

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

FIONA RAE

Thursday 19 January - Saturday 18 March 2023



And nothing is but what is not, 2021. Oil and acrylic on canvas. Fiona Rae.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present the first solo exhibition of Fiona Rae at its Brussels gallery, having exhibited the artist six times at its Paris gallery since the start of their collaboration in 1994. The British artist is recognised as one of the most important abstract painters of her generation on the international scene.

Born in Hong Kong in 1963, Fiona Rae initially studied at Croydon College of Art in London before entering Goldsmiths College in 1984. This is where she first came into contact with Damien Hirst, Gary Hume and Sarah Lucas, with whom, among others, she became part of the Young British Artists (YBAs) group, the embodiment of the resurgence of the British art scene in the 1980s and 1990s. For over 30 years, Fiona Rae has been developing an oeuvre with a rich and complex vocabulary, one that both pays homage to the history of art — for example, the Pop resonance of certain motifs and the gestures specific to Abstract Expressionism — while at the same time producing a distinct and innovative visual language anchored in the contemporary.

The exhibition at Galerie Nathalie Obadia Brussels presents paintings and works on paper from 2015–2021, most of which were included in *Fiona Rae: Many-Colour'd Messenger / Messagère aux diverses couleurs*, Centre d'art La Malmaison, Cannes, France, 2021–2022. This selection in Brussels showcases the evolution of her work over the past few years, an overview that attests to her pictorial virtuosity and ability to conjure up vividly expressive and enigmatic images.

The exhibition begins on the first floor of the gallery with paintings from the *Greyscale*, *Figure* and *Pastel* series; the arrangement of the works reveals the variations in chromatic shifts through a dramatic sequence from light to dark. Rae's brush marks create elusive and ethereal fairy-tale figures and cartoon characters, blending into and out of darker or lighter grounds, evoking some pictorial effects reminiscent of Photoshop, whilst remaining decidedly abstract. These fleeting

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figures reflect Fiona Rae's improvisatory investigation of the evocative and imaginative possibilities inherent in abstraction.

On the second floor of the gallery, paintings from the *Abstract* series and Rae's most recent *Word* series are presented, alongside a selection of works on paper. In the *Abstract* paintings, Rae abandons intentional references to the figurative, stating that she has "no intention of portraying the human figure, nor of implying a landscape, let alone a still life." The brush marks are intended to represent only themselves. However, the impossibility of a "pure" and non-objective abstraction is revealed as the painterly forms inevitably evoke references and the suggestion of an imaginary field of activity.

The two most recent paintings, *And nothing is but what is not* (2021) and *Yes I'm alone, but I'm alone and free* (2021), are from the current *Word* series, which enacts the titles of the paintings over the surface of the canvas. The brush marks and shapes form letters and sentences with differing degrees of legibility and clarity, merging the languages of art with those of literature and popular culture. As Jean-Pierre Criqui writes, "[the painting] surface is...punctuated by the words, scattered, torn apart and transfigured into motifs – into figures, I was about to write – of painting."¹ Rae's references to Shakespeare, films and animation, metaphysical poetry and pop music within the same group of paintings point to the myriad of influences that inform her work and underline its profoundly contemporary dimension.

¹ Jean-Pierre Criqui, *Fiona Rae: Many-Colour'd Messenger / Messagère aux diverses couleurs*, 2021, La Malmaison Cannes / Snoeck

Born in 1963 in Hong Kong, Fiona Rae lives and works in London.

Fiona Rae graduated from Croydon School of Art, London (1984), and Goldsmiths College, London University (1987), alongside Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, and Sarah Lucas, with whom she was part of the Young British Artists group, which allowed for a rebirth of the British art scene in the 1980s and 1990s.

Fiona Rae has become one of the foremost abstract painters of her generation, and is widely represented in prestigious public and private collections, such as the Tate Collection (UK); Royal Academy of Arts (UK); Fond National d'Art Contemporain (France); Centre Pompidou (France); Mudam (Luxembourg); Fundacio Caixa (Spain); Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain of Nîmes (France); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC (USA); The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, New York (USA); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (USA); Astrup Fearnley Museum (Norway); Arts Council England (UK); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (UK); British Council (UK); Southampton City Art Gallery (UK); Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (UK); University of Warwick Art Collection (UK); Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (Portugal); Contemporary Art Society, London (UK); the Albertina Museum, Vienna (Austria); FRAC Auvergne (France); Fundación Barrié, A Coruña (Spain); Government Art Collection (UK); Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (Germany); the Jerwood Collection, London (UK); Leeds Museums and Galleries (UK); Musée Départemental de Rochechouart, Haute-Vienne (France); Morsbroich Museum, Leverkusen (Germany); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC (USA); and the Sintra Museum of Modern Art (Portugal).

Fiona Rae's work was recently the subject of important solo exhibitions at Centre d'art La Malmaison in Cannes (France, 2021-2022), Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery (UK, 2014), Southampton City Art Gallery (UK, 2014), Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (UK, 2013), Leeds Art Gallery (UK, 2012), The New Art Gallery, Walsall (UK, 2012). Earlier solo institutional exhibitions were held at Kunsthalle Basel (Switzerland, 1992), ICA, London (UK, 1994) and the Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain in Nîmes (France, 2002) which also published her first important monograph that met with great public and critical success.

Rae's work has also been included in many significant group exhibitions in prestigious institutions, including Tate Britain (UK, 2019), Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (UK, 2017), Institute of Contemporary Arts of Singapore (Singapore, 2012), Tate Britain (UK, 2009), Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Luxembourg, 2008), Hamburger Bahnhof (Germany, 2007), Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai (China, 2006), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany, 2003), Tate Liverpool (UK, 2001), Fundacio Caixa (Spain, 2000), Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (Portugal, 1997), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Spain, 1996), Hayward Gallery (UK, 1994), Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (Netherlands, 1990) and the Venice Biennale (Italy, 1990).

Fiona Rae has been represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, since 1994.

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BRUSSELS

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Brussels

Charles Decoster

Antoine Renard

Strange Attractors

October 27 - December 17, 2022

Fiona Rae

January 19 - March 18, 2023

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Cloître Saint-Merri I and II

Guillaume Leblon

PATAQUÈS

November 19 - February 4, 2023

Joseph Grau-Garriga

February 24 - April, 2023

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Saint-Honoré

Andres Serrano

The Robots

November 7 - December 23, 2022

Collin Sekajugo

January 20 - March 4, 2023