

Lidija Delić

Selected Works
2017-2022

Pavillion of Montenegro at the 59th International Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia; exhibition titled *The Art of Holding Hands / as we break through the sedimentary cloud*

Not All of Paradise Is Lost

Waiting for something to happen who knows what.
Edouard Glissant

Through a series of monumental paintings of magnificent landscapes, Lidija Delić continues her search for the possibilities of representing different worlds within our world. Which of the things we assume safe or unquestionable could have been something else or significantly different? The author believes that history, and not only history but also modern society, or what we could call the sum of experiences of modern life - is often the result of contingency.

Topography is very important for the artistic practice of Lidija Delić, which is often based on continuous research of specific locations within the representations of idyllic landscapes. These are not ordinary views of our everyday life. Like-minded to the writer James Ballard, whose work inspired some of her previous painting series, "landscape is a formalization of space and time, and the external landscapes directly reflect interior states of mind." [1] The objects in her paintings (including the landscape) can be seen as manifestations of the unconscious, whose changes reflect the radical shifts of our subjectivities.

Artifacts of human presence, escalator, chairs, abandoned buildings are shown, but apart from one lone figure that could represent a self-portrait of the artist, human presence is not directly visible. These scenes could easily be created immediately after a certain apocalyptic event in which we identify the disintegration of human systems and processes. However, instead of the presence of the usual imagery from the repertoire of similar cataclysmic fantasies - destruction, fire, flood and death, the scenes of slow intensity prevail here. The silent ecological collapse and the first bio-geo-chemical metamorphoses are accompanied by an indefinite phantom melancholy, rather than the fear that popularly defines these visions.

This approach results in images of landscapes that seem ambiguous or contradictory, provoking our existing established perspectives and opinions. Are these images representing myths of the near future? Or are there hints of hidden but true human subjectivity peeking out from under the deceptive surface of the present?

The images in front of us are in constant fermentation, boiling, flourishing, swarming, tormenting and swirling, uninterrupted metamorphosis of continuous movement that mobilizes, channels, surrenders and (re)merges everything with flora and fauna. They remind us of different views of complex relationships with our environment, such as those in some East Asian countries where the special sovereignty of the Other is accepted and respected in human relationships with various natural phenomena, animals, plants, rocks or soil. Pictorial poetics of Lidija Delić shows a similar tendency to mediate these relationships with unpredictable, inorganic forms, where the interaction is not one-way aimed at recognizing human self-consciousness in them, but towards coincidences that condition such relationship. The artist situates her paintings on a unique fragile and imperceptible membrane that simultaneously separates and connects seemingly different realities.

[1] *The Subjectivity of the Near Future, Geographical Imaginings in the work of J. G. Ballard*, Jonathan S. Taylor, in: *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*, Rob Kitchin, James Kneale (ur.). Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2002.

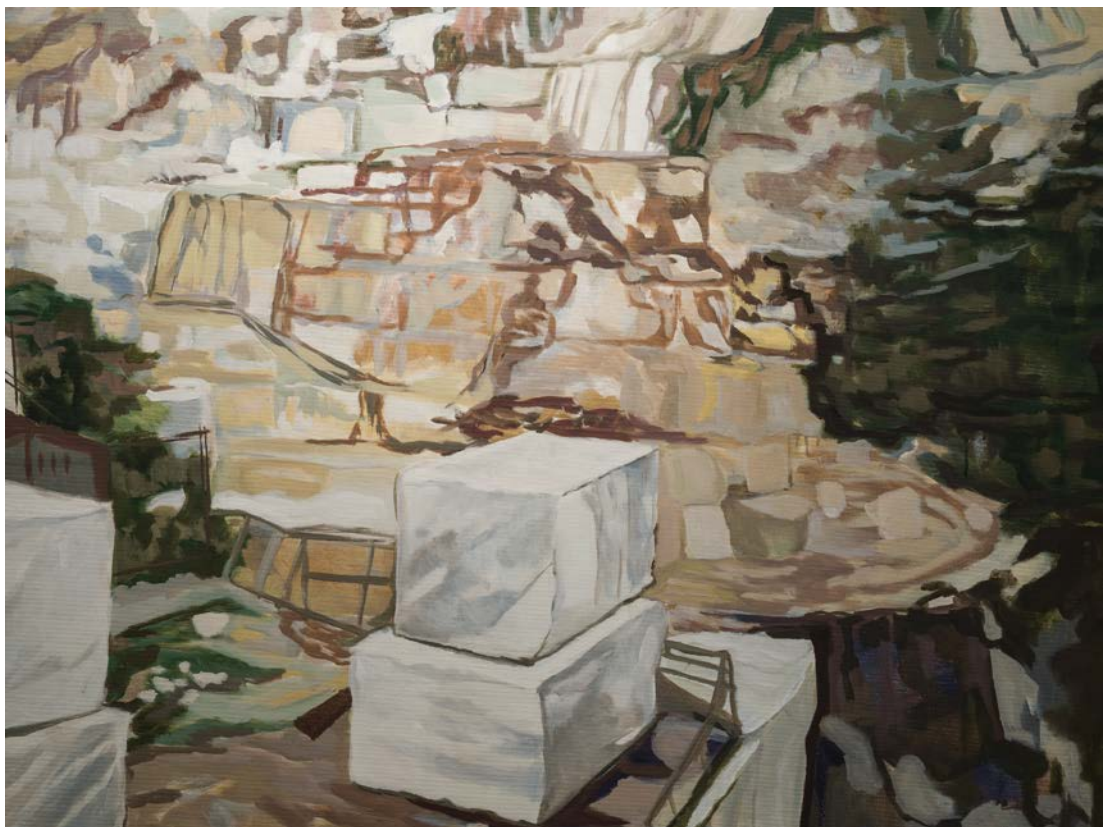
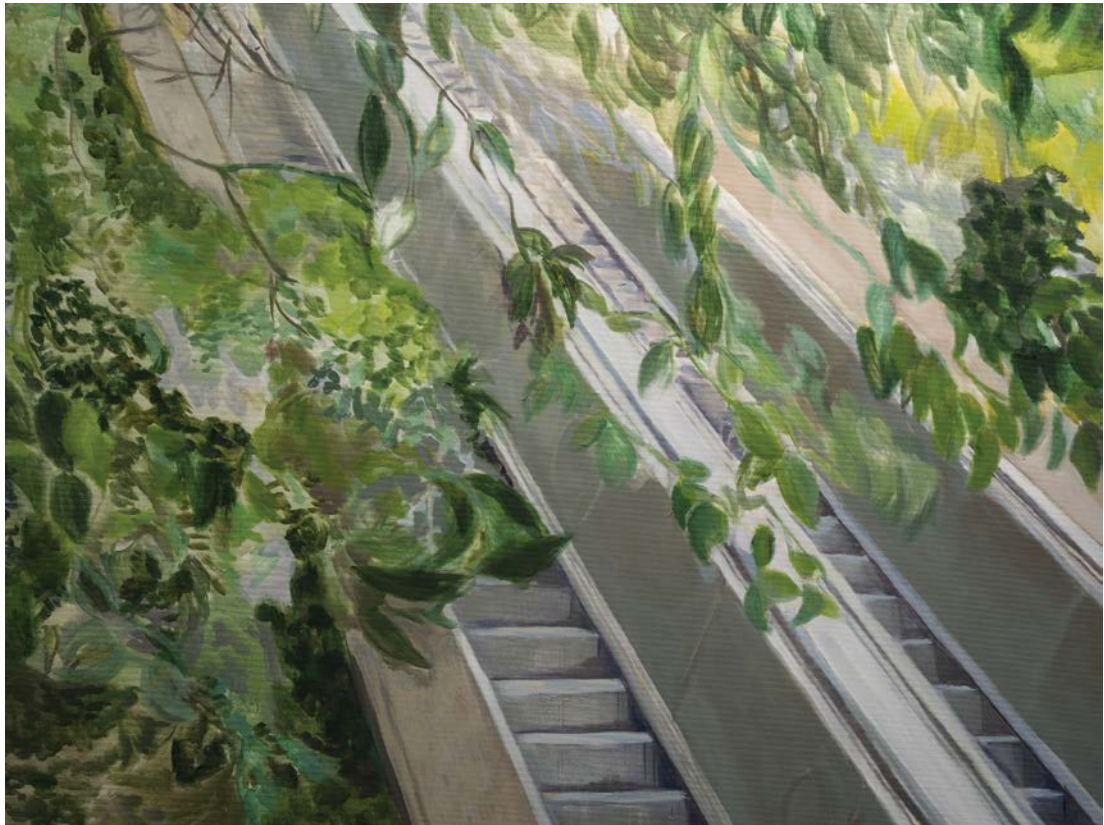
Miloš Zec
(Excerpt of the essay from the exhibition catalogue)



