

Lana Stojićević *GREAT DEAL! Premium New Build*

[illegible]

What does it mean, to live in a room? Is to live in a place to take possession of it? What does taking possession of a place mean? As from when does somewhere become truly yours? Is it when you've put your three pairs of socks to soak in a pink plastic bowl? Is it when you've heated up your spaghetti over a camping-gaz? Is it when you've used up all the non-matching hangers in the cupboard? Is it when you've hung suitable curtains up on the windows, and put up the wallpaper, and sanded the parquet flooring?¹

But what if the parquet is so worn out that it can no longer be sanded? What if it has swelled due to bad foundations, inexpensive construction, and moisture? Invisible and trapped within the structures, the moisture that eats away from the inside is the central theme of Lana Stojićević's new series of works, which consists of three segments. On one hand, the artist explores the topic in the manner of autofiction, while on the other, she offers a commentary on the contemporary social reality of galloping capitalism, the proliferation of short-term rentals, and the touristification. In her work, architecture serves simultaneously as both a metaphor and a case study for current phenomena and issues, whether it's about housing affordability, property values, neglect of cultural heritage, or the position of vulnerable groups in society.

As the moisture expanded and contracted, so too did the swelling in the parquet it caused, moving through her childhood room in a rented apartment. It wouldn't stay in one place, but would follow her, appearing with every move in a new destination that had yet to become a home. A fragment of an interior with a moisture-formed mound, presented as a diorama in the shape of a movable piece of furniture, serves as a reminiscence of numerous relocations and the accompanying feelings of displacement, anxiety, and confinement. Since moisture doesn't read rental ads, it appears both in cheap apartments and in *luxury* new builds. It often remains invisible for a long time, trapped inside walls, slowly eating away at them. Behind the series of watercolors lies a contemplation on the stages of moisture spreading – from barely visible stains to toxic mold. It portrays polished, empty interiors ready for move-in, stage sets of illusory *dream homes*. But lurking in the background is moisture, a sign of a flaw in the system of hyperproduction of new builds; extremely expensive residential square meters made from low-quality materials. By choosing watercolor as her medium, the artist simulates the movement and spread of a water stain; like moisture, watercolor leaves a darker pigment at its edges. At its core, moisture points to blockage, leakage, to a problem in the internal functioning of a house. It draws attention to all those integral yet invisible parts of the home, such as plumbing. Water, which both nourishes and floods, cleans and stains, reveals the deeply embedded contradictions within systems like the household. The space we live in defines us by shaping gender and social relations. In this sense, water symbolically reveals the naturalized, often invisible, unpaid reproductive labor performed by women, which primarily takes place in water-associated areas of the home (the kitchen,

¹ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1997, 24. (shortened quote)

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the bathroom), or involves activities that require water. This labor is essential for the functioning of the capitalist system, whether in the context of a family, a household, or the state.

In his book *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (1978), Rem Koolhaas writes about a 1931 party in New York where renowned architects, all men, arrived dressed in phallic costumes modeled after their iconic New York skyscrapers. The only female architect among them, Edna Cowan, appeared as *Basin Girl* – a sink girl, plumbing to the male architects.² The Western concept of hygiene, one of the key modernist projects, with its sanitized white bathroom and the sink as its symbol, frequently casts women into a service role. Their task is to manage fluids, to remove shameful excretions: juice, saliva, sweat, tears, urine, feces, blood, lymph, pus, bile, acid, water.³ Stojićević addresses this issue, not only highlighting architecture as a traditionally masculine discipline, but also exposing how architecture is complicit in building a patriarchal and capitalist society. By dressing in a costume inspired by *Basin Girl*, which she constructs through a lengthy sewing process using synthetic materials, faux leather, she mimics the temporary luxury of a modern residential high-rise until the first clogging of the sink/basin, that is, of the system itself. In doing so, the artist also highlights the issue of unaffordable housing. This basic human need and right to a space to live and a home becomes a victim of a profit-driven desire, the market competition of supply and demand – a game that moisture exposes.

Petra Šarin

Lana Stojićević (1989, Šibenik) is a visual artist working in the field of artistic research. She utilizes performative and staged photography, costumes, and architectural models to explore themes such as illegal construction, architectural and industrial heritage, environmental pollution, contemporary neo-style tendencies, the devastation of cultural heritage, and the transformation of the landscape as a result of mass tourism. She graduated from the Department of Painting at the Arts Academy in Split (2012). She works as an assistant professor at the Department of Visual Culture and Fine Arts of the Arts Academy in Split. She has won numerous professional awards, such as the third-place Erste prize of the Youth Salon (Croatian Association of Artists, Zagreb, 2022), the Radoslav Putar Award (YVAA, Institute of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2021), the third-place Ivan Kozarić award (Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, 2021), the Metro Imaging Award at the New East Photo Prize exhibition (Calvert 22 Foundation, London, 2016), and the Annual Award for Young Artists (Croatian Association of Artists, Zagreb, 2015). She has taken part in several artist residencies including Residency Unlimited, New York (2023), and Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2019).

² Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1978, 130. Stojićević had previously referenced that event in her work *Fasada/Facade* (2018).

³ Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1975, 28.

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