

Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi (1974, Kranj) je diplomantka umetnostne prakse in sodobne kritičke teorije (Goldsmiths College, University of London), univerzitetna diplomirana oblikovalka vizualnih komunikacij in magistrica umetnosti (ALUO UL). V slovenskem kulturnem prostoru deluje kot univerzitetna predavateljica, članica strokovnih žirij in komisij ter prevajalka strokovnih besedil o umetnosti in oblikovanju iz slovenskega v angleški jezik. Kot vizualno umetnico jo poznamo predvsem po črno-belih insceniranih fotografijah prostorov otroštva ter po zunanjem metaforičnem soočanju z osebnimi in kolektivnimi spomini, pogosto postavljenimi v jukstapozicijo. Njena barvna vernakularna fotografija predstavlja podobe, ki so skrajno domače in intimne, dvoumne, a asociativne, ter temeljijo na subtilnem podvajjanju motivov in pomenov. Njena dela se redno uvrščajo na odmevne samostojne in izbrane skupinske razstave doma in v tujini. V zadnjem triletnem obdobju je sodelovala na 30 tovrstnih razstavah, med drugim: Betekeités/V pogledu, Gönczi Galéria, Zalaegerszeg (HU); Fascino 3/4 – Doppelgänger/Spirit Double, Centralna postaja, Maribor; Pogled 8 – Pogled na slovensko umetnost doma in po svetu, Galerija Božidar Jakac, Kostanjevica na Krki; Üres vagy tele/Prazno ali polno, Slovenski kulturni center, Szentgotthárd, (HU); Sichtbar/In View, Fotogalerie Gmünd, Künstlerstadt Gmünd in Kärnten (AT); Glej, ne glej, Kibela, Maribor; Vmesni prostor – Refleksija čipke v sodobnih umetniških vizualnih praksah, Loški muzej Škofja Loka, Inside Out III – Dvojice, Fotonični trenutki 2016, Ljubljana; Brezčasna Ofelija, Mala galerija, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana; Čudežna dežela, Likovni kritiki izbirajo, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana ... Od leta 2004 je članica stanovskega združenja umetnikov ZDSLU. Od istega leta deluje kot fotografinja s statusom na podlagi kriterijev izjemnosti Ministrstva za kulturo RS.

Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi (1974, Kranj) is a graduate of Fine Art and Contemporary Critical Theory (Goldsmiths College, University of London), a graduate of Visual Communications Design and a Master of Art (Academy of Fine Art and Design, University of Ljubljana). She is active within the Slovenian cultural arena as a university lecturer, a member of professional juries and committees, and a translator of expert texts on art and design from Slovenian into English. As a visual artist, she is mostly known for her black-and-white staged photographs of the realms of childhood and external metaphorical confrontations with personal and collective memories, often set in juxtaposition. Her colour vernacular photography represents images that are extremely personal and intimate, ambiguous, but associative, based on a subtle duplication of motifs and meanings. Her works are regularly featured in resounding solo and selected group exhibitions at home and abroad. In the last three-year period, she has participated in 30 such exhibitions, including: Betekeités/In the Gaze, Gönczi Galéria, Zalaegerszeg (HU); Fascino 3/4 – Doppelgänger/Spirit Double, Centralna postaja, Maribor; A Look 8 – A Look at Slovenian Art in Slovenia and Abroad, Galerija Božidar Jakac, Kostanjevica na Krki; Üres vagy tele/Empty or Full, Slovenian Cultural Centre, Szentgotthárd, (HU); Sichtbar/In View, Fotogalerie Gmünd, Künstlerstadt Gmünd in Kärnten (AT); Look, don't Look, Kibela, Maribor; In-between Space – Reflections on Lace within the Contemporary Visual Art Practices, Škofja Loka Museum, Inside Out III – Doubles, Photonic Moments 2016, Ljubljana; Timeless Ophelia, Mala galerija, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana; Wonderland, Art Critics Select, Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana ... She has been a member of the ZDSLU professional artists' society since 2004, and has also worked as a free-lance art photographer accredited with the criteria of excellence of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia since then.

