

Swimmers

Joshua Jensen-Nagle

Vicki Smith

July 11 - Aug 12, 2022

Swimmers is an exhibition about our relationship to the water. Featuring Canadian artists Joshua Jensen-Nagle and Vicki Smith, the show proposes that something as simple as swimming can be thought of, and represented, in complex and diverse ways.

Vicki Smith paints women in water. The settings suggest northern lakes; the light and colour evoke summer. But these are not portraits of a particular person or place; Smith considers the figure as a placeholder for a remembered sensation. Tightly cropped and focused, her intimate imagery brings forward the physical relationships we have with water. Separate, yet primevally connected to our bodies, she focuses on the way water combines with light, capturing the physically enveloping and visually multifaceted effect of a body moving through water.

The swimmers are a meditation. The abstract movement of the water around the body creates a space for the viewer to bring their own remembered experience. While swimming, the body and mind still, allowing us to experience time as it flows from moment to moment. In the paintings these physical sensations are contained within the image of the swimmer, being juxtaposed with the near-abstraction of the swirling, churning and distorted effects created through the interaction of the swimmer and the water. These paintings achieve deep complexity and resonance through Smiths' merging of an interior, personal experience with an exterior world of physical and biological laws and parameters.

Photographer **Joshua Jensen-Nagle** focuses on the big picture – capturing beach and swimming scenes that shrink the participants and foreground the scale and patterning of sea and shore itself. These *Swimmers* are read en-mass, losing individual identities when viewed against the natural environment. Often taken from high overhead, it is often within the transitional area between land and sea that Jensen-Nagle is able to reveal the essence of these places.

The photos frequently contain a soft, dreamlike quality, with candy coloured beach wear and umbrellas punctuating the image. In early works, Jensen-Nagle used expired Polaroid film to achieve the look of his signature style. His practice now engages the latest digital technologies, focusing on materials selected for printing, mounting and framing to achieve the effects he is after. Despite their good feeling vibe – you can almost feel the sun on your back and the salt water on your skin - these photographs might also suggest a subtle critique of mass tourism, sustainability, and the environmental impacts that many of these areas are experiencing

Also included in the exhibition are a selection of prints taken from some of the earliest how-to swimming manuals printed in Western Europe, which for the first time approached swimming as something that could be learnt, providing guidance in the form of images and texts.

CK, July 2022

Swimmers is presented in collaboration with Bau-Xi Gallery, Vancouver

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