

Soft Crush. Hard Life

Virginia Lupu

Curated by Cazul101: Robert Bajenaru & Bianca Bajenaru

6 — 28 June 2025

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Virginia's Lupu solo show *Soft Crush. Hard Life* is curated by Cazul101 (Robert and Bianca Bajenaru) and organized in collaboration with Catinca Tabacaru Gallery.

Soft Crush. Hard Life is an invitation to step into the personal dominatrix archive of Virginia Lupu. Starting from crush fetish—a sexual desire involving the destruction of objects or creatures (often small animals or insects), and sometimes even the fetishist themselves—Virginia transforms this fetish into an act of protest and resistance, addressing politics, heteronormativity, and the dynamics between passivity and agency.

Here, Virginia asserts her position of power by crushing rigid old narratives, clearing a space purified from toxicity, and making room for the possibility of hope—hope that might arise with the disappearance of negative entities wrapped in consumerist discourse. The sound of crushing becomes the scream of revolt born from the injustice inflicted upon the marginalized.

The presence of Donald Trump is evoked through ripe oranges—his signature color. He stands at the center, the connecting figure, flanked on his right and left by a war criminal, a personification of death—Netanyahu—and a sexual aggressor, a clear image of misogyny and toxic masculinity—Andrew Tate. Lupu's heels pierce skulls and rinds alike, annihilating monsters.

Hearts, flowers, police, and cucumbers—symbols of a heteronormativity that constricts incrementally, suffocatingly, amplified by the stern institutional authority. And the face of the alpha male is smothered beneath Lupu's firm heel. The man desires domination, yearning to escape the illusion of control he believes he holds.

She embraces the crush fetish, acting radically and violently as a means of self-liberation from normativity in a patriarchal world where women's reactions are distorted into hysteria, where agency is attributed to men, and where women are assigned the role of passive objects. All of this is refuted by Lupu's firm, unrelenting feet.

Virginia Lupu (b. 1990, RO) is an artist and Political Dominatrix based in Bucharest/Romania. She seeks to present her subjects as they exist and coexist in society without altering their appearance to fit social norms, expectations, or stereotypes. In her role as a Political Dominatrix, Virginia Lupu practices BDSM in a way that subverts the values of capitalism, viewing »femdom« (female domination) and »findom« (financial domination) as forms of political resistance to patriarchal exploitation. For her, it is an opportunity to reinvent gender power dynamics with social justice in mind.

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Co-curated and text by Bianca Băjenaru