A moment ago; 2022, Oil on linen, 150x180 cm, Installation view



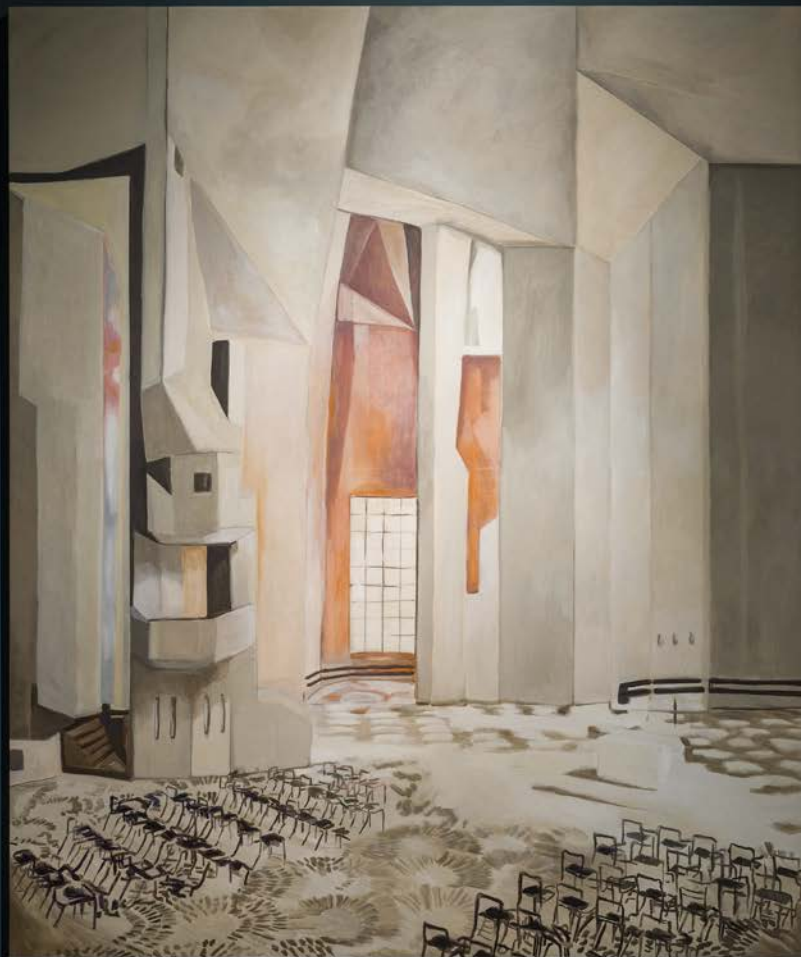
A long time; 2022, Oil on linen, 150x180 cm, Installation view



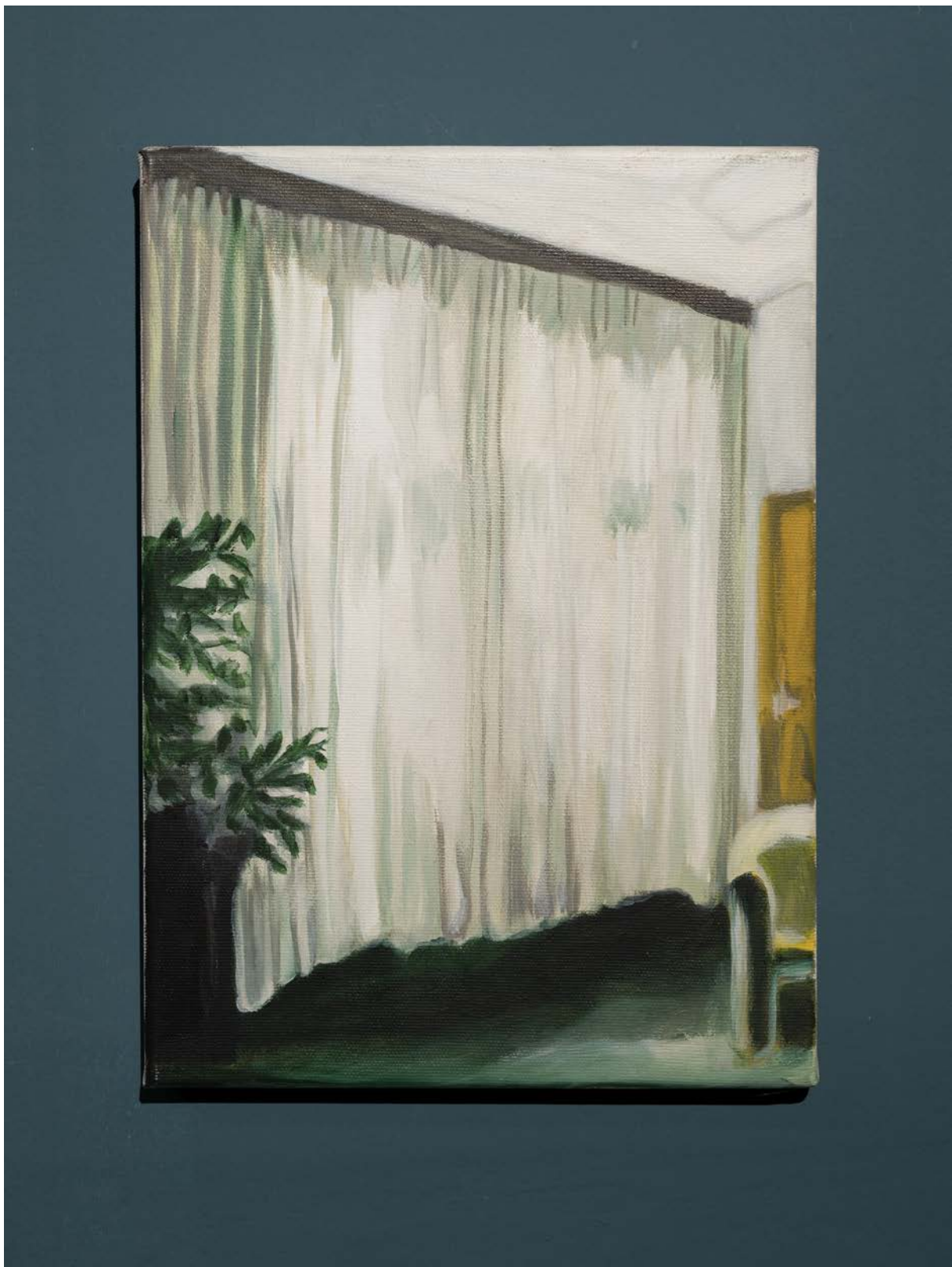
A moment ago; 2022, Oil on linen, 150x180 cm, Detail
A long time; 2022, Oil on linen, 150x180 cm, Detail



