

**12—20**  
**MAY 2021**

# NOSTALGIA

CURATED  
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You are more than welcome to the grand opening of 'Nostalgia' on the 12th of May, where I intend to curate an exhibition featuring nine pieces of artwork in collaboration with six different artists. Delving into themes of nostalgia, déjà vu, emotions, and past and present memories, I will focus on the 'Affect theory', originally attributed to Silvan Tomkins.

My role here is to create an exhibition that explores contemporary issues on social, political, and cultural levels, in a creative way. We, as curators, spend a lot of time selecting and displaying artworks that not only encourage my viewers to participate but also help them clear their thoughts and ideas, acting as a "lens through which they look". Some may even say that exhibitions like this "become an artwork itself" (Murgida, 2018), challenging them to re-think their definitions of exhibitions, curators, and artists.

In the same way that Ryan (2009) addresses that "the art of seeing lies in the attention and subjectivity of sight", I personally believe that there should be an emphasis on the process of looking at art. For this reason, my exhibition should be a place where you pay attention to the spectacle, not just feel like a mere spectator (Augé, 1995, p.86).

To be able to retain information and memories, our brain requires to recognize and interpret mental and emotional factors. Likewise, to be something other than a fantasy, what we remember must have taken place somewhere, "it would be extremely difficult to describe the event if one did not image the place" (1997, p230). Thus, the importance of the connection between our memories and places. According to Thomas (Merton, 1968), the memories that lack localisation run the risk of being lost. Memories will always live on borrowed time;

threatened by the slightest accident. One insignificant change and you no longer know where you are. (Truc, 2011, p149.)

Hence, I chose to explore Tomkins's theory. The Affect theory is less about what we see, but more about what we feel. It is a reflective mode of analysis; by focusing on our feelings, gives special interest "to the subtle and implicit aspects of experience that shape how and what shows up in encounters with the world". (Simecek, 2020, p.1)

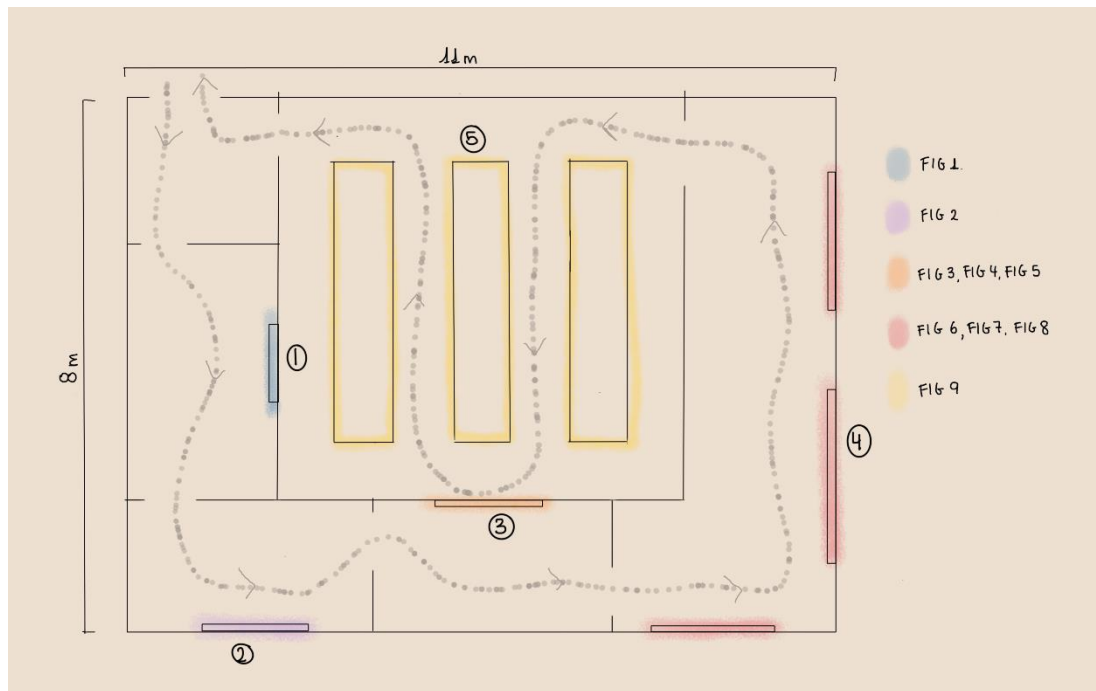
*"Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them" – Simo O'Sullivan, 2001*

My intention is to make my viewers identify and understand what they feel or what occurs when they face an artefact. In an article about Devorah Sperber's exhibition, Ryan (2009) explains how her work is influenced by the idea that each artwork is 'made' by the viewer.

"Seeing art forms and artworks as structures of feeling, opens up a way of understanding and analysing works as subjective, response-dependent, not just as a simple interaction between work and a spectator".

(Simecek, 2020, p.2)

This exhibition will take place in a big and open space, where all the pieces will be displayed separately. With the dimensions of (11x8 m), you will have the opportunity to experience every single piece of artwork carefully and privately. That way you will be able to embrace every emotion and sensation you might feel.



Although this space will be entirely white, the room will stay dark, with some subtle lights focusing on the pieces. I have chosen white walls to further enhance the spectrum of colours of each painting. Through curation, I have carefully chosen the following pieces, aiming to support my concept.

As far as I am concerned, our memory is a complex but underrated feeling. For Halbwachs (1997, quoted in Truc, 2011 p. 148), memory is, as we know, "a reconstruction of the past using data taken from the present". However, our brain sometimes has the ability to recognize objects without identifying them. Which Bolte and Goschke (2008) refer to as a feeling of 'intuition' or 'familiarity'.



