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VLADIMIR VELIČKOVIĆ

FLIGHT, VERTIGO AND FALL

23 03 2026_

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All of Veličković's (1935-2019) work stems from the moment he was forced to leave Belgrade, devastated by the Nazis and plunged into destruction and chaos, in 1941. His creations convey pain but also empathy and a respect for humanity and the victims of tragedies caused by hatred and war. This exhibition presents a compendium of Veličković's work arranged in series: orators, births, crucifixions and studies of the human body in motion – running, leaping, fleeing, or falling.

The son of a librarian mother and a doctor father, his work is closely linked to the images he saw in the anatomy and science books he had at home. Driven by a steadfast commitment to the human condition, Veličković's pencil and brush bear witness to the slaughter of innocence, the resurgence of primal instincts, and the utter breakdown of reason. Predatory hounds, rats, ravens, sickles and gallows serve as the inexorable punishers of every error and misstep. Destiny manifests as the triumphant tightening of the noose, coiling around the legs of a man desperate to outpace his own demise.

Whilst his early years were tethered to the fantastic-surrealist currents prevalent in Yugoslavia, his style would gradually refine into a more clinical draughtsmanship without ever sacrificing its raw expressive force. His **orators**, emerging in the late 1960s, are captured in a state of explosive rupture – a visceral knot of entrails and lines that possess, quite ironically, a haunting beauty. Fraught with tension, they implode upon the lectern in a harrowing, primal shriek: eyes bulging from their sockets, lips retracted to expose the teeth, and ligatures that seem to wrench or unravel the internal organs. This mixture of bones and torn flesh represents the outburst of the hatred and stupidity of the human race, a collective that finds itself trapped and driven toward self-destruction through wars and slaughter beyond all reason. The images are inspired by TV news anchors, commentators spouting empty words and people shouting excitedly into microphones and making promises that will fall on deaf ears.

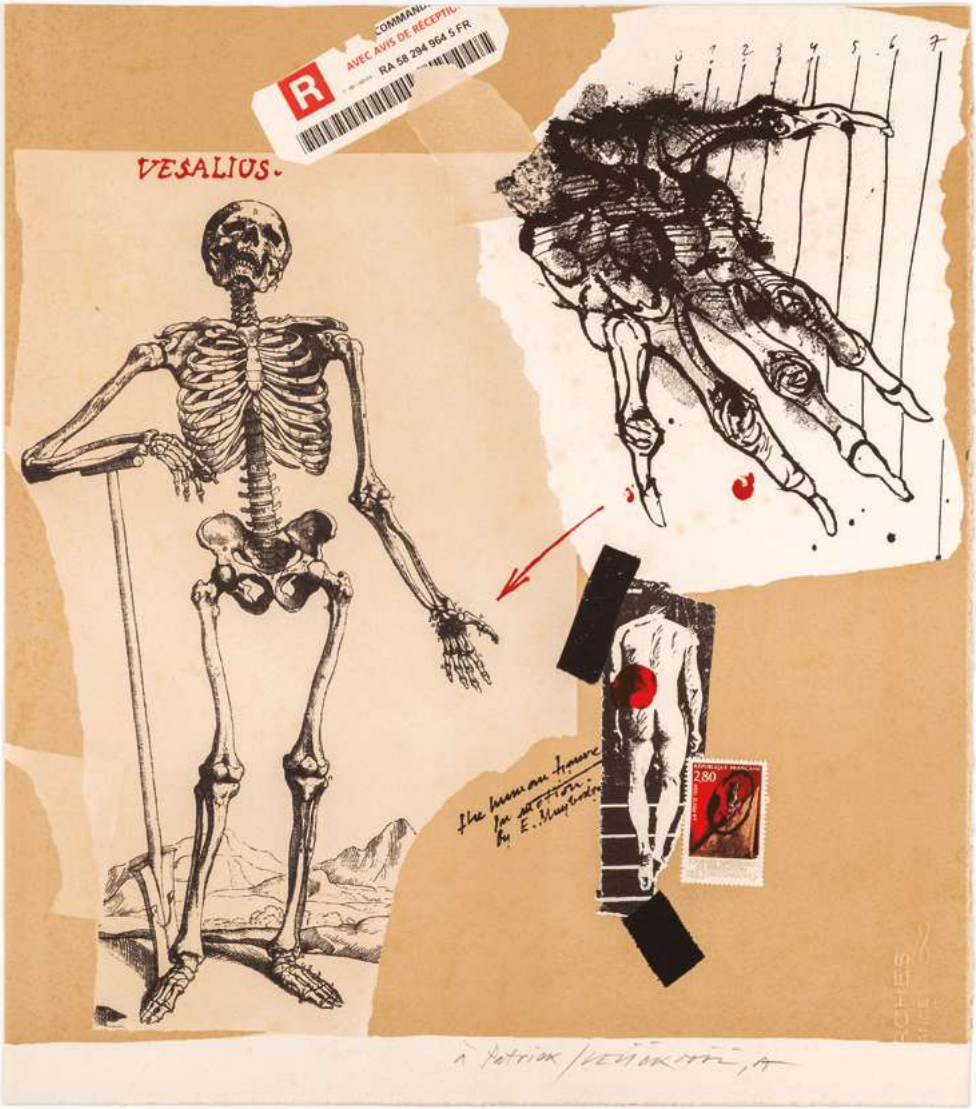


Orator. Hand-touched lithograph, c. 1973 © Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026


VELIČKOVIĆ

The artist's interest in the human form finds its genesis in the medical illustrations housed within his father's library. One clearly discerns the shadow of the 16th-century physician **Andreas Vesalius**, a seminal pioneer in the art of anatomical rendering.

