

DIMITRINA SEVOVA
SAMODIVA –
WILD RECLAIMING SPACE
12 JUNE – 4 SEPTEMBER 2026

Samodiva—Wild Reclaiming Space is based on Dimitrina Sevova's fieldwork in the ruins of the former women's ward of the Ospedale psichiatrico di Volterra complex, now overgrown and reclaimed by nature, and reflects her long-standing interest in the interconnectedness of body, mind, society, environment, and ecology.

Starting from the history of psychiatry, the project examines the construction of hysteria in the context of the rise of modern institutions and the social and economic transformations of early industrial capitalism. In the 18th and 19th centuries, psychiatric institutions not only provided care but also shaped the definition and regulation of deviance—women whose bodies, knowledge, or life rhythms challenged prevailing norms were often stigmatized.

The exhibition draws on feminist theories, including those of Silvia Federici, and is inspired by Félix Guattari's ecological thinking and transversality, looking for future enunciations of the collective unconscious. It views hysteria less as a fixed medical diagnosis and more as a cultural narrative shaped by projection, discipline, and shifting value systems.

The title refers to the *Samodiva* (literally: she-wild), a (dis-)embodied archetype of femininity from Bulgarian folklore associated with forests, healing, and the ambivalent forces of nature, serving as a counterpoint to the pathologized woman.

In paintings, sculptures, and other works, the artist experiments with earth, minerals, and organic elements as transformative and symbolic forces. Pigments mixed with soil, wildflowers embedded into painted surfaces, and pyrite added to clay create subtle variations in texture and luster. These materials suggest states of transition and hybridity, while their forms draw on tropes from literature, art history, and mythology, serving as pathways into a holistic, animate cosmos.

Through these material and conceptual explorations, the project interweaves institutional memory, ecological processes, and symbolic imagination. Decay and transformation become quiet metaphors for resilience and renewal, and the exhibition thus opens a space inviting a reconsideration of care, memory, and resistance.

Text and curation: Jeannette Weiss