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| **SILVESTER PLOTAJS SICOE: *How to Dream Backwards?***  Overview Exhibition City Art Gallery Ljubljana **5 March 2026 – 3 May 2026** curator: **Sarival Sosič, PhD** [mgml.si/en/city-art-gallery/exhibitions/737/silvester-plotajs-sicoe/](https://mgml.si/en/city-art-gallery/exhibitions/737/silvester-plotajs-sicoe/) |  |

Thursday, 5 March 2026, 19.00  
**Exhibition opening**

Thursday, 12 March 2026, 17.00  
**Conversation on contemporary painting:** Silvester Plotajs Sicoe, Katarina Hergouth, Marko Košan, Božidar Zrinski and Sarival Sosič, PhD

Wednesday, 18 March 2026, 17.00 **Film screening: *SICOE PUNK CUBIST***

Thursday, 26 March 2026, 17.00 **Guided tour with the artist:** Silvester Plotajs Sicoe

Tuesday, 31 March 2026, 17.00  
**Guided tour of the exhibition:** Silvester Plotajs Sicoe and Božidar Zrinski

Wednesday, 15 April 2026, 17.00  
**Curatorial guided tour:** Silvester Plotajs Sicoe and Sarival Sosič, PhD

Thursday, 23 April 2026, 17.00  
**Catalogue presentation on World Book Day and guided tour of the exhibition:**Silvester Plotajs Sicoe and Sarival Sosič, PhD

**Silvester Plotajs Sicoe**, an academic painter, will present himself at the City Art Gallery Ljubljana with his most extensive and most comprehensively conceived retrospective exhibition to date. The exhibition, entitled ***How to Dream Backwards?*,** is a carefully considered selection of works – precisely those artistic creations in which the author has achieved personal painterly and narrative maturity, the refinement he has persistently, thoroughly, and patiently pursued since the very beginning of his practice.

Silvester Plotajs Sicoe’s creative path began, developed, and consolidated through the figure and the world of objects, each entering the artist’s visual reflection in its own way. From the outset of his artistic career, he understood bodies and objects – figural images as motivic painterly energies – as malleable and flexible visual forces capable of developing vividly and powerfully across space, transitioning from conceptual premises into clearly articulated and convincing visual organisms. Immediately after completing his studies and continuing to the present day, he has deliberately and energetically created and organised these organisms into series, cycles, or independent works, depending on his immediate sensibility and reflection.

The elaboration of figural images often oscillates between anatomically clearer forms and circular, oval, elongated, flattened, concealed, overlaid, and even geometrically diffused shapes. The transition or flow of forms from concreteness to emphasised geometricity, and above all the highlighting of varying degrees of passionate depiction of the body, are frequently conditioned by the artist’s current psychophysical state and his response to the world surrounding him.

Throughout his oeuvre, strong connections appear between technically coordinated creative journeys into the core of chromatic materiality and painterly insights into the artist’s dynamic inner expanses. Technically, he proceeds from a clear contour and a carefully considered and sensitively attuned chromatic harmony, all merging with the central motif. In larger works in particular, the compositional structure often flows into chromatic intensity, at times intertwined with semantic indeterminacy, as the directness of corporeality may also connect with the enigmatic nature of expression.

The painter conceives pictorial space as a chromatically clear and precisely geometrically defined element in which the depiction of figures and objects is frequently linked to a certain narrativity – as confirmed by the carefully articulated subtitles of individual works. In his paintings, intense colour fields divide various psychologically modified landscapes in which figures and objects are transformed into forceful concreteness, articulated through expressive visual systems with a visually identifiable, yet often decentralised core. Varied colour tones and gradually intensified light reflections shape the plasticity of figural masses, most often without pronounced spatial depth. Flatness is emphasised, which the artist gradually disrupts through the use of differently scaled formats, including very large-scale canvases.

