

## **ANDREJ DÚBRAVSKÝ**

*MOSAIC OF DOPAMINE DEFICIENCY OF A TADPOLE*

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GAA GALLERY NEW YORK

Gaa Gallery is pleased to present *Mosaic of Dopamine Deficiency of a Tadpole*, Andrej Dúbravský's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Dúbravský's new suite of paintings form an immersive installation of stretched and unstretched canvases exhibited across the gallery's main space. The installation creates a mosaic of paintings of bees, caterpillars, tadpoles, roosters, and adolescent boys, installed over painted backdrops of abstracted landscapes.

*Mosaic of Dopamine Deficiency of a Tadpole* is a kind of poem, a metaphor. *Mosaic* is the actual way in which the work is installed - layers of stretched and unstretched canvases forming a mosaic of images that examine the intersections of agriculture, industry, identity, and sexuality. The *Dopamine Deficiency* sets the stage in a place abuzz with anticipation and anxiety. People are on their phones, scrolling, looking down. A group of runners appear, inspired by stills from an anniversary video of a gay porn company, where thirty porn actors are running on a beach. The *Tadpole* is representative of something embryonic, delicate, porous, and not quite emerged yet.

Produced from his home studio in the countryside of Slovakia, where he also maintains a garden, Dúbravský explores the romantic notion of life in the countryside while provoking questions about the perceived simplicity of living within nature and the complexities and realities therein. Painted a la prima, Dúbravský's wet-on-wet work both embraces and counters whimsical notions of the landscape and rural life. In watery images rendered in acrylic, charcoal, and pastel on raw cotton canvas, his work offers a contemporary take on traditional motifs. With a tertiary palette, his work possesses an elemental quality of earth and water.

Favoring the multiplicitous, messy, promiscuous, and metamorphic processes, Dúbravský's work resists a singular narrative. Instead of a story with a start and an end, we find ourselves in the middle. His paintings depict those engaged in processes of transformation set within atmospheric landscapes. There are the frogs in all their life stages—the hatchling emerging from an egg—the tadpole, swimming, growing teeth, then legs—the froglet becoming a frog. Using both the dramatic metamorphosis of the frog and the realities of being born in water, Dúbravský calls attention to the lives of amphibians. Living much of their lives in and around aquatic ecosystems, the skin of amphibians is highly permeable and susceptible to pollution. For Dúbravský, this porousness is a metaphor. The frog becomes symbolic of the effects of agriculture and industry and, not unlike us, contamination and stimuli.

Then there are the caterpillars- spikey, spiny, and crawling over everything. And the honey bees—buzzing, flying, liaising with flowers. Painted in an expressive manner, the caterpillars are the brightest works in the exhibition. Influenced by American abstract expressionism and the work of Jackson Pollock and Cy Twombly, the caterpillar paintings are made on the ground and composed with vivid splashes of color. Like the tadpoles, the caterpillars represent an intermediary stage of life, while the bees appear fully formed.

Like the bees, Dúbravský's male runners serve as a stand-in for civilization. Facing the viewer head-on, they sprint forward, not away. Their movement is suspended and blurred, calling to mind Eadweard Muybridge's studies of movement and Richter's blurred photo paintings. For Dúbravský, the runners represent humanity set within this dystopian landscape. In this landscape, young men are running, swimming, and catching frogs; their youth is something they came from and are growing into, but also something they hold on to. Together, they hold in tact this youthfulness amidst everything telling them not to. Their idleness, rest, and play is rendered both joyful and melancholic.

In this mosaic of burgeoning and transitional life stages, joy, depression, and existential dread set in. The question of dopamine comes into play. Interested in contemporary self-help and self-care movements, including dopamine fasting, Dúbravský imagines the idea of digital detox, proposing—what are we doing with our dopamine? What are we wasting it on? What's the feedback loop, and how is it shaping us and our relationships with each other and to the environment?

In *Mosaic of Dopamine Deficiency of a Tadpole*, we see life in its emergent processes. In his work, Dúbravský focuses on living things, painting images of bees, caterpillars, frogs, landscapes, nature, people, and roosters to depict their kinship, sexuality, and liveliness. While there is an abundance in all this living, there is also the prospect of an end. Dúbravský depicts a kind of shadow time where two or more time scales and realities exist together. There's one of boys playing and catching frogs while industrial smokestacks linger in the background. Maybe they are from the past, some leftover relic of industry, or maybe they are present still in the soil. His work teeters, somewhat restlessly, in these shadows and in the idea of a utopia situated in dystopian conditions. While holding that edge, Dúbravský's work offers empathy, care, critique, and celebration.

**Andrej Dúbravský** (b. 1987 Nové Zámky, Slovakia) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia in 2013 with masters of fine art. His work is represented in the public collections of the Bratislava City Museum in Bratislava, Slovakia, and the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, Slovakia. Recent exhibitions include solo presentations at Dittrich and Schlechtriem Gallery, Berlin, Germany; Galeria Richter Fine Art, Rome, Italy; Galéria Jána Koniarka, Trnava, Slovakia; Museum Bensheim, Bensheim, Germany; Botanical Garden UPJŠ, Košice, Slovakia; Launch F18, New York; Ales South Bohemian Gallery, Hluboka nad Vltavou, Czech Republic, among others. Dúbravský lives and works in New York, NY and Rastislavice, Slovakia.