

Press kit

spiaggia libera

miart

Romana Londi

Romana Londi (Italy & Ireland) born in 1985



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Romana Londi has developed unique painting practices which include the recto-verso series Happenstance - painted simultaneously on both sides of unprimed canvas and the colour-changing series, Sentient and Jetlag. For these signature series, Londi invented and developed a photochromatic medium which responds to the changing intensity of sunlight and shifting shadows. These sentient (rather than merely representational) works are concerned with the immediacy of life, and absorb and manifest their surroundings as sites for transformation. The resulting paintings, or hybrids, gather and sync conflicting realities.

Romana Londi graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2009. Selected Exhibitions include Planet B, Climate Change and The New Sublime, Venice, IT 'I am the beat, Desire Nights, IMMA Museum, Dublin, IRL Gaia has a Thousand Names, Elgiz Museum, Istanbul, TR Mademoiselle, Centre Regional D'Art Contemporain, Sete, FR.

Education

- 2009 Fine art and theory of art University of East London, London, UK
- 2008 BA, Fine Art Central Saint Martins University of the Arts, London, UK
- 2005 Political Science, La Sapienza University of Rome, IT

Residencies and Awards

- 2019 CASAWABI Residency, CASAWABI.ORG
- 2019 V.OCurations Residency, Baker Street, London, UK
- 2015 Hooper Projects, Painter residency, LA, USA

Solo and group exhibitions

- 2024 Jetlag: San Bartolomeo, MiArt, Milan, IT
- 2024 WHAT IS YOUR SUBSTANCE, WHEREOF ARE YOU MADE (That Millions of strange shadows on you Tend?), Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Brussels; BE
- 2023 Jetlag: Lullaby to the Tick of Two Clocks, Spiaggia Libera, Paris, FR
- 2022 The worm at the core, Curators: Cristiano Di Martino and Conor, Ackhurst Set Gallery, SET Woolwhich, London, UK
- 2022 Planet B, climate change and the new sublime, Curator: Nicolas Bourriaud, Radicants Internationals, Palazzo Bollani, Venice, IT
- 2021 Tienda de memorias, Casawabi.org, Puerto Escondido, MX
- 2020 I am the beat, event desire: A Revision from the 20th Century to the Digital Age, Curators: Vaari Claffey and Rachel Thomas, IMMA Museum, Dublin, IRL

- 2019 Gaia has 1000 names, Elgiz Museum, Collateral Events, Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, TR
- 2019 Foreign Affairs, Curator: Lorena Juan (Boros Collection team), Impact ArtPerspective, Berling gallery Weekend, Berlin, DE
- 2019 Romana Londi, Curator: Voocurations, UK Baker street, London, UK
- 2018 Rhapsodies, Curators: Alix Janta-Polczynski and Lauren Jones, Bruxelles, BG
- 2018 Played, curated by Maria Thurn Und Taxis and Sebastian Hoffman, Ebensperger Gallery, Salzburg, AUS
- 2018 Mademoiselle, Curator: Tara Londi, Centre Regional Contemporain Occitanie, D'Art Setè, FR
- 2018 Adventures & Curiosities, Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Mark Shand, London, UK
- 2018 Skinscapes, curated by Tatiana Cheneviere, and Giulia Vardelli UNIT1 Gallery, London, UK
- 2018 Art Night, White Chapel Gallery Associate Program, London, UK
- 2018 Penelope, 76 Gallery, curated by Alix Janta, London, UK
- 2018 Fully Nude, Hooper Projects, Hooper Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, US
- 2018 I came undone, Open Studio, Cell Project Space Studio London, UK
- 2018 Happenstance, Video and performance, collaborative project bigger & Pulse, Paris, FR
- 2018 The Limits of Law, State Unfunded Art Group Exhibition, Freies Museum, Berlin, DE
- 2013 From Hands to Mouth, Rove gallery, kenny Schachter Gallery, London, UK
- 2013 I came undone, Open Studio, Cell Project Space Studio London, UK
- 2010 State, Exhibition, Shoreditch town Hall, London, UK

MiArt - Jetlag : San Bartolomeo

12.04—14.04.24

Lullaby to the Tick of Two Clocks

In the cave which wild weeds cover... It was once a Roman's chamber, Where he kept his darkest revels, And the wild weeds twine and clamber; It was then a chasm for devils.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Roman's Chamber Poem'

