

ROMAN ROAD
PRESS RELEASE

Under Blue Shade

Gaia Fugazza
Zoë Marden
Precious Opara
Alina Vergnano
Lian Zhang

Curated by Mollie E Barnes

Private View: Thursday 20 April 2023, 6 – 8 PM
Exhibition: Friday 21 April – Saturday 10 June 2023
Location: Roman Road, 50 Golborne Road, London, W10 5PR
Opening Hours: Monday – Tuesday, by appointment
Wednesday – Friday, 11 AM – 6 PM
Saturday, 11 AM – 5 PM

Roman Road is delighted to present *Under Blue Shade*, a multimedia group exhibition curated by Mollie E Barnes, featuring works by five ultra-contemporary artists: Gaia Fugazza, Zoë Marden, Precious Opara, Alina Vergnano and Lian Zhang. Bringing together paintings, ceramics and sculptural works, connected through the universal concept of water, the show explores personal mythologies, dualities of the self, and the fluidity of experience and gender.

Water has been a consistent symbol throughout time, with many cultures and religions viewing water as a sacred, purifying element. Within Chinese culture, it plays a significant and indispensable role in traditional tea ceremonies, which is explored in Lian Zhang's work *Shadows in the Water* (2023); the delicate wood grain is a stream-like entity, leading the eye to the cup of tea in the foreground. Zhang is fascinated by the significance that viewers place on a symbol through their individual projections and experiences. To the artist, there is a universality in water that transcends these experiences and unites everyone.

Gaia Fugazza continues an exploration into the origin-properties of water. Her scenes reference the fact that we build societies around water and examine the cycles of life through plant growth and reproduction. Similarly, Zoë Marden's multimedia works continue this exploration of the ocean as the base of all humankind, a necessary safe space and alternate world. Her subaquatic and intimate ceramic pieces are curvaceous, reminiscent of both coral reefs and vulva patterns. Water provides a space for freedom, exploration and truth, of how we are genetically intertwined.

Precious Opara's works examine the psyche and ways in which the human form interacts with bodies of water. Through her paintings, figures and limbs are merged and distorted with the natural environment, blurring the line between landscape and body, and demonstrating the importance of interaction and climate responsibility. Similarly, Alina Vergnano presents the fluidity and continuation of both time and experience through rhythmic works. Her compositions revolve around the tensions between balance and unbalance, assonance and dissonance. The traces of bodies float through the projected waves, morphing from abstraction into figuration.

Collectively, the works in *Under Blue Shade* remind us of our dependence on, and sacredness of, the element, the fact that Mother Earth doesn't need us to survive, and the universality of water itself. With an opening event on Thursday 20 April, from 6 – 8 PM, the exhibition will be on display at Roman Road's gallery in Notting Hill from 21 April through 10 June 2023.

About the artists

Gaia Fugazza (b. 1985, Milan) is a London-based artist working with painting, performance and sculpture. She completed a BA in painting at the Brera Academy, Milan, in 2018, and an MFA at Chelsea College of Arts, London, in 2014. Selected solo and duo exhibitions include *A Fool with a Tool*, Case Chiuse, Milan (2021-22); *Virginity is not a contraceptive*, Richard Saltoun, London (2021); *Antidotes and their Counterparts* (duo show with Haroon Mirza), Häusler Contemporary, Zurich (2019-20); and *Ostaggi e Amici*, Galleriapiù, Bologna (2019). Fugazza's work has been featured in several international biennials, art festivals and institutional shows, including Lofoten International Art Festival, Svolvær, Norway (2022); *Images of Italy, Contemporary photography from the Deutsche Bank Collection*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2019); Baltic Triennial 13 (2018); *Glasstress*, Fondazione Berengo, Venice (2017); The London Open 2015, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015); and *Haroon Mirza / hrm199 Ltd.*, Museum Tinguely, Basel (2015). She has also presented performances at numerous institutions and galleries, including the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2019); and Kunsthall Oslo, Oslo (2018).

