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The Cave in the Mind

MELANIA TOMA ~ PAOLA TURMINA ~ ATALANTA XANTHE

Curated by Marcelle Joseph

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'For a long time, he said, you cannot tune in. Then, you might sense a current or buzz of telluric energy. This sound transforms, the more time you spend in caves. It becomes voices. You hear these voices but are unable to isolate them. It takes years to learn how to listen, to differentiate, to adjust your inner tuner to a position on the temporal band-width of the underground world.'

- Rachel Kushner, Creation Lake (2024)

IONE & MANN is thrilled to present **The Cave in the Mind**, a group show curated by **Marcelle Joseph** featuring the recipients of the 2024 **GIRLPOWER Residency**. Bringing together the works of **Melania Toma**, **Paula Turmina** and **Atalanta Xanthe**, **The Cave in the Mind** presents new work produced at the culmination of these four artists' stay at the **GIRLPOWER Residency** in the Aquitaine region of southwestern France.

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How did the images painted or engraved in charcoal and red hematite on the walls of caves in Western Europe thirty-five thousand years ago spring, seemingly from nowhere, into the human story? Who made these paintings? And why did they paint only fauna such as bison, horses, ibex, deer, aurochs, woolly mammoths, bears, lions and sabre-toothed tigers? Were these images made as a creative impulse or part of some kind of religious, spiritual or pagan ceremony or ritual? Or were they made as a psychic manifestation of a bounteous upcoming hunting season? Some even say that these artists could have been plotting the stars in the sky, coming up with these animal forms through nocturnal celestial mapping.

In this exhibition, the works originate from a constellation of artists who participated in the 2024 edition of the GIRLPOWER Residency in southwestern France, namely Melania Toma, Paula Turmina and Atalanta Xanthe. Nearby to many cave sites, these three artists had the privilege to visit the caves at Pech Merle, Font-de-Gaume and Combarelles. Deeply moved by what they saw, these artists agreed to come together after the residency to reflect on these works of prehistoric art for this exhibition, *The Cave in the Mind*.

No one knows why these *Homo sapiens* crouched and crawled into the deep subterranean vortexes of the limestone caves of southwestern France to make images in the total darkness during the Upper Paleolithic Transition from a Neanderthal to a *Homo sapiens* populace. But according to David Lewis-Williams (*The Mind in the Cave* (2002)), during this period, human beings were able to remember their visions, dreams and hallucinations and, with fully modern language, to speak about them. Only after developing a set of socially shared mental images could the people of this period start to make graphic images or fix their visions on the walls of these caves when in an altered state of consciousness caused by sensory deprivation afforded by the remote, silent and totally dark underground chambers. He posits that the people of that period ‘harnessed what we call altered states of consciousness to fashion their society and used imagery as a means of establishing and defining social relationships’. Lewis-Williams looks at the origin of the image-makers in that ‘art cannot be understood outside its social context’. So a two-dimensional image of a bison in a cave was not a depiction of a ‘real’ bison but a ‘vision’, a ‘spirit bison’. Thirty-five thousand years ago, image-makers were shamans, not artists.

The three artists in this exhibition may not be hunter-gatherer shamans or celestial mappers, but they all were deeply touched by what they saw in the caves they visited this past summer in southwestern France, including the polychrome paintings of bison, horses and mammoths at Font-de-Gaume, the engravings of horses, reindeer, ibex, rhinoceros, bears and lions at Combarelles and the prehistoric negative handprints at Pech Merle. In that vein, some of the featured artists have made works that allude to these cave paintings and their predetermined vocabulary of motifs, and others have created works that imbue the ambience of being in those sacred places of rituals.

If we go back to the conclusions of Lewis-Williams, Toma, Turmina and Xanthe are image-makers inspired by their own dreams and visions after witnessing the ‘spirit animals’ made real by these hunter-gatherer shamans. From the rock walls of these dark caves to the white walls of the modern-day gallery space, these artists have translated a shamanistic conception of the world and created artworks that reflect upon the new spiritual dawn that occurred at these Ice Age cave sites in southwestern France.

