



MELISSA O'DONNELL



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gallery

solomon

Tara Murphy
requests the pleasure of your company
at the private view of

MELISSA O'DONNELL

Beautiful Decay

Thursday 4 May 2023
from 6pm to 8pm

to be opened by
Patrick T. Murphy
Director, Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA)

The exhibition runs until Saturday 27 May 2023

Artworks may be previewed and acquired in advance by appointment,
via the Online Viewing Room at www.solomonfineart.ie/viewing-room/
or simply scan the QR code below for prices and availability



Solomon Fine Art, Balfe Street, Dublin 2

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Front cover: *ROSE PHANTOMS*, oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm

Inside cover: *YELLOW WERE YOUR FAVOURITE (detail)*, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm



ROSE PHANTOMS
oil on canvas
120 x 80 cm

'Because the sun was behind them, their shadows came first, and then the birds themselves.' Musa McKim Guston¹

At first glance, I saw Keats, or rather I felt the atmosphere of a Keats poem. Through this encounter with flowers, a mixture of bloom and decay, I was taken back to an ode, with the pathos of broken hearts. I recalled 'branched thoughts'² and 'droop-headed flowers.'³ I saw colourful birds in Victorian cages. Inspired by Edouard Heckel's botanical illustrations, *Orchidae* features on the cover of the Summer 2022 issue of *The Stinging Fly* magazine.

In *Beautiful Decay* we encounter art history, botany, the seasons, the cycle of life (and death), and a spectrum of feelings. Through the melancholy of Keatsian romanticism and the tenderness of maternal love, these paintings confront us with much that is familiar and often uncomfortable. Light and shadow move through floral arrangements in various states of decay while the materiality of paint, of surface, texture and technique disrupts and at times, energises.

Viewers are invited to step into the richness of a painterly world: a world of sensation that resonates on evocative, emotional and visceral levels.

The studies in this series include elaborate and decadent floral arrangements, often in states of deterioration, and dark still lifes from an outdoor garden; wilder and neglected but with tenacious roses amongst the weeds.

In *Through sunset and slow dusk* we experience delicate, poignant pinks, the crepuscular light of perfect summer evenings – gardens full and verdant; a tribute to the artist's mother, who loved flowers.

In *Rosaito Festival and a hundred roses might bloom*, we glimpse older worlds. Layers of light in the backgrounds draw the gaze to the otherworldly. Echoing the work of Gustave Moreau, light here creates a sense of enchantment with a nod to the ecstasy of his religious paintings. We can almost sense sound in these worlds, just-grasped invisible notes, music lifting and falling like internal compositions.

Yet, we cannot stay too long here as the tangibility of the mark-making brings us back to where we stand. Technique interrupts reverie as carefully positioned blots juxtapose these beautifully rendered, slightly submerged flowers. The materiality of the paint creates tension separating the ephemeral from the corporeal – a constant pull between the experience of being in the painting and our sense of the here and now.

The texture of the brushstrokes and splattering evoke a strong desire for haptic perception – we simply want to touch.

Sara O'Rourke is a PhD researcher in the Department of Anthropology, Maynooth University. She also works at The Stinging Fly.

¹ <https://www.frieze.com/article/philip-gustons-vivid-reflections-power-art>

² Ode To Psyche by John Keats (1819)

³ Ode on Melancholy by John Keats (1820)



