

EXHIBITION REVIEW:

***Unveiling the Traces of my Own Shadows,* Himera x Jecza Gallery, Timișoara, 28.08.2024–03.10.2025, Curator Moldovan Gabriela**



The exhibition titled *Unveiling the Traces of my Own Shadows* was opened on 28.08.2024, in Timișoara in the space of Himera Gallery in collaboration with Jecza Gallery. It follows an open call that resulted in the selection of ten artists, whose works were featured in this summer show. The exhibition harmoniously brings together different media, such as painting, ceramics and installation, the artists behind these works are Ana Maria Ștefan, Bandi Szidonia, Cristina Chirilă, Cristina

Dimuș, Diana Oană, Paul Darius Moldovan, Luana Cloșcă, Diana Popuț, Viktoriia Rozentsveih, Tania Șimonca, all under the careful curation of Gabriela Moldovan.

The linking element that coagulates the work of the artists, differing mostly in technique, is the idea of the “absent present”, a concept that originated from Sartre’s work *Being and Nothingness*, where the following phrase is mentioned, which would become the motto of the curatorial text: “The absent present is not merely an illusion or an effect of perceptual blindness, and materiality does not present the absolute truth”. In short, the exhibition itself creates a “portrait” of something that does not exist, the absence of the figurative creating an absent character, a metaphysical figure that challenges the viewer to go beyond the superficial barriers of reality and look around them for those aspects that can imprint the Self.

It is important to mention that this exhibition had as its starting point the rigorous process of selecting an appropriate title, with the curator emphasizing that the choice of a suggestive title had a significant impact on the entire creative process. It deliberately provided direction and coherence in the development of the theme and the reading of the works on display. She compared this process to that of an architect who systematically starts with the foundation of a structure and builds successively, with the ultimate goal of realizing a coherent and harmonious whole, in which each element integrates optimally into the whole. Thus, the name of the exhibition *Unveiling the traces of my own shadows* is relevant to the whole concept, referring to the idea of the rebirth of an almost mythical character, composed of several distinct fragments, this entity being captured by the use of the word "shadow". Further, the possessive pronoun alludes to the idea of individuality, through which each artist can find himself. In short, what is fundamental to this exhibition is the curator's incipient suggestion of where we should direct our perspective, that is, by finding the traces, that absent outline, that finds its contours in the human consciousness.

The exhibition space is industrial, but polished, deliberately left to remain so, the floor plan is trapezoidal, and the separation of the interior and exterior space is made through a stained-glass window. The scenographic element in this exhibition consists in the play of light, which is used to "separate" the works and give them a particular elegance. The refinement is also evident in the frames used for the paintings, made possible through the support of Rămăria.

One of the main challenges of this exhibition involves the different mediums of artistic expression and the initial difficulty of composing a conceptual map and answering how to bring together and balance such different works. However, it is precisely this variety that provides the pervasive dynamism in the space in which the exhibition took place.

Returning to the ten artists who have been selected there is no better way to illustrate how their work engages with the concept of the absent present than by quoting directly from the curator's text.: 'It (absent presence) is found in the assumed absence of the present figure, where the void is filled by geometric or vegetal motifs as in the series of works *Axis Mundi* signed by Ana Maria Ștefan, like the metaphor of the cactus by Szidonia Bandi. The void is also filled by the element of memory in the works of Tania Șimonca, Viktoriia Rozentsveih, and Cristina Dimuș. We see a timid trace of the figurative, a representation of human anxiety and alienation in the works of Cristina Chirilă, but the pinnacle of the representation of presence is seen in the "flight" of the characters identified in the works signed Luana Cloșcă, where the intense and fleeting cough is the outline of our mystical character. The magnetism rendered by Paul Moldovan through sculpture represents a force that is difficult for the eye to perceive, as he states or the phenomenon of perceptual blindness. The magnetic force manifests

itself as glue, water, and ashes of this recurring absence. Finally, the body of works is completed with the exploration of the phenomenology of absence, as Diana Popuț assumes in her works, the latter filling in the void that we feel as shadow throughout the exhibition.'

The exhibition succeeds in outlining its intended purpose—to challenge the viewer's imagination in the search for a 'presence' concealed within the works, a task made all the more difficult by its near-total absence, yet still possible by following the 'shadows' it casts throughout the exhibition path. In the end, I would consider the exhibition a successful one, clearly reflecting the dedication of the entire team—from the well-crafted and thoughtfully sustained curatorial text to the artworks and their inspiring arrangement. The challenges encountered along the way, mostly logistical in nature (as previously mentioned), were effectively addressed and, in fact, contributed to the unique character of space. Of course, the curator of the exhibition, Gabriela Moldovan, has a strong imprint on the whole exhibition, without which we would not be able to see the similarities and at the same time the uniqueness of each artist. She is a dedicated young art curator based in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, with a deep passion for scenography. Her work merges new media with traditional art to craft immersive aesthetic experiences through innovative scenography and production design. Gabriela is currently an independent curator and is also pursuing a PhD in Cinematography and Media. Professionally, she has curated several significant exhibitions that have been pivotal for her curatorial evolution and practice, including *Specular Interactions*, *Unearthed Echoes I*, *Looking Back*, *I Choose Future* and *Ceai în regim*. These projects have refined her skills in developing curatorial concepts, managing exhibition logistics, and engaging with audiences. Additionally, her research visits to Berlin and Paris have deepened her understanding of international art practices and broadened her curatorial perspectives. Currently she is working as a cultural manager assistant at Cluj Cultural Center, where she contributes to the production of cultural and artistic projects of The Academy of Change.

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