



Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia, *¡Silencio!*, 2023.

Oil and tempera on washi, 220 x 316 cm and 180 x 316 cm. Installed at Saatchi Gallery, London, as part of The Robert Walters Group UK New Artist of the Year Award, 2023. Photograph: Tom Platinum Morley. Courtesy of the Artist and Saatchi Gallery, London.

## ***The House of Bernarda Alba***

**Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia and Sam Llewellyn-Jones**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

**Elizabeth Xi Bauer Gallery**

**Private View: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024**

Elizabeth Xi Bauer is delighted to present *The House of Bernarda Alba*, an exhibition featuring works by **Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia** and **Sam Llewellyn-Jones**. United by themes of place, identity, and memory, Onwochei-Garcia's work confronts contemporary surveillance, identity politics, and post-colonial narratives. Llewellyn-Jones explores the themes of landscape and material elements; his work highlights the passage of time, revealing how landscapes carry layers of history, memory, and meaning.

*The House of Bernarda Alba* transforms the gallery space into an immersive indoor-outdoor experience. Onwochei-Garcia's large, suspended paintings construct a house-like environment that guides the viewer's movement. In turn, Llewellyn-Jones's photographs and oil on pastel works create a foreboding landscape that surrounds and deepens the setting. Together, the artists evoke a layered space resonating with tension and unease.

This is the first time **Elena Onwochei-Garcia's** works will be exhibited at Elizabeth Xi Bauer. In October, Onwochei-Garcia was announced as the 2024 Artists' Collecting Society Studio Prize recipient. This has allowed the artist the time, space, and freedom to keep developing her practice, which centres around recurring power dynamics, informed by her research into historical and contemporary narratives. Her large-scale figurative paintings and intricate works on paper examine the intersections of race, identity, and history. Being of Nigerian, German, and Spanish heritage, Onwochei-Garcia draws on Mestiza theory to explore the experience of being between multiple cultural spheres. Integrating psychological literature and historical analysis, the artist challenges singular narratives, she explains, "I find this more engaging as it brings up contradictions – the diversity of things."

A key focus of Onwochei-Garcia's work is the experience of the "Other" and "in-betweenness"—the feelings of displacement, a sense of a fictionalised identity shaped by external societal perceptions. Her

large paintings often take on sculptural qualities, encouraging viewers to move and shift around them, mirroring the internal disorientation she experiences.

Onwochei-Garcia's triptych *¡Silencio!* (2023) is inspired by Federico García Lorca's 1936 play, *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, which the exhibition draws its title from, as it anchored the feelings of repression, subjugation, and apprehension of that time. Poignantly, the title of this work is derived from the first line of the play. The tragedy tells the story of an oppressive widow who forces her five unmarried daughters to remain isolated inside in mourning for their father. It was written during Spain's political upheaval and considered incomplete before the author's assassination during the Spanish Civil War. Onwochei-Garcia's large-scale suspended works mirror the walls of the house, re-enacting the play's oppressive atmosphere with the entangled figures confined in a space. The artist explores the characters' emotional conditions: the experiences of anxiety, anguish, conflict, and tyranny. Onwochei-Garcia reinterpreted this theme within modern socio-political contexts as a reaction to Brexit; the effects of austerity; and issues of control and concerns over the cultural implications of severing Britain's international ties.

Also on display will be the panel *Los Espectadores* from the series *Dramas de Honor* (2023), which portrays spectators hiding in the darkness, waiting to see a performance. Onwochei-Garcia's works draw from the formalised, rigid structures of 16th-century Spanish dramas, capturing the tension between those who act and those who govern to reflect her belief that oppression recurs throughout history, often leaving behind isolation and denial.

In this exhibition, the works will be installed so that they are suspended to reveal both sides—one bold and imposing, the other delicate and intricate—this duality symbolises the fragility beneath power structures. Onwochei-Garcia's works present a challenge to the depicted regimen and a nod to contemporary concerns like the influx of fake news and the distortion of truth. Created on traditional Japanese Washi paper, these sculptural forms respond subtly to their environment, bending or straightening with time and embodying her exploration of power, performance, and hidden truths.

