

The Apple of my Eye

Karolina Szwed

Solo Exhibition by
Karolina Szwed

Oct 11th –
Nov 08th, 2025

Opening
Oct 11th, 2025
5–8 pm

Marienstrasse 35
40210 Düsseldorf
Germany



no title (glass)
2025
Oil on canvas
40×40 cm



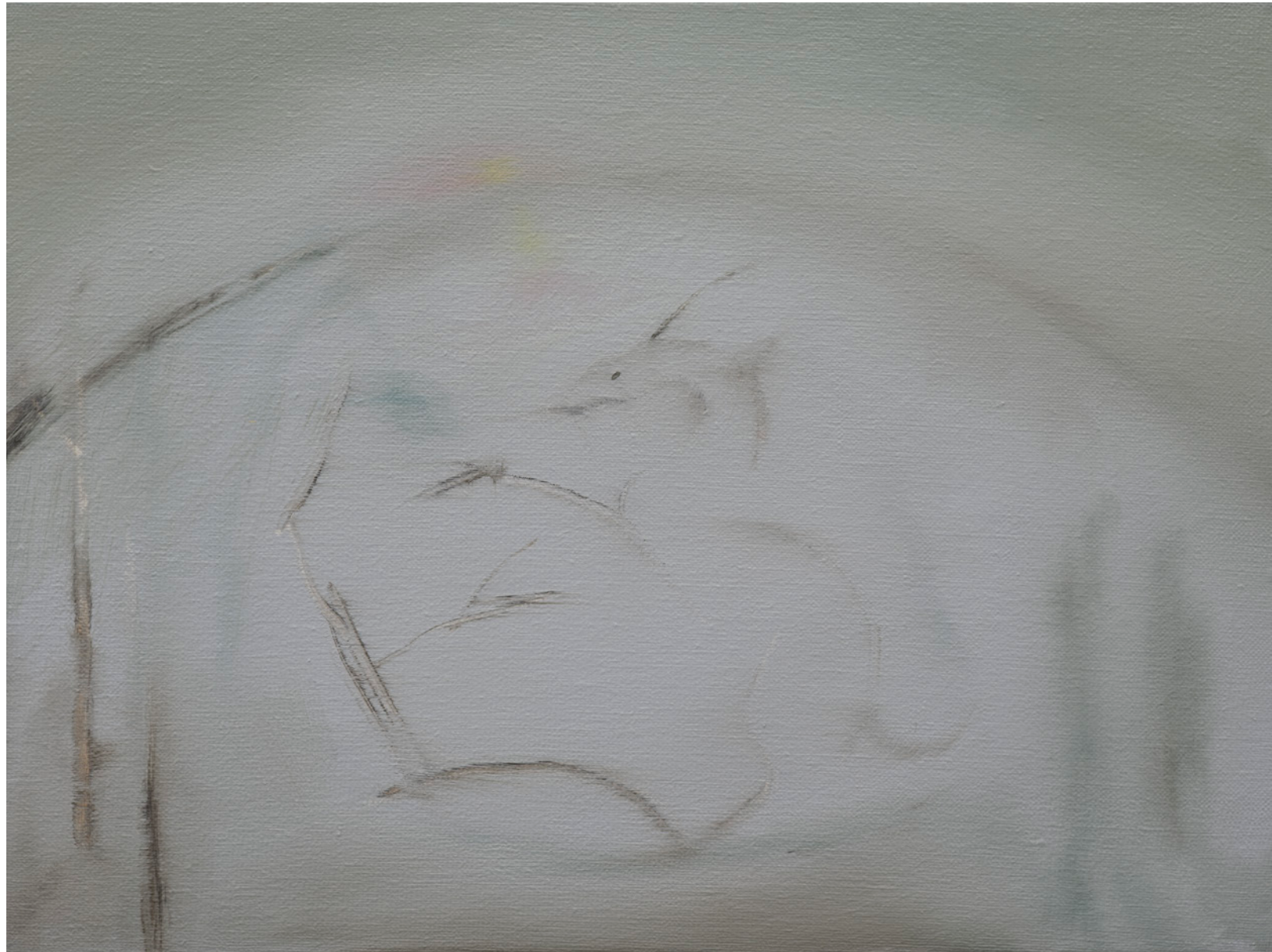
Guardian Angel - Bird - Plane
2025
Oil on canvas
30×40 cm



