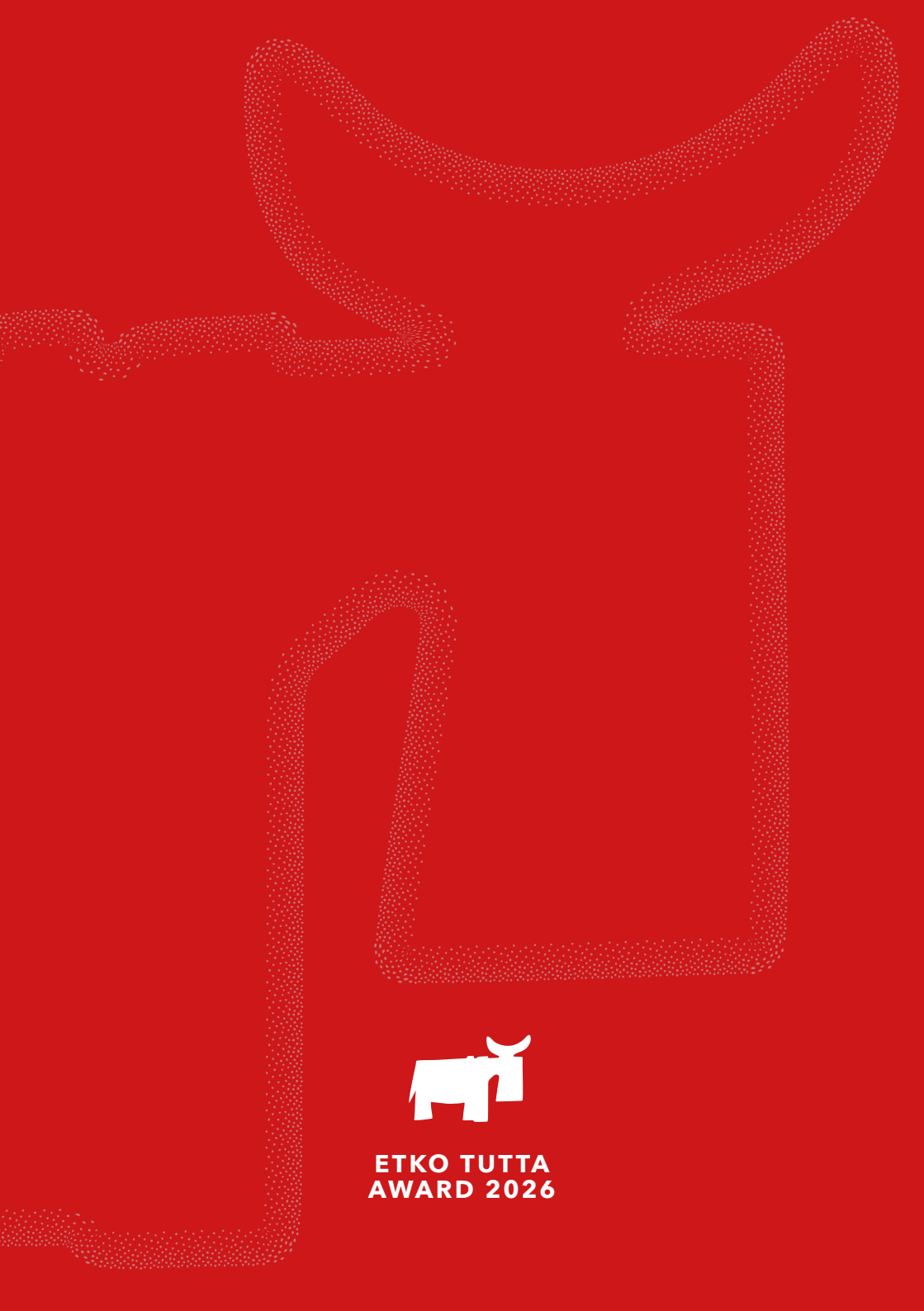




**ETKO TUTTA
AWARD 2026**

ABOUT THE ETKO TUTTA AWARD

The **ETKO TUTTA AWARD** is a biennial international award for contemporary visual art, established in 2024 by KUD Manifest within the ART CIRCLE International Visual Arts Festival. It recognises artistic excellence and originality, professional and active participation in the festival, long-term support of ART CIRCLE, and contribution to its international visibility and the promotion of Slovenian contemporary art abroad.

The award is named in memory of Etko Tutta (1961–2022), Slovenian artist and one of the key figures in the development of ART CIRCLE. His vision of connecting art, international artists and the local environment remains an important part of the festival's identity.

