

In 1783, the Montgolfier brothers sent a sheep, a duck and a rooster up in the air to be the first passengers of their hot air balloon, as forerunners of Laika, the dog. We also have hot air balloon flight to thank for the first Hungarian parachuters: in 1811, Dr. Menner, Viennese physician and physicist, during his flight, released farm animals outfitted with tiny silk parachutes into the air. The audience of this spectacle was the first to witness living beings descending via parachutes.

The paintings in this exhibition do not depict geese and slowly descending sheep; Adrienn Dorsánszki employs associations of ideas that are much more surprising and impossible than these surreal images. She guides the freely soaring hot air balloons into closed rooms or gets them entangled in dense bamboo forests. Something hinders flight. The images are kept in motion by constraint and liberation – by the tension produced through a struggle that requires greater expansion than what is accommodated by the available space.

The protagonist is, without a doubt, the hot air balloon, which is placed in various situations by the artist in order to examine its properties and to see how the red and white sphere reacts to different conditions. The balloon is glowing from the inside, becomes taut, glides on, and vanishes. In the meantime, the artist zooms out and in on the subject of exploration, she switches scale from a tiny phenomenon placed under a gigantic microscope to a bulging spherical canvas, filling large rooms. The balloon is still flying, but the air or gas required for its flight is already escaping; its undisturbed soaring is but a memory now. The old television set is showing a successful journey from long ago, or it is the lens of the cameras that reminds us of an age when the launching of a large hot air balloon was an event meriting international press attention. Sometimes we think we might also see in the distance Professor Auguste Piccard's spherical, pressurised gondola, which collected data on cosmic radiation in the stratosphere. In the close-up pictures, a balloon that has broken free is seeking its way – the basket with its passengers or the capsule concealing explorers is absent. At the same time, the changes in scale and dimension lead to a surprising outcome: the balloon examined under a microscope, along with the rocket-like pattern of the curtain and the mysterious blue marbles or bubbles, remind us that this “peacetime” mode of aerial transport was after all the first to successfully lift people into the air, allowing them to rise to never before seen heights.

The flying objects play with gravity and conquer distances. At the same time, hot air balloons have a property, which, in addition to human planning and calculation, also leaves space for chance and the forces of nature: in contrast to a navigable zeppelin, its flight is completely determined by wind conditions. Only those who cultivate an intimate relationship with the wind and know in which direction it blows at which elevation can direct the balloon's path. Vertical movement is made possible by releasing the ballasts or regulating the temperature. The hot air balloon has thus become associated with the myth of adventurous journeys with unexpected turns. Furthermore, in addition to sport, entertainment and spectacles that involve the senses, it is also used for the more stern business of meteorological observation.

In addition to the globes which take central stage, we must not forget about the serious backgrounds – working so familiarly and smoothly together – signified by the empty spaces on Adrienn's paintings. These are the sites of strange happenings and they – floors with various patterns, half-parted curtains, draughty corridors, shadowy rooms with occasional patches of incoming light, or intersections, street corners, forks in the road, vacuum-white windows and doors that open to the unknown like black holes – determine the basic tone of the paintings, the world in which the balloon seeks its path and possibilities for flight.

The drawings show dreamlike, floating snapshots of moments: a world that seemingly operates on its own. It is as if a person has just exited the picture, passing the central role over to objects and spaces that have been realized by him, in accordance with his own notions and needs. The life of objects comes to light. This is the human world without humans. Who has set the floating pool ball on its course? The enlivened objects have a long history, whether we think of the furnishings from the castle of the Beauty and the Beast, of Dadaist film etudes, or of Anna Lesznai's book entitled *Tale About the Furniture and the Little Boy*, not to even mention such classics as the purple necktie bursting out with song and the self-resounding, empty water glass. In Dorsánszki's earlier paintings (which are still on view this week at the Fuga), we encounter the dance of objects that have been broken off, creating impact or floating, alluding to the presence of a not-so-scary poltergeist phenomenon. She is attracted to moving dead objects and to furnishings that create the impression of life even in the absence of human beings, such as escalators, fans, and artificial wind. In one of her paintings, the signing fire extinguishers bring to mind our childhood fear of whistling pressure cookers. In her new paintings, the cameras, the microscopes, the instruments of observation all stand on their own, replacing their users, condensing them into an intention of observation and recording. Plants, which are incapable of changing their location, are the only living organisms that appear in this world. Instead of immobility, however, we sense movement from every direction: it is the elements, the phenomena of light and air, that actually initiate action.

Hot air balloons always remind me of old post cards, which first became popular in the United States, and then in Europe, around the turn of the century. These showed the future streetscapes of a given city, with progress signified by the addition of areal transport devices, racing automobiles, motors, and velocipedes, superimposed on the cityscape.

Hot air balloons of all kinds appeared on these postcards. And while, by the turn of the following century, the spectacle of airliners, cars, bicycles and vehicles of mass transportation has become part of the streetscape to a degree that far surpasses fantasy images of the time, the hot air balloon stayed behind somewhere in the past, floating stagnantly, still as a curiosity. All the while its cousin, the zeppelin, on account of the frequent accidents, has vanished from the world of air transportation.

Once upon a time, they were seen as a token of the future. Today, they represent futuristic imagery that now belongs in the past. At the same time, the hot air balloon, as it sets off with its curved shape riding the wind, still evokes something of its original appeal. When exploring its still unharnessed potential, it is worth taking a detour to the beginning of the last century. The German chocolate brand Hildebrand included little pictures of the future with their product, in which the realization of "water-walking" was envisaged by fixing balloons to the clothing of men and women, strolling along the lake surface.