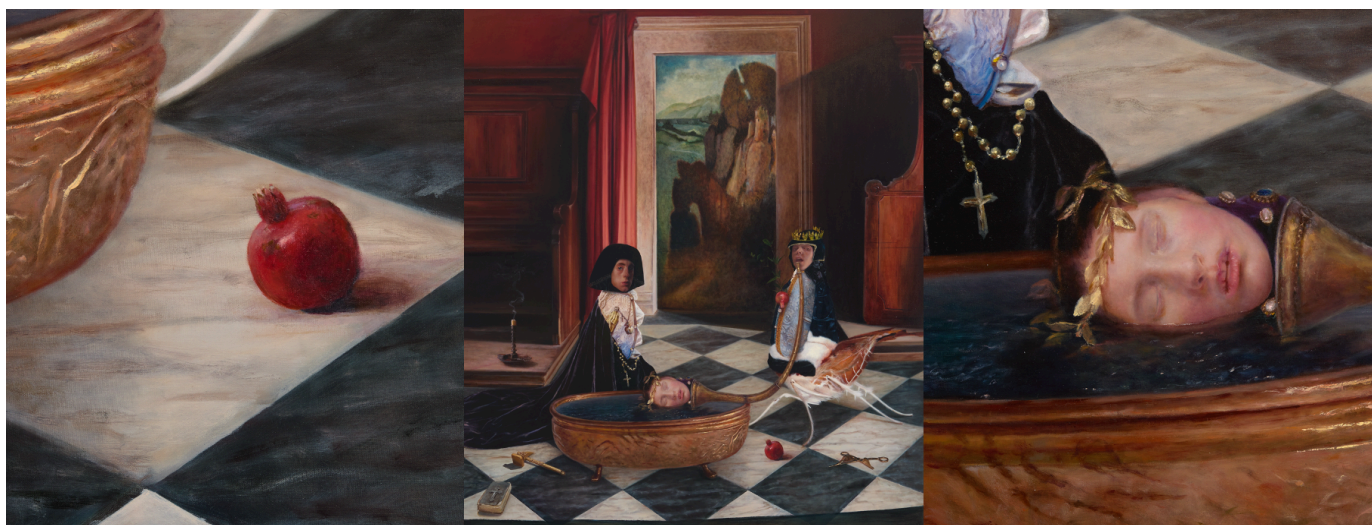


rosenfeld

Figures in internal crisis: gallery rosenfeld stages UK exhibition on artist Teodora Axente

gallery rosenfeld, London



- Opening this autumn and through Frieze London, gallery rosenfeld presents a solo exhibition from Romanian artist Teodora Axente
- Known for her uncanny works and eerie, metamorphic figures, the artist will present over a whole new body of work, featuring emotive portrait, still-life and large-scale new works that reference the human desire to reshape oneself
- The exhibition will run from 22 September to 24 October 2025, ahead of the artist's first major institutional show in Santa Maria della Scala Museum in Sienna, one of Italy's most historic and prestigious institutions

gallery rosenfeld presents a new solo exhibition from Romanian artist Teodora Axente this autumn. A member of the Cluj School in Romania, the artist forms part of a new group of young painters, whose preoccupation with the uncertainty of the individual in modern society manifests itself in a dark, sultry palette, featuring eerie and ambiguous figures.

In this exhibition, *From Horizon of the Matter, Rises the Vertical of the Soul*, Axente applies a driven sense of discomfort to the viewer. Themes of decay, aging and societal destruction

feature heavily in her work, which takes its inspiration from the Dutch Golden Age of Painting, Early Renaissance and Sienese School. Creating a visual collage solely through oils on canvas, the artist invites the viewer into a world of her own; where her figurative subjects are immersed in an environment that straddles the tangible, material, spiritual and elusive.

Humanoid and hybrid, these foreground bodies are often surrealist in form; traditional on the surface but with limbs replaced with those from insects, animals and fantastical creatures. They are surrounded by an intricate assortment of fabrics – gilded foils, satin pillows and nylon bags – that emphasise the artist's fascination with the material. Represented through darkened singular still-life works and portraiture, these figures often surround a serene tablescape on which lay symbolic objects. Their duality speaks to the thresholds between life and death, leading the viewer to a dreamlike state of suspended belief.