Not All of Paradise Is Lost; 2022, Installation view
Not All of Paradise Is Lost; 2022, Installation view



Time of Risk; 2022, Oil on linen, 150x180 cm, Installation view



Untitled; 2022, Oil on canvas, 24x35 cm, Installation view



Not All of Paradise Is Lost; 2022, Installation view
Not All of Paradise Is Lost; 2022, Installation view

With luck there'll be no more dreams

Inspired by Ballard's Drowned world, I'm exploring everyday places, objects that inhabit them and the environments that surround them. By displaying daily routines that happen on the territory of an island in which I've spent a limited amount of time, I direct our attention toward the vegetation, picturesque sceneries and narratives that are soon to be lost. Also, through painting, I aim to preserve and share memories of events that, once lived, just pass.

Lidija Delić

With dreams

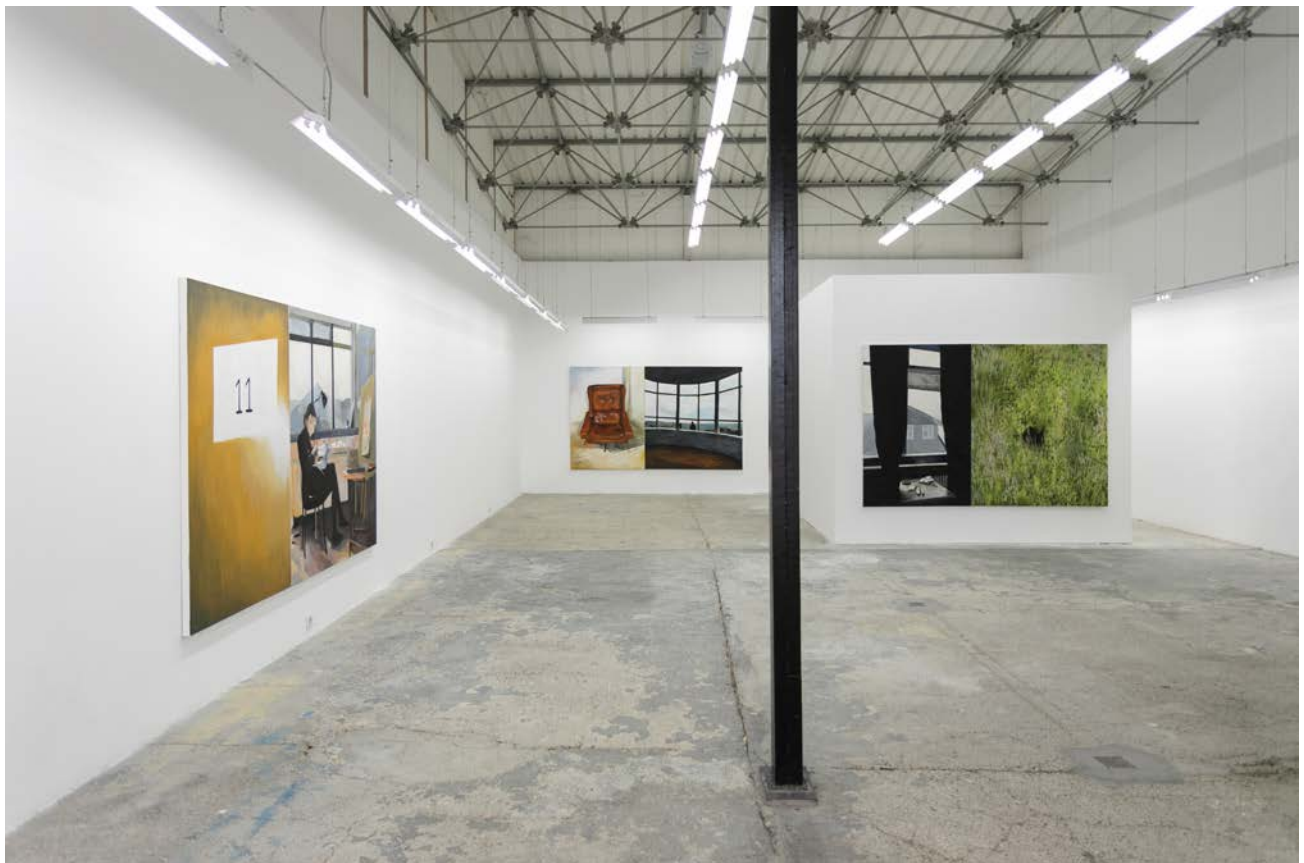
Life has become fast and not much needs to be said about that. Perhaps there's nothing to be said anymore, about our survival strategies in the Anthropocene, about money left in therapy, self-care, self-preservation, self-help, fear of missing out, anxiety, for the sake of being in the moment, travels that are merely distractions, joy that translates into documentation. About dreams that we don't even want. Everything that's been written in this direction, whatever the intention, puts one final straw on the back of a generation that feels this absolute imperative to live in the moment.

