

ROMAN ROAD
PRESS RELEASE

CANON OF BEAUTY

Private View: Thursday 05 October 2023, 6 – 8 PM

Exhibition: Friday 06 October – Saturday 11 November

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 pleased to present *Canon of Beauty*, a group exhibition curated by Fousieh Mobayen, featuring artists Antonia Nannt, Murat Önen, Victoria Pidust and Lola Stong-Brett.

For hundreds of centuries there has been a question and negotiation about beauty, aesthetics and its classification, and very early on philosophers coined terms and theories around it, from Plato to Kant and Hegel. The term 'aesthetics', initially named by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1750, refers to the "study of sensory perception." Today's aesthetics have two main aspects: it's a theory of beauty, including the sublime, magnificent, elegant and graceful, and also of the ugly and grotesque; these ideas expanded in the 19th century, notably with Hegelian philosopher Karl Rosenkranz's *Aesthetics of Ugliness* (1853). Overall, aesthetics explores how we value, experience, and judge art and beauty.

This profound dialogue has received great attention within the art world throughout various exhibitions. Looking back historically, many great works were considered as inappropriate or shocking because they broke with convention or simply were grotesque. Indeed, Marcia Tucker, founder of the New Museum in New York, curated an exhibition in 1978 titled 'Bad Painting', which initiated a new discourse in the art world: painting as a counter-reaction to avant-garde and stylistic dictates.

Canon of Beauty brings together artists whose practices and works exhibit different perceptions of singular aesthetic references. Through sculpture, painting and photography they collectively weave a narrative that explores unique experiences and observations, and the question of the relevance of aesthetics and how it is felt in today's world.

In contemporary art, different concepts of 'beauty' have emerged, where beauty and aesthetics are democratised, politically discussed, and are even becoming a statement of oppression and marginalisation, a place of unpredictable movements and visuals. We have entered a stage where there is no definite answer of what is meant to be aesthetic and not. Furthermore, how strongly does the western gaze influence these theories?

The artists of *Canon of Beauty* are paying contribution to the discourse of aesthetics in different ways, such as Antonia Nannt's steel sculptures, which fill the room and resemble a garden of metallic flowers with substantial petals. Etched with the names of design movements, the sheer number of words sometimes causes petals to fall prematurely, revealing fragile coloured glass within. Coated in enamel, they glisten, questioning how they are used as part of the language of design to forcibly transmit nostalgia, reassurance, or even power itself.

Murat Önen's work is self-reflective, blending real-life situations and personal experiences with imaginative elements from art history. He references old masters, reinterpreting their artistic essence and forging new paths in the present. His confrontation with the socially defined and perceived conflicting notions of masculinity, as well as his quest for liberation from them, ultimately paves the way for a completely new mode of expression within his painterly repertoire.

Victoria Pidust's work explores the idea of mirroring our world with a different perception, creating a shift in reality for the viewer. Her deep connection to painting led her to contemplate abstract possibilities in photography. In her iPhone zooming series, Pidust captures extreme close-ups, revealing algorithmic elements of the iPhone's in-camera programs. Any loss of quality due to zooming is offset by independently generated information.

Lola Stong-Brett's paintings mingle abstraction with figuration to depict altered realities of the everyday. Taking imprints of her immediate surroundings, she uses gestural and emotive mark making to explore wider social themes of class, memory and nostalgia.

Canon of Beauty builds a forum for exchange of different ideas of aesthetics through the works of the artists involved, and is considered a place for discussion, motivated by different cultural viewpoints, experiences and influences surrounding the central question: what does it mean to live today in times of dissonance and chaos, and how does it create a sense of beauty and aesthetic?

Text by Fousieh Mobayen

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Antonia Nannt (b. 1995, Reutlingen) is a German artist and sculptor based in Berlin. She studied art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, and the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, before graduating in 2021 at the Universität der Künste Berlin in the class of Manfred Pernice. Her work has been exhibited at WAF, Vienna (2022); June, Berlin (2022); and Galerie Anton Janiszewski, Berlin (2021), among others.

