

Apolonija Simon

REFLECTIONS

28 August–26 September 2026

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Apolonija Simon's painting is defined by a distinctive sense of time. Her works resemble quiet harbors, spaces we enter to perceive the world in its elemental presence, free from the noise of everyday life. Within the realm of landscape – trees, horizons, and open expanses – her motifs gradually unfold into spaces of ever-deepening contemplation.

Her painting engages with the long tradition of European landscape art, from the renaissance exploration of spatial and atmospheric depth, through the romantic understanding of landscape as a bearer of inner feeling, to the contemporary conception of painting as an autonomous imaginary space. In her work, landscape becomes an imagined realm in which the concreteness of place and moment expands into a broader field of feeling, while the scenery becomes an inner image of the world, where the gaze confronts its own experience. This imaginary landscape is the central motif of her practice, one she has pursued for decades with a persistence that reveals her deep trust in the boundless expressive possibilities of this subject. Through changing viewpoints, layers of color and light, perspectival relationships, horizons, spatial arrangements and transitions, and the interplay of proximity and distance, she continually explores how to create a sense of open, deep space on a two-dimensional surface. Color and light become the fundamental building blocks of this process, establishing spatial distance and atmosphere and transforming the surface of the painting into a space through which the eye can travel. The imaginary pictorial world thus created follows its own inner logic and mythology, one in which the gaze moves almost as if it were a body, anchoring itself, lingering, and penetrating ever deeper into the atmosphere of the painting.

The color world of her painting is richly varied and nuanced. Her technique, combining egg tempera and oil on canvas, gives the colors distinctive refinement, translucency, and inner luminosity. Different tones permeate one another, and their transitions shape the emotional character of the image, creating a delicate balance between surface and depth. Within this broad spectrum, her exceptional mastery of color and its full expressive potential becomes apparent. Monochromatic passages achieve remarkable chromatic intensity, with individual tones taking on an almost radiant power in certain areas, while her painting also unfolds across a rich spectrum of fully saturated color harmonies. Warm autumnal and earthy tones meet gentle pink and blue gradations in the sky, while elsewhere the image is suffused with vivid emerald green or deep, dark blue. The artist's broad palette supports continual exploration of the relationships between warmth and coolness, and between restraint and intensity. With a masterful touch and confident command of technique, she creates a refined translucency in the individual layers, through which the colors interweave and, through their inner luminosity, generate a sense of breathing space. Color thus creates atmosphere while also functioning as an autonomous carrier of the painting's energy.

Figures in her paintings function as thresholds between the viewer and the pictorial space. Through their restrained presence, they invite the viewer to identify with them and to find themselves within the painting's mental space as an integral part of it. The figure thus becomes a link between the external gaze and the inner experience of the image. At the same time, the size of the figures and trees establishes the overall scale of the composition. Their dimensions define the sense of distance, height, and expansiveness, allowing the viewer to physically perceive the space. A small figure within a wide landscape can emphasize its boundlessness, while a larger, closer figure creates a more immediate sense of presence. Scale thus becomes a crucial means of constructing space, enabling us to perceive the breadth, depth, and vastness of the pictorial field through the

relationship between human beings and their environment. Alongside trees, landscapes, horizons, and human and arboreal figures, water also appears, introducing a distinctive sense of reflection and fluidity into the image. Its surface can function as a second visual plane, a space where the sky, light, and landscape reappear in altered form. Water thus opens up the painting's visual world and creates a sense of duality: the world appears both above its surface and within it simultaneously, as though the visible were continually returning to itself.

The paintings possess a distinctive quality in which their reality seems more expansive than what is immediately visible. The gaze enters the space of the painting and slowly moves into the distance, where individual forms dissolve into the atmosphere. Perspective establishes a path for the gaze: the lines of space lead the eye toward the horizon, yet do not stop there. The image seems to extend beyond its edges, opening onto a space that belongs more to sensation than to visual orientation. The paintings also convey a powerful sense of momentary stillness, as the air appears suspended in an almost tangible density and, for an instant, time slows its flow. A particular tension emerges between movement and stillness, one that makes the landscape feel like a moment caught just before it changes.

Simon creates a world of soft transitions, restrained light, refined color, and silence, where trees and human silhouettes stand as witnesses to time, marking its transience while, in their very presence, suggesting something enduring – something that, through the image, touches eternity. A mysterious thread runs through the paintings, almost tangible yet elusive. Her images possess a magical atmosphere that arises from the relationship between the recognizability of the landscape and the sense of something not easily defined. They seem like places the eye recognizes, while the inner world experiences them as almost dreamlike. The image unites mystery and grace, existing between a tangible metaphysical reality, gentle tenderness, and refined subtlety, in which the reality of the landscape slowly transforms into a fairy-tale realm. From this emerges the mysterious thread that runs through her entire oeuvre. The motifs change, the compositions are reshaped, and the perspectives open ever-new paths into pictorial space, yet the feeling retains its inner continuity. Each new image is a different view into the same, ever-expanding world. It is precisely in this relationship between repetition and transformation that the distinctive character of her painting is revealed. Decades of exploring a similar world of motifs become an exploration of seeing itself. The same world appears differently over time because, as the years pass, our way of seeing it changes, and life slowly teaches us to see what individual days alone cannot yet reveal.

– Nina Šardi

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Apolonija Simon was born in 1967 in Brežice. In 1985, she enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana, majoring in painting. In 1989, she received the Prešeren Prize for students for outstanding achievement. She graduated in 1990 under the mentorship of Professors Andrej Jemec and Jožef Muhovič. In 1995, she completed a specialized program in painting. From 1994 to 1997, she worked as an assistant in drawing and painting with Professor Andrej Jemec at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana. Since 1999, she has been teaching drawing at the High School of Design and Photography in Ljubljana.

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artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor

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