



Megan Rooney, Green, I Want You Green, 2020.
Courtesy the artist und DREI, Köln. Photo © Andrew Phelps.

Megan Rooney. Green, I Want You Green

October 3 – November 29, 2020

Megan Rooney is an enigmatic storyteller whose work expands across painting, performance, sculpture and installation. Born in South Africa, raised in Canada, and now living in London, the artist Megan Rooney blends both her styles of monumental abstract and intimate figurative painting with sculpture, dance and performance in her artistic practice. As artist in residence at the Salzburger Kunstverein in 2020, Megan Rooney has been invited to create a solo exhibition in the Main Gallery as well as an immersive, large-scale mural in the Ring Gallery, which will run for one year. Altogether these two exhibitions will be the largest single presentation for an artist ever presented at the Salzburger Kunstverein.

Curated by Séamus Kealy.

Megan Rooney was born in South Africa in 1985. From 2005 to 2009 she studied at the University of Toronto where she received her Bachelor of Arts (Honours). In 2011 she completed her Master's degree at Goldsmith College in London. Megan Rooney's works have been shown most recently in solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2019), DREI, Cologne (2018) and in 2017 at Tramway, Glasgow; Freymond-Guth, Basel; and Division Gallery, Toronto, as well as in group exhibitions at the David Roberts Art Foundation, London, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018). In addition, her performance "Poor Memory" was shown in the supporting program of the Swiss Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017. She lives and works in London.

Megan Rooney, *Green, I Want you Green*

Text by Emily LaBarge

You may see a tree flying, pulled from the ground into a wind-whipped sky. You may see bodies, writhing and strange, slinking and lurking amidst a riot of colours. You may see a firmament, unholy with rebellious shades of burnt coral, burnished orange, blush, rose, fuchsia, lilac, azure, turquoise, royal blue, dark green, muddy green, hunter green, chartreuse, sage—a tender, licking, arcing, smearing atmosphere that spreads just as wide as a person's arms might reach, just as far as the ceiling and the walls, though it wants to go further. You may see clouds or scratches like hieroglyphs or slowly lowering suns or colours that menace, colours that seduce, a stab of black like a pupil, like a happy accident, like blink and it has blinked too, is suddenly different, never the same.

Rooney's work wants you to look and look again, to pay attention, to apprehend the echoes of forms within forms—to see the potential that lies deep within all objects and images, their secret lives and unrealized desires, the knowledge that they could at any moment transform, be transformed, just like you. This is not a question of pareidolia or artistic sleight of hand, but of how many different worlds an image can hold, and how many fathoms deep an eye can see. Rooney builds up her work in careful, intuitive layers of colour in which shapes and smears and angles, lines and drips and swathes generate their own processual logic, lay and overlay, before she strips them back and sands them down, only to build them up again: each painting is a capsule of time and space, a palimpsest of effort and care, a portal into an intimate conversation between artist and canvas in which the journey of the work remains pulsing just beneath its surface.

Rooney's paintings—hung in the main gallery in solitary or in discrete groupings, their colours pushing and pulling you around the room, arresting your gaze like icons or gateways to some other universe — were predominantly made during the spring and summer of 2020: a time that was for so many filled with a profound sense of isolation, fragility, loss, distance, and redundancy. Redundancy of body and mind, as well as of labour and capital: what remains when daily life dissolves and we behold its waste, sloughed off like so much dead skin? Rooney's works are seeded in this time, from daily walks in urban gardens where plants bloomed, died, rotted, and were seamlessly replaced, to the detritus of local construction sites and garbage heaps. The paintings progress like these seasons paused and abstracted, made strange and beguiling, never explicit, hinting at exterior and interior states collapsed, like Yeats' *foul rag and bone shop of the heart*. Here, a scene of flaming pink, there a lush tangle of green throbbing with blue, mauve, peach. Here, an array of bony white ribbons shining against yellow, there hazy forms of brown, pink, white leaning into each other against a cerulean sky—or is it? Rooney has long been interested in colour, and how it is wedded to memory—the ways in which it can both forge and summon an environment. What does it mean to want *Green*? Or any other colour, for that matter? Could *Green* ever want us back?

Rooney's immersive mural, *Big Sky Blooming*, made in response to the spaces of the building, against which it pushes and rebels—consuming those who enter it—foregrounds radical impermanence as the order of the day. We cannot stay, just as nothing lasts, as they say, forever. A risk to assert this in art, which so often relies on posterity and material value. But it is true that an image can be indelibly burned into the mind's eye, where one might keep and revisit it, seeing something new—heartening, fragile, provocative, frightening—each time.

Further Information on recent works and exhibitions by Megan Rooney

Artforum Review 'Fire on the Mountain' by Laura McLean Ferris, Oct 2019:

<https://www.artforum.com/print/201908/openings-megan-rooney-80816>

Frieze review 'Fire on the Mountain' by Harry Burke, Sep 2019:

<https://www.frieze.com/article/megan-rooneys-missing-children>

'Fire on the Mountain', Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2019 (solo):

<https://www.kunsthalle-duesseldorf.de/ausstellungen/fire-on-the-mountain>

Park 2018: Megan Rooney 'Sun Down Moon Up', Serpentine Pavillion (performance):

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/park-nights-2018-megan-rooney-sun-down-moon>

For further information please get in touch with:

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Hours Exhibition: Tue-Sun 12-7pm

Hours Café Buk e Kryp: Tue-Sat 10am-10pm