

HYPERALLERGIC

An Artist Paints Love and Life in Maputo, Mozambique

Drawn from archival photographs, memories, and imagination, Cassi Namoda's family portraits emanate warmth and comfort.



Lizzy Vartanian Collier February 27, 2020



Installation view of Cassi Namoda: *Little is Enough for those in Love* at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (image courtesy Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, photo by Mark Blower)

LONDON — Sweeping brushstrokes of pale pinks, yellows, and blues merge in familial scenes that emanate a sense of warmth and comfort. The works in *Little is Enough for Those in Love*, Cassi Namoda's solo exhibition at Pippy Houldsworth, depict life and love in Maputo, Mozambique, where the artist was born. Drawn from archival photographs, memories, and Namoda's imagination, the exhibition's title and the body of work are inspired by an East African proverb that reminds us that luxury is of little significance when you are surrounded by love.

The exhibition opens with the painting "Long Winding Path with Friends and Family" (2019), a foreshortened view of a long peach-pink path that two couples walk along. In the distance is a car and abstracted greenery, punctuated by four dark green trees, flanks both sides of the path. There is no destination in sight, but the intimacy between each couple and the placid warmth of the palette suggests that wherever the people are going, they will be content.



Cassi Namoda, "A Long Windy Path With Family And Friends In Namacurra" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in. (Image courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, photo by Mark Blower)

This sense is consistent throughout Namoda's work. In "Untitled (Conjoined Twins)" (2019), a mother rests her head on one of two infants, who appear to be conjoined at the head, placing her hand on her children's bodies as a sign of love and protection, a promise that she is keeping them safe. "Little is Enough for Those in Love" (2019) is a testament to the mother's care, and the bonds of family: Namoda portrays a wedding scene in which the twins — a little older now — look on at the bride and groom in the background.

Namoda's loose, expressive painting style positions her figures against the shifting forms of pastel-colored landscapes. While the figures are rendered as flat and opaque, the artist fleshes them out with delicate details around jewelry, teeth, and fingernails. In addition to her personal history, Namoda's paintings also comment on the history of Mozambique. "Family Portrait in Gurue" (2019),

which shows a couple posing with their infant daughter, references her grandfather's region. On the exhibition's opening night she activated a colonial tea set passively accompanying the paintings by steeping leaves from Gurue and serving the tea to her guests. This gesture asserted postcolonial control over Mozambique's narrative (the country gained independence from Portugal in 1975) and brought it to her audience.

Other works depict couples dancing and women harvesting corn with their children, again reminding us that all love — romantic or familial — is just as valuable as any luxury.



Cassi Namoda, "Untitled (Conjoined Twins)" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 in. (photo by Todd White, image courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery)



Cassi Namoda, "Little is Enough For Those in Love" (2019), acrylic on canvas, 66 x 48 in. (photo by Todd White, image courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery)

Cassi Namoda: Little is Enough for Those in Love continues at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery(6 Heddon Street, London, UK) through March 7.

Collier, Lizzy Vartanian, "An Artist Paints Love and Life in Maputo, Mozambique," Hyperallergic, February 27, 2020.
<https://hyperallergic.com/540842/cassi-namoda-little-is-enough-for-those-in-love-pippy-houldsworth/>