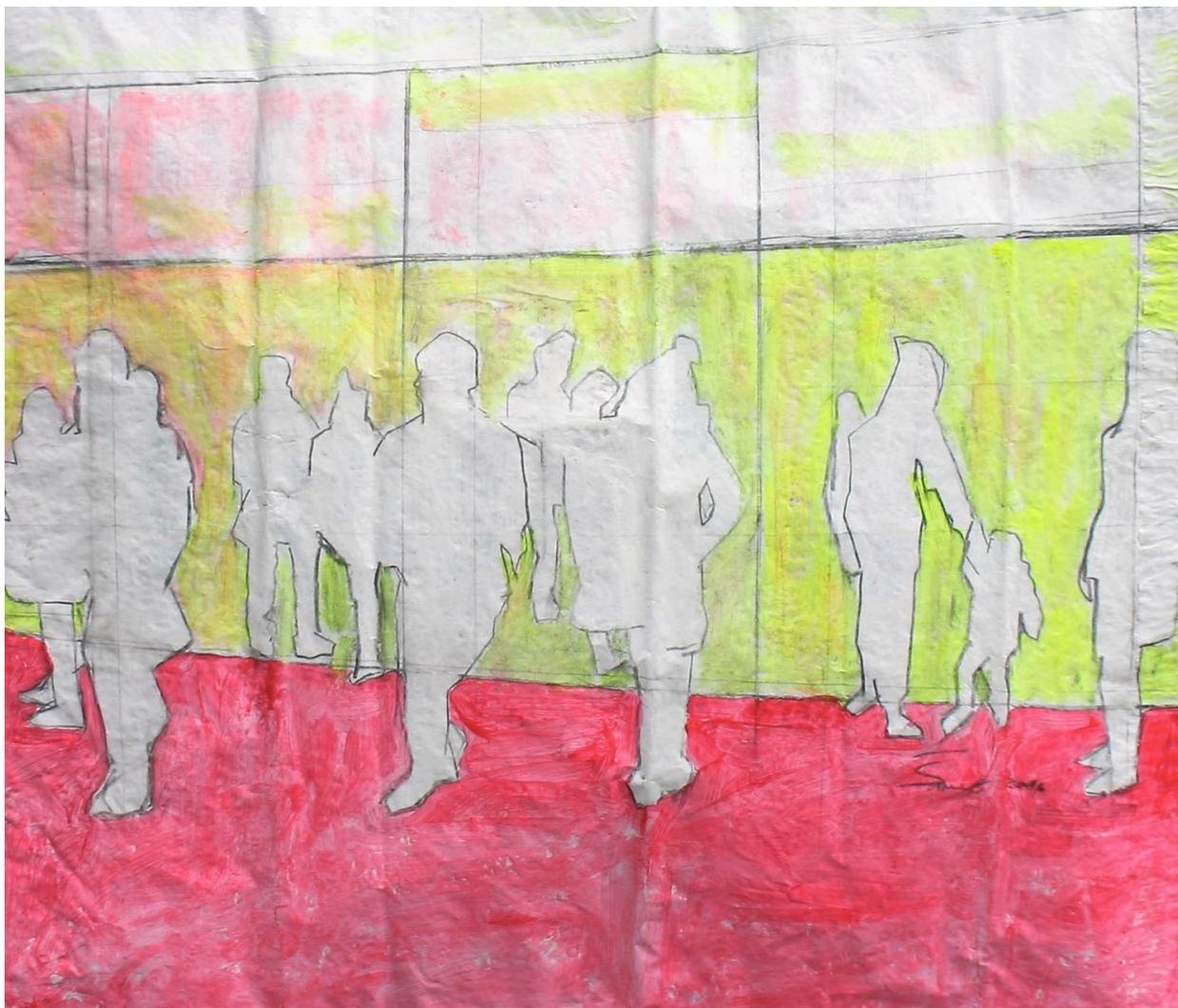




*Parisian silhouettes, 2017,  
acrylic on paper, 100 cm x 120 cm*

**BRANE ŠIRCA**

Pariške silhuete/Parisian silhouettes



*Parisian silhouettes*, 2016,  
acrylic on paper, 100 cm x 120 cm



*Parisian silhouettes*, 2017,  
acrylic on paper, 185 cm x 100 cm

## **LONELY INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR EVERYDAY CITY LIFE**

The series of works on display was designed in Paris, specifically in the art studio of the Slovene Fine Artist Society where Brane Širca lived for two months. At first, the artist was fascinated with the tumult, artistic heritage and modern art of the French metropolis. But over time, the initial enthrallment with all the new glamour started to subside, revealing the less pleasant face of the big city: the rushing crowd, indifferent people and uniform buildings and streets surrounded by endless lines of stores, exposing the consumer-oriented biorhythm of the city. The photographic sketches of public places, lobbies, squares, shopping centres and subway stations were produced as personal diary documenting his experience. These places are constantly overcrowded with people who are always absorbed in their personal worlds, alienated from each other and dehumanized as they walk on with impersonal haste. The photographic sketches were transformed in numerous study drawings and later, in the Ljubljana art studio, gradually evolved in monumental paintings on special inflatable bases. At the same time, the artist's mind reflected on lines, planes and colours, with gradual abstraction of contents and shapes. During his special Parisian experience, the author was constantly torn between making international acquaintances in the lively artistic quarter and artistic contemplation in the comfort of his temporary studio, between exploring the outside world and following his own intuition. This also resounds in his artistic search for balance between external and internal, public and private, observing and reflecting.

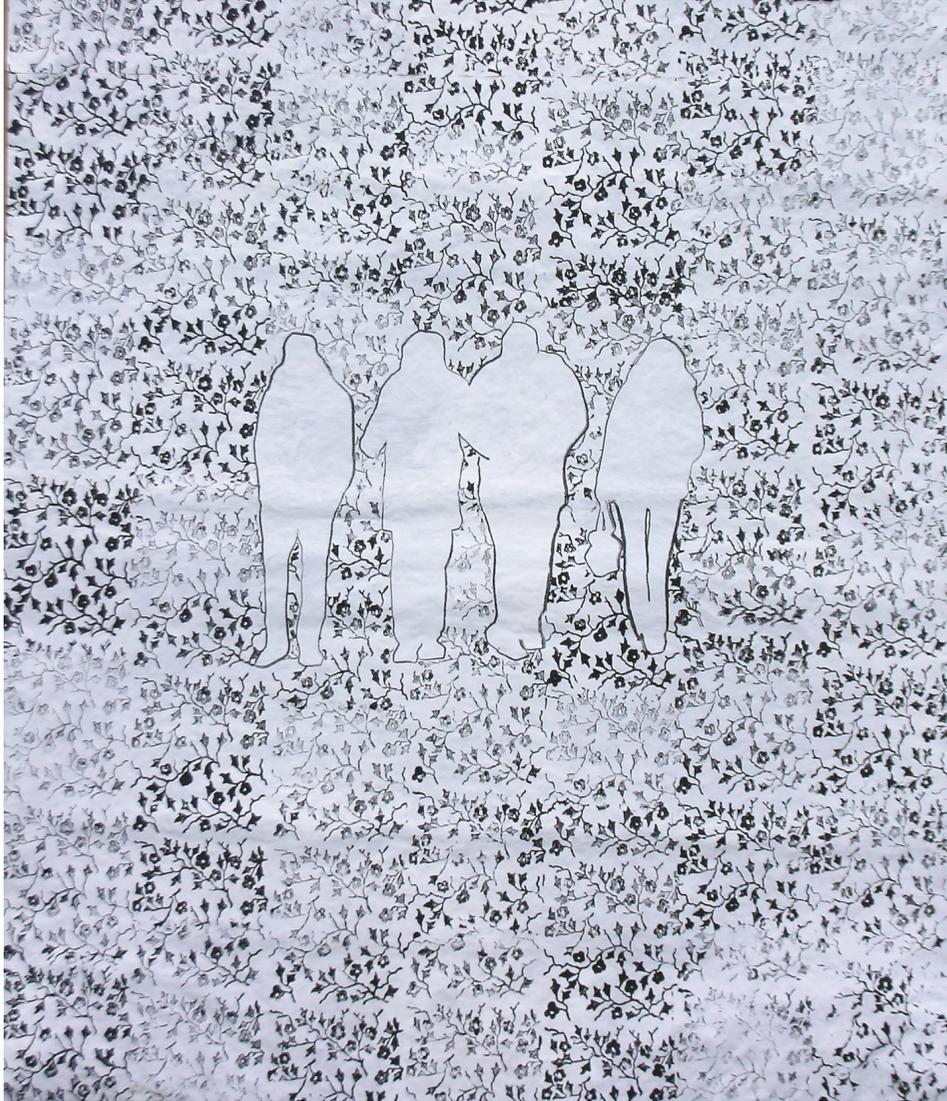
At first glance, the paintings are figurative genre depictions, although their effect is mainly felt in the emotional charge, conveying the obvious bitter loneliness of an individual in the midst of the multitude of bodies. For this reason, the depicted figures are faceless and their expressions are indistinguishable. Their mood is indicated with their body language and visual elements: light-dark contrasts, intense fluorescent colours and exuberant decorative patterns. The essence of visual contrasts highlights the discrepancy between external glamour and internal emptiness, and often paints a critical portrait of reality, full of social contradictions.