THE BOTANIST'S DAUGHTER
oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm



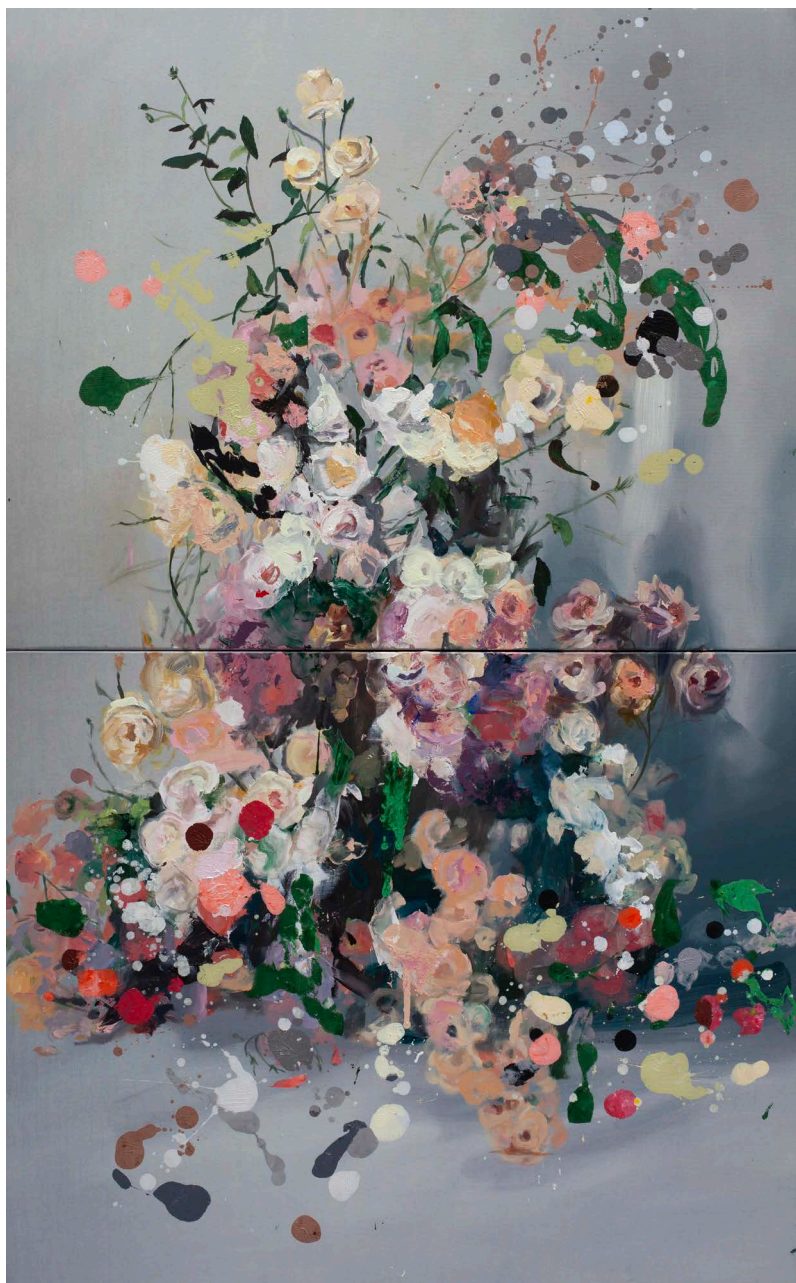
KOLOBRIS
