

ENIGMA

Artists: Sharon Leahy-Clark / Fiona G Roberts

Gallery: Vivienne Roberts Projects

Exhibition Dates: 11 September – 31 October (Online)

Vivienne Roberts Projects is delighted to announce **ENIGMA**, an online exhibition showcasing the works of Sharon Leahy-Clark and Fiona G Roberts. Both artists, who have never met before this exhibition, share a background in sociology before pursuing fine art, bringing their deep insights and observations of human behaviour into their creative practices.

An enigma is something or someone difficult to grasp, inconsistent, and inherently elusive. What, then, is more elusive than the self? As human beings, we find ourselves on a stage where our roles are scripted by the unspoken dialogues of our upbringing, shaped by silent gestures and learned behaviours. Our first encounters with authority begin in the family and continue through societal institutions like schools, where we often question, rebel, yet remain conditioned.

Society, many would argue, is fundamentally flawed—unscrupulous and driven by false values perpetuated through the media. We are conditioned to adjust to and sustain this questionable structure. Depending on temperament, one may either compete fiercely within it or feel overwhelmed by its inherent injustices. Art offers a way to express the unspeakable, emerging from a place of silence.

Sharon Leahy-Clark self-portraits are an exploration of self, not traditional representations but rather masks that question the nature of identity. Influenced by mythology, literature, poetry, and personal experiences, her masks do not hide the self but challenge the very idea of what a self is. We are constantly changing, in flux, something she sees at the core of an absurd life. She questions what is accepted as normal, the very ideas against which labels “other or outsider” were created. She quotes Beckett: *“But what matter whether I was born or not, have lived or not, am dead or merely dying, I shall go on doing as I have always done, not knowing what it is I do, nor who I am, nor where I am, nor if I am.”*

Fiona G Roberts often paints female faces, which are sometimes unconsciously autobiographical. Her works reflect lost innocence, unexpected injustices, and the complexities of the human experience. A sidelong glance, a change in micro-expression. Some of the faces seem to emerge from stone, their emotions leaking through fissures and cracks - a slippage, a loss in their transmission of power, with contradictory feelings leading to speechlessness. Roberts’ use of monochrome in these intense small works is like poetry, its poignancy and strength lies in what’s left out. She quotes Aristotle: *The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.*

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Both artists grapple with the complexities of existence in a world of contradictions. Leahy-Clark pulls apart the very idea of self, while Roberts delves into the vulnerabilities of the human condition.

About the artists

Sharon Leahy-Clark lives and works in London. She is based at the Centre for Recent Drawing, Highbury Islington. She graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2001, with an MA Fine Art Painting. Middlesex University 1999, BA Hons (1st class) Fine Art. Her first degree was at the Polytechnic of North London, 1986, where she gained a BSc Hons (2:1) in Sociology. She is the recipient of several awards including the Helen Chadwick Memorial Prize. Her work can be found in collections including British Airways and The Drawing Gallery. She is the co-founder of 'Head on a Plate Projects' a collaborative drawing project with artist/critic Sarah Kent.

Fiona G. Roberts lives and works in London. She received an MA, Painting, from Wimbledon College of Arts, University of the Arts London, where she was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship. She completed two years at the Turps Banana Painting School (2019-2021) on the offsite painting programme. She had work shortlisted for the Jerwood Drawing Prize; Ingram Collection's Contemporary Talent Prize; Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize, 2018 and 2019 and Dentons Art Prize, where she was runner-up and won the Staff Prize. She was shortlisted for the Ruth Borchard Self-Portrait Prize 2021 and the 2021 Figurative Art Now Exhibition, where she was awarded a Mentorship Prize. Her work was exhibited in the 2021 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Roberts' work can be found in several collections including The David and Indre Roberts Collection (formerly the David Roberts Arts Foundation).

For more information:

Visit Vivienne Roberts Projects online for full exhibition details.

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