Romana Londi's work combines gestural expressiveness in thickly layered brushstrokes with an extraordinary attention to the possibilities of material experiment. The Italian-Irish artist Londi, who graduated from Central St Martins in 2009 and worked in east London for fifteen years, before recently relocating to Rome, is as much an alchemist as an artist. This is perhaps best demonstrated by her unique process of applying UV light-sensitive photochromic films to her canvases, which darkens when exposed to light and becomes clear again in shadow. In her profoundly enigmatic abstractions, Londi is a master of light and dark, developing effects of chiaroscuro for the digital age as she uses colour to find form. Whether in her *Jetlag series* (2019-ongoing), which titularly refers to the desynchronization of biological clocks caused by high-speed travel, or *Shapeshifters* (2021-ongoing), expressive matrixes of humanoid metamorphoses, or the *Sentient* works (2016-ongoing), which transform colours into black, Londi's works engage with how the vulnerabilities of the human form become transformed against itself in a world that has become increasingly uninhabitable, and increasingly hostile to nature. Londi's works delve into important ontological questions on the nature of physiological transformation in an uncertain world, and ask us: How do our bodies and our minds change and yet some irrepressible sense of ourselves remains the same? How can painting today reach back into the

history of art and recuperate solace for our disembodied age of AI, morbid screen addictions, and the closed loop of the metaverse? How will we feel about our sensual abilities at a time when technological advances may yet render them functionally obsolete?

Having been born and brought up in central Rome, Londi returned to her native city to reconnect with its extraordinary cultural influence, and to balance the weight of its art historical precedents with a creative lightness to make new works that recuperate eternal themes. The Eternal City also provides nearly unlimited access to medieval and Renaissance masterpieces, in churches, convents, and museums, and devotional paintings with their iconographical symbolism (if not the belief structures they express) have inspired new directions for her work. Bernard van Orley's *The Seven Joys of the Virgin* (undated), on display at the Galleria Colonna, depicts the Madonna with the infant Christ on her knee, as seven moments from her life, from the Annunciation to the Nativity, appear in disc-shaped time capsules like spinning halos above her head. Noting how these moments in time are depicted through a Neoplatonic *circle*, but wanting to narrate human finitude rather than divine revelation, Londi turned to an even older example of the symbolic shape: the triangle in the cave. In this case, the triangle, which has no correlative in the natural world, paleolithic anthropologists believed that the shape was scrawled onto cavernous entrances to warn subsequent travellers that the head and shoulders of the body are too large to pass through. Alongside a forewarning of danger, or a sense of directions, in their earliest usage triangles stand for a kind of human limit. Londi has included triangular shapes in several of her works, which are made not with paint but with photochromatic film. As such, these

triangles change colour and therefore the temperature of the works' meaning. The ultimate or absolute truth of the work is a fugitive in an endless temporal experiment. In Londi's universe of forms, it matters who you are and where you are standing; hers is a living situation of art.

In *Thoughts* (2023-24), made using an extraordinary array of materials (oil, acrylic, spray paint, solid oil, and photochromic film painted on a linen canvas and aluminium frame), Londi abstractly depicts such an encounter in which life cannot pass any further into the world. The luscious strokes of paint curve and coalesce but are almost immediately contained in a larger structure that reorders movement but refuses to explain its total logic. As such, the painting itself resembles a network or system; look at the way the cylindrical black forms, both linear and non-linear, seem to pump their power through the valves and closed circuits of the red industrial-like structure. Here, Londi has achieved something rare so late in the history of abstract painting: to be both gestural and architectonic simultaneously, and to contain something of both the human anatomy and the totalizing post-industrial environment, where all life is subsumed into capital, that constrains it. Londi manages to give life and take it away in the same picture.

In her recent investigations scouring Roman churches, Londi was struck by the prevalence of representations of Saint Bartholomew, and basked in reproductions of Matteo di Giovanni's version at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. Bartholomew is depicted as being skinned alive with the saint then pictured holding his flayed skin and the knife which mutilated him, somehow still, or still partly, alive. Several paintings by Londi reference this poor saint, most explicitly *The Skinning of San Bartolomeo*

MiArt - Jetlag: San Bartolomeo

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(2023-24). We see something of an outstretched leg, something of the displayed hand, something of the pious but weary face. The black-and-white grave of the body, indexed by juts of lines like an anatomical figure at play, is wincingly bare against the pink and red coat of flesh that flows like a torrent in an arena of scarlet. At the foot of the painting, triangles of blue signal the flourish of an escape beyond; including these triangular forms offer some solace, while emphasising the saint's physiological entrapment in the foreground. 'I became enamoured with the enigmatic figure of Saint Bartholomew', Londi has said, 'because he was a man who has learned to live without his body.' But, more than this, Londi recognizes how by 'reclaiming his own skin and wearing it as a dress, he reclaims a certain sensibility out of his vulnerability.'

It is difficult to underestimate the expressive power of Londi's Shapeshifter paintings, such as *There Be Dragons*, and *The Devil's Tale* (both 2023-24) especially given how remarkable their spatial organization appears to lunge to the surface, out at you like falling scaffolding, as well as pared back, stripped, held down against the pallid pink backdrop, like a bound prisoner. Small triangular arrows imply some sense of exit from the malaise; their course surely leads nowhere. Near Saint-Paul-de-Vence in Provence, there is a sculpture display of works by Alberto Giacometti: what strikes you most is the ways in which they are concurrently both visceral and abstract. A Giacometti figure discloses both an imperceptible sense of our humanness and yet also a brute, sensual conceptualization of how we exist as humans. Also skeletal, and elongated to stretch the very limits of human embodiment, Londi's shapeshifters achieve the same effect: to confront us with our radical vulnerability and fallibility in a world where technological developments are making

everything else sentient, except for us.

Many of Londi's paintings engage with the temporal dissonances of life lived between the different places of our lives, between the home of our birth and the homes that we build in adulthood, between the familial relationships that we inherit and the fragile bonds we build ourselves. Londi has put the philosophical investigation into the nature of these temporal dissonances into her work because she believes that the rapid advancement in technology has disconnected us from nature and from our environment. 'Like Courbet, who reconnected to the gestural métier of paint at the advent of photography', Londi has said, 'I return to painting gesture as a way to recalibrate what painting is, and what is its enduring strength.' Hers are works that attest to art's capacity to act as some kind of compensation for loss, but also something simpler: the assurance that another, and here recuperated through her intensely physiological vernacular of abstraction, has experienced something that we – that I, that all of us – are too experiencing. I believe that Londi's works, which manage to articulate the sensuous presence of life lived on the fly while documenting the negated traces of what once was, or might continue to exist but without our attention, offers a compelling route out of the distractedness of our increasingly atomized lives. As well as any other artist working today, Londi knows that the most daunting moment is to find ourselves at the threshold of the cave. But more than that, as an artist who recognizes the possibilities and limitations of art at a time of extreme transformation and crisis, she offers us a route through.

By Matthew Holman

Artworks

Hewn from Darkness, Forged from Light, 2024, Oil paint and acrylic on canvas, photochromic film, 180 x 180 cm. Courtesy the artist & Spiaggia Libera, Paris. Photo © Gabriele Abbruzzese



Artworks

Apple Riped, 2024, Oil paint and acrylic on canvas, photochromic film, 180 x 180 cm.
Courtesy the artist & Spiaggia Libera, Paris. Photo © Gabriele Abbruzzese



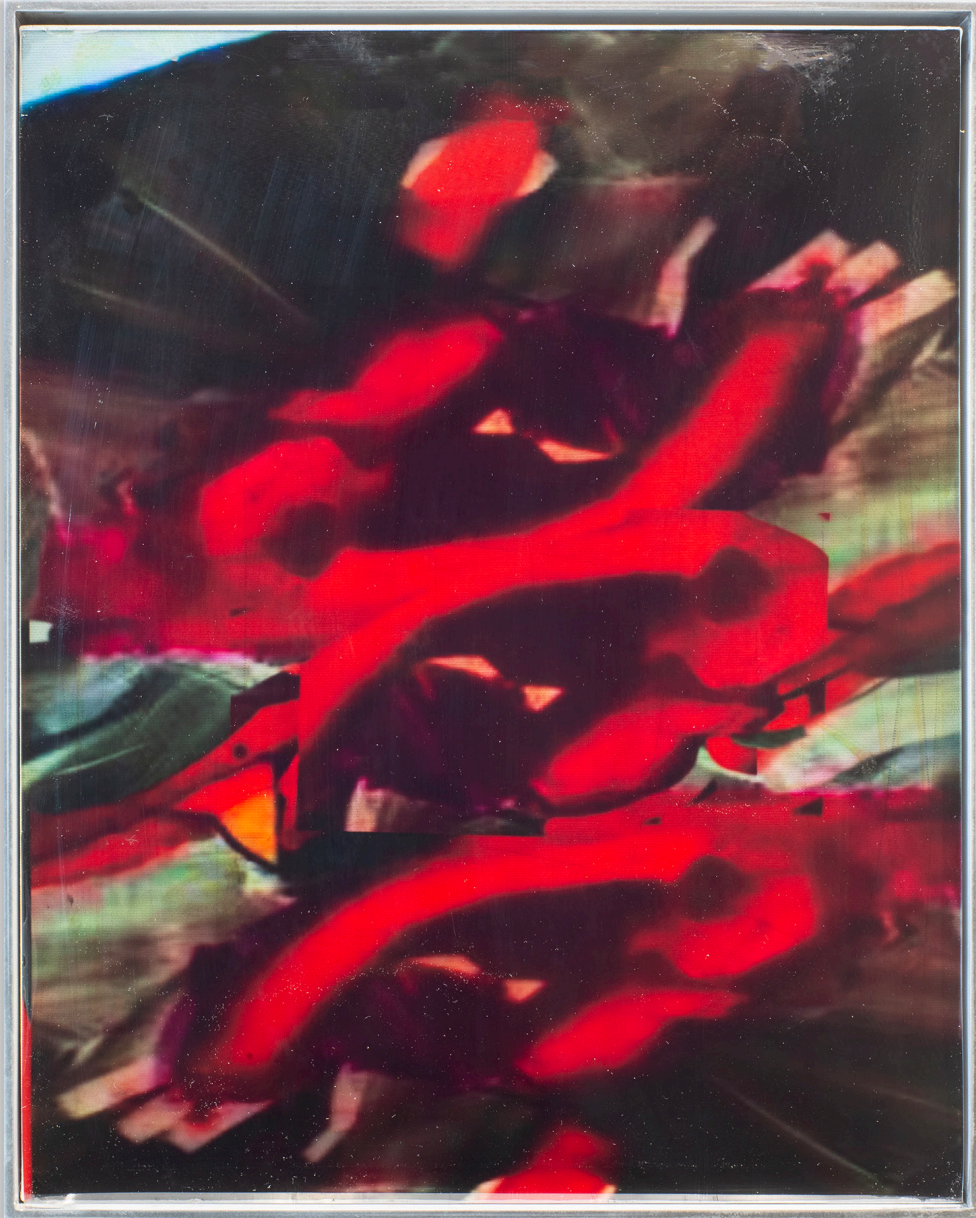
Artworks

Who Real ?, 2024, Oil paint and acrylic on canvas, photochromic film, 220 x 190 cm.
Courtesy the artist & Spiaggia Libera, Paris. Photo © Gabriele Abbruzzese



Artworks

Sentient, 2024, Oil paint and acrylic on canvas, photochromic film, 50 x 40 cm.
Courtesy the artist & Spiaggia Libera, Paris. Photo © Gabriele Abbruzzese



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Exhibition views

«Jetlag: San Bartolomeo », Miart, Milan, 2024. Photo © Gabriele Abbruzzese



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Available works

Asylum Under my Tread, 2022, Oil painting, 200 x 150 cm. © Aurélien Mole



Available works

Mimic, Tear, Ashes, 2022, Oil painting, 194 x 188 cm. © Aurélien Mole



Available works

Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates, 2023, Oil painting, 150 x 195 cm.
© Aurélien Mole



Available works

To the Tick of Two Clocks, 2023, UV print on photochromic film on canvas,
182 x 134 cm. © Aurélien Mole



Exhibition views

«Jetlag: Lullaby to the Tick of Two Clocks », Spiaggia Libera, Paris, 2023. © Aurélien Mole



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Extracts of texts on Romana Londi

→ « Romana Londi's recent series of paintings has involved the development of a unique light-sensitive paint medium (photochromic) that allows the works to embody ongoing environmental change. They are consequently defined by their existence in space and through time. For Londi, "a picture is not simply a dead surface, but can move through external influences and become a performance itself. This process is difficult if not impossible to portray in formal terms, but that is precisely why it is so appealing." The artist, who keeps a studio in London but who has recently completed a residency in Case Wabi, Oaxaca, Mexico, describes herself as a painter who is nonetheless inspired by other forms of expression. Painting, she says, is like alchemy: a sensual experience in which there is an incredibly close relationship between one's own thoughts and the material outer world [...]. »

Alexander Estorick – Writer, Art Critic

→ « The colour changing paintings, continue to channel the artist's unapologetic interest in the dynamics of painting in conversation with higher forces at stake, and in this case sunlight: the invisible and all powerful primary condition for life on earth. This multimedia series of paintings further elude the formal constraints of representation and speculation, becoming sentient beings instead, fundamentally shape-shifters, whose patterns are performed by the UV light. In sync to their geographical location, season, and time of day, the artists reflects that these paintings are as nomadic as «the schizophrenic mode that characteristic of our era and the hybrid, sexualised, nomadic subject we have become». Thus, consciously defying fixed identity, politics and narratives, the works usurp process-based linearity and play instead with 'vibrating temporalities' where, quoting Donna Haraway.»

Tara Londi Boland – Writer, Art Critic

Exhibition views

« PLANET B, Climate Change and the New Sublime », Radicants Internationals, organised by Nicolas Bourriau, Palazzo Bollani, Venice, 2022.
Photo © Andrea Avezù & Sebastiano Pellion Di Persano



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