

ZOOM IN, ZOOM OUT

Solo show Iulian Bisericaru

featuring sound artist Romain Poirier

25.05 – 30.08.2022

Curated by Marie Maertens

Iulian Bisericaru (b. 1987, Sibiu) is one of the most promising young painters in Romania, the next voice formed by the Cluj School of painting. Bisericaru follows his own path, in complex compositions and unexpected transitions from flat, richly chromatic surfaces to the fondus technique. His work relates to a sense of urgency towards the ecological crisis and ongoing exploitation of natural resources, zooming in on draught-resilient plants as landscapes in themselves – zooming out into an entire ecosystem within another and yet another. Bisericaru's new paintings will link his work in the pre-pandemic residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, and his latest solo show in Bucharest.

In the post-pandemic context, and current social and cultural shifts in Europe, the solo show presents a unique painting installation based on Bisericaru's current approach in zooming in and out of landscapes, allowing the vegetation to become a solitary, uncanny ecosystem of its own making. His artworks rendered a dynamic connection between the painter's experience from Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris to a post-pandemic Paris and through an Eastern-European perspective, on the current ecological crisis we all face. Marie Maertens, the curator of the show, uncovers in Iulian a youthful approach to painting, departing from the well-known Cluj school, but bringing a fresh perspective on how the medium acts within a post-digital, post-humanist world.

Bisericaru reflects on how landscapes are now mediated by a digital language of detail and oversight. His paintings will trace the zoom-in, zoom-out concept of his latest work, and link to the open green spaces of urban terraces and parks. The artist's interest in imaginary landscapes creates fantastic merges, between Eastern and Western Europe, between his hometown in Romanian mountains and tropical climates. The mixture is pertinent and contemporaneous to the nowadays climate changes that transform weather patterns, and the advent of digital culture and communication, which create new distances to cross.

Iulian Bisericaru has been drawing and painting continuously since childhood. While his early works usually depict houses and landscapes, his first major paintings evoke a panoramic view over an architectural ensemble. He started painting industrial landscapes from very early on, in bright colors, acknowledging in painterly gestures an impulse for strong contrasts and accentuated brushstrokes. For the artist, this type of representation requires an engaged and radical attitude facing the post-1989 context in Romania. He spent his childhood on the outskirts of Sibiu, a considerably large Transylvanian city, that still carried on the memory of some formerly well-known factories and industrial buildings.

The early works of the artist, from around 2012, let a sense of nostalgia transpire through, captured between two historical times. The paintings are made on large canvases, sometimes two meters tall and wide. By focusing on the few still functioning, yet geographically marginal industrial areas, the artist confronts the remnants of the past and the uncertainties of the future. The dynamic amplitude of his brushstrokes is accompanied by multiple perspectives in his composition, collaging various fragments with oil on canvas, reminiscent of the cubist movement. Iulian Bisericaru works with photographs, sketches and collages to establish a narrative and a memorable dynamic for the viewer.

Using lively colors and rich painterly effects, the artist creates unexpected transitions from flat chromatic surfaces to the fondus technique. Although the nostalgia of his earlier works has faded during the years, certain paintings still maintain a fascination and a eulogistic undertone toward the history of art. The work titled Roma (2015) is a perfect example in that sense. The artist confesses to his preference for offering subtle homages to artists such as Peter Doig or Paul Gauguin, in a hedonistic approach to the act of painting.

Further into the exhibition we see a collaboration between painting and sound, between Iulian Bisericaru and composer Romain Poirier, as media that can complement each other in creating an

experience in the exhibition space, focusing on the mutual enhancement of visual and auditory media of expression. Painting periodically announces its demise, but is always reborn in the attention of art lovers, especially in times of crisis (as Isabelle Grawl states in her excellent study of painting through the centuries "The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium" published by Sternberg Press in 2018). The starting point of the project is uncertainty about the future, especially in the current context. The artist Jalal Toufic states in his essay, "Withdrawing Tradition from an Outdated Past Disaster," that an immeasurable disaster - which for him means the destruction resulting from war, from any violent trauma - not only implies material destruction, but, according to Toufic, it also means immaterial devastation. Even if all the books, paintings, libraries, museums and other places of knowledge survived or were rebuilt, restored or reconstructed, the past would still be lost in an immaterial way. The way we read recovered works would change, because society changes its values, its ideals. If we consider painting an "immortal medium", the task of artists, of the art scene, is to respond to this challenge of reconnecting with the past in a time of crisis, or as the issue is taken up in this project, the physical space of art.

Sound art dates back to the early inventions of futurist artist Luigi Russolo who, between 1913 and 1930, built noise machines that reproduced the sounds of the industrial age and the sounds of war. From Dada and the Surrealist artists, to Marcel Duchamp and his composition 'Erratum Musical' to the 4'33' piece, visual artists and composers alike have used the communication between image and sound to explore the space around them. Since the introduction of digital technology, the art of sound has undergone a radical transformation. Artists can now create visual images in response to sounds, allowing audiences to control art through pressure sensors or voice activation.

Romain Poirier creates the haunting acoustic environment to Iulian Biserișcaru's approach to absence. The sound, that the visitors can hear in the second part of the exhibition in a specially prepared room with one of Biserișcaru's most immersive paintings, can carry the listener through a variety of sensations: from the post-industrial sound of machines, to the overgrowth of a triumphant natural landscape.

The sound is available on the exhibition viewing-room created on www.ancapoterasu.com page.

Text by
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