

ROMAN ROAD

PRESS RELEASE

YULIA IOSILZON & ANNA SKLADMANN

Paradise Is Not Just a Place

Private View: Thursday 16 September 2021, 6 – 9 PM
Exhibition: Friday 17 September – Saturday 06 November 2021
Opening Hours: Wednesday – Friday, 10 AM – 6 PM
Saturday, 12 PM – 5 PM and by appointment

Roman Road is thrilled to present *Paradise Is Not Just a Place*, a duo show of new works by Yulia Iosilzon and Anna Skladmann. This is the first exhibition at Roman Road since February 2020.

Skladmann's photographs and Iosilzon's paintings draw on forbidden fruit as a repeated motif, exploring tropes of temptation, abundance, and nourishment. The works are interwoven with a meadow of ceramic flowers, bringing the life cycle of the plant into the gallery space, and picking up shared references to species that feature across the two artists' imagery. The exhibition inhabits a notion of overgrowth, of plants taking over the ruins of the past, seeding themselves in the cracks of history. Stories leave microscopic traces through the life cycles of plants and people; we all become food for plants in the end.



Anna Skladmann, *Fragaria*, 2021. C-type print mounted in aluminium floating in oak wood frame, 151 x 114 cm. Courtesy of Roman Road and the artist.

Anna Skladmann's practice interrogates the mythologisation of nonhuman nature, and the relationship between plants and technology. She uses a scanner to capture arrangements of flowers, leaves, and fruit, adding water to the machine's sensitive surface. Slow scans are used to create ultra-detailed high-resolution images, flecked with digital glitches caused by tiny movements or light leaks.

Yulia Iosilzon's paintings evoke a dreamworld of human-plant hybrids and playful childhood memory, tinged with the quiet menace of mythology. Figures and faces emerge from the surface of the canvases before dissolving into foliage, water, and the bodies of animals. The paintings contrast chaos with control, baroque abundance with boldly delineated segments of colour.

The artworks act as portals into a vegetal realm that unfolds and grows, playfully expanding on the artists' distinct visual worlds. A profusion of handcrafted ceramic flowers emerges in the spaces between the works, challenging the traditional parameters of a two-person show; creeping and climbing between paintings and photographs, they blur the boundaries of where one artist's work ends and the other's begins.

The exhibition takes reference from Hieronymus Bosch's c.1490-1510 *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, which abounds with red berries, twisting and subverting traditional narratives around the Forbidden Fruit. Skladmann and Iosilzon draw on the complex relationship between chaos and symmetry in the painting's composition, as well as its evocation of exuberant natural growth.

The traditional Japanese practice of Ikebana has also been central to the artists' shared process in cultivating the ideas for this exhibition. Masters of Ikebana work by dividing the space with flowers, working across three levels: soil (represented by the Ikebana base), life (represented by the flowers), and sky (represented by the empty space above and around the arrangement). Skladmann and Iosilzon's response to the unique site at Roman Road – a gallery with a small footprint and a very high ceiling – uses these Ikebana principles to divide the space with ceramic flowers and floral photographs and paintings. Visitors are invited to take off their shoes to step down onto the gallery floor, which is covered in black sand, and to contemplate the life cycle of the plant in an immersive environment.

Ikebana embraces the budding, blooming, and dying stages of the plants in the arrangement, for example working with closed buds that open over the course of a few days and then wither. Across cultures, fruit and flowers are symbols of both beauty and death, innocence, and experience; the fullest bloom is followed quickly by rot and decay. *Paradise Is Not Just a Place* conjures this sinister undercurrent, weaving a complex web of references and associations.

The exhibition will be complemented by a conversation between Anna Skladmann and Yulia Iosilzon, moderated by writer and curator Anna Souter.

Paradise Is Not Just a Place opens on Thursday 16 September and will be on display at Roman Road until Saturday 06 November 2021.



Yulia Iosilzon, *Narcissus*, 2021. Oil on transparent fabric, 167 x 137 cm.
Courtesy of Roman Road and the artist.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Anna Skladmann (b. 1986, Germany) combines photography and scanning techniques to reflect on aspects of contemporary life as well as explore notions of nature and society. Having received her MA from the Royal College of Art and her BA from Parsons School of Design, her work has since been nominated for the Prix Pictet and Paul Huf Award, and has also won the Arles Photo Folio Prize. Skladmann published her first monograph in 2011 and her photographic projects have been shown in exhibitions and festivals, including the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris, Museum of Modern Art in Moscow, Fotofest Gewerbe in Hamburg. Recent solo exhibitions include *In Bloom*, Artsy & Lumitrix (2020); *YVA*, Schlueterstrasse 45, Berlin (2019); and *The Man With The Midas Touch - A Botanical Index Of Narcissus*, The Garden Museum, London (2019).

Yulia Iosilzon (b. 1992, Moscow) works across painting and installation. Her paintings are made directly with a mix of oil and silicone on stretched translucent silk. Yulia Iosilzon graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art and the Royal College of Art, London. She was awarded the Audrey Wykeham Prize in 2017 and Bloomberg New Contemporaries prize in 2019. Recent shows include : *A Chorus of Beauty and Menace*, Carvalho Park, New York (2021); *The Big Fish!*, Berntson Bhattacharjee, Stockholm (2021); *Fanfarria*, Huxley Parlour, London (2021); *Invisible Power*, Osnova, Moscow (2020); *The Crowd*, Hannah Barry, London (2020); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London (2019).

ABOUT ROMAN ROAD

Roman Road, founded by Marisa Bellani in 2013, grew organically from a project space to a gallery through establishing itself as a space of reference for contemporary art and photography. Located in London, Roman Road has recently redefined itself with a more fluid and cooperative approach, becoming a platform for collaborative exhibitions since the end of 2019. In 2017 Roman Road also added a research cell and an online journal to its activities in order to expand its horizons and to share with its audience information and knowledge that would go beyond art. The gallery has established a qualitative programme of around ten shows annually, including participations at notable international art fairs. Over the years, Roman Road has represented a talented roster of artists, among which Antony Cairns and Alix Marie, who have also seen their works exhibited in such institutions as Tate Modern, Stedelijk Museum and Musée des beaux-arts Le Locle. Since its marked shift to a collaborative platform, Roman Road supports young artists in expanding their careers and further learning to put together an exhibition and take the opportunity to push their practice further.

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