

**Elizabeth Xi Bauer presents: *It's all in your vivid imagination***

**Cătălin Marius Petrișor Hereșanu**

**Curated by Maria do Carmo M. P. de Pontes**

Elizabeth Xi Bauer announces a survey of works by Cătălin Marius Petrișor Hereșanu, encompassing ten years of his artistic production. In this exhibition, seminal pieces are displayed with works from across the artist's career, as well as newly created paintings, as a way of exploring the artist's reinvention of style and practice.

Cătălin Marius Petrișor Hereșanu is a multidisciplinary artist whose preference for the field of painting is evident in this show. Upon entering the gallery space, the viewer is faced with a wall containing twelve compositions dating from 2019 to the present. These are hung in an organic manner, establishing aesthetic affinities rather than telling a chronological story. Though the restlessness of his vivid imagination is felt through the variety of formats and motifs on display, a few common denominators can be noted, most prominently in terms of colour. Petrișor uses an abundance of hues to compose his works, yet even the warmest shades – reds, oranges and yellows – are inevitably sober, creating an overall palette that is reminiscent of El Greco.

The exhibition's title, *It's all in your vivid imagination*, is taken from a near homonymous work from 2018, titled *It's all in your vivid imagination and feelings*. It depicts a subject wearing a VR headset without haptic gloves, which would usually accompany the VR headset when it is worn. Instead, the protagonist's feeling of the skull in their hands is conveyed to the viewer as the reality of that situation, making their VR experience tangible. The choice of colours is somewhat realistic yet absent of any warmth, a fantastical quality that further emphasises the fact that what is on view is the subject's experience.

Early in the artist's career, Petrișor created a series of semi-realistic, black and white paintings, which incorporated scientific-like elements drawn on the top layer of the works in graphite. These included motifs such as beating hearts; our solar system; and light refracting through prisms. Combined with a grayscale palette, the works from this series have a supernatural and eerie quality to them.

Petrișor then went on to introduce colour to his next series of works, creating bold, almost confrontational works. The crescendo of this creative process came when the artist decided to cut his paintings, sometimes completely, into strips. This was due to a mixture of creative frustration and the urge to begin anew by pushing his practice to new realms. Each strip was destroying a previous creation whilst simultaneously threading a new work.

These 'recycled' strips were woven into lattice arrangements which then became new artworks, each square like a pixel on a screen. Petrișor developed his style by painting on top, adding photographs, drawing, and even adding some sculptural elements to his paintings to play with scale and the boundaries of painting and sculpture. *Islands on land* (2019-2022), displayed among the saloon-like wall, is an example of this period.

A subsequent body of work, whose idea was conceived in 2021, explores pulses. The artist explains the concepts behind this series, "*In these paintings I attempted to transpose the concepts of 'rhythm' and 'animation' in parallel with other themes that I was exploring through my work. I imagined that these paintings would represent a rhythm with a chromatic scale that would transfer good vibrations to the viewer. I created the paintings in the Pulse series in such a state of peace and, I believe, this is conveyed in the works. I generated the vertical rhythm by horizontal spots, and the horizontal one by brighter vertical spots, like slits of light*". Both *Amplitude modulation of a kiss* and *The sounds of the memorable*, displayed one on top of the other, are part of this 'pulse' series. They consist of long, horizontal compositions where the colour blue

predominates. Noteworthy, the artist conceived this series towards the end of the coronavirus pandemic, and the feeling of peace that he refers to can perhaps be traced to the prospect of an end in sight.

Most recently, Petrișor has marked yet another new direction in his practice. At first glance, the works appear to be the artist's cut up and recomposed woven paintings, however, on closer inspection, the viewer witnesses that the artist has created the same 'illusion' through the act of painting alone. The fabric effect is created by scratching the wet layer of paint on top of the dried underlayer with a knife; it is a process much like the sgraffito technique. The artist explains, "*Working on these paintings is like an exercise in attention, the horizontal and vertical gestures, those that create the illusion of fabric when viewed closely, also create a good rhythm*". Beneath the top layer, forms can be seen underneath, such as natural forms and faces, after a period of 'sinking in'. Such works vary broadly in scale: from diminutive compositions like *Happening at intervals* and *Yesterday afternoon*, both 2023, to the bigger works such as *Rain in due season* (2022).

Petrișor's new body of works, created in 2023, began whilst the artist was working on his 'scratched' paintings that imitate fabric. These works – such as *I believe we've already met*, *Mutual desires* and *Between time and love*, all 2023 – are created using the scratched off excess paint which is then placed on small pieces of paper to become the basis for other paintings. Works from this series begin with blue colours, which represent the sky, and brown or green colours to represent the earth. The aforementioned saved excess paint is then used on top of these colours in order for the artist to shape it into human bodies, adding and adding until they became crowds, that appear to rise to the sky. This body of work symbolises for Petrișor people who rise in consciousness, as these works depict the whole group represented in the painting, but also each individual: each person adding to the whole at the time of the ascension.

Though his trajectory is marked by restless experimentation, portraiture has been a constant in his career, and both the newest and the oldest works on show are portraying human bodies. *A Gentle Persuasion* (2023) is inspired by the story of creation in the book of Genesis, an important teaching of the Original Sin for Christians, a moment Christians believed made humanity aware of their imperfections. The artist explains, "*Starting with this, I imagined a joint scene with two young people in love. Although it is inspired by the creation story from Genesis, in this work the roles are somewhat reversed, the woman creates the man through a persuasive gesture that can also be a gesture of reconciliation; a gesture of caress; a gesture through which the girl tries to convince the boy that all evil has passed or that all evil is for good, for self-knowledge*". *Space Grafted on Image* (2013), the oldest composition displayed in this survey, depicts the portrait of a woman through a side angle, like a trapezoid. Everything below the woman's nose is obscured by the reflection of a window, supposedly positioned on the side of this portrait within a portrait. While presenting myriad points of view, the work addresses issues that pertain to the realm of painting, such as deception, trompe l'oeil and luminosity.

Since becoming a father, Petrișor has balanced caring for his young child with working in the studio. He explains the impact this has had on his outlook as an artist. "*The time spent with the child is completely different from all my experiences I have had so far as a painter. Somehow, I was led to believe that these two, working as an artist and raising children, are incompatible, however, I now believe this to be a false prejudice. Walking with [my child] who is curious about absolutely everything connects and anchors me to a reality full of curiosities about the most 'insignificant' of things. I wish to use this lens whilst in the studio: this wonder that the child has for the world they are discovering daily for themselves*".