

SPOTLIGHT: EXHIBITION

LANDSCAPE, PORTRAITURE

Lili Jamail's Rollercoaster

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Jamail's new exhibition centres on the in-between — seemingly mundane everyday moments heavy with tension and unease

The name of Lili Jamail's new exhibition, *Rollercoaster*, has a personal significance. "The group of photographs is about emotional ups and downs," says the photographer. "I began working on the grouping at the beginning of the year, which started off really rough for me." Jamail, whose mother taught her how to use her first film camera, is referring to a break-up. "I really felt like I was alone, and I knew that the only way I was going to get out of it would be by learning how to make myself feel whole on my own," she continues.



The exhibition, which is on show at Team Gallery, New York, comprises a selection of images that embody the emotional rollercoaster Jamail experienced — the ups and downs of heartbreak. The photographer's practice is rooted in an autobiographical approach. Jamail documents the every day, specifically moments that may seem unremarkable. "Situations that are usually missed, like quiet time at home, or a space that you may have just passed when you were walking at night, which you would only see if you shone a flashlight," she explains, referencing an image that depicts a small Bonsai tree illuminated by the glare of a torch.

The manner in which Jamail frames her subjects is unique; she imbues ordinary scenes with mystery. Her use of diagonals is intentional, inflicting a sense of disruption. "I like when there is a flow but it is also important for there to be abrupt stops in the flow," she says. "I think the take-away is this feeling of entrapment." Many of the images were shot close up, to prevent audiences from identifying an exact location. "I want them to have the chance to place a situation, which might have been part of their life," says Jamail. "I think it is easier to do with less information given in a photograph."



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The collection of images blends portraiture and landscape. “I have been photographing myself through my friends the past couple of months,” reflects Jamail, who observes her acquaintances for actions she recognises in herself. In one image, a young woman reclines on crisp, white sheets, wrapped in a towel. The photographer identified with the moment of idleness. “She is procrastinating; not wanting to get in the shower, or trying to force herself to get put together after a shower,” says Jamail. In another, sparkly blue manicured nails rest on the side of a garden chair. “The ‘ups’ in the group are these waves of confidence,” explains Jamail, in reference to the image.

“I want these photographs to have a balance between the imaginative and familiar, maybe a little bit like a dream that feels very realistic,” she says. “There is an importance to me about it feeling familiar to viewers.” Despite evolving out of Jamail’s every day, the images exude a certain universality — capturing emotions, moments, and the sense of transience and passing that pervades the everyday. “So much of people’s lives happen in this time frame that seems like a bridge from one important moment to the next,” she continues. “And I think people are most themselves during these times.”

Rollercoaster is on show at Team Gallery, New York, until 05 October 2019.

