

## PRESS RELEASE

CASSI NAMODA

*A gentle rain is dying*

September 8 – October 21, 2023

Opening reception: Friday, September 8, 6-8 pm

303 Gallery, New York



303 Gallery is proud to present *A gentle rain is dying*, New York-based painter and visual artist Cassi Namoda's inaugural solo exhibition in our project room.

Not unlike the many origin stories and founding myths, Mozambican artist Cassi Namoda's *A gentle rain is dying* begins with a flood. In one of the exhibition's key artworks, *The last metical of Senhora Fatima* (2023), a woman in traditional dress and headscarf faces a dilemma. The titular Fatima holds before her the last remaining bills of currency to her name. Balanced atop her head is a bright yellow valise, presumably containing the small handful of belongings she's chosen for the long voyage ahead. In another work, *Existential migrations in Mecufi* (2023), three young men in rubber sandals shroud themselves with geometric red blankets, the final relics of life now certainly past—in the artist's words, "a comfort." To the familiar viewer, vignettes such as these are squarely aligned with the sort of exilic vantage through which much of Namoda's narration is fashioned. By a myriad of lenses—memory, nostalgia, nativity, exodus, magic realism, postcolonial theory, photographic record, art canons, world literatures, and not least the rear-view of history—Namoda has cultivated in her practice a kind of filmic collision space through which she interpolates, often from both literal and imagined peripheries, narrativized visions of African time and place. In the same breath, Namoda's newest exhibition is one directly poised at matters of current affair. Even in its title, *A gentle rain is dying* addresses candidly, even ineluctably the impact of climate change on the global precariat—in particular, Sub-Saharan Africa's disproportionate burden of climate-driven natural disaster and forced migration. The exhibition's only portrait, *Shazia flees and arrives in Mocuba* (2023), depicts a migrant woman in a cascading, pale-blue veil. Her composition and vitiligo complexion recall the tenebrism of high-baroque Spanish painting. She is, one cannot forget, a displaced woman in crisis.

At its heart, *A gentle rain is dying* comprises stories told across three primary divisions, almost like acts or passages. United by Namoda's loose, rhapsodic storytelling voice, each division offers its own unique narrative identity by way of palette, composition, timbre, and subject matter. Adjoining Namoda's migratory images are a series of large-scale numbered landscapes, the first of their kind in the artist's practice. In hues of violet, deep green, and pale sea foam, Namoda imagines nighttime scenes above a lagoon in far northern Mozambique:

“these images explore the gestational aspects of the moonrise; they’re testaments to the beauty and power of the African landscape.” In the final suite of lilac paintings, Namoda turns to communal life, envisaging through the glass of the magic-real aspects of ephemerality and resilience in postcolonial African society. *Ancestral trauma in Sagrada familia* (2023) shows a group of men, women, and children in a cemetery, wandering amidst strange, colossal grisaille statues—vestiges of colonial regime. In *Aquiqa and Musa find temporary settlement on the road to Xalala* (2023), a handful of children in bright white dresses pause for a lively game of jump-rope between legs of their long migration. Together, the images in *A gentle rain is dying* put forward tender, sometimes elusive glimpses of African life and the natural world—the latter a force inextricably bound to the spiritual, aesthetic, and, in an increasingly pivotal way, the existential identity of the continent.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Cassi Namoda’s work explores the history and culture of post-colonial Africa, especially the exchange between vernacular traditions and Portuguese colonialism in the Lusophone continent. Namoda’s work is collected by several important museums, including The Pérez Art Museum in Miami, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Jumex in Mexico City and X Museum in Beijing, and she has held solo exhibitions at a number of notable galleries, including Xavier Hufkens and Goodman Gallery. Namoda was born in Maputo, Mozambique, in 1988, and has also lived in Kenya, Uganda, Benin, Haiti, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic and the United States. Currently she divides her time between New York City, East Hampton and The Berkshires, MA.

#### CONTACT

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