

A guided tour of the exhibition with the curator:
Saturday, 11 June 2022, at 10:00.



Exhibition Colophon:
Peter Gaber
The Coming World

25 May – 10 July 2022
Ivan Grohar Gallery

Represented by: Aleksandra Saša Nabergoj
Curator: Boštjan Soklič
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***Peter
Gaber***

Painter Peter Gaber is best known for his portrayals of natural landscapes filled with thoughtfully placed figural compositions which express his introspective thoughts while telling a series of stories. Ivan Grohar Gallery is proud to exhibit a new thematic collection of paintings by the Slovenian artist, the beginnings of which date back to Gaber's residency in Ankara, Turkey in 2017. Based on sketches and croquets created during the exchange, Gaber went on to develop and bring to life his imaginary topics during the corona epidemic, conceptually realising them through combined painting techniques.

The gallery is showcasing Gaber's thematic cycle entitled *The Coming World*, consisting of ten larger-format paintings with topics drawn from the painter's analytical experience of individual and collective unconscious. According to Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, such memories (or visions) are part of the collective unconscious. Through his research, Jung tried to prove that such phenomena are inherited as part of humankind's genetic memory, independent of an individual's experience or environmental influence. He was convinced that an individual's experience is not erased after death, but rather preserved in the genetic memory of their offspring. The conceptual set of images or "mental screens" is divided into two sets. Both work as a selective collection of primary recollections that (according to many scientists) are supposed to genetically manifest in the form of impressions - blurred images and small visual fragments. Gaber draws the inspiration for his artworks from the same source: during an in-depth creative process akin to meditation, he derives nebulous visual fragments from the realms of the unconscious before sketching and then confidently moving them onto the canvas to present them to the viewer. The exhibition is accompanied by original music by Bernard Kogovšek and its specific atmosphere amalgamates Gaber's work into a whole.

The first room contains two paintings dedicated to ancestors, which augment the painter's experience in Anatolia with additional insights gained at home. The content of these new paintings touches upon Gaber's older shell-shaped figural depictions, but the new works depart from their forerunners in terms of depiction. Both works show that choosing a larger format contributed to the relaxation of the artist's strokes, reflected both in the dynamic modulation of figures

and design of the subject matter. Gaber treats his motifs dynamically but, in comparison with his older images, in a harder, sometimes rough and elementary manner. The composition of *Flesh and Bones Urge Me On* is moderate, centred on a main horizontal from which vertical figures grow. Gaber depicts slight, expressive deformations, merging into the surfaces of bodies, filled with tension in the relief. The haunting image of a series of ancestors preserves the painter's characteristic iconography and unique artistic language which consists of elements of the natural landscape, vague shapes in the subconscious and archetypal symbolism, "dormant" in each of us. The closely-knit group of naked human figures depict mental states that maintain existence and spiritual survival and in them we recognize the reflections of humankind's distress, anxiety, vulnerability, helplessness and mortality. *What is, Escapes* meanwhile expresses the artist's primary understanding of all things existing in reality, dreams, forebodings, fantasies or memories. Its primary nature brings it into the realm of a homogeneous illusion of movement, trembling and reflection, a testimony to constant change. The image lives as a suggestion of a parallel world from science fiction novels.

While the first room clearly presents Gaber's vision of the protagonists of his stories, the ancestors, the second room introduces us to a dramatical experience of the creation (and passing) of mysterious life forms arising from raw elementality. Anthropomorphic semblance in most of the works arises from the expanding organic matter - a conglomeration of basic elements - the building blocks of our world. Gaber is here returning to the fantasy theme he has been working on for years, and which persistently guides him towards his own recognizable illusionism. This segment of *Creating a New Family* can be seen as a metaphor for the original state of the Earth at the time of its formation and of turbulent events filled with reactions between carbon compounds that contributed to the emergence of life. The artist presents the union of organic molecules and the embryos of primitive organisms with anthropomorphic characters in varied interactions in line, colour and flat surface formations.

In the second room, the standout painting is *Over Her Back*. This iconic depiction of a mother with children in the incarnate colours emphasizes the physical peculiarities of the monumental mother (bulging belly,

exaggerated buttocks) and allows Gaber to move away from the naturalistic depiction of the female character while not transitioning into abstraction. *The Great Mother* meanwhile connects Mother Earth, the cosmic creator goddess, with a human woman. It represents the archetype of ancient goddesses and a symbol of fertility.

Gaber's paintings from *The Coming World* correspond to scenes from the distant past as well as depictions of the planetary future after a global catastrophe brought about the collapse of civilization. The apocalypse might have been caused by a global natural disaster, human activity (such as nuclear war) or an attack by aliens. As one of the central motifs of contemporary science fiction in literature, the post-apocalyptic world sporadically appears in contemporary visual art as well. It usually offers us an exciting (terrifying) notion of the destruction of our bureaucratized, complex world and a vision of a new beginning. Gaber places his stories in an undefined timeframe, but fictitiously hints at the destruction of the Earth and a new beginning, closing the circle in doing so.

Peter Gaber's painting process is well-thought out, though emotion and spontaneity have the final say in his work. Sometimes his layers are transparent as in *Facing*, other times organically gestural. His method combines line drawing, dense and transparent colours with special effects achieved by a combination of acrylic paints, charcoal and more.

Gaber's art is not an escape into the past but rather a depiction of the appalling attributes of our technological period, which threaten to bring about a monstrous dipole that will divide people into two amorphous masses - the ruling elites and lawless slaves. The thematic cycle *The Coming World* is his internal response to current global events and the images reflect Gaber's attitude towards social and sociological situations and the fear of a nuclear apocalypse. Peter Gaber reaches back into the past to try and find those things that stood the test of time and are still valued today, while showcasing his inner world to us. His works reveal the depths of the unconscious, visions and fantastic flashes that spill over into the symbolic language of colours and strokes. In both landscape and figural painting, he suggests new directions of expression and raises questions about the importance of classical painting motifs in modern times.

Peter Gaber (1980)

Peter Gaber, MA, is an established versatile artist, active in various art fields and genres. Gaber enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana in 2001 and graduated in painting in 2006 under the mentorship of professors Herman Gvardjančič and Borut Vogeltnik. He received an MA in painting with professor Vogeltnik in 2009. He works as a painter and illustrator. He exhibits his work in solo and group exhibitions at home and abroad. Gaber is a member of the Association of Škofja Loka Artists and the Association of Slovenian Fine Artists. He lives in Ljubljana and works in Medvode.