

The White Aphroid Award 2016

Risk Change

The White Aphroid is an independent transdisciplinary award in the field of contemporary art. Based on an established international network of cultural organizations it supports artists, who have demonstrated an exceptional contribution to contemporary arts. The considered artistic achievements involve all forms and means that appear in the sphere of contemporary art, from traditional, modified, and combined media, to electronic, intermedia, and interdisciplinary manifestations. All generations, genders, and beliefs are treated equally, a fact supported by the nominations in both categories. The choice of the international jury for the White Aphroid 2016 has tipped the balance in favor of an emerging young artist working at the interception of art and science. Parallel to the art award, careful regard is given also to the innovative informal educative-creative practices that establish new social and educational paradigms according to their methodology, contents, and implementation as such. The award, therefore, is presented in two categories: for outstanding artistic achievements in contemporary art, and for innovative educative-creative practices.

The design concept for the award is closely linked to the overall visual image of MIG 21, as well as to the cultural project Risk Change. Specifically, the image plays with modern-day cliché images related to the topic of migrations, and is a result of diverse stereotype-shattering discussions. When we talk about contemporary migrations, faces of nations and races from the Middle East and Africa outline before us, the first refugee crisis of the 21st century. This is the toughest version of migrations, and consequently of the related mass media interpretations, and it overshadows all other manifestations.

The twin half-body bust nude of the androgynous contemporary artist and performer Aphra Tesla is provocative in its own right. Nudes are forbidden and unwanted in all stricter religious and other reactionary communities. The 21st century era is a time of revival of all the conservative social forms, which aim to preserve their proper culture untouched, foreign cultural irruptions and influences are undesired. Even the European freedom of thought, idolatry, satire, etc. are all under attack and need to be defended. The image reminisces about the antique times when the nude occupied a central position in the arts and in the European Roman-Catholic, aristocracy-commissioned imagery, from the Renaissance onward, art as the paradise, purgatory or hell of creative freedom.

When Aphra puts on the black clergyman head covering, we get one of the authentic symbols of present-day

European culture, a strange co-existence and tension between religious signs and freethinking exposure. The historical connotation of the late-Renaissance motif, touching a woman's nipple with the fingers, is a sign that she is pregnant. All that is implied in the contemporary interpretation of this motif is that we are able to perceive change. Eyes, not to see, two cyborgs, a pair of biological instruments are measuring perception. The only radical difference is in the color of the head covering. Everything else is just differing shades.

A spin-off of the same motif is The White Aphroid statuette. The 30-centimeter print of a three-dimensional live-figure scan is attached to a granite cube. The granite cube stone has become a contemporary symbol of the city of Maribor after the massive demonstrations in 2012, when people used these stones to attack buildings associated with corrupt local authorities. This symbol of justice, courage, and non-corruptness, is the foundation of The White Aphroid. With the visual image of a living, active artist Aphra Tesla used as a symbol, the award signifies contemporaneity, here and now, as a position in the time which we live.