

*Sonia & Shi* ELENA  
SHKVARKINA

# PURE LAND



**PURE LAND** offers a critical perspective on the communal and individual disconnection from the land, touching upon both tangible and metaphysical dimensions of perception. It initiates a dialogue about the industrialised aspects of land, juxtaposing the demoralisation of plastic production with its intrinsic origins and vitality.

This show emphasises the need for a renewed connection with the Earth, exploring themes of fertility and resilience of land. Preconceived notions of beauty and utility are challenged, blurring the lines between what is plastic and what is organic, and prompting a critical reflection on our relationship with nature in both visual and materialistic aspects.

The artists' practices manifest a confluence of textures. The exhibition promises a sensory and intellectual journey: from Sonia's detailed brushwork influenced by Chinese ink painting and Gong Bi to Elena's relief-like intuitive action painting emerged from Nihonga (Japanese-style painting).



**Elena Shkvarkina** (b. 1988, Moscow) is a self-taught Nihonga (Japanese-style) and ink painter based in London, UK. Since 2022, she has honed her skills with guidance from a Tokyo-based Nihonga master.

Practicing the ancient traditions of Nihonga, she prepares paints from pulverised mineral pigments, earths and oyster shells bound with animal glue.

Drawing inspiration from nature, Elena harnesses forces of destruction and regeneration that manifest in the relentless cycles of weathering, erosion, and volcanic eruption. She recreates these elemental events through a distinctive technique that deviates from conventional brushwork. Instead, she embraces strikes, vibrations, and swings, guided by the pull of gravity itself. Her transient mindscapes offer the viewer an empathetic reflection of self within cyclical patterns of nature.



**Sonia Shi** (b. 2001, Beijing) is a versatile fine artist currently based in London and Beijing. Having relocated to the UK in 2017, her multidisciplinary practice encompasses painting, photography, and sculpture. Shi skillfully merges traditional Chinese ink and Gongbi painting techniques with Western media.

Currently pursuing her MA at the Royal College of Art, she earned her BA in Photography from the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London in 2023.

Shi's artistic philosophy revolves around materiality, where she reinterprets the provocative potentials of everyday objects as her expressive language. This is vividly demonstrated through her intricate brushstrokes and abstracted motifs.





**Sonia Shi**

*Le Pli (Pleat)*, 2024

Oil and acrylic on canvas

120 x 90 x 1.6 cm



**Elena Shkvarina**

*Fading I, 2023; Fading II, 2024*

Nihonga painting: jasper, tiger eye & burnt umber on paper mounted on wooden panel, reinforced with aluminium frame  
30 x 80 x 3 cm



