

Victoria Stoian

La Moldava

curated by Francesca Comisso



**opening:
16 February 2023**

6 > 9 P.M.

**exhibition:
17 February >
8 April 2023**

**opening hours:
Tuesday-Saturday
3 > 7 P.M.**

MORNINGS BY APPOINTMENT

Victoria Stoian's research finds its expression in a pictorial language rich in forms and signs of an abstract nature, with which she translates her experience of reality. Her stylizations, as the artist defines them, surfacing from the unconscious, draw upon memory and its fragmentary unfolding, and generate a personal visual code. Interwoven in this code are details of places and things, viewpoints, sensations and moods, where joyful childhood memories and the drama of wartime conflicts coexist. Ample backgrounds of soft colors are crossed by layers rarefied at times, at others denser, which hide what had already been drawn, and leave on the surface minute forms, which sometimes look familiar - hatches, outlines, punctuation marks unpredictable in their proceeding and morphology. A sort of psychogeography, in which the concern with places and landscapes - at the core of her research - is rendered with the rhythm of a story that proceeds by layers and continuous variations, from painting to painting. On the occasion of her third solo exhibition at the Peola Simondi Gallery, Victoria Stoian conceived her exhibition as a unitary project divided into stages, from the entrance to the last room, dominated by a large site-specific pictorial artwork created directly on the wall surface, in two weeks of constant and immersive work.

The title of the exhibition is *La Moldava*, a reference to the famous piece written by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana in 1874, the best known of the six symphonic poems that make up *Ma vlast*, in English *My Homeland*. In full accordance with the romantic cultural climate, the symphony celebrates the Czech national identity and its rebirth in the Austrian Empire, through its reference to the landscape that the Vltava, Bohemia's largest river, runs through, evoked by pictorial sound timbres. Having grown up in Chisinău, Moldova, Victoria Stoian has already named her monumental pictorial project *Nistru Confines* after a river, the Nistru (Dnestr): launched in 2018, it now consists of over 400 works tracing the length of the river, which was assumed as the border of Transnistria when this secessionist region bordering Ukraine proclaimed itself independent in 1990. The landscape that Stoian evokes is thus a geopolitical territory, the common place of any discourse on identity, which becomes a subtext to the "life of forms" that inhabit each of her canvases.

Embedded in this precious pictorial stratification are such grave issues as exile, migration, wars, which have been following the artist from her childhood to the tragic reality of our days, in Ukraine and elsewhere. Right from her earliest pictorial cycles, the landscape was represented as disrupted, due to natural events such as thermal changes (*Recea Project*, 2014) or devastating earthquakes (*Codri Earthquake*, 2013-2017) that had left their mark on the land as much as in the collective memory. It is tantamount to saying that instability - which features in Stoian's paintings as the frequent imbalances generated by the concentration

of signs in liminal and aerial areas - is a condition resulting from both the constant transformation of matter and our way of inhabiting the world, of making every portion of space a "homeland." It is precisely to the ambivalent nature of the border, which generates separateness and closure, but also creates a sense of protection, as the artist observes, that this cycle of works is dedicated. The landscape as a *village*, as a *home*, idealized in youthful memories, combines with the theme of identity in the diasporic figures - both female - of the foreigner and the exile: *the Moldavian woman*. The large painting on the ceiling thus becomes the place of an opening, looking out over an immense, imaginative space, like when, as a child, lying under the trees, she observed the sky framed "by the embrace of the trees." To that image are added fragments of other images, of things seen or experienced, and the entire exhibition, like Smetana's symphonic poem, seems to follow the flow of the river towards the sea.