

5-50

COLOR ME IN

Nianxin Li, Nicole Schonitzer, Lauren Skelly Bailey, and Jen Shepard

On view: April 5 - April 30

Closing reception: April 28th, 5 - 8 pm



Nianxin Li, *Frog doesn't notice pink*, 2022, acrylic and oil on canvas, 48 x 60 in.

COLOR ME IN is an exhibition at 5-50 Gallery that features the works of artists **Nianxin Li**, **Nicole Schonitzer**, **Lauren Skelly Bailey**, and **Jen Shepard**. This exhibition places Li's large paintings, Schonitzer's bodily abstractions, Bailey's layered ceramic vessels and Shepard's psychic landscapes together, bringing forth questions about intimacy and the physical reality of our world. The works of this show reimagine the presentation of objects in different ways that convey the ambiguity of their physical beings. In doing so, these artists propose alternatives to the physical reality of the world we live in and invite us into another realm.

Nianxin Li's practice begins with feelings of disconnection between the purpose and methods of her early education and family life. This series of works discusses the possibility of various parts actively or passively staying in the same space, and questions the traditional framework of prioritizing familial relationships.

Li subverts the traditional still-life genre by populating her compositions with atypical elements. There is tension in the steady plane; the objects rely on and guard against one another. Each creature shoulders different responsibilities and ignores itself. They twist and squeeze carefully to maintain balance, but behind the balance is the sinking ground, the bubble that is about to burst, and the life that is ignored. Though her images are streamlined, they are not simplified: multiple visual centers compete in her paintings, bright, toxic colors and neutral tones contend with one another, and various paints (such as oil, spray, and acrylic) overlap. Such visual effects create a sense of division and confrontation, but with mutual checks and balances.

Nicole Schonitzer's work inhabits a space where formal abstraction and bodily narrative coalesce. The images and objects she creates amalgamate into an amorphous, other Place, with its own set of logic. In the Place of her work, there is power in softness, impulsivity is celebrated, and tenderness rules. Leisure and pleasure are valued above all else. She makes the Beings seductive and vulnerable, qualities she fears and desires. They do things a body can do and sometimes look the way a body can look, but they are not of an earthly body and possess an alternative corporeality. As bodily autonomy disintegrates around us in the real world, Schonitzer vicariously indulges in the fantasy of existing in this impossible, liberated mode through creating and living with her beings.

Lauren Skelly Bailey considers herself to be an explorer, seeking new ways of layering, swirling, forcing, bending, breaking and reusing surfaces. In her current body of work, she grapples with new ways of navigating her roles as mother and maker. As a result, she finds ways to reprocess older pieces through using them as foundations for new sculptures and collages. She believes in second chances for pots, sculptures, paintings, installations, and people.

In each firing of her ceramic works a new element is added to the piece, furthering its transformation from fail to fixed. Not all layers are successful, but they all serve as a learning process. Bailey makes earthy lasagnas—formations made up of multiple parts—fired several times. She responds to changes and observes balance in her work, seeking to push an uneasy tension between materials and form.

Jen Shepard's newest body of work is largely a continued formal exploration of the other-worldly motifs inherent in her work. Blobs of sky meet rainbow-esque wiggles and swoops. Moons and stars hang in the balance. A tangible horizon line glows from the backdrop, and sculptural elements alter perception. These works are about the macrocosm and the microcosm and our pursuit of meaning in between.

Nianxin Li is a mixed-media artist who lives and works in New York. After completing her BFA in painting at the Florence Academy of Fine Arts in 2020, she moved to New York in 2021 to pursue her MFA at the School of Visual Arts. Her works have been featured in recent exhibitions at various NYC galleries including *Contours and Crevices* and *Double Trouble* at VillageOneArt, *Material Mixtape* at New Collectors Gallery, and *In Transition* at Gallery MC.

Nicole Schonitzer graduated in 2021 from her MFA program in Painting at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her art has been shown in galleries in New York City, Chicago, Providence, Poughkeepsie, and London. Recent shows featuring Schonitzer's work include Westside Exposure: Whitney Staff Art Show 2022 at Westbeth Gallery (New York, NY) and *Shit in a Bucket* at Cigar Factory (Long Island City, NY), and she also curated the latter. Publications such as Saatchi Art's 2022 Rising Stars and Create! Magazine have written about her work.

Lauren Skelly Bailey received her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design with a focus in Ceramics. In 2018 at the Museum of Arts & Design, Bailey showcased installations, photographs, decorative vessels, and conglomerates in her first solo exhibition in a museum in New York City. In 2022, her works were also featured in group shows such as *Holiday Round Up* at Kasper Contemporary, *Wunderdonk* at Underdonk, and the *Long Island Biennial Exhibition* at Heckscher Museum of Art.

Jen Shepard holds an MFA in painting and printmaking from the University of Texas at Tyler and achieved her MS in graphic design at Pratt Institute. She has been awarded residencies at DNA Residency (2020-22), The Wassaic Project (2016, 2018), The Vermont Studio Center (2019), and The School of Visual Arts (2009). Recent exhibitions include *Moon Beams and Fever Dreams* at Lorimoto Gallery, Ridgewood, Queens (2023); *Do or Don't Do it Yourself: A Paint by Number Show*; (forthcoming) at Salve Regina University Gallery, Newport, RI (2023); *Please Scream Inside Your Heart*, (solo) at Gold/Scopophilia, Montclair, NJ. Shepard has also participated in art fairs such as Art on Paper (2020), Untitled Miami (2018), and The Satellite Art Fair, Brooklyn (2019). Shepard's work can be found in the Morgan Lehman Gallery flat files, the Fidelity Mutual Corporate Collection, and the Freight and Volume DNA Gallery collection.

5-50 Gallery is an art gallery / curatorial project space set in the former site of a stone carving studio in NYC.