

# Vladan Nikolić Slays the Dragon



caricatures and illustrations

ebook









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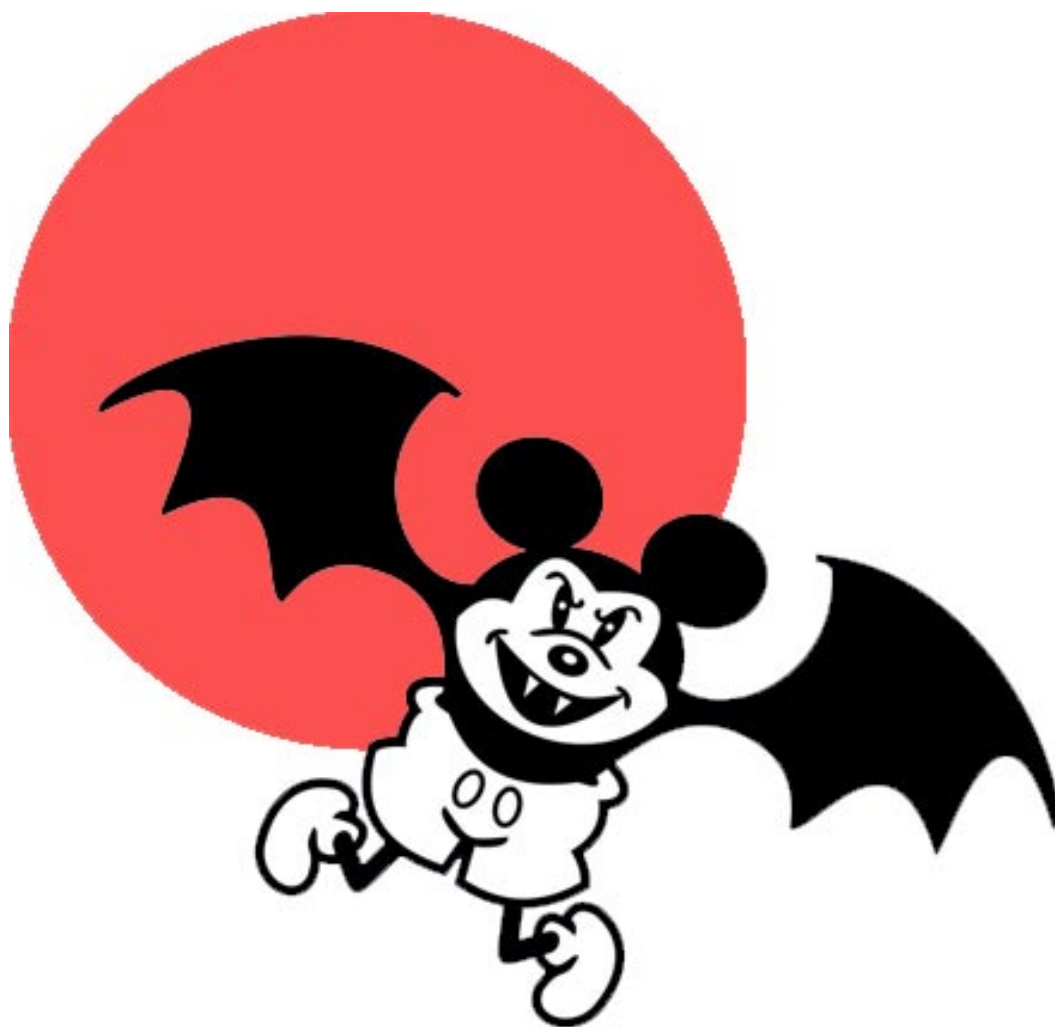


*Modesty*  
COMICS

Vladan Nikolić  
Vladan Nikolić Slays the Dragon  
caricatures and illustrations

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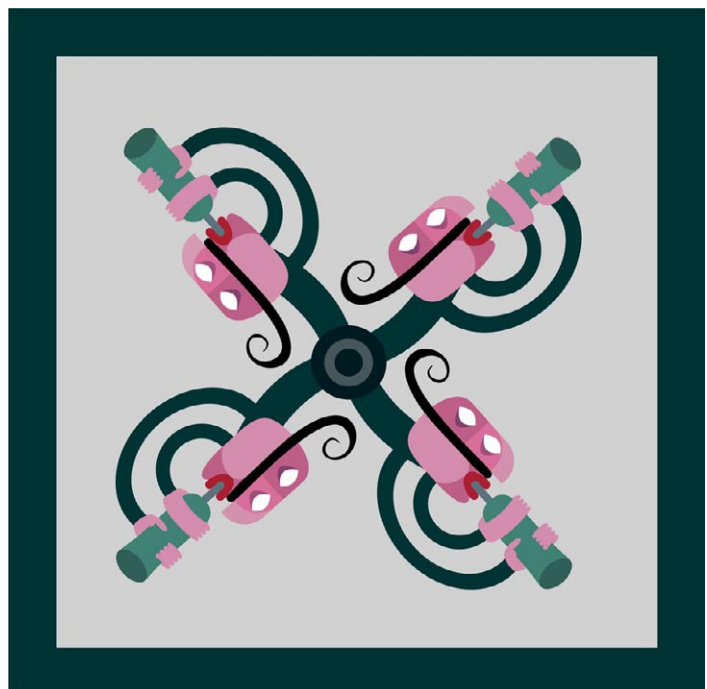


