

The Paradoxes of the Real: Photorealism and Hyperrealism in Slovak Painting

**Authors: Oľga Bartošíková, Julián Filo, Richard Marco, Marcel Mališ, Veronika Rónaiová,
Dorota Sadovská, Adam Šakový, Veronika Šramatyová, Uljana Zmetáková, Ivona Žirková**

The paradoxes of the real in painting are revealed at the moment when the image appears more convincing than reality itself, and when the boundaries between image and reality blur to such an extent that illusion prevails over the real. In photorealistic and hyperrealistic painting, however, the aim is not a faithful reproduction of the world, but rather its questioning.

Photorealism and hyperrealism, associated primarily with American and European art of the 1960s and 1970s, emerged as a response to the growing dominance of photography, which was considered a more objective medium than realist painting. Photography became the primary form of representing reality and, at the same time, a source of reference for painters. Photorealists transferred analogue photographs onto canvas with extreme precision, to the point where the painting resembled a photograph. Their approach was mechanical, documentary in nature, and reinforced by glossy surfaces that intensified the illusion. Hyperrealists, however, did not seek merely to copy reality. They transformed it, emphasized details normally invisible to the naked eye, and created a new reality in which the original was lost within the newly formed hyperreality (a concept introduced by Jean Baudrillard).

Both strategies also found a specific form in Slovak painting, although the political and artistic context of the 1970s differed from that of the West. Thanks to the acceptability of realism, space emerged for alternative forms of realist painting beyond socialist realism. Non-problematic themes allowed for an escape from ideological subject matter, while experimentation with photography introduced new ways of seeing the world. Photorealism and hyperrealism appealed not only to artists of the 1970s such as Julián Filo and Oľga Bartošíková, but also to prominent female artists such as Uljana Zmetáková, Veronika Rónaiová, and Dorota Sadovská. The overlaps of hyperrealism with conceptual painting can also be found in the work of contemporary artists such as Marcel Mališ, Veronika Šramatyová, Ivona Žirková, Adam Šakový, and Richard Marco, who demonstrate that this is not merely a matter of precise painting technique, but also of redefining the relationship between image and reality.

Katarína Ihringová