

Un être humain a une racine par sa participation réelle, active et naturelle à l'existence d'une collectivité qui conserve vivants certains trésors du passé et certains pressentiments d'avenir.

Simone Weil, L'Enracinement

Faceless figures appear fading amidst abstract landscapes that teeter on the edge of reality and dream. These are the paintings of Christiane Pooley whose practice explores place as both a physical environment and an emotional state that transcends time and geographical boundaries. For her first solo exhibition at Gallery38 in Tokyo, the Chilean artist presents a powerful new body of work, entitled *Distance*, that contemplates notions of dislocation and absence.

Pooley's practice is deeply embedded in her own personal explorations of place while also reflecting on the wider complexities of origin. She was born and grew up in Araucanía, a region in southern Chile that was incorporated into the national territory by means of military occupation and colonisation in the late 19th century. Since then, there has been a continuing conflict between the original inhabitants (who were forcibly assimilated to a newly-built Chilean identity) and the settlers, provoking complex discourse around identity, land ownership and belonging.

Pooley utilises archival photographs from her own family to explore Chile's complex history through an intimate and non-confrontational lens. "I'm interested in how we deal with distance, whether it's physical disconnection from our friends, family or homes, or the void between memories of the past and present realities," she says. This latest series of works also meditates on the ongoing impact of the pandemic, specifically in terms of how we use technology to socialise in the absence of physical connection. The vertical format of the paintings evokes the familiar format of a phone screen, which is increasingly becoming a kind of conduit for intimacy whether it's through video calls, messaging or social media, while the materiality of paint and visible brushstrokes evoke a bodily presence. Meanwhile, the archival images become abstracted through the process of painting, merging with the artist's memories and experiences to create poetic, liminal spaces in which figures and landscapes overlap and blur into one another, sometimes to the point of erasure. In the painting entitled *Summer*, for example, two children appear half consumed by dynamic gestures of green paint. While the title and soft colour palette direct our understanding of the scene, the removal of a specific context or temporality invites a more emotional engagement with the image.

Many of the paintings possess a compelling sense of tenderness and longing, but these are by no means works of romanticism or nostalgia. The balance between vivid, concrete details and more abstract elements creates a palpable tension and slightly uncanny atmosphere. The painting *Behind the hill*, for example, depicts a line of people on horseback riding through a pathway between grey mountains towards a dark sky that's marked by a surreal, vibrant red triangle on the horizon. Inspired by Rothko's compositions, this work explores depth, spatially and emotionally, through the layering of different forms of representation and a considered use of colour.

Elsewhere, Pooley explores a different kind of abstraction through the use of recurring imagery that plays out across multiple canvases, drawing attention to her source material and the artifice of painting. "For me, the process of repetition is a way of asserting an identity that is currently being challenged and at risk of being erased," says the artist. As such, we are presented with a tense, haunting kind of beauty in which vivid glimpses of intimate memories are caught suspended in the process of fading.



*Summer
2021
27x22cm*

CHRISTIANE POOLEY

Born 1983 in Temuco, Chile
Lives and works in Paris, France

2006 Postgraduate Diploma Fine Art, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London
2001-2005 BA Fine Art, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *The Need for Roots*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London
2019 *La Primera Piedra*, Galería Patricia Ready, Santiago
2018 *Landscapes Beneath*, Bendana Pinel Art Contemporain, Paris
2016 *La forêt est là et me regarde*, Bendana Pinel Art Contemporain, Paris

Exhibition detail:

Christiane Pooley [Distance]

Date: September 23 (Thu) - November 14 (Sun), 2021

Hours : 12:00 - 19:00

Closed on: Mon, Tue and National Holidays

There may be irregular changes without notice. Please kindly check our website and SNS page before visiting.

Place: Gallery 38

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