You're the apple of my eye
2025
Oil on canvas
95×200 cm



Nice day to be around
2025
Oil on canvas
30×40 cm



no title
(a horse from a Norwegian plate
and two people as styes in the eye)
2025
Oil on canvas
30×40 cm



Together we are 12
2025
Oil on canvas
50×40 cm



Yukio Mishima leaves the house to
take over the government
2025
Oil on canvas
30×60 cm



Orange juice break 2
2025
Oil on canvas
30×80 cm

Karolina Szwed



Karolina Szwed (*1997, Bielsko-Biała) is a visual artist based in Warsaw. She studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice, graduating in 2022. Her work creates situations that are at once autobiographical and detached from personal identity, capable of unfolding anytime and anywhere. She is drawn to strange scenarios, objects as bearers of sentimental value and symbolic meaning, as well as motifs and archetypes that carry greater cultural significance. Szwed's work has been shown in galleries, institutions, and art fairs in Poland, Germany, Austria, and England, for example, MOCAK (Cracow), BWA (Katowice), NADA Villa (Warsaw), VARIOUS OTHERS (Munich), Vienna Contemporary, and Alice Amati (London). The Apple of my Eye is her first solo exhibition at JVDW gallery.

The Apple of my Eye

The phrase “apple of my eye” is often understood as a declaration of love, expressing affection for someone or something most cherished. Karolina Szwed layers this meaning by tracing the phrase back to its Hebrew roots, where some interpretations render it as the “little man of the eye”. The “little man” comes from a phenomenon you can see when looking closely into someone’s pupil: a tiny reflection of yourself appears, which looks like a small figure. In Szwed’s work, this figure serves as a kind of aperture – a tiny point of focus that narrows and focuses her sight.

The “little man” reading dialogues with the familiar, mainstream understanding of the phrase, intertwining love, passion, and even obsession with the idea of perspective. For Szwed, it is both a metaphor for the cultural myth of the detached genius and a point of intimacy and reflection. On one hand, the “little man” can stand symbolically for the focused vision of people who inspire Szwed such as the Japanese author Yukio Mishima and her eccentric neighbor in Warsaw, whom she observes performing “elemental rituals” with cats and CCTV cameras. These people embody the promise of freedom and great feats achieved if only the focus is “right”. On the other hand, the “little man” is also the other – the person whose gaze reflects back on us, turning obstruction into a means of anchoring our experience.

Szwed’s paintings linger in the tension between what we see, what is hidden, and what blocks our view. In works like *Together we are* (2025) and *Nice to be around* (2025), the surfaces seem to blur, wash out, and dissolve, like a fading memory. Figures and objects drift along the horizon or float in ambiguous space, creating a sense of visual tension and instability. Though fragments of a scene may be missing or barely perceptible, Szwed’s paintings carry a thick, suggestive atmosphere that invites the mind to wander. Rather than congesting the imagination, she allows viewers to emplace themselves within the narratives, filling what is absent with their own reflections and associations.

Szwed’s practice is guided more by intuition than intellectualization. She works with sensations that linger at the back of her mind, where things spin and recite until her head opens and something falls out. Similarly, artworks spin in her studio, where she changes their positions at regular intervals. In this way, Szwed tests their relationships and discovers new resonances while resisting the comfort of what is already known. She rejects a recipe-driven approach to painting, insisting that “finding honesty in the medium” is key. Part of the honesty in her work is practical and immediate, stemming from the in-the-moment way she paints. The other part is more conceptual and structuring, as reflected in her delicate balancing of internal and external focalization.

JVDW gallery

Marienstrasse 35
40210 Düsseldorf
Germany

+49 170 9000 806
info@jvdw.gallery
www.jvdw.gallery