**Silvester Plotajs Sicoe** (b. 1965, Ljubljana) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana under Professor Emerik Bernard in 1988 and continued his postgraduate studies in painting with Professor Gustav Gnamuš and in printmaking with Professor Lojze Logar. In 1990, he furthered his studies with Professor Martin Tissing at the Minerva Academy in Groningen, the Netherlands. Since 1992, he has worked as an independent artist. As a freelance artist, he creates at the Švicarija Creative Centre in Ljubljana.  
-Dr Sarival Sosič, PhD, curator

CATALOGUE EXCERPTS:

**Sarival Sosič, PhD: *The World of Colour, People, and Objects***

Contemporary art is increasingly intertwined with everyday life, creatively processing and transforming it. In modern artistic practices, diverse relationships are emerging between accentuated material carriers, drawn from fragments of everyday life, and their author-led symbolic articulation, embedded within intentionality and subjectivity. This expanded field of artistic systems shifts or even dissolves the boundaries between reality and art. Due to its intensive incorporation, reality itself is increasingly becoming the raw material of contemporary art, undergoing aestheticisation[[1]](#footnote-1) and acquiring or developing symbolic connotations and metaphorical levels. Reality (its materiality) as a vessel of possible motifs and content also encourages a multitude of unconventional, experimentally more liberal artistic approaches, as well as many more entertaining and humorous artistic narratives. The academic painter **Silvester Plotajs Sicoe** entered the Slovenian art scene in the mid-1980s. This was precisely at a time when conceptual art, minimalism, and neo-constructivism were beginning to recede in Slovenia, and a renewed, refined, primary, and more direct approach to painting was once again gaining prominence in artistic interest. During this period, the art field evolved through intensified chromatic effects, the discovery of new relationships between colour density, artistic structure, and the dynamism of forms in space, which collectively signalled renewed creative energy, artistic directions, and trends. In the 1980s, chromatic tensions were often materialised in abstract visual treatments, composed in layered arrangements of light and colour. Some artists applied colour in swift, jerky gestures marked by an expressive character, while others relied on calmer processes of application, interweaving colours within various vertical and horizontal fields. In such painting, the human figure often receded from the artist's focus. And the so-called new image, which gradually emerged in the mid-1980s, represented a departure from lyrical or epic abstraction and a renewed return to figurative art, the art of the tangible world, in the case of Silvester Plotajs Sicoe, formed beyond perspective and linked to Gothic painting, which, after the end of ancient Roman art, once again redefined the visual field within European painting, the visual space as a coarser texture, non-spatial and box-like, geometrically considered, yet infused with the powerful energy of modern artistic expression, where a special figural-object presence seems to prevail, imbued with a heightened sense of greater artistic freedom.

[…]

