



## PRESS RELEASE

<b>Author, Exhibition Title:</b>	Jana Bednárová: Colony of Rainforests
<b>Venue:</b>	Záhorie Gallery of Ján Mudroch in Senica, Sadová 619/3
<b>Curator:</b>	<b>Adrián Kobetič</b>
<b>Exhibition Opening:</b>	<b>August 9 (Friday) 2024 at 17:00</b>
<b>Musical guest at the vernissage:</b>	<b>Boris Čellár</b>
<b>Exhibition Duration:</b>	August 9 (Friday) – September 22th (Sunday) 2024

"Look at how, with our intellect,  
With our star-like hands,  
We transform nature according to our own visions..."

Look,  
At how we denature!  
Under the banner of eternal curiosity,  
We seek to get to the root of things,  
And we uproot them...  
We strive to solve questions,  
And end up in an era unhinged..."

In this excerpt from the 1978 poem *The Descent of Man*, the author, Mikuláš Kováč, poses a question to the contemporary human. This human can be understood as a representative of the "white Western man" cultural sphere, aspiring to occupy the pinnacle of evolution, a position that (at least according to him) grants him the status of master of creation. The question, in its reduced form, asks: Are your ambitions not destructive to everything you seek to conquer?

Over the past nearly 50 years, this question has evolved and continues to evolve into a broad discourse that reflects on both historical and current forms of colonialist behavior, not only towards nature but also towards other cultural circles. Colonialist behaviors are no longer limited to the typical colonizers; they have also infected those cultural spheres that previously did not engage in colonial practices. In many cases, these have transformed into dangerous variants of self-colonizing processes.

Jana Bednárová, in her exhibition project *Colony of Forests*, builds on this set of ideas, bringing to it an exceptionally engaged yet poetic perspective on the topic. A partial outcome of one of the presented projects, titled *Terrarium*, which resulted from a year and a half of field research, is the conservation of collected moments from the wild nature and culture of northeastern India. During the process of her self-education, her role as a collector gradually evolved to that of a creator—manipulator, working with ready-made natural materials, from which she then created a living sculpture, operating with the metaphor of human participation in the creation of the external social and ecological system. The goal of her research

was primarily a deep understanding of the contexts of nature and culture in the environment she experienced. In this regard, she touches on the symptom of colonialist misunderstanding, or rather the lack of need for understanding, usually accompanied by an effort to reduce the complex system of meanings, concepts, and philosophical assumptions. She demonstrates that it is possible to let oneself be permeated by other cultural environments without the need to Westernize them or make them more accessible.

This deepening research process resulted in extensive series of works using natural materials such as pigments, silk, or handmade paper, inspired by traditional artistic techniques of Southeast Asia. Her paintings are essentially signs of the process of familiarizing with the local culture and nature. She ultimately connected these with a bio-art installation of collected orchid artifacts, on whose symbiotic way of living with the host she offered a variant of "colonial behavior," a metaphor that can be expressed with the oxymoron "good colonization," or perhaps more precisely—coexistence without the need for colonization.

Jana Bednárová embarks on journeys into the depths of artistic practice in Southeast Asia to evaluate its possibilities, perhaps adopt some starting points and thereby overcome the boundaries of our established ways of thinking. The exhibition expresses the belief that, to practice the traditions of another cultural sphere, it is essential, indeed necessary, to first make a great effort to understand that culture so that it does not become an object of colonial looting of meanings but also of resource exploitation. And so, before anyone decides to use "cross-cultural resources," and thinks how much they have enriched themselves by doing so, it is appropriate to ask: Am I not uprooting? Am I not unhinging? Ultimately, one may decide rather to seek something that truly relates with the depth of diversity in the spectrum of other cultures.

Adrián Kobetič

### **Jana Bednárová** (\*1986 Myjava)

During her bachelor's studies at FAVU in Brno, she completed a one-year Erasmus internship at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of the Basque Country in Bilbao, Spain, and through the Cepas scholarship, she spent a semester in the studio of Klaudia Kosziba at VŠVU in Bratislava. She completed her master's degree in 2014 at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda, India, through a scholarship from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. She has been active and creating in the northeastern part of India for 10 years. In 2018 and 2019, she was a finalist in the VÚB Painting competition, and in 2021, she received a grant from the Asia-Europe Foundation. She has participated in several artistic mobilities in Kaziranga National Park and the Dzukou Valley in India and completed an artistic residency at Tao Hua Tan in China in 2014. Her work is represented in the Nedbalka Gallery, Čin Čin Gallery, and in many private collections in Slovakia and India.