

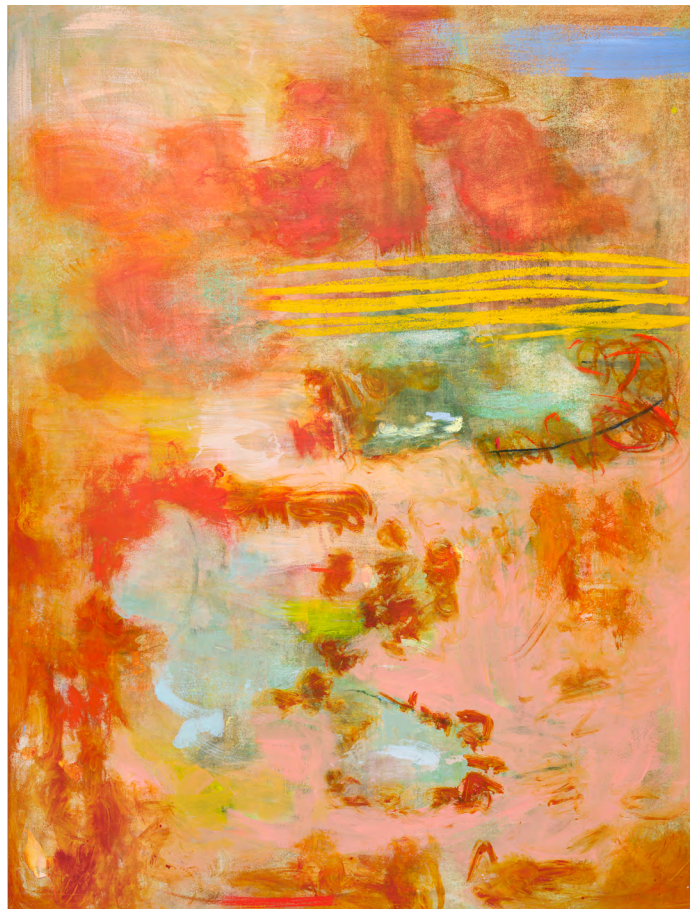
Press release

# Megan Rooney

## *Flyer and the Seed*

11 March—22 April 2023  
Opening Saturday 11 March 2023, 4—7.30pm

Thaddaeus Ropac  
Paris Marais  
7, rue Debelleye, 75003 Paris



Megan Rooney, *Leaning out for Yellow*, 2023  
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 199.6 x 152.3 cm

*Flyer and the Seed* is London-based artist Megan Rooney's first solo exhibition in France. Following the site-specific mural paintings realised recently to great acclaim in the *Couleur en Fugue* exhibition at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in 2022 and for *CHILDHOOD* at the Palais de Tokyo in 2018,

the artist will present a group of new works on canvas in her signature format that corresponds to 'the wingspan of a woman'. These paintings will be centred around a monumental work on canvas whose scale invokes the all-encompassing presence of her murals.

A sculptor and performance artist, as well as a painter, Rooney is known for her impassioned exploration of colour, which she uses as a vehicle for finding form. Her paintings are built through an accumulation of layers, alternating between gestural strokes of paint of varying densities, and areas where colour has been sanded down or rubbed off. The layers continue to jostle and battle just below the surface of the finished painting, giving it a sense of depth and a palpable energy. 'At different stages of the painting, I take on different roles', explains the artist. 'For most of the painting's life, I am tunnelling into the core of the painting, trying to get deeper. Then I become an excavator, unearthing forms which lay buried deep within the surface of the paint. Late in the painting's life, I become bird-like. I want to fly on the surface, so I am looking for places to touch down.'

*Memory and time  
, time and colour, colour and light.  
Painting is a space where everything else  
slips away  
and I am free. — Megan Rooney*

Rooney refers to the groups of paintings she creates together as a 'family'. Their colours and moods correspond at times, clashing at others to immerse viewers in a changing painterly ecosystem. The artist's allusions to her predecessors, including Poussin, Turner and Monet, are drawn out by curator Matthew Holman in the essay accompanying this new family of works. Rooney hints at their influence in the titles of her works, as well as in their formal aspect. And yet, as she explains, each painting has 'its own desire, its own will'. They become like a cast of characters, partly shaped by the artist, and partly by the paint itself. 'My paintings are born out of acute observations of the world around me,' states Rooney. 'I think of them as an informal collaboration between my body, the city and light conditions on any given day.'

