

www.omkonst.se: **The shadow as witness of truth** Alexis Soul-Gray, *Screen*



Memory – Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm, 11/11–17/12 2022 Text: Otto Ruin



I didn't want to go, 2022, 100 x 75 cm © Alexis Soul-Gray
(Click on the image for high resolution)



The Orange Eaters, 2022, 130 x 150 cm © Alexis Soul-Gray
(Click on the image for high resolution)

For the first time, Alexis Soul-Gray (b. 1980) is now being shown outside the UK with around thirty works at the Wetterling Gallery. The title *Screen Memory*, refers to Freud's concept of *cover memory* which refers to a memory that represents a repressed experience that is too traumatic to recall directly. The psychoanalytic term is recalled throughout the exhibition, which deals with the emotional life of childhood.

Soul-Gray's artistry depicts memories and repression through the drives of the unconscious technically and painterly. In the first work the visitor encounters at the gallery, *The Orange Eaters* (2022), the viewer contemplates a cut-out childhood image of little orange eaters. The motif is romantic and eerie. The girl in the center of the painting stares at the viewer and makes one aware of one's own position. The subject appears like a repressed memory rising from a murky well of memory from the painting that is splashed with blue ink.

Like in *The Orange Eaters* are the majority of motifs cut from archives, newspapers or books at Soul-Gray. They are strangers but show a hurtful and personal presence, cover memories of the artist's own traumatic childhood.



Cry Baby, 2022, 110 x 90 cm © Alexis Soul-Gray



She was buried at the cross roads, her soul lay permanently in Purgatory
2022, 160 x 200 cm © Alexis Soul-Gray
(Click on the image for high resolution)



Waterbabies 4, 2022, 25 x 19 cm
© Alexis Soul-Gray

The background to the exhibition is the artist's complicated relationship with the mother who ended her life with euthanasia. The motifs are guided on the one hand by loss, but also by repression, violence and the hope of reconciliation with the past. In *She was buried at the cross roads, her soul lay permanently in Purgatory* (2022) a carnivalesque multitude of figures can be seen that take one to the world of the enchanted nursery. The title recalls how the Church of England historically denied people who committed suicide a funeral.

Minnen, drömmar och historien lappas fragmentariskt ihop ur förstörelsen som en skapande kraft i Soul-Grays verk. Samtidigt märker man att det är en pågående, sökande process vilket syns tydligast i de mindre collagen i material från 80- och 50-talet (hennes och moderns barndomsår). Där samlas överlagringar av färg ofta på upphittat papper blandat med personliga referenser som i suggestiva *Waterbabies 1-4* (2022). Det är svårgenomträngligt om än gripande att följa den associativa trauma-bearbetningen.

De monumentala verken är tillgängligare, som den frihängande duken *Dereliction* (2022) och *Like Mother like Daughter* (2022). Det sistnämnda verkets grå färgskala och teknik sticker också ut i utställningen som domineras av sprakande kompositioner och färgfältsmåleri. Moder och dotter står i profil, ansiktena är dolda men deras skuggor avslöjar konturerna – moderns skarp, barnets naivistiskt som om hon ännu inte växt i den. Skuggan blir sanningsvittnet, det medvetnas bortträngda egenskaper och drifter. Den utsagda rädslan att växa upp och bli som sin mor i en utställning som annars blickar tillbaka och försöker återknyta till världen före tragedin.

The art ultimately becomes a form of therapeutic method for the artist's grieving work that she blatantly welcomes the viewer to enter and ultimately reflect on herself.

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Like Mother Like Daughter, 2022, 160 x 120 cm
© Alexis Soul-Gray

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