

*Future sun* (Rosalind Nashashibi & Lucy Skaer)

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Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer have two distinctive art practices but they have been working as a duo since 2005. This winter, they are inhabiting the first floor of the Ghent Contemporary Art Museum, the SMAK, with a captivating exhibition, bringing together their individual and collectives works.

It's a very oneiric show, where paintings, sculptures and most of all films immerse the viewer in a dream, intertwining different imaginaries : a Middle-Eastern universe, of unclear origin (perhaps Palestinian, given the roots of Nashashibi), both domestic and sacred; a second universe, carrying memories of rural and industrial England in the 19th century, and of its post-industrial, and unoccupied condition in the 20th century; and finally, a third universe, an exotic world.

The movies displayed in the exhibition resemble entrances to or exits from the imaginary immaterial world, collaboratively created by the artists. Or as if they were fomenting surprising indecision, whispering, challenging questions: Are we in front of the film, or inside it? And when are we in front of or inside it? When we, as viewers, are in the rooms where they are effectively projected, or when we are in the other rooms of the exhibition, inhabited by sculptures and paintings resembling props from the film which might also be entrances (or exits, or intercessors) as well? As if we were facing movies encompassing, extending into the surroundings...

Gathering all the signs expressed in the exhibition, the metaphorical space materialized through the whole





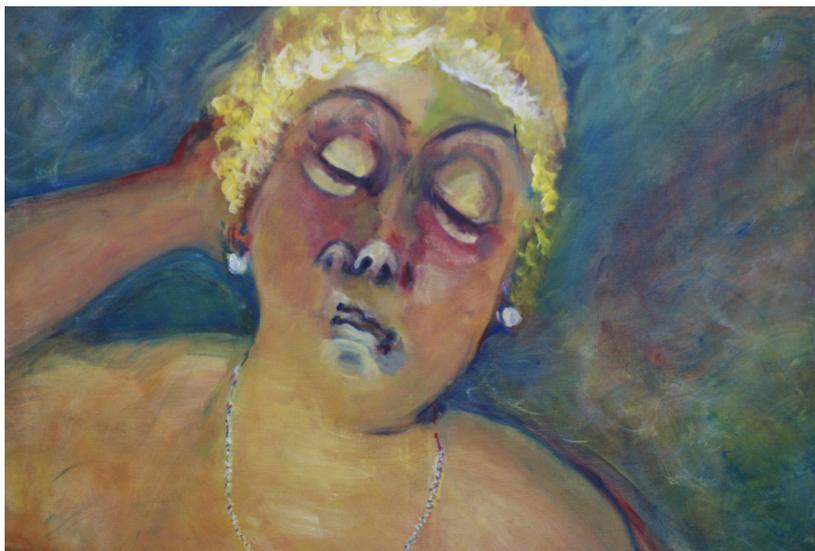
scenography seems to hybridize the indigeneous hut/farm, the English seaside villa, the abandoned industrial building, and the occidental office.

This would be the cinematic, dream-like landscape depicted by the two artists with their selection of works. Thus the exhibition affirms its kaleidoscopic, mnemonic form, and soon we understand that its true concern can be localized here. Effectively, it meditates on actual globalization and digitalization, where times, spaces, cultures and individuals who were not supposed to meet, are now next to each other (or even within each other). This is also the case for history which acts on the present like never before -history suddenly becomes alive, animated.

The manifestations of this “animated” history can be found in the exhibition in two figures, erected as divinities, reappearing in different works, sometimes in a film, sometimes in a painting or a sculpture : the woman and the sheep. It is all of the humanity and animality of these two beings that Nashashibi and Skaer underline with emotion in their exhibition-as-movie/movie-as-exhibition. These two beings bind cultures, for we find them everywhere, in the occidental, oriental and exotic worlds.

In this respect, the 16mm film *Lamb* (2019) is focused on the stalls of a farm, where sheeps are kept. We dive into their velvet furs, safekeeping all the memories of their presence in the world, and their confrontation with humans and spaces. We contemplate disarming scenes: the birth of a lamb, the mother cleaning it with her ton-





gue, sheep nestled against each other, and so forth.

While *Why are you angry* (2017), in turn, is a movie combining vivid colours and grainy black and white, showing indigenous woman, lascivious and innocent, in their modest houses, or suddenly preoccupied, in cars or planes. It has something anachronic and/or eternal. It reminds the creatures painted by Gauguin or filmed by F.W. Murnau, but soon we come back abruptly to the contemporary world, with its neuroses.

These two films may refer to Robert Bresson admirable movie's *Au hasard Balthazar* (FR 1966), where a donkey, equally mythological, is the protagonist. He is portrayed as a martyr and shows all the daily violence towards others that humans are capable of, but also all the majesty of the one who resists to the oppression until his or her last breath.

However, Nashashibi and Skaer, through their works, do not especially insist on the weight that the divine figures of the sheep and the woman would have to carry on their shoulders. It's rather their inner power, and their sensuality that are highlighted. And for sure, all the elegance of this show rests in its capacity to deal with preoccupations of our times (in this case feminism, ecology, and social structures) through a mesmerizing and unexpected approach. And we call to the ancient and sacred dimensions of the woman and the animal, who were already venerated in ancient civilizations, for their cathartic and redeeming powers.

