

YOSSI MILO



For Immediate Release:

Natia Lemay: *Nineteen Eighty-Five*

**Artist's Reception: Thursday, May 11, 6-8 PM
May 11 – June 17, 2023**

Yossi Milo is pleased to announce *Nineteen Eighty-Five*, Natia Lemay's debut solo exhibition in New York and first with the gallery. Opening on Thursday, May 11 and on view through Saturday, June 17, the exhibition will present new works exploring psychological, metaphysical, and material spaces of 'home.'

Natia Lemay engages her practice as a means of building new notions of home. Hailing from T'karonto (Toronto), Canada, the artist navigated much of her childhood through insecure housing and environments of drug use, impeding a firm sense of home from ever fully forming. This precarious and formative period of the artist's life exists only in the realm of memory, as she possesses almost no photographs from those years. Revisiting and processing these memories as an adult, Lemay paints images and visions of herself at different moments in her childhood, and sculpts miniatures of the furniture from the transient spaces she inhabited. Lemay's paintings and sculptures are the result of this investigative process, allowing the artist to recuperate lost memories, and trace a path of trauma and dispossession beginning with settler colonialism and leading up to the present day. Working across multiple mediums, Lemay steers this path towards a future of healing.

The artist's painted worlds of black bring her own visions of home to light, turning the very color of black itself into a paradox of visibility. Of mixed Afro-Indigenous descent, Lemay learned to find refuge in the traditions of her ancestors, from a spiritual reverence for trees, to the form of the circle as a symbolic demarcation of home, referencing drum circles, dream catchers, and beads worn in braided hair. Today, Lemay calls upon these traditions in her art practice to recall memories, trace the generations of trauma inflicted by settler-colonialism, and invoke the embodied knowledge inherited from her ancestors.

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Included in the show is *Untitled (2022)*, a circular painting depicting two children standing in a barren room. The figures are childhood versions of Lemay herself and her brother, the likenesses of whom the artist referenced from one of the only photographs she has from her childhood. In *Untitled (2022)*, the artist and her brother are positioned at the very fore of the composition with their bodies partially cropped by the curved edge of the canvas, as if being simultaneously pulled into close focus and pushed into the peripheries. Lemay is painted entirely in black, while her brother is rendered in full color. The artist chromatically distinguishes between the two in acknowledgement of the different lived experiences of gender within a patriarchal society. While both are of Afro-Indigenous descent, and both live in the same environment of neglect, the female child slips further into the oblivion of her background due to the social positioning of her gender. The intersecting layers of race, culture, age, and gender are constantly subject to scrutiny in Lemay's work, a process that allows the artist to process and emerge from the traumas that permeated her childhood.

Alongside the paintings presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Five*, Lemay will debut a new body of sculptural works, including miniature versions of stacked furniture made from soapstone. Throughout her practice, the artist returns to furniture for its quotidian yet powerful significance in our domestic lives. Despite their impermanence in Lemay's childhood, the artist regards these objects as permanent fixtures of memory, linking the present to the past through fleeting visions and remembrances. Rebuilding these relics from soapstone, Lemay draws a parallel between the material as something that is at once extremely heavy yet soft, and the transitory experiences of home she had as a child. As members of the Indigenous Nation of Mi'kmaq, the artist and her ancestors have been dispossessed of their land by the European colonial project, which continues to have devastating and rippling impacts today. With her soapstone sculptures, Lemay returns to the land, harnessing the Earth's resources to reconfigure the structural components of homes lost and forgotten. Placed in conversation with painted memories and visions of the past, these sculptures ask the viewer to find both comfort and discomfort as they too are made to grapple with histories manifested in the present, both materially and psychologically.

Natia Lemay (b. 1985; T'karonto [Toronto], Canada) has exhibited widely throughout North America, including at Green Hall Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT; Mayten's Gallery, Toronto, Canada; and Artscape, Toronto, Canada, among others. The artist was selected for the 2022 Royal Drawing School Residency in Dumfries, Scotland and was the recipient of the 2020 Christopher Pratt & Mary West Pratt Bursary and 2020 OCAD University Diversity and Equity Excellence Award, among others. She received her BFA from Ontario College of Art & Design University in 2021 and is a 2023 MFA candidate at Yale School of Art. Lemay currently lives and works in New Haven, CT.

For more information, please contact Jack Cassou at 212.414.0370 or jack@yossimilo.com, or visit the gallery's website at www.yossimilo.com

Image: Natia Lemay, *You'll Get a Better Look at the World... and the World Will Get a Better Look at You*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 46" x 48" (117 x 122 cm)