The artist's religious beliefs are key to her practice, evident in the visual history and splendour of her paintings. Her works are often didactic, from illustrating specific Eastern Orthodox teachings, such as *The Seven Sins*, which stands in deliberate contrast to the Seven Virtues depicted on Siena's Fontana Gaia. Located in Piazza del Campo, created in the 15th century by Jacopo della Quercia, the Fontana Gaia celebrates the Virgin Mary, the city of Siena, and the Seven Christian Virtues. Axente subverts this tradition by offering a counter-narrative, replacing the virtuous with the sinful, thereby questioning contemporary spiritual and moral decay.

Another painting, *The Five Senses* depicts a table where each plate holds a removed sensory limb. With the table motif as a space of dialogue, these paintings speak to the fragmentation and sensory isolation associated with transformation. *The Moment* – selected by the gallery to be presented at The Armory Show in New York – features symbolism characteristic of the artist's paintings: the pomegranate for death and rebirth, the insect for metamorphosis, the water for sanctification, and the presence of a sacred book referencing the famous *Evangelario* preserved in the Duomo of Siena.

Following the London exhibition, Teodora Axente will debut her first major institutional solo show, *Metamorfosi del Sacro*, at the historic Santa Maria della Scala Museum in Siena, curated by Riccardo Freddo and Michela Eremita. One of Europe's most significant cultural institutions, the 12th-century museum complex stands as a powerful emblem of Siena's spiritual and artistic heritage, housing a vast collection of artworks and archaeological treasures spanning over a millennium. *Metamorfosi del Sacro* will open on 13 November 2025, marking a pivotal moment in Axente's career.

Drawing directly on the Museum's material memory and mythology and the city of Siena itself, viewers will experience specific references to the architecture and artefacts on site. Fresco cycles serve as compositional backdrops, while motifs such as insects, cocoons, lilies, ladders and the chalice are reframed as agents of transformation. Religious symbolism inspired by the cathedral runs through these works, created especially for this exhibition. The works will

reference specific relics acquired by the institution from the Empress of Constantinople, like the nail that bound Christ's hand to the cross, his blood and the veil of the Virgin Mary. Another painting reimagines frescoes from the museum walls inside a ladder (Scala), symbol of the museum and of humanity's vertical ascent.

The exhibition, one of the first of its kind, will take over the *Piano Nobile* of the museum space. Once a Christian hospital for pilgrims and the city's orphaned children, medical iconography and surgical instruments are also reimagined by the artist through their surreal signature style; transformed into secular relics that reflect the historical site and honour its spiritual identity as a place of care. In direct response to the artist's work, the exhibition opening will feature a concert and a special performance, directed by Anna Lea Antolini, in dialogue with one another.

From Horizon of the Matter, Rises the Vertical of the Soul will open at gallery rosenfeld from 22 September to 24 October 2025. *Metamorfosi del Sacro* will open at the Museum of Santa Maria della Scala from 13 November 2025 to January 2026.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

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About the artist:

Teodora Axente (b.1984) lives and works in Cluj, Romania. Axente belongs to the younger generation of the Fabrica de Pensule in Cluj, Romania, an artist community in an old brush factory that became a cultural center over the last years. Narration is the focus of Teodora Axente's expressive development. In surreal paintings of human figures constricted by an array of devices and materials, Teodora Axente explores states of internal crisis. For Axente, the juxtapositions in these scenes—between human emotions and the odd assortment of foil, satin pillows, and nylon bags—are meant to evoke the duality of spiritual and material and reference the human desire to reshape oneself.

Axente has exhibited internationally with solo exhibitions and group presentations at museums such as The Frissiras Museum (Greece) where she was awarded with the annual prize for European Painting 2017; The Art Center Hugo Voetten (Belgium); The Museum of Art Cluj; (Romania); The Boulder Contemporary Museum of Art, Colorado (USA). Private collections include The Obayashi Foundation, Samlung ESSL Collection, Strock Collection, Hugo Voetten Collection; Alva Collection; Frissiaris, Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Fairs presentations include; Chicago, Miami, New York and Basel, London, Tokyo.

About gallery rosenfeld:

gallery rosenfeld is a contemporary art gallery committed to presenting ambitious, concept-driven work by international artists. Located in London's Fitzrovia district, the gallery reflects the pulse of contemporary culture through a dynamic programme of solo exhibitions by both established and emerging artists, alongside curated group shows.

