



# PETRA MEŠŠA

## DETECTED LANDSCAPE

Curator: **Miroslava Urbanová**

Opening: March 22, 2018 at 6.30 PM

Duration: March 22 — April 22, 2018

Venue: Salon

---

As the title of the *Detected Landscape* exhibition suggests, it refers to an effort of updating the genre of landscape painting and the landscape in general. This update is generally outlined by the Anthropocene geological epoch and the pervasive recording and overseeing technologies or satellite imagery and drone recordings. On a global scale, these changes are related to the demoralisation of the "natural" landscape and the way we understand it as variable, geographical, geological, but also political, cultural and social space.

Petra Mešša's newest series continues to evolve the theme of the so-called trivial landscape, while incorporating different media, including painting, photography and video. She is not interested in monumental natural sites featuring snow-capped mountains and endless valleys that call out existential sighs and tunes of both folk and popular music. She opts for fragmented landscape that does not seem to explore anything specific or superficially picturesque.

She creates various series whose key themes include a puddle, stump or a pile of discarded lumber. These familiar and yet not specifically located formations and structures almost always carry signs of human touch, at least on the index level -

road ruts made by someone's car that accumulate water or a stump of a tree that has been cut down by someone. It creates a kaleidoscope of everydayness that can, however, slip into two different levels by repeating itself.

One of them is taking these trivial themes and turning them into symbols - the puddle symbolises naturally repeating phenomena, while the stump represents the passing of time that has been written into its annual rings. On the other hand, these are images we have noticed without assigning them any aesthetic value and they just may not be enough on their own. Not enough as they immediately call up other associations related to their landscape, not just the visual ones.

The artist moves (or returns?) from her realistic classic oil paintings of trivial themes to the medium of photography, while somehow honouring the genealogy of working with the landscape theme throughout history. Another level (or medium) of capturing the landscape is video footage. Her static shots, however, prevent us from exploring nothing but the frame the artist has chosen. Even though this one actually contains a valuable audio recording as well, we are stuck looking at a stream seemingly flowing into itself and we can sum it up into a brief: panta rhei and what else? It is this moment of inconsistency, escaping, realising the differences between the individual media and our position as a subject who is supposed to reflect upon their own position and relationship with nature that inspire Petra's search for these trivial parts of the scenery.

The artist realises she is working with images of the Central European landscape with precise geographical and aesthetic frameworks while trying avoid certain traditions and being assigned to the movement that has been titled as contemporary romanticism or constructive lyric (Mária Janušová). Petra's contemplativeness, simple themes and their execution set her apart from all the visual smog out there, while her approach towards the material keeps becoming more of an analytical search for the landscape that has been violated and damaged, detected and recorded.

*Miroslava Urbanová*

---

**Petra Mešša** (\*1987, born Vojteková) graduated from painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (prof. Fischer, doc. Kosziba). Her works have been presented at group exhibitions Contemporary Romanticism at the Bratislava City Gallery (2015) and Constructive Lyric at the Gallery City of Pilsen (2017).