

text by

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The title of the Radiohead's song from 1998 came to my mind when, after talking to Iva Lulashi about putting down on words some reflections on her work, she sent me the images of the new body of works that she's been developing of late.

Lulashi has entered the artistic scene during the last years, known for her body of paintings that navigate issues of individuality, collective memory, eroticism and sexuality. In her earliest series Eroticommunism she was striving to address "the gap in between" herself and the land from which she and her parents escaped in search for a better, safer life. That entire body of work came to life through a pictorial accident – namely an unintended spot on a dancing female character's breast – that opened up a new reading imbued with erotic undertones of the sequence Lulashi was painting. This predicament that builds on the unexpected, the accidental, ambiguity and incompleteness would accompany and form the future work of Lulashi.

**IVA
LULASHI**

Where I end and
you begin

22.03 - 21.04.2023

Via G. Ventura 6 -
Via Massimiano
Milan

When confronted with her newest series of paintings it becomes clear that Lulashi is not after painting pictures that would tell a specific story of individual persons or of specific situations, nor is it important to locate them in linear time. That initial discovery of the erotic undertones became the grounds for continuing to both extend her research and build her world of images. In this world of hers, the border between innocence and debauchery, desire and pleasure, curiosity and abuse, and even established hierarchies of the gaze are dissolved and dissipated. In order to achieve such dissolution, ambiguity and the focus on the fragment becomes the tool of choice for Lulashi. This latest body of work is especially characterized by fragments and close ups. Even more than in previous series, gender distinctions are blurred out and the paintings do not depict clear actions that are taking place but rather incomplete ones. To put it differently, the paintings depict *possibility* - of actions that might happen or that might have happened. Human bodies engaged, or about to engage carnally with each other continue to populate the canvases. In a sort of mosaic of smaller scale works we encounter various scenes: two long-haired heads seemingly kissing in a bathtub... three figures revealing their

behinds while facing the sea... an exposed vagina of a person hanging upside down... two figures dressed in white by the pool with a feeling of expectancy filling the distance between them... the naked body of a boy... But a new use of the close ups has come along. A figure has its face immersed in what could be somebodys crotch, deliberately painted as an unclear ruffled drapery of clothes... a head rests (or is it being pushed against?) on a wicker hanging chair... One would expect that the close ups could help to make the reality of the painted scenes more intelligible. But the opposite happens because they continue to remain unintegrated and unarticulated in any straight out narrative that Lulashi is keen to avoid at any cost. Even the use of language in the titles of the works adds yet another layer of poetic complication: "Ombra e vapore"... "A volte si usciva"... "Fors'anche ridendo"... "Prendimi i giorni"... "Il dolce più buono"... "Se ne sta lì"...

That "in between gap" that Lulashi wanted to address at the beginning of her journey has evolved into multiple extensions of bodies, hair, limbs, mouths, organs, clothes, objects, trees, plants and situations. The paintings tease the gaze while at the same time forbidding it or even denouncing it, refusing to reveal themselves through simple readings. They rather draw us in in their continuous conundrum, where making out clear divisions and borders, beginnings and ends, viewer and partaker becomes more difficult with every new attempt... As in the mental journey of some lived or imagined experience in which it is difficult to make out where one thing ends and another begins... *where I end and you begin...*