

**Ádám DÓRA**  
**Working With My Body (2023)**

In the series of *Ádám Dóra* (1993), consisting mainly of acrylic and oil paintings, the individual works are built on each other, the artist plays with the repetition and variation of recurring elements. Displaying his motifs in new and new contexts creates a rich visual language. In his work, he seeks to answer questions about painting while reflecting on our contemporary visual culture. He is characterised by a sophisticated use of colour and an expressive use of form, working with fundamentally figurative yet highly abstracted pictorial elements. In his works, he does not realize concrete scenes, but rather condenses and reinterprets his aesthetic experiences. He paints systems of relationships, exploring the connections between surfaces, forms and colours.

In recent years, he has developed a distinctive painting language based on simple yet emblematic motifs of everyday life. Two mundane activities, dressing and eating, have always been the subject of artistic reflection throughout history as defining pillars of human culture. On a personal level, the starting point for the works on display here is a body of experience that matured into a painting vision over the course of five years, based on the artist's work in the fashion trade and his passion for cooking. His work is closely linked to physicality and sensual experiences. His art is based on a high degree of sensitivity: he is attracted to profane themes in his motifs, which he then transforms through his sensitive painterly language.

His works embody impressions of the techno-aesthetic world of our time. Having worked in the fashion industry for many years, he has long been interested in the aesthetic experience of dressing and especially everyday street wear and trends. Since the global Covid period, when the noise of big cities suddenly quietened down and the streets emptied out, his interest has turned more strongly towards fashion and a kind of slow and analytical analysis of it. Sneakers became the most characteristic motifs in his paintings. The sneaker simultaneously carries the nostalgia of the 80s and 90s and represents the specific features of contemporary fashion trends. It is a distinctive footwear that has become an iconic element of the visual culture of urban spaces today. Its construction is often architectural, layered and many times unexpected, simultaneously meeting the comfort and representational needs of today's people.

These shoe monstrosities, difficult to define formally and directly disproportionate, have been recurring visual elements in *Ádám Dóra's* art since Covid. In his earlier series in 2022, this object almost completely filled the space of the canvas. In his new series, however, the strange footwear is slowly being joined by the figures of their wearers. These faceless, colourful figures tower above us on grandiose legs. The puppet-like figures move through space with great dynamism as heavy yet disembodied masses, mostly positioned in parallel to the picture plane and always appearing alone. In the background, cotton-candy-like clouds, consciously pursuing the painting programme, appear, moving mysteriously and suggestively slowly in the indefinable space. The backdrop is an intense backdrop reminiscent of a child's drawing, which strongly supports the central motif. Yet there is no strong distinction between the background and the subject of the painting, the whole scene is more abstract and expressive than it feels separate or spatial in perspective.

In addition to shoes and anthropomorphic figures, various foods are also depicted. Cooking as a method is an important source of inspiration in Ádám Dóra's art - the process of food preparation, the way different ingredients and flavours come together - the artist constructs his images in a similar way. Fruits and ice-creams flood the images, expanding the meaning field of the works to new sensual dimensions. Food, the aesthetic experience of taste, is embodied in a harmony of colours and forms. The tartness of the citrus fruit is materialised in the image's disordered structure and asymmetry, while the blue-yellow colour pair reflects the world of glazed ceramics and tiles of Mediterranean cultures.

Several of his recent works show multisensory sets of experiences and memories expressed in a painterly manner, strongly influenced by the studio site and the specific impressions of the environment. For example, the bustling, vibrant and colourful city of Barcelona. An iconic, selected motif of the material ecosystem of the cities appears in each painting. (The two larger paintings in the exhibition were made in the summer in Barcelona, while the *Working With My Body* series was made in the autumn during a residency in Carinthia.)

This kind of magnifying, highlighting gesture tries to paint a more analytical, detailed picture of the object, while at the same time subjecting it to a process of iconisation. By taking the motifs out of context and due to the composition, the commodity character of the subject of the painting is often further emphasised. There is a kind of profanely commercial and sacredly ritualistic gesture of presentation. Despite the importance of the motif, the emphasis is not on the external appearance of the objects and figures presented.