An overview of Sicoe's entire oeuvre reveals certain guidelines, characteristics, and artistic personality traits that should be mentioned at the outset of this discussion. Therefore, I will first address the artist's formation of artistic space, his treatment of layered colour applications, and expressive light nuances, and subsequently the world of content and motifs related to the figure and materiality that captures his attention. The artist understands visual space as a chromatically clear and precisely geometrically defined element in which the depiction (of figures and objects) is often intertwined with a specific narrative. In the paintings, intense colour planes divide various (psychologically) modified landscapes, within which figures or objects are transformed into mighty concreteness, articulated through expressive visual systems with a visually determinable, yet frequently also decentralised core. Different shades of colour and gradually intensifying light reflections shape the plasticity of the figural masses, though mostly without any pronounced spatial depth. The flatness is emphasised, and the artist gradually breaks it apart through formats of varying sizes, including some that are very, very large. Thus, many of the large-scale canvases give the impression that they do not want to end or confine themselves within their corporeality, while those with elongated forms even resemble the human body. Shifting the boundaries of expectation only further reinforces the painter's characteristic wild and at times almost uncontrolled artistic gesture, most often present in works that are subject to deeper self-reflection. The world of motifs develops as a personal, meditative landscape, while the emotional state is visualised in artistic metaphors or symbols, creating a personal visual world that at times even borders on ritual representation. The composition is dominated by intertwined forms, placed within diagonal, vertical, or horizontal relationships, often appearing as fragments captured within fields of colour, enriched with nuanced light gradations. In some paintings, both in terms of execution and effect, the painter approaches various references to past periods, such as Cubism, German expressionism, and occasionally even Surrealism, but above all, contemporary Pop Art and the latest artistic syncretism, which combines various styles and modes of representation, mostly already explored in past artistic periods. We can also discern specific Cubist influences in many of the paintings, which the artist deconstructed and expanded into what the author himself likes to call "pan-Cubism," which, together with the aforementioned stylistic influences, situates his work into what is known as "metamodernism," which, in its breadth of meaning, is much closer to me than postmodernism, into which some of Sicoe's works are attempted to be placed, especially those that express a stronger reliance (in terms of motif, content, and artistic technique) on popular culture or artistic reinterpretation of everyday reality, including through the de-ideologization of artistic principles and the depiction of even contradictory motifs, meanings, and semantic layers. Within such a division of the artistic space, the artist positions objectivity, geometric forms, and the relationships between bodies as a kind of expanding, but above all, visually malleable substance. The colour palette is based on wild chromatics of intense (various shades of) red, blue, green, purple, pink, orange, and yellow applications, enriched with blacks and whites. Over the years of creation, the paintings gradually condense in colour, become brighter, and expansive in colour; they become concrete or occasionally abstract spaces in which the painter actively incorporates primarily female and male bodies. The content of these paintings is charged with a distinctly intimate world of the artist's own experiences, events that have left a particularly strong impression on the artist’s memory, and even affirm his direct presence at certain events and, above all, a certain subtlety of observation of the past with reminiscences of the present. […] (**Sarival Sosič, PhD**)

**Božidar Zrinski: *Painting that still carries the trace of the human spirit***

Silvester Plotajs Sicoe has clearly stated in several interviews that painting imbued with the spirit of a human presents a particular challenge to him, as it allows him to depict both human dignity and complexity, as well as the often-inexplicable follies that man commits. In this sense, Sicoe does not paint socially engaged or overtly critical images of a human. His protagonists are neither victims nor mythical heroes of grand narratives; yet they nevertheless speak of a specific time, of moments and actions that inspired him.

It might seem unusual today for Sicoe to paint a portrait or a composition in which the legendary basketball player and notorious bad boy of the sport, Dennis Rodman, takes centre stage. Paintings featuring Rodman in the leading role reflect Sicoe’s fascination with a particular human spirit—one that the controversial basketball player embodied in almost every public appearance, and which Sicoe captures with striking precision in his portraits. He was inspired by Rodman’s unpredictability, excessiveness, idiosyncratic posture, and rejection of authority—although it seems that Rodman did acknowledge one figure of authority: his legendary clubmate Michael Jordan, who, at the peak of the 1998 NBA season, famously went to retrieve him from a party that had already lasted four days in a row. Rodman returned to the court revitalised and, according to commentators and sports analysts, better than ever. In Rodman’s portraits, Sicoe captured this determination to take what he desired in the moment and to do what he felt compelled to do. One could argue that neither photographs nor the countless media recordings of that period portray Rodman in the way Sicoe managed to achieve. The distinctive smile, the multicoloured hairstyles, the tattooed body, the explosiveness on the court, the characteristic rebounds under the basket, the shoving on the verge of fistfights—all appear equivalent to Sicoe’s wild colour palette and his multitude of narrative symbols. This shows that Sicoe loved, understood, and continually reflected upon media oddities and their rebellious stance, which he himself continues to uphold today and which makes him appear not only wild but also young at heart. For Sicoe, Dennis Rodman represents a media construct—something that existed only in the 1990s and reached the wider public through various media channels, newspapers, television programmes, and film. The universal and global presence as we know it today had not yet fully developed. Paparazzi played an important role, as did editors and sensation seekers. What mattered was being the first to break the story. Today, it seems more important that as many people as possible see the news; likeability and clickability have replaced colourfulness and the programmed glamour of the media scene—conditions to which Rodman was perfectly suited. Sicoe does not see Rodman merely as a personality, nor does he search in him for a reflective or lost romantic hero. Instead, Sicoe paints an anti-hero: someone who wants to be one, someone who can play by the rules yet consciously breaks them—either through his behaviour on the court or through excesses off it. Dennis’ hands were everywhere, much like Rodman’s hand in Sicoe’s 1999 painting. He was known for his extraordinary wingspan and his talent for leaping after the ball and catching lost balls. In his self-sacrificing determination to save the ball, he would often launch himself into the spectators—acts that only reinforced his status as both an athlete and an influential media personality. Years after that Rodman hand, in 2013, Sicoe painted Jordan’s hand—the hand that had, some years earlier, pulled Rodman out of bed, away from alcohol and drugs, and back under the basket.

