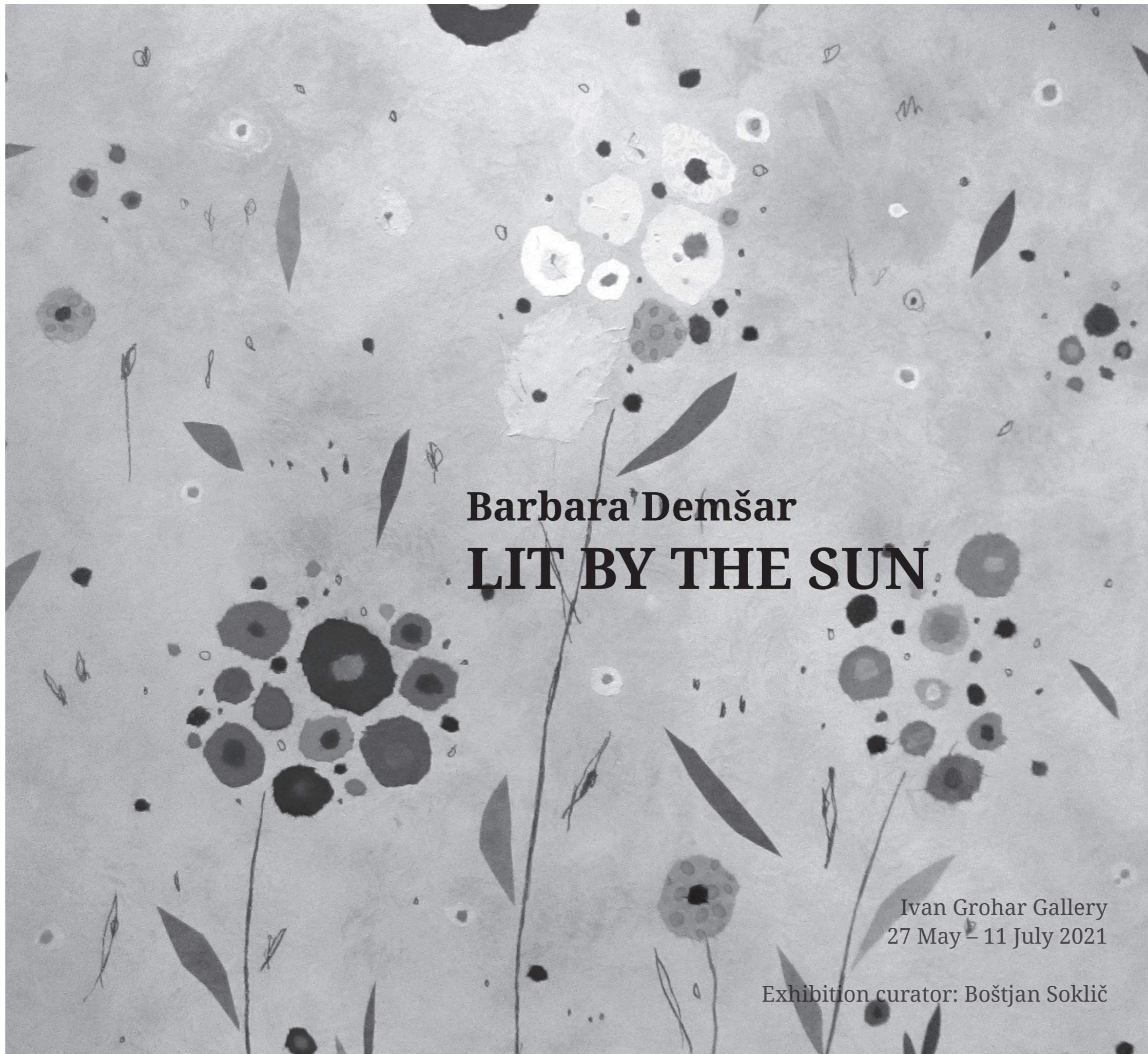


**ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME:**

Due to the changing epidemiological situation, the accompanying program will be published later on the Škofja Loka Museum website.



**Barbara Demšar**  
**LIT BY THE SUN**



**Exhibition Colophon:**  
Barbara Demšar: LIT BY THE SUN  
27 May – 11 July 2021

Ivan Grohar Gallery  
Škofja Loka Museum  
[www.loski-muzej.si](http://www.loski-muzej.si)

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Ivan Grohar Gallery  
27 May – 11 July 2021

Exhibition curator: Boštjan Soklič

At the Ivan Grohar Gallery, Barbara Demšar's work is presented with a recent cycle of paintings titled *Lit by the Sun*, which was created between 2018 and 2020. The cycle consists of fifteen medium-format works painted with acrylics on canvas, which are divided into two interconnected parts according to the theme and the way they explore motifs. The first gallery room features a "yellow" cycle, which carries the same name as the exhibition itself, and the second gallery room shows a set of works titled *The Wonderful New Crazy World*, for which the artists used a different, more subdued palette. For instance, backgrounds consisting of distinct floral motifs are paired with "warm" shades of grey and in some other works the artists went back to using the warm colours resulting from the earth basking in the sun – orange, ochre and red.