The first award was presented in 2024 to Norihiko Saburi (Japan). For its second edition in 2026, the selection was made from more than 150 artists who participated in ART CIRCLE festivals in Slovenia, Italy and Austria between 2024 and 2026.



Inspired by Etko Tutta, the glass sculpture created for the award is by Klemen Brun, artist and Steklarstvo Loverčič



Etko Tutta

The international professional jury – Daniel Sur (Romania), curator and President of the Jury; Réka Fazakas (Hungary), curator; and Katarina Brešan (Slovenia), curator and art historian – selected Sabine Müller-Funk (Austria), Anca Boeriu (Romania) and Murdo Ortiz (Spain) for the shortlist and Mihael Milunović (Serbia) as the recipient of the ETKO TUTTA AWARD 2026.

The Award Ceremony and Mihael Milunović's solo exhibition will open on 8 October 2026 at Xcenter in Nova Gorica. The second exhibition, bringing together Mihael Milunović and the three shortlisted artists, will open on 22 October 2026 at Villa Vipolže. Both exhibitions will be on view until 18 November 2026 and are curated by Daniel Sur and Maša Gala.

FOREWORD

The **ETKO TUTTA AWARD** grew naturally from what ART CIRCLE has become. Over the years, we have welcomed increasingly accomplished artists from around the world, and at a certain point we realised that we wanted to do more than organise residencies and exhibitions. In 2024, our team at KUD Manifest decided to create an international award that would recognise exceptional artistic practices and allow us to take a more active position within the wider field of contemporary art.

Naming it after Etko Tutta was both personal and natural. Etko was an artist, colleague and friend, and one of the people whose vision helped shape ART CIRCLE. He believed in connecting artists, people and places – and in creating opportunities where they did not necessarily exist before.

I believe strongly in this idea. We do not have to be in one of the world's major art centres to create something internationally relevant. We can build it here, in our own environment – inviting artists from across the world into it, while opening our region towards a much wider contemporary art dialogue. The ETKO TUTTA AWARD is part of this ambition.

My sincere thanks go to Daniel Sur, Réka Fazakas and Katarina Brešan for their commitment and expertise as members of the jury, and to our team, Maša Gala, co-curator of the exhibitions, and Jesse Magee, for their dedication to the project.

Above all, I thank this year's award recipient and the shortlisted artists for their trust and willingness to invest their time, work and artistic energy, as well as our Slovenian and international partners and supporters who make this project possible.

With its second edition, we are still at the beginning. But I hope we are building something that will grow beyond us – a lasting platform for artists and a contribution to the cultural legacy of the environment in which we have chosen to work.

KLEMEN BRUN, BFA

President, KUD Manifest

Director, ART CIRCLE International Visual Arts Festival



Mihael Milunović, Art embassy of Serbia, 2023



ART CIRCLE 2023: Vladimir Lalić, Marjan Simčič, Maša Gala, Valerija Simčič, Mihael Milunović, Art embassy of Serbia, 2023



Einfühlung 56.3 x 77 cm, acrylic on paper, 2026



MIHAEL MILUNOVIĆ'S work spans painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, video, performance and installation, exploring questions of perception, identity and the ways we understand reality. His recent work focuses on human identity in a post-human, hyper-mediated world and on how perception is shaped by social environment, education and psychological habits. By decontextualising familiar objects, symbols and settings, he creates layered works that provoke alienation and curiosity and open space for reflection.

Born in Belgrade in 1967 into an artistic family, Milunović studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade and at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, working in the classes of Vladimir Veličković, Marina Abramović and Tony Brown, among others.

Since the mid-1990s, he has exhibited widely across Europe and beyond. By October 2026, he had participated in more than 150 international exhibitions, including over 60 solo exhibitions and more than 90 group exhibitions. His works are held in numerous museum and institutional collections, including MUMOK - Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; macLYON - Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Colección SOLO, Madrid; Deji Museum, Nanjing; the Moët & Chandon / LVMH collection, France; and the National Gallery of Bulgaria, Sofia.

He has also realised large-scale public and cross-disciplinary projects, including the wrapping of Vienna's Ringturm, projects for the 250th Beethoven anniversary, kinetic sculptures for the Klangwolke in Linz, and commissions from the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie in Paris.

He lives and works between Paris and Belgrade.

