

# OFF ROAD II

MOUNIRA AL SOLH

TROY MICHIE

HANA MILETIĆ

KRESIAH MUKWAZHI

DONA NELSON

LISA OPPENHEIM

SARA OUHADDOU

DIANE SIMPSON

ZHANG YUNYAO

TEKSTEN - TEXTS

## OFF ROAD

For its second *OFF ROAD* exhibition, Zeno X Gallery again departs from its regular gallery program to present work by nine international artists who are collaborating with the gallery for the first time.

*OFF ROAD II* features work by Mounira Al Solh, Troy Michie, Hana Miletić, Kresiah Mukwazhi, Dona Nelson, Lisa Oppenheim, Sara Ouhaddou, Diane Simpson and Zhang Yunyao. A mix of artists from different corners of the world and from different generations, each with their own view and unique way of expressing thoughts and feelings through painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, textile installations and stained-glass windows.

### DIANE SIMPSON

Diane Simpson creates sculptures and drawings that refer to often overlooked elements in clothing and architecture, such as decorative details or accessories like collars, sleeves, wall sconces, hats, and bibs. She works with cardboard, plywood, fiberboard, aluminium and other industrial materials, which she manually transforms into structures that feel almost like three-dimensional drawings. Her creative process involves three steps. She first selects a subject from her personal archive of images taken from sources such as encyclopedias, fashion magazines and catalogues. She then translates the found image into elaborate drawings in pencil on graph paper, rotating her subject at a forty-five-degree angle. The drawing serves as a blueprint for the final sculpture but also exists in its own right. Finally, she renders the drawing into a meticulously hand-crafted three-dimensional sculpture, which balances between the literal and the distorted, the strange and the familiar. For the *Apron* series (2000–2005), she has chosen to focus on a typically female and domestic garment, and the *Peplum* works (2014–2016) highlight the flare of fabric attached to the hem of a blouse or dress to accentuate the waist. By placing these marginal subjects in the center of attention, Simpson upends traditional hierarchies and challenges the distinctions between essence and ornament, object and detail, figuration and abstraction.

Diane Simpson was born in 1935 in Joliet, Illinois (US). She lives and works in Chicago. Although she has been active as an artist for the last forty years, she has only obtained critical acclaim in the past decade. Her first solo exhibition in Europe was held at the Nottingham Contemporary in 2020. She was included in the Whitney Biennial in 2019. She has had solo exhibitions at the Frey Art Museum in Seattle (2019), the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (2016), the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (2015), and New York University (2014). Her work can be found in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, M Woods in Beijing, the Pérez Art Museum Miami, KADIST in Paris and San Francisco and the Espoo Museum of Modern Art in Finland, among others.

### HANA MILETIĆ

Hana Miletić uses weaving as a way to speak about care and repair as well as labour and ecology. The works on view in *OFF ROAD II* are all part of her series *Materials* (2015–present). In this series she first photographs acts of repair in the urban environment, for instance the repair of a broken window or a damaged car side mirror with bands of tape or plastic. She then replicates the scale, shape and colour of these repairs and translates them into woven artworks. Through the precise and slow process of weaving, she counteracts standardization, automation and the speed of the economy. In *OFF ROAD II* Miletić presents five works that are inspired by repairs she stumbled upon in the neighborhood around the gallery. In all these works, she used casein milk fibers as a reference to the gallery's previous function as a milk factory. Moreover, these fibers also bear witness to the artist's preoccupation with the use of sustainable materials.

Hana Miletić was born in 1982 in Zagreb, Croatia. She lives and works in Brussels. She has had solo exhibitions at Bergen Kunsthall (2021), La Loge in Brussels (2021), and WIELS in Brussels (2018). Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at Museum M in Leuven, the 2017 Sharjah Biennial, Kunsthalle Wien, Kunstverein Hannover, S.M.A.K. in Ghent and BOZAR in Brussels, among others. Miletić is the recipient of the Baloise Art Prize 2021. She will have solo exhibitions at MUDAM in Luxemburg and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka (both 2022).

## LISA OPPENHEIM

Lisa Oppenheim's work is often inspired by the materiality and history of photography. Through extensive online and archival research, she mines obscure or forgotten images which she repurposes and transforms using historical and contemporary techniques. In her practice, she investigates and continues the experimental tradition of photography, which allows her to engage openly with both materials and ideas. By readdressing historical images in a contemporary context, she reflects on how objects and events accumulate meaning over time.

Oppenheim's starting point for *Stilleben (Version I) (1942/2021)* was a poorly lit photograph she found in the German National Archives of a still life painting that was looted from a Jewish family in 1942 and presumably destroyed in a bombing in 1943. Using her smoke technique, Oppenheim exposed the negative to the light of a flame and then solarized it in her darkroom. In her work, fire has become a generative force allowing not for a recreation of what was lost but, rather, the creation of a new artwork based on what was left.

