



Vivian Suter, Untitled, n.d. Photo: Sebastian Lendenmann and Isabel Rotzler



VIVIAN SUTER
I AM GODZILLA
22.3-31.8 2025
MODERNA MUSEET MALMÖ

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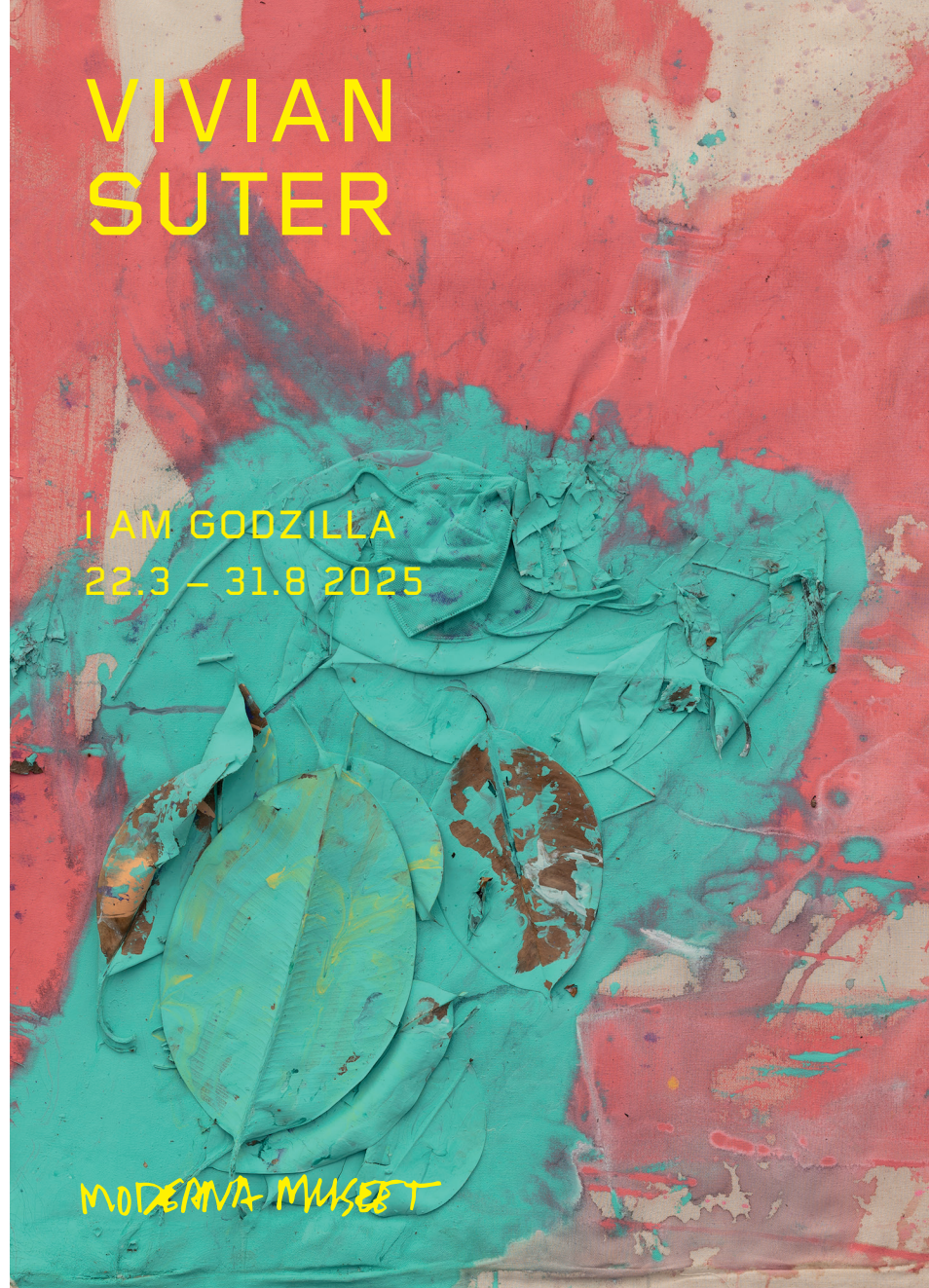
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I Am Godzilla is Vivian Suter's first exhibition in Sweden and consists of more than 350 paintings. Several of the works have never been shown before. In the exhibition, Suter's paintings fill the Turbine Hall in a free and non-hierarchical manner. The organic installation is like an extension, or abstracted version, of the surroundings in Guatemala where she lives and works.

Vivian Suter (b. 1949 in Buenos Aires, Argentina) has been living and working in Panajachel, Guatemala, for over 40 years. The village is on Lake Atitlán, a hint of volcanoes can be made out on the opposite shore, towering 4,000 metres above sea level. Surrounding Suter's house, a large winding verdant garden gradually merges with wild nature. Leaf-strewn paths meander through the vegetation opening up to the occasional glade. The attentive eye will notice a fleck of paint on a leaf here, or an abandoned paint can there. This is Suter's studio and place of work.

An exhibition of Vivian Suter's paintings is like an extension of these surroundings where she lives and works. It's private and personal but never exposed. Instead, all it reveals is how important this place is to her, for her practice. The metal stands used for the presentation are reminiscent of the way in which she herself stores her finished paintings waiting to be exhibited. A larger wooden structure that allows visitors to shift the perspective of the body and the gaze is also part of the exhibition.

Two events in recent years tend to be mentioned as meaningful for the development of Suter's work - hurricanes Stan (2005) and Agatha (2010). These caused massive flooding and destruction, and many people lost their lives or disappeared. Suter's house and studio were also damaged and her paintings were covered in clay and water. She decided to keep

them and retain the effects of nature on them. These traces became a part of the work. "I started to like how nature painted on them". Parts of the canvases bear traces of earth, leaves and branches. Glimpses of motifs appear, like winding rivers, vegetation or a horizon.

It is unmistakable how Suter's house, her studio and the surrounding nature melt into one. Her work can be termed landscape painting in more ways than one, since nature is absorbed into her paintings both as a motif and material. She uses oils and acrylics when she paints, but the list of materials also includes earth, botanical matter and jungle-based microorganisms. Suter lets the canvases dry in her garden – exposed to rain, sun and wind. The works are created in close dialogue with nature, accepting of its forces.

There is a tangible spontaneity and physicality in Vivian Suter's paintings. The wild and the calm are in discourse with each other. It is easy to imagine the active physical gesture in the moment of creation. Suter has said that it is like being in a state of trance when she paints. Conscious of her body but at the same time as if being in a different place.

Hanging on the wall, suspended from the ceiling and lying on the floor the paintings overlap, and the front and back, even the spaces in between, emerge with the same power. The limits of the canvas do not exist. Neither is it clear whether a canvas should be shown vertically or horizontally – the space and the context decide. Suter's paintings are untitled and undated, which further emphasises the fleeting and interconnected feeling. All of this together creates a continually ongoing process of transformation. Suter herself expresses it best when she describes her work as part of a "lifetime painting".

The exhibition title *I Am Godzilla* refers to a game between her and her grandchild, in which they playfully frighten one another with extended arms: "I am Godzilla!". In the context it is interesting that Godzilla, the prehistoric sea monster known from Japanese popular culture, defended his territory. The importance of place resurfaces, not just in Japanese pop culture, but also in the exhibition space. Suter generously leaves the door to her own safe space ajar and allows us to peak in and share in it.