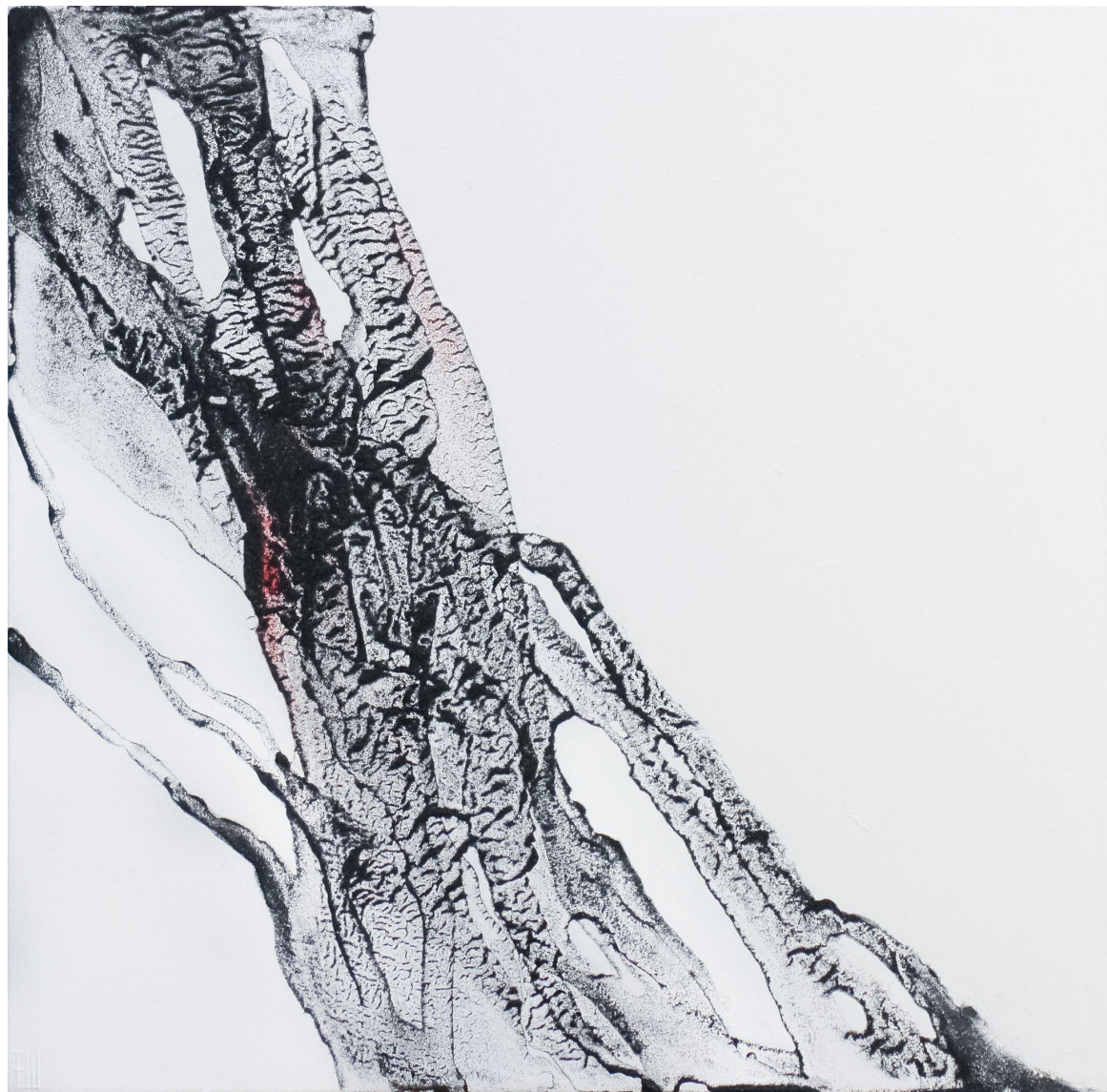


**Sonia Shi**

*Le Pli (Pleat)*, 2024

Bronze with multi-colour patina

17.2 x 19.5 x 28 cm



**Elena Shkvarkina**

*Formation I*, 2024

Nihonga painting: tourmaline, oyster shell, cinnabar and marble on paper mounted on wooden panel

25 x 25.5 x 2 cm





**Sonia Shi**

*Plastic Mountains*, 2019

Oil on canvas

42 x 59.4 x 1.6 cm



**Elena Shkvarkina**

*Formation*, 2023-2024

Nihonga painting: tourmaline, oyster shell and marble on paper mounted on wooden panel

50.7 x 25.2 x 2 cm





**Sonia Shi**

*I'm rooted, but I flow - Chán 禪, 2022*

Oil on canvas

90 x 60 x 1.6 cm



**Elena Shkvarkina**

*Hidden Place Immersed, 2023*

Nihonga painting: Japanese pigments on paper mounted on wooden panel, framed in walnut

