

SMILLLEE

Rachel Jones
SMIIILLLEEEE

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London Ely House

Text by Vanessa Onwuemezi

Words and phrases come
to mind words and phrases:

imagination embodied
in dissonant
elements descending from
unthinking matter, matters unthought
nonetheless leaning towards the
nascent order dissolving into
bitterness/sorrow,
the love of
fear and its opposite.
Yes. The colours of homecoming,
bold flesh corrupted in violet,
and sour yellow fluorescence
disorder. The result of our sins.
Worry
and gladness
lavender swells of elation.
Overcome with the thick ecstatic
colours of bitten skin.
The blood-fed ancestors
from whom we have bitten
and forgive us for biting, for the ruin
in hope of redemption.
And joy.
Because it has been forgotten
it is always found within.

Word and phrases, come to mind
nonsensical violence but
happiness
the terrible happenings
under light sky and technicolour
the SMILE-portal. Joy.
And its breath of menace, of terror.
Of nerves frayed spewing white
electricity lit unnerving
brilliance walks the edge
of a dark line.
The singular split into duality
a self with no boundary
and it all gets undone
and it all gets.
For every grain of love is manifest here, this is all.

We begin with colour. The ground. To challenge the order of empty space. What was open filled with juxtapositions of colour endless, plain and rough, influence passing back and forth, ground overlaid by more powerful colour, the first to arrive, to colonise. The seen and unseen contradictions of feeling. Power of an upstroke, pastel scrape, the hardness dissipates, the solid to the porous orange, poured and drunk, then earth tone cut with the fresh relief of green (acid lime on tongue, and damp of forest moss). Joy. And violence of opening wounds a tooth-slice, a jagged rip, heavy lined expression glorious glorious as the sunshine hits us, wink of the glint of gold teeth smiling defiance, smiling the bright of day.

Of mercy given. Resist retreating from the intensity; the pigment set alight in fire. Leave it to melt, to bleed and settle right up to the edge, to square off, or slip along raw canvas edge degree after degree down into pink heat. Infectious hue lightened in white, rushed softly in shade rushed as savannah grass, or rushed past as a seed might fly in air, the pollen might, as anger might rush from the belly, to the lungs to the throat, to sing through the lips lost as the word, or a hand heavy with the warlike lightness of nature and life lost.

Take none of what you know to be known forever.

As we are poised to return
to the smiling blank.

A canvas stretched and undone
tooth by tooth.

A line bending to
a sacred fold.

Mouth portal
to a sentient circle.
Into an interior deep

and restless. Where brown oil-water pools, and red seas break onto the shores of home. Where blackness finds its reflection in the waters of gathered tears and spit. The trail of words that stretches the heights of colour. Sweetness. Glorious terror. Joy. Bitter. Where it can itself recognise the noise of existence breaking its silence, where we can be ourselves, undone, undone the noise of changed and changing light. Nothing is known forever.

Within one microcosm sits another, the unknown within, and to seek it is to travel, to feel the fear of leaving. The urge takes us because we need it. Just as we break away from the cold when we need warmth, and crawl into the darkness because we need the cool of shadow. Intoxication in forms we need, a certain purity of feeling – colour as revealed by clear light, form by the line reaching out and eating through the noise a heavy task, forging its path.

And so shape emerges, remember, out of one emerges its opposite and both are mingled in intimacy. Microcosm within microcosm, hell within paradise, one self within another. We smile at our own illusions, eventually. Smile contains the knowledge of what happened here. Mouth-portal into a bottomless depth, adorned with cheap and happy flowers. Joy. Undone, tooth by tooth. Mouth-portal, numinous circle through which exterior becomes interior. The interior that escapes the word, escapes into a beyond black, undone into a frayed noise, a knowing static.

We are mapped. Because dust eventually settles, blood and liquid congeal into solids at some point. The vital body decays in livid bruises of mould. Eventually. Becomes hoarse and noiseless again. We are mapped, and contained within is all that has once been and all that is now, all that could be (this is all). And as with time for the dead and the yet to be born, the line has no direction but eats itself as it curves around, as the breath is round in and out

into belly extending
ache
the sweet of rot.
We are blinded in sight
we might then see

what it is we have here mapped out in front of us. Joy. The primordial system that bends us into shape. The transparent intersection that fruits our bodies into being. SMILE. When you remember what had been forgotten. SMILE. It cannot ever be forgotten.



SMIIILLLEEEE, 2021. 14 x 33 cm



SMIIILLLEEEE, 2021. 18.5 x 44 cm

About Rachel Jones

Rachel Jones (b. 1991, London, UK) completed her Masters Degree at the Royal Academy Schools in 2019 and was awarded the André Dunoyer de Segonzac Hon RA Prize before exhibiting alongside Gillian Ayres and Nao Matsunaga at the New Art Centre, Salisbury (September – November 2019). Jones has held residencies at both The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas in 2019 and the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art, Bermuda in 2016.

About Vanessa Onwuemezi

Vanessa Onwuemezi is a writer and poet living in London. Her work has appeared in *Granta*, *Prototype*, *frieze* and *Five Dials*. Her story 'At the Heart of Things' won the White Review Short Story Prize 2019. Her debut short story collection *Dark Neighbourhood* is published by Fitzcarraldo Editions.

Thaddaeus Ropac

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