ISSN 1846-8918

VISIT SPLIT

WELCOME MAGAZINE

Summer 2026
Ljeto 2026

31



MAGAZINE FOR TOURISM AND CULTURE
ČASOPIS ZA TURIZAM I KULTURU

TWO DECADES SINCE THE DEATH OF VASKO LIPOVAC

Painter of Mediterranean erotica

By: ***Sandi Vidulić*** Photos: ***Archive family Lipovac***

The silent presence of longing for warmth defines this maritime life. In his paintings, ships leave thick smoke as they sail across the purple and blue sea. They announce stories of lives that unfold between arrivals and departures - love, longing, meetings and farewells. Lipovac creates an alchemy that refines melancholy with gentle spirituality, vital energy and good-natured humour - the charm of childlike innocence.

DVA DESETLJEĆA OD SMRTI VASKA LIPOVCA

Slikar mediteranske erotike

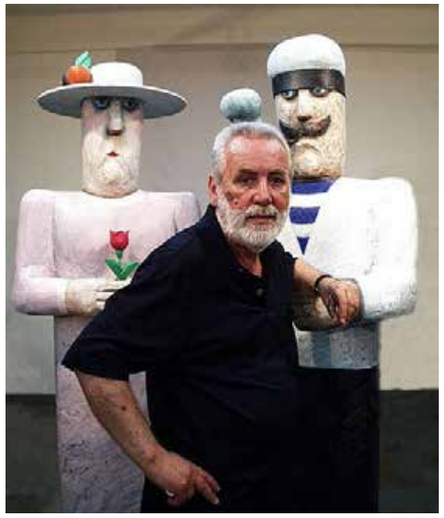
Piše: ***Sandi Vidulić*** Foto: ***Arhiva obitelji Lipovac***

Tiha prisutnost čežnje za toplinom obilježava ovaj pomorski život. Na slikama brodovi ostavljaju gusti dim dok plove ljubičastom i modrom pučinom. Najavljuju priče o životima koji se odvijaju između dolazaka i odlazaka. Ljubav, čežnju, sastanke i rastanke. Lipovac stvara alkemiju koja sjetu oplemenjuje blagom duhovnošću, životnom energijom i dobroćudnim humorom - šarmom djetinje nevinosti

Vasko Lipovac's Cyclists were exhibited on Split's western Riva.
Biciklisti Vaska Lipovca bili su izloženi na splitskoj Zapadnoj obali



Plavo stablo, skulptura Vaska Lipovca
Blue Tree, sculpture by Vasko Lipovac



Vasko Lipovac
He created a unique arsenal of memories
Stvorio je jedinstven arsenal uspomena

Gabriel Garcia Marquez said that all his important experiences happened when he was a child. A similar thing could be said about the art of Croatian painter, sculptor and graphic artist Vasko Lipovac. He was born in 1931, in Montenegro, near Kotor, next to the idyllic bay where he spent his childhood. He was the youngest of five children in the wealthy family of a prominent shipping agent and merchant. He came to Split in 1967 from Zagreb, where he had graduated from the Academy of Applied Arts. His return to the Mediterranean would permanently define his art, and Split would remain his home for the rest of his life (until 2006).

Lipovac has received numerous awards. His art was recognized by the profession, but it was also widely accepted by the public, because it worked in a familiar and accessible way, at a time when most modern art consisted of incomprehensible trends and movements. Because of all this, Lipovac is one of the most significant artists from Split and Dalmatia in the second half of the 20th century.

Lipovac's works take place in a time of memory. In his works, Vasko Lipovac will resurrect the native world of bourgeois society that existed in Kotor Bay until World War II, and it was distinguished by a maritime tradition. He created a unique arsenal of memories, with the figures of sailors, their fiancées, 'easy women', respectable gentlemen, ladies with flowers and large hats, children dressed formally for a Sunday outing, widows, moustachioed captains with pipes, and bathers.

The silent presence of longing for warmth defines this maritime life. In his paintings, ships leave thick smoke as they sail across

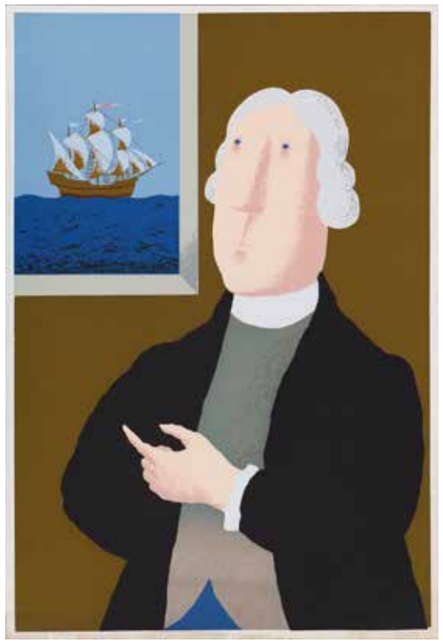
Gabriel Garcia Marquez rekao je da mu se sve važno što je doživio dogodilo dok je bio dijete. Slično bi se moglo reći za umjetnost hrvatskoga slikara, kipara i grafičara Vaska Lipovca. Rođen je 1931. u Crnoj Gori blizu Kotora pored idiličnog zaljeva gdje provodi djetinjstvo. Bio je najmlađi od petero djece u imućnoj obitelji uglednoga brodskog agenta i veletrgovca. U Split je došao 1967. godine iz Zagreba gdje je završio Akademiju primijenjenih umjetnosti. Povratak na Mediteran trajno će obilježiti njegovu umjetnost, a Split će ostati njegov dom do kraja života (2006.).