50.7 x 25.2 x 2 cm Artwork Size

53.2 x 27.6 x 4 cm Framed Size



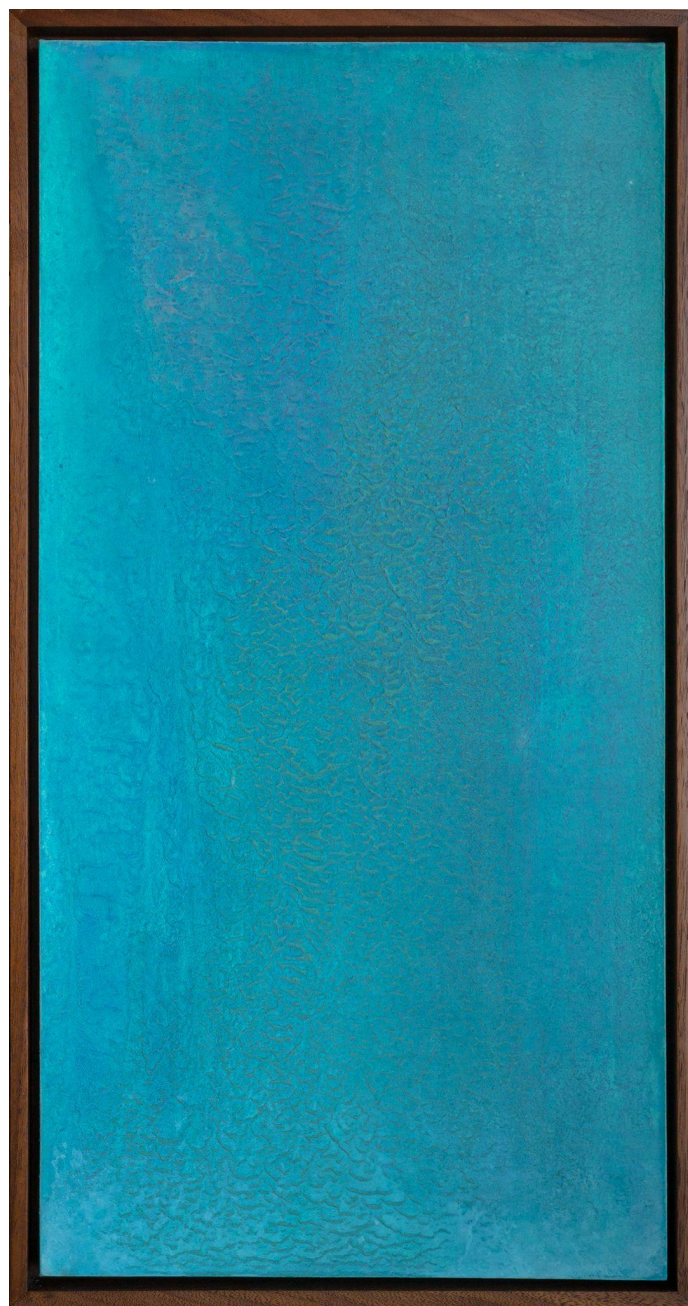


**Sonia Shi**

*Le Pli (Pleat)*, 2023

3D print in resin

17.2 x 19.5 x 28 cm



**Elena Shkvarkina**

*Hidden Place, 2023*

Nihonga painting: Japanese pigments on paper mounted on wooden panel, framed in walnut