MIHAEL MILUNOVIĆ PORTRAIT OF AN EMPTY INHERITANCE

There is a biographical coincidence that Mihael Milunović rarely invokes, although it offers an unexpectedly precise entry point into the question of inheritance that runs through his work. He was born in Belgrade in 1967, the year and city in which his grandfather, Milo Milunović, died. One of the founding figures of modern Serbian painting and an important presence on the Yugoslav art scene, Milo Milunović belonged to a generation whose work helped define the cultural landscape into which his grandson was born. The two never met. What Milunović inherited was not a studio practice transmitted directly from one generation to the next. He inherited a name. A name already burdened with history, which he had to make his own.

This biographical circumstance can be read as a quiet key to an oeuvre that, for more than three decades, has been concerned with what survives after the systems that produced our forms have disappeared. Architecture, institutions, uniforms, political infrastructures and bureaucratic bodies appear in his work as structures left standing after the ideology that once gave them meaning has withdrawn.



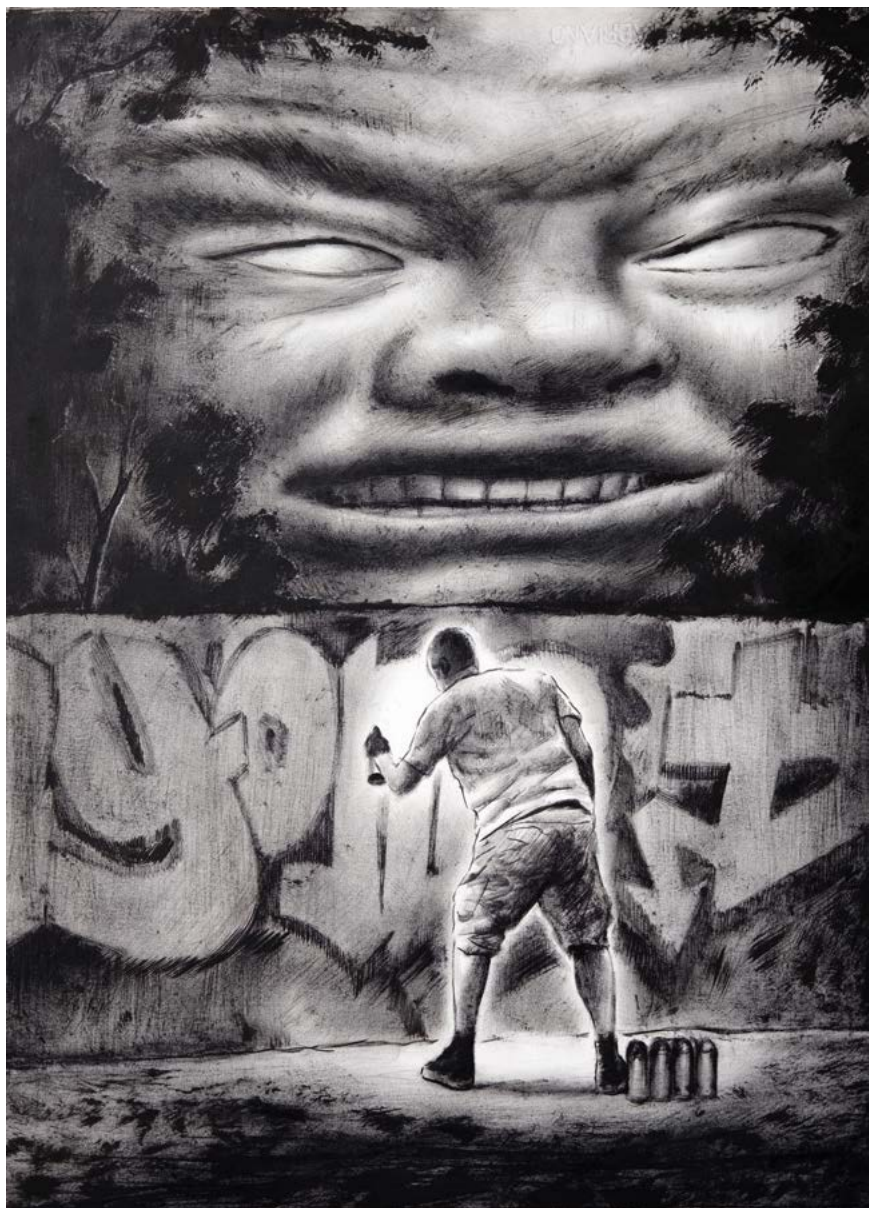
Sacred society 76,5 x 57,5 cm, china ink on paper, 2016



Futura 88 x 70 cm, acrylic on paper, 2024

In a recent interview, Milunović describes the blocks of Novi Beograd as architectural shells of a vanished ideology, spaces in which subsequent generations invent different relationships and different meanings. The image is revealing because it describes one of the central operations of his practice: looking at historical forms after they have lost their original function and observing what happens when they are inhabited by people who no longer share the world for which those forms were designed.