The entire *Lit by the Sun* cycle is about the way Barbara Demšar experiences nature and natural phenomena. For her, nature is an eternal source of inspiration, allowing her to record the impressions she gains through her internalised experience of Škofja Loka's landscape in a lyrical way. Under the artist's brush, realistic motifs from her home environment are transformed into an image or vision of a world in which nature is the source of moods and stories: it is also dynamic, spiritual, and aesthetically pleasing; it is by no means mechanical, soulless, and explicable only through rational thinking. The *Lit by the Sun* cycle continues the artist's path of exploring the selected colour values that impact the viewers without them being conscious of it, while also provoking various reactions – be it mental (psychic) or purely physiological (physical) ones – and related moods. With her "yellow" canvases, Barbara Demšar returns to the very beginning of her yellow-related exploration of perceptions of the world, which marked her artistic endeavours during the first few years of the twenty-first century (the *Extasis* cycle). It is interesting to note that during the lockdown and isolation time resulting from the pandemic, her work was once again

characterised by an optimistic painting style with yellow and orange hues, which reflects her positive attitude towards the world, her optimistic outlook on life, creative zeal, light-heartedness and upstanding disposition. Yellow invigorates and lifts the spirit, while orange is all about warmth and joy. The artist's poeticism (akin to impressionism) and symbolism are the indicators of art with a romantic touch, one that defies the widespread social resignation and apathy in the times of a pandemic. The most common motif in the exhibited works is a flowering meadow, which is the painter's metaphor for Škofja Loka's landscape: it is both her personal reflection and a symbol of the natural landscape, which is slowly disappearing due to violent human impact.

Barbara Demšar's visual language in the *Lit by the Sun* cycle is warm, recognisable, inviting and rich in symbolism. It is characterised by abstract typicality of Škofja Loka's landscape, enhanced through clearly drawn magical symbols and unusual characters that are harmoniously arranged into playful, at times completely imaginary forms, providing the viewers with the material to experience the subtlest of feelings. The basic characteristics of Barbara Demšar's painting are captured in a compositionally balanced, slightly simplified, planar, yet structurally rich artistic approach. The artist uses shapes, colour accents and contrasts, symbols and codes to create the illusion of an abstractly felt real space, whose natural framework is more noticeable in newer works (due to the more pronounced atmospheric colourfulness). In the artist's older cycles that featured similar motifs (*Holidays*, *Gardens*), the landscape was perceived more as a premonition, as opposed to the *Lit by the Sun* cycle, where its outward appearance is direct and visible. Less understandable, yet all the more mysterious are the various symbols that make up the paintings and painting installations, which have been an ever-present feature of Barbara Demšar's artistic practice for more than two decades. She uses her canvases, paper, wood and other materials as a surface

to be covered with symbols in a dynamic, artistically bold and continuous way, using all sorts of symbols, such as circles, ladders, the sun, crescents and the infinity symbol, i.e. a sideways figure eight. She usually uses the ladder – one of her most frequently used symbols – to connect the earthly life with the afterlife, and the crescent shape within the wider landscape to indicate fertility or abundance in connection with various cycles of life (life-death, decline and growth, changing of the seasons etc.). Some of the most common symbols in the *Lit by the Sun* cycle are flowers, which appear in various forms and as various types of meadow plants (oxeye daisies, buttercups, poppies, yarrows). Sometimes they are unobtrusively hidden in a veiled background reminiscent of a palimpsest or the wallpaper scraped off the wall and at other times they are exposed (in the form of an intense accent colour) on a flat-painted tree, which may be a rose bush. They are often paired with a forked twig arising from the shape of a transformed crescent, reminiscent of an abstract depiction of the human figure, which crosses the circle (with raised hands), thus symbolising the transition from the everyday life (the circle) to areas perceived in a different way. The most commonly featured symbol, however, is the circle, which represents infinity, perfection and wholeness. Its meaning is universal. It symbolises the ever-present energy that is found in nature, as well as focus, mobility and eternity.

A special characteristic of the exhibited paintings is the way the artist has upgraded acrylic painting through assemblage: she glued and attached various materials (paper, fabric, thread, leather) to the canvas, thus giving the images a tactile dimension and expanding the painting into the room.

Barbara Demšar presents her one-of-a-kind vision and experience of Škofja Loka's landscape and the world. She takes viewers to an (almost) abstract world, one that is compositionally mature, appealing in terms

of colours and refined to the point where the medium takes the form of a "galactic meadow" of the universe. Joie de vivre, the joy of life presented in the *Lit by the Sun* cycle and hidden in a plethora of hues and surprising shapes, urges us to find it and keep it in ourselves.

*Boštjan Soklič, Curator, Škofja Loka Museum*

#### **Artist Bio:**

Barbara Demšar (1969) graduated in 1997 from the Department of Fine Art Education at the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana – her mentor was Prof. Herman Gvardjančič. She is a member of the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies (ZDSLJU) and the Škofja Loka Artists' Association. She has received further training at the Cité Internationale Des Arts in Paris, France, at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont, USA, and at the Art Hub in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in October 2017, which was her last art residency. She has held about 30 solo exhibitions and has participated in more than 200 joint exhibitions both in Slovenia and elsewhere. She has received 23 awards for her work in Slovenia, Croatia and the USA, the two most recent of which include the Gottlieb Foundation Grant (New York, USA) and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (New York, USA). She lives and works in Škofja Loka.