START星美术馆

Genealogy Study of Artists No. 19

Karolina Jabłońska: *Which Way the Wind is Blowing*

Date: August 22nd- September 27th, 2025

Address: START Museum (S Space)

Ruining Road No.111, Xuhui District, Shanghai

START Museum will present Polish artist Karolina Jabłońska's first museum solo exhibition in Asia, titled *Which Way the Wind is Blowing*, opening to the public on August 22nd, 2025. This exhibition marks the 19th case study of the museum's ongoing "Genealogy Study of Artists" project, initiated in 2018. The exhibition features a series of new works created specifically in response to START Museum's architectural space and the natural-cultural context of the Huangpu River.

This innovative project establishes a continuous academic research platform focused on the interplay between an artist's personal genealogy and their artistic creation, utilizing exhibitions, publications, sound documentation, visual materials, and historical literature to systematically explore the artist evolution of the featured artist.

Karolina Jabłońska stands as one of the most compelling artists of the rising generation in Poland today. Working primarily in painting, her art masterfully blends the medium's inherent two-dimensionality with a powerful sense of three-dimensional spatial control. In recent years, grounding her practice in ontology and autobiographical exploration, the artist has forged new visual perspectives and artistic expressions, engaging critically with themes of gender, politics, art history, and social reality.

For her first museum-level solo exhibition in Asia, *Which Way the Wind is Blowing*, Jabłońska worked with the specifics of the Start Museum's space and surroundings in mind, considering the spacious interior filled with natural lights, shadows and reflections, and the proximity to the river. Her figures become fluid with the wet, cloudy environments around them, displacing the "self" from portraiture into landscapes: In *Flying sketches (2025)*, the trembling wind swept up a flurry of close-up sketches of self-portrait, quivering through the air. In *The letter from the fortune-teller (2025)*, the "I" in the fortune-teller's eyes is blurred beyond recognition by the falling rain. In *Raindrops (2025)*, her iconic portrait forms only emerge through the distortion of falling water-drops. Fragmented clues compel the audience to reconstruct and imagine the individual and the truth.

The sensation of being immersed in water and wind is given form in the paintings and extended into the exhibition space. The artist has designed the exhibition architecture to bring in and reflect natural elements such as wind, water and clouds. On the floor, she installs organically shaped mirrored foil

to suggest puddles, and around the paintings, a series of sheer blue-grey curtains recall dense sheets of rainfall.

The exhibition will present 16 new works created by the artist, all on view in START Museum's S Space on the second floor.

The sentence "Which Way the Wind is Blowing" has a broad meaning, can stimulate the imagination, and sounds like a fragment of a poem or a song. The idiom "I know which way the wind is blowing" means that someone understands things and can predict what might happen, and I like to think about it according to the artist, as somebody who knows things, a kind of fortuneteller. This title also has a direct connection to things that appear in paintings, as wind, pieces of paper flying in the sky, and windy weather.

—Karolina Jabłońska

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ARTIST PROFILE

Photo © Mateusz Torbus

Karolina Jabłońska

Karolina Jabłońska, born 1991 in Niedomice, Poland. Lives and works in Kraków.

Jabłońska studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków (2010-2015). Residencies and fellowships include Scholarship in Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze UMPRUM (2014-2015), LIA Programme Residency, Spinnerei Leipzig (2018), Fern Residency, Brussels (2021), Fores Project Residency, London (2022).

Deeply felt and keenly observed, Karolina Jabłońska's paintings often depict everyday situations that capture the awkwardness of certain common activities. As the artist has put it, "the paintings come from small sensory and emotional impressions." Yet, the personal is also political: metaphors for emotional states, inherent in these paintings are references to the role of women, the existential threat to their bodies and restrictions imposed by political realities.

Monumental depictions of faces—a striking portrayal of her own features that has come to function as a stand-in for the artist but also for a more generalized alter ego—suggest strong emotions but also evoke a visceral response in the viewer. Pairing dramatically distorted points of view and expressive color, the works have an immediacy that is leavened by art historical painterly references and a distinct dry wit.