The visual vocabulary he developed during his student years in Paris, in Vladimir Veličković's class, has repeatedly returned to one persistent image: the body from which the face has been removed. Uniforms, insignia, conference tables, bridges suspended over devastated landscapes, the paraphernalia of bureaucratic and military power – all are populated by anonymous figures. The face may be replaced by a field of light, an opaque surface or a carnival mask bought in an ordinary shop. Identity is not concealed. It has been evacuated.



Blind Stare 76,5 x 57,5 cm, china ink on paper, 2023

The effect is closer to the clinical than to the surreal. Milunović does not construct an imaginary nightmare. He takes recognisable images from a world that existed and looks at them after the explanation that once made them intelligible has disappeared. His works begin to resemble an inventory of authority after authority has withdrawn.

This is also where one of the genuine tensions within his practice emerges. The faceless figure, an exceptionally effective metaphor for the collapse of Yugoslavia and the experience of de-individuation in the 1990s and 2000s, has gradually become one of Milunović's visual signatures. A few of these bodies are enough to identify the artist. Yet every image that acquires such a strong recognisable identity runs the risk of becoming its own mechanism. Repetition can diminish the unease generated by the original image. Within an art system in which visual languages circulate rapidly and style is easily converted into a brand, the anonymous figure can begin to function simultaneously as a critical image and as an emblem.



The Bridge 102 x 66 cm, china ink on paper, 2023

Some of the more recent works appear to test precisely this limit. The palette occasionally flares up: saturated reds, electric yellows, contrasts kept at a distance in the earlier work. The chromatic shift opens another register for the same set of concerns. It is a risky move, and for that reason an interesting one. Some of these works retain the conceptual density of the earlier body of work while giving it a new kind of energy. Others move towards illustration or an almost pop vocabulary, creating a less stable relationship between the gravity of the subject and the seduction of the image.

Less frequently discussed is the relationship these works establish with the viewer. The bodies positioned in front of ideological architecture are not simply historical victims. They are people who have inherited spaces they did not design and must find ways of inhabiting them. The block, the conference room, the uniform and the infrastructure become settings for a history that continues to be lived by people for whom that history no longer provides a shared explanation.

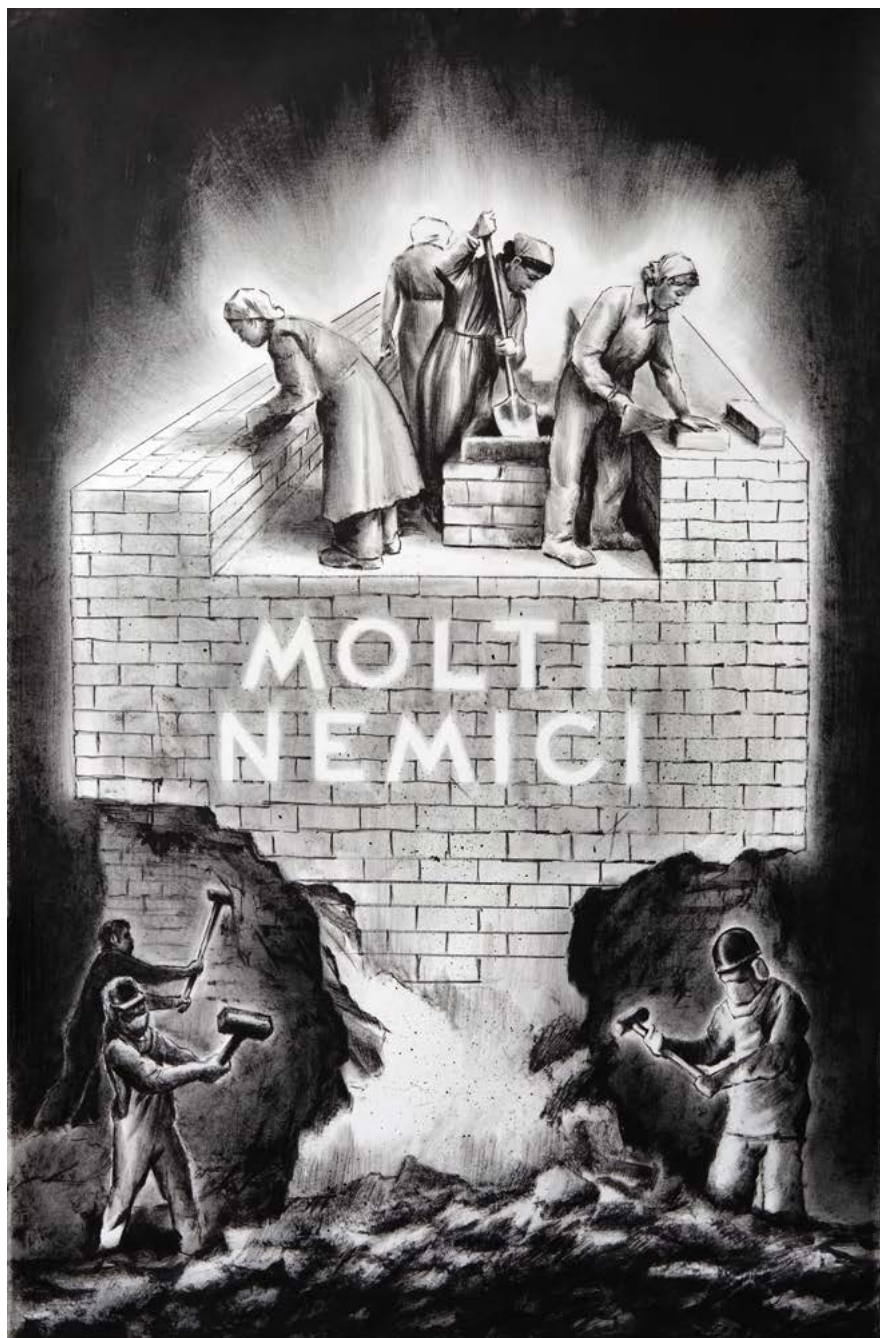
From this perspective, Milunović's concerns extend beyond post-communist memory. In a 2023 interview, he spoke of the „final liquidation of all possible ideologies“ produced by neoliberalism. The statement shifts the focus towards the present: the old systems have disappeared, while the promise of a world liberated from ideology appears exhausted in its own turn. What remains are the forms. The spaces remain. Learned gestures remain, as do the bodies that continue to perform them.



