

Flora Yukhnovich: *Thirst Trap*

Exhibition 1–26 March 2022

Victoria Miro, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Flora Yukhnovich
Bombshell, 2021
Oil on linen
220 x 185.5 cm
86 5/8 x 73 1/8 in
© Flora Yukhnovich
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

Victoria Miro is delighted to present an exhibition of new paintings by Flora Yukhnovich.

Flora Yukhnovich is acclaimed for paintings that, fluctuating between abstraction and figuration, transcend painterly traditions to fuse high art with popular culture and intellect with intuition. While in the past she has adopted the language of Rococo, dynamically reimagining aspects of works by eighteenth-century artists such as Tiepolo, Boucher, Lancret and Watteau, new paintings draw upon various depictions of the Roman goddess Venus in mythology, art history and contemporary culture.

Rather than focus on individual points of reference, each work synthesises a multitude of influences that convey the shifting representations and significations of Venus herself. Here the Venus who embodies idealised female form and is goddess of love, maternal care, sexual reproduction and erotic desire, meets the Venus of violent origin and hybrid gender – promiscuous and vengeful.

In Greco-Roman mythology, Venus emerges fully formed when Cronus throws Uranus’s dismembered testicles into the sea; she is carried to land from the boiling spume in a shell. The artist says, ‘I was immediately drawn to

the idea of her body being made of water... this fluidity of form feels like a very painterly concept to me, a bit like creating seemingly solid figures out of wet paint. There is a tendency for water and the sea to be spoken about as female – fluid and soft but also capricious and destructive. I like the potential for strength or force in that association and it's something I try and bring to these paintings.'

Travelling back and forth through art, mythology and philosophy, and echoing Venus's storied representations through time, Yukhnovich's references are revealed to be equally as fluid. One influence is Rubens' *The Feast of Veneralia*, 1636–37, in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, which depicts the festivities of Veneralia – the ancient Roman festival celebrated on 1 April to honour Venus Verticordia, an epithet that alludes to the goddess's ability to change hearts from lustful to chaste. Venus as an embodiment of propriety contrasts with her promiscuity in another source painting, Boucher's *Mars and Venus Surprised by Vulcan*, c.1754, in the Wallace Collection, which captures the moment when Vulcan, on hearing of his wife's infidelity with Mars, ensnares the adulterous couple in a golden net, inviting other gods to enjoy their humiliation.

Such divergent attributes are enfolded with allusions in contemporary culture, from Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* to Doja Cat, which demonstrate the enduring potency of Venus as symbol and spirit. In Yukhnovich's paintings these references are never revealed explicitly. Rather, they are conveyed compositionally or chromatically: variation is a driving force, her virtuosic mark-making – ranging from delicate flourishes to dramatic and muscular brushstrokes – heightens a sense of rhythmic sensuality. Bubbles – by definition one substance contained by another – are a recurring motif in these works; effervescent, capricious, unstable or transformative, they denote changing states that mirror Venus's turbulent arrival in mythology and her ever-shifting presence in culture thereafter. Paint, in Yukhnovich's hands, becomes the perfect vehicle to conjure the multiplicity of a subject which, characterised by flux and transformation, is as elusive as it is seductive.

About the artist

Born in 1990, Flora Yukhnovich completed her MA at the City & Guilds of London Art School in 2017. She had her first solo exhibition at Brocket, London, in December 2017 and has recently exhibited at Parafin, London, GASK, the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region, Czech Republic, the Jerwood Gallery Hastings and at Blenheim Walk Gallery, Leeds Arts University, UK. Previous solo exhibitions with Victoria Miro include *The Venice Paintings* and *Barcarole*, both held in 2020. Collections include Government Art Collection and The David Roberts Art Foundation. In 2018 she completed The Great Women Artists Residency at Palazzo Monti, Brescia.

Work by the artist will feature in the survey exhibition *Impressionism: A World View*; Yukhnovich's painting will be exhibited in galleries dedicated to 'Contemporary Neo-Impressionists', on view at The Nassau County Museum of Art, NY, from 19 March–10 July 2022. In 2023 Yukhnovich will be the first artist to take part in a new series of solo exhibitions responding to the collections of The Ashmolean, Oxford, titled *Ashmolean NOW*.

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