

Milena Dragicevic: Lagoonal

Opening: Tuesday 4th December 2018, 7 pm

Duration: 6th December 2018 until 12th January 2019

Milena Dragicevic's fifth solo exhibition at the Galerie Martin Janda will display new works from the ongoing series *Erections for Transatlantica* from 5th December 2018 until 12th January 2019.

"I look for a ... *somewhere*. I look for a space without borders, a space with blurred edges, a space of inside out, a space that is wet and dry, a space where I can leak colour and where I can leak form. I look for a location where knowledge is shared and where both precision and confusion are permissible. The container for my form is painting." (Milena Dragicevic)

In 2017 the Serbian Pavilion's themed title for its presentation at the Venice Biennale was *Enclavia*. Enclavia (the Serbian word for Enclave) was interpreted by Milena Dragicevic as a space within a space, with its own set of rules. As an immigrant, an artist and a fraternal twin Dragicevic perceives an urgency to locate a space of multiplicity and a space where art can happen. Her paintings bear witness to all things within this space, including herself and her environment.

In this new show Dragicevic remains in the imaginary region of *Transatlantica*, but also draws, as suggested in the exhibition title, on her 2003 painting *Lagoonal*, a small painting depicting a twisted ribbon of heads on what could be described as a Mobius curve, where time and place turn back on itself. Drawn to the idea of bringing something from a previous work forward, Dragicevic is reminded every time she starts a new painting, that despite the uniqueness of each individual artwork they exist within a community, seeing herself as a caretaker of the community.

The exhibition title *Lagoonal* carries on from the word *Transatlantica* (referring to the Atlantic Ocean as a place of origin and a suspended space). Lagoon, the root word, refers to a body of water with its own eco system and is used as a metaphor for the fluid, continuous and contradictory space that echoes the materiality of paint. The act of painting is localised and idiosyncratic in time and space, but it spills out into its surroundings and leads to something bigger, leaking into things that exist outside of itself. Each image in the *Erections for Transatlantica* series is named after an artist, predominantly female. The paintings are not portraits or homages to these people but gain another level of autonomy and agency through their individual titles.

"*Transatlantica* also represents a utopian borderless ideal – a notion, one hardly needs to say, that feels particularly urgent in our current context of rife nationalism, protectionism and authoritarianism. The idea of an 'erection' for *Transatlantica*, meanwhile, situates each painting – and the amalgamation of parts that it makes visual – as something analogous to a tribute, a tangible, tender marker in the service of understanding. It makes something real in the speculative space of painting, so that it might become real to the imagination" (Martin Herbert)

Just like Dragicevic's amalgamation of identity and community, an array of intersecting personal references transfer context and composition to her paintings. She borrows from Paleolithic artefacts, modernist sculpture, graphic design, book covers, fashion, pattern-making, textiles, ceramics, ancient weaponry, sports equipment, furniture design and old exhibition catalogues. The form of her work uses a code of abstraction whilst keeping one foot in reality. Gathered imagery, painterly processed, dissected and abstracted, produce object-like forms and swaying outlines. They emerge to distinguish structure within the continuous space of the canvas, then almost dissolve again into the background, a relationship of tension and potential is built.

Milena Dragicevic, *1965, lives and works in London.