*Figure 1: Déjà vu, Monika Furmaniak (2017)*

I have chosen this painting by Monika Furmaniak entitled 'Déjà Vu' to highlight that uncanny feeling of 'familiarity'; that whatever you are currently experiencing, you have already experienced it. At the same time, you also know that that familiarity is false, in fact, that it cannot be true. (Gagosian Gallery, 2015).

With the dimensions of 100 W x 120 H x 1 D cm, this piece seeks to represent that moment when your sense becomes one, and for an instance, you blurrily experience the 'here and now' and 'the future' at once. All I want with this painting is for you to realize how déjà vu is a feeling that can be easily observed outside one's body. Which supports my concept.



Figure 2: Déjà vu sculpture, Vivid Venus.

In the next room, there will be displayed a six-piece series of metal sculptures that uses geometric forms to emulate varied street encounters. Also entitled 'déjà vu', these mirrors (152 x 97 cm) act as a reminder that the viewer has likely participated in all sorts of sidewalks interactions. "Each interaction appears individual from the outset but is born from the same entities human reaction and interaction" (Vivid Venus, n.d.)



Figure 3: Déjà vu sculpture, Vivid Venus.

For you, it is a relatable experience; it just feels like a mere memory. That is why not only you get confused and irritated, but you also feel overwhelmed with strong emotions, particularly feelings of nostalgia.

This sense of nostalgia has inspired artworks for centuries. It allows artists to recall memories and meanings from the past in a way that might be even painful. So, nostalgia is the suffering caused by an unappeased desire to return. (Kundera, 2002)



Figure 4: Banana split, Isabella Innis (2019)



Figure 5: Banana peel, Isabella Innis (2019)



Figure 6: Major, Minor, Ticking Timer, Isabella Innis (2019)

These three pieces by Isabella Innis will be displayed in the next room. I chose these paintings (with the dimensions of 25 x 25 cm), because not only they are able to express a variety of nostalgic modes, evoking both the joy and grief of past memories, but they also represent her relationship with childhood scenes, motifs, and emotions.

Symbolizing commonplace objects, such as the banana, and contrasting the colour gradients with geometric forms and chaotic charcoal lines, the artist managed to link the universal to the personal. "Isabella infuses her work with childish energy and graphic aesthetic which is intrinsic to her generation and the times we live in" (Resident publications, 2019)

Since the birth of the internet, human civilization is increasingly approaching the next technological singularity. And as a result of this explosive advancement of technology, nostalgia has become an effective way to trace back to one's history and retain and reshape individual or collective cultural identity. (Anon, n.d.)



Figure 7: p1904- Electronic Nostalgia, Kim Young-Hun (2019)



Figure 8: p1831-Electronic Nostalgia, Kim Young-Hun (2018)

With the approach of this next technological development, what will nostalgia mean to us if, from now on, the human memory is documented digitally? Where would we place ourselves?

I chose Kim's screen-like paintings, as with their paradoxical designs, they can provoke disorientation, joy, or harmony, as "the viewer suspends ordinary visual perception as they tentatively stay afloat in the grooves of distortion." (Artnet, n.d)

Having taken part as the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of television watchers, Kim wanted to reclaim those childhood memories, by combining an analogue moment in our digital era of technology.



*Figure 9: p1906- Electronic Nostalgia, Kim Young-Hun (2019)*

With thin layers of paint repeated across the whole canvas, Kim slightly trembles his hands to create this virtual skin tracing the fluid behaviour of the line. The spectrum of the colour chosen, such as the saturated pink and green, expresses the duality between painting before and after the digital revolution.

Displaying trails of human forms moving from one point to another, this last artwork serves as a type of remembrance. My intention with this scene is for the viewer to engage and capture a sense of time and its correlation to movement within space, allowing you to contemplate how often we retrace our steps without even realizing it.



*Figure 10: Déjà Vu VII, Pia Männikkö (2019)*

By just using tulle fabric and ink, the artist Pia Männikkö, captures, in each panel, a moment frozen in time. To make the silhouettes appear ghostly or like distant shadows, they are hanged from the ceiling in a layered format.

Altogether, there will be three sequences, through which people can walk through and around, so they view the installation from different angles. The sense of movement will be also emphasized by an air draft, which will make the light fabrics move.



*Figure 11: Déjà Vu IV, Pia Männikkös (2011)*

On the whole, I just hope this exhibition feels like a step back in time, specifically of your past memories or feelings.

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1: *Déjà vu*, Monika Furmaniak (2017). Accessed from: <https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-Deja-vu/763174/3362043/view>

Figure 2: *Déjà vu sculpture*, Vivid Venus. Accessed from: <http://www.vividvenus.com/product/deja-vu-sculpture>

Figure 3: *Déjà vu sculpture*, Vivid Venus. Accessed from: <http://www.vividvenus.com/product/deja-vu-sculpture>

Figure 4: *Banana split*, Isabella Innis (2019) Accessed from: <https://www.isabellainnis.com/threes-company-2019>

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Figure 7: *p1904- Electronic Nostalgia*, Kim Young-Hun (2019) Accessed from: <https://www.artnet.com/galleries/galerie-richard/electronic-nostalgia>

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Figure 9: *p1906- Electronic Nostalgia*, Kim Young-Hun (2019) Accessed from: <https://www.artnet.com/galleries/galerie-richard/electronic-nostalgia>

Figure 10: *Déjà Vu VII*, Pia Männikkö (2019) Accessed from: <https://mymodernmet.com/pia-mannikko-deja-vu/>

Figure 11: *Déjà Vu IV*, Pia Männikkö (2011). Accessed from: <https://mymodernmet.com/pia-mannikko-deja-vu/>

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