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MoAD Announces First Solo Museum Exhibition in the United States of British Painter and Visual Artist Rachel Jones, Opening March 27, 2024

Jones Will Debut '!!!!', A New Series of Oil Paintings Depicting Interior Worlds Through Layered Compositions



Image caption: Rachel Jones, !!!!!, 2023. Oil stick on linen, 220 (h) x 320 (w) cm., unframed. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Eva Herzog.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is pleased to announce '!!!!', the acclaimed British painter and visual artist's first museum solo exhibition in the United States opening on March 27 and on view until September 1, 2024 in the museum's third-floor galleries. Curated by Erin Jenoa Gilbert, the exhibition continues the artist's use of mouths and teeth to symbolize encounters between Black interiority and outward expression, celebrating the artist's gesture as its own communicative medium. Additionally, the series of new paintings will boldly add a new dimension through negative space, with raw untouched linen augmenting her phantasmic landscapes. Tickets to the exhibition are available now at moadsf.org/tickets

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“Rachel Jones wields a distinct vision and we’re honored that the museum will be hosting her very first museum solo exhibition in the United States,” said Monetta White, Executive Director. “She shares our commitment to exhibit work that inspires each of us to locate the joy found within ourselves. Her work carries vast entry points that allow viewers to linger, contemplate, and settle inside her vivid, psychic landscapes.”

Born in 1991 in London, Jones completed her MA in Fine Art in 2019 at the Royal Academy Schools. In recent years she’s become internationally-renowned for her large-scale, abstract paintings featuring teeth and mouths amongst energetic color fields. Jones makes the mouth’s outline its own glyph or icon, becoming a vessel to explore Black expression and world building. For her exhibition at MoAD, Jones will take these queries a step further, adding her interests in text and the process of signification more explicitly. The show’s title, pronounced as “five exclamation points,” gestures toward the gap between symbols and what they seek to describe. This mysterious excess in between the mind and the mouth is used as painterly raw material in the artist’s vibrant works, creating worlds of new and unrestrained emotion.

“Having observed Rachel’s practice evolve over the past four years, it is an honor to collaborate with her to debut this distinctive body of work at MoAD,” said Erin Jenoa Gilbert. “I’ve witnessed her mesmerizing compositions enforce the idea that at a cellular level, the mouth is central to our comprehension of human emotion. For people throughout the African diaspora, it is a site in which decipherable and indecipherable experiences are transformed through poetic intonation and incantation. Rachel’s practice forcefully contends with the history of painting, transcending categories as her work oscillates between abstraction and figuration.”

‘!!!!’ will feature twelve new paintings made in 2023 and 2024: six large-scale paintings on linen all titled ‘!!!!’ accompanied by six smaller works on canvas, each titled ‘!!!!’. The large linen pieces frequently employ the artist’s familiar mouth and teeth motifs which take up the entire painting, aiming toward a monstrous and comical effect. For this exhibition, *Looney Tunes* imagery and scenes are used as references that shore up parallels between real and fictional environments. Swirling hues and deep pigments foreground or submerge the mouths, illustrating internal psychological states like angst, goofiness or slyness.

Teeth are sometimes conventionally-shaped but rendered in a comic style to spark intrigue and curiosity. The smaller paintings on canvas are more heavily layered, linked directly with the punctuating force of the exhibition’s title. Their fullness and titling signals the conceptual importance of sound, noise, and speech. Mouths, as the origin point of sound, represent the mysterious, elusive qualities of a protected inner life. Rachel Jones’ ‘!!!!’ invites viewers to bask in these enigmatic inward journeys, where literal interpretation is left behind in favor of seeing and feeling for oneself.

ABOUT RACHEL JONES

Rachel Jones completed her BA Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art in 2013 and an MA Fine Art at the Royal Academy Schools, London, in 2019. Recent solo exhibitions include the Long

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Museum, Shanghai, China (2023) and the Chisenhale Gallery, London (2022). She was included in *Mixing It Up: Painting Today* at the Hayward Gallery, London (2021), followed by other institutional group exhibitions at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., and Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona (2022). She was an artist in residence at The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas in 2019 and the Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art in 2016. Jones's work is housed in prominent institutional collections, including those of the Long Museum, Shanghai; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and Tate, London, where her piece 'lick your teeth, they so clutch' (2021) is currently on display as part of the Tate Britain's rehang. Alongside her performance practice, which most recently took form as an operatic based work titled 'Hey, Maudie', Jones also designed the BRIT Awards 2024 trophy which will be presented to all winners.

ABOUT ERIN JENOA GILBERT

Erin Jenoa Gilbert, is a New York based curator and art advisor, specializing in Postwar and Contemporary Art. She holds a BA in Political Science, a BA in African and African American Studies from the University of Michigan and a MA in Contemporary Art from the University of Manchester. With over 15 years museum experience, she has held positions at The Art Institute of Chicago, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and was the inaugural Curator of African American Manuscripts at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Since 2020 has been an independent critic and curator, operating as EJJ International, exploring the relationship between art, power and politics through exhibitions, publications and acquisitions. Focusing on abstract, conceptual and sculptural practices, informed by her own migrations between the US, Africa and Europe, Gilbert has conjured a curatorial practice that examines the physical and psychological connection to land, the trauma of displacement and the Black female body as contested terrain. Having curated exhibitions and composed essays on several artists, Gilbert's intersectional critical analysis exposes the fault lines in the aesthetic regimes that dominate visual culture, specifically by presenting artists whose contributions to the canon have been overlooked, particularly women artists from the "Deep South" and the "Global South".

ABOUT MoAD

The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is a contemporary art museum whose mission is to celebrate Black cultures, ignite challenging conversations, and inspire learning through the global lens of the African Diaspora. MoAD is one of only a few museums in the United States dedicated to the celebration and interpretation of art, artists, and cultures from the African Diaspora. The Museum presents exhibitions highlighting contemporary art and artists of African descent and engages its audience through education and public programs that interpret and enhance the understanding of Black art. Founded in 2005, the Museum continues to be a unique, cultural arts staple in the San Francisco Bay Area community. For more information about MoAD, visit The Museum's website at moadsf.org.

General Information

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For general information, the public may visit The Museum's website at moadsf.org or call 415.358.7200. MoAD is located at 685 Mission Street (at Third), San Francisco, CA.