*Parisian silhouettes, 2017,*  
acrylic on paper, 120 cm x 100 cm

The surface composition of figures complements the colours, while the decorative patterns and white spaces create mysterious tension with their vagueness and excite the viewer's imagination with their concealed symbolism. The silhouettes are framed with accentuated outlines. In doing so, the author would like to lead us to the idea that every individual should seek out their own purpose, happiness and peace within themselves, not in the outside world or the world of material things. This can be understood as an appeal against mindless consumption and greed.

In this context, the exhibited project seems a logic continuation of the Denar/Money cycle, which was designed by Širca in 2012 and has been made available to the public on several occasions; the bank notes in different currencies were scanned, magnified and transferred onto various surfaces using a transfer printer. As a bringer of visual messages, this was the first time he used inflatable bags, which are actually used to protect goods during transport. After applying the visual elements, these bags were also inflated.



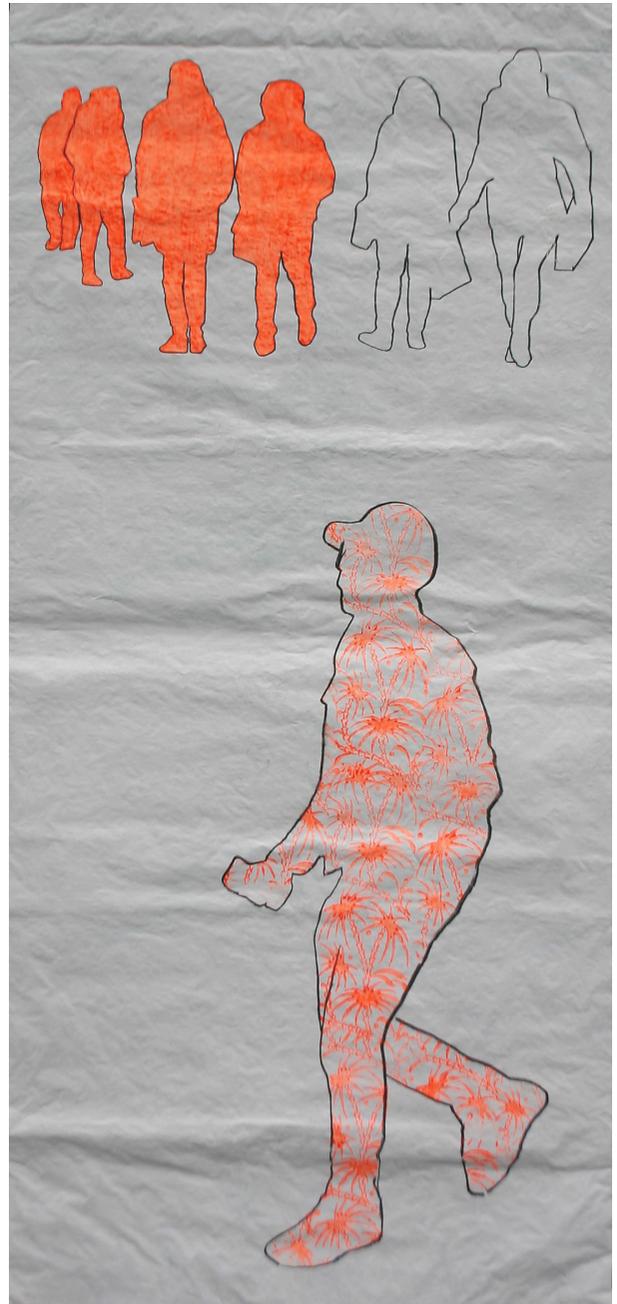
*Parisian silhouettes*, 2017,  
acrylic on paper, 120 cm x 100 cm

Using this method, the painting process was transformed in a metaphoric tale. In this regard, the series Denar/Money raised the questions of valuableness and moral values, historic and social role of money, money laundering, tax havens, overpricing, financial balloons and similar issues. However, in the current series *Pariške silhuete/Parisian silhouettes*, the author resorts to special characteristics of these painting surfaces to materialize his idea, expand the two-dimensional drawing into the space, add depth to plane-based figures and breathe soul into them, metaphorically and literally speaking.

