

Staring at the Sun

Jelena Tomašević

Opening 5.06.2025, 6-9pm

From 06.06.2025 to 18.07.2025

Jelena Tomašević (Podgorica, 1974) lives and works between Podgorica and Berlin. The artist graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Cetinje. Author of a complex work with various stylistic, formal and content levels, Tomašević masters different languages with rare simplicity and formal expertise. Human existence and the search for its hidden meanings, the difficulties and psychological problems associated with living conditions in Western societies, the overturning of places of affection in mental prisons, and horror vacui are recurring themes in Jelena Tomašević's artistic research. Her works have been exhibited on numerous occasions, including Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2005); Center for Contemporary Art, Podgorica (2010); National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje (2019); Whitebox Art Center, New York (2015); 9th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2005). She also represented Montenegro/Serbia at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005) and at 59th Venice Biennial (2022). Among the artist's awards are the Award for Best Young Artist of Montenegro, Center for Contemporary Art, Podgorica (2007) and the Onufri International Prize, National Gallery of Arts, Tirana (2017).

Artopia Gallery opened in February 2001 with Marzia Migliora's exhibition *In punta di piedi*, curated by Emanuela De Cecco. The gallery promotes emerging and mid-career Italian and international artists with an extensive program of exhibitions, mostly site-specific and curatorial projects. The intent is to offer a critical and innovative reading of the contemporary through the experimentation of multiple languages and practices that include film, digital media, performance and design. In the fall of 2023, the gallery changed locations, moving to the courtyard of the same building that has housed it for more than two decades. The new space, a former late 19th-century workshop in the heart of Milan, was designed by Studio Martinelli Venezia. Since summer 2022, Artopia has been organizing the festival NUCRÉ, sponsored by the Region of Puglia: a set of contemporary art events aimed at enhancing the cultural and anthropological heritage of the Apulian territory.

Artopia is pleased to open, on Thursday 5 June, the solo exhibition of **Jelena Tomašević** (Podgorica, 1974), on view until 18 July. The artist, who represented Montenegro at the 51. and 59. Venice Biennale, interprets the gallery's spaces through an essential project of an installative nature and a declared post-conceptual matrix.

The artist's work, as bare in its presentation as intense in its content and full of questions for the viewer, is pervaded by a dreamlike, sometimes claustrophobic dimension, in which the dominant feeling is the suspension of any judgement. The very title of the exhibition, *Staring at the Sun*, suggests a precise emotion, that moment when time stands still, sight is blinded and one remains suspended in a limbo where life seems to be consumed in the waiting. "*Staring at the Sun* is a silent meditation, the invocation of a universe undone and re-imagined. Not a post-apocalyptic world, but a post-anthropocentric one, not an elegy, but the murmur of the beginning whispered among the debris of the end. In this space, the end is neither feared nor experienced with distress: it is observed, inspired and allowed to bloom." writes Tomašević.

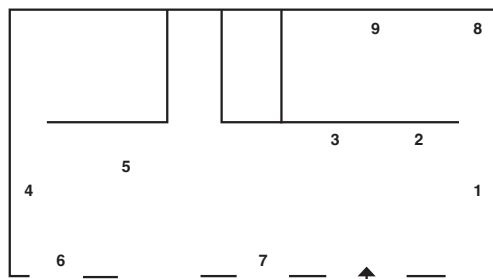
Jelena Tomašević transforms the exhibition space into a personal miniature world, through an inedited corpus of works that, articulated on different linguistic, stylistic, formal and content levels, act as a single device. Three white cushions in the central nave allude to a childlike and dreamy world. On them the artist impresses mathematical formulas and equations representing the direction of the wind or the polarisation of the sun, underlining that physics and its rules can indeed measure natural phenomena, but it is their manifestations that inspire wonder and poetry. On the wall, the three-dimensional drawings, suspended exactly eleven centimetres from the wall, float silently, disengaged from any function or chronology. The works collect the fragments of a distant past: fragments of nature and architecture, anatomical relics and forgotten tools. Different objects, with heterogeneous perspectives and functions, are brought together and used in a common and shared space, beyond the boundaries of the paper. Furthermore, Tomašević states: "Each work of art, made on handmade ecological paper with embedded plant seeds, is not simply an object, but a potential. Life sleeps in its fibres. When surrendered to the natural elements - earth and rain, time and decay - these delicate artefacts can give life to wild flowers, herbs and even trees. Here, paper is not a mere support but a living lung." On the sides, two magnifying glasses lengthen the drawing, a kind of "third arm", an extension of the hand and sight, an aid to greater stability and precision. In the video room, two simultaneous projections create scenes suspended between reality and fiction, a realistic theatre made up of fantastic and surreal elements.

Tomašević's exhibition at Artopia reconstructs a parallel reality, a post-human world that, in the tension between reality and dream, opens up a possible new beginning, the recomposition of new spaces after the end of everything. *Staring at the Sun* proposes a change of perspective and reminds us that humans are nothing more than passing figures.

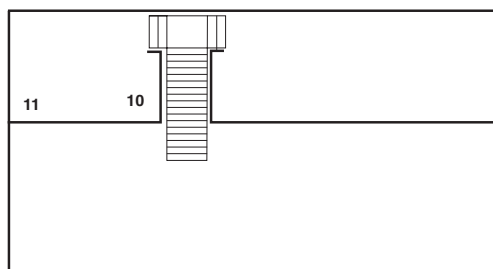
The artist will be present during the opening.



Ministry
of Culture
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GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

Staring at the Sun, 2025

#1 Collage on ecological paper containing plant seeds, magnifying glass, tweezers
100x32cm

#2 Collage on ecological paper containing plant seeds, magnifying glass, tweezers
100x32cm

#3 Collage on ecological paper containing plant seeds, magnifying glass, tweezers
100x32cm

#4 Drawing on handkerchief paper
20x20cm

#5 Collage on handmade paper with net embroidery, maracas, microphone stands
28,5x65cm

#6 Print on cotton pillowcase and embroidery
60x35cm

#7 Print on cotton pillowcase and embroidery
60x35cm

#8 Video, 35', loop

#9 Video, 4', loop

10# Print on cotton pillowcase, bookstand, neon
60x35cm

11# Video, 2', loop