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EXCERPT: EXHIBITION

These Garance Vallée Paintings and Totems Are Familiar But Surreal

by Jill Singer

When we first came across the work of Parisian artist Garance Vallée, it took the form of an immersive installation she had created in a Milan PR company's office back in 2018. For her inaugural American exhibition this month at Carvalho Park in Brooklyn, Vallée was meant to create a similarly holistic environment, working with fabricators in the neighborhood to create a kind of set design that would encompass her new paintings, which are on view for the first time. That plan, of course, was scrapped when COVID hit, and Vallée scaled down her ambitions to that which could be fabricated in her own live/work space in Paris, then shipped in a crate to New York. In some ways, however, being forced to reckon with her own surroundings is part of the point of the exhibition: Called *Portrait de Famille*, the paintings and small, acrylic-painted totems depict subjects drawn from Vallée's own domestic life. A chair, a vase, a curtained

room, a staircase: Vallée creates a fully inhabitable interior in her work. And yet while the contours of the space, including alcove shelving, zebrawood finishes, goblets, vintage Italian chairs, would feel familiar to anyone who spent time on Instagram in the year 2020, the collapsed dimensions of the portraits lend a slightly surreal quality to the work.

“We accumulate these objects, in which we put so much of our innermost being, to the extent that the objects form totems that rise as meaningful, human-like figures,” says Vallée. “They fill space with their presence, while taking us elsewhere, towards a memory, a dream, a utopia —they set us free. In this work, some objects appear as simple contours, other volumes take the form of a solid, thus playing with trompe-l’oeil and digital architectural representation, occupying a space between three-dimensional rendering and two-dimensional drawing. The objects are detached from their primary function — they are presented as a kind of family portrait, charged as personal symbols.” On view until March 20.