

NEW FIGURATION

1963 was another milestone year for Kregar, because his works gradually moved towards new figuration that prevailed after 1965 and lasted until his death in 1973. It is true that the human figure never really disappeared from Slovenian post-war art but Kregar introduced it in a new context; therefore, he is also a pioneer of new figuration. He followed the European tendencies of expressive new figuration with the elements of pop art and psychedelic art. After the period of surrealism, when he occasionally depicted his own view on the current socio-political events in the world, Kregar returned to social engagement and again started to comment on reality. In his paintings, he portrayed a range of moments from reality that were subordinate to his own perception thereof. In doing so, he relied, above all, on reconstruction, deformation, and adaptation of objects. Bodies, hands, legs, faces, technical devices, vehicles, medical equipment, and other similar objects were arranged in the backgrounds marked with their grid structures and large surfaces of colour-saturated fields. Kregar followed everyday political, social, (sub)-cultural, technological, popular, and other events and innovations that encouraged his expressive art interpretation. In Slovenian painting of the time, he stood out because he took notes of historical events, reacting to the devastating earthquake in Skopje, the Vietnam War, the successes of astronauts, and to the hippie movement. Because of a strong personal interpretation of the events, Kregar's paintings of his last period are difficult to comprehend. It is known that even the author himself changed the interpretation of a particular painting several times.

The paintings *Protest* and *21 August 1968* commented on the political events in Prague, where people were struggling for democracy and human rights. Their efforts reached a peak in the *Prague Spring* and were severely suppressed by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1968.

The painting *Weekend* is a response to the changing habits of people influenced by the West and the depicted objects show various free-time activities. The painting *Lighting* seems to be Kregar's most poster-like painting, by which he visually came closer to the innovations of the time in graphic design and print, even though he was never a graphic designer. With the painting *Dreams*, one of his last paintings, Kregar completed his lyrical opus and it can be said that it is the lyricism that runs like a golden thread through all the stages of his painting even though at first sight it seems that they have nothing in common. The diversity of Kregar's works was also one of the reasons why art critics sometimes reproached him for changing styles and succumbing to fashion trends by following different contemporary European art movements.

From today's point of view, it is believed that this was not an imitation but a constant entrance into dialogue with European artistic achievements, which Kregar as a cosmopolitan and an art expert persistently followed and then introduced to Slovenia for the first time.