

# rachel uffner



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Erica Mao

***Reach Through the Veil***

March 11 - April 29, 2023

Opening reception, Saturday, March 11 from 6 - 8pm

Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present *Reach Through the Veil*, **Erica Mao's** first solo exhibition with the gallery. Comprised of new oil paintings and ceramic sculptures, the directive title of the show offers a clue as to the artist's intention of revelation, insinuating a deeper level of clarity to her growing invented world.

Mao has become known for her exuberant color palette and distinctively textured paintings which depict evocative landscapes populated with enigmatic shadowy figures. In previous works, her protagonists blend with their agitated, atmospheric environments, leaving much to the imagination of the viewer who remained situated as voyeuristic onlookers of an intense moment of fire or flood. In this new series - expressed by a metaphorical 'lifting of the veil' - figures emerge with a newly defined prominence, oftentimes facing outwards and confronting the viewer's gaze. As before, the subjects are presented on some sort of journey, for salvation or shelter. Throughout this series Mao focuses deeper on the relationships between her characters, establishing social hierarchies, and illustrating them in moments of tension or cooperation.

The paintings also demonstrate a new level of tactility and power within natural elements like water, trees, caverns, and vines. These forms are repeated in a series of ceramic sculptures presented in the center of the main gallery space as part of a multi-level installation. The highly textured sculptures take the form of crumbling houses, gnarled tree trunks, and pockets of earth. Each piece is treated with different textures and glazes, mimicking natural elements of the land and sky, and materializing in more tactile shapes and objects.

*Reach Through the Veil* ultimately demonstrates the artist's own development with her materials and subject matter. Focusing on this metaphor, the artist is intent on not only honing her mastery of mediums, but on demystifying the protagonists and shedding light on her otherwise enigmatic and opaque narrative.

Erica Mao (b. 1994, Columbia, MD) received her BFA from Parsons School of Design, NY, in 2016, and her MFA from Columbia University, NY, in 2020. In 2022, Mao was part of a two person exhibition with Robert Zehnder at Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, NY. Recent exhibitions include *Sea View*, Los Angeles, CA; *Embajada*, San Juan, PR; *Everyday Gallery*, Antwerp, Belgium; *North Loop*, Williamstown, MA; *Anat Ebgi*, Los Angeles, CA; and *NADA House*, Governors Island, New York, NY. Mao currently lives and works in Ridgewood, Queens.

Image: Erica Mao, *Wanderer in the Light*, 2023, oil on panel, 47 x 71 x 1 1/2 in (119.4 x 180.3 x 3.8 cm)

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