

MAUREEN PALEY
MORENA DI LUNA



press release

CHIOMA EBINAMA

The Eyes of the Beloved are Everywhere

1 July – 10 September 2023

Maureen Paley is pleased to present Chioma Ebinama's second solo exhibition with the gallery and her first at Morena di Luna, Hove.

Nigerian-American artist Chioma Ebinama draws from an array of visual and cultural references, employing myth and cosmology as a guide for examining her inner life. Her practice centres around watercolours on paper, a medium that elucidates the process of mark-making as both a meditative act and a tool for self-liberation.

"I have envisioned a story of a feminine figure recalling her past life as a mermaid (or a sea nymph) and thus longs to return to the sea. Turning to the sea can also be a metaphor of letting go of self-imposed social constructs. I've been reading a lot about neurodivergence in women and how it often goes undiagnosed because of "masking", in which a neurodivergent person learns to suppress or camouflage their authentic selves often by mirroring the behaviour of neurotypical people. That said, I think everyone "masks" a little bit especially those coming from the margins who must exist in heteronormative spaces. The protagonist has decided to "unmask" and the hybridity (half-fish, half woman) is an interesting (perhaps ancient) means of describing ways of being that do not fit into simple categories." – Chioma Ebinama, 2023

Divided between two spaces, *The Eyes of the Beloved are Everywhere*, represents the genesis of an unnamed protagonist. In the first space, viewers are invited to share in the vulnerability of her first encounter of life on earth. Moving through the exhibition, the viewer witnesses her inner world of memories and dreams. The second space is a fragmented narrative, her education on the realities of the external world: oppression, joy, carnal pleasure, and ultimately belonging.

Ebinama questions the standards of heteronormative and neurotypical decorum. In the act of returning to the sea, she details her subject as "letting go of human constructs, allowing herself a less-defined freedom of being".

Chioma Ebinama (b. 1988, Maryland, US and lives and works in Athens, Greece). Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Eleventh House*, The Breeder, Athens, Greece (2023); *tipota*, Fortnight Institute, New York, USA (2022); *A Spiral Shell*, Maureen Paley, London (2021); *mud & butterflies*, Galeria Catinca Tabacaru, Bucharest, Romania (2021); *Lay All Your Love On Me*, Salon 94, New York, USA (2021); *Leave the thorns and take the rose*, The Breeder Gallery, Athens, Greece (2020) and *Now I only believe in...Love*, Fortnight Institute, New York, USA (2020).

Her work can be found in the Whitney Museum Collection, Perez Museum Collection and LACMA Collection. This year Ebinama was awarded the Ezra Jack Keat Honor Award for her illustrations for *Emile and the Field*, written by Kevin Young, the director of the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and published by Penguin Random House in 2022. She is currently working on her first manuscript for a children's book set to be published in 2024 by Penguin Random House.

Ebinama recently participated in the Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition *Hollow Earth: Art, Caves & The Subterranean Imaginary* at Nottingham Contemporary (2022/2023), touring to The Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork (2023); and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (2023/2024).

For further information please contact Lauren Williamson at lauren@maureenpaley.com

MORENA DI LUNA 3 Adelaide Crescent, Hove BN3 2JD. Saturdays and Sundays 12pm - 6pm. www.maureenpaley.com