And for a while now, I can't bring back the feeling of the "everyday". Ever since I started dealing with exhibitions, I've been trying to summon it. Surely I'm not the only one who doesn't always feel like beauty is beautiful. Perhaps contemporary art spaces often seem so unremarkable, seemingly merged with everyday life, because our everyday life lacks ordinariness. Things that are simply given and that should be there by default become objects of special value, when it comes to air and water, but also when it comes to truth and oblivion, and our right to them. Beauty is no longer a category of the image or of space, but of time and presence (absence).

Lidija's new works translate this beautiful / ordinary paradox to the viewers so clearly. Basic things: food, bed, chair, windows, even the self-portrait of the artist living on an island where someone's day-to-day becomes extraordinary to someone else, all guide us to a place where worlds gently clash; places of isolation and spaces of exploration, of the mind and the heart. Through large formats, fluorescent colours and a haunting presence of absence, the spectator enters a moment that indeed has been kept, that now lasts visually. Time is what's missing, but time is also what these paintings are about, which is how Lidija Delić subtly enters the French poststructuralist narrative: a trace of that which is not there, in what's there, overpowering all objects that surface on canvas.

In the end, I've spent most of my time looking at the salmon-sandwich painting. Beside the fact that eating salmon every day is one thing in Iceland and another in Belgrade, raw fish is also an excellent metaphor. Raw, but not alive, it needs to be eaten fast because otherwise it becomes toxic; isn't that strongly associated with the idea that we need to live fast but also stay grounded in the velocity (in other words – carpe diem, but also stay mentally and physically healthy)? In conversation with this image, the second part of the diptych shows an improvised lighthouse. There's an orange triangle on it, giving out an unclear instruction (at least it's not clear to me). It doesn't tell us to stop or to go, it just makes us look. Putting these two motives together, and by analogy this happens in the four other diptychs as well, Lidija Delić gives us an impossible task, to be there, but also inside the image, to spend her time and to spend it with her, but also to find our own breaking points, moments when food becomes poison. And then, just to pay attention – neither stop, nor go – just to notice, the colour orange, to breathe air, to eat food, to look at one's own hands. Ordinary things.

Natalija Paunić



With luck there'll be no more dreams; 2021, Installation view



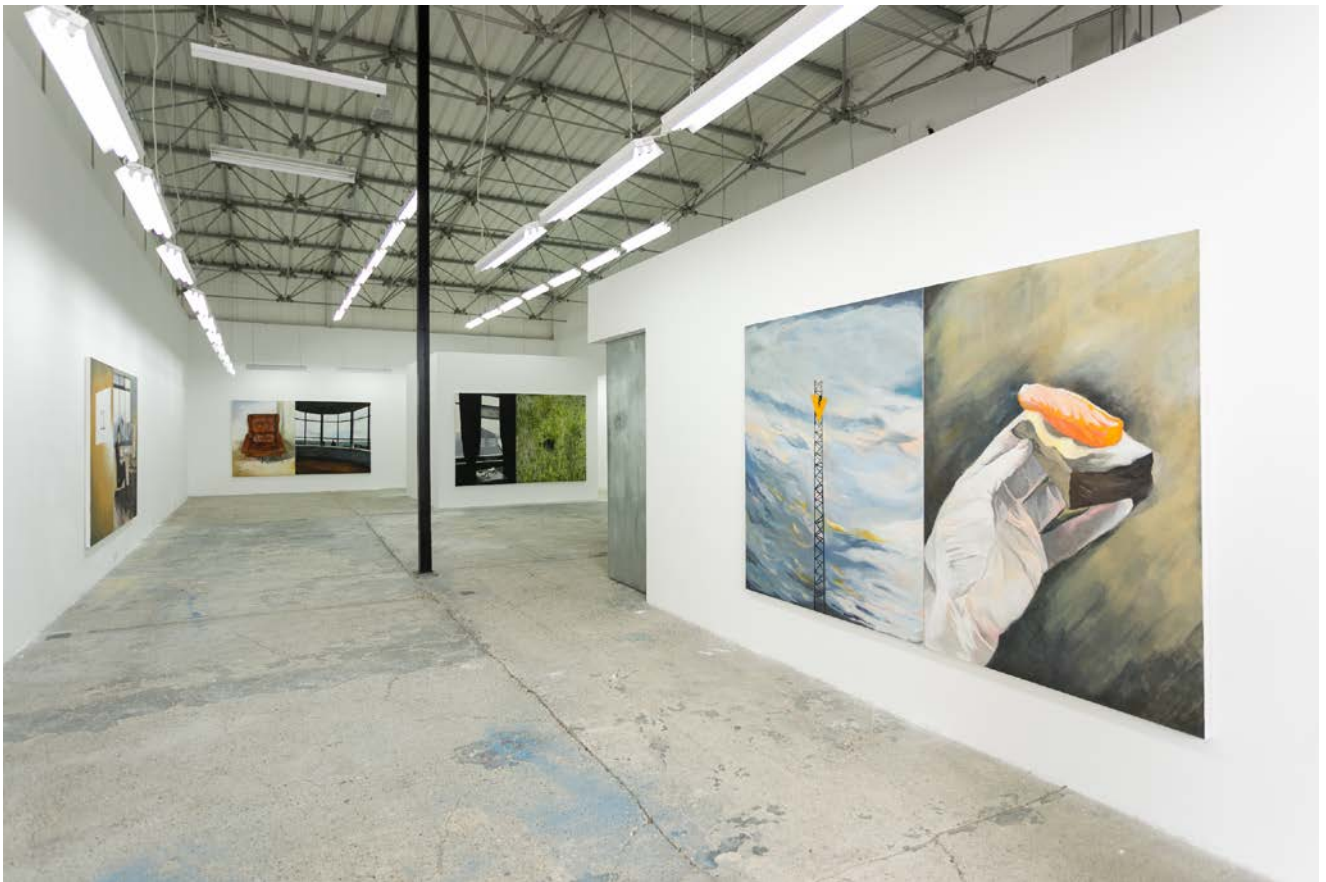
With luck there'll be no more dreams I; 2021, Oil on canvas, 270x180 cm, Installation view
With luck there'll be no more dreams V; 2021, Oil on canvas, 300x180 cm, Installation view



With luck there'll be no more dreams III; 2021, Oil on canvas, 300x180 cm, Installation view



With luck there'll be no more dreams IV; 2021, Oil on canvas, 300x180 cm, Installation view
With luck there'll be no more dreams II; 2021, Oil on canvas, 270x180 cm, Installation view



With luck there'll be no more dreams; 2021, Installation view

Too Soon, Too Late

I am sitting in an airconditioned room flipping through iPhone photos of an upcoming painting exhibition. I can hear protestors chanting and marching on the street outside of my apartment. One major newspaper headline reads “[Carbon] Emissions Are Surging Back as Countries and States Reopen”. It is June 18th, 2020 and I am in New York City, approximately 7,300 kilometers away from the exhibition space in Belgrade.

