



JASMINA CIBIC

Gandy
Gallery

BIOGRAPHY

Jasmina Cibic (b. Ljubljana 1979) works in film, sculpture, performance and installation to explore 'soft power' – how political rhetoric is deployed through art and architecture, particularly examining how cultural production is used by the state to communicate certain principles and aspirations. Through unfolding the complex entanglements of art, gender and state power, the artist encourages viewers to consider the strategies employed in the construction of national culture.

Gathering together symbols and iconographies, Cibic's projects present a synthesis of gesture, stagecraft and re-enactment. Realised in films and installations, her on-going performative practice is an 'enacted' exercise in the dissection of statecraft. Her multi-layered approach draws together primary sources and falsified narratives. This wilful overwriting creates shifting meanings and highlights historical uncertainties and untruths, especially in the gendering of the past. Cibic plays a double-game, at once decoding mechanisms of power whilst building her own allegorical structures.

Jasmina Cibic represented Slovenia at the 55th Venice Biennial with her project "For Our Economy and Culture". Her recent exhibitions include solo shows at: Belvedere 21 Vienna, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, High Line New York, Museum der Moderne Salzburg, macLyon, Museum Sztuki Łódź, Museum of Contemporary Art Ljubljana, CCA Glasgow, Phi Foundation Montreal, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art Gateshead, Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Aarhus 2017, Esker Foundation Calgary, Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, MGLC Ljubljana and Ludwig Museum Budapest along with group exhibitions at IMMA Dublin, Biennale Jogja, Innsbruck Biennial, MAC Belfast, Chicago Architectural Biennial, MAXXI Rome, MOMA NY, MUMA Monash Museum, CCS BARD, Marta Herford and Guangdong Museum of Art China. Cibic's films have been screened at Whitechapel Gallery, MOMA New York, London Film Festival, HKW Berlin, Louvre, Dokfest Kassel and Copenhagen International Documentary Festival. Cibic was the winner of the Aesthetica Film Festival Award (2024), Jarman Award (2021), B3 Biennial of the Moving Image Award (2020) and MAC International Ulster Bank and Charlottenborg Fonden awards (2016).

The Arrangement (2024) by Jasmina Cibic

Floral arrangements, placed in simple, green or clear vases, rise above a polished brown table. Nocturnal insects, as beautiful as the flowers, approach menacingly, crawling among fallen petals and drooping stems, all set against an austere black background. These richly detailed images evoke the still life paintings of the Dutch Golden Age, when masters like Rachel Ruysch and Jan van Huysum introduced flowers into the vanitas tradition, reminding the viewer that all beauty must disintegrate with time. Yet, with Jasmina Cibic's series, we are confronted with photographs, not paintings, and the symbolism includes another, troubling meaning.

The artist has asked members of international courts and organisations protecting human rights to nominate a flower each. Combined, these plants make up the floral portraits of each institution. The symbolic language of flowers has a long pedigree in art history, but here the mimosa, roses, lilies, peonies, anemones, and even edelweiss come to stand for such organisations as the International Criminal Court or the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee. How are we, then, to unpick the new symbolism; how do we contemplate Cibic's new vanitas?

An important link between *The Arrangement* and Cibic's previous works is the artist's interest in soft power. Her subject matter is often drawn from what might seem like the inconsequential background of politics—the decorative paintings hanging in the Slovene parliament (*For our Economy and Culture*, 2013), the roses named after European politicians (*The Foundation of Endeavour*, 2020), the architecture of people's palaces (*The Gift*, 2021)—and here she imagines floral arrangements, such as might decorate a committee room. Typically, Cibic magnifies such details until they capture the lengths to which nation states will go to justify their own seeming inevitability. Across her films, installations and visual art, Cibic shows how artistic modernism coincided with the creation of new states in the twentieth century, and how, across the East-West ideological divide, surprisingly similar artistic motifs were used to project political unity and strength. She distils the cool, seductive aesthetic of statecraft into her own artistic language.

However, international organisations, and international courts especially, face a different image problem to that of nation states, which Cibic explored in previous work. International courts do not project national unity, but, conversely, must do everything to appear neutral between national interests. My first memory of international justice—as for many of my generation who come from former Yugoslavia—was the trial of Slobodan Milošević at the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague, 2002-2006, where he infamously refused to recognize the authority of the court. I do not acknowledge this court, he fulminated from the dock, quoting Marshall Tito's words from his trial for underground Communist activities in 1928. Milošević sought to align himself with the Yugoslav mythology of a revolutionary leader, but it is notable that in doing so he sought not so much to deny his own merciless crimes, as to show that international justice operates under the shadow of geopolitical power. As evidently guilty as Milošević was, it was hard to dispute with that claim. No Americans or Russians have been tried before international courts. Both powers, as well as China, are not currently signed up to the International Criminal Court. In other words, international justice is hardly ever enforced against the victors, or against those with power.