oil on canvas
152 x 122 cm



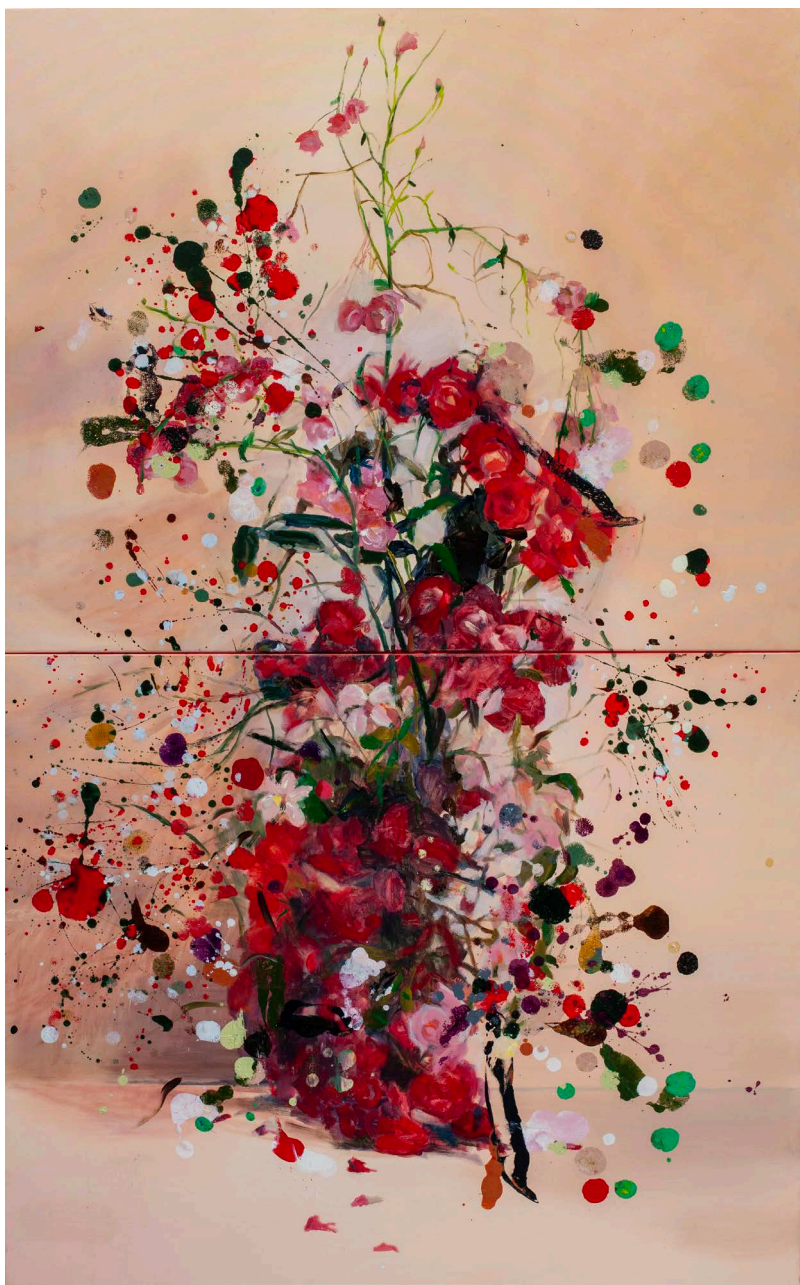
THROUGH SUNSET AND SLOW DUSK
oil on canvas
160 x 100 cm



