

Press Info

Exhibition Title: **Zero-sum**

Artist: **Vika Prokopaviciute**

Gallery: **house of spouse GALLERY**

Opening: **05.10.2023**

Duration: **05.10.2023 – 13.11.2023**

Photographer: **Flavio Palasciano**

Credit: **Courtesy the Artist and house of spouse. Image: Flavio Palasciano.**

Text: **Laura Hinrichsmeyer. Translation by Miriam Stoney**

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List of works:



Vika Prokopaviciute
Boiling Ultra, 2023
Oil and acrylics on linen
200 x 130 cm



Vika Prokopaviciute
White-hot, 2023
Oil on acrylics on linen
200 x 130 cm

Text:

Looking for the Fourth in Demolished Rooms

By Laura Hinrichsmeyer, translated by Miriam Stoney

As a child, I once looked directly into the abyss.
These are things I still know:

I was with my mother in a room.
From the window, I could see a metal stairway outside.
Along the house, it led below into a garden.
Behind it was an empty plot.
It was August.
Leant in a corner of the room was a mirror, which seemed to imitate me with its size.
It was without a frame, hence especially fragile.
With some random movement, I knocked the mirror over.
It shattered and shards lay all over.
My mother looked at me and said:
Now you'll have 7 years bad luck.
I was 9 years old.

The following day I had a fight with my mother.
Below, in the garden, I took the hose and doused everything around me.
The metal stairway too. Step by step, for some minutes.
As though I had to extinguish something.
Then I turned off the hose and let it fall.
I wanted to go up, out of the garden.
The wet stairs before me led the way.
From the house resounded a song that I didn't know:

*Baby, better come back maybe next week
Can't you see I'm on a losing streak?
I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey
That's what I say ...*

I wore only my wet socks.
Why, I no longer know.
Then I went up the stairs. With my left foot on the penultimate step, I grasped the metal handle and stepped with my right foot onto the final step at the same time. That's when something within tore at my veins, arteries, organs and nerves.
As though I were imploding, something binding me.
I was stuck fast to the metal and could not get free.
Inside, my mother turned up the stereo even louder.

*... can't get no, I can't get no
I can't get no satisfaction, no satisfaction*

*No satisfaction, no satisfaction
I can't get no*

The highest step on the stairway was under high voltage due to a cable sawn into during building works.

No one noticed anything.

Because of the water, the charge was doubled and without rubber soles – without shoes – I was caught in a circuit.

My mother had the same accident too.

At the exact same age.

In May 1968.

Reporting from this month, Antoinette Fouque:

“May 68 is primarily a departure. [...] at the beginning was indeed the cry and with the cry, the body: this body that the society of the sixties had so badly mistreated and which, with the moderns, with today's master thinkers, is violently repressed.”¹

My mother was, 27 years prior to my electrocution, stuck fast just like me.

Everyone said it was her own fault, she must have been up to something, in order to be punished like that. It actually doesn't make sense to speak of a singular electrocution. Since it wasn't a one-time thing that'd be over just as soon as it started. It was an endlessly long, tenacious force that pulled at a person.

1995, in August, because my mother wearing shoes she was able to free me and we drove to the hospital. In the report it states that I had a 5 Deutschmark-sized hole in my foot. I remember a wholly unbloody, whitish wound. A bright hole so deep that even the blood failed to find its way there. As though I were made of white chalk.

The metal had gone and sucked all the red out of me.

On the way to the hospital, in the car, I was terrified of the consoles, the handles, the interior, the entire vehicle.

Everywhere was metal.

When I was in your studio I saw on the canvasses a similarly dangerous metal. But that metal was in motion and it was freeing itself from its stiff materiality. In your paintings, it extends threateningly lengthways, to form an endless field. Red paint sticks to it, it appears to glow, so hot that it gleams into a greenish tone and becomes liquid. Angular constructions lace themselves together like rosettes and writhe out of their geometric constraints. Even this metal is clutched by an intrinsic violence.

The abyss into which I stared, that time on the stairway, also unfurled within me like an endless field. Accompanied by no particular feeling, it was simply there with a sheer force and it wanted to pull me into its realm. A supra-human plane that lay horizontal before me in its endlessness. The horror of an endless field that has no end. The panic did not derive from the surface itself but rather the unknown, the (non-)end of this field.