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Židovska ulica 6, p.p. 1512, SI-2001 Maribor
T: +386 (0)2 620 9713, M: +386 (0)51 336 991
www.galerijastolp.com

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Arven Šakti Kralj Szomi

**V DEŽELI OGLEDAL
IN THE LAND OF MIRRORS**

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Through the Looking Glass

Variation no. 2 on the theme of Alice, Lewis Carroll's heroine

"Let's pretend we're kings and queens!" Alice wanted to invite her sister to play. But the latter, who liked to be exact, challenged, "But there are only two of us!" With abundant imagination, Alice invited her sister to choose which queen she wanted to be, and she, Alice, would be "the rest of them". Yes, in childhood we were able to be everything and everyone, if we only had enough imagination and courage. Childhood, a time of play, a time of imagination and mischief, a time of innocence and tenderness, a time of small misdoings, but also a time of small sorrows, disappointments and fears; a time of hiding and seeking, a time of dark and light, a time of pretending and searching for the truth, a time of ... And in her childhood, Alice, Lewis Carroll's heroine, was a brave little girl with a great deal of imagination.

The Wonderland exhibition, as part of the Art Critics Select programme (of 2016 at Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana) was a unique photographic work and the predecessor of the project In the Land of Mirrors, or, in other words, the project In the Land of Mirrors came as a logical follow-up to the previous Wonderland project. Arven Šakti interpreted and presented Carroll's non-classical fairytale Alice in the Wonderland in 2016 in the form of a large-scale photomontage, that took us into the world of little girls, into the world of their wish and reverie, finding trauma and frustration, and finally encountering all that, which is loaded in the unconscious, where there is no oblivion, where nothing disappears, where everything is inscribed and remains eternal. Yet this can, from time to time, be revealed in our dreams as an incredible landscape or fantastic experience. Carroll accompanied his Alice across such dream landscapes and fantastic and imaginary experiences, helping generations of girls and women to escape to wonderland and giving them the opportunity to slip through the 'gelatine' of the looking glass into a world of reflection, through their own unrealised, suppressed dreams. And what do girls and women have in store there? As if everything were the same in the mirror world – but, no, it is different! An asymmetrical, imperfect world discloses itself that is often not only warped and altered in its appearance, but also in its actions and values. Growing up means an agonizing confrontation with this world, which is not perfect, not fair and not nice. And at the same time, it could be all of those things – fair and nice, kind and tolerant – if mankind only found enough strength and resolve for good deeds to prevail. Carroll knew all that, and this is why he retreated to the world of logic, mysterious puzzles, apparent nonsense, humour and fantasy in his tales.

In the project In the Land of Mirrors, Arven Šakti makes us face the little girls, who look to the world, who look to us, and we look them back in the eye. As we face them, their curiosity, search for a path and some sense, we become a part of their world with their trepidation and spirit. They invite us to join in their game; the game of helping them to understand this world. The steps of today's little girls through the mirror into the twisted world of adults seem at first glance tougher and more complex than they were in Carroll's time, given that the world has seen radical change over the past 150 years, in some aspects for the better, and in many others, for the worse. Growing up has not grown any easier nowadays than it used to be. The world of the Internet and social networks comes up as one of the 'mirror images' of our society that can be hurtful to a gentle youthful soul. Even in the worst of forms, like for instance hateful Facebook profiles created by classmates for all those that are 'different', more sensitive, bright, talented, and perhaps not completely adaptable to this cruel world. And, yes, children can be cruel, too!

The transition from childhood to the world of grown-ups is a long process of tackling reality. It is a time for a new type of socialization, yet unknown to children, which is different from that accustomed to in one's family and small circle of close friends. Arven Šakti has taken her little girls into the land of mirrors (into a world of the twisted mirror image), by building up the story through various components: chessboards, rabbits, chairs, books, empty spaces ..., which have a strong symbolic meaning and which can be interpreted by every observer in their own personal way, be that in the eloquence of Carroll's story or modern-day events and norms. Arven Šakti thoughtfully stages, edits and positions the story into space and time. The little girls remain her main motif also this time. But on this occasion, in the mirror images of the land of memory, which slowly slips through the membrane, as if the images were involved in the process of osmosis, 'social osmosis'.

Vesna Teržan, art historian



Skozi ogledalo

Variacije št. 2 na temo Alice, junakinje Lewisa Carrola

"Let's pretend we're kings and queens!" Pretvarjajmo se, da smo kralji in kraljice, je želeta Alice povabiti k igri svojo sestro. Ta je bila natančna in ji je oporekala: "Saj sva le dve!" Alice je v bujni domišljiji odvrnila, da si sestrica lahko izbere, katera kraljica želi biti, ona, Alice, pa da bo "vsi ostali". Ja, v otroštvu smo lahko bili vse in vsi, če smo le imeli dovolj domišljije in hrabrosti. Otroštvo, čas igre, čas domišljije in nagajivosti, čas nedolžnosti in nežnosti, čas malih hudobij pa tudi čas malih žalost, razočaranja in strahu; čas skrivanja in iskanja, čas teme in luči, čas pretvarjanja in iskanja resnice, čas ... In v svojem otroštvu je bila Alice, junakinja Lewisa Carrola, hrabra deklica z veliko domišljijo.