On the one hand, the shoe, as a statement on the foot, as a means of identity, and the fruit, as a characteristic element of art historical iconography, have a strong symbolic meaning. On the other hand, the examination of the visual through abstraction suggests a creative intuition of a structural rather than a mimetic nature. The artist does not seek to illustrate current trends or specific products, but rather to evoke sensual experiences, to make the relationship with the material more transcendent. He is interested in the human body and its movement and function, as well as the colour-form-surface dialogue in the picture, for which the collection of motifs outlined above provides a starting point. He uses these experiences to build up his own painterly visions and abstract-expressive pictorial fabrics.

Ádám Dóra does not only subject the view to detailed analysis, but works with momentary impressions, often with associations. This includes the experiences of unconscious street observations that a modern urban environment inherently provokes. These images are in fact frozen moments of the impact of everyday situations and phenomena on us. When our gaze rests on something, and then that something fades away, what we see becomes vague and only the memory of impressions is recorded. Everything is very elevated and fresh. The fields of colour sometimes flash in an ungrounded white and their placement just marks, just makes the object depicted recognizable. In order to capture the moment, the most important thing is that the image creation process is completed on time and that the canvas is not overworked.

His works are characterised by a tactile play of surfaces, a stacking of expressive colour patches of different sizes, which evoke different materials, textures and structures. To express the effects, Ádám Dóra uses pure, vivid colours, which are applied to the canvas in grandiose and dynamic brushstrokes,

in pastose layers. He uses colours intuitively, he likes to juxtapose "aggressive" and subtle surfaces. Nowadays, he tends to paint on a larger scale, and this change of scale is important for him, as the proportions of colour and form are better expressed on larger surfaces. He paints in a spontaneous, gestural way, but always plans the „pictorial objects” themselves in advance. He consciously tends more and more towards abstraction in his art.

The title *Working With My Body* refers not only to the material of experience, the specific motifs, but also to the process itself, the movement and shaping of the material - the central role of the physical in the works and the importance of the human gesture in his painting. The artist sees painting as a materialisation of intellectual and spiritual processes, in which the functioning of his own body is present as a medium. In his paintings, he depicts qualities and relationships that are difficult to verbalize, thus he uses the elements of visual language to create a connection with the viewer, providing a wide range of associative possibilities. Ádám Dóra reflects on the sensual world of consumer society in the contemporary painting discourse, on the border between figurality and abstraction, through the use of specific iconographic motifs of our time.

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Ádám DÓRA was born in Vác (Hungary) in 1993. He lives and works in Budapest. He graduated in painting (MA) from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in 2017. He was a mentee in the Budapest Art Mentorship Programme from 2019 to 2020. His first notable solo exhibition entitled *Chunky Steps* at Nagyházi Contemporary, Budapest (HU), was organised in 2021. He has participated in several group and duo exhibitions including *Explorers 3.0* at Budapest Projekt Gallery (HU), *Esterhazy Art Award Short List 2021* at Ludwig Museum, Budapest (HU), *Overlaps* with Rita Koszorús at Hegyvidék Gallery, Budapest (HU), *INSTA* at Nick Gallery, Pécs (HU), and *Summer Wine* at Einspach Fine Art & Photography Gallery, Budapest (HU).

In 2020 he received a special prize in the open call *Calling Across the Distance* at Emergent Art Space, San Francisco (CA), USA. He was shortlisted for the Esterházy Art Award 2021 (HU) and the Strabag Artaward International 2022 and 2023 (AT). In 2022 the artist created a permanent installation including a wall painting and three artworks on canvas at the Esterházy Castle in Eisenstadt (AT) for the NOW Esterházy Contemporary Collection. He also had a solo exhibition at Artkartell Projectspace, Budapest (HU). In 2023 he was invited as resident artist to the Künstlerstadt Gmünd (AT) and to the Piramidón Centre di Arte Contemporani Barcelona (ES). He currently presents a solo show at Einspach Fine Art & Photography, Budapest (HU). In the summer of 2024 his works will be shown in Casa Estudio Granados, Mahón, Menorca (ES). Ádám Dóra's works appear in many private and public collections, such as the NOW Esterházy Contemporary (AT) and the Contemporary Collection of Hungarian National Bank (HU).

/Emese Boglárka Nagy, Viktória Popper/