



CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS
TEETERING ON THE BRINK: FEMININITY, INHERITANCE, AND DISASTER

A SPECIAL GROUP EXHIBITION
DEBUTING WORKS BY ARTISTS SAMI TSANG, EBONY RUSSELL, AND SUYAO TIAN

ON VIEW MARCH 15 - MAY 11, 2024



New York, NY | February 2024 – [Claire Oliver Gallery](#) is pleased to present *Teetering on the Brink: Femininity, Inheritance, and Disaster*, a special group exhibition marking the New York City debut of work by artists **Sami Tsang, Ebony Russell, and Suyao Tian**. The exhibition spans media including figurative sculpture, watercolor on paper, sculptural vessels, and installation and explores the themes of memory, childhood, patriarchal societal values, and female identity through the lens of multiple cultures and vernaculars. *Teetering on the Brink: Femininity, Inheritance, and Disaster* will be on view at Claire Oliver Gallery’s Harlem gallery from March 15 through May 11, 2024.

“I’m thrilled to share the work of these three incredible artists,” states Claire Oliver. “While completely distinct, these artists share a commonality of concept, exploring the knotty issues of childhood, what we inherit and what we reject, and how being feminine and female are still viewed as an issue through a societal lens. By creating powerful, emotional works of art that are symbolic, personal, and deeply narrative, these artists have upended what is expected and opened new lines of dialogue on an age-old issue, still thorny and in need of discussion.”

Teetering on the Brink features nearly 30 abstract and figurative sculptures and paintings on paper.

Sami Tsang

Sami Tsang is a Toronto-based ceramic artist whose work explores domestic encounters and private narratives born out of the flux amidst two cultures – Chinese and Western. Mediated through materials and self-reflection, Tsang's work is a raw, truthful, and spontaneous response to the artist's feelings in a given moment.

Chinese proverbs from childhood memories inspire the Artist's initial sketches. As the piece evolves, the artist draws from the different stages of her childhood and adolescence where she often felt repressed and silenced. Tsan's large-scale works point to the importance of representation and taking up space in connection with others. Her figurative sculptures are created from ceramics, rice paper, and textiles, creating characters that weave together domestic and psychological narratives related to the conservatism of her youth. She often references Chinese proverbs while using humor, distortion, and whimsy. Her work is a complex fusion of autobiography as a first-generation Chinese Canadian woman and symbolic markers of a common experience of the trap of domesticity and subjugation of individuality in contrast with liberation and exaltation of self-expression.

Tsan studied traditional Chinese painting for seven years in Hong Kong, which profoundly affected her pursuit of an art career. She earned her BA in Craft & Design from Sheridan College (2019) and her MFA in Ceramic Art from Alfred University, NY (2021).

Ebony Russell

Ebony Russell is an artist living and working in Sydney, Australia. Her porcelain sculptures defy traditional notions of the medium, challenging all perceived understandings about working with porcelain. Ornate and baroque, her sculptures and installations are characterized by decadent swirls and curlicues and the finely detailed visual repertoire of piped icing and cake decorating. Her work investigates nostalgia and traditional female craft through sculpture that is at first glance girlish and romantic yet upon closer inspection, fraught with danger and complex emotional realities.

The environments and structures Russell creates include heavily embellished tiaras, crying golden tears and hiding slight cracks and fissures amongst the folds of myriad roses. Although seemingly fragile there is an underlying sense of inner strength and defiance to each of these works. They may appear delicate, but Russell's works are a feat of technical mastery and will not crumble or break. Prompting us to consider the childhood dreams and ideals over which we once obsessed, Russell's works allow us to remember and grieve the childhood dreams we once held, allowing us to discuss the past and create new and more varied understandings of ourselves as women.

"Objects can stir memories and are used mnemonically to create, store, and retrieve a sense of past," says Russell. "My work is a response to aspects of my experience, focusing on my personal connection to these objects through childhood memory, identity, and contemporary collecting practices".

Russel received her Masters in Fine Arts (Ceramics) from the National Art School, Sydney, and now lectures the Masters ceramics classes at the NAS



Suyao Tian

Suyao Tian is an artist and curator based in St Paul, Minnesota who creates emotive abstract watercolor paintings on paper, enlarged and distorted to construct dreamlike landscapes and peculiar, otherworldly beings within an imaginative landscape.

Growing up as a single child during China's one-child-only policy in the 80s, Tian experienced first-hand the impact of cultural norms, expectations, and a highly competitive exam-oriented education system that prioritizes memorization over critical thinking and imaginative problem-solving. This has had a profound effect on her art, which leans into the concept of free imagination, breaking away from social constructs and encouraging freedom of creation from within herself, and the freedom of imagination for everyone.

As a child, Tian's means of expressing emotions were found in nature, where she would catch various small bugs, put them in jars, speak to them, and play with them. As a professional artist now, her imagination still seeks inspiration from nature, extracting fragments of memory, imagination, and subconscious thinking for her creations. The artist holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Central Arkansas and a Master of Fine Art from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

IMAGE CREDITS (L-R)

Sami Tsang, *Hot Tea Melts Me Down*, 2022

Ebony Russell, *Rose Crown*, 2023

Suyao Tian, Contours of Unbounded Perception, 2023

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ABOUT CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY

Claire Oliver Gallery is located in Central Harlem in a four-story brownstone. For nearly 25 years, Claire Oliver Gallery has showcased and celebrated artwork, with a focus on work by women and people of color, which transcends and challenges the traditional art historical canon. The gallery's forward-thinking program and exclusive commitment to the primary market allows for an intensive focus that has nurtured and grown the careers of our artists. Many of the gallery's artists have been included in The Venice Biennale, The Whitney Biennial, and biennales in Sydney, Pittsburgh, and Lyon and have exhibited works in major international museums including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, Centre Georges Pompidou, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art amongst others. Claire Oliver Gallery artists are included in the permanent collections of many important museums worldwide including The Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Tate Britain, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The State Hermitage Museum, MoMA, and the Museum of Arts and Design amongst many others. Claire Oliver Gallery held the first American exhibition for the Russian collaborative AES+F, whose work went on to twice represent Russia in the Russian pavilion of the Venice Biennale. Gallery artists have received prestigious fellowships including Fulbright, Guggenheim, USArtist and National Endowment for the Arts.

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