Lipovac je dobio brojne nagrade. Njegovu umjetnost priznavala je struka, ali je i široko prihvaćena u javnosti jer je djelovala blisko i pristupačno u doba modernih često nerazumljivih strujanja i pokreta. Zbog svega toga Lipovac je jedan od najznačajnijih umjetnika Splita i Dalmacije u drugoj polovici 20. stoljeća.

Lipovčeva djela događaju se u vremenu sjećanja. Vasko Lipovac će u svojim djelima uskrsnuti zavičajni svijet građanskoga društva kakvo je do Drugoga svjetskog rata postojalo u Boki Kotorskoj, a obilježila ga je pomorska tradicija. Stvorio je jedinstven arsenal uspomena, s likovima mornara, njihovih zaručnica, 'lakih djevojaka', ugledne gospode, gospođa s cvijećem i velikim šeširima, djece svečano odjevene za nedjeljni izlazak, udovica, brkatih kapetana s lulama, i kupača.

Tiha prisutnost čežnje za toplinom obilježava ovaj pomorski život. Na slikama brodovi ostavljaju gusti dim dok plove ljubičastom i modrom pučinom. Najavljuju priče o životima koji se odvijaju između dolazaka i odlazaka. Ljubav, čežnju, sastanke i rastanke. Međutim, Lipovac stvara alkemiju koja sjetu oplemenjuje blagom duhovnošću







“My works are mild eroticism. Eroticism is something that interests a person, if he is normal, both when he is young, and at the age of 85. It’s always an important driving force. It carries us through unexpected details, through some atmospheres that are difficult to read until one steps into the world of motifs,” said Vasko Lipovac about his art.

the purple and blue sea. They announce stories of lives that unfold between arrivals and departures - love, longing, meetings and farewells. Lipovac creates an alchemy that refines melancholy with gentle spirituality and vital energy. The good-natured humour with which he shapes his characters into round, plump and cylindrical forms gives his paintings and sculptures the charm of childlike innocence

The characters and the settings exude muted emotions. This longing for a return to a time when everything seemed reliable, when the world was still young, will unfortunately never come true. That is why his paintings are permeated with lovers’ meetings and their partings, the longing for union and the painful inevitability of separation.

Lipovac had erotic cycles. Unlike perfectly proportioned ancient sculptures, or modern bodies built up with protein, his round and soft bodies express a longing for warmth and human touch. The extra pounds giving them a human dimension.

Lipovac was also very well-known as a sculptor. Although he collaborated with architects to create sculptures for public spaces, his most impressive pieces, such as *Cyclists*, are not publicly exhibited. The most famous public work in Split is the sculpture the *Blue Tree*. Although recognizable, his works were not ossified by predetermined decisions; they were created through a process of research and therefore retained their vitality.

“My works are mild eroticism. Eroticism is something that interests a person, if he is normal, both when he is young, and at the age of

i životnom energijom. Dobroćudni humor kojim oblikuje svoje likove u oble, tuste i valjkaste forme daje slikama i skulpturama šarm djetinje nevinosti.

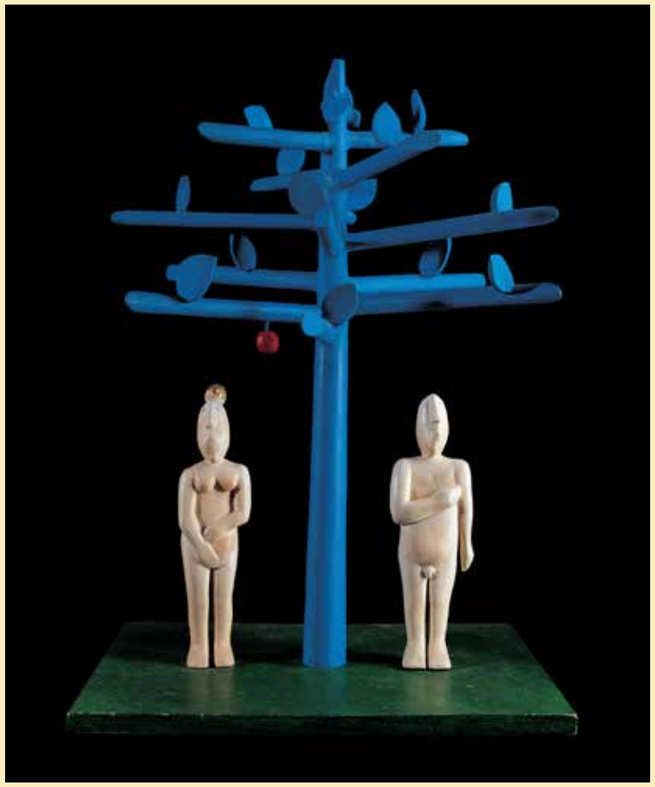
Likovi i ambijent odišu prigušenim emocijama. Čežnja je to za povratkom u doba kad se sve činilo pouzdanim, kad je svijet još bio mlad, ali koja se neće ostvariti. Zato su njegove slike prožete sastancima ljubavnika i njihovim rastancima, težnjom za sjedinjenjem i bolnom neizbježnošću odvajanja.

