

The Children's Villa

Anastazie Anderson 09.09.2026 – 10.31.2026

Drawing on found photographs from her private family albums and the public realm of the internet, the paintings of the Czech-British artist Anastazie Anderson possess an intimacy – even a tenderness – that belies their large scale. Employing dense black grounds and a muted palette, whose tones appear to have been washed out by the passing of the years, or else the glare of repeated scrutiny, these paintings explore the persistence of personal, familial and collective histories, both in the photographic record, and in human memory. If Anderson is an artist in search of lost time, she is also aware that this is an ultimately impossible pursuit. As the French novelist Marcel Proust famously observed: 'Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were'.

While Anderson works from source images, she insists that 'the most important thing for me is their conversion into paint – through countless studies and then the final painting, which is done in a single session'. This methodology suggests not a painstaking attempt to replicate the original photograph, but instead a desire to thoroughly internalize its energies, and then channel them into the act of applying pigment to a support, wet into wet, employing direct, expressive brushwork – something that demands she pledge herself utterly to the here and now, and the opportunities it presents for experimentation, for play. The artist has said that when she is deeply engaged with a canvas, 'sometimes I forget what I am painting'. While her works address what we might complicatedly call the past, they are all essayed in the present tense.

The title of Anderson's exhibition, *The Children's Villa*, is borrowed from the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard's final novel *Extinction* (1986), and refers to a dilapidated architectural structure in the grounds of its narrator Franz-Josef Murau's sprawling family estate. Following the deaths of his parents, he begins to restore the villa 'in order to re-enter my childhood', although he comes to discover that this is a hopeless enterprise. As Murau upbraids himself: 'You actually believed that your childhood could be repainted and redecorated, as it were, that it could be refurbished and reroofed like the Children's Villa'. In fact, 'The Children's Villa affords the most brutal evidence that childhood is no longer possible. All you see when you look back is this *gaping void*'.

By choosing this title for her show, Anderson points to the insoluble contradiction at the heart of our remembrances of childhood. On the one hand, we are aware that time, memory and the gap between child and adult cognition make us unreliable narrators of our own early lives. On the other, this narrative is the precious foundation on which we build a self. In painting canvases derived from photographs of her childhood days (an action we might compare and contrast with Murnau's 'repainting' of the villa), the artist is not attempting to reconcile the interior truth of her own recollections with the exterior truth captured by the camera's lens. Rather, she is interested in how they meet and merge, creating new narratives, new uncertainties.

Anderson's *Annie (head)* (all works 2026) and *Annie (sleeping)* 3), present the painter respectively as a 4-year-old peering inscrutably at

Anastazie Anderson (b. 1995, Prague, Czech Republic) lives and works in London. Her paintings draw from home photography, social media imagery, and cinematic references, using cropping, scale, and flattened color to shift familiar images into more ambiguous scenes.

She received a BA in Fine Art from Falmouth University and an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art, where she was supported by a scholarship from The Bakala Foundation. Recent solo exhibitions include *Imitation of Life* at YveYANG, New York (2024). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions at LBF Contemporary, London (2024); Studio West, London (2023); Berntson Bhattacharjee Gallery, London (2023); Moosey Gallery, Norwich (2022); Bermondsey Project Space, London (2022); and Soho Revue, London (2022), among others.

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whichever unseen adult is photographing her, and a 7-year-old settling down to a nap with blank, if still-open eyes, behind which it seems she dreams unknowable dreams. These canvases' status as self-portraits is complicated not only by the fact that Anderson did not compose, or perhaps even consent to, the photographs on which they're based, but also by the temporal gulf between the girl (or indeed girls) in the paintings, and the woman in her early thirties who painted them decades later. To what degree does it make sense to claim that they are the same person, as we might do, say, of the painter Rembrandt in the final year of his life, and the man he depicts in his *Self Portrait at the Age of 63* (1699)? The belief in the essential continuity of selfhood from conception to death does not bear much philosophical analysis. Contemplating Anderson's paintings, it feels like a convenient fiction that is beginning to fray.

Looking across the works in *The Children's Villa*, there is a sense not only of the domestic being monumentalized, but also of different eras converging – note *Jana*, a painting of the artist's mother as a ten-year-old girl, who we might at first glance mistake for *Annie's* older sister. *Table and Chair* is based on a cropped photograph of the interior of Anderson's family home, taken circa 2007, when she was in her early adolescence, although there's little here to indicate that it is a 21st-century scene. On the table is a teapot, a box of tissues, a rather Giorgio Morandi-like white vase, and a hardback book, whose reader has marked their place with a thin, lolling ribbon. Design historians might recognize the titular empty bentwood dining chair as a Model B28, first produced by the Czech furniture manufacturer Mundus in the 1920s. However much we might think of ourselves as living in the present, we are surrounded by the past – its fixtures and its fittings, its atmospheres and its ghosts.

This theme is driven home by *Castle 2*, a painting based on a found aerial photograph of Prague Castle, a complex of buildings in the Czech capital that gathered together between the 9th and 19th centuries. In Anderson's depiction, this huge edifice resembles an architectural model, or even a doll's house – a space where time is suspended, and fantasies are played out. Perhaps it is no wonder that one of the most persistent motifs across the artist's oeuvre is the Siamese cat who was her household companion through her childhood and adolescence. Gazing at us through its crystal blue eyes, it is an unknowable animal consciousness, a being beyond the human temporal realm.

Text by Tom Morton.