¹ Re-translated from an interview translated into German with Antoinette Fouque in *Freibeuter*, no. 48, Berlin 1991, p. 37.

The unknown purpose of this space.

Raised in a soup of thought peppered with Calvinism, I wanted to know why this happened to me. As though someone had shoved me onto this plane. I wanted an explanation, who and why, what had I done? Where did my guilt come from?

The thought of seven years bad luck wound me into a strange loop from my mother to the mirror and the electrically charged metal.

Back in your studio, you told me about the very first painting, a kind of *mother-painting*, to which all your paintings refer. A form of painting that alone perpetuates and carries itself forward as a tautology, and which stretches the self-reflexivity that is often ascribed to the medium into the extreme. Here painting refuses to take up an outward purpose. Though even pure self-justification is demonstration and with that very perpetuation empty of almost any meaning – *l'art pour rien*?

We won't get anywhere with thoughts of mastery here.

We hit a low point and have to start again at the beginning. Each time afresh, because there is no moral to the question we put to ourselves.

The approach seems wrong. Our starting point collapses into itself.

Here, painting acts more like a *rite de passage* – a ride through hell.

An abyss that we are confronted with, and whose end is not in sight.

The moral classification of an accident that *affects* someone and the evaluation of art, and particularly of painting, that someone *effects* in the moment of viewing, seem related to me. As a viewer, as someone affected by art, one can do the following:

One can fill a layer with seven years bad luck.

Stick it together with guilt and self-reflexivity.

On the back of a limited notion of painting, claim it's all a bourgeois confirmation mechanism that represents our possessions in a safe embedded in a wall, or figures phallic gestures of a masculine world of feeling.

So, just thinking of that kind of painting that behaves both vertically as an event, simulating an almost embarrassing authority in the act of viewing, and in its very creation, also seems to work upwards and downwards. Shoots, sprays, piles up beyond recognition, always condensing and destroying more and more.

Standing before this vertical idea of painting, all that reveals itself is one's own, anachronistically charged fantasy, which contributes to the medium being passed back and forth continuously between the extremes of 'declared dead' and a contemptuously commented, ubiquitous visibility. Such a viewer only usually exposes something of herself, reducing painting to the painted image as a bourgeois-performing monad.

The other would be the much older idea. Something that we can also see here – feminist painting. Laced with diva-like, perspectival refusals, constructivist, metal floor plates that twist like fluid and expose the soft from other, massive passages, and thus perpetuate themselves rhizomatically as abstractions of a kind of *ur-painting*. A matriarchal abstraction that relates to, in and on an other in the surface of a domain, pouring out horizontally, spilling onward, it blows bulges into a pre-given structure, rolls out speculatively over something and births itself existentially in a subcutaneous brutality.

In this case, it's not about a singular, protruding masterpiece that we are allowed to watch as it poses. It's much more about the painterly attempt to get closer to that very space of possibility behind the wall, which opens out of itself and the medium, inscribing itself into another dimension. Not *for* us, the viewer, but *with* us as viewer and potential collaborator. This is not to be confused, however, with those paintings brought forth emanistically, which have flowed spiritually and passively out of something –here we see the artist's informedness, woven out of things that we still cannot classify.

In its fatalistic dialectics, the pietistic assumption that a random accident could have something to do with one's self and one's own good or bad behaviour resembles the bourgeois assumption that painting represents solely for us and as countermeasure that which we know, know personally, and we own. We reward ourselves with a quick decoding and can thus subjugate the image. A view on art that degrades painting to a servile debtor. And which stylises an accident as a *personal message from god*.

The paintings seen here open up a principle with which we could make ourselves familiar, paradoxical arrangements that set out a field of thought removed from the blunt pursuit of our counterpart within painting. Much more, these works point to a terrain in which we might dwell or position ourselves. Temporarily and at our own risk – since enduring the horror of an endless loop and bearing the powerlessness exercised throughout these paintings is no easy undertaking. If we commit to this ride, we can continue unscrewing our thoughts through these paintings.

Anti-teleological painting, which understands itself rather as a catalyst and, far from being bound to a purpose, is still in the position for activation. It does not concern any particular truth which should ultimately prevail; it's about that which we do not yet know, but to which we can come ever closer.