

MARIANE IBRAHIM



AMOAKO BOAFO: *I STAND BY ME*

September 10 - October 24, 2020

Mariane Ibrahim is pleased to present *I STAND BY ME*, Amoako Boafo's first solo exhibition at the gallery. The show features never before seen works, representing a moment of reflection during this time of crisis, emphasizing the notion of autonomy and self reflection, a call to preserve one's integrity and independence. The exhibition will open on September 10 and the artist will be present.

The large paintings using photo transfer compositions in *I STAND BY ME* mark a significant development in his technique. Concerned with a constant need to redefine new aesthetic and visual nomenclatures and to explore different ways of expressing themes; the artist emphasizes atmospheric naturalism and the impressionist rendering of motion. Boafo uses painting as an instrument for navigating the complexities of human experiences and depicting a vivid sense of each subject's presence in the world.

The latest large-scale works accentuate Boafo's unmistakable figurative language and influence from great masters of classical portