

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum *All my seven faces*

Like Alice through the rabbit hole, you are invited, dear traveler, to tumble down the steps of time, and walk into the depths of the earth. An extensive exhibition, All my seven faces covers the sinuous career of Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum—over the span of ten years and across three continents. A nomadic, multimedia artist, Sunstrum is accustomed to the idea of transitioning through multiple dimensions of being and becoming. Echoing her own journey, the title of the exhibition allows for parallel universes and alternate selves to coexist in one place and time.

In her early collages, Sunstrum invoked Asme, a character whose name playfully refers to one’s duplication (as me). Notions of mirroring through multiplicity resurfaced in later paintings, through the prism of the wild goose. Evocative of Bjork’s avatar on the Vespertine album cover—a swan—the animal symbolizes the artist’s recent life in Canada, while the overlaid figure creates palimpsest narratives. The artist’s distinct painting technique, which allows for traces of pencil to remain visible under the layers of paint, participate in making visible the “otherness” one can possess.

This voyage brings together past and future: burnt sienna emulates the architecture of Batswanan houses from Sunstrum’s childhood, while sand, blown from the Kalahari desert, piles up in the corners of the rooms. Wrapping herself and viewers in earth, the artist also propels us forward, advancing contemporary discourses on imagination. This survey of her career highlights the radicality of calling a reality, which we choose to believe univocal, fluid. And, by situating utopias within the sites of our imagination, it establishes invention as an active, ritual practice.

All my seven faces is organized by the CAC
Curator of Lens-Based Arts, Valentine Umansky.

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