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Edyta Hul. If you can, send the rain
Zachęta Project Room
curator: Magda Kardasz

If the things which the public magician sets himself to do for the good of the tribe, one of the chief is to control the weather and especially to ensure an adequate fall of rain. Water is an essential of life, and in most countries the supply of it depends upon showers. Without rain vegetation withers, animals and men languish and die. Hence in savage communities the rain-maker is a very important personage; and often a special class of magicians exists for the purpose of regulating the heavenly water-supply. The methods by which they attempt to discharge the duties of their office are commonly, though not always, based on the principle of homoeopathic or imitative magic. If they wish to make rain they simulate it by sprinkling water or mimicking clouds: if their object is to stop rain and cause drought, they avoid water and resort to warmth and fire for the sake of drying up the too abundant moisture.

James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Wordsworth Editions 1993, pp. 62-63

The exhibition in the Zachęta Project Room features new paintings by Edyta Hul as well as plant-based sculptural objects, which she has grown and shaped especially for this show. They form a vibrant green energy installation that fills the gallery space. The works on display relate to the practical and magical relationships between people and nature. The title refers to rituals found in various cultures to invoke rain or ask deities for bountiful harvests that bring prosperity. The artist also draws attention to the global issue of increasing demand for water and worsening droughts.

Densely painted, saturated with colour and light, Edyta Hul's paintings can be perceived as allegories of nature in its blossoming or withering, or as simple abstractions related to water. The artist has developed her own unique style and achieved technical mastery in combining oil colours with industrial enamels. She delights in accidental painterly effects. (It is not without reason that the exhibition is complemented by objects constructed from layered, dried paint residues that bear witness to the creative process). The slow process of applying successive layers of primer, varnish and paint to achieve depth in the image is a form of meditation for Edyta Hul, and she sometimes refers to her canvases as 'inner landscapes' or 'fantastic reality'. Some of them have irregular shapes reminiscent of Baroque paintings and their ornamentation, inspired

by the aesthetics and decoration of churches and roadside shrines, as well as the connection between rituals and nature in the rural culture of the artist's childhood.

The artist seems to be seeking her own spiritual path by turning to nature. Her daily life is enriched by taking care of plants. She welcomes their growth: they create a healthy microclimate, absorb toxins released by paints or artistic chemicals, and nurturing them strengthens the nervous system. It can be a form of meditation. It is no coincidence that the exhibition of paintings in Zachęta's Project Room is complemented by plant-based objects that the artist has created in her studio. For her experiments, she deliberately chose plants characterised by vitality and rapid growth, such as beans or sweet potatoes, which will grow or wither during the exhibition, somehow emphasising the variable nature of the creative process. Edyta Hul took the experimental character of the Zachęta Project Room as a starting point for her reflections on the exhibition. Thus, *Send Us Rain, If You Can* is not a conventional exhibition of paintings, but a dynamic, living installation of an unpredictable nature. Painting on canvas is complemented by the drawing created in space by the vines of plants climbing in different directions.

For the artist, organic forms serve as a painterly system of expression, emerging naturally from body language, gesture, emotion and imagination. She does not create mimetic images of nature, but thinks about her works in terms of abstraction: "The starting point of the project prepared in the Zachęta Project Room is an attempt to create an allegory of a world in which nature plays the role of a deity and the source of the creative process, while at the same time being a part of it". The eponymous plea for rain also becomes the artist's call for respect for nature.

Magda Kardasz