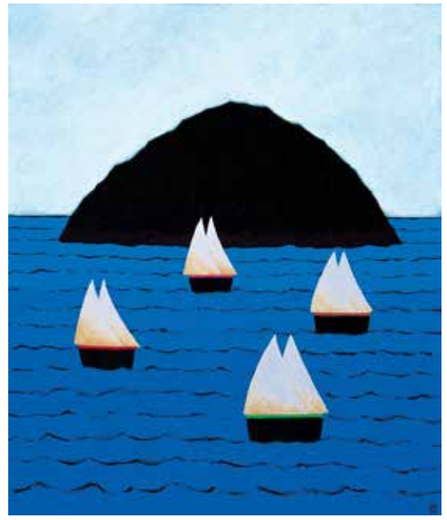
Lipovac je imao i erotske cikluse. Za razliku od antičkih skulptura savršenih proporcija ili suvremenih tijela nabildanih proteinima, njegova obla i meka tijela iskazuju čežnju za toplinom i ljudskim dodirom. Višak kilograma daje im humanu dimenziju.

Lipovac je bio vrlo zapažen kao skulptor. Premda je surađivao s arhitektima za skulpture u javnim prostorima, njegove najimpresivnije skulpture poput „Biciklista” nisu javno izložene. Najpoznatije javno djelo u Splitu je skulptura „Plavo stablo”. Premda prepoznatljiva, njegova djela ipak nisu okoštala u unaprijed zadanim odlukama, nastajala su u procesu istraživanja i zato su očuvala vitalnost.

„Moji su radovi blaga erotika. Erotika je nešto što čovjeka, ako je normalan, zanima i kad je mlad, i sa 75, i sa 85 godina”, tumačio je svoja djela Lipovac. „Nikad nisam imao svjesnu namjeru unositi humor ili ironiju u svoje radove, ali život je takav. Iako su moji likovi često osamljeni i vrlo često tužni u njima se osjeća radost života” - pojašnjava autor.

„A erotika je uvijek važan pokretač, ponese baš preko neočekivanih detalja, kroz neke atmosfere koje su teško čitljive dok se ne zakorači u svijet motiva”, govorio je o svojoj umjetnosti Vasko Lipovac.









75, or 85”, Lipovac explained of his works. “I never had a conscious intention to bring humour or irony into my works, but that’s how life is. Although my characters are often lonely and very often sad, you can feel the joy of life in them”, the author explained.

“Eroticism is always an important driving force. It carries us through unexpected details, through some atmospheres that are difficult to read until one steps into the world of motifs”, said Vasko Lipovac about his art.

Lipovac’s paintings and sculptures, reminiscent of cartoon characters, are well-thought-out works of art in which everything that could be superfluous has been ‘stripped back’. He hints at stories, but he will not tell them. Because Lipovac is not ‘chatty’; there are not many details in his work. Nor does he want to seduce with decorations. Although they seem to be presented from a child’s perspective, his works are not sentimental or infantile. His advantage lies in his well-measured restraint. Because he invites viewers to communicate, to inscribe personal experience in the ‘reading’ of his works.

One of the secrets of Lipovac’s popularity is that both the public and the profession perceive his works as brighter than the author may have intended. ■

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Lipovčeve slike i skulpture koje podsjećaju na likove iz crtanih filmova su dobro promišljena likovna djela u kojima je ‘očišćeno’ sve što bi moglo biti višak. On nagovještava priče, ali ih neće ispričati. Jer Lipovac nije ‘brbljav’, kod njega nema puno detalja. Ne želi niti zavoditi dekoracijama. Premda djeluju kao da su prikazana iz djetinje perspektive, njegova djela nisu sentimentalna ili infantilna. U dobro odmjerenoj suzdržanosti njegova je prednost. Jer poziva gledatelje na komunikaciju, na upisivanje osobnoga iskustva u ‘iščitavanju’ djela.

Jedna od tajni Lipovčeve popularnosti je što i publika i struka doživljavaju njegova djela vedrijima nego što je možda bila autorova namjera. ■





Sculpture by Vasko Lipovac dedicated to the famous basketball player, Dražen Petrović exhibited in the Olympic Museum park in Lausanne

Spomenik Vaska Lipovca poznatom košarkašu Draženu Petroviću u parku Olimpijskog muzeja u Lausannei