

Milan Golob

Paintings (of a female friend) and titles of paintings yet to be created

UGM Studio, Trg Leona Štuklja 2, Maribor

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[The exhibition includes approx. one-third of the paintings (500 pieces) created over the last 20 years (a random selection from my archive), three video/audio works, and a list of titles for paintings I have yet to create. The size of the exhibition space, the estimated time for installation, the institution's technical support, and so on are all crucial and decisive features of the set up, which I have no control of as the exhibition's creator; they are simply an intervention of the real. If I do not get everything (randomly selected) set up on time, the rest will merely sit in a box on the floor of the display room.]

Twenty years ago, four circles occurred randomly in a painting of mine and remained my painting constant; everything else has altered since then. Beginnings have always been delicate. The image of the circle may attest to the incapacity to truly begin, but it also attests to the incapacity to authentically repeat. Philosophy supports the idiot, being a man without assumptions. The paintings' dimensions have also been decreased significantly, but the space of my activity, which is propelled by the paintings, has grown. Soon, but continuously and randomly, I began to name these paintings after departed people (first and last name, birth and death years), initially, after persons who have spiritually inspired me in some way. But nowadays, most of the names for the paintings come from gravestones at cemeteries¹ all throughout Europe. There are presently 6,784 titles awaiting my creation of an artwork for them. Every year, I create 40 to 100 small-size abstract paintings with four circles in the image. The paintings are only finished when I assign or choose a title at random from my arsenal of titles.

I am not interested in the stories of people whose names and surnames, as well as their birth and death dates, happen to be the titles of my paintings, and the titles of the paintings have no bearing on the final visual image. If only the image titles were important, it would be much easier to utilise these names to identify identical monochrome ready-mades of the same size. However, for me, the image is only a full whole when combined with the title. Even if a single image is visually compelling, it is impaired without a title, and vice versa.

The plebeians have never been given names. And it was vital to keep slaves ignorant in order to stop them from rebelling. The Russian modernists, Stalin, Gorky, and many others envisioned a society in which people no longer had names but instead were simply given a letter and a reference to where they worked. *Composition f*, *Construction z*, *Untitled 3* etc.

Every few years, I produce a video² of the paintings I created in which I read the titles of the images, which are displayed as subtitles in the video. The painting's title is crucial. Marcel Duchamp was absolutely right when he said that the title is like an invisible colour.

The resemblance of the paintings from this period is always external (four circles), but the core (repetition) of my paintings is always the difference, no matter how great or small. The surface has an innate ability to reconcile the disparity, but only on the surface.

I do not understand why I enjoy making my work more difficult by choosing canvasses of arbitrary but disparate proportions. Furthermore, I am not certain that the information seen on gravestones is entirely accurate. The arrangement of the captioned artworks in this space is

entirely accidental. First there was a name, and now my painting's title includes that name. Wittgenstein might have wondered how little of a thought it took to occupy so much of my life already. It is possible that everything is a jumbled mess. I have always excelled at that.

According to Gilles Deleuze³, repetition is a transgression in every respect. I act and create something new, that is to say, freedom, out of repetition. I oppose repetition to the laws of nature. The essential and non-essential are inextricably intertwined. Meaning and meaninglessness are intertwined. First, there were people with names, which became part of the titles of my paintings. Repetition alters something in the spirit that contemplates it. Only in another time and space will we be able to relearn what we have all forgotten. The problem with habit that is not repetition is that it is subordinate to pleasure.

The point is in the problem itself. "Learning" always occurs in the unconscious. Postulates that do not require verbalisation perform better in silence. The history of painting is also a place of absurdity and foolishness. Perhaps it needs Apollo, the thinker of the clear—unclear, to contemplate Dionysus' concepts in order to recreate light. But the world would not exist if everything were worthy and right.

Repetition is never repetition of the "Same", but always repetition of the "Different" as such, and difference itself has repetition as its object. Genital thinking, on the other hand, always leads the Self to think only when it thinks its own passion in the pure and empty form of time. Parlançe repeats the past that was never present in the first place. Yes, there is something that compels one to think.

My painting does not imitate, but that is mostly because it repeats, and it repeats all repetitions. Integrating my paintings into the daily existence is an insoluble aesthetic issue. Painting titles are historically an invention of the market, but I am not on friendly terms with it. The universe of my painting⁴ (my spirit) is conditioned not just by looking at it and immersing in it, but also by the possibility of doing so.

It makes no difference where you begin to view the exhibition; if and for as long as you are tempted, you will continue, and you are not required to see everything. Do not look for the beginning. The paintings you do not see or are not displayed are not any worse; you just have not seen them. What happens if nothing occurs? Perhaps a gnostic utopia on how to defeat death. It occurred to me that I am a moron.

I am not sure why the title of this exhibition should have anything to do with this text, but it might.

¹ I take pictures of gravestones that catch my eye by chance due to an unusual inscription or shape. I then transcribe the titles of the paintings that have yet to be created from the photographs at home, and archive the photographs so that, if required, I can figure out where I found the title years later.

² The videos are shot with rudimentary, "out-dated" electronic equipment (for example Olympus SP 310). The videos are small-sized (320 × 240 px or 640 × 480 px) and in black and white. I record the sound with a ten-year-old classic mobile phone (Samsung GT-C3590). I process and combine everything by using, for example, Videopad and Audacity.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton, Columbia University Press New York 1994.

⁴ Painting is a thing of the mind (*La pittura è cosa mentale*), said Leonardo da Vinci.