Lidija Delic’s exhibition, *Too Soon, Too Late*, includes ten paintings, three large and seven small, installed in adjacent alcove rooms on the etage noble of a prewar building. The neoclassical space features a series of pilaster molding along the walls and a wide doorway between rooms adorned with two Ionic columns at its flank. The walls are a seafoam green and remain entirely unfinished. Swaths of drywall are missing, surfaces are scarred, and paint drips line the walls.

One enters the space nearly in the middle of the two rooms. To your left you see a series of small oil and epoxy paintings. To your right, are three larger oil on canvas paintings depicting the following: A single autumn tree, leaves turned red, wades in the middle of a body of water, overlooked by an arcade of sinister dark green pines, more shadow than tree. In another painting, office chairs are shown discarded in garbage bags in front of a city backdrop. The protruding contours of the chairs within the bags give them the appearance of filled body bags. And, two men in business attire appear at the fore, back turned to the viewer, looking out at a green landscape. The land is uncultivated and in that sense, the suited men appear to be looking at nothing.

The strong presence and division of the foreground and background in each painting display clear dichotomies. The visible passing of time on the tree leaves before the permanently green leaves of a pine. Things filled with death and things filled with life. Cultivated man vs uncultivated nature. These dualities are readable through use of universal symbols, or as Carl Jung would describe, Archetypes (man, tree, water, a black shroud). The themes of time and nature also recall J. G. Ballard’s novel “The Drowned World” which was likely influenced heavily by Jungian ideas (“The Drowned World” was published in 1962, just one year after Carl Jung’s death in 1961) of universal symbolism shared through the Collective Unconscious -networks of the unconscious which are shared among entities of the same species.

Ballard’s seminal work, “The Drowned World”, is set in a post-apocalyptic future. The earth’s temperatures have risen to extremes through decades of global warming and mankind is pushed to settlements in the north and south poles where the planet is coolest. The main characters, originally scientists tasked with monitoring the effects of the change, collectively start experiencing terrifying dreams of humanity’s distant past, a clear reference to Jung’s Collective Unconscious.

In the room to the left, are several smaller paintings depicting various florae. The general color and form give away their subject matter, however, the rendering is hazy and its image is further obscured by the epoxy cover. The array of unknown plants appear almost scientific, reminiscent of blurry Audubon pictures, and perhaps something close to what the protagonists of “The Drowned World” studied before their demise. The splotches of color appear both microscopic and mountainous.

Here we have a formal paradox. In order to see the larger paintings, the viewer has to zoom in and look closer. To see the smaller paintings, the viewer has to zoom out and imagine a larger image outside of the small frame. When we consider Deep Time, or geological time, we acknowledge that this small frame of our lifetime is a tiny fragment of the larger whole. Scale and time then become emphasized in the visual language of climate change, as this temporal expansion is essential to its understanding. Stepping back further, we observe another space-time division: room one and room two. In Delic’s installation, the arrangement of work acknowledges the procession of the viewer in relation to the artwork. Curation itself becomes a spatial and temporal practice. If the program is read with “The Drowned World” in mind, room one becomes the ‘before’ and room two the ‘after’. A world of dualities in imbalance followed abruptly by a temporal fog, neither in the past nor in the future.

Jae Cho
June 18, 2020, New York City
(Exhibition text, *Too Soon, Too Late*, Manifesto, Belgrade, 2020)



Too Soon, Too Late; 2020, Installation view



A View From an Office; 2020, Oil on canvas, 150x180 cm



Too Soon, Too Late; 2020, Installation view



Remember; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 30x40 cm



Foreshadow; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 25x30 cm

The Garden Thrives; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 25x30 cm



Sensory Garden I; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 25x30 cm
32 Years Ago; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 24x30 cm



Another World; 2020, Oil and epoxy resin on linen, 25x30 cm

Tropiques Nord

Within her new series of works, Tropiques Nord Lidija Delić reveals paintings and drawings, conceptually developed around discursive representations of tropical landscapes and the idea of their de(re)construction. The images from the series were created during and after their stay at the artistic residence in Iceland in 2017, while the installation is inspired by the famous ethnographic inscription Claude Levi Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), which depicts anthropologist's travels across the territories of the Mato Grosso area in the Amazon.

Tropics (Tropical Zone) denote the Earth's region, below and above the Equator bounded by the northern and southern returnees. In geographical sciences, the concept of a landscape is somewhat controversial and its primary use remains in the everyday language. Semantically, the landscape is defined through its various physical and geographical characteristics - beauty, uniqueness, integrity, specificity, diversity, harmony and specialty.