In the creation of the works in this exhibition, the artists tuned into what Rachel Kushner describes in her 2024 novel *Creation Lake* as ‘cave frequencies [that] cross moments, eras, epochs, eons’ and ‘tease apart the mono-phony...[to] encounter an extraordinary polyphony’.

‘You hear whispers, laughter, murmurs, pleas. There’s a feeling that everyone is here. A wonderful feeling, I should add. Because suddenly you realize how alone we have been, how isolated, to be trapped, stuck in calendar time, and cut off from everyone who came before us.’

Text written by Marcelle Joseph

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Notes to Editors

BIOGRAPHIES

Melania Toma (b. 1996, Padova, Italy) is an Italian multi-disciplinary artist living and working in London. At the centre of her practice lies the exploration of opposites, and how they can be broken down and merged to depict a new world of interconnectivity that challenges our age of the Anthropocene. Toma's painting process collides dualities: large quick marks coexist with slender slow line drawings; thin layers of paint feature alongside coagulations of thick sand; the softness and sensuality of threads juxtaposes with the vibrant intensity of colour against raw canvas; and overpopulated planes of the canvas coexist with silent areas of negative space. Her work has featured in the following solo exhibitions: *Five Hearts*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Wandsworth, London, UK (2024); *As Soon as the Sun Sets*, Daniel Benjamin Gallery, London, UK (2023); and *Cabin UTROBA*, Sarieva Gallery, Plovdiv, Bulgaria (2022). Recent selected group exhibitions include: *'Re-Rooted: The Quiet Politics of Plants'*, Cooke Latham Gallery, London, UK (2024); *Loose Ends*, Thameside Studios, London, UK (2024); *Embodied Selfhood*, Pictorum Gallery, London, UK (2024); *In Rapture*, Bomb Factory Art Foundation, London, UK (2024); *Studio Responses IV*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Sistema Tempo*, MO.CA: Centro Per Le Nuove Culture, Brescia, IT (2023); *MATTER*, Flowers Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Soft Monuments*, Frestonian Gallery, London, UK (2023); *2 for 1: A dialogue with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals*, Thorp Stavri, HAZE, Hypha Studios, London, UK (2023); *London Design Biennale*, Italian Pavilion with Triennale Milano, Somerset House, London, UK (2023); *Dopo il fuoco, sotto la cenere*, Condotto48, Roma, IT (2023); *From the Rattle*, FOLD Gallery, London, UK (2023); *In the Garden*, San Mei Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Ingram Prize*, UNIT 1 Gallery, London, UK (2022); *17th International Triennial of Tapestry of Poland*, Centralne Muzeum (2022); *Wlòkiennictwa*, Lodz (2022); *Nocturnal Creatures*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Daughters of Pacha*, Roksanda, London, UK (2022); *The Dinner Table*, San Mei Gallery, London, UK (2021); *Summer Exhibition*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (2021); *CLAY TM*, TJ Boulting, London, UK (2020). Toma has participated in the following residencies: Thread Residency, The Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation, Senegal (2024); GIRLPOWER Residency, Salles, southwestern France (2024); and Casa Wabi, Bosco Sodi Foundation, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, Mexico (2023).