Each of the works created for the exhibition has its own 'internal weather system', as Matthew Holman describes it, which reflects the rapidly changing light of the winter months during which the artist



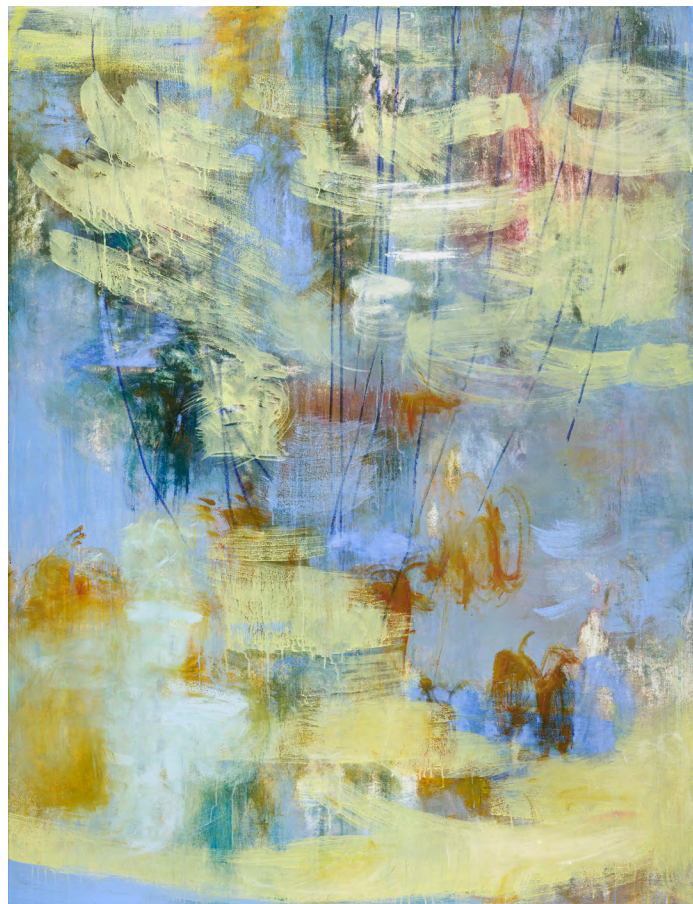
Megan Rooney, *Pools & Palms*, 2023.  
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 199.6 x 152.3 cm

was painting. Rooney's studio is perched on the third floor of an old hospital building in the heart of London, giving her a bird's eye view of the streets below, as well as a rare unimpeded sightline to the sky. The artist captures this sense of suspension in her new paintings, which combine traces of what she describes as a 'lunar, vegetative, decomposing kind of state' and luminous expanses of colour. Although resolutely abstract, Rooney's work always contains hints of anthropomorphic figures and references to the urban and natural worlds that surround her. Buried among gestural strokes and bursts of colour, they emerge to tell a story, drawing viewers further into the artist's visual world.

For Rooney, 'all painting is about storytelling.' As a form of mark-making, her practice allows her to connect, as she describes it, 'to the oldest parts of humanity'. 'Telling stories is a central part of the human condition', she states. 'This impulse to leave a trace, to make a mark, to say I was here.' Her prominent use of line across the paintings in



the exhibition seems to point to this elemental desire, as well as recalling her own earliest experiments with printmaking. At the same time, the line represents a new expansion of Rooney's visual vocabulary, providing a counterpoint to her atmospheric treatment of paint by reversing her usual process and allowing form to lead her to colour. 'You spend your life as a painter developing a relationship to colour and then testing the limits of that relationship', Rooney reflects. 'It's radical, it's ever-changing – it can submit to you and it can betray you. It always seduces, always excites.'



Megan Rooney, *Flyer and the Seed*, 2023  
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Megan Rooney. Photo: Charles Duprat.

### About the artist

An enigmatic storyteller, Megan Rooney works across a variety of media – including painting, sculpture, installation, performance and language – to develop interwoven narratives. The body has a sustained presence in her work, as both the subjective starting point and final site for the sedimentation of experiences explored through her practice. The subjects of her works are drawn directly from her own life and surroundings, while her references are deeply invested in the present moment. She addresses the myriad effects of politics and society that manifest in the home and on the female body. Recurring characters and motifs form part of a dreamlike narrative that is never fixed, but obliquely references some of the most urgent issues of our time.

Based in London, Rooney grew up between South Africa, Brazil and Canada, completing her BA at the University of Toronto followed by an MA in Fine Arts at Goldsmiths College, London in 2011. Her work has recently been shown in solo museum exhibitions, including at the Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg (2020–21); Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto (2020); and Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2019). Her performance *EVERYWHERE BEEN THERE*, created in collaboration with choreographer Temitope Ajose-Cutting and musician Paolo Thorsen-Nagel, premiered at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 2019. The year prior, she performed *SUN DOWN MOON UP* as part of the Serpentine Galleries' Park Nights programme in London. Rooney's work has also been presented in numerous group exhibitions, including at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2022); the Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen (2021); Lyon Biennial (2019); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2019 and 2017); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018); Venice Biennale (2017); David Roberts Art Foundation, London (2017 and 2014); and Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette, Paris (2014), among others.

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