

Natia Lemay
Soft Tissue

Galerie Nicolas Robert is pleased to present *Soft Tissue*, an exhibition of new works by Natia Lemay. In this series, the figure is not staged but situated. At rest, in withdrawal, sometimes fractured or cropped, always becoming. Each piece honors the intimate topography of domestic space and the body that carries, absorbs, and resists what cannot be spoken.

These works dwell in the quiet aftermath of rupture. They offer glimpses of what Christina Sharpe, in “In the Wake: On Blackness and Being”, names as the ongoing condition of living “in the wake,” where the past is not the past, but present in flesh, gesture, and space. The wake is not only historical but intimate. It lives in the weight of bodies at rest, in scars that speak without words, in the slowed rituals of care.

To live in the wake, as Sharpe describes, is to inhabit a condition where vulnerability is shaped by proximity to historical and ongoing harm. In *Soft Tissue*, vulnerability is not a spectacle. It is interior, carefully held. The figures do not unravel. They rest. They do not confess. They remain. The darkness that surrounds them becomes both cover and care.

These are exercises in remaining. Rooms are quiet, windowless, paneled, or tight. The figures recline on couches, on beds, on floors. The body is loose, heavy, remembering. The scenes are familiar: a small dresser with moisturizers and water, a striped sofa, a soft blanket in a pile on the floor. But these spaces are not passive. They hold. They press. They become extensions that belong to the bodies inside them.

In *Soft Tissue*, black is not a void but a substance. It is the architecture of interiority. It becomes light and memory, creating both density and atmosphere. The materials—oil, acrylic, graphite, raw canvas—suggest a process of excavation and layering. In some of the paintings, the body is reduced to its parts: the weight of arms, the scarred legs of a figure dangling over the bed’s edge, a slight tilt of a head. These gestures are deliberate and unspectacular. They ask for slow looking.

Field Notes, specifically, is both wound and map. In this small painting, scar tissue is rendered as terrain, a surface that cannot be erased by time or imagination. These traces, whether inherited or self-contained, do not shriek. They vibrate. They hold. Sharpe writes of “wake work” as a mode of care, mourning, and attention to life. These paintings perform wake work on the level of the everyday: the oiling of skin, the long sit, deep conversation. They refuse spectacle and turn instead toward the soft and the sustained.

The work does not resolve into narrative. It lingers in the pause, the blur, the breath. This is not a story of recovery or revelation. It is a record of what endures beneath. *Soft Tissue* is about what the body remembers, not in clarity, but in residue. In the hush after language fails. These works do not seek to be decoded. They ask to be held.

Natia Lemay (b. 1985, Toronto) is an interdisciplinary artist raised in Winnipeg and based in Toronto, On. Her autoethnographic practice draws on personal stories to explore how the mind, body, and space interact, reflecting on lived experience as a lens to understand broader cultural and social contexts. Natia Lemay has exhibited widely throughout North America. The artist was selected for the 2024 Fountainhead residency in Miami and the 2022 Royal Drawing School Residency in Dumfries, Scotland. She was awarded the National Trust Prize at Expo Chicago 2024, with her work acquired by High Museum in Atlanta in addition to being collected by the Art Gallery of Ontario, The Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Minnesota Museum of American Art, The North Dakota Museum of Art and The Montclair Museum of Art. She received her BFA from Ontario College of Art and Design in 2021 with a minor in Social Sciences and her MFA from Yale School of Art in 2023.