



photo: TJH

Code L - Fragments

by Nataša Prosenč Stearns at KiBela

Nataša Prosenč Stearns, a Slovenian-born video artist living in the USA, has been exhibiting the project code L - Fragments since last Friday at the KiBela Gallery in Maribor. She is presenting a selection from a new series of videos, which she originally recorded for Milko Lazar's new opera of the same name. According to the artist, "code L testifies to the power and depth of human emotion – a unique selection of intimate moments captured in the time and space of today.

Inspired by Roland Barthes' *Fragments of Lover's Discourse*, it is fuelled by myths, archetypes, philosophical works, and the intimate."

Projections onto transparent screens integrate shadows, silhouettes and reflections of the architectural elements. What emerges is a space-inside-of-space into which the visitors enter. According to the curator Peter Tomaz Dobrila, "The artist used to place humans at the center of the natural environment in her earlier works, reappropriating the image of the human body by emphasizing certain parts, such as eyes.

In her recent works, however, the human figure blends with the environment; it becomes a body - shadow, moving across the given ambience. The internalization of this relationship unravels the corporeality, unlocks the interior, and highlights the intimacy of the experience. The figures are abstracted into ephemeral creatures, who transcend into eternity of existence and offer the viewer a space for reflection."

Human intimacy has been a topic of interest for the artist since the beginning of her career. Her focus is on the human condition – what goes on with human beings in the contemporary world; where is our psyche, our soul, our heart?

The exhibited works are moving collages based on image-layering. They depict the states of constant emergence; the integrity of the body falls apart, establishing new connections with the environment and suggesting new possibilities for regeneration. Transformations occur under the influence of water, sand and other elements, which in the works of Nataša Prosenč Stearns serve also as abstracting visual artistic elements – in some cases they trigger the disintegration of the image, in others, they are the substance that connects and protects them. The hypnotic nature of her visualizations, little gestures and static states, almost appear as if trying to stop time and emphasize space. However, we are not to be misled by her flawlessly esthetic moving images. Behind the beauty of her works, Nataša Prosenč Stearns questions our existence and our endurance in the natural environment: to what extent are we even natural beings at all; how capable are we of emotion, of feeling, of compassion? The work is offering not only a top-level artistic experience and enjoyment, but is also encouraging a reflection about ourselves and about our attitudes towards fellow human beings and the environment. The succession of images, their intertwinement and the transitions, move from the magic of projection into the sphere of contemplation.

Melita Forstnerič Hajnšek