Razstava Čudežna dežela v okviru akcije Likovni kritiki izbirajo (leta 2016 v Cankarjevem domu v Ljubljani) je bilo enkratno fotografsko delo in predhodnica projekta V deželi ogledal ali, drugače povedano, projekt V deželi ogledal je logična posledica predhodnega projekta Čudežna dežela. Carrollovo neklašično pravljico Alica v čudežni deželi je Arven Šakti leta 2016 interpretiral in predstavila v obliki velike fotomontaže, ki nas je popeljala v svet deklic, v svet njihovih želja in sanjarjenja, ob tem je našla travme in frustracije, na koncu pa naletela na vse tisto, kar je naloženo v nezavedenem, kjer ni pozabe, kjer nič ne izgine, kjer se vse zapisuje in ostaja. A se zna kdaj pa kdaj razkriti v naših sanjah kot neverjetna pokrajina ali fantastično doživetje. Carroll je svojo Alice spremljal prav po takšnih sanjskih pokrajinah in fantastičnih/fantazijskih doživetjih in generacijam deklic, deklet in žensk pomagal skozi lastne neizživete, potlačene sanje, jim omogočil pobeg v čudežno deželo ali pa jim dal možnost, da se odkradejo skozi "želatino" ogledala v zrcalni svet. In kaj deklice, dekleta in ženske tam čaka? Kot da je v zrcalnem svetu vse isto, pa vendar je drugače! Razkrije se nesimetričen, nepopoln svet, pogosto izmaličen, spreobrnjen tako v podobi kot dejanjih in tudi vrednotah. Odraščanje pomeni mučno soočanje s tem svetom, ki ni popoln, ni pravičen in ni lep. In hkrati bi lahko bil vse to – pravičen in lep, dober in toleranten –, če bi človeštvo le našlo dovolj moči in volje za dobra dejanja. Carroll je vse to vedel in se zato v svojih pripovedih umaknil v svet logike, zagonetnih ugank, navideznih nesmislov, humorja in fantazije.

V projektu V deželi ogledal nas Arven Šakti sooča z deklicami, ki gledajo svet, gledajo nas in mi jim vračamo pogled. Ko se soočimo z njimi, njihovo radovednostjo, iskanjem poti in smisla, z njihovim strahom in korajzo, postanemo del njihovega sveta, povabijo nas v svojo igro; igro, ki jim pomaga pri razumevanju tega sveta. Koraki današnjih deklic skozi zrcalo v sprevrnjeni svet odraslih se na prvi pogled zdijo težji in kompleksnejši, kot so bili v Carrollovem času, saj se je v teh 150 letih svet korenito spremenil, ponekod na boljše, na marsikaterem področju pa na slabše. Odraščanje danes ni nič lažje, kot je bilo nekoč. Svet interneta in družbenih omrežij je ena izmed "zrcalnih slik" naše družbe, ki lahko nežno mlado dušo še kako prizadene. Tudi v najhujši obliki, kot so t. i. sovražni facebook profili, ki jih sošolke ustvarijo za vse tiste, ki so drugačne od njih, občutljivejše, pametne, nadarjene in morda ne povsem prilagodljive za ta kruti svet. In, ja, tudi otroci znajo biti kruti!

Prehod iz otroštva v svet odraslih je dolg proces spoprijemanja s stvarnostjo, je čas nove, otrokom še neznane socializacije, ki je drugačna od tiste družinske in majhnega kroga prijateljčkov. Arven Šakti je svoje deklice popeljala v deželo ogledal (v svet sprevrnjene zrcalne slike) s pomočjo gradnikov zgodbe: šahovnica, zajec, stol, knjiga, praznina ..., ki imajo močan simbolni pomen in ki ga vsaka gledalka/gledalec lahko razume po svoje, v sobesedju bodisi Carrollove pravljice bodisi sodobnih dogodkov in navad. Arven Šakti premisljeno kadrira, montira in postavlja zgodbo v prostor in čas. Tudi tokrat so deklice osrednji motiv. Vendar tokrat v zrcalnih podobah dežele spomina, ki počasi drsi skozi membrano, kot da bi bile podobe udeležene v procesu osmoze, "družbene osmoze".

Vesna Teržan, umetnostna zgodovinarka