

Features

#1

Tadej

Vaukman

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Your photography is informed by the history of your family, from your ‘super’ grandparents to your newborn son, but at the same time you document raw scenes in wild live gigs and house parties. What does intimacy mean to you?

Yes, basically I’m just trying to draw a simple line through my life and tell this pristine story I have on my mind. I always found my life special, don’t know why - I get fascinated by my grandparent’s basement for example, or my friend shaving his penis while taking a shower, even a mirror selfie with my little Vincent in my hands. Vincent is my son, so let’s not get too excited for now, ok? Intimacy somehow became not so intimate to me anymore, if that makes sense, but at the same time it’s my creative fuel. It’s present all the time and like I said before - I need to keep it pristine, it helps me to stay sane.

In 2019, you received the OHO Group Award after an RU residency in New York where you asked yourself ‘in what ways can a radically different, completely new environment affect you’. How would you now reply to this question?

Oh boy, New York really got me in the best possible way, to be frank. Being so far away from home in a city, which was on my wish list almost my entire life, helped me to relax and get honest with myself. I landed there in a pretty bad condition and I wasn’t even aware of that. It helped me to start over again, both in a personal and professional way. All this wouldn’t be possible if the RU residency wouldn’t have my back. Basically what I did in New York was get up early in the morning, have a coffee and then just cruise the streets for the rest of the day while thinking about my upcoming projects. All I knew for certain is that I should not lose this vibe and freshness when I get back to Ljubljana, this was the most important thing. It reshaped me again into something which was lost a long time ago. I knew there was something missing. It was this lust to create every day, without any compromises. Yeah, I’m ok now.

Beside photographs, you have recently introduced collages and texts in the exhibition “But don’t show this to my kid” in Škuc Gallery.

What brought you to this expansion?

I think this was kinda boiling in me for quite some time. I got to the point where I just needed more to express myself and I always leave the door open for new stuff. When I started taking photos almost 15 years ago, I felt that joy and urge to destroy things, everything was so new and rough to me and I felt exactly the same way when I started with my writings recently. This feeling is kind of addictive and as long as I'm feeling this, I know I'm on a good path. The rest doesn't matter. There's also one more important reason for sure - this spring I had a show with Roman Uranjek (IRWIN) called "Mentors". So, we would see each other for almost six months and I'd teach him photography and he'd teach me how to draw. This helped to get comfortable with pastels and paper way quicker.

Which is the most challenging part in being an artist today based in Slovenia?

It's kind of sad I have to say this, but it's the Government. There's just no room for artists in their right-wing mentality. It feels like Janez Janša, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, is doing his best to ruin what's left. They are destroying non-governmental organisations, cutting down resources for film, theatre and just art in general, not to mention they are publicly bashing artists who they don't like, or I should better say, understand. But hey, we somehow need to stay positive, there's still some place left in Hell.

I really enjoy how you blend art with your private life on your Instagram account. In which ways do social media influence your process?

Thank you! :) I'm "deep in the game", I have to admit that! I just enjoy Instagram, simple as that. There are two important things for me when it comes to social media: audience and possibility to share my work instantly. I mean, it's 2021, baby. I always worked transparently as an artist, there are no secrets I don't want to tell, that's why I'm pretty happy when younger generations reach out to me asking me for advice or just a little chat about artworks. I wish I had this when I was younger. As long as it doesn't hurt my creativity, I'm all fine with this social media game we are all playing. My private life is my work, after all.