# How to Kill the Dragon and Stay Alive

**W**e all notice that many things are wrong with this world in which we live. Some modern demons, dragons if you will, disturb the conscious and unconscious parts of our personality, but we usually go through this torture without articulated resistance. Injustice, primitivism, superficiality, greed, disrespect and even banning of individuality, economic globalization, and many other modern horrors which humiliate us as individuals and as a group of beings, but we are worried to preserve our pure existence and can not find the strength to confront them. We need a voice, someone brave, who can clearly expose the negativities and to show us that resistance is possible and feasible. That voice will not come from politics, it will come from those most sensitive souls, and these are the souls of artists.

Vladan Nikolić (1968) brings into our service his vulnerability and his sensibility which are higher than that of ordinary people. These ethereal demonic influences in our everyday day are hurting him, crystallize his resistance, which is then personified in the drawn images. Sometimes these images are only conformation of the situation and (black humoured) acceptance, but more often they reveal the essence of the problem, trigger a wave of dissatisfaction and start opposing and, finally, conquer against inappropriate elements.

In Nikolić's comics books, graphic expression chosen is an accurate drawing, with clear, defined lines and uniform and easily recognizable style. It is a specific type of stylization, or grotesque, inspired by some prior art from ancient



*Illustration of geometric reality*

history, such as African art, more than by some current or recent comics authors. The protagonists seem like they were made of cardboard, and the drawing is simplified and two-dimensional - all action takes place on a flat plane, with rarely deeper entering into the scene. The movements are geometrized, simplified, and shading is with precise dark surfaces and lines. In narrative terms, his stories are sometimes gloomy and even painful, but always with clear ideas, whether he tells the story from literature, folk tales, or resorts to his own, somewhat abstract, often wordless, storytelling structures.

In Nikolić's illustrations, graphic mannerism is somewhat diverse, but with all the main characteristics from his comics. It ranges from quite simple caricature style (in this book under the chapter Funnies), through enhanced stylization to complete geometric abstraction (chapter Geometric Reality). There are certainly interchanges between styles in his works and this book does not even want to hide this, but the illustrations are grouped into several segments, or chapters, in the style of drawings, but primarily based on the topic of the piece.

In the chapter Funnies we have Nikolić's humorous reflections on people, animals, vampires and our modern lives. It seems that he shows a conciliatory attitude towards the demons around us, but in the chapter Patchwork Life, he speaks about the complexity and limitations of our destiny, regardless of profession. There are already the first signs of social analysis and disclosures of truths. The chapter Political and Social Life consist of Nikolić's fierce fight with our modern monsters and each illustration with its depth and thorough observations deserves special review. For example, a wealthy man bends the tree that grows on the land of a poor man to pick fruit, or people who are marching pushing supermarket trolleys and led by the man whose flag is the American banknote. There is also a great environmental scare when



*Illustration which complains about the superficiality of Facebook*

on a watch there is a tree as number twelve and the handle in the form of an ax is inexorably approaching. The initial conflict with the dragons continues in the chapter Fantastic Reality where it is reduced to abstract ideas, and people are presented as addicted to technology and consumerism. Nikolić goes even further in the chapter Barcodes, which, inter alia, are shown as stakes piercing the people. Finally, in the chapter Geometric Reality we have our reality presented metaphorically and geometrically and where people are prisoners of alcoholism, never-ending meetings and losers of their own individuality.

It should be noted that Nikolić's social deconstruction and discovery of truths are complete and uncompromising, but never given with rage or hatred. He is a cool assessor of the situation and committed resistance fighter, but never crosses the line of lasciviousness, does not call the names of individuals, and shows problems as metaphysical ideas. We can only be grateful to the artist who has transformed our personal insufficiently defined observations into clear images and led us through the resistance.

It is no coincidence that Nikolić in his illustrations repeatedly returns to the religious theme of St. George killing the dragon (examples are in the chapter Fantastic Reality). As in the drama (a theatre play and later a movie) by Dušan Kovačević (1948), St. George Slays the Dragon, people pray to St. George to help them against the invaders, so we feel helpless and ask Nikolić to drive us headlong into the fight against negativities of the world today. However, Nikolić can not do more than to start, with his drawings, an eternal and utopian battle, killing at least some of the dragons, and coming back alive to continue to help us.

London / Belgrade, September 2014

Živojin Tamburić, comics editor and critic

# Funnies









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