Vesalius. Muybridge Man. Lithography, 2007 © Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026



From an iconographic perspective, Veličković's **crucifixions** represent some of his most compelling graphic works, sharing a deep kinship with the 'scarecrows' of his formative years. The motif of the crucified Christ – ever-present in his studio via a postcard pinned to a board – serves as a constant muse, stripped of its religious weight to focus on the formal and the transcendental. **Grünewald** remains the ultimate touchstone, frequently cited and reimagined throughout his career. The master of the Isenheim Altarpiece, whose work left an indelible mark on Picasso and Graham Sutherland, is echoed here through the distorted expressionism of his subjects, culminating in the harrowing depiction of the crucified hand.



Grünewald. Screen print, 2013. © Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026

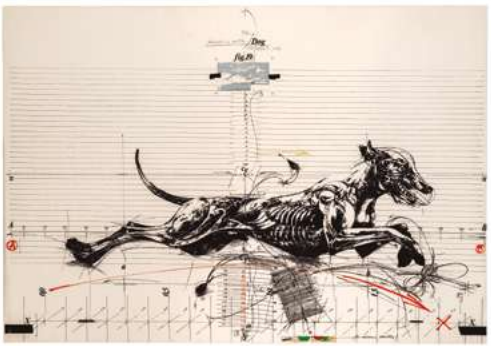
By the 1970s, a new structural element entered his compositions: measuring scales used to delineate internal spatial logic. With this addition, the images acquired a technical aspect related to the sciences in general, from the medicine he absorbed through his father's influence to the architecture and engineering stemming from his university years. Proportion studies may lack mathematical precision, yet they reinforce the atmosphere of images birthed in a laboratory setting.



Journey (Scotch). Lithography, 1991
© Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026

The depiction of the moving body became a frantic duel of speed between the artist and his canvas. Figures bolt from impending peril as death lies in wait, devoid of mercy, yet this flight is a headlong rush into a perturbing, uncharted void into the dark. Images drawn from sport, another of his great passions, saturate his work so thoroughly that the hunted are transfigured into Olympic athletes – simultaneously victims struggling to stave off the end. At the end of the race lies a total blackout: a lightless chasm, an oppressive and harrowing space where hope finds no foothold. And yet, in spite of it all, the only recourse is to run.

Animals in motion (Dog) – *Fig. 19/s*. Screen print, 1974.
© Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026



These 'speed tests', as the artist envisioned them, allowed him to dissect the body across the various phases of a single motion. They evoke a sense of internal evolution within the image itself. Both his hounds and his runners are haunted by the lingering shadow of **Eadweard Muybridge**'s chronophotography. Transplanted into his own grim landscape, Veličković's dogs become subjects of scientific scrutiny, though they remain charged with an aggressive violence – vivid guardians of a tragedy stalking their human prey. They function as both victim and executioner in equal measure.

The **falls** share a profound intimacy with his series on the mechanics of the **leap**. While the lateral momentum of the former implies a body still clinging to life, those falling vertically are, in all likelihood, already cadavers. And yet, such a downward movement brings to mind the exact moment when life is lost. It appears as though death is taking hold in the very midst of the air. Indeed, ash piles up upon the floor, a cold testament to what shall remain of us: memory, or perhaps merely ephemeral debris destined to be scattered by the wind.

Vertigo pervades everything: the flight and the fall. The crushing weight of the inevitable does not stifle the fear, nor the flickering hope that compels the human spirit to flee its own demise, refusing to accept a preordained end. As onlookers, we can offer only empathy – vicariously experiencing that rending of the flesh, that adrenaline-fuelled desperation that dares to believe it does not have to end this way.



Fig. HT. Screen print, 1982. © Vladimir Veličković, VEGAP, Málaga, 2026

The message, shifting from the visceral to the worldly, is stark: the individual may be blameless, yet we are all collectively complicit in the tragedy. It is the eternal myth of the fall, renewed and updated, stripped of religious or moral aura, yet charged with full symbolic and expressive force.

Veličković's imagery invites a boundless plurality of interpretation. They are open symbols, fertile ground for intellectual speculation and spiritual development. The tension, aggression and cruelty inherent in their contemplation may yield various conclusions, yet it is clear that his ethics transcend mere moralising. By posing the question and dissecting its parts, he offers them to the viewer without providing a convenient or transparent exit. No neat conclusion exists; no permanent solution is offered. There is also no one to turn to for answers, nor any means of salvation. In the words of André Velter, 'Heaven and earth are no longer responsible for anything'. Or, in a Nietzschean sense, the religious path is rendered obsolete, having failed throughout history to avert catastrophe. Human beings prove entirely sufficient in sowing their own terror and nurturing barbarism, capable of desecrating the sacred and obliterating the profane. And historical evolution does not seem, by any means, to be heading for improvement. The ultimate victory of catastrophe is certain.

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Portada: *Fig. II*. Serigrafía sobre papel vitela de Rives, tirada por Jacques Marquet. 43,5x32,5 cm. Ejemplar HC 15/20. 1979.
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