

“She Came to Stay”

Bambou Gili, Emma Cousin, Nadia Waheed, Lucile Littot, Krista Louise Smith, Sola Olulode, Zofia Patucha, Astrid Terrazas, Ania Hobson, H el ene Padoux, Mary Stephenson, Xiuching Tsay, Paula Kamps, Lise Stoufflet, Sara Rahmanian, Nicolette Mishkan, Elizabeth Jaeger, Rewind Collective

Curated by Domenico de Chirico

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“She Came to Stay” was Simone de Beauvoir’s first novel published in 1943, the work that made her an author. It explores a difficult theme: the so-called *m enage   trois*, meaning the introduction of a third party into a couple, changing its entire balance and forcing each one to reveal themselves before someone else’s gaze. The above-mentioned novel exceedingly explores various topics—essential for us—such as existentialism as freedom, anger, and the Other. Simone de Beauvoir talked about women’s condition in its entirety, seen through the lenses of existentialism. Martin Heidegger’s philosophy had a great influence on her way of thinking, as revealed in statements such as the following: “Existing is daring to throw oneself into the world.” The author’s relationship with time was central: living is exorcizing time and the present is the moment for choices and action; one must fully live their own life, yet without surrendering when problems occur. Freedom is indeed an ambiguous condition, where we are both objects and subjects at the same time. The above-mentioned group show, titled “She Came to Stay” after such theories and aspirations, aims at examining these conditions from the point of view of latest-generation female artists. “Being,” in this case, is a verb with a capital B, not the act of taking a break but actively introducing oneself into the mess of the complexities of reality in order to praise it.

The artists who will take part in the exhibition are the following. **Bambou Gili**’s inscrutable paintings, characterized by long arms and enigmatic female faces, between cerulean tones and strong brushes, convey casual tension. **Emma Cousin** draws things in front of her, those imagined and those felt: she is interested in exploring normative tensions inside contemporary society, employing a darkly comic yet irreverent facade of female characters to do so. Painting supporting ideas, mobility and progress, she illustrates metaphors to explore the consequent break of the regular correspondence between concepts and words and the tension between figurative meaning and its literal application. Autobiographic at its

core and characterized by precise brushes and bold colors, **Nadia Waheed's** work focuses on themes such as integration, diversity and identity. With her porcelains, **Lucile Littot** seeks to animate paintings, videos and performances of those archetypes that are autobiographical motifs, as well as clichés of cinema history. All of these elements are developed in a system of generalized equivalence between reality and fiction, between different epochs and artistic registers. Her work, strongly characterized by a certain feminine touch, turns into scenarios of a casual and morbid decadence with rococo influences. Characterized by graceful touches made from the use of semitransparent oils and mindlessly drawn lines, **Krista Louise Smith's** work, cathartic at its core, conveys infinite and contagious lightness; here, physical experiences, emotional and spiritual, are all on the same level. **Sola Olulode's** paintings are true social bodies and spaces of unity and friendship. They constitute an elegy to the personalities of Black History, challenging social exclusivity and celebrating individual and collective expression. In their context, they canalize London's current nightlife, although creating "anti-spaces" that remove any spatial bonds. The dreamlike space in these works releases the figures from a pre-fixed context: allowing the body to be at the center of the scene, it highlights movement, gesture and dance as binding forces which reflect personal and collective experiences, individuality and relational strength. The electric and freed body, therefore, is not restrained by rigid identity labels which enclose and divide the social body into distinctive members. As in most of her paintings, **Zofia Pałucha's** poetic cannot be interpreted in simple terms. Having the world on your fingertips, on your laptop and phone screen, and using painting's contemporary language in all its potential, Pałucha creates unique imageries evocating a charming combination of fear and excitement for the void. It's a mere form of rebellion against conventions and the lack of imagination, against nationalism and all the diseases that hit modern societies since only those who create to transform the world can contribute to its progress. **Astrid Terrazas** rewrites worlds. Her tales reflect ancestral folklore, real-life experiences and celestial transfigurations. They are stories that push personal and collective trauma towards tangible healing. Terrazas uses motifs as artifacts of protection, meant to put a security spell on whoever encounters them. Her work becomes paint, illustrated ceramic vases and mixed technique sculpture. With her portrayals of people that pose, lean, conversate in bars, bedrooms and cars, **Ania Hobson** develops escape fantasies and gives voice to little psychodramas of everyday life. Using elements of portraits, bold colors, and facial expressions that are often intense and contemplative, Hobson invites us to explore a new world that swings between reality and a daydream. **Hélène Padoux** gives us dreamlike scenes meant to illustrate the ambiguity of pure emotion and the impossibility to preserve innocence, where the seductive sweetness is intertwined with threatening toxicity. Padoux's universe, represented by tender fruits and flowers, with an emotional and protective tendency towards what is tiny and vulnerable, is juxtaposed to the sense of

