

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

ROMANA LONDI

WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE YOU MADE

Saturday 13 april - Saturday 25 may 2024



THOUGHTS, 2023-2024

Huile, acrylique, peinture en aérosol, huile solide, film photochromique peint sur toile de lin et cadre en aluminium

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE YOU MADE* (*That Millions of strange shadows on you Tend?*), the first solo exhibition by the artist Romana Londi at the Brussels gallery. An ensemble of previously unseen paintings, thirteen of which were recently completed for the exhibition, further explores the *Jetlag* series initiated in 2018, which includes *Jetlag: Shapeshifters* and *Sentient*. For the artist, these paintings represent a veritable exploration—probing the language of painting, its imagery, and processes. This involves an examination of a new contemporary materiality and a contemplation of the representation of the body as it evolves in a post-industrial, digital world.

The exploration commences with the series' title work, *Jetlag*, a term that designates all disorders linked to the desynchronization of biological clocks caused by rapid travel. This relatively recent term epitomizes our contemporary era, marked by significant spatio-temporal changes. With the emergence of new technologies, bodies are perpetually traversing places and worlds, at times to the point of becoming entirely dematerialised by the proliferation of digital technology.

Drawing from this observation, Romana Londi creates artworks in which various temporalities intricately intertwine. The forms suggest images in full transformation, in a state of transition, mobile and unstable on the painted surface. Some of these optical variations, notably prominent in the *Jetlag: Shapeshifters* series, arise from the artist applying UV light-sensitive photochromic films to her paintings. In the *Sentient* series, this characteristic extends across the entire painted surface, rendering the works entirely monochrome. The shapes in this way become permeable to their surroundings, synchronizing with the rays of light, and

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revealing themselves in varying ways depending on the time of day. The artist composes using natural elements, such as the sun, as though seeking to reconnect with the ties we have gradually lost in a world increasingly dominated by technology.

Drawing inspiration from past masters like Bernard van Orley (1487 - 1541) with *The Seven Joys of the Virgin* or Matteo di Giovanni (1430 - 1495) with *The Apostle Saint Bartholomew*, Romana Londi explores notions of transformation and disembodiment at the dawn of the third millennium. The depiction of Saint Bartholomew flayed, gracefully holding his own skin, already evoked a mysterious aura—a figure both partially familiar and partly alchemical, hovering on the edge of the uncanny. "Saint Bartholomew is not just about the body. It's about this sensitive membrane, receptive to human emotions," says the artist. "Worn like a cape by the Saint, it presents a potential contemporary reappropriation of our vulnerability and empathy," she adds. Romana Londi employs this iconography to unveil our mutant bodies: *Wearing it (the sun's armor)*, *Holding it*, and *Stripping* provide glimpses of figures where shapes, flesh, and skin merge in a carnal environment of dazzling vitality.

The artist chooses the nature of the material as the starting point for her work. The vivid expressiveness of the broad brushstrokes, the combination of diverse techniques, and the bold use of colour imbue each painting with boundless energy. The shapes appear elusive—almost watery—as they furtively traverse the pictorial field. It is a characteristic that gives substance to what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman refers to as 'liquid modernity'. The figures become hybrid creatures, navigating a realm akin to the 'worlding' defined by Donna Haraway.

With the widespread proliferation of digital technology and machines into our daily lives, the world now hovers between existence and meta-existence. As such, *WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE YOU MADE (That Millions of strange shadows on you Tend?)*—a title borrowed from Shakespeare's Sonnet 53 and quoted by Jeanette Winterson in one of her books—explores the extensions of our own humanity. We could pose this question to a human being as much as to an avatar in the metaverse or to a ghost. For, as Jeanette Winterson continues in her book, "Is consciousness obliged to materiality?" Algorithms and artificial intelligence lack physical presence, yet they exist, among us. To us, they appear just as alive.

¹ According to Donna Haraway, worlding refers to the structuring of possible worlds and times, material-semiotic realms, past, present and future.

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Romana Londi is an Italian-Irish artist, born in 1985 in Rome (Italy), where she lives and works.

Since graduating from Central St Martins in London in 2009, Romana Londi has developed a unique approach to painting that is rooted in experimentation beyond simple representation to explore the immediacy of life, fusing conflicting realities in hybrid works. Her early practices which include the recto-verso series *Happenstance* - painted simultaneously on both sides of un-primed canvas - and the colour-changing series, *Sentient*, *Blushing (Pink as Fuck)* and *Jetlag*.

For all these signature series, Londi used photochromic mediums which responds to the changing intensity of sunlight and shifting shadows. These sentient (rather than merely representational) works are concerned with new materialism, the immediacy of life - with the interplay between presence and absence - absorbing and manifesting their surroundings as sites for transformation. Her latest series *Jetlag*, started in 2018, is conceptualised as the hangover of The Great Acceleration - a musing on the role of the body in the post-industrial, digital world with all its potential and failures.

Her work has already been included in major group exhibitions such as *Planet B, Climate Change And The New Sublime* at the Palazzo Bollani in Venice (Italy), *I am the Beat*, *Desire Nights* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin (Ireland), *Memory Shop* at the Casa Wabi Foundation in Oaxaca (Mexico), *Gaia Has a Thousand Names* at the Elgiz Museum in Istanbul (Turkey) and *Mademoiselle* at CRAC Occitanie in Sète (France).

Romana Londi has been working as an artist since 2009, and her works can be found in numerous private collections in Italy, France, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In 2024, she will have a solo exhibition *WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE YOU MADE (that millions of strange shadows on you tend)* at the Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Brussels (Belgium).

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Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Brussels

Charles Decoster

Romana Londi

WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE

YOU MADE

13 April - 25 May 2024

Group show

30 May - 13 July 2024

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Cloître Saint-Merri I et II

Laura Henno

Grande Terre

6 April - 1 June 2024

Valerie Belin

11 April - 1 June 2024

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Saint-Honoré

Carole Benzaken

Éclats

16 March - 18 May 2024

Roger Edgar Gillet

29 May - 27 July 2024