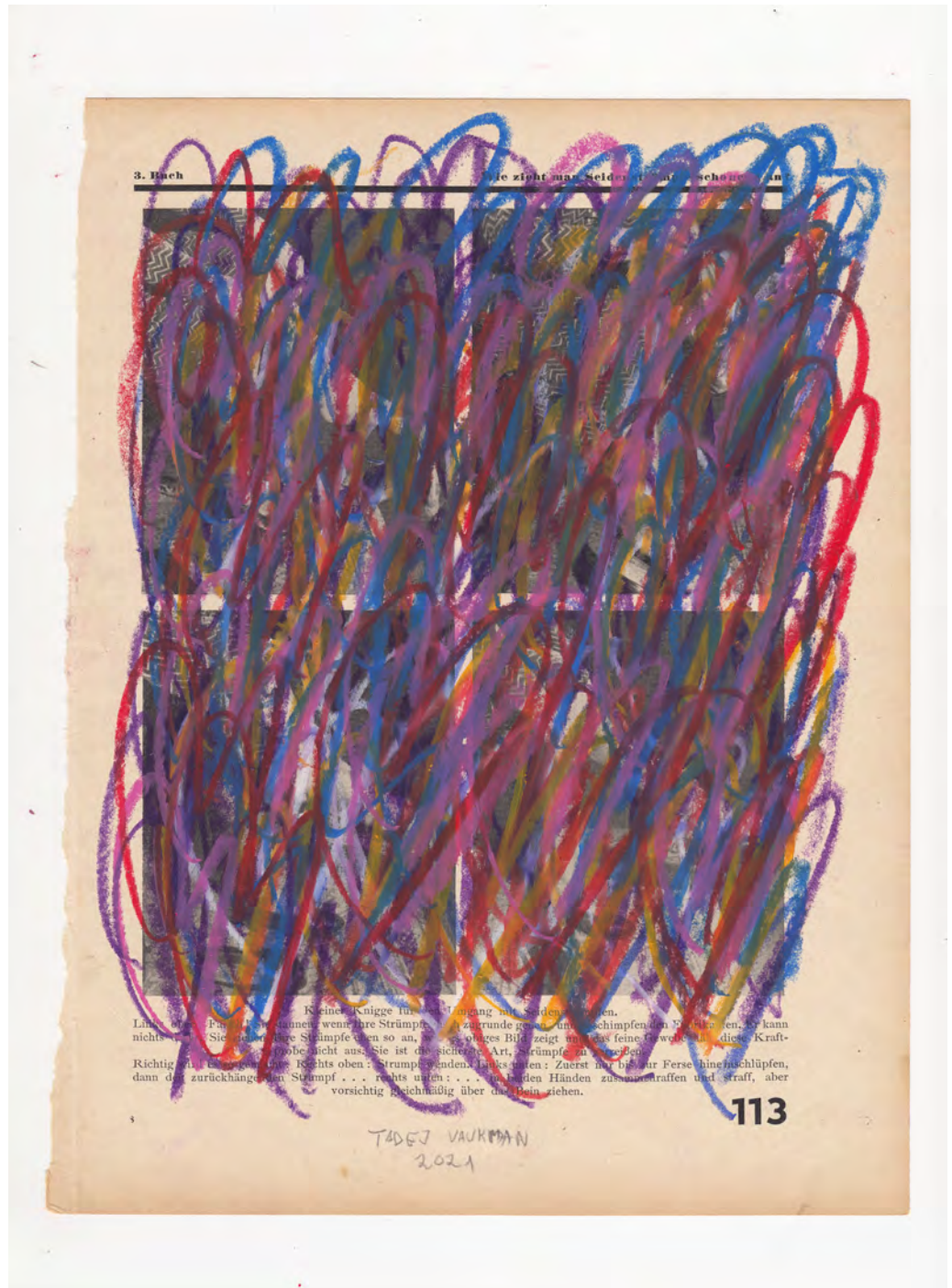
During winter 2021, you are having shows in Paris and Belgrade.**What are they about; are you presenting a new body of work?**

I'm pretty excited for this, yes! First, I'm hitting Paris in November, where I'll exhibit my photography work at the "ImageNation" group show for the Paris Photo Off. I've been taking lots of flower photographs this summer, so you know what to expect in Paris. I'm so grateful to be on board! Another thing happening in Paris (same week) is my zine and special edition print release at the Classic Paris, where I'll dig a little bit into the archive and present my never-seen work from the "Dick Skinners"

era. However, Belgrade will be totally different. Kind people from U10 Art Space gave me an opportunity to have a solo show in December, where I'll exhibit my recent work, mostly writings and collages. It's a big challenge for me, because I'm stepping into an area which is new to me, but it feels so great! I've started to write my first ever manifesto, and the good thing is, that I know so little about the whole "manifestos in the art world", so I don't even feel any pressure, I'll just do it my way. You can definitely expect more of that kind of work in the upcoming future as well.

