

Iva Lulashi

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Three paintings, exhibited one at a time, each telling distinct female narratives, yet bound together by the tragic, mystical, and sensual passage from body to otherworldly states, through the act of sacrifice.

Iva Lulashi (Tirana, 1988), a leading figure in the recent revival of Italian painting, inaugurates a new cycle of her practice with a project that is at once intimate narrative and theatrical device, private imaginary and paradigmatic tale.

The very structure of the exhibition constitutes a statement of intent: three large canvases, shown in succession, mark the temporal unfolding of the display, as immobile acts of a silent theatrical *pièce*. As in theatre, duration is integral to the work, and vision is always partial, deferred.

Drama and staging define this pictorial cycle, a virtual triptych whose protagonists are female figures drawn from diverse literary contexts: the fable-like dimension of the Albanian legend of Rozafa, foundational myth of the city of Shkodra, homeland of the artist's family; the erotic-sacral tension of *Sancta Susanna* (1921), expressionist work by Paul Hindemith; the collective martyrdom of a convent of nuns during the French Revolution as recounted in Georges Bernanos' *Dialogues des Carmélites* (c. 1948). Different stories recomposed into a coherent, feverish pictorial syntax, visually united by the centrality of the female body, the site where the conflict between eros and sacrifice, between desire and surrender, is enacted.

Lulashi employs a liquid pictorial language that holds together the transparency and evanescence of glazes with the plasticity of drapery and the force of volumes. As in sacred painting, she constructs a dramatic space that is both real dimension and fictive stage, suspended in a growing tension where the slightest gesture becomes a blade, tearing open the image's surface and giving way to a seeping interiority.

In the canvas dedicated to Rozafa, the myth takes form in the figure of the heroine languidly reclining on the black wall that is about to swallow her forever, in the sharp contrast between the cold inertia of

architecture and the warmth of her flesh. In *Sancta Susanna*, two nuns brush against each other in a pulsing, inward tension, composed of incomplete gestures and unsettled geometries. Finally, in the painting inspired by the *Dialogues des Carmélites*, a nun lies prostrate, dead or merely surrendered, embodying the ambiguity of martyrdom as abandonment, the beauty of yielding as ultimate act.

Punctuating the sequence of the three large canvases are a number of smaller paintings, acting as whispers, fragments of a more intimate and unguarded language. Here, the sensuality restrained in the large works, becomes more explicit, though always filtered through a painting that resists indulgence, working instead through allusion, tension, and stratification.

With this pictorial corpus, the Italian artist brings to a close the phase linked to the grainy imagery of Albanian communist propaganda, opening a new stage in which personal memory and collective myth, the legacy of faith and erotic impulse, merge in paintings that begins with the flesh in pursuit of transcendence.

-Arturo Galansino

Iva Lulashi moved to Italy in 1997 and enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice in 2007, where she began exploring painting as a space of desire, memory, and ideology. In 2024, she returned to Venice to represent Albania at the Biennale, gracefully closing the circle between education and vision.

Her practice is rooted in contrasts: restrained eroticism meets the clear rhetoric of communist propaganda, generating images that hover between attraction and ideological distance. In her most recent phase, she evokes Albanian folklore through legends she heard as a child and that have been passed down through generations, now interwoven with mythological figures rediscovered in theatre. The result is a visual repertoire where the intimate becomes epic and myth slips gracefully into the realm of contemporary imagination.

Among her recent solo exhibitions are *Love as a Glass of Water*, Albanian Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale (2024); *Girandoti girandomi*, Ordet, hosted by Massimo Giorgetti, Milan (2024); *Libere e desideranti*, Church of Santa Caterina, curated by the Collezione Giuseppe Iannaccone, Corniglia (2021); *Love as a Glass of Water*, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg; and *Eroticismism*, Prometeo Gallery di Ida Pisani, Milan. She has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Twilight is a Place of Promise*, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2024); *Italian Painting Today*, Triennale Milano, curated by Damiano Gulli (2023).

Iva Lulashi was born in Albania in Tirana in 1988.