

Talisa Lallai - Gelateria

I am 6 years old again and standing in front of the big window of the Eiscafe Venezia. One scoop of chocolate, one vanilla in a cone, please. My first bit of Italy and boundless happiness. The title of Talisa Lallai's exhibition takes me back there. The Gelateria is a place of memory, a symbol of the Italian way of life, a little vacation. Full of imaginations and longings that are closely interwoven with German-Italian history, leading back to the time of post-war society and the economic boom of the 1950s. The time when Italian migrants came to Germany, the first ice cream parlors opened in the Federal Republic, and vacation trips to Italy became increasingly more affordable and popular for Germans.

The works in Talisa Lallai's exhibition allow us to not only retrace the transfiguring effects of images associated with this country but reflect on the role that photography plays in the constitution of these ideas. We stumble upon motifs that are more than familiar to us, reminding us of private vacation photos, advertising images of travel agencies, or touristy postcard idylls. The grainy aesthetic of the photographs is reminiscent of analog color prints from the second half of the last century, while their visual language does not seem to belong to any particular time.

The story takes us to Calabria, the southern Italian region where Lallai's mother was born. The artist went on two trips before and during the pandemic, where she took the photographs with an analog camera on 35mm film. In her work, Lallai explores imaginaries and constructions of the South as a utopian paradise. Reflecting on her perspective and personal view of the country that she never lived in but visited every summer as a child, the exhibition thus presents an examination of her own (family) history and the memories that arose between Germany and Italy, raising questions about identification, belonging, and the sense of home.

The photographs appear in different formats and materialities and unfold the narrative of a South in which subjective and collective ideas intermingle. We are traveling and remembering: The light, the colors, the taste of pistacchio ice cream, the smell of the salty, warm sea. The works in the exhibition instantly transport us to the Italian summer. Or are we somewhere else?

In Diamante, our gaze clings to the stone parapet and the parallel horizon behind it, losing itself only in the play of cloud formations in the sky. Here we encounter palm leaves rustling in the summer wind. On two monitors in the room, together with the roaring and foaming surf, they create a sublime visual background noise of Super 8 film that surrounds us. On the opposite wall, water trickles from a mossy old fountain into a shiny red plastic bucket. In another room, it is the meditative splashing of the waterfall in the dark rocky gorge of the Gole del Raganello. A random glance through a lemon tree towards the blue sky transports us in seconds to the "dolce far niente", where one rests in the pleasure of doing nothing (Daydreams (Limoni)). Next to it, a rack of found postcards assures us that We are right down in the south now. In Daydreams (Gelateria) a group of young people is playing foosball next to some overflowing trash cans in front an ice cream parlor, whose whole appearance with its gloomy lettering seems to have fallen out of time. Nor do we know what time of day it is. A contradictory, almost uncanny atmosphere of proximity and distance, reality and fiction, consolidates itself. Other details in the exhibition subtly comment on our present time, bringing us back to the here and now: In front of the Gelateria, a girl wears a mask under her chin. In BIOXCARE, a disinfection bottle, brightly illuminated by the sunlight, seems frighteningly familiar.

Melancholily we are looking down on the ever-shrinking Vesuvius in the distance while the plane slowly ascends. NAP NCE, from Naples to Nice and the journey comes to an end. Arrivederci – until we meet again.

Text: Daria Bona

Talisa Lallai was born 1989 in Frankfurt/M., she lives and works in Düsseldorf. Lallai studied at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Rebecca Warren and Georg Herold (2009-2016). Current shows include Post Tropical at Museum Kleve (solo, 2019), Timbuktu, Kunstverein Reutlingen (solo, 2017), Förderstipendium, Kunststiftung DZ Bank, Frankfurt am Main (2021), and Bon Voyage!, Ludwig Forum, Aachen (group, 2020). Her works are included in the collections of Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, DZ

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Bank Stiftung Frankfurt am Main, Dekabank Frankfurt am Main, Museum Kurhaus Kleve and Museum Art.Plus, Donaueschingen. Gelateria is Talisa Lallais first solo show with Galerie Parisa Kind.