020

One of the basic premises of Uršula Berlot's artistic expression is undoubtedly her desire to enlarge and ensuing practice of making visible that which is not before our eyes, that which is not directly evident nor exposed to the view and analysis of the viewer other than through her work. These structures and blow-ups of fractions bear witness to the preservation and isolation of the traces left by her interventions or recordings and visualisations of magnified samples, forms, and structures. The blow-ups are of fractions of the author's body (skin tissue, hair, fingernails, eyelashes, and teeth enamel) – a selection of matter and fractions, a record of sorts of her very existence, of her material composition, which makes it personal, perhaps even to the extent that it creates some manner of self-portrait. Although the reference to "images" of herself, to artists existence, is not her original motivation for the creation of these artworks, this existential note remains relentlessly present, providing a subtext to the whole collection.

At its core, this selection of works, done in various techniques, is about the question of reality and representation, the original image and simulacrum, a process of dematerialisation and substantiality of the image. A mimetically and microscopically precisely rendered blow-up of the structure of matter is the starting point for her relief light works, drawings on paper, and video, which are arranged in the gallery space as a coherent spatial installation. The mimetic repetition of this motif is thus expanded in Uršula Berlot's works with the issue of whether to stay true to the original or transform the template – usually a microscopic image of fractions of the artist's own body.

The works on paper (*Bodygaze*) were created from images of the microstructures of such fractions, which formed the basis for her airbrush prints. The structures were then stylised and abstracted into images of individual fractions of the body. In fact, what is at issue here is the duality between the visible and the invisible, between the concealed, deep structure of body fractions and a visualisation thereof in the form of a microscopic image that lays the invisible completely bare and makes it available for visual perception.

Similarly, the relief light pictures (*Corporeal Abstractions*) were created from microscopic images processed with special software used in microscopy to analyse the structure of materials and crystals. The software copies the recorded images into an inverted, reciprocal space and generates new images using certain filters. The result is a double metamorphosis since the filters reduce the amount of data captured in the original image, from which the software then generates a new image. The new image is similar to the original, but it is created artificially, digitally. This opens an immensely broad semantic field of multi-layered references, be they references to the duality of mimesis and technologically generated reality or to the question of reality in this day and age, when the boundary between image/simulation and original is becoming increasingly blurred.

In her drawings, light works and *Bodyfraction* video the duality between technology and traces of the artist's hand, between the digital and the analogue, achieves consistent results in the form of works that offer a poetic deliberation on an invisible reality that is made visible with the help of microscopy technology.

The exhibited works are structured around the triad of body, media, and an art that uses as its "material" images acquired by means of scientific technology, making the initial materials – fractions of the body – the starting point of the final works. Their constant oscillation between the documentary-scientific image and poetic interpretation lays bare dimensions of the final objects that situate the installation *Bodyfractions* in the realm of breakthrough experimental procedures that expand and transform the definition of artistic medium: in this case, the medium is the microscopic image as well as its transformation into the finished, artistic image.

The body as an element of life is not subject to imitation; instead, its constituent parts, blown up and transformed, have become works of art per se, for they do not imitate life; they have been created from life itself. One could even argue that these images do not imitate life and nature, but rather are inherently both by virtue of their materiality. At a time when not only art but nature as well have entered an era of technical reproducibility, an image of the original, deepest, primordial structure of a part of the body may itself be transformed and become different in its inimitable uniqueness, thus transposing these images into the imaginative, artistic sphere.

This exhibition by Uršula Berlot is therefore an unambiguous and exceedingly poetic commentary on a topic that the artist has been dealing with for some time – the motif of transience, which carries with it the metaphorical elements of *vanitas*. The installation stands at the intersection of three levels: the images are acquired by means of high technology; the author then transforms them using her artistic imagination; and finally, the semantic dimension makes the impression that the whole of the images is an astute visual meditation on the passage of time and transience.

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Pogled v snov telesa – Telesni razlom / Bodyfraction Uršule Berlot, 2020

Ena od temeljnih izhodiščnih točk umetniškega delovanja Uršule Berlot je zagotovo hotenje in praksa, s katero avtorica naredi vidno tisto, česar ni pred našimi očmi, kar ni neposredno evidentno in je šele z njenim delom izpostavljeno pogledu in analizi gledalca. Te strukture in povečave delcev so nekako povezane z zaščito in osamitvijo sledi, ki jih zapustijo posegi ali snemanja ter vizualizacije povečanih vzorcev, oblik in struktur. Gre za povečave delcev avtoričinega telesa samega, kot so tkivo kože, lasu, nohta, trepalnice in zobne sklenine, tako da je izbor teh snovi in delov nekako zapisan pričevalnosti o njenem bivanju kot takem, o njenem snovnem ustroju in predvsem na ta način v določenem pomenu oseben, morda tudi avtoportreten. Čeprav to nanašanje na lastne »podobe« ali na svojo eksistenco ni temeljni vzgib nastanka teh podob, ostaja ta eksistenčna nota neprestano prisotna in daje nekakšen podton celoti.

