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**ANNA ZACHAROFF**  
**"RED HERRING"**

**05.06.2025-05.07.2025 / PREVIEW: THURSDAY 05.06.2025 / 18.00-20.00**

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People actually fish from the foundation that wraps around the Norwegian National Opera. Well, by people I mean men, mostly older men, who are arriving at sunrise on a weekend, finding a vacant spot for themselves, their backpack and their folding chair, putting together the rods and preparing the bait, lighting up a cigarette, pouring themselves a cup of coffee from a thermos, chatting with the neighbours, moving on the spot to stay warm, waiting, while scanning the surface and trying to catch a glimpse of some movement. There they stand, a line of dark dots against the massive building, clad in white Carrara marble. On cold winter days, when the fjord freezes and it gets covered with snow, the building takes on the appearance of the fractals and forces that make up in Caspar David Friedrich's painting "Das Eismeer" ["The Sea of Ice"] (1823–1824). It is not only a building that expresses the drama of the operas performed inside of it, but also a building that seeks to hold the tensions and contradictions on being located where the Oslo Fjord ends and the city of Oslo begins.

The same forms are repeated in the work "Kirsten Flagstads Plass 1" by Anna Zacharoff. However, there is an almost comical shift in terms of dimensions and notion of space. The opera, with its scale and spectacle, has been reduced to the size of an MDF box, measuring a modest 30 x 40 x 20 centimeters. Each of the facades of the building have been accurately painted onto the four sides of the box, with the top rendering the birds eye view of the roof. In the work by Zacharoff, the architecture has both been unfolded and flattened, disconnected and compartmentalised, reduced from a whole into building blocks, once again. The box is one of many: the Oslo Opera is here appearing alongside the Sydney Opera House, the Opéra Garnier in Paris and the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Each of them are given the same matter-of-factly treatment and each is confined to the size of the same box regardless of their actual scale. Here, they are equal. They are all nodes of a global network, that circulate and consolidate the culture of opera. According to Operabase - a service surveying opera performances worldwide - the top 3 titles in terms of performances since 2000 are "La Traviata" by Verdi with 18 732 performances, "The Magic Flute" by Mozart that is following closely behind with 18 332 performances, and "Carmen" by Bizet with the slightly lower number of 16 856 performances. The top 20 list is - other than 4 titles by Mozart from the 18th century and 2 titles by Puccini from the 20th century - solely consisting of compositions dating back to the 18th century. While there might be a distance between Oslo, Paris, Sydney and New York, there is not much of a difference as to what performances make it onto these stages.

In the terms of fishing, this is best described as backwater. If the water is not reached by the current, it turns stagnant. Either the water has to move, the fish has to move or the fisherman has to move. Anna Zacharoff knows that. Her whole project, since graduating from Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main in 2015, has been concerned with the fish as a motif and its biological and geological surroundings. The vast landscape that is the seabed, measuring three quarters of our planet, has mostly been absent from painting and the history of art. Zacharoff's paintings, however, are not merely aiming at compensating this by depicting and describing the maritime life, but rather attempts at identifying connections between this and the lives we live on solid ground - whether it is looking into the use of the Alaskan Pollock in the fast food industry or bringing our attention to the history and rich connotations of the goldfish as a specie and symbol good fortune. For a decade, Zacharoff's project has been like a research vessel, constantly seeking out new waters to sample and survey - gathering the knowledge of species and ecosystems as well as gathering the motifs and methods for an ongoing investigation of painting. Executed in oil and pigment, Zacharoff's paintings typically locates and isolates a singular figure, giving it shape through a minimum of gestures, and placing it against a canvas that is largely untouched and only occasionally interrupted by slight stains and sprinkles of pigments. The twelve paintings making up this exhibition, are each marked by this sense of restraint that seems to suspend the notion of an opposition between figuration and abstraction. Rather, Zacharoff seems more concerned with what colours and what brushstrokes are strictly necessary in order to make it tangible that this is a living, breathing and moving creature.

Sometimes, it is only by reading the titles of Zacharoff's paintings are you made aware what to look for. That the thin outline of a being appears from the brushstrokes laid down. This time, the titles even suggest what sounds you should listen for. As slapstick in its approach as the boxed portraits of the opera buildings, Zacharoff has solely chosen species of fish whose name include the name of a music instrument: banjo fish, drum fish, or piano flangbenny, to name but a few. While Zacharoff paintings always come with a distinct sense of motion and animation, these paintings also bring their own musicality. Similar (to what children of the 1970s and 1980s will recall) the video for Jean-Michel Jarre's "Oxygene, Pt. 4" - in which colonies of penguins are migrating and marching in perfect sync to the synth music - nature

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