

Djordje Ozbolt

Sing me a Song

5th - 28th May 2021

Front Space
(Anti-clockwise)

High Anxiety
2021
Acrylic on icon board
40 x 30 x 4 cm / 15.7 x 11.8 x 1.6 in

High in the Clouds
2021
Acrylic on icon board
40 x 30 x 4 cm / 15.7 x 11.8 x 1.6 in

The Enigma of Position
2021
Acrylic on icon board
40 x 30 x 4 cm / 15.7 x 11.8 x 1.6 in

Greek Fruit
2021
Acrylic on icon board
40 x 30 x 4 cm / 15.7 x 11.8 x 1.6 in

Back Space
(Anti-clockwise)

Classic Knockout
2021
Acrylic on icon board
60 x 50 x 5.5 cm / 23.6 x 19.7 x 2.2 in

Sing me a Song
2021
Acrylic on canvas
155.5 x 125 x 2.5 cm / 61.2 x 49.2 x 1 in

Fruit Bubble
2021
Acrylic on icon board
70 x 59.5 x 5.5 cm / 27.6 x 23.4 x 2.2 in

Black is the Colour of my True Love's Hair
2021
Acrylic on icon board
40 x 30 x 4 cm / 15.7 x 11.8 x 1.6 in

Herald St | Museum St

Djordje Ozbolt, who most recently represented Serbia at the 58th Venice Biennale, is known for his playful subversion of history, memory and contemporary culture. Found imagery, torn from a variety of media, is one of the unifying aspects of Ozbolt's work. Awkward, sometimes monstrous but often humorous, cultural hybrids recur throughout his paintings and sculptures exemplified in this new body of work. Cartoon motifs, kitsch and canonical art history rub shoulders with references to cultural iconography, resulting in work that both belongs to and resists art historical traditions.

'Sing Me a Song' brings together a suite of eight recent paintings, a group of work chosen for its unifying format of small icon boards, a format he has constantly returned to over the years. Ozbolt imports these boards from his native Serbia where they are used for traditional, religious iconography, for him this is both a deliberate reference but also useful springboard for departure. During lockdown Ozbolt decided to sand down some of his older works on these boards, in doing so he was presented with an unexpected backdrop from which to re-start, these cloudy and monochromatic backdrops can be seen in many of the new paintings.

Ozbolt works quickly, often over painting what was before, constantly starting anew, quick drying acrylic paints are perfect for that allowing an immediacy of both mark and decision making. A Surrealist nod in much of the work is at the forefront of this exhibition allowing a playful vision of his subject matter. Man Ray's 1938 painting *La Fortune* of a billiards table in a landscape shrouded in multi coloured clouds is here deconstructed, two paintings sit side by side containing different elements from the common source.

In *High in the Clouds* an invented mythical creature roams the land, his bird like head is surrounded by Man Ray's rainbow of clouds, perhaps a headspace for the ethereal or even a delusional space in which one could inhabit.

The Enigma of Position appropriates Ray's pool table from the same painting, a metaphor for painting's surface as a place for play as well as study. In this case the green monochrome also becomes the backdrop for a still life of two bananas. Fruit appears again in two more paintings in the exhibition. *Greek Fruit* marries classics with the absurd, a lemon and an orange on the same branch, the tragic and the comic, personification of sour and sweet. This theme is explored further in *Fruit Bubble*, this time the composition is more abstract with a family of fruits all appearing happy and safe in their floating blue bubble, ignorance is bliss.

Appropriation is again revisited in *Classic Knockout* in which Ozbolt lifted a design from a vintage cigarette packet, the painting is a conflation of landscape, still life and action scene. The classic Greek vase becomes the frame, the horizon line joining up across both settings.

The painting *Sing me Song* is the largest in the exhibition and the only one that is painted on canvas, it is a direct reference to Picasso's *The Old Guitarist* from 1904 a painting that Ozbolt has always admired, it's an appropriation as well as homage. The animal kingdom features widely throughout Ozbolt's oeuvre, with commonplace hierarchy often reversed. Sitting within the green landscape the monkey serenades us with his wisdom, perhaps an intuition that Ozbolt hopes we can carry throughout his work.

Djordje Ozbolt (b. 1967, Belgrade) lives and works in London.

Forthcoming and recent exhibitions include: Taro Nasu, Tokyo (2021); Phillips, Tokyo (2020); *Via dell'Inferno*, Galleria Spazia, Bologna (2020); *Regaining Memory Loss*, Serbian Pavilion, 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2019); *Greetings From A Far Away*, Gallery Baton, Seoul (2019); *Where is the Madness You Promised Me: Dystopian Paintings from the Marc and Livia Straus Family*, Hudson Valley MOCA, New York (2019); *Belgrade Biennale*, Belgrade (2018); *For better or worse*, Taro Nasu, Tokyo (2017); *Lost and Found*, Gallery Baton, Seoul (2017); *The Grand Detour*, The Holburne Museum, Bath (2016).