

ATM Gallery is pleased to present *Bittersweet*, a solo exhibition of paintings by Anaja Hvastija Gaia, on view from January 13 to February 12, 2023.

In *Bittersweet*, no figure is ever alone. Slovenian painter Anaja Hvastija Gaia's subjects are always in relationships—to their own reflection, to each other, to the natural world and the wilds of unconscious perception. A figure gazes at tender sprouts, or stands with their back against the wall—their stylized, smooth rendering creating implicit attraction and potent ambiguity.

Across seven works, no line is ever straight. Anaja's forms appear like stylized Rorschach tests—evocative in their softness, revealing the movements of an unconscious which doubles itself and alters perception to create order. In works such as *Unseen* (2022) and *Disguise* (2022), two figures are stacked together, as if an inner self has become manifest. In *Reflect* (2022) and *Mirage* (2022) a solitary figure amidst a sparse backdrop nevertheless attains the depth of hidden desires made palpable in Anaja Hvastija Gaia's composition. Throughout, she reminds us of paintings' unique abilities to make our desires more clear to ourselves, a process which is complex, even bittersweet.

Anaja Hvastija Gaia (b. 1995, Slovenia) is a contemporary painter currently based in Ljubljana. *Bittersweet* is her first solo exhibition in the United States.