Zoë Marden (b. 1985, Hong Kong) is a London-based artist, filmmaker and writer, working with performance, video, text, sound, sculpture and installation. She graduated with an MA in moving image from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2018. Marden's recent solo exhibitions include *Becoming Creature*, Kong Art Space in partnership with Young Soy Gallery, Hong Kong (2023); and *Marine Lovers...their fishy beginnings*, V.O. Curations, London (2021). Selected recent group exhibitions and performances include *Becoming The Wild Thing*, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Hong Kong (2022); *Becoming Creature*, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London (2022); *Born to make you happy*, The Residence Gallery, London (2022); *Queer to the Bank*, Galleria Fonti, Naples (2021-2022); *Futureless*, SomoS, Berlin (2020); and *Stay LIVE at Home*, Performistanbul (2020).

Precious Opara (b. 1997, London) is a self-taught, multidisciplinary artist working primarily with painting, collage and site-specific installation. She completed a BA at the London College of Fashion in 2019, where she was introduced to the fashion world and drew connections to her art. Opara has since participated in the Villa Lena Residency (Tuscany, 2022) and the Clovermill Artist Residency (Giessenburg, 2022), and made her gallery debut in London and Nigeria in 2022. Recent exhibitions include *Face to Face*, Gillian Jason Gallery, London (2022); *Shout Plenty*, African Artists' Foundation x Alliance Française, Lagos, Nigeria (2022); and *Reclaiming the Nymph: A Force of Nature*, Gillian Jason Gallery, London (2022).

Alina Vergnano (b.1989, Turin) is an Italian artist based between Norway and Sweden. Her practice is rooted in drawing but spans through painting, installation, writing and sound. She holds a BA in illustration and animation from the European Institute of Design, Turin (2012) and is currently finishing her MFA in fine art at the Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design in Bergen, Norway, the graduation show for which is going to be held at the Bergen Kunsthall this spring. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Tenses*, JVDW gallery, Düsseldorf (2023); *Dissolvenza*, Mikey Laundry Art Garden, Bergen (2022); *Fleeing Feeling*, Galleri Cora Hillebrand, Gothenburg (2021); *Adrift, A Dream, A Reef*, Stene Projects, Stockholm (2019); and *Scattered*, Gallery Thomassen, Gothenburg (2019). Vergnano's work has also been widely exhibited in group shows around Europe and in China, and is held in numerous public collections, including at the Västra Götaland Regional Council and Statens Konstråd.

Lian Zhang (b. 1984, Hangzhou, China) is a London-based artist working with painting. She has obtained two master's degrees in painting, firstly from the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou (2007-2010) and secondly from the Royal College of Art, London (2011-2013). Her recent solo exhibitions include *The Rabbit Who Hunts Tigers*, Galerie Sébastien Bertrand, Geneva (2023); *Fast Dreams, Slow Days*, Nicodim gallery, Los Angeles (2022); and *Weathering with You*, Lychee One, London (2022). Zhang's work has also been exhibited widely in group exhibitions, including *Angels With Dirty Faces*, Ojiri Gallery, London, (2022); *Dream Baby Dream*, Fitzrovia Gallery, London (2022); *An Ode to Orlando*, Pi Artworks, London (2022); *A Couple of: The Dual-mechanism of the New Generation of Asian Artists*, Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2021); *Unfair Weather*, Lychee One, London (2021); and *Fortune Exhibition of Li's Family House*, WHITE SPACE BEIJING, Beijing (2021).

About the curator

Mollie E Barnes is a South East-based independent curator, whose exhibition-making, programming and research lives at the intersection of contemporary art, queer and feminist histories. She is the Festival Manager and Artist Liaison for Tom of Finland Festival UK and Berlin, and has been a mentor with I LIKE NETWORKING since 2020. She has spoken extensively on the role of artist residencies, most recently with Christie's Education. Her forthcoming and recent curated exhibitions include *Dungeons and Daydreams*, Wilder Gallery, London (2023); *Dancing on a Knife's Edge*, Wilder Gallery, London (2023); *Greatest Source of my Longing*, Barbara Thumm Gallery, Berlin (2022); and *Reclaiming the Nymph*, Gillian Jason Gallery, London (2022). In 2021 she curated and led programming for YOLK!, a digital showcase of the Taurisano Collection. Mollie is the founder of She Curates, a global platform highlighting international artists, and has also facilitated and produced revolutionary artist residency programmes, including PLOP Artist Residency (since 2022) and She CURAtes The Residency (since 2020).

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 and focusing on ultra-contemporary art. 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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