From August to October 2024, **Sam Llewellyn-Jones** was an artist-in-residence at Joshua Tree Highlands Artist Residency, situated on the edge of the Joshua Tree National Park in California. The desert landscape inspired Llewellyn-Jones to experiment with techniques such as rubbings of natural elements and photography post-production techniques. These explorations include painting layers in oil onto his photographs, a technique Llewellyn-Jones first began exploring with watercolours during his 2023 residency at SÍM in Reykjavík, Iceland.

Llewellyn-Jones' work seeks to capture the evolving relationship between landscape, time, archaeology, and architecture. His work is inspired by vast, elemental terrains of deserts, mountains, and natural forms, from fauna and rocks to grains of sand. His work reveals how both natural and built environments shape human perception. From California's desert expanses to the remote landscapes of Wales and Iceland, his images invite viewers to reflect on the silent transformations within these spaces.

This upcoming exhibition will include a selection of new large-scale works by Sam Llewellyn-Jones inspired by distinct desert ecosystems: the wind-sculpted lands, surreal geological features, and rich topography. Llewellyn-Jones uses a variety of analogue processes and darkroom printing techniques in his photography practice. After using his archetypal wooden Deardorff 8x10 Field Camera and his portable darkroom tent in the desert, Llewellyn-Jones enlarges the negatives in his London studio.

When developing prints, Llewellyn-Jones sometimes chooses to use a solarising technique, which enhances the eerie, anthropogenic, otherworldly quality of the landscape. Llewellyn-Jones then paints in oil on top of the developed photographs so that the brush strokes of dried, cracked paint on the surface mirror the qualities of the depicted landscape's arid terrains. This includes the undulating details and textures captured in the physically developed images, creating haptic compositions as a result. The artist was inspired to paint over the works in a translucent wash as he marvelled at the beautiful and

supernatural qualities of the colours of the light at dawn and dusk in the desert, which he endeavoured to capture through painting.

"The act of painting over an existing image somehow emulates the re-enactment at the heart of Elena's practice: both are giving a new life to an existing image" – Maria do Carmo M.P. de Pontes, exhibition curator.

"Photography always functions as a starting point for me, a transportable practice that I use to collect information whilst employing an archaeological approach to making. The material and indexical qualities of the analogue photograph itself are important, and the chemical processes used to achieve this," explains Llewellyn-Jones.

"I am interested in the history of photography, in this case, the hand-coloured black and white prints that existed before the development of colour film. Through my recent works, I like the idea that I put the 'gesture' or the 'hand' back into my photographic practice. This gesture, whether partially obscuring and abstracting the original details of the image or highlighting specific aspects of it, introduces a wash of colour and a direct trace of the artist's hand, something that is not overtly present in the heavily technologically mediated form of image making that is photography", further explains Llewellyn-Jones.

Llewellyn-Jones' rubbings in oil pastel on canvas preserve the textures of desert boulders, creating a direct physical connection to the landscape. The artist is interested in the index of the object; the rubbings are the same size as the form it is directly taken from. Rather than a digital image, Llewellyn-Jones uses physical documentation through the record of its layers; this is akin to how he uses photography. The artist makes prints that are a material trace of an object or landscape. The artist extracts the relics from the landscape from that moment in time before the effects of entropy continue. Due to the bright and layered colours, the works have a nebular quality, like desert suns.

## Notes to Editors

**Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia b.1996, Bristol, UK. Lives and works in Glasgow, UK.**

In 2023, Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia completed her MFA at Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, UK. In 2019, she completed a Combined Honours in History and Art History at Durham University, Durham, UK. This included a year of study in La Sapienza, Italy, where Onwochei-Garcia was mentored by the figurative artist Luca Morelli at the Academy of Figurative Arts in Rome, Italy.

In October 2024, Onwochei-Garcia was announced as the recipient of the ACS Studio Prize. Now in its eighth year, the ACS Studio Prize offers recent graduates a grant to help contribute to the cost of an artist's studio in a UK city of their choice. Onwochei-Garcia was awarded the ACS Studio Prize 2024 by artist and Royal Academician Allen Jones, artist and Director of the Royal Academy Schools Eliza Bonham Carter, and artist and art patron Rosamond Brown.