Founded in 2011 by Ian Rosenfeld, the gallery has become a platform for artistic rigour and discovery, supporting multidisciplinary practices spanning painting, sculpture, installation, and performance. Since Ian's passing earlier this year (2025), the gallery continues with a renewed focus on his founding vision - fostering thoughtful engagement with contemporary art and championing bold, cross-disciplinary practices.

Its expansive two-floor space hosts several exhibitions annually, each inviting audiences to engage with diverse artistic languages and methods of expression.

gallery rosenfeld participates in major international art fairs, including Tokyo Gendai, Art SG (Singapore), Artissima, West Bund Shanghai, Art Brussels, Frieze New York, Zona Maco Mexico City, Untitled Miami, The Armory Show, and 1-54. gallery rosenfeld's ongoing artistic dialogue has led to numerous exhibitions in partnership with museums and institutions, including: V&A, MACBA, Reina Sofia Museum, The Met Museum, TATE, Albertina Museum, Palais De Tokyo, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, MARV Gradara, Saatchi Gallery and many more.

gallery rosenfeld remains dedicated to nurturing new talent, advancing conversations in contemporary art, and offering a space to foster meaningful engagement with the art of our time.

[galleryrosenfeld.com](https://www.galleryrosenfeld.com)
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About Santa Maria della Scala:

Santa Maria della Scala is a monumental complex, placed in the center of Siena, on the top of the Cathedral hill. Its particular location, developing on different levels, sloping down from the Cathedral square to the valley behind, is the reason for its extraordinary structure.

Born as a medieval hospital, linked to the Francigena Route, it developed over the centuries and it worked as the city hospital until less than 50 years ago. The building was the object of an impressive restoration plan and today it still presents, alongside with many spaces open to the public and variously destined to museum and exhibition rooms, service areas etc, a part under restoration. At the Cathedral square level, where the entrance to the museum is placed, monumental rooms are housed: wide halls (pilgrims' halls), wards, friars' refectory (nowadays used as temporary exhibition space), the Sagrestia Vecchia (Ancient Sacresty), the Cappella del

Manto (Chapel of the Mantle), the church of SS. Annunziata, the old pharmacy (nowadays headquarters of the Museo d'Arte per Bambini / Children's Art Museum and of the Educational Section).

The extraordinary Pellegrinaio (pilgrims' Hall), painted in the 40s of the Fourteenth century by Lorenzo di Pietro, Domenico di Bartolo and Priamo della Quercia, is the Fulcrum of the level: it represents real and mythical aspects of the history and the detailed description of the hospital functions with their spaces and protagonists ("Caring and Healing of the Sick", "Almsgiving", "Education and Marriage of a Daughter of the Hospital"). To the same period belong the frescoes of the Sagrestia Vecchia, painted by Lorenzo di Pietro, which represent the quotes of the apostolic Creed with scenes from the Holy Bible and New Testament. The place houses the precious nucleus of relics and reliquaries bought by the Hospital in 1359.

In the section once destined to the women and to the abandoned children, based on two courtyards, is nowadays exhibited the collection Piccolomini Spannocchi, an important collection of artworks put together in the second half of the Seventeenth century by the married union of the two Sienese families.

At the third level different itineraries are placed around a small courtyard, the so-called Corticella. In the wide rooms of the ancient granary the original marbles of the Fonte Gaia by Jacopo della Quercia are displayed, together with the casts and the plaster models made by Tito Sarrocchi for the Nineteenth century copy. From the courtyard the historical headquarters of two Brotherhoods, one dedicated from the late '400 to 'Saint Catherine of the Night' and the other to 'Saint Mary under the Vaults', today 'Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni' can be reached.

Levels I and II, in the lower part of the building, characterized by wide vaulted spaces and tunnels dug out of the sandstone, develop along an ancient street (nowadays partially closed for restoration work), incorporated by the hospital during its growth towards the bottom of the hill: it has become a fascinating internal route connecting different levels. These places host the National Archaeological Museum, which collects artifacts from the Sienese territory, and the itinerary "Siena. A story of the city from its Origins until the Middle Age".

The Giuliano Briganti Library and Photo library are also open to the public, as well as spaces for temporary exhibitions and conferences

SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA

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santamariadellascala.com