Murat Önen (b. 1993, Istanbul) is a Turkish painter based in Düsseldorf. He has recently graduated from the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf having previously completed his diploma at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts (2017). Önen has had recent solo shows at DUVE Berlin (2022); Ballon Rouge Collective, Brussels (2022); and an institutional solo exhibition at Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (2023). He has participated widely in group shows, including recently at Max Mayer, Düsseldorf (2022); Kunstmuseum Marburg (2022); and Martch Art Project, Istanbul (2022).

Victoria Pidust (b. 1992, Nikopol) is a Berlin-based artist working with photography. She studied multimedia at the Institute of Book Studies and Printing Technology, and photography at NTUU KPI in Kyiv from 2010 to 2015. She also studied painting and visual communication at Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin (2020). In 2020 Pidust was awarded the Mart Stam Prize, and in 2022 the Kunstfonds Bonn NEUSTART KULTUR-Stipendium and the Artists Inside Fellowship. Solo exhibitions include *I will not think about this for too long*, kjubh Kunstverein e.V, Cologne (2021); *Bildmassage*, JVDW Gallery, Düsseldorf; and *Hybrids*, ZERO FOLD, Cologne (2020). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *Expect the Unexpected*, Kunstmuseum Bonn (2023); *Realms*, JVDW Gallery, Düsseldorf (2023); *nezrydani slyozy*, Galerie Judith Andreae, Bonn (2022); *New Talents 2022*, FUHRWERKSWAAGE, Cologne (2022); and *POSTOST: Україна/Ukraine*, Stiftung Neue Kunst Berlin-Brandenburg, Berlin (2022).

Lola Stong-Brett (b. 1996, London) is a British artist working with painting. She graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 2019 with a first class honours degree in painting. Stong-Brett is currently enrolled on the Tracey Emin Artist Residency, where she will have a final show in the summer of 2024. She has previously shown work with the Royal Scottish Academy, Rafiki Gallery and Embassy Gallery in Edinburgh, as well as GoodMother Gallery in California.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Fousieh Mobayen is Iranian, born and raised in Wuppertal. She obtained an MA in German literature and art and design studies from the University of Wuppertal (2006) and a BA in curatorial studies at UDK in Berlin (2016). Mobayen is now based in Berlin where she has worked as an independent curator since 2016. As such, she conceives her own exhibitions and cultural projects with artists and galleries, and in 2022 started her own art series 'Unlimited Tomorrow', where she presents performances and art exhibitions in spaces outside the conventional and learned art context, and creates singular experiences. Her recent projects include *TOTAL RECALL - Break the Charm*, group exhibition at galerie burster, Berlin (April 2023); *Spilling the beans* with artists Olga Hohmann and Antonia Nannt, part of the Berlin curatorial project 'Unlimited Tomorrow' (November 2022); *The In-Between Again*, curatorial collaboration with Marlene Alice Schenk at the Schweizer5, Frankfurt Book Fair (October 2022); and *TOTAL RECALL - Learn the Unlearning*, group exhibition at galerie burster, Berlin (March 2022).

ABOUT ROMAN ROAD

Roman Road, formerly an art gallery founded by Marisa Bellani in 2013, is a community driver and catalyst for artists' career growth and creativity, driven by its founder's desire to propose a new and viable support system for artists, responding to the XXIC ever-evolving art world. As such, Roman Road's activities are dedicated to two main aspects: Studios and Curation.

Studios are spaces where artists can expand the parameters of their practices. Roman Road's mission to unearth talent and root artists to its community is achieved through the implementation of its studio programme, providing a sense of belonging and furthering its purpose and commitment as a leading facilitator fostering experimental freedom and artistic autonomy.

As opposed to the showcasing of full-on programming specific to galleries, Curation is a branch dedicated to the conception and production of fewer exhibitions, either internally or in partnership, to push further the academic research focusing on an in-depth and qualitative study of two main topics: the future of the world through utopia and dystopia, and the complexities of the human mind, from non-normative identities to challenging stereotypes in modern society.