STEAL AWAY
oil on canvas
160 x 100 cm



ONE HUNDRED ROSES MIGHT BLOOM
oil on canvas
160 x 100 cm



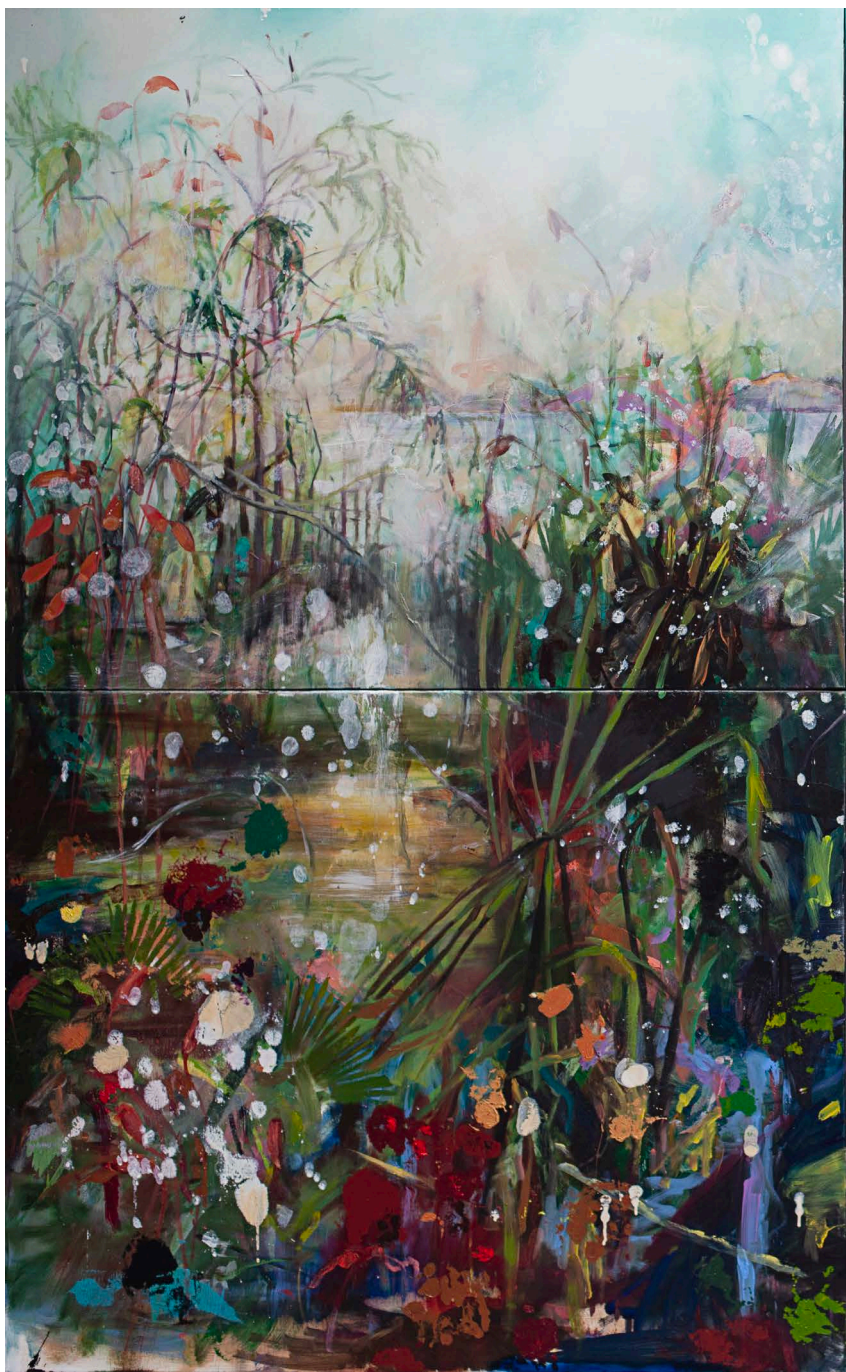
ROSAITO FESTIVAL
oil on canvas
160 x 100 cm



YELLOW WERE YOUR FAVOURITE
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm



MISS HAVISHAM
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm





MIND GARDEN
oil on canvas
160 x 200 cm



MEDITATIVE HYDRANGEAS
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm



FROM THE HEART
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm



ROSA DASHED
oil on canvas
50 x 60 cm



CONFETTI ROSA
oil on canvas
70 x 60 cm



ROSA NOIR
oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm



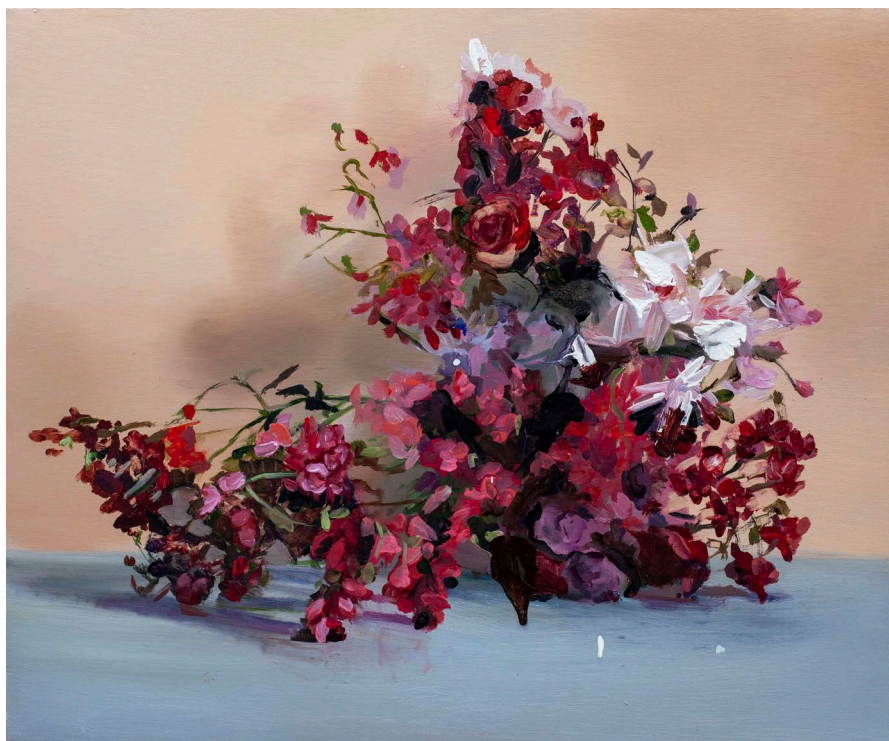
ROSA MOMENTO MORI
oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm



BOTANY I
oil on canvas
40 x 40 cm



BOTANY II
oil on canvas
40 x 40 cm



ZOE'S WISHES
oil on canvas
50 x 60 cm

MELISSA O'DONNELL (F.K.A. O'FAHERTY)

EDUCATION

- 2018-21 Turps Contemporary Painting School, London
1993 IADT Dublin, Visual Communications

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Beautiful Decay, Solomon Fine Art, Dublin
2022 Turning it Over, RHA Ashford Gallery, Dublin
2021 Nature Nostalgia, RHA Ashford Gallery, Dublin
2016 Spaces of the Imagination, Mermaid Arts Centre, Wicklow
2015 Drawings, Signal Arts Centre, Wicklow

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 193rd Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin
Irish Art Sale (4-10 May), Sotheby's, Paris
2022 Irish Art Sale (22 November), Sotheby's, London
2021 The Quick Brown Fox, Cohort Turps (Virtual exhibition)
2020 In Absentia, Cohort Turps (Virtual exhibition)
100 Artists Virtual Showcase, CIAC LA Irish Contemporary Arts Centre, Los Angeles
DrawingDeCentred, The Courthouse, Ennistymon, Co. Clare
2019 189th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin
DrawingDeCentred, The Model, Sligo
2018, 17 Incognito, Solomon Fine Art, Dublin
2017 Pallas Periodical #7, Pallas Studios, Dublin
2016 186th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin

RESIDENCIES

- 2017-23 Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Co. Monaghan
2017 Royal College of Surgeons, Anatomy Room, Dublin
2015-21 Cill Rialaig Arts Centre, Co. Kerry

AWARDS

- 2019 Residency Award/RHA/Notre Dame University @ Global Centre, Kylemore Abbey

WRITINGS / REVIEWS

- 2023 What Lies Beneath, Niall MacMonagle, Sunday Independent
2018 Contributing writer, DrawingDeCentered article, Visual Artists Ireland (VAI) Periodical
2017 Contributing writer, Visual Artists Ireland (VAI) Periodical

PUBLIC TALKS

- 2022 Artist Talk, Sotheby's Irish Sale (preview) RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin
2019 Enough is Never Enough, Mermaid Arts Centre, guest artist panel talk (online)
2019 Artist public talk/tour, 189th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin
2019 Turps Review, London

COLLECTIONS

- Office of Public Works, Ireland
Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland
Notre Dame Global University, Irl/USA
The Leinster Hotel, Dublin
Private Collections in Ireland, Europe & USA

MELISSA O'DONNELL

Beautiful Decay

In memory of June O'Donnell née Kirwan (1937-2023)