The Studio 70 x 100 cm, acrylic on paper, 2025



Three Stars 102 x 66 cm, china ink on paper, 2023



Molti Nemici 102 x 66 cm, china ink on paper, 2023

Milunović works with this persistence. The block, the uniform, the institution, the conference room and the anonymous body become forms of a history that continues to operate after the disappearance of its official justification. In his work, „inheritance“ is rarely a stable patrimony. It resembles something received without an instruction manual: an existing structure that each generation is required to reinterpret.

The institutional recognition of his work has developed alongside this sustained investigation. His 2023 exhibition *Ukrštanje / Teritorija i sopstvo* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, curated by Miroslav Karić, belongs to a trajectory that includes institutions such as MUMOK in Vienna and the Deji Art Museum in Nanjing. In 2018, Milunović received the Académie des Beaux-Arts Award in France. In 2017, his intervention on Vienna's Ringturm transformed approximately 4,000 square metres of façade into the support for a single image. The scale of such projects also alters the scale of the question: the anonymous body that appears within the frame of a painting can become, in public space, the image of an entire building.

The ETKO TUTTA AWARD 2026 arrives at a moment when this investigation already encompasses three decades of accumulation, repetition and displacement. The award can therefore be understood as a recognition of an oeuvre built around a question that remains unresolved: what do we do with the forms we inherit once their original meaning has disappeared?

In Milunović's case, the question also has a personal origin. A famous name, inherited from a grandfather he never knew, becomes the starting point for an artistic practice concerned with institutions, ideologies and forms of authority that continue to exist after those who created them have disappeared.

Perhaps this is where the most interesting tension in Milunović's work lies. He has developed a visual formula powerful enough to withstand three decades and recognisable enough to become its own sign. The challenge of the next stage is to discover how far that inheritance can still be transformed before it becomes, in turn, an empty form of its own.

DANIEL SUR

President of the International Jury for Etiko Tutta Award 2026



Surface Works 102 x 66 cm, china ink on paper, 2023



White Heart 76,5 x 57,5 cm, china ink on paper, 2017



The Good and The Bad 100 x 70 cm, acrylic on paper, 2024





The Field 70 x 100 cm, acrylic on paper, 2026



The Afternoon 70 x 100 cm, acrylic on paper, 2026



Serial Clown 70 x 70 cm, acrylic on paper, 2026



COLOPHON

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MIHAEL MILUNOVIĆ

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AWARD 2026**

MIHAEL MILUNOVIĆ
SERBIA



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