

## SOLASTALGIA 2 — Dream of a River

There is a particular kind of sadness that arises when a place to which we belong begins to change before our eyes. We are still physically here, but the landscape we know is gradually disappearing. Rivers dry up or burst their banks, forests change colour, and the seasons lose their familiar rhythm. A once-familiar place becomes unfamiliar.

The Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht called this experience solastalgia — the feeling of losing one's home while still living in it. Unlike nostalgia, which implies distance from the place we long for, solastalgia arises precisely because we cannot distance ourselves from the change we are witnessing. Home is still there, but it is no longer the same.

*Solastalgia 2 — Dream of a River* continues my earlier engagement with climate change, the relationship between humans and the environment, and the sense of uncertainty brought about by transformations in nature that we can no longer regard as belonging to some distant future. In this project, however, I am not attempting to illustrate the climate crisis or present a documentary account of it. What interests me is something else: what does it feel like to live amid changes that we cannot yet fully comprehend?

Alongside a video from the first *Solastalgia* series, the centrepiece of the installation is a new video lasting more than twenty minutes. The landscape is doubled and inverted: the ground appears both below and above, while a strip of sky remains between the two images, offering the eye a possible way out. Double exposure and mirror inversion create a space in which spatial relationships are disrupted. Land looms over land, islands hover above the sea, and settlements and fields form a vault over their own landscape. The horizon loses its certainty. Viewers recognise the world but can no longer confidently locate themselves within it.

The experience of solastalgia takes shape in this tension between familiarity and estrangement. The ground, which we take for granted as a firm foundation, is displaced above us, acquiring a threatening weight. The beauty of the scene only deepens the unease: the blue of the sea and the warm tones of the coast retain the appeal of familiar landscapes, while their doubling creates an impossible geography. Uncertainty seeps into the very structure of the image. The video unfolds as a flow, like a river passing through different states, from calm to unease, from allure to threat. The river is also a metaphor for time: we never look at the same water, even though we believe we are looking at the same river.

The photographs in illuminated lightboxes extend this relationship between beauty and disquiet. Light emanating from within the image lends the landscape an almost artificial allure. It is precisely this beauty that interests me: the moment when something can be both seductive and unsettling. Nature is no longer a romantic realm apart from humanity, but a place we have

# GALERIJA KARAS

profoundly altered and whose changes we are now beginning to feel in our own bodies.

The text on the screens, in turn, interrupts the visual flow, emerging as a warning, a piece of information or a thought that cannot easily be suppressed. A tension emerges between image and word: what we see may be beautiful, while what we read makes that beauty seem less certain; the act of reading changes our perception of what we have seen.

The ambient sound, composed of the sounds of deep water and low bass tones resembling heartbeats, acts as the installation's inner pulse. Visitors hear it and feel it through vibrations. It is as though the space were breathing, as though the river had a pulse of its own. Sound connects the body to the landscape and carries the disquiet of the image into the surrounding space.

On the gallery floor, dry leaves and partially wilted flowers introduce material traces of transience. The leaves rustle, crumble and shift underfoot, while the flowers continue to dry out. The installation changes over the course of the exhibition; decay becomes part of the work. The video plays on a loop, the lightboxes glow, and the organic material slowly changes. The doubled ground in the projection and the fragile remnants of plant life underfoot establish a connection between image, space and body.

*Solastalgia 2 — Dream of a River* is conceived as an environment through which visitors move. Image, text, light, sound and organic material draw them into a state suspended between document and fiction, calm and unease. The dream of a river may be a memory of a familiar landscape, but also a premonition of its future.

Behind the data on climate change lies an intimate shift in our relationship with the places we inhabit. Solastalgia begins when we realise that we can no longer take a familiar landscape for granted. What will happen to us when the landscape we thought of as home becomes only a memory?

Davor Mezak



# GALERIJA KARAS