



The Cherry on The Cake
Sotheby's, Sturegatan 24, 114 36 Stockholm
19 - 29 May 2022



Berntson Bhattacharjee is pleased to present 'The Cherry on The Cake', an exhibition of works by Olivia Sterling and Vincent Olinet.

Food has been explored throughout art history, from early depictions in mythological scenes to religious art of all cultures. For artists, food can be a great tool to display technical skill as well as allude to the variety of meaning different food items can symbolise. It remains a topic of fascination for many contemporary artists today. Particularly when it comes to sugar and sweet items; wealth, greed, lust, flesh, and femininity are issues that artists continue to investigate through their art. Olivia and Vincent are two artists who use food to speak of wider societal questions. At first glance the works look innocent, humorous and warm, however the surface level impact disguises darker themes at play.

Olivia Sterling (b.1996) is a London based painter who explores topics of race, identity and belonging through cropped domestic scenes, often involving food. Referencing cartoons such as Looney Tunes as well as Victorian satire, her signature colourful and slapstick style is consciously nostalgic. Using humour and childhood references to draw the viewer in, one is quickly confronted with the

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reality of the images. Flurries of black and white hands grasp at bottles of ketchup, victoria sponge cakes and trifle, leading to “accidents”. These, often overlooked, careless mishaps speak of the daily undertones of racial tension present everywhere.

After having been brought up in a small town in the UK, Olivia questions what it means to be British, and how race can alter one's perception of cultural identity. Many of her paintings are set around a kitchen table, a familiar place which can be both positive and negative. The movement of the figures around the quintessentially British dishes suggest excitement or struggle, reminding us of complicated relationships and identity crises.

Vincent Olinet (b. 1981) is a French artist based in Paris. Vincent plays with universally recognised objects and concepts, often relating back to childhood desires, to create fantastical artworks. Decaying, lopsided cakes, slices of bread, and giant watermelons are common subjects in his work. Vincent remarks on society's obsession with consumerism and incorporates an ominous tone into his otherwise humorous pieces.

Vincent's Marie Antoinette-esque multi-tiered cakes are a symbol of extravagance and over-indulgence. They sway between pleasure and the grotesque - a balance hard to maintain. He uses sickly sweet colours which look unappealing and unnatural. Vincent's cakes, unlike real ones which quickly turn sour, last forever. They are suspended in time, on the verge of collapse; a reminder of the pitfalls of society.