For her ongoing *Heliogram* series, Oppenheim creates photographic negatives from historical images of the sun and exposes them to natural sunlight. For her newest work in the series, *Solar Effect in the Clouds-Ocean (Version III) (1856/2021)*, Oppenheim has translated a technique developed by Gustave Le Gray, an important early French photographer. As early film emulsions were unable to capture the range of light from both sky and sea at the same time, Le Gray took separate exposures, when light levels were ideal for either scape, which he printed simultaneously on a single page, reuniting the image. Similarly, Oppenheim has created photo negatives from the digital archives of Le Gray's images, exposed them separately at different times during the day and then tiled them to form a single image.

Lisa Oppenheim was born in 1975 in New York (US), where she currently lives and works. She has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (2018), the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (2017), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (2015), Kunstverein in Hamburg (2014) and Grazer Kunstverein, (2014). Her work is held in the permanent collections of The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, among others.

## DONA NELSON

Dona Nelson's practice and stylistic expression have changed multiple times over the past fifty years. Nelson has displayed a commitment to the exploration and expansion of painting, which led to her two-sided freestanding paintings. She engages the viewer in a physical dialogue with these paintings, which demand to be looked at from both sides, offering different perspectives. The audience is drawn to the canvas, seeking proximity to the texture and depth, which Nelson achieves by using cheesecloth, painted string, acrylic paint and stitches on the linen canvas. Nelson creates paintings in a traditional format but she rejects the concept of painting as a window to the world, choosing to focus instead on movement, colour and materiality.

Dona Nelson was born in 1947 in Grand Island, Nebraska (US). She lives and works in New York (US). In 1968, she graduated with a BFA from Ohio State University and completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York. She has been creating art for the past five decades. Her work has been exhibited at the Whitney Biennial of 2014 in New York, the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, the Rose Art Museum in Waltham, MoMA PS1 in New York, the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Her work is included in the public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, among others.

## MOUNIRA AL SOLH

Mounira Al Solh works within different media such as painting, drawing, performance and installation. Her works narrate the histories and experiences of her broad family and community but also of the people she encounters. At Documenta 14, she presented a series of portraits of Middle Eastern and North African migrants who were no longer able to live in their countries because of wars and climate change. In her painting practice, Al Solh often attempts to visualize the oral histories of (displaced) individuals. *Buried Alive* was created in the aftermath of the Beirut explosion in 2020 but is also a dedication to unjustly imprisoned Lebanese, Syrian and Egyptian women. *The Kiss of the Revolution: Pickled* references a trend of kissing on the streets of Beirut as an act of activism after the protests in 2019 as well as a traditional Lebanese and Syrian way of pickling eggplants with walnuts practiced by her Syrian grandmother. "*I don't consider this an insult.*" is a self-portrait, framed in a typical decorative motif referencing early Byzantine paintings and Islamic ornamentation. It could be a metaphor for the empowering actions of women and people of the LGBTQ community during the recent revolution in Lebanon, which was responded to with arrests and killings. The Arabic texts that are usually present in her work can be read as voices shouting out confronting injustice and sexism among other things, and they are integral in the paintings and give them rhythm.

Mounira Al Solh was born in 1978 in Beirut, Lebanon. She lives and works in Lebanon and the Netherlands. She studied painting at the University of Beirut and fine art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. She will have a solo show at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead and the Felix Nussbaum Haus in Osnabrück in 2022. Previously she had solo exhibitions at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo (2020), the Art Institute of Chicago (2018), Alt in Istanbul (2016), KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin (2014), the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow (2013), Art in General in New York (2012) and Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (2011). Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2020), Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (2020), Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes (2018), Documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), the 56th Venice Biennial (2015), the New Museum in New York (2014) and the 11th International Istanbul Biennial (2009).

## SARA OUHADDOU

Sara Ouhaddou's practice is informed by the experience of growing up between different cultures. Her work addresses the various challenges facing artisan communities and investigates how art can be wielded as an instrument for economic, social and cultural change. Ouhaddou often works together with craftsmen in Morocco, establishing a process of knowledge exchange. She confronts craftsmanship as well as her heritage with the codes of contemporary art in order to reveal the unknown and forgotten stories and realities of the communities she works with. The Arabic language is a significant theme in her work. She dissects the Arabic letters into abstract symbols, turning it into a language of its own, illegible to readers of Arabic but clearly reminiscent of Arabic. Just like the weavings in a Berber carpet can be deciphered, so do alphabets reveal the history of identities. Ouhaddou shows the range of this new language in her drawings, silkscreens and stained-glass windows on view in *OFF ROAD II*. Aside from the recoded alphabet, her works also reference Islamic geometry, architectural elements and decorative patterns from different North African cultures.

Sara Ouhaddou was born in 1986 in Draguignan, France. She lives and works between France and Morocco. Her work has been exhibited at the Mucem in Marseille (2021), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (2021), La Kunsthalle in Mulhouse (2021), Z33 in Hasselt (2021), Manifesta 13 in Marseille (2020), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2020), Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2020), Crac Occitanie in Sète (2020), Institut des Cultures d'Islam in Paris (2018) and Bauhaus in Dessau (2017), among others.

