

ROMAN ROAD
PRESS RELEASE

BEX MASSEY
The truth is out there

Private View:

Tuesday 25 October 2022, 6 – 8 PM

Exhibition:

Wednesday 26 October – Saturday 26 November 2022

Opening Hours:

Tuesday – Friday, 11 AM – 6 PM;

Saturday 11 AM – 5 PM and by appointment

Address:

Roman Road, 50 Golborne Road, London, W10 5PR

Roman Road is delighted to present *The truth is out there*, a solo exhibition by British artist Bex Massey. Featuring her largest and first autobiographical series, the show teems with reimagined narratives exploring Queer history and identity, mediated through ostensibly fan art paintings.

Taking its title from the tagline of the iconic paranormal television series, *The X-Files*, *The truth is out there* presents an intimate and thought-provoking look into the subjection and struggles of the LGBTQ+ community. Documenting and evoking feelings of otherness and alienable rights in her own search for the truth, Massey's works more specifically aim to examine Section 28 – a reviled law existing from 1988-2003 across Britain that forbade local authorities and schools from promoting homosexuality – and its impact on the Millennial generation. Reappropriating recognisable pop icons and motifs from the 90's into often surreal and hyperrealistic renderings, the artist takes us back to the memories and retro palettes of her childhood in a bid to instigate a nostalgic and relatable visual language to discuss these issues with levity.

Seemingly at odds with her contemporary subject matter, Massey's virtuosic brushwork emulates the precision of the Old Masters and her practice is rooted in traditional making techniques. She uses collage, mixed media and optical illusion to create multi-layered narratives through each piece, with some also making subtle yet insightful references to art history. *In Plus One* (2022), for example, Massey has employed a 'cut-out' style redolent of surrealist artist René Magritte, delineating the outline of the figures found in *Cupid Wounding Sappho*, a drawing by Victorian sculptor John Gibson (bequeathed to the RA Collection in 1866) who was known to channel same-sex passions into his works. Similarly, in 'Jose Chung's from outer space' (2021), Massey pays homage to the esteemed and openly homosexual Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli and his *The Birth Of Venus* (mid-1480s). Bringing together the past, the peculiar and the personal, Massey's works meticulously examine the relevance and role of painting as a vehicle for communication and change in the face of popular culture.

The truth is out there opens on Tuesday 25 October and will be on display at Roman Road's newly acquired gallery space in Notting Hill until 26 November 2022. On the occasion of the exhibition, Roman Road will be hosting a talk with writer and editor Louis Wise, who will be discussing queerness, camp and the long shadow cast by Section 28, on Tuesday 08 November at the gallery.

About the Artist

Bex Massey (b.1985, Newcastle upon Tyne) is a British artist working across painting, collage and installation. She graduated with a BA in fine art from The School of Art, Architecture and Design in London in 2007, and later completed an MA in fine art at Chelsea College of Arts in 2013. Since obtaining her master's degree, Massey has been awarded the ButterBiggens Prize in British Painting (2019), the Repaint History Prize for Womxn Artists (2021), and has been shortlisted for numerous awards, most recently the BEEP Painting Prize 2022. Recent solo exhibitions include *The truth is out there*, Roman Road, London (2022); *We Didn't Start The Fire*, VOLT, Eastbourne (2020); and *ÀhhÁÀhhÁ*, Slugtown, Newcastle upon Tyne (2018). Massey has also exhibited widely in international group shows, including *Instagram Live*, 19 Karen Contemporary Artspace, Queensland (2022); *The Big Show*, Good Mother Gallery, San Francisco (2021); and *Body \ Politic*, Boutwell Schabrowsky, Munich (2020). Her work is held in the Leslie Collection, UK and Trollhättans Konsthall, Sweden, as well as in private collections across the UK, Europe and USA.

About Louis Wise

Louis Wise is assistant editor for the Financial Times' HTSI magazine. He has written about arts, fashion and gay life for the Sunday Times, the Guardian, the Telegraph, Vogue, ES Magazine, 10Magazine, Mr Porter and more. In 2021 he curated *The Gaze*, an exhibition at London's TJ Boulting Gallery, featuring works by the likes of Sunil Gupta, Alex Foxton and Prem Sahib. He has also discussed sex, RuPaul's Drag Race and memes on Radio 4's Front Row.

About Roman Road

Roman Road is a contemporary art gallery based in London and founded by Marisa Bellani. The gallery has recently redefined itself with a more fluid and ethical approach, becoming a platform for collaborative exhibitions in 2019. Since 2020, Marisa has organised art residencies in London as part of the gallery activities. Roman Road exists since 2013, following and fostering notable projects and dealing with artists all over the world. Since completing a full renovation in 2015, Roman Road has established a qualitative programme and has seen its represented artists become internationally recognised by institutions and collectors. Roman Road has established a qualitative and thematic programme and realised the creation of a research cell and Roman Road Journal in 2018, an online platform dedicated to publishing articles and exploring topics on art, science, technology, anthropology and literature.

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Bex Massey, *Jose Chung's from outer space*, 2021. Oil, acrylic and colouring pencil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm, unique. Courtesy of Roman Road and the artist. © Deniz Guzel