Human rights and international justice, then, are not imposed on us by some higher rationality. The judgments of international courts are only enforceable through the goodwill of nation states. A cynical view, like that of Milošević, might then reduce these institutions to a mere fig leaf, a performance obscuring imperialist power play. Yet, Cibic's floral arrangements seem to suggest another, more ambiguous reading. Flowers of the Dutch still life tradition, which the artist evokes, did not stand for falsity or vanity, but above all for the frailty of beauty and life. Here, the wilting flowers do not necessarily make us think of the inefficiency of international courts, but rather remind us that the international justice arrangements, following the Second World War, represent but a tiny window of human history. In these decades, which are our own time as well, the worst excesses of human violence, armed with increasingly destructive technology, have been by no means prevented: not by the concept of human rights, nor by the international organisations tasked with guarding these rights. But, as limited as international institutions are in upholding justice, they do hold out at least the possibility of an impartial, universal respect for human life.

Here, then, is the ideal of human rights on display. History corrodes ideals, just as time ravages the flowers. Yet, just as the Dutch vanitas paintings show flowers in a state between beauty and decay, so Cibic's artwork leaves us in a space between optimism and pessimism. The ideal of human rights is turned into a chiaroscuro, a meditation on darkness and light, an invitation to contemplate what is worth preserving and why.

Text by Vid Simoniti



Installation view



Installation view



left to right:
The Arrangement (International Court of Justice)
The Arrangement (UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee)
100 cm x 132 cm, with artist frame in walnut, Edition 2/5

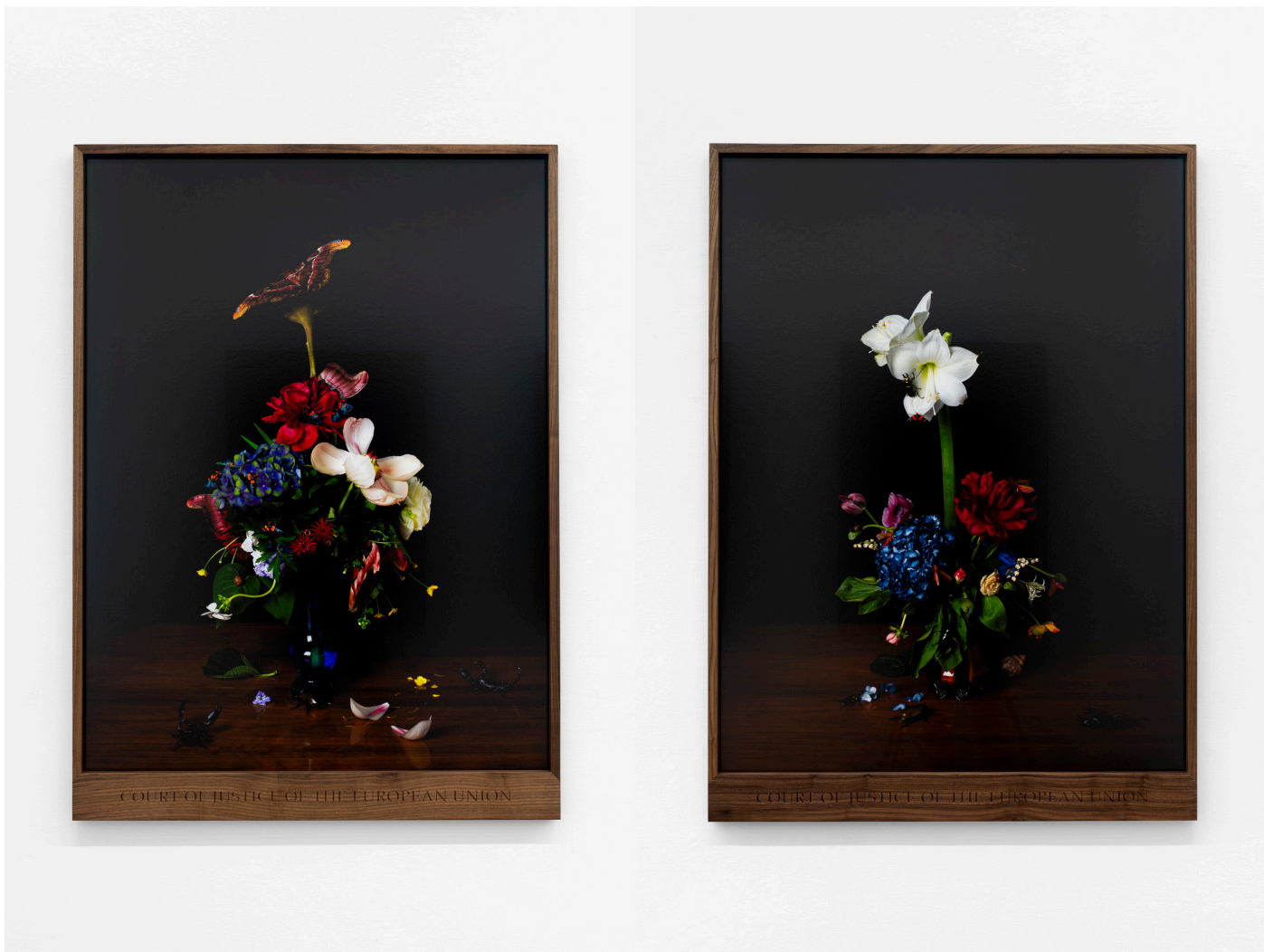


left to right:

The Arrangement (UN Human Rights Treaty Body: Committee on the Rights of the Child)

The Arrangement (International Criminal Court)

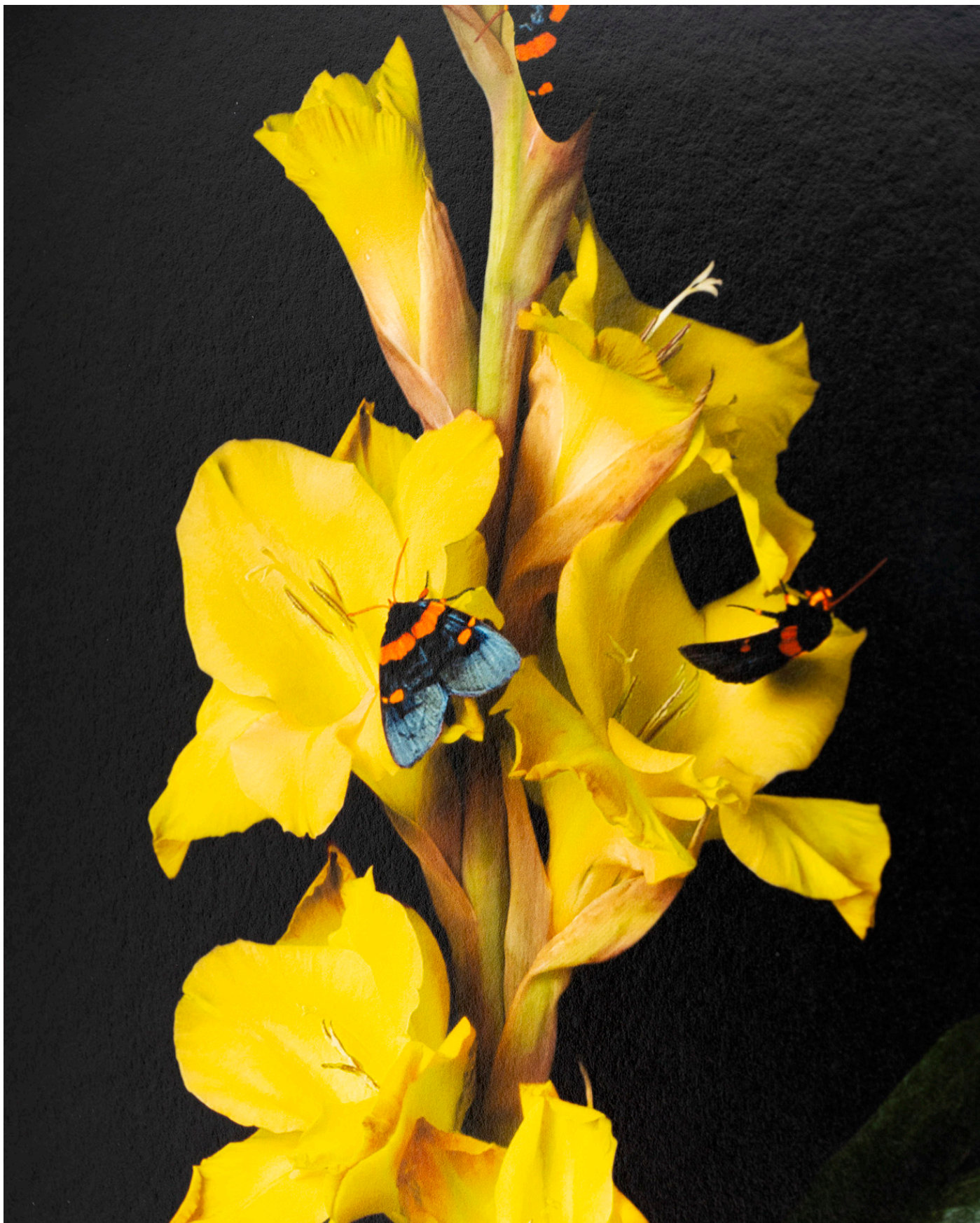
100 cm x 132 cm, with artist frame in walnut, Edition 2/5



left to right:
The Arrangement (Court of Justice of the European Union I)
The Arrangement (Court of Justice of the European Union II)
100 cm x 132 cm, with artist frame in walnut, Edition 2/5



The Arrangement (UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee), detail
100 cm x 132 cm, with artist frame in walnut, Edition 2/5



The Arrangement (UN Human Rights Treaty Body: Committee on the Rights of the Child), detail
100 cm x 132 cm, with artist frame in walnut, Edition 2/5

GANDY GALLERY

Gandy Gallery's programme was developed in the context of the early 90s, when Europe was determining itself by confronting different histories, ideologies and hopes, and the opening of the gallery in 1992 in Prague, marked the beginning of this history...

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