In 2023, Onwochei-Garcia was selected as a recipient of the Bloomberg New Contemporaries award, and in 2024, her work was exhibited as part of Bloomberg Contemporaries at Camden Art Centre, London. In 2023, she was shortlisted for the Robert Walters Group UK New Artist of the Year Award and her work was included in the accompanying exhibition *UK New Artists*, Saatchi Gallery, London. In 2022, Onwochei-Garcia received the RSA John Kinross Scholarship and Leverhulme Master of Fine Art Bursary.

Onwochei-Garcia's work has been included in several solo and group exhibitions. Recent exhibitions include *Buried*, OHSX x Thames-side Studios, London, 2024; *New Contemporaries*, Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, UK, 2023; and *Royal British Society of Artists Rising Stars*, Royal British Society of Artists, London, 2022. In 2021, the artist's work was featured in the exhibition *Painting our Past: The African Diaspora in England* at The Africa Centre, London. Onwochei-Garcia's portrait of Septimius Severus (AD

145–211) commissioned for this exhibition is now part of the permanent collection of English Heritage, at Corbridge Roman Town, Hadrian's Wall, Corbridge, UK.

Onwochei-Garcia's work has also been exhibited at various UK and international galleries, including Gallery No.20 Arts, London; Barnes Building, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow; Saltspace Gallery, Glasgow; Barreiro, Lisbon, Portugal; and Arts in Rome Academy, Rome.

**Sam Llewellyn-Jones b. 1988, London, UK. Lives and works in London, UK.**

Sam Llewellyn-Jones graduated with an MFA from Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK, in 2016. In 2012, he completed his BA Honours in Photography from the University of Hertfordshire, UK. In 2011, he attended UAL, Central Saint Martins, Byam Shaw School of Art, London, and completed his FdA in Fine Art.

Recently, Llewellyn-Jones has returned from a residency at Joshua Tree Highlands Artist Residency, California, USA. Previously, in 2023, Llewellyn-Jones completed a residency at SÍM Residency, Reykjavík, Iceland, and in 2022, at Stiwdio Maelor, Wales, UK.

Llewellyn-Jones' works have been included in international publications, including *NOIA Magazine* (Italy) and *Dose Magazine* (Portugal).

Llewellyn-Jones' work has been included in several European and UK group exhibitions. Recent exhibitions include *The Very Hours Pass Unnoticed*, Warbling Collective, Greatorex St, London, 2024; *SÍM Open Space*, Korpulfsstadir, Reykjavík, 2023; *Unwinding*, curated by *Umbigo Magazine* in collaboration with Elizabeth Xi Bauer, Galeria Sá Da Costa, Lisbon, Portugal, 2023; and *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, Elizabeth Xi Bauer, London, 2022.

Llewellyn-Jones' work is held in various private and public collections, including Millennium BCP Foundation, Lisbon; UCL Special Collections, London; and Poustinia Land Art Park, Cayo District, Belize.

Elizabeth Xi Bauer presents *The House of Bernarda Alba*, which will run from 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025, open Wednesday through to Saturday, 12 – 6 pm or by appointment. A Private View will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024, 6 – 8 pm, in the presence of the artists. The artists will be available for interviews.

A Dropbox with additional press material can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/mf6yxogdv1tbw03vy61yt/AlbqYjUDtWiig6M8-vwJ7Ko?rlkey=39hf8agpi0ibr6494vx9e0kr4&st=00qq1pu8&dl=0>

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Image credit: Elena Njoabuzia Onwochei-Garcia, *¡Silencio!*, 2023. Oil and tempera on washi, 220 x 316 cm and 180 x 316 cm. Installed at Saatchi Gallery, London, as part of The Robert Walters Group UK New Artist of the Year Award, 2023. Photograph: Tom Platinum Morley. Courtesy of the Artist and Saatchi Gallery, London.