

Breaking up of ice on a river
Carolina Fusilier, Nina Hartmann,
Jaanus Samma, Tai Shani, Anastasia
Sosunova, and Johanna Ulfsak

Margot Samel is pleased to present *Breaking up of ice on a river*, a group exhibition featuring artists Carolina Fusilier, Nina Hartmann, Jaanus Samma, Tai Shani, Anastasia Sosunova, and Johanna Ulfsak, curated by Lilian Hiob.

In the confines of this exhibition space, we are greeted by a surreal spectacle—floating jockstraps, each adorned with intricate Estonian national embroidery by Jaanus Samma. Appearing to defy gravity, their tethers bound to the gallery floor by a wire and a metal weight. This initial encounter sets the tone for an exploration of the enigmatic, the unexpected, and the subversive.

Nearby, a series of collages by Anastasia Sosunova rests on the gallery walls. Combining offset lithography, intaglio, and woodcut techniques with digital prints and found materials, the imagery is a patchwork of found motifs sourced from the boundless expanse of cyberspace and from personal photo archives. These collages, interwoven with intimate scenes of tenderness plucked from the pages of LGBTQ+ magazines, offer a testament to the raw and unapologetic celebration of queer existence. In the corner of one of these collages we see a small basket, alluding to motifs from Ursula K. Le Guin’s luminary science fiction writing. Le Guin suggests that the genesis of human tools did not lie in the phallic and violent usurpation of another species but rather in a far humbler object—a basket or a cloth bag—unassuming vessels and carriers of sustenance that weave a thread of unity and nourishment throughout the tapestry of human history.

Nestled in the right armpit of Europe’s easternmost country, Estonia, lies the island of Kihnu. Here, the matriarchal way of life reigns supreme – women are considered as custodians of wisdom and sovereignty. Tai Shani’s narratives might conjure visions of this post-patriarchal utopia, where the feminine reigns supreme, transcending the confines of conventional power structures. Kihnu women are traditionally involved in matchmaking with mothers deciding on the partners of their children. At funerals, it is not unusual for women to bear the solemn duty of carrying the coffin, signifying their place of importance in their society. Notably, Kihnu women’s traditional attire incorporates a knife—a once-phallic symbol now confidently wielded by women in this unique tradition. Johanna Ulfsak weaves this thematic thread into her practice, paying homage to the age-old craft traditionally deemed women’s work, while fine arts, in its classical milieu, was an exclusive domain for men. Ulfsak, with meticulous dedication, carves the wooden frames for her woven

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canvases by hand—a nod to the symbiotic interplay of tradition, gender, and craftsmanship.

Our exploration takes a surreal and disorienting turn with the works by Nina Hartmann. We descend into a dreamscape, where the boundaries between reality and illusion blur. The machinations of a control society, depicted already decades ago by Terry Gilliam in a movie Brazil and today exacerbated by algorithms and pervasive data collection, loom closer than ever. The invisible web of control, machine vision, and social alienation imbues every facet of our existence, entwining us in its intricate embrace.

Amidst the labyrinthine web of software and hardware depicted in Carolina Fusilier's paintings, boundaries blur and it becomes an onerous task to discern whether what unfolds before our eyes is an unvarnished reflection of reality, a stark illumination of the clandestine systems that envelop us, or a fantastical, unbridled, and profoundly personal projection of our very imagination.

What unravels within this exhibition is not a mirage or fantasy of a better or a dystopian society. It's a vivid tapestry, woven from the complex threads of reality, perception, and the intricacies of our shared human experience. It opens up as a profound reflection of the oft-neglected traditions and clandestine undercurrents of subversive social patterns that have long lurked in the penumbras of the prevailing narrative. They lie in wait, ready to challenge the established order and to illuminate the enigmatic recesses of our shared human experience, unearthing the stories and perspectives that have long been obscured.

–Lilian Hiob

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