It is interesting to compare the practical applicability of transport packaging and the creative use of these same materials. The primary purpose of packaging material is to transport goods from one corner of the world to another as per the requirements of global consumer market. The artist uses it as a canvas onto which he depicts the images of people trapped in the metropolitan hustle and bustle, in the cycle of everyday motion, haste, transporting to work and school, running errands etc.

The motif of repetition, multiplication and reproduction matches the mechanical pulse of a big city and dullness of a day-to-day routine. The recurring elements are figures, poses and the pattern applied with a painting roller. The larger formats are composed of pieces slightly resembling the scenes of a movie and thus further emphasizing the dynamics. Even though the original photographic sketches featured real people at first, the artistic process remoulded them into faceless silhouettes representing every human being. Rather than real people, they seem more like symbolic architectural illustrations. It is ultimately left to the viewer to determine the final shape, content and meaning, identify the silhouettes or perhaps even step into their shoes

The pictures have a plane-like effect and appear like jumbo advertising posters. Still, a close-up view reveals powerful brush and pencil strokes. As the figures were outlined with a charcoal pencil, the lines seem animated, emotional and full of life. In some parts the line is strengthened or it disappears, sometimes it was erased and then corrected. The varying pressure intensities and tiny "mistakes" all attest to human nature. The pattern applied with a painting roller settles into a rhythm of intense and mild strokes. The viewer may notice the crumpled paper texture and a brush line on the white background which the author used to transform the robust industrial base in a sensual form of expression.



*Parisian silhouettes*, 2017,  
acrylic on paper, 220 cm x 100 cm



Sketch of Parisian silhouettes, 2016,  
ink on paper, 35 cm x 65 cm

The Pariške silhuete/Parisian silhouettes is a result of a long and systematic process: from photographic sketches and reduction of realistic details to rough sketching with charcoal and colours and ultimately the production of final works, which were further developed over time as well, being simplified or enriched with ornamentation and colours. It is true that Brane Širca often inserts decorative elements in his works, nevertheless, he is aware of the very thin line between decorative and tacky. This is also an example where an ornament serves the content. The reproduction of the pattern criticizes the uniformity, predictability and, more often than not, the tediousness of the modern world. But at the same time, repetition and routine provide a feeling of safety.

The Pariške silhuete/Parisian silhouettes recreate the visual, emotional and socially critical impressions of the metropolis. It is also interesting that they were placed at the "Jožef Stefan" Institute Gallery, which also functions as a lobby, a public space and a place where people pass through and encounter each other. No matter if visiting the exhibition or just randomly passing by, the depictions of silhouettes in monumental formats will capture your attention, invite you to stop and encourage contemplation, identification and humanization.



Sketch of Parisian silhouettes, 2016,  
ink on paper, 13 cm x 20 cm



Sketch of Parisian silhouettes, 2016,  
ink on paper, 13 cm x 20 cm



*Parisian silhouettes*, 2016,  
acrylic on paper, 100 cm x 220 cm

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#### Brane Širca

He was born in 1971 in Ljubljana. In 2003, he graduated at the Arthouse- College of Visual Arts in Ljubljana under the guidance of Darko Slavec, MA, and Tanja Mastnak, PhD. He is the co-founder and president of the VIČ Cultural and Artistic Association and leader of the S.K.U.P. art group. Over the course of his 15-year career as an artist, he held over 80 independent and collective exhibitions in his home country (Ljubljana, Maribor, Lipovci, Dekani, Kanal ob Soči, Ljutomer, Hrastnik, Medvode, Kamnik, Žalec, Novo mesto, Nova Gorica, Velenje, Koper) and abroad (France, Germany, Montenegro, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina). He also received several awards for his achievements. He manages graphic and plastic art workshops for children and adults, and his works were featured in several publications. The most defining theme of his pieces are numbers assembled in different ways, using painting and graphic techniques, as well as assemblage. In addition to painting and graphic design, he is also implementing the nude female body and human figure motifs in sculpture.