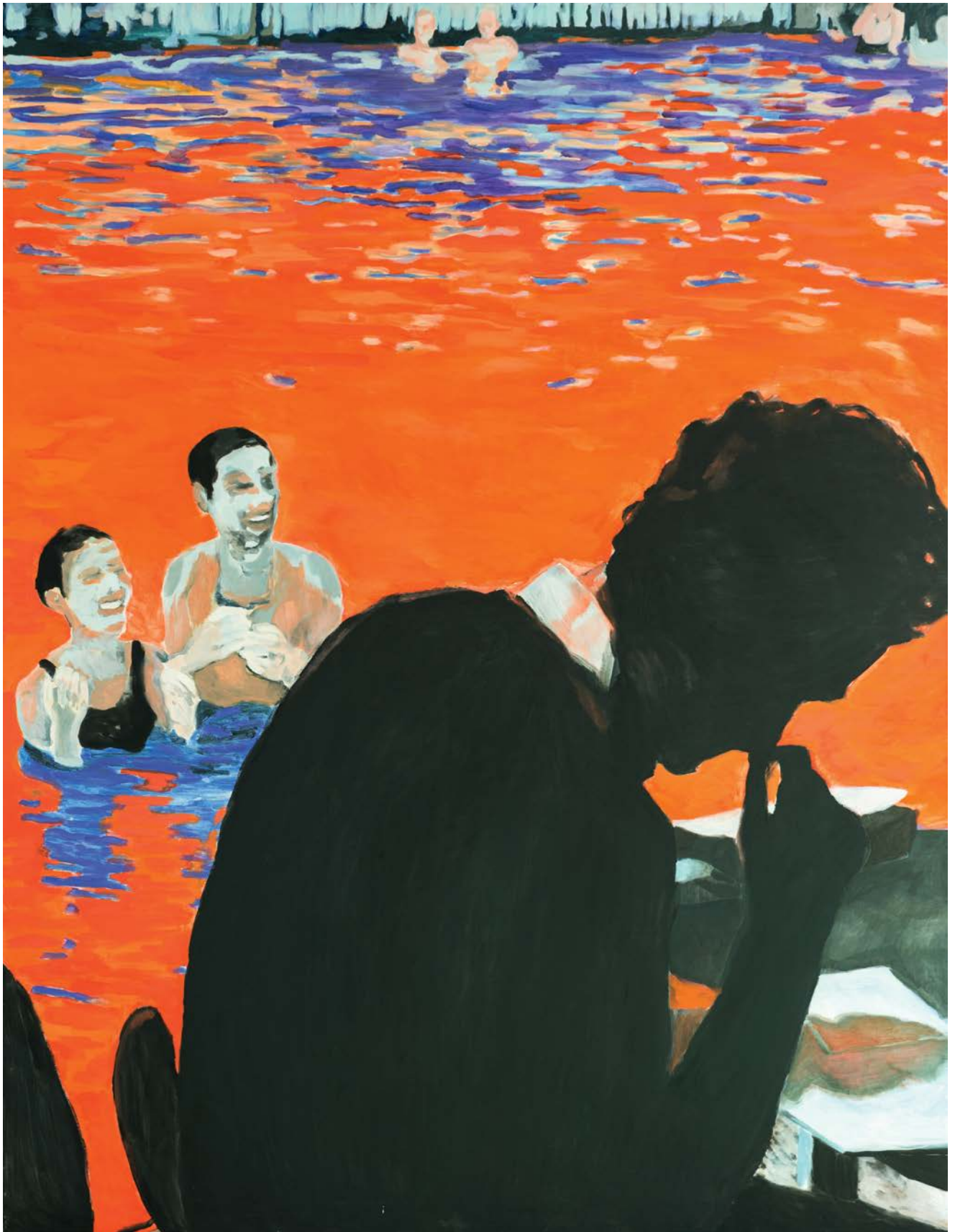
Starting from the idea that every geographical territory is bound in a dense set of different material and cultural contexts through which the subjective experience of a certain landscape (scenary) is born, Lidija Delić is moving along the boundary of the unclear boundary between the usual and the unknown, the exotic and the everyday. The splendor of the color palette and the exciting access to the material's colors are mediators who transcribe the autobot photographs of the north into, the tropes of inspired, pseudo-ethnographic transmission of unknown territories. The ability to design and reflect on her own position on the background of various geographical and mental areas enabled her to create a hallucinatory vision of tropical modernity within the paintings, reflecting her inner reference framework for understanding the world.

In the free semiotic game, from the romantic painting of the 19th century, the author assumes the motive of hidden reality. Atmosphere in Tropiques Nord paintings often contain human figures wrapped in mystical ethereal landscapes of changed aggregate states within which natural elements of air, water, soil, and light are in circular fluidity. On the other hand, exploring the form of the classic legend of the heroic quest within the Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, horsemen in these paintings are in an associative relationship with the bold travels of researchers and their followers, often unknown individuals, unclear contours away from reality.

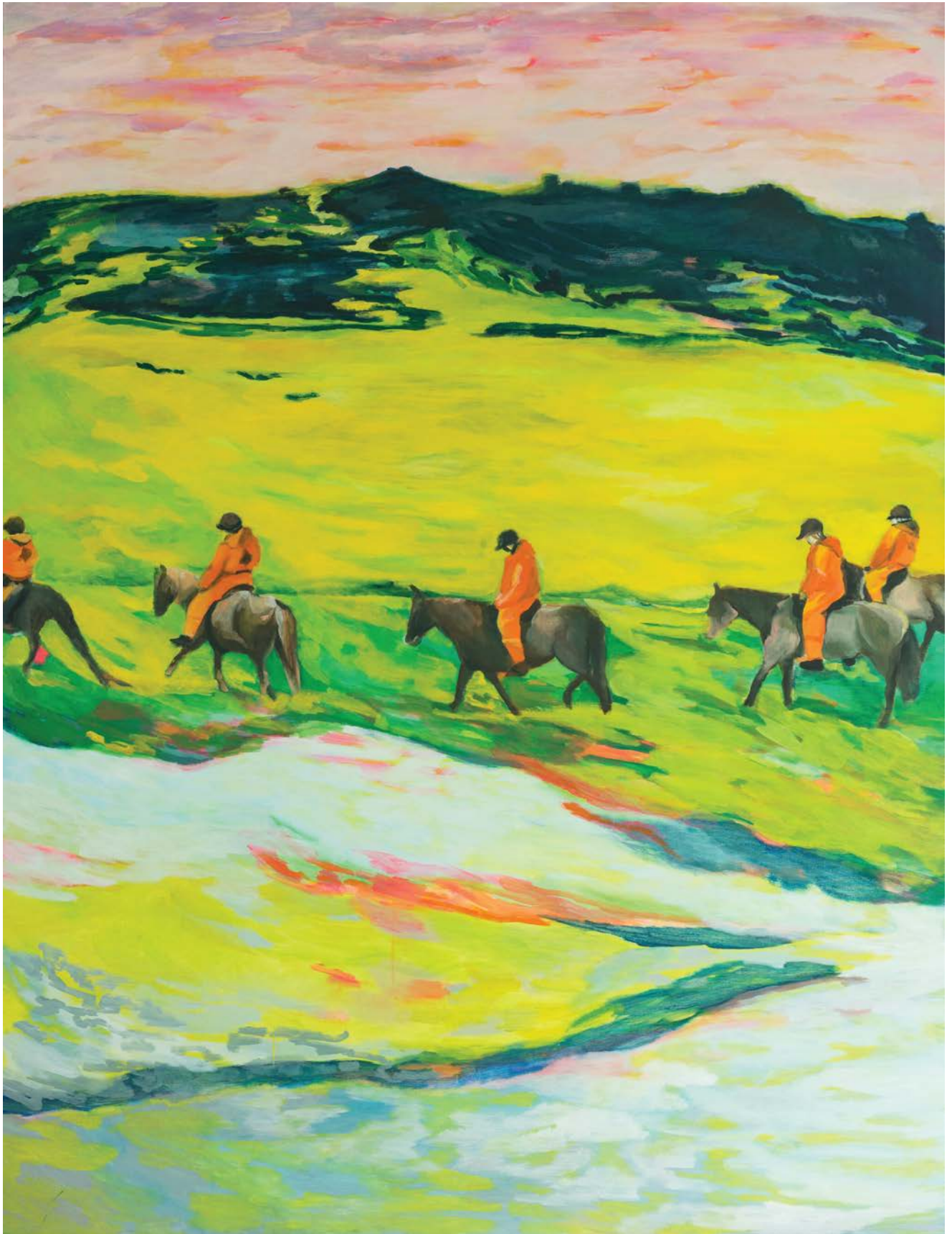
The key to read the installation of staged tropical manifestations located within the archival structure of museum depots and offices could be similar to the mechanism of the operation of the optical scare - you need to watch them for a while and suddenly you can see them as inverted. Only by long filtration they turn around and reveal their inner structure and their relationships with other imaginary worlds.

