

# IONE & MANN

## RHIZOME

17-29 January 2023

**Irini Bachlitzanaki - Shannon Bono - Thomas Langley**



IONE & MANN is delighted to present **Rhizome**, a three-person exhibition bringing together the work of **Irini Bachlitzanaki** (b. 1984), **Shannon Bono** (b. 1995) and **Thomas Langley** (b. 1986).

In kinship with the natural world, traditional craft practices as well as individual and collective cultural and emotional anchors, the artists explore the inter-connected, ever-evolving structures of the places we inhabit physically and spiritually and the deeply entangled nature of identity, perception and being.

Much like rhizomatic structures, Bachlitzanaki, Bono and Langley's work appears to have no end points; bold, unapologetic yet tender, it emerges as a material expression of consciousness with a pared-down linearity that connects the internal with the external and defines a space that allows for individuality and belonging, rootedness and growth.



Inspired by material culture, artisanal traditions, nature and the biographies of objects, **Irini Bachlitzanaki** builds upon re-contextualising recognisable forms to examine our relationship with the world around us and ourselves. Within a practice that is primarily sculptural she plays with two and three-dimensionality and explores the object as image, signifier and continuation of the body and the self.

Drawing on cultural, geographic and historical references she offers us renditions of familiar forms: a traditional clay pot (in this case a '*stámna*' or '*kryologos*' found in her native island of Skyros) becomes flattened and moves into a new plane, its distinctive shape operating as a different type of container enveloped in an image-based narrative; the emblematic and ubiquitous opuntia cactus, a symbol of resilience encountered all across the Mediterranean and in dry, rocky areas around the world, reclaims its power as it rises from a concrete base and invites us to interact with it directing our movements in the space around it. The body, visually notably absent, feels undoubtedly present and so is the mind, assigning and re-evaluating meaning.

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There is a linear, reductive, diagrammatic quality to Bachlitzanaki's shapes but the simplification of forms does not seem to detract from their essence nor from their power to elicit an emotional response. Her sculptures, reductive yet dense with meaning, lend themselves to a multiplicity of narratives in a dialogue between cultural specificity and universality, informed by the associations and experiences of both artist and viewer.

**Shannon Bono's** paintings embody an afrocentric consciousness, sharing muted narratives and projecting black women's lived experiences. She is invested in producing layered, figurative, compositions embedded with symbols and scientific metaphors that centralise black womanhood as a source of knowledge and understanding. Drawing on African spirituality, Christian iconography and Renaissance art, she consciously employs a purpose of cultural impact, liturgy and instruction for an improved society within her works. At the same time, she turns to her own experiences and beliefs to define and express black womanhood from her own unique perspective.

Her latest body of work, entitled '*To Summers End in Gambia*' follows an intimate journey that explores themes of love, loss, healing and awe, as well as the power and traditions of West African divination. Working with a mix of acrylic, oil and spray paints, she uses the structure of her paintings to bridge seen and unseen worlds, the internal body with the external. The background, consisting of repetitive patterns reminiscent of Dutch wax fabrics but also biological and organic structures, appears both distinctive and integral; the body, depicted or implied, emerges seamlessly in the foreground as a powerful signifier, alongside elements of still life in the form of plants or mystical objects used in rituals of magic.

Bono uses figuration in an attempt to tell relatable stories, make sense of and peace with personal and shared experiences, but the power of her work urges us to look beyond the imagery and explore its symbolism and truth. Her world is rich and colourful but there is nothing superfluous about it; underneath it all, there is a simplicity that permeates it completely and authentically, a solid structure connecting and supporting the variegated elements of society, identity and selfhood.

**Thomas Langley** works within an interdisciplinary practice that includes painting, sculpture, drawing and installation. Through a lens that is often self-referential he is keen to explore universal themes in the human and artistic condition and the concept of what he describes as material thought, how consciousness makes its way into an object or a work of art. Born into a family of basket makers he has an affinity with traditional craft practices and the natural world both as a source of inspiration and raw material. Always seeking new territories for artistic comment, he tends to work in series with the works functioning as modular components of a wider narrative or sentiment.

His latest body of work sits at the intersection of painting and drawing; the series' title, '*Bodger's Hovel*', references the highly-skilled itinerant craftsmen practicing a form of wood turning in nature, a practice dating back to medieval times. Using a mix of charcoal (a bodging by-product), wax and oil paint, he creates bold, monochromatic works derived from observing plant life, resulting in a loose yet dynamic botanical abstraction. The natural world emerges as a protagonist but, in reality, the imagery is inseparable from the material, the intention and the act of creation itself.

The artist's hand is very much present as he creates raw, bold rhythmic compositions that function almost as language, conveying simultaneously the urgency of a call and the softness of a whisper. Langley's entangled, expressive, undulating lines and the texture of the painted elements imbue the works with an energy that renders them more than a representation of botanical forms but an expression of a state of being.



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## NOTES

In botany, a rhizome, from the Greek *ρίζωμα* (*rhizoma*, meaning taking root) is a subterranean plant stem that has the ability to grow roots and shoots in multiple directions. The word is also associated with C.G. Jung<sup>1</sup> who used it as a metaphor for a perennial essence and post-modern theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>2</sup> who used the term to describe a heterogenous, non-binary mode of existence that does not come from a single point of origin and has no end.