## TROY MICHIE

Through his work, Troy Michie examines questions of race, identity and gender by focusing on the representation as well as the perception of the Brown and Black male body and the racialization of fashion. In his collages, Michie assembles and juxtaposes a variety of sources ranging from fabric scraps and thread to clippings from tailoring magazines and vintage pornography fetishizing Black and Brown men. He also incorporates painted materials and drawings into his works.

For *OFF ROAD II*, Michie has created two new works, *Did I Do That* and *Grayscale*. These multilayered, almost abstract collages combine clippings of Black nude models with prints referencing the zoot suit, a recurrent motif in Michie's work, which is connected to the history of his hometown, El Paso, Texas. Much like this border community, Michie sees his collages as an amalgamation of different cultures. The zoot suit, a flamboyant and often striped garment, was popular among Black and Latino men in the United States in the 1940s. Central to its history are the Zoot Suit Riots: a wave of racially motivated violence that took place in Los Angeles in 1943 when white servicemen attacked a group of Mexican American zoot suiters. Michie has covered up the models and has cut and woven the magazine pages back together. By adding stitches, he brings in the language of drawing but he also makes a poetic gesture in an attempt to reunite and heal. Throughout his work, Michie subverts the fetishizing gaze upon these Brown bodies and creates an intimate atmosphere, providing nuance to these anonymous figures. The sensuality remains but becomes more complex and humanizing.

Troy Michie was born in 1985 in El Paso, Texas (US). He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Michie earned a BFA from the University of Texas and an MFA from Yale School of Arts. His solo exhibition at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles is scheduled to open in February 2022. Michie has participated in the 2019 Whitney Biennial. His work is included in a group exhibition at the Momentary (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art)

in Arkansas. Other recent group exhibitions were held at Kunsthal KAdE in Amersfoort, the Metropolitan Arts Centre in Belfast, the Shed in New York, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, the New Museum in New York, the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York, the Artist's Institute in New York and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

#### KRESIAH MUKWAZHI

Kresiah Mukwazhi takes her own experiences in nightclubs and her encounters with sex workers as the main sources of inspiration for her work. She criticizes the conditions in which sex workers have to operate as well as the mechanisms that forced them into this precarious labour. Her creative practice is expressed through mixed media textile collages, the fabrics often brightly coloured and cheap seem as if they have their own stories to tell. Mukwazhi also uses clothing and wigs from the women she meets and interviews. *Hondo Mbishi* and *Nyenyedzi Nomwe* are both created with brassiere straps collected from sex workers, still carrying the energy of their previous owner. Her work is an act of care towards these women, offering humanization and understanding for their lived experiences. Mukwazhi's work engages the audience in an act of voyeurism. It is seductive yet confrontational and explicit without being degrading.

Kresiah Mukwazhi was born in 1992 in Harare, Zimbabwe. She lives and works in Harare and Cape Town. She is a graduate of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe Visual Art School. Her work has been shown at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare, Iziko Museums in Cape Town, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town and the Chale Wote Street Art Festival in Accra, among others.

#### ZHANG YUNYAO

Using non-traditional media and surfaces such as graphite and felt, Zhang Yunyao explores the language of painting and the intersections of historical and individual memory. Depictions of biblical and mythological characters and scenes are important sources of inspiration that are re-woven into his images. By incorporating felt as the support for the medium of his paintings, Zhang attempts to explore the unfixed meaning of emotions and desires. Felt is lightweight and not absorbent, so liquid pigments meet little resistance on its surface and spread out in unpredictable ways. In contrast to the unpredictability of his materials, every approach in Zhang's work is carefully calculated, and even the smallest lines and dots are meticulously thought out before he starts the piece. Zhang is hypersensitive to the subtle variations of graphite and the psychological effect of such variations, which is why his work often features black with a sheen of silver. Up close, the gloss presents as full, rich granules of pigment, evoking a strong tactile experience. On the whole, it speaks a textural language of lustre, skin and flesh.

Zhang Yunyao was born in Shanghai, China in 1985. He lives and works between Shanghai and Paris. His works have been widely exhibited in various institutions such as the Watou Arts Festival in Belgium (2021), Musée Fenaille in Rodez (2021), chi K11 Art Museum in Shanghai (2016), CAFA Art Museum in Beijing (2015) and the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai (2013). He has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Marguo in Paris (2020), Palace of Extasy at Qiao Space in Shanghai (2019), Skin Gesture Body at Don Gallery in Shanghai (2017), Nec Spe, Nec Metu at Perrotin Gallery in Hong Kong (2017), After Evensong at Don Gallery in Shanghai (2015), Touch Point at 01100001 Gallery in Beijing (2013), Mirage at Don Gallery in Shanghai (2013) and Paradbox at Don Gallery in Shanghai (2011).

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