

# VIN VIN

## **Collective Nostalgia**

### **Cow Mash**

**Victoria Nunley**

**Natalie Terenzini**

**Zandile Tshabalala**

**Invitation and Text by Sveva D'Antonio**

**3 June - 24 July 2021**

**Opening: 2 July 2021 4pm - 10pm**

The art world still exists. Artists, curators, gallerists, museum directors, we are all part of a system that we are presently not physically experiencing due to the impossibility of travelling and of meeting people other than our restricted circle.

Therefore, how can we reactivate our relationship, our experience as art workers?

My immediate response came up by speaking with the artists.

Let's start from here.

Collective Nostalgia is a group show of women artists born in the 90s.

The idea of the exhibition was born at the end of October 2020 after a series of Skype calls with different artists. We were talking about how we were living this period and how this pandemic was affecting us and our perception of the future. The shared feeling was a nostalgic attachment to the past, nostalgia for the present and towards the future. This dialogue enabled us to go deeper and investigate broader topics that were keeping us alive. We came up with an idea of community or even better of a feminine collective. And by then, it was clear to me whom to invite to the show at VIN VIN gallery and the process I was going to initiate. I decided to involve two artists and then propose to each of them to invite one artist.

The first artist to invite was introduced to me by one of the artists I was in contact with at that time: Rebecca Ness (b. 1992, lives and works in New Haven, USA). Rebecca suggested me to look at the work of Victoria Nunley (b. 1991, lives and works in New Jersey, USA). Nunley is a figurative painter just as Rebecca Ness. She has never questioned figuration, not for a single moment. It's the only way she can paint when looking at things like her childhood toys recently found in her parents' house. She didn't enjoy playing with toys, but she would rather stare at them and reflect on the way they look. What we find in Nunley's paintings is girlhood declined in every aspect. She gives the audience a self-examination of her private life, breakups for instance, and all sorts of feelings that are transferred to the canvas in a process of looking backwards while looking forward. Her paintings are talking for her when she is not able to put into words emotions she wants to share with the world. Nunley's universe is constellated by her everyday objects such as sneakers, cheap beer bottles and cowboy's hats. All of this contributes to portray, even non intentionally, a working-class that is concerned about the present. This generation of the 90s truly believe in supporting and helping each other, they foster an idea of collectivism that perhaps should be repeated in the everyday life.

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Having this in mind, the process of invitation - inclusion continued. So Nunley invited Natalie Terenzini (b. 1994 lives and works in New York, USA). Recently graduated from the New York Academy, Terenzini spans from traditional portrait (from a European aesthetic point of view) to mysterious representation of the female body and its surroundings, reminding a lot the so-called "Chicago Imagists". A thoughtful combination of colour and texture gives to her paintings a tactile sensation that triggers off an increased desire to see more and also, when possible, to touch.

A frustrated desire that leads to one of the possible interpretations of Nostalgia, as Victoria was pointing out in one of our conversations. <<Nostalgia is like a dream that you strive to remember but the more you try, the more it fades away>> she recalls. Nostalgia can also be a wonderful driving force (according to Victoria Nunley again speaking with me), but we have to pay attention to it because it can turn into a negative meaning if being weaponized for the wrong purpose. It's a feeling that comes with an experience of the outside world being an image, a sound, a song, a smell. Looking up in the dictionary, Natalie recalls that the nearest word to nostalgia is regret. That being said, an atmosphere of soft sadness arises and drives us to believe that this emotion is more complex than we thought, it's unreliable and multifaceted.

Documenting our present times, I couldn't ignore what is now happening in South Africa with women artists born in the 90s. Zandile Tshabalala (b. 1999 lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa) stands out for the bold glamorous gaze her paintings transfer to the viewer. The female body is depicted in all its great blackness alongside a wild sumptuous nature. In her paintings she thinks of Nostalgia as a dialogue with her former self, with what she was before and how she looks now.

Naked black women covered in fur with giant palm leaves in their hands look at you and express the artist's desire to being looked at and to being appreciative of the black colour. She considers herself a student of Kerry James Marshall for the same reason: the use of black colour to paint blackness.

A strong statement that carries us to the artist invited by Zandile: Cow Mash (b. 1994, lives and works in Pretoria, South Africa). She talks about her artistic practice starting from her self-given name: Cow. In her sculptural works, the female body is deconstructed merged with the cow to analyse the parallels of women and cows. The connection with the rural vs suburb is presented through the use of specific materials and again with the cow. For her Nostalgia is linked to a happy sadness. With this in mind, everything in her universe becomes more magic injecting, in her works a strong sense of collective spirituality linked to the collective gathering of spiritual spaces.

At the end of the discussion with all the artists, another parallel word to nostalgia came up: hope. Cow Mash was asking herself: where do we look for Hope? None of us was sure about where nor how. Sure is that Nostalgia is a past driven emotion (as Victoria proposed) while Hope is a future driven one. We should, maybe, experience both of them at the same time and convince ourselves that acting is a right choice, make things happen is positive, and that we should appreciate the now even though it's not ideal. Natalie Terenzini said that she wants to portray casual people being together. This very simple desire resonated in my head all day long and honestly gave me a possible idea of where to find Hope.

**Sveva D'Antonio**