The trace of the human spirit is expressed in several portraits of key figures in Sicoe’s painting, among which the portrait of Grace Jones undoubtedly stands out—another legendary performer who filled the media with her graceful, frightening, and simultaneously inexplicable beauty. Every one of her media appearances was a spectacle of popular culture: musical, cinematic, on stage, on the catwalk, or on a billboard. Even Sicoe himself could not ignore her; she was made to be portrayed. With a cigarette in her mouth, similar to her album cover, she looks at us with determination, yet with a subtle distance. Her face is like a mask—showing no trace of spirituality, romantic reverie, confusion, or absence. Her portrait, stripped of overt emotion, embodies the determination of the here and now of the era she represented.

What Rodman and Jones have become and achieved in the media world would not have been possible without the queen of pop, Madonna. She was the one who, in the early 1990s, literally conquered the global media and music empire. Through her work, she became a symbol of continuous physical and conceptual transformation. Her carefully thought-out and meticulously crafted performances were adorned with flawless choreography with full-blown provocation, in which she often exposed her body and delight in pop aesthetics. In 1993, Madonna presented Sicoe with the perfect model for a portrait that today can be ranked among his most important works. On a four-and-a-half-metre-long triptych, he deliberately depicted her three times. The three parts function as three photographs or three scenes from a film or video, in which only her lips, by which we recognize her, are clearly outlined, while her body changes from one scene to the next. With Madonna’s portrait, Sicoe created one of his first personal archetypes—a “proto-painting” or “pre-image”—which he would continue to refine over time. He enhanced the endless colour palette with impasto application and, combined with other materials, emphasized the very materiality of paint itself, highlighting the corporeality of the canvas. With the portrait of Madonna, Sicoe marked his fascination with cultural and media icons of the era, inaugurating his own pop-Parnassus. He was one of the few, if not the only, Slovenian artists at the time who fully understood the significance of—and deliberately explored—the constant transformation of the body in early 1990s popular media culture through his painting practice. […] (**Božidar Zrinski**)

Artist's website:  
<https://www.plotajs.com/>  
IG [@s\_p\_sicoe](https://www.instagram.com/s_p_sicoe/)

Please quote the images accordingly. For any questions contact Nataša Ilec at Natasa.Ilec@mgml.si.

1. "Aesthetic relationship stems from qualitative differences that we consciously perceive and reflect upon. These qualitative differences exist between surfaces, materials, nuances, and components of the material world with their structure and elementary arrangements. They do not mean, speak, or convey anything, but rather we try, differentiate, determine, and reflect on them. Aesthetic systems are ambiguous, complex, multi-layered, and nourished by essential metaphoricality, and are endowed with aesthetic self-reflexivity." (Stefan Majetschak: *Sublime Beauty. The Beauty of Sublimity. Reflections on the Implicit Aesthetics of Modern Art*. In: Stefan Majetschak and Jožef Muhovič, eds., *Art and Form*. Ljubljana: Research Institute of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design and the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, 2007, 93.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)