Paula Turmina (b. 1991) is a Brazilian multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in London. Paula completed her BA in Painting at Wimbledon College of Fine Arts in 2016 and graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2021 with an MA in painting. Furthermore, Turmina graduated from the Graphic Design Technical Course at the University of Passo Fundo in Brazil in 2012. Paula's practice encompasses painting, printmaking and analog films. By approaching the canvas and other surfaces as a metaphorical landscape, she explores notions of time and storytelling from a sci-fi perspective. Paula uses, almost exclusively, variations of red in her recent paintings. The application of this colour is a nod to her homeland and the Brazilwood tree, a strong natural resource which has been exploited and exported as timber since the 16th century. Her canvases depict scenes of a post-apocalyptic world with figures who seem to merge into the nature around them. Paula is interested in the human relationship to the land, speculating on the future of the Earth and the absurdity of political discourse and colonial history. Her work has featured in the following solo exhibitions: *Terrenos Maleables*, Ambar Quijano Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico (2024); *Drawn (in)to the Land*, Andrew Reed Gallery, Miami, FL, USA (2024); *Thriving Through (Chaos)*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Membrane*, SENS Gallery, Hong Kong (2023). Recent selected group exhibitions include: *Surrealism and Witchcraft*, Lamb Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Tomorrow is Tomorrow*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, UK (2023); *The Red Room*, Berntson Bhattacharjee Gallery, Cromwell Place, London, UK (2022); *Wish Lush*, Kravitz Contemporary, London, UK (2022); *Decomposição e Fetiche*, Vivian Caccuri Atelier, RJ, Brazil (2022); *Summer Show 2021*, Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK (2021); *Spiral Trap*, Lewisham Art House, London, UK (2021); *Female Gaze*, Kupfer Gallery at Artsy, online (2021); *Up Close and Personal*, The Curators x Dynamisk, online (2021); *It's a Strange World*, Heloisa Genish x Vortic.art, online (2021); *Sun Worshippers*, Goldmail Gallery, online (2021); *London Grads Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2020); *Casa da Escada Colorida*, ArtRio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2020); *Monsters*, The Function Suite, London, UK (2020); *RCA & SLADE Graduate Show*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London, UK (2020). Paula Turmina was awarded the Zsuzsi Roboz Art Scholarship by the Chelsea Arts Club Trust, London, UK in 2019. Paula has participated in the following residencies: a studio-based residency at Ambar Quijano Gallery in Mexico City, Mexico (September 2024); the GIRLPOWER Residency, Salles, France (June 2024); a sustainability-focused residency with Las Vioskas in Dobrzyn, Poland (July – Sep 2022); a studio-based residency at Kupfer Project Space in London, UK (Jan – Dec 2021); a six month online residency with Casa da Escada Colorida, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (August 2020 – April 2021); Winsor & Newton Residency, London, UK (2019); and Zsuzsi Roboz Art Scholarship, Chelsea Arts Club Trust, London, UK (2019).

Atalanta Xanthe (b. 1996, UK) grew up in the UK and New Mexico, USA, and now lives and works in London. Xanthe studied at the undergraduate level at the Ruskn School of Art, University of Oxford (2014-2016) and completed her Postgraduate MFA at the New York Academy of Art (2016-2018). On graduating, at 21, she became the New York Academy of Art's youngest Fellow (2018-2019). Xanthe's is a world of fantastical surrealism - a beguiling collision of nature and artifice. Her painterly dramas, tantalisingly ambiguous, are a space for free-wheeling and re-imagining. Xanthe is influenced by stagecraft and the world of theatre; mischievously splicing aspects of her own biography with elements of the art historical canon and popular culture to create plots which are permeable, stretchy and, at times, magnificently unhinged. A practice rooted in drawing, Xanthe teases out her compositions and narratives over the course of many preliminary studies before embarking on the final painting. Knowingly riffing

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on the scale and seriality of history paintings, a genre traditionally depicting male heroism or grand events, Xanthe's ability to vault, jump headlong, sprint or glide effortlessly across the canvas is testament to her love of paint and the purist act of applying pigment to canvas in the name of storytelling. Xanthe's singular stylistic flair and clearly identifiable hand constitute a feminist reclamation of narrative through paint. Her work has been exhibited extensively internationally in the UK, USA, Italy, France and Germany. Notable solo exhibitions include: *Age Gap: 1494-2024*, Alice Black Gallery, London, UK (2024); *Uteroverse*, Alice Black Gallery, London, UK (2022); and *Scaffold for the Imagination*, Galleria Alessandro Albanese, Milan, Italy (2023). In 2024, Xanthe participated in the GIRLPOWER Residency in southwestern France. Xanthe was also the recipient of the prestigious Ruth Borchard Self-Portrait Competition in 2013 and the David Schafer Portrait Award in 2017. Xanthe is featured in the permanent collections of the Ruth Borchard Collection, UK and the Marval Collection, Italy.

