

MORTA JONYNAITĖ

LIGHT RAIN WITH BIG DROPS

At these moments she thinks that her life could be drawn as two intersecting lines: one horizontal, which charts everything that has happened to her, everything she's seen or heard at every instant, and the other vertical, with only a few images clinging to it, spiralling down into darkness.

Annie Ernaux, *The Years*

Morta Jonynaitė's solo exhibition *Light Rain with Big Drops* is akin to *The Years*, a novel by Nobel Prize for Literature winner Annie Ernaux, in that it presents an intersection of two different types of memory. One is personal, pertaining to the protagonist's experiences at different stages in her life. Worn and faded, it manifests as fragments of memories the narrator picks through in the vast sieve of time. The other is collective. It brings together pieces of communal past time and weaves the threads of generational change into a shared fabric of interconnected individuals. These two types of memories form a web of recollections where one becomes another, where the personal overlaps with the collective, and the individual with the universal.

Created using a variety of weaving techniques, Morta's works were physically laborious. They are proof of consistent effort and dedication. This persistent toil is an important ingredient in the energy field of these works, tying them in with the creations of past weavers. Like many other countries, in ancient Lithuania, fabrics and handicrafts were often produced collectively. Only a handful of names involved in this process have been recorded, the rest lost to the sands of time. The fabric therefore becomes a bridge across time, connecting past and present generations, collective and personal experiences.

The artist's works demonstrate a certain lightness. They are almost like woven watercolours, both thanks to their faded pastel colours, and their references to landscapes. They are either suspended mid-air or laid down like everyday objects. Simple and unpretentious, they exist as individuals but tend to form groups. Morta draws out their voices by seamlessly combining ornaments and colours, letting them speak both in unison and one-by-one.

The theme of the female creator is important to Morta. She tells stories in a similar way to Ernaux, only through textiles rather than text (notably, both words share the same root). She alludes to specific experiences that have left a mark in her memory map. The narrative is often syncopated and fragmented, taking us back to various times in the artist's past. The fabrics, handled with thousands of delicate touches, evoke femininity, while certain works, such as *Chimeras* or *Pink Street Boys*, speak of women's experiences in society.

A musical, poetic language with no strict rhythm dominates in the exhibition. The polyphonic collection of works is aimed at enveloping the viewer and creating a memorable experience rather than communicating meanings and ideas. Each work feels different to the touch – some have softer surfaces, others are rougher. All of them, however, are woven from the threads of lived experience. Perhaps more aptly than this text, the impression of the exhibition is conveyed by the brief yet poignant lines of the poem found at the end of Ernaux's novel:

*I leaned against the beauty of the world
And I held the smell of the seasons in my hands*

PAULIUS ANDRIUŠKEVIČIUS

You step into a sticky bar that reeks of beer. A punk rock show is on. You lose yourself in a crowd of men pogoing. In here, you're more like them. *Pink Street Boys* is a white wool coat soaked in acrid sweat, which I wove in a pattern created by Dolly Pratt. In doing so, I've knocked out that boxer whose light but annoying touches have left marks on my body.

I step outside with my ears ringing and wander around for a long time, until I meet you. From that moment, our story is shared. *Blissfully Unaware* is about a summer that melted away so quickly, the mildest autumn, the warmest winter, the brightest spring. For four years, I lived entirely in memories and perhaps spent too much energy trying to keep them vivid.

I move further back, to a time when I used to watch other passengers on the bus. *Departed*. When I see elderly people on public transport, I offer them my seat. These small exchanges provide at least a modicum of contact. On the streets, they are forgotten, fading, worn out over many years, same as their jackets, their trousers, and their memory.

I get off at the Green Bridge. *10 Minutes of Vilnius Silence*. Pigeons squabbling against the background of a constantly rotating billboard, tired faces around me keeping their distance, staring blankly as this was before we had smartphones.

Miglos Str. First, there was the rustic common room in primary school. This was where I got to know my social gender and discovered that Santa Claus didn't exist. There, I learned about bereavement, the sweetness of birthday cakes, and the differences between mythological beings like *aitvaras* and *laumė*. Later, that prop cottage wall popped up in different spaces, becoming a romanticised image of folklore, a symbol of respite, and a repository for complex stories.

Chimeras are curtains that have absorbed the painful stories of women. For them, a room of one's own is not a place of freedom, but one of oppressive silence. Like pets, they keep busy, afraid to change direction, roaring silently inside.

Shed Skins are clothes removed by tongues. How precise and powerful a word can be in baring, piercing, imprinting in the memory. Sometimes because of great beauty. Sometimes I bare too much myself.

Harper's Bazaar is the glossy, hollow magazine you flipped through in the bathroom or outside the dentist's office. You bought it because you avoided the cafeteria for a few days. Lots of women with their mouths half-open, 10 tips for a slimmer waist, a horoscope that seems quite accurate.

I still think of memory as photochemistry of the mind, constantly developing images that resemble, but never become, reality or truth.

Sometimes, it seems better to forget a few things to be able to live in the present.

Forget the lies, because the war isn't over yet.

Forget your double identity, because intimate memories have the right to become public.

Remember your love, even if our bodies only meet on the screen,

the voices still bleed into your spaces, they won't let you forget.

MORTA JONYNAITĖ



