Chantal Joffe: *Story*

Exhibition 10 November–18 December 2020

Victoria Miro, 16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Chantal Joffe, *Self-Portrait Naked with My Mother I*, 2020
Oil on board
243 x 181.5 cm
95 5/8 x 71 1/2 in
© Chantal Joffe
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

Victoria Miro is delighted to present new works by Chantal Joffe. Accompanied by an artist's book with a new text by Olivia Laing, *Story* features a number of paintings of the artist's mother and considers issues of aging, motherhood and invisibility, focusing particularly on the complex relationship between mother and child over time.

Chantal Joffe brings a combination of insight and integrity, as well as psychological and emotional force, to the genre of figurative art. Defined by its clarity, honesty and empathetic warmth her work is attuned to our awareness as both observers and observed beings, apparently simple yet always questioning, complex and emotionally rich.

The exhibition includes a number of new paintings of the artist's mother, Daryll, part of an ongoing series that Joffe began some three decades ago. These works, some painted from family photographs, others from life, range back and forth in time. The *Story* of the title refers to a painting depicting the artist and her two sisters as children in the early 1970s, snuggled up on a sofa with their mother as they share a bedtime story. Other paintings show Daryll now, alone – standing in her doorway,

reclining on sofa after a cataract operation – or accompanied by Joffe, the shifts in dynamic as much emotional and psychological as they are physical but no less palpable. As Olivia Laing writes in the accompanying publication, 'Over the years, a kind of hardening takes place, a process of separation and individuation on both sides. It's not just that everyone gets older, but rather that time occasions a shift in perspective and visibility too. The mother recedes inch by inch, becoming smaller and harder, emerging as a person with needs and sadnesses in her own right…'

The exhibition also premieres a number of large-scale pastel self-portraits. While drawing has always been integral to Joffe's practice, the medium of pastel offers a number of unique challenges and opportunities as she brings images robustly and truthfully to life. The artist has discussed the absorbing, as well as the highly physical experience of the work's making, with pastel accumulating with a luminous purity, as being markedly different from the act of painting and the ways in which oil behaves on canvas or board. 'You can get a kind of brutality with pastel that you can't with paint,' she explains. 'With paint there's always an extension of your arm and brush. Whereas pastel is so primitive. You can't draw hard enough.'

The exhibition will be available to view by free timed ticket.

About the artist

Born in 1969, Chantal Joffe lives and works in London. The acclaimed British painter has exhibited nationally and internationally at venues including Royal Academy of Arts, London; Whitechapel Gallery, London; Jewish Museum, New York; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; and Neuberger Museum of Art, New York. Her work is in numerous institutional and private collections, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Detroit Institute of Arts; National Portrait Gallery, London; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Joffe has created a major new public work for the Elizabeth line station at Whitechapel, London, which will be on view when the Crossrail station opens in 2021. The exhibition Chantal Joffe: *For Esme – with Love and Squalor* is currently on view at Arnolfini, Bristol (until 22 November 2020).

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