50.7 x 25.2 x 2 cm Artwork Size

53.2 x 27.6 x 4 cm Framed Size



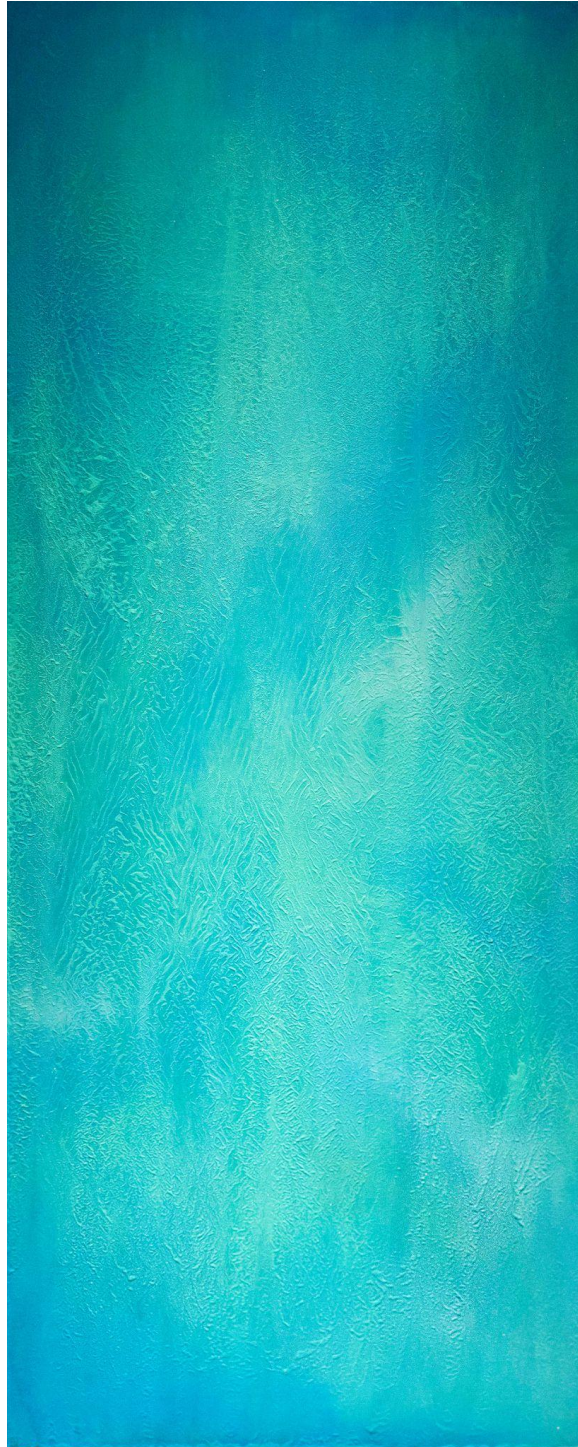


**Sonia Shi**

*I'm rooted, but I flow - Jiàn 澗, 2022*

Oil on canvas

90 x 60 x 1.6 cm



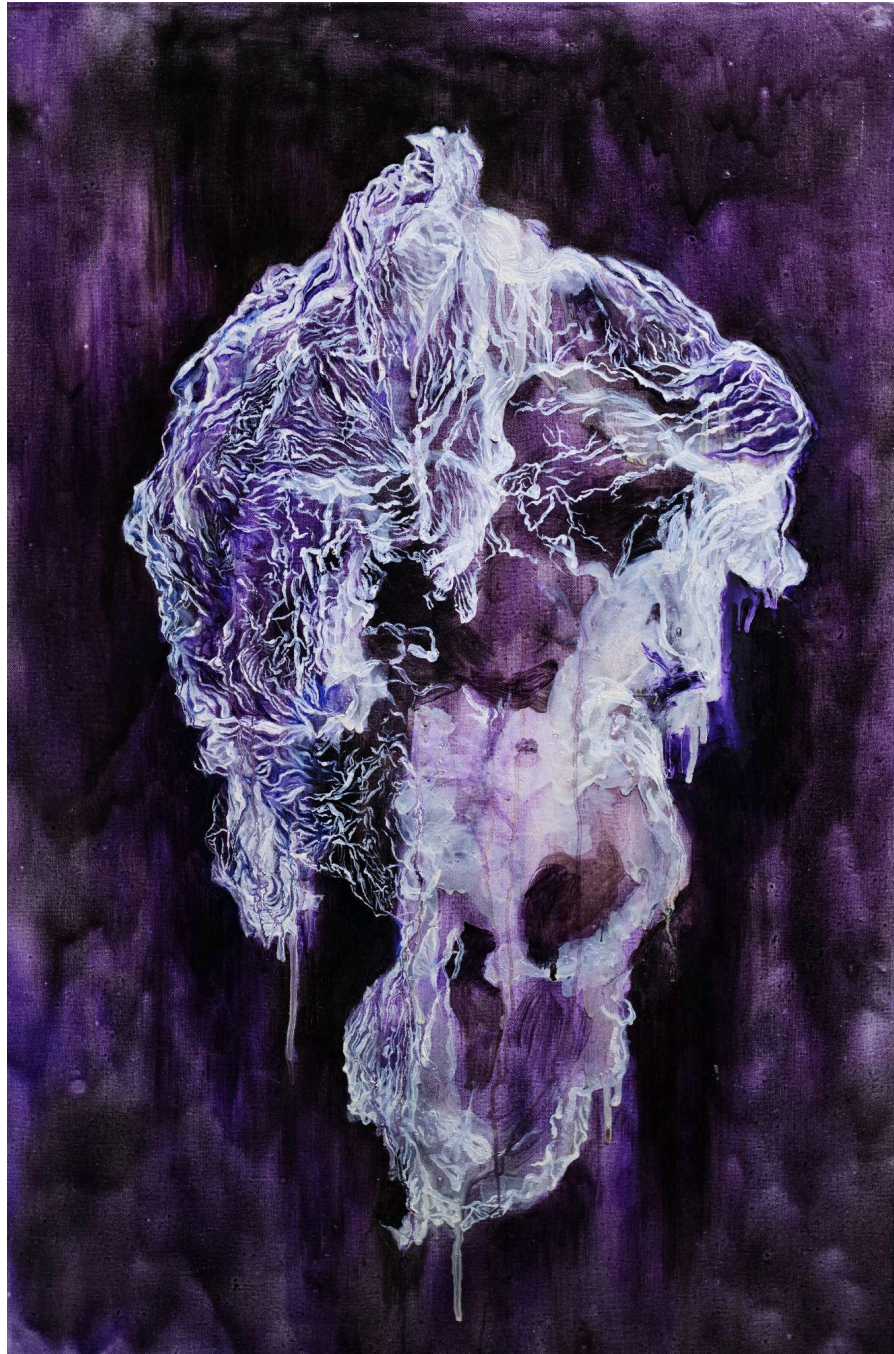
**Elena Shkvarkina**

*Hidden Place, 2023*

Nihonga painting: Japanese pigments on paper mounted on wooden panel, reinforced with aluminium frame