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**Irini Bachlitzanaki** (b.1984, Athens) studied History of Art at UCL, University of London and Fine Art at Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts and, most recently, at the Royal Academy Schools graduating in 2021.

Her first UK solo show *"The Combination Show"* was presented at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge in 2021. Recent notable exhibitions include: *"Doomed Companions, Unsubstantial Shades"* organised by NEON and presented at the Hellenic Residence in London (2022), *"Pott/Potts"* at the Modern Pottery Museum in Athens (2022), *"Rebetiko"* at the Municipal Gallery of Athens (2022), *"Our Home, This Mortal Coil"* presented by IONE & MANN in London (2021) and *"Yesterday, Today and Forever"* at Artseen Contemporary Art in Nicosia, Cyprus. Recently awarded scholarships and grants include: the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Artist Fellowship by ARTWORKS (2022), the Arts Council England DYCP grant (2022), the Jerwood Arts 1:1 grant (2021), the André Dunoyer de Segonzac Hon RA Prize from Royal Academy Schools (2021), the Gilbert Bayes Award (2020) and the NEON scholarship for postgraduate studies (2017-2020). In addition to her practice, she occasionally pursues curatorial work in line with her artistic research. She lives and works between London and Athens.

**Shannon Bono** (b.1995, London) received her MA in Art & Science from Central Saint Martins (2019) and her Associate Fellowship in higher education from the University of the Arts London (2021).

In 2021 Bono was selected for the Bloomberg New Contemporaries award showing at Firstsite and The South London Gallery and presented her debut solo exhibition *"The Hands that Hold You"*, at Anderson Contemporary in London. Recent exhibitions and projects include: The World Reimagined Globe Trail in London (2022), *"The Expanse In-Between"* presented by the Grove Collective (2022), *"Love is the Devil: Studies after Francis Bacon"* at the Marlborough Gallery (2022), *"The Red Room"* presented by Bertson Bhattacharjee, *"BOLD BLACK BRITISH,"* presented at Christie's (2021) and 'WOP' Avant Arte x WOAW Gallery in Hong Kong (2021). Recent residencies include the Lee Alexander McQueen Sarabande Foundation and the OOF Gallery. Bono's work has been displayed on Maximus billboards in London in partnership with Black Blossoms and the Kensington and Chelsea Art week as well as on billboards in the New York transit system in collaboration with Artsy. She has been featured in Dazed Magazine and online press by Elephant magazine, Wallpaper magazine, Bustle, i-D and Soho house. In addition to her practice, she is an Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins and Camberwell College of Arts. She lives and works in London.

**Thomas Langley** (b.1986, London) studied Fine Art at UCA Canterbury and at the Royal Academy Schools, graduating in 2018.

Langley has an impressive number of solo shows to his name since completing his post graduate studies starting with *"Plastic Factory (No place for me)"* which he presented concurrently with his degree show at the RA Schools. Recent solo exhibitions include: *"Bodger's Hovel"* presented at Fold Gallery in London (2022), *"Ghia Coupe"* at the Casa da Cerca Centre for Contemporary Art in Almada, Portugal (2021), *"Courage"* at MONO, Lisbon, Portugal (2020), *"Mummy's Boy"*, a collaborative presentation by Cob Gallery, Frestonian Gallery, Marian Kramer Projects, Charlie Smith and Union Gallery, London (2019) and *"Just like anything"* presented by Marian Kramer in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Other notable group exhibitions include *"OSSOS"* (a duo show with Tim Ralston) at Irma Feia, Lisbon (2022), *"Five Hides"* presented by Thorp Stavri in London (2020), *"Young Gods"* at Charlie Smith London (2019), *"Telescope"* at Jerwood Gallery in Hastings (2019) and *"A series of pocket Utopias"* presented by Yellow Brick in collaboration with Snehta in Athens, Greece (2017). He lives and works between Lisbon and London.

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## IONE & MANN

Arc Gallery | 4 Cromwell Place, London SW7 2JE

Opening Hours: Wednesday - Saturday 10am - 6 pm, Sunday 10-4 pm and by appointment.

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For additional information, images, or interview access to the artists please contact us at: [info@ioneandmann.com](mailto:info@ioneandmann.com)

Website: [www.ioneandmann.com](http://www.ioneandmann.com) | Instagram: @ioneandmann

Image Credits: Thomas Langley, *Bodger's Hovel (Untitled)*, 2022 [detail] oil, wax and charcoal on canvas with oak frame, 187.5 x 157.5 cm.; Irini Bachlitzanaki, *The Red Pot*, 2022, plaster polymer and markers, 53.5 x 31 cm.; Shannon Bono, *Fortunate*, 2022 [detail], oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 50 x 50 cm. Copyright the artists, Courtesy of IONE & MANN.

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<sup>1</sup> Jung C.G., Jaffe Aniela, (1989) [1961]. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Translated by Winston, Richard, Winston, Clara. Vintage

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, Guattari, Felix, (1987) [1980]. *A Thousand Plateaus*, Translated by Massumi, Brian. University of Minnesota Press