Miloš Zec

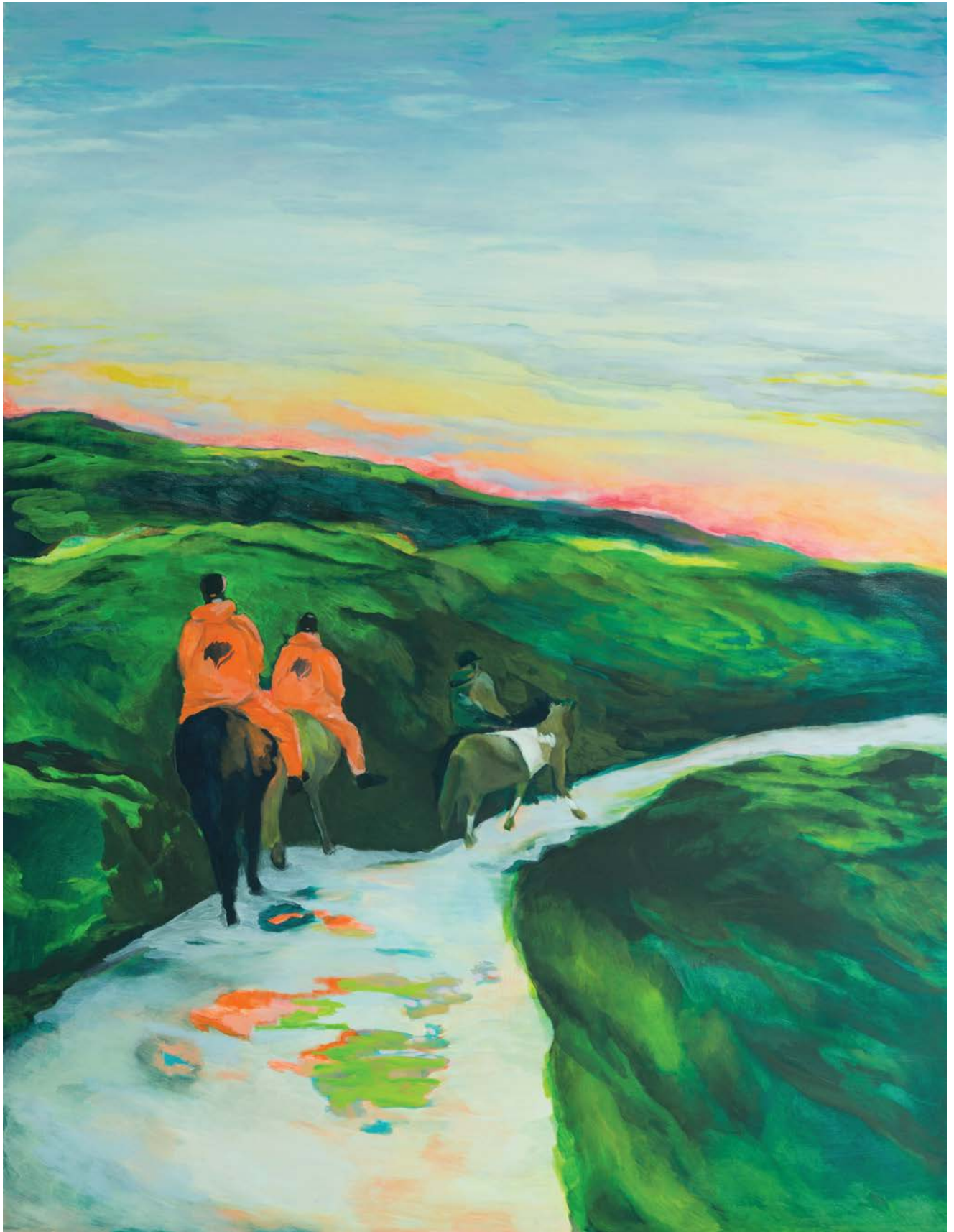
(Catalogue text, *57th October salon - The Marvelous Cacophony*, Art Directors: Gunnar Kvaran and Danielle Kvaran, Belgrade City Museum, Belgrade, 2018)



