

Nea Likar: SPIRA MARIS

Look at the seas as it vibrates

1 August–30 August 2025

artKIT

With an exhibition that is a combination of completely new works and works for her book *Alba*, illustrator Nea Likar turns away from illustration as a supporting genre and presents a project based entirely on her own experiences and her attitude towards her own position in society. While the protagonist Alba sought her place in the world through a negative attitude towards her apparent otherness, this time Nea Likar questions the position of a woman, an artist and a highly sensitive person in an unfriendly climate that constantly seeks to reinforce feelings of delay, inadequacy and threat. The image of an island inhabited by albino humans, animals and plants leads us into a world where otherness and vulnerability are both all-encompassing and standard. In one of the works, the strength of a whale and the fragility of a paper boat coexist peacefully and complement each other. In Nea Likar's more recent works, the story from the silent book *Alba* merges seamlessly into the independent series *SPIRA MARIS*, which in its own way observes existence within rigid parameters. Both series have specific thematic starting points that form a coherent whole and outline a girl's path to becoming an adult woman.

The entire concept is permeated by the intimacy of solitude, which leads to a deepening. Part of this intimacy also involves reflecting on romantic relationships and taking a position within these relationships, with oneself and with society. The artist illustrates a woman's position in a relationship with the motif of a carousel, which combines a sense of light playfulness, nostalgia and also of finding balance and, above all, speaks of the decision to accept unpredictability in exchange for a sense of freedom. The retro amusement park motif is also a characteristic feature of the artist's work and serves as a subtle personal symbol that hints at the particular narrative flavor of the artwork. Instead of vociferous resistance from the outside, Nea Likar turns to the path to the center of being, which she symbolizes primarily through the shape of a shell, which also tells of opening and closing to the outside world and allows for visual parallels to the forms of the female body. At the same time, she addresses the similarities between the delicacy of the shell and individual experiences and the depth of the sea.

The shape of the shell tells of the uniqueness and unrepeatability of life, which, with its predetermined path, reminds us of the ever-changing perception of experience and leads us to center and balance. The spiral, a basic natural shape that can serve as a key to understanding our environment, is an ancient symbol of self-discovery, wholeness and the subconscious. In her drawings, prints and wallpapers, which are characterized by transitions from blue-green to orange, brick tones and the connection between people, bodies of water and animals, the artist creates a visual calm that alludes to wisdom, tenderness and vulnerability. In places, the color palette grounds the ethereal elements, anchoring their presence in the tangible world and reminding the viewer that the experience of life is a reciprocal relationship between the tangible and intangible. The works also remind us of the rich history of the shell as a motif in fine art, ranging from a symbol of woman, i.e. the possibility of creative expression, to a reminder of the fragility of life (Aphrodite, an architectural element, a symbol of vanitas). The French poet Paul Valéry also described shells in his essay *L'Homme et la Coquille* as "an unusual union of

ideas: order and imagination, ingenuity and necessity, law and exception”, as shells represented privileged objects for him because they stood out from the usual disorder of perceptible things.¹

Water retains the central position as a motif and acts as the fundamental conceptual thread of universal fluidity and transience, but time in the works presented is not linear but circular and repetitive with small changes requiring repeated walks along the spiraling path. By thematizing marine motifs, the artist reveals her emotions and uses her art, most consistently to date, primarily as a means of communicating and capturing her own position. While exploring the hidden and subtle, she remains accessible and contemplates the human condition in relation to the sea, which is constantly in motion, calming but also capable of chaos and wildness. The artworks are accompanied by a sense of fascination with the small, the delicacy of the connections of living together, a sense of the artist’s sovereignty and dedication to the constant metamorphosis and acceptance of herself in all changing positions.

¹ Freya WIGZELL, *The People Here Think I’m out of My Mind*. AA Files, 75, 2017, pp. 8–19.

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Nea Likar (1990) is an illustrator, visual designer, storyteller and freelance artist working at the intersection of illustration, graphic design, visual storytelling and make-up. She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, specializing in visual communication design and illustration, and also studied in Portugal (Faculdade des Belas artes, Porto), where she developed an expressive style that continues to influence her work today. Her artistic practice is characterized by the exploration of illustration as a medium with personal, social and ethical potential. Her subject areas range from introspective topics, personal growth, mental health and interpersonal relationships to environmental issues, the relationship between humans and animals and the questioning of social norms. She pays particular attention to vulnerability, the acceptance of differences and the ethics of the relationship between humans and non-human beings. Her artistic cycles often emerge as diary entries in images – through sketchbooks, color scales, small glimpses and inner landscapes, which she translates into her recognizable visual language. In recent years she has been very active in the field of exhibitions. Her solo exhibitions include *Sén* at the Media Nox Gallery (Maribor), *Alba* at the Srečišče Gallery (Hostel Celica, Ljubljana), *Labyrinth* at the Salsaverde Gallery (Izola), an exhibition at the Padaria Águas Furtadas (Porto, Portugal), *Corners of Chaos* and *Evolution of Gentleness* at the Kvartirna hiša Celje. She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, such as *Ilustrofest* (Belgrade), (Im)balance at the Center for Contemporary Arts Celje, the May Salon and Prvenci svetlobe at the Slovenian Association of Fine Arts Societies, an exhibition on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Celje Art Quarter, and others. She is the conceptual leader and organizer of the erotic illustration festival *Velvet*, which celebrated its 5th anniversary in 2024.

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artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor

Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.