

**Diana Oțet (b. 1987)** lives and works in Cluj-Napoca and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Art and Design. Since 2009 she has been participating in many national and international group exhibitions. The artist has already had two solo exhibitions, both in Cluj-Napoca: *Clipography* 2012 (Casa Matei Gallery) and *Seeds of thought* 2015 (Quadro Gallery), which were remarkably appraised, especially amid the artistic community in Cluj.

The artist uses drawing as a tool for introspection, for ordering fragments of reality and transcribing intimate thoughts and feelings. For Diana Oțet, the medium of drawing, explored in various directions and aspects, represents a privileged path to self-knowledge.

The exhibition project *Smooth Misery* includes an installation titled *Choose your perspective!* and drawings, which can be divided in two series. The small sized works (20 x 22 cm) are figurative representations, such as studies of commonplace objects or rather vague landscapes, which retain a strong lyrical and metaphorical quality. The second series includes larger works (100 x 100 cm) depicting abstract, geometric representations. Diana Oțet explores the diverse expressive potential of the medium, deploying and combining with versatility technical instruments such as pencil, ink, washed drawing and waxed crayon in order to obtain overlapping layers and delicate textures.

The works explore the subconscious, dwelling reflectively around questions such as: why does a biographical event appear to remain most vividly in one's mind in the shape of a seemingly insignificant image or fragments of images? Why and how do these apparently insignificant images become symbolically charged, abruptly providing meaning to life's episodes? Why do such disparate fragments appear to convey some of the most intimate memories and feelings, recurring obsessively in one's mind? Although they emphasize the fragmentary and fragile nature of memories, circumscribing the process by which they turn from images of events into diffuse sensations, the drawings are not intended to

provide any clear cut answers to questions of life, but to rather act as tools to stimulate reflection and interpretation. Nevertheless, they invite and provoke the viewer to take part in the artist's introspective process, to emotionally relate to the discreetly revealed experiences, still shrouded in an aura of mystery.

The title of the exhibition adequately describes the dominant atmosphere of the works, the tension between smooth and misery indicating that they do not express dramatic pain or anguish, alluding instead to states of mind generated by following an emotional path which leads to the serene acceptance of life's uncertainty and impermanence.

Some of the small sized drawings contain spontaneous notations such as *the one who I no longer am* or *temporary resting place*, which are integrated in the visual composition and vividly suggest a specific state of mind while illustrating the meditative, reflective nature of the artistic endeavor. The artist's approach is characterized by a discrete manner of representing apparently insignificant presences and sensations, which though posses a surprising potential to guide one's thoughts towards the great questions of existence. What is actually striking about the works in this series is the transformation of ordinary scenes and objects into visual metaphors, semantically rich and lyrically charged. Cut out from the context of everyday reality, the object lives and breathes, weaving its own story in the silence of contemplation.

The large-sized drawings are abstract representations based on the aesthetics of construction and deconstruction, deploying geometrical visual formulas. The works are produced by thoroughly exploring ways to create graceful compositions using a rectangular "module". In contrast with the square shape of the composition, the small rectangular surfaces present refined and sensual textures, taking full advantage of the expressive potential of the pigment itself and of the delicate sensuality of various shades of gray.