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Oil on canvas, 130x170 cm



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Oil on canvas, 220x160 cm



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Oil on canvas, 220x160 cm



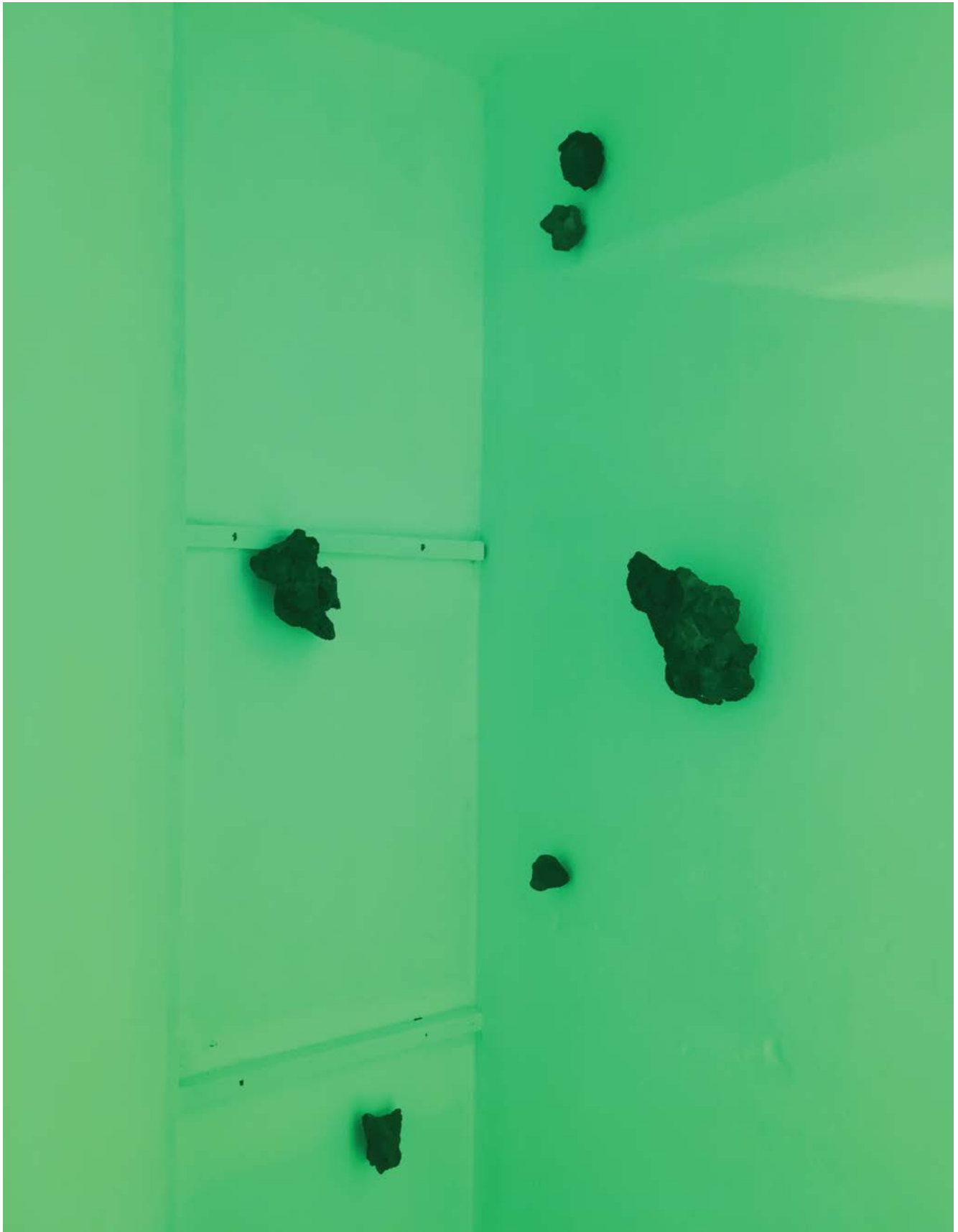
Tropiques Nord; 2018, Installation view



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Installation view



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Installation view



Tropiques Nord; 2018, Installation, Volcanic rocks, green light and field sound, Variable dimensions
Installation view

The West Island

The exhibition setting is of crucial importance in the work of Lidija Delić in order to complete the conceptual presentation of her individual works. As in her previous shows, the works in this exhibition are complete only when set in the space itself and when specific relations are established between them. The Sógandisey Island Lighthouse piece is positioned so that its light and sound signals enable boat navigation on The West Island video, in the same way as this happens in reality. Lidija transforms the gallery space to create a complete ambience, so that the audience can experience this Icelandic landscape through pulsing sounds, room temperature and a cold blue light that is only paused and disrupted at certain intervals.

The form of the video itself requires an extended duration viewing. On the one side, light that changes at even intervals, illuminating the entire environment with different colors, accompanied by the ubiquitous repetitive sound of the lighthouse signalling device, and on the other, the ship that slows down into the harbor, further captures the audience by creating a seductive, almost hypnotic atmosphere. The equal intervals at which sound and light are emitted, synchronized with the pattern of the rotating captions in the other space, create periodic movements that are perceived as the rhythm of the exhibition. In this rhythm, the emphasis is on the interval, which is the time between two sounds or the light, indicating the gap itself, the void, as the accent. In this way, the whole setting seems to disappear and reappear every three seconds.

On the surface, these landscapes seem only to recreate the atmosphere of a specific geographic point. However, they actually convey the artist's experiences and feelings which are on the edge of real and imaginary to the audience. Icelandic marine landscapes serve as a starting point for artistic research that aims to transfer the artist's inner processes to the gallery space and to create an atmosphere of displaced reality that has the ability to transport the audience into another reality by putting them at the centre of the relations that are the experiential core of the exhibition.

Sanda Kalebić
(Exhibition text, *The West Island*, Belgrade Youth Center, Belgrade, 2018)



Ségandisey Island Lighthouse; 2018, Video, 1,5'
Still from the video



The West Island; 2018, Video, 2,14'
Stills from the video



Ségandisey Island Lighthouse; 2018, Video, 1,5'
Stills from the video



The West Island; 2018, Video, 2,14'
Still from the video



The West Island; 2018, Installation view

Sunset Journeys

The project SUNSET Journeys conceptually represents a synthesis of different elements. Whilst the work is presented in its final form as an installation of 40 paintings framed in double wood frames, the process of the installation, Lidija used her personal photo archive from her journeys/travels over the past few years. These colourful and vivid images, and clearly concealed texts, were created on logbook that Lidija found in the Jugooceanija building in Kotor harbour, Montenegro. Technically, when the first image opens, on the right-hand side is written the details of where the pictures motive origins.

Extracting images, objects, and words from their established contexts, this work challenges a sense of uncertainty in which the contrast between the reality of visual images and the reality they depict becomes clearly visible. These paintings/objects meld landscapes and sunsets with the rows and columns of spreadsheets, brushstrokes of colour with the algorithms of sorting and categorization. The image-culture age we live in is characterized by our faith in the capacity of visual images to explain scientific and political phenomena, and the encounter with dissonance present in artworks can trigger a process of questioning these status quo assumptions.

(Catalogue text, *Mediterranea 18 Young Artists Biennale*, Curator: Maja Ćirić, Former Embassy of Yugoslavija, Tirana and Durrës, Albania, 2017)



Sunset Journeys; 2017, Installation view



Sunset Journeys; 2017, Mixed media, 47x32x4 cm each
Installation view



Sunset Journeys; 2017, Mixed media, 47x32x4 cm

Detail

My practice is predicated, both conceptually and structurally, upon an inter-medial exploration of a set of relations between (my) subjective internal processes and spaces that surround me. I find it possible to elucidate, expend and transform internal personal spaces of atmosphere, dreams, memories and imagination through their transposition into the physical space of a gallery. Point of departure of my approach is an understanding that the world around us is not a system of pre-defined objects and concepts to which we come and choose rationally, but that it is rather a dense network of unfinished processes where seemingly stable things are nothing but a reflection of stability of their images. Through my work I strive to create an opening which would lead a visitor from one level of reality into another, from physical to sensory, for collective state into individual physical experience.

Lidija Delić (b. 1986) lives and works in Belgrade, Serbia. She graduated in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade (2010), and earned a PhD in the Multimedia Art Department from the University of Arts in Belgrade (2015). She is co-founder and member of artist-run U10 Art Space from Belgrade.

She was awarded a prize for drawing by the Gioielli di Carta auction house in Rome. Her drawings are in a collection at the ING Bank Collection, Amsterdam. Her work has been presented in solo and group shows, such as 'PARALLEL VIENNA 2015', Alte Post in Vienna (2015) and 'LISTE Art Fair' in Basel (2015). In 2017 she was selected to represent Serbia at the Biennale des jeunes créateurs de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (BJCEM) in Tirana, Albania. Lidija was a finalist in the 2017 D.B. Mangelos Award, and in 2018. Lidija exhibited at 57th October Salon in Belgrade.

In 2019, Lidija attended Artist-in-Residence program organized by Balkan Projects and Swiss Institute in New York.

Together with four more artists, Lidija is representative of Montenegro at the 59th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale in 2022.

Currently Lidija works at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Belgrade as an assistant professor.