186 x 70 x 4 cm





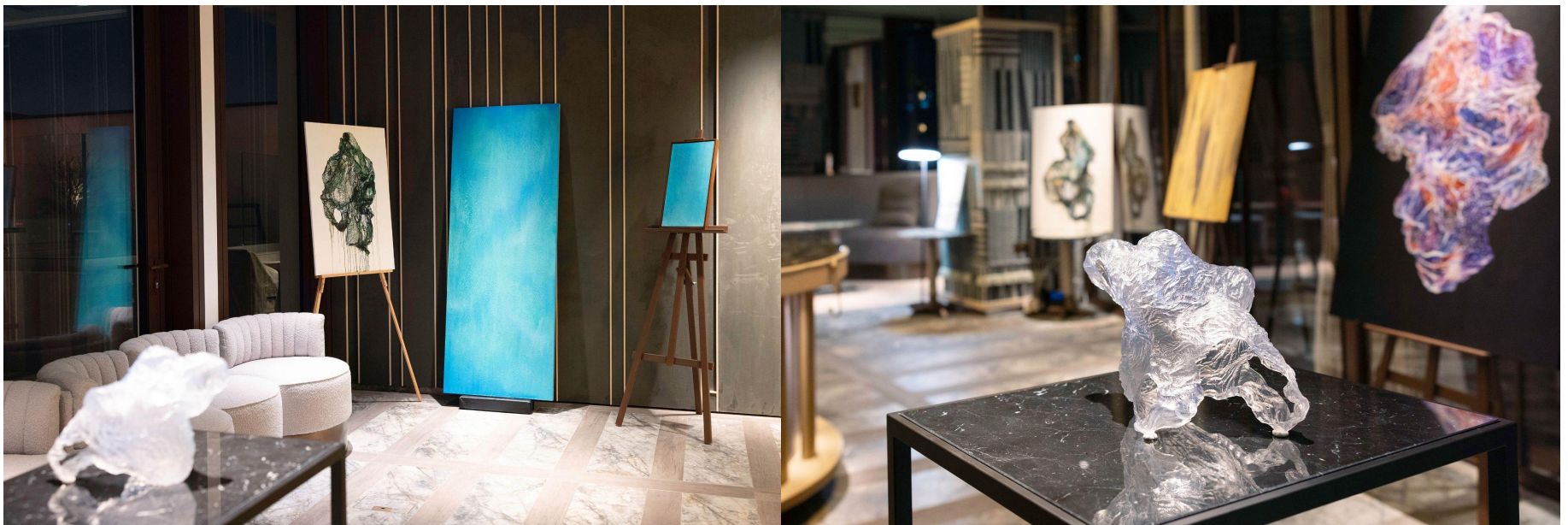
**Sonia Shi**

*I'm rooted, but I flow - Yuān 渊, 2022*

Oil on canvas

90 x 60 x 1.6 cm





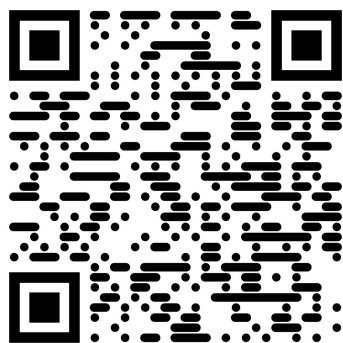
## CURATORS

**Elena Shkvarkina**

[elena@elenashkvarkina.com](mailto:elena@elenashkvarkina.com)

**Sonia Shi**

[ssodonoghue@icloud.com](mailto:ssodonoghue@icloud.com)



## PURE LAND

Duo solo exhibition

25th January 2024

6:30 - 9:30 pm

The Sky Lounge, Thames City,  
6-8 Carnation Way, SW8 5GZ