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I Plant an Eye against the Grain of Mind

//solo show Iulia Toma. Galeria Ivan

"This is the waking landscape/Dream after dream after dream walking away through it "*; or, in other words, to wander is to find oneself amid collaborative speculations and sacred mythologies. Fragmented landscapes, watery scenes, amorphous silhouettes, swamp-forests, and ambiguous, (un)familiar bodies — accompany us at every step. One more step through translucent deserts and floating water bubbles and we find ourselves in the middle of the exhibition "I Plant an Eye against the Grain of Mind", the fourth solo show by interdisciplinary artist Iulia Toma presented at Ivan Gallery, following the 2020 exhibition "Nodes of Resistance". The exhibition continues to address techniques and themes inherent to the artist's practice, such as the relationship to otherness (human or non-human) and mobility affected by social and ecological dynamics. In this context, the textile medium becomes a field of analysis for speculative fabulations, a way of looking towards a possible ecological future, an alternative of adaptation and survival in hostile environments, where sewing creates worlds.

"Planting an Eye against the Grain of Mind" is a study emerging over several years, from its outset in 2019 to the present, incorporated into an imaginary populated by transitional ecosystems and zoophyte species, part of an (already) post-anthropocentric future. Working with the material becomes a practice of archiving and reconstructing relationships between humans and the environment. The series of textile collages and soft sculptures draws from speculative, ecocritical and indigenous theories and gives rise to a space of the non-representational that refuses strict categories and paternalistic gestures. It evokes a grey zone, an in-between, or, on the contrary, a dimension of dazzling colours, harbingers of change. The community of emerging new plant and animal species refuses apocalyptic scenarios and nihilistic thinking — hybrid silhouettes create an intimate space of transformative negotiations, guiding us through indigenous cosmologies and stories of multispecies symbioses. Origins unclear; we have only hints to roam around solar landscapes.

From phosphorescent algae to scorched hot landscapes and fleeting hybrid appearances, from soft cacti to epiphytic rhizomatic systems, we are slowly becoming familiar with a post-natural habitat that questions and fabulates about species' evolution while refusing ontological separations. At the same time, hospitable. The materials used are generally recycled canvases, each carrying with them and adding to the non-human narratives, personal and collective experiences and histories from the artist's everyday life. This creates a space of the trans-individual, a space of affective becoming and the transmission of intergenerational responsibility for the environment between and within species. Echoing writer Adrienne Maree's statements, the artistic process as speculative fabulation becomes, through Iulia Toma's practice, a way of "practising the future together "**. Collaborations woven together.

*W.S. Merwin, „The Widow“, *The Lice*, 1967

**adriennemaree brown, *Emergent Strategy. Shaping change, changing worlds*, 2017