Predvsem gre pri tej celoti del v različnih tehnikah za vprašanje realnosti in posnetka, originalne podobe in simulakra ali pa proces dematerializacije in substancialnosti podobe. Mimetično in mikroskopsko natančno podana povečana struktura snovi je izhodišče za reliefna svetlobna dela, risbe na papirju in video, ki so razporejeni v instalaciji galerijskega prostora, kot v sebi zaključena prostorska postavitev. Tako je vprašanje mimetične ponovitve motiva v delih Uršule Berlot dodatno nadgrajeno z vprašanji sledenja originalu ali pa transformaciji predloge, ki je najpogosteje mikroskopski posnetek dela lastnega telesa.

Dela na papirju (Bodygaze) so nastala na temelju posnetkov mikrostruktur delcev, ki so bili podlaga za nastanek grafične podobe s tehniko airbrush, te strukture pa so nato stilizirane in abstrahirane v podobe posameznih telesnih delcev. Dejansko gre tu za vprašanje dvojnosti med vidnim in nevidnim, torej med prikrito, globinsko strukturo delca telesa in njegovo vizualizacijo s pomočjo mikroskopskega posnetka, ki naredi nevidno povsem evidentno in na voljo vizualni zaznavi.

Podobno so reliefne svetlobne slike (Corporeal Abstractions) nastale na podlagi mikroskopskih posnetkov, ki so bili obdelani s posebnimi programi, s katerimi v mikroskopiji izračunavajo strukture materialov in kristalov. S tovrstnimi programi so posnetki preslikani v inverzni oziroma recipročni prostor, nakar se z uporabo določenih filtrov generira slika za nazaj. S tem je dosežena dvojna metamorfoza, saj je zaradi filtrov zajem podatkov iz osnovne slike reduciran, čemur sledi računalniško generiranje nove slike. Ta je sicer podobna originalu, a je umetno, digitalno ustvarjena. S tem pa je ustvarjeno izredno široko pomensko polje večpomenskih referenc, bodisi na dvojnost med mimesisom in tehnološko generirano resničnostjo, ali pa na vprašanje realnosti v današnjem času, ko se vedno bolj zabrisuje meja med posnetkom in simulacijo na eni ter originalom na drugi strani.

V risbah, svetlobnih delih in v videu Bodyfraction je dvojnost med tehnologijo in sledjo umetničine roke, med digitalnim in analognim privedena do konsekvencnih rezultatov v delih, ki na poetičen način ponujajo razmislek o nevidni realnosti, ki je v vidno priklicana z mikroskopsko tehnologijo.

Dela na tej razstavi so strukturirana okoli triade telesa, medijev in umetnosti, ki je za svoj »material« vzela podobe pridobljene z naravoslovno tehnologijo, s katero so izhodiščni materiali, delci telesa, postali izhodišče za dokončna dela. Njihovo nenehno osciliranje med dokumentarno-naravoslovno podobo in poetično interpretacijo nam razpre tiste dimenzije dokončnih objektov, ki instalacijo Bodyfraction uvrščajo med izjemno prodorne eksperimentalne postopke, s katerimi je razširjena in predrugačena definicija umetniškega medija, ki je tu tako mikroskopska podoba, kot njena transformacija v dokončno, umetniško podobo.

Telo, kot dejavnik življenja, tukaj ni predmet posnemanja, temveč so njegovi sestavni delci, povečani in transformirani, postali umetniška dela sama, saj ta ne posnemajo življenja, ampak so nekako nastala iz življenja samega. Lahko rečemo, da te podobe ne posnemajo življenja in narave, ampak so tako eno kot drugo že v svoji materialnosti. V času, ko je ne le umetnost, temveč tudi narava vstopila v dobo tehnične reproduktivnosti, je podoba originalne, najgloblje, prvotne strukture dela telesa lahko tudi sama transformirana in drugačna v svoji neponovljivi enkratnosti in s tem tovrstna podoba preide v svet imaginativne, umetniške sfere.

Tokratna razstava Uršule Berlot je zatorej jasen in izjemno poetičen komentar ene izmed tem, s katerimi se umetnica ukvarja že dalj časa, in sicer motiva minljivosti v času, ki nosi s seboj tudi metaforične prvine *vanitas*. Tako se ta instalacija umešča na presečišče treh ravni, in sicer z visoko tehnologijo pridobljeno podobo, ki jo avtorica preoblikuje s svojo likovno imaginacijo ter končno s pomensko dimenzijo, ki celoto umesti na področje subtilne vizualne meditacije o toku časa in minljivosti.