

NINO MIER GALLERY

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Shanee Roe

Snarl Bloom

Brussels

June 13 – July 19, 2025

The dichotomy in Shanee Roe's work is striking. Viewers are confronted with overtly sexual, adult themes, yet the figures themselves are quite the opposite. Her silly, clumsy characters don't evoke pornographic tension; rather, they imbue Roe's work with a sense of charm and even endearment. Infantile, raw, and primitive, these figures explore their world with a childlike sense of wonder, as if newly born or just awakened. Their nudity recalls an original state of being and scenes that might just as well take place in the Garden of Eden.

Roe deliberately avoids glorifying her subjects. Instead, she presents them in their most honest for: deeply human and vulnerable. She questions her audience: are these scenes purposefully playful, or refreshingly naïve? Any sexual tension is disarmed by the humor inherent in her cartoonish figures; any obscenity is subdued by the tender, dreamy way in which their actions unfold. Roe challenges viewers to find beauty in unflattering imperfection, using the lightness of humor as a gateway to more easily engage with the themes in her work. Much like Philip Guston in his late figurative work, Roe uses humor to defuse seriousness and provoke thought.

Guston is a recurring influence in Roe's oeuvre. His humorous caricatures masked deeper emotional currents and sharp social commentary, an approach Roe embraces herself as well to question and gently dismantle societal constructs. Patriarchal norms and expectations of strong male identities are challenged by revealing a more vulnerable side of her male characters. These men are stripped of conventional attributes like physical dominance or power, while their female counterparts are elevated and almost deified. This inversion is evident in works like *3 Wishes* (2025), where Roe subverts gender expectations with quiet but deliberate force.

Roe is clear about her intentions: "*Of course, I want the viewer to feel a little disturbed discomfort. But at the same time, the figures need to be harmless, touching, and borderline pathetic.*" She invites her audience to confront subtle unease, not as something problematic, but as a space for reflection. Must bodies always be glorified? Isn't it healthy or even liberating to depict them as Roe does, in defiance of dominant beauty standards? Her work challenges us to rethink how we perceive beauty in society. There is a power in portraying the human form without mockery or shame and a lasting reminder that romance and sexuality need not be polished or glamorous. They can be raw, clumsy, blunt, and laced with humor. Roe's approach echoes that of Maria Lassnig, who aimed to paint the body as it feels, not as it appears.

The internalized, dreamlike longing present in many of the works featured in *Snarl Bloom* is as honest as the characters themselves. The title alludes to the tangled web of desire that threads through her canvases, from the awkward attempts at intimacy in *Oral desire with no Pleasure* (2025) and *Wandering Mind* (2025) to surreal encounters with angelic figures in *Bring me a dream* (2025).

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The exhibition marks a subtle departure from Roe's earlier work, embracing a more dreamy, fantastical atmosphere and sensibility. At the heart of this exhibition lies, after all, a deep yearning for connection, a desire to fill the hollow void of loneliness with unfiltered intimacy. Roe's characters act on this impulse with the same bewildered tenderness that defines her entire body of work.

Shanee Roe (b. 1996, lives and works in Berlin, DE) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, AT in the class of Daniel Richter and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig, DE in the class of Christoph Rückhaberle. Roe has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, AT; Luce Gallery, Turin, IT; KORNFELD Galerie, Berlin, DE; The Cabin, Los Angeles, CA, US; Neuer Kunstverein Wuppertal, DE; Wannsee Contemporary, Berlin, DE and Maya Gallery, Tel Aviv, IL. Recent group exhibitions were held at Schloss Sacrow, Brandenburg, DE; Jupiter Contemporary, Miami, US; Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, AT; Luce Gallery, Dallas, TX, US and Erfurt Museum, DE.