



VICTORIA STOIAN

Rallenting

Codri Earthquake

26 September – 15 November 2015

Studio la Città in collaboration with Alberto Peola Gallery



Victoria Stoian, *Codri Earthquake* 15", 2015, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

Rallenting - Codri Earthquake is the title of the first solo show by **Victoria Stoian** in the rooms of Studio la Città. On show there are a selection of works recounting the devastating earthquake that in 2011 destroyed a region of Moldova.

The project consists of 52 canvases, some of which are still in progress, called *Codri Earthquake* and tell of the 52 seconds of the violent earthquake - of a 7.5 magnitude on the Mercalli intensity scale with epicenter in Vrancea (Romania) - that on 25 August 2011 hit the town of Chişinău, the artist's birthplace where her parents still live. The area of the Codri, the largest forests in Moldova, was the region hardest hit by the earthquake and is the artist's centre of attention. In these works, Stoian, by way of sinuous lines flanked by sharp marks, and colour contrasts underlined by chiaroscuro, pays close attention to fragility and to the power of nature. A nature that creates and, at the same time, destroys.

In her works Stoian expresses her fascination in the link between change and destruction by narrating the relationship between life and drama. An absence of geographical, mental, and psychological reference points gives rise to panic, interpreted by the artist as a possibility for freedom. Through this metaphor of a natural catastrophe, Stoian deals with chaos as vitality opposed to stasis.

The show is illustrated by a critical essay written by Clara Sofia Rosenberg.

Victoria Stoian was born in Chişinău, Moldova, in 1987. Since 2009 she has lived and worked in Turin where, in March 2015, she graduated in contemporary art history from the Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti with a thesis titled *La collezione Vogel*. Among her principle exhibitions in 2015, mention should be made of the solo show *Codri Earthquake*, curated by Clara Sofia Rosenberg, at the Galleria Alberto Peola, Turin, and the group show *Capricci del destino* at the Galleria Giuseppe Pero, Milan.

The images can be seen at: <http://www.studiolacitta.it/download/VictoriaStoian>

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Codri Earthquake

Codri Earthquake is an ongoing project inspired by the violent earthquake that in 2011 devastated Moldova when it struck the Codri, the largest forests of the country, near to which Victoria Stoian was born and grew up with her family. On 25 August at 4.30 in the morning, two seismic waves of 7.5 magnitude hit the capital, Chişinău, and caused deaths, injuries, and missing people; roads and dams were broken, and villages flooded. In its ideas about continuously changing nature and the instability of human beings, this series of paintings will produce 52 works, one for each second the earthquake lasted. Stoian has said, "Nature is the queen of changes; it is never static and, in particular, cataclysms shift things the most. I am fascinated by the energy released and spread, even more than by its wrecking effect. The lava of an eruption, with its brilliant colours and its boiling heat; the energy of an earthquake that so quickly shoots through rock."

Rallenting. Codri Earthquake contains a series of works that corresponds to certain seconds of the earthquake, which range intermittently from 1 second to 52 seconds. Without any tendency to increase, the intensity of the catastrophe is modulated on the canvases as a result of chiaroscuro contrasts and areas of more or less dense material. As Stoian explains, "In an earthquake the first second can be as violent as the last. Perhaps the first impact is even stronger and destabilising." In this way, if at 15" pistils and fringes stand out against a dark background loaded with tension, at 37" an ancient colour, accompanied by a delicate sea green mark, clears the atmosphere.

With an analytical approach, Stoian dissects the phenomenon into units of time and space. Individual seconds are separated from each other, as with a film separated into individual frames with a pair of scissors. The exhibition becomes a kind of painterly photomontage with its juxtaposition of freeze-frames selected by the artist. The earthquake is captured and released by Stoian from canvas to canvas: begun in 2011 and still unfinished today, the *Codri Earthquake* series has dilated 52 seconds of catastrophe into more than four years of colours and forms. The violence of the quake is attenuated by the new rhythm given by the artist in a kind of slow motion painting. At the same time the choice of colours contrasts the gravity of the catastrophe with an unexpected sweetness that will perplex those who, sadly, experienced the earthquake. Speaking of her use of such delicate colours for such a dramatic event, Stoian explains "I speak about compassion: through tranquil colours that confer peace, I accept the pain of destruction and I wish to recount it through a message of beauty, almost of stillness, if possible."

The artist attenuates and comes to grips with the violence of the cataclysm by mixing her pigments with white and grey in order to arrive at pastel shades, at times contrasted with areas of pure colour.

In the composition of the works there is no drawing, no horizon line or other fixed reference point: the result is a sense of movement and destabilisation. Unfinished or simply hinted-at forms are juxtaposed and superimposed in games of stratification and transparency. In the unformed magma of the chaotic material we can recognise familiar figures to which the artist manages to give, by tapering them away towards a vanishing point on the canvas, a sense of perspective that gives depths to her scenic designs. Globules, cells, and sinew-like bands are trapped in or carried away on the currents of colour. In this primordial broth, where the destruction incubates life, anatomical elements are alternated with zoomorphic presences: proboscis, tufts, capillaries. Such tribal attributes as tattoos or seeds planted under the skin contrast with films and alabaster veining. Paint-saturated fields are interwoven with veils of colour on the canvas, but they are never still: here destruction pursues rebirth.