manipulation and exploitation. **Mary Stephenson's** art examines real life through a playful approach that explores social behaviors with a romantic note. Stephenson's work intertwines narrations and draws complex and surreal scenes. She uses humor and distraction to create tension and apprehension, through the use of objects represented as characters. These objects play a central role in her work because they both control and, at the same time, are controlled by the situations where they are placed. Objects are as important as the characters she draws. The theme of "conspicuous consumerism" is explored in many of her artworks, in an evanescent examination of the human desire to adapt and belong. Paintings become a warehouse of excessive thoughts, layering contradicting narrations and emotions to represent the mania of the projected self. Stephenson offers us a magnifying glass with which we can see from close-up our constructed identities. **Xiuching Tsay's** job is to light up the objects belonging to memories, resuscitating their essences and finding their hidden characters through an ecstatic quality of vision, adopting the concept of hallucination to recondition its perceptions through inanimate objects. This dazzling practice experiments with the concept of water because it has both metaphorical and substantial qualities which hide infinite visions, merging all the possible topics in the most ambiguous forms. Water metaphors always play an important role in her paintings, opening endless imaginations; its tumultuous movement, like vortexes' spiral schemes, prevails on its emotions, inducing them to the multi-layered spirituality of an object. **Paula Kamps's** art explores those means traditionally considered less important in painting. She develops a technique halfway through watercolors and drawing, spreading wide strips resembling stains, which reveal everyday figures shattered all over the canvas. Each memory or scene is like a new layer overlapping with another. **Lise Stoufflet's** artworks, halfway through painting and drawing, are innocently bewildering and marvelously surreal. Narration is richly present in her paintings: the story is often unclear and rather frightening. Part of this tension derives from the marvelously contained manipulation of color, matching the contrast between light pastel colors and darker, bold shades, creating a mysterious and intriguing atmosphere. Each work is a snapshot of a wider sequence, a hint to a complex story without however revealing what exactly is going on. Her artworks invite the viewer to dialogue with her colors and shapes. **Sara Rahmanian** is a multi-disciplined artist who is fascinated by everyday objects and by the absurdity of contemporary life. She uses painting to explore the imaginary differences between reality and perception. Painting on coffee filters or cloth panels, she draws from first-person perspectives to create a greater sense of contemplation around what surrounds us. Painting is its undisputed means to play hide and seek with objects, but more often than not, this scholarly process surprises her. **Nicolette Mishkan** is enigmatic and sexy, confident, reckless, and all this is greatly conveyed by her artworks. Mermaids are the perpetual and permanent leitmotiv of her artistic production. It is a mortal mocking: their song is seductive and relaxing at the same time and it is their last melody,

mythologically speaking, that many sailors hear before being swallowed by the unknown. Fins are both a phallic and undoubted feminine element. It is an ephemeral union of cosmic harmonies whose balance is debatable.

Elizabeth Jaeger's sculptures incorporate common figurative elements in the existential ideas of reality and perception. Sculptures like elongated human bodies with mask-like faces, trunk torsos, greyhounds, furniture or empty vases usually start with a personal experience or event. From there, they explain a wider picture of phenomenological preoccupations. Despite an apparent familiarity with objects' figurativeness, there is a sense of apprehension and subtle uneasiness in Jaeger's work which challenges the relationship between the viewer and their own physicality, the surrounding environment and their conscience. **Rewind Collective** is a digital art collective that tackles gender and minority inequalities in the art world. They create original digital artworks in response to already existing artworks. It is time to rewind the patriarchy, misogyny and segregation and shed a light on those who deserve to be seen and heard.