

Press release for the exhibition

Martin Salajka: Nebula  
9. 1. – 22. 2. 2026

Curator: Kristýna Jiráťová



Trafo Gallery presents the exhibition *Nebula* by painter Martin Salajka (\*1981), drawing on his long-term and intense relationship with nature. In his paintings, the artist captures a personal experience of the landscape as a space of constant movement, transformation, and tension between life and decay. The exhibition features works pulsating with the energy of natural elements, mist, water depths, and dark forests, where reality merges with visions and hallucinatory imagery. The exhibition opens on 8 January 2026 at 7 pm. A guided tour will take place on 4 February at 6 pm, followed by a children's workshop on 14 February from 2 pm to 5 pm. A bilingual publication designed by Martin Pecina will accompany the exhibition. More information is available at [www.trafogallery.cz](http://www.trafogallery.cz)

In his current exhibition, Martin Salajka returns to the place he has never truly left. It is as if the testimony of nature—where everything began—has now become more urgent than ever. The painter confronts us with what he has personally lived through, which in the very specific environment of his studio materialises into a multitude of paintings. He moves among them as if engaged in some wild dance or ritual. Although nature in these works is full of unsettling phenomena, it is precisely being in nature that grants the painter the only measure of calm he can find.

*"From the chaos of the world, which hurts more and more, I've spent much of this year escaping into nature with my sketchbook and my dog to listen to the silence—falling asleep while looking at the sky, waking to mists, watching the sun draw with light into the billows of vapour and seeing everything reflected on the water's surface. I looked beneath that surface into darkness and marshy decay, felt the vibrations—the dance of tubifex worms in the sludge, the fierce energy of fish, water currents, the rising from the bottom toward the light and back again, the dance of trees and winds. The movement and vibration of life and death. Each day and night by the water multiplies the intensity of the previous ones. The images return from the chaos, take shape in sketches, and now it is time to inscribe them onto the canvases. To tame the chaos I can grasp, and to hope I can do it—and that someone will understand,"* Martin Salajka says about his work

His permanent restlessness, his inability to concentrate or work systematically, seems to resonate with the instability of the contemporary world. A certain inner raggedness also characterises his work, which constantly hovers on the boundary between the real and the unreal, the abstract and the concrete. Within a single canvas, several painterly registers may alternate—from glowing, impasto layers to finer, more drawing-like strokes. The paintings pulse with the fast, aggressive, as well as the slow and heavy rhythms of metal music, which is an integral part of the creative process and often uncompromisingly guides the painter's hand.

A crucial, though not physically present, role is also played by the human in canvases inspired by Salajka's journey to Congo, undertaken with fellow artists in autumn 2024. Fiery demons, water spirits, or storm clouds appear as personified natural forces unleashed by human insensitivity and arrogance in interfering with ecosystems. The mystery and symbolic woundedness of nature is thus accompanied by its dangerously enigmatic aspect—one that threatens the blind human with the terrifying forces of its revenge.

Still lifes, a permanent component of Salajka's work, remain present as well. Alongside flowers referencing the eternal theme of vanitas, extinguished, smouldering candles now appear. It is precisely the motif of smoke and vapour that links these works to the exhibition's overarching theme. Nebula—meaning clouds or vapours—can, in a broader sense, signify anything unclear, blurred, or changing. These are the mists drifting above the pond's surface, the murky waters, the wind-swirled dust, the vapours rising from the nostrils of nocturnal creatures. At first indistinct, the forms within the paintings gradually sharpen in the viewer's eye; the imagination tirelessly works, new forms emerge from the depths, silence transforms into an infinite multiplicity of sounds, and from mere stains arise the hidden spirits of nature. What was once immaterial becomes transferred into reality.

**Thanks to the partners of Trafo Gallery:** Magistrát hlavního města Prahy, Canadian Medical, Skupina ČEZ, Hospodářské noviny, Seznam.cz, Art District 7, Art Revue, Radio 1, Wine4You a MOSŤ Nápoje / Beverages s.r.o.

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