

## Identity, Psyche and Gender Through the Black Body: A Review of “Show Me Yours” at Monique Meloche

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*Brittney Leeanne Williams, “Lemon Tree,” 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 67 x 55 inches*



*Bianca Nemelc, “Mujer Y el Agua #2,” 2019, acrylic on canvas, 56 x 46 inches*

Have you ever questioned nudity and its relation to the stigma of the black body? If so, Monique Meloche’s newest exhibition, “Show Me Yours,” will leave you tingling. It features three emerging artists, [Brittney Leeanne Williams](#), [Jake Troyli](#) and [Bianca Nemelc](#), approaching nudity from different perspectives, all taking into consideration identity, gender and psyche.

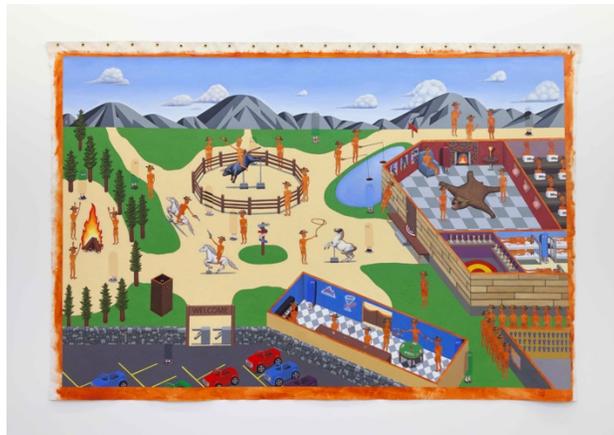
Nemelc’s canvases reveal an up-close view of the female figure, integrating shades of brown. The headless, ambiguous nature of the form allows her to be every woman of color, as depicted through the multitude of browns. “Mujer Y el Agua #1” and “Mujer Y el Agua #2,” both reflect Nemelc’s multiracial background, as each shade on the figures can represent various shades on the color spectrum for women of color. The loose lines of the body allow the viewer to fall into the crevices of the subject’s body so effortlessly, and to let go of the stigmas attached to the nude female form and the stigmas of sexualization attached to the black female body in particular.

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Bright red pigments greet you as you approach Williams' work. Williams approaches the female body through a psychological angle. The skin tone of her female figure is depicted in shades of red, and the body is distorted into a circular form. The psychology behind red and the nude form come into play as both are associated with passion, energy and action, yet these words don't come to mind when first viewing the piece. In "Into Victorville," Williams bends the body in a manner that could be for pleasure or pain, yet it is up to the viewer to understand it in their own realm.

Troyli's "High noon at Ranchland®" brings amusement and childhood memories to the forefront. Taking a closer look, we are met with the same nude male figure in multiple scenarios that allow the viewer to question the figure's masculinity as this figure plays roles in the painting. Troyli uses this repetition of the same unidentified figure to question identity and masculinity when stereotypical social cues are not available for the viewer to decipher the environment. "The next best thing to Napoleonic" dives deeper into the nude form and how it exists between gender and identity. We see in "the best next thing to Napoleonic" a brown chest with white hands pinning a ribbon. The juxtaposition between the white hands and black chest speak to Troyli's tug-of-war between himself being biracial, yet being able to encompass different ethnic spaces. The second canvas features a black man riding a child's toy. The stigma of a black man being strong and powerful is disassembled by him riding this coin-operated child toy, allowing for Troyli to show the man as just a nude body and not a nude body stigmatized by his color.



Jake Troyli, "High noon at Ranchland®," 2019, oil and graphite on unstretched cotton canvas, 84 x 126 inches

While each artist understands and depicts the nude body differently, these differences relay the understanding and demise of the social stigma that accompanies the black nude body and how each artist understands and sees nudity. "Show Me Yours" will leave you wanting to revisit how you interact, understand and function with nudity and the social stigmas accompanying it. (Caira Moreira-Brown)

*"Show Me Yours" is on view at Monique Meloche, 451 North Paulina, through August 17.*