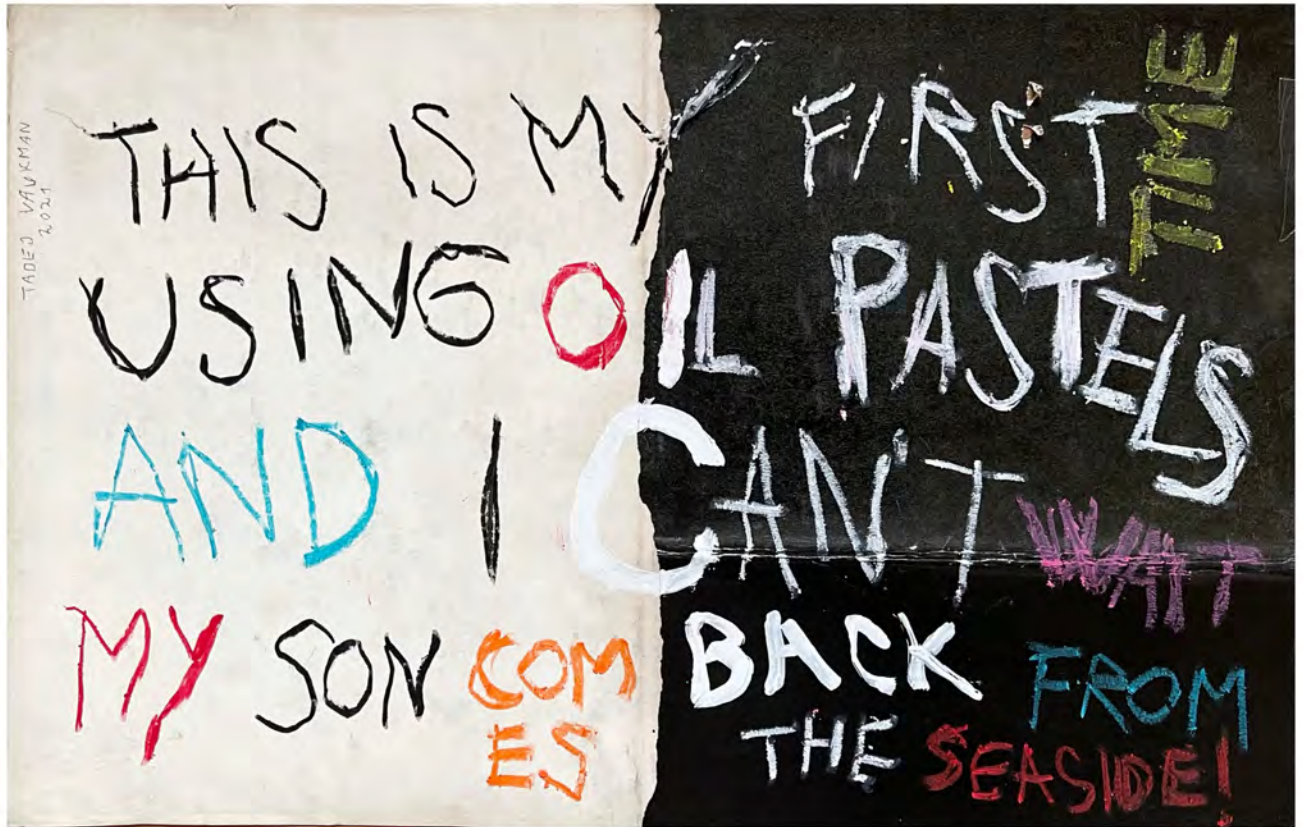
















Tadej Vaukman

Born in 1984, he is an independent artist, photographer and publisher based in Ljubljana. He has exhibited widely at the P74 Centre and Gallery, Hiša kulture, Ravnikar Gallery Space, Daeppen Gallery, Center for Contemporary Arts Celje, MSUM, agnès b. and Viennacontemporary. His works are included in Slovenian and international collections including the Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Koroška, Franklin Furnace Archive Inc. and Pratt Institute. He is the recipient of the OHO Group Award 2019.

Features is an interview series that explores inspiring artistic and research stories in contemporary culture. Invited artists and practitioners from all over the world — acting within a multitude of initiatives, spaces and contexts — share their creative processes with curator Nicolas Vamvouklis.

The opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation.

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