4 - 27 May 2023

Mind Garden	2023	oil on canvas	160 x 200 cm
Kolobris	2023	oil on canvas	152 x 122 cm
Undergrowth	2023	oil on canvas	137 x 137 cm
Through Sunset and Slow Dusk	2023	oil on canvas	160 x 100 cm
Steal Away	2023	oil on canvas	160 x 100 cm
One Hundred Roses Might Bloom	2023	oil on canvas	160 x 100 cm
Rosaito Festival	2023	oil on canvas	160 x 100 cm
Rosa Phantoms	2023	oil on canvas	120 x 80 cm
Yellow were your Favourite	2023	oil on canvas	70 x 60 cm
Miss Havisham	2023	oil on canvas	70 x 60 cm
Mediative Hydrangeas	2023	oil on canvas	70 x 60 cm
From the Heart	2023	oil on canvas	70 x 60 cm
Confetti Rosa	2023	oil on canvas	70 x 60 cm
The Botanist's Daughter	2023	oil on canvas	60 x 50 cm
Rosa Noir	2023	oil on canvas	60 x 50 cm
Rosa Memento Mori	2023	oil on canvas	60 x 50 cm
Rosa Dashed	2023	oil on canvas	50 x 60 cm
Zoe's Wishes	2023	oil on canvas	50 x 60 cm
Botany 1	2023	oil on canvas	40 x 40 cm
Botany 2	2023	oil on canvas	40 x 40 cm
Yellow Roses	2023	acrylic on paper	47 x 39 cm
Pink Duo	2023	acrylic on paper	47 x 39 cm
From the Heart (Study)	2023	acrylic on paper	47 x 39 cm
Just Peachy	2023	acrylic on paper	47 x 39 cm

Photography: Gerry Blake and Ros Kavanagh

Portrait of Melissa O'Donnell in her Co. Wicklow studio by Tony Gavin.

Thanks to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre and the Arts Council of Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

Studies based on florist Simone Gooch & photographer Derek Henderson's collaborative Rosa publication.

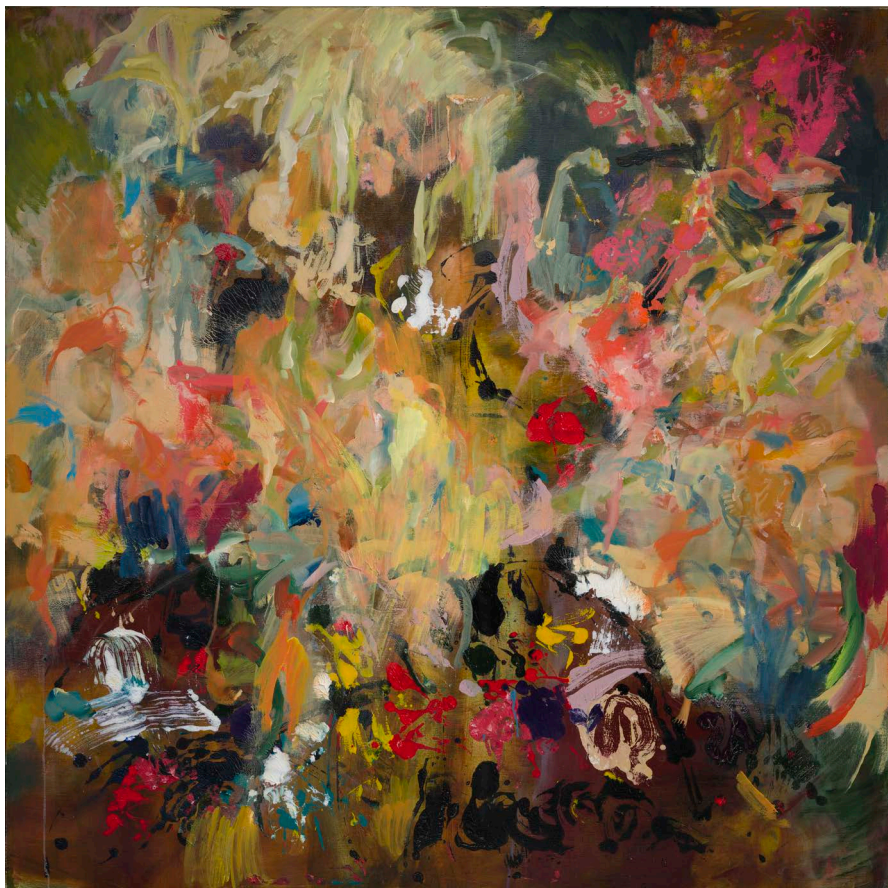
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Back cover: *UNDERGROWTH*, oil on canvas, 137 x 137 cm





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