

The Contemporary Art Modern Project presents... ***Starring: Woman***, featured in **PhotoLA's Virtual Collect + Connect 2020**.

***Starring: Woman*** presents the viewer with a narrative focused on the female experience, a narrative of freedom, a narrative of life, a narrative of retention. This narrative takes shape as a journey of peaks and valleys, a representation of the beautiful and the ugly, a reminder of the vicissitudes in the drift that is life. Featuring **Stefano Ogliari Badessi**, **Natalie Lennard**, and **Rosana Machado Rodríguez**.

Italian artist **Stefano Ogliari Badessi** is globally known for bringing his eccentric mind to life through his large-scale installation work. For this exhibition, **Ogliari Badessi** takes a different approach, taking a step back to "capture" the moment rather than constructing it. His photographic work combines a whimsical aesthetic with a sense of absurdity that describes the most freeing aspects of the human experience. The series, titled *Mexican Dream*, exudes the artist's signature tribal aesthetic with a hint of post-apocalyptic vibes added to the equation. The female protagonist featured in most of the series functions as the first act of ***Starring: Woman***. This first act takes the viewer through a journey of freedom and sensuality, not a journey of two lovers, but a journey of a woman, a woman who knows what she wants, and seizes it. The progression of works depict a connection between two individuals, two bodies, two essences; they are the focus, in a world where seemingly everything and everyone else is gone, nothing matters beyond what is being captured. The animals present in the work serve as a metaphor of fertility, they act as religious symbolism that elevate the depicted scenes to a scenario akin to that of The Nativity, a modern take to this iconic tale. As a metaphor of life, the woman in the works begins her journey on her own, and ends this journey on her own, in the car where it all started; a car that provides her with safety and protection, like a mother's womb, it represents new beginnings.

For the second act of ***Starring: Woman***, British artist **Natalie Lennard** takes her vast experience as a fashion photographer and combines it with her own personal journey and fascination with the idea of motherhood. Her *Birth Undisturbed* series acts as a photographic record on the under documented reality of childbirth. From historical portrayals such as the homebirth of Queen Elizabeth II to Prince Edward witnessed in *Royal Blood*, to the depiction of the ancient Egyptian practice of waterbirth depicted in *Aquadural*, Lennard seeks to expose that which is often obscured and sometimes regarded as taboo. The scenes are raw and full of intricacies, representing the idea of beauty within pain, and portraying the reality of female sacrifice, a reality which is intrinsically biological. The practice of childbirth is one of beauty, one of sacrifice, sometimes physical, sometimes emotional, often both. Furthermore, as per societal and cultural norms, women have historically been expected to give birth to as many offspring as they physically could, a reality still present in a number of cultures. **Lennard** does a commendable effort in terms of representation, displaying an extensive variety of cultures and religions in her work, thus proving her awareness. The women depicted in this series largely differ from one another, their conditions are often vastly different, however, be it the Queen of England or a suburban wife in

the 1960s, they all have one thing in common: they are all equally vulnerable. This vulnerability serves as a metaphor on the female struggle in a largely patriarchal world, which takes us to our third and final act.

Hosting the third act of ***Starring: Woman***, Argentinian artist **Rosana Machado Rodríguez** presents her *El Encierro* series, depicting the female body—**Machado Rodríguez'** own—in dark and muted settings which speak of fragility and retention. The woman who guides this final act is trapped not only within her own walls, but more importantly, within society's own. A patriarchal society that is often a focus in the artist's work, a patriarchal society that does not encourage female aspiration, but rather a loss of the self. Women have historically been reduced to mere objects rather than valid entities, objects of pleasure, objects of labor, objects of creation; a fight that was fought for centuries in the past and a fight that is fought by many to this day. **Machado Rodríguez** represents this struggle by portraying her subject in a constant stage of vulnerability, her body language always fragile, always exposed. The idea of retention is further reinforced by the additional elements she utilizes in her work, her photography consistently accompanied by an element of confinement, be it a large frame, a set of chains, a wire net, a resin cover, it is present. We run into the sole exception towards the closing of the show, in *La Proximidad del Abismo II*, **Machado Rodríguez'** subject has traversed her previous struggles of confinement to step into something bigger, something darker: absolute abandonment. An abandonment that leads to melancholy, sorrow, dejection; it leads to a lesser perception of the self, to a neglect of one's identity, which ultimately results in a total disconnection with oneself.

***Starring: Woman*** is not a narrative of superation, neither is it one of optimism, but rather one of reality. It is not the story of one woman, but rather of women, those who struggle, those who thrive, those who endure. It is about those who are trapped within themselves, and those who are trapped by those around them. As such, this show acts as a vehicle to tribute the truth about womanhood, a beautiful truth, a tragic truth, a powerful truth.

By Andres J. Mora