

I Want to Be the Moment in a Dream

Mara Verhoogt

14 December 2024 — 15 March 2025

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Catinca Tabacaru Gallery

Calea Giulesti 14, 3rd floor, Bucharest, Romania

Newcomer Mara Verhoogt, recently completed her studies at Chelsea College of Art in London. Her work delves into the convergence between humans and non-human beings. Through self-portraiture and body modification, she reinvents and disrupts rigid identity structures.

In I Want to Be the Moment in a Dream, Mara Verhoogt transforms the gallery into a delicate, surreal landscape. Inspired by the lyrics of the Romanian love song *If You Were a Willow by the Shore*, the exhibition moves between nostalgia and transformation, blending imagery of nature, urban life, and fantasy into a deeply immersive sensory experience. The works foster a dialogue between control and liberation, order and indulgence, portraying summer as an amplified emotional and aesthetic state.

At the heart of the exhibition lies a video work, where scenes of nature—pairs of animals caught in moments of quiet connection—are filtered through the circular lens of a stoplight. Overlaid with a haunting cover of the titular song, the video evokes a liminal space where romantic longing collides with the mechanized rhythms of urban life. The stoplight, with its alternating colors, becomes a metaphor for suspended time, a moment where yearning and control converge.

This tension between structure and excess reverberates across the gallery. Dominating the space is a textile and ceramic sculpture: a doll clad in an ice cream bathing suit. Simultaneously playful and otherworldly, this alien figure embodies both innocence and seduction, its sticky-sweet evocation of summer pleasures underscored by a mythic, totemic presence. Nearby, a trio of ceramic disks swirl with psychedelic imagery, blending urban symbols, natural motifs. These surreal compositions appear as visions glimpsed through the shimmering heat of a summer sidewalk, where reality bends under the weight of desire.

The stoplight recurs in sculptural form, its shifting colors freed from logic, pulsing with the unpredictable rhythms of longing, rebellion, and anticipation. A pair of ceramic red high heels, poised nearby, amplifies the exhibition's meditation on fantasy, adornment, and the performative dimensions of desire.

By interlacing evocative imagery and symbolic forms, I Want to Be the Moment in a Dream conjures summer as an emotional and aesthetic state of intensity. It situates desire as a force capable of both disrupting and transforming the constraints of societal order, offering a space where longing can slip into liberation. Through its charged, dreamlike landscape, the exhibition underscores the radical potential of transgression and the transformative power of the imagination.