

Štefan Papčo

Floating Mountain

Maria Bartuszová

Germination

Curator : Silvia Van Espen

Friday, November 28th — Thursday, December 18th, 2025



At the initiative of curator Silvia Van Espen, Galerie Poggi is partnering with ZAHORIAN & VAN ESPEN gallery to present the second solo exhibition of Slovak artist Štefan Papčo (born in 1983). The exhibition brings together works from the *Absolut* series (2017), the sculptures *Becoming, Fifth Step* (2024), *Through Two Slabs* (2017), as well as in situ drawings.

The exhibition explores the meeting points between gravity and elevation, matter and consciousness, the visible and the invisible. Within the two cabinets, works by invited Slovak sculptor Maria Bartuszová (1936–1996) accompany and enrich these reflections.



Štefan Papčo

Floating Mountain

Štefan Papčo has long been committed to understanding sculpture as an experience of the vertical world—an experience of the body or of matter in space, of gravity, of the leap, and of the transcendent. In the *Absolut* and *Antigravity* series, this exploration takes on an almost metaphysical dimension.

Sculptures such as *Bonekan* or *Anorak* (from the *Absolut* series), cast in bronze, evoke the suspended presence of an absent body: empty garments that retain the memory of a gesture, a posture, a breath held still. Through these anthropomorphic forms, Papčo questions the tension between envelope and interiority, between the trace of the living and its disappearance.

In *Through Two Slabs*, glass and fiberglass play on transparency and fracture, placing the sculpture within a transitional zone between materiality and erasure. As for *Becoming, Fifth Step*, carved in granite and iron, it condenses mineral density and the slowness of the sculptural gesture : weight becomes almost meditative, a point of balance between effort and surrender.

Through this intimate relationship with nature and the elements, Papčo situates himself within an artistic lineage in which sculpture transcends its materiality to become a meeting point between physical and mental space. Inspired by Robert Smithson's Site/Nonsite dialectic, he brings into the exhibition space fragments of lived experiences from his wanderings in the mountains, forests, or extreme alpine environments – each work becoming the imprint of an inner dialogue with the landscape.

His sculptures are at once a recording of a unique moment in time and an act of participation. The “antigravity” he evokes is not a denial of the physical presence of matter : it is a suspension of time, a fragile moment of equilibrium in which matter seems to breathe – a form of listening to the world and to oneself. In this exhibition, sculpture becomes a site of delicate balance between the tangible and the immaterial, a contemplation of matter within the void.

Štefan Papčo, *Through Two Slabs*, 2017





Maria Bartuszová, *Semienka púpavy*, 1970 - 1972

Maria Bartuszová

Germination

Maria Bartuszová's works (*Germination I*, 1966, and *Dandelion Seeds*, 1970–72) enter into dialogue with those of Štefan Papčo through their sensitive approach to form and lightness. Their organic volumes, cast in bronze or aluminum, explore fragility as a generative principle. In Bartuszová's work, as in Papčo's, sculpture seems to tend toward dissolution, toward that moment when matter — traversed by breath — becomes almost immaterial.

Biography

Štefan Papčo

The sculptural work of Štefan Papčo (born 1983) is closely tied to mountaineering, which he has practiced for many years. He is an experienced climber, whose direct knowledge of climbing as a mental and physical discipline, as a bodily language, and as a choreography forms an integral part of his work.

Climbing does not necessarily refer to visual paradigms: it is performative and deeply rooted in the body, movement, and gravity. For this reason, the sculpted objects Papčo creates stem from his intense experiences and from the vocabulary of mountaineering within art.

Interwoven with the mountain environment and its ecology, Papčo's practice also revisits the history of mountaineering and its ambiguous status in the debate on modernity. Officially "invented" in 1760, mountaineering developed in parallel with the logic of colonization and the conquest of peaks. Yet at the same time, it adopted an anti-technological stance and engaged in an early advocacy for nature conservation. Štefan Papčo's work aligns with this latter approach, grounded in an ethic of fair play between body and nature, and embracing a non-technological, unfiltered vision of the human – nature relationship – one based on solidarity rather than domination.

Maria Bartuszová

Maria Bartuszová (1936 – 1996) is one of the most original sculptors who have worked in Slovakia, a representative of the "organic line" in sculpture from the second half of the 20th century.

Drawing inspiration from the creativity of Nature, she works with fragile materials such as plaster, which she confronts with more resistant and durable substances like wood, stone, and metal. In doing so, she expresses not only her affinity with the natural world but also her awareness of the need to address eco-feminist issues.

She was born in former Czechoslovakia, in Prague, and studied at the University of Applied Arts. Most of her life was spent in Košice (Slovakia), where she achieved many works for public space. In the 1969-70 she was a member of the Concretist Club. She became famous internationally after her death. From 2007 her work has been represented at the documenta 12 in Kassel; in 2022 Cecilia Alemani, curator of the 59th Biennale di Venezia, has included her in the exhibition "*The Milk of Dreams*"; and the Tate Modern in London opened a solo exhibition of hers in September 2022. That same autumn, an international exhibition on the theme of fragility opened at the Rudolfinum Gallery, of which she was a part.

Exhibited Works

Selection





Štefan Papčo
Bonekan Movement III, Absolut series, 2017
 Bronze, steel
 360 x 135 x 135 cm (adjustable dimensions)



Štefan Papčo
Pullover, série Absolut, 2017
 Bronze, steel
 286 x 130 x 130 cm (adjustable dimensions)



Štefan Papčo
Becoming, Fifth Step, 2024

Granite, steel
148 x 93 x 83cm, unique

Štefan Papčo
Through Two Slabs, 2017

Glass, fiberglass
55 x 100 x 120 cm





Maria Bartuszová

Semienka púpavy, 1970 - 1972

Aluminum foil

82 x 60 x 6 cm

The Art Collection of the First Slovak Investment Group

Maria Bartuszová
Germination I, 1966

Bronze
v. 29 cm

The Art Collection of the First Slovak Investment Group



PUBLIC OPENING

Vendredi 28 novembre 2025
17h - 21h

ZAHORIAN & VAN ESPEN

GALERIE POGGI

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