ALMINE RECH

Haley Josephs
Every Part of the Dream

Nov 17 — Dec 22, 2022 | London

Almine Rech London is pleased to present Every Part of the Dream, Haley Josephs' second solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition will be on view from November 17 to December 22, 2022, presenting new paintings and a selection of pastel drawings.

The exhibition begins with *Food Sloshing in Baby's Mouth / Sunlight Through Window* (2022), where a baby is being fed breakfast as rays of sunshine beam through the window and onto the scene. A myriad of sensory experiences are highlighted: the warmth of the morning sun, the food and flavours being energetically consumed, the hands of the mother or caretaker as they gently yet firmly support the rapidly growing body. This illustrates the beginning, where an equation begins to be assembled–what it means to be alive. In attending to what Josephs considers the 'dream of reality', our experience of the world becomes a dream and a seductive illusion. Therein, the human subject experiences something akin to an education on how our modes of interpretation can materialise within this new sphere of consciousness.

As we continue in the exhibition, we witness the figure travelling on their way–an open pathway presenting the journey forward through the dream. The potential purpose for each figure is to awaken. The encompassing wilderness, and the way in which wilderness itself is 'alive', forces the figure to snap out of the dream and into the present. After the dreamer awakens, the surrounding landscape provides a restorative awareness of reality. Consequently, dreams provide a gestural language that can convey the beauty of reality when words fail to articulate the multitudes of perception and experience.

Landscape, wilderness, and the pastoral are crucial to Josephs' work, but especially in this new body of work. Following *Psychopomp* (2021), her last solo exhibition with Almine Rech, Josephs spent a formative sojourn in Maine, hiking in Acadia National Park and Quoddy Head State Park, known as the easternmost point of the United States. These landscapes evoked dreams and memories that Josephs frequently revisits, and they are part of the creative impetus behind the paintings in *Every Part of the Dream*. "*When I was a little girl, I used to sit at my bedroom window and squish my head against the glass to look far into the distance where I could see these periwinkle blue rolling hills and mountains*," Josephs recalls from when she lived in Pittsburgh. "*I don't even know if they were real or if I imagined them, but this memory is vivid. I would sit there and stare and cry because it felt like a land I was meant to be in but could never get to.*"

The notion of the pastoral, with Josephs' focus on landscape and how human subjectivity is interdependent with it, is key to reading her works, both in this exhibition and in her larger oeuvre. Likewise, Josephs finds an affinity with the German expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) and his use of inviting, vibrant colours, notably in the paintings he completed in the Swiss Alps. In equal measure, Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), is formally kindred to Josephs' works and her authorial intent. In relation to Joan Lindsay's novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1967) and its cinematic adaptation, Scholar Victoria Bladen contends that the pastoral genre

"*[...] embodies an encounter with the mystery of life because it situates the human at the liminal periphery of urban space and culture and at the frontier of that which humanity has emerged from and to which it remains tied, albeit estranged in many ways: nature. The pastoral genre is thus uniquely placed to philosophise on what the state of being human encompasses.*"

Every Part of the Dream continues Josephs' own intervention into the pastoral genre, with her vivid and atmospherically dynamic paintings that moreover evoke their own surrealism and expressionism, particularly when considering the role of the oneiric, or the evocation of dreams in their endless spectra of possibility; through day dreams, night dreams, or visions. The possibility of awakening within the dreams is ever-present, and the dream itself offers the pathway to transformation.

Josephs' work, however, deviates from Joan Lindsay's novel and Peter Weir's film through spiritual idealism and a faith in the resilience of the human spirit. Dreams in their myriad forms and nature are symbiotic to overcoming loss, grief, and the confusion that follows the uncertainties of the human experience. In Victoria Bladen's meditation on *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, she emphasises how the text addresses the trauma of loss, and how temporality, or one's relationship with time, can be rendered within the pastoral genre:

"*Pastoral deals with some of the most significant aspects of the human condition: its relationship to nature, its experience of beauty, desire and love, and the profound sense of loss at the core of life. Pastoral is a lament, a type of pining for the absent, past or future, for the loss of beauty and recognition of the ephemeral, transient quality of life.*"

The transience of life, through the corporeal and the spiritual, is a dual site that Josephs dwells upon in her work. In *Heads Crack Open / Let God Come In* (2022), Josephs imagined the figure reaching a mountain peak while hiking. At this peak, the figure goes through a transformational awakening. In her words: "*Their true self is revealed as they let go and witness the surrounding beauty*." In this moment the dream is cracked open to give way to the true beauty of reality and presence.

Animals and people coexist throughout the various compositions. The animals act as witnesses to the every day, and the figure (often clad in hiking boots to symbolise their perpetual journey) is witness to the transcendent. *Every Part of the Dream* is, put simply, a page out of the journal of humankind, from the perspective of the artist.

— Kristen Cochrane, writer and researcher