Marcelle Joseph (b. 1966, United States) is an independent curator and collector based in the United Kingdom. In 2011, Joseph founded Marcelle Joseph Projects, a nomadic curatorial platform that has produced over 45 exhibitions in the UK and the rest of Europe, featuring the work of over 300 international artists. Joseph holds an MA in Art History with Distinction from Birkbeck, University of London with a specialization in feminist art practice. Her curatorial work focuses on gender and the performative construction of identity with an emphasis on material-led artistic practices. Joseph is the executive editor of *Korean Art: The Power of Now* (Thames & Hudson, 2013). Additionally, in London, Joseph is the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of Mimosa House (since 2021), an Ambassador of the Royal Academy Schools (since 2010), and a member of the Selection Panel of PLOP Residency (since 2019). She served as a trustee of Matt's Gallery in London from 2018-2022 and served on the jury of the 2017-2019 Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery and Collezione Maramotti, and the Mother Art Prize 2018. She also collects artworks by female-identifying artists under the collecting partnership, GIRLPOWER Collection, as well as more generally as part of the Marcelle Joseph Collection. Since 2022, her collection has been on public display in the UK in two institutional exhibitions curated by Joseph, the first at the Rugby Art Gallery & Museum, Rugby (2022) and the second at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, University of Leeds, Leeds (2023-24). In 2022, Joseph co-curated her first museum exhibition in the United States at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles titled 'The Condition of Being Addressable'. In 2023, she co-founded the GIRLPOWER Residency in southwestern France, an annual artist residency for female-identifying and non-binary artists.

The GIRLPOWER Collection and Residency

The GIRLPOWER Collection is a collecting partnership founded in 2012 between London-based curator Marcelle Joseph and Zurich-based lawyer and businesswoman Kimberly Morris who is currently Chief People, Technology & Services Officer at FIFA. This 50:50 collecting partnership supports female-identifying and non-binary artists through the acquisition of their work at the early stages of their careers.

In 2023, Joseph and Morris founded the GIRLPOWER Residency located in a medieval hilltop property dating back to the 13th century near Bergerac in the Aquitaine region of southwestern France. As an extension of their collection, Joseph and Morris have devised this annual one-month residency to give female-identifying and non-binary artists the space and time for research and experimentation in the hills around the Lot-Garonne rivers. The thrust of the programme emanates from the desire of GIRLPOWER Collection to extend their patronage beyond the purchase of art to personal involvement with the artists themselves. The relationship between the artist-in-residence and the host is an important aspect of this programme. The mission at the GIRLPOWER Residency is to provide early-career artists with an opportunity to slow down and centre their focus on their practice without the stress of deadlines and life in a big city. They invite artists to immerse themselves in the history and culture of the area that date back to the Knights of Templar and to take in the breath taking views and nature around the property. Located in the rural countryside, the GIRLPOWER Residency invites artists to engage in a quieter and more isolated environment that will ideally launch a new development in their practice.

IONE & MANN is a London-based contemporary art gallery established in 2015. Independent and female owned, artist focused and not driven by trends, the gallery is dedicated to thoughtfully curated exhibitions and championing early to mid-career artists in a manner that supports longevity and sustainability. The gallery favours a personal, considered approach to presenting, experiencing and engaging with art, one that allows for long-term relationships and on-going dialogues between artists, curators, collectors and the community.

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Opening Hours: Wednesday - Friday 11 - 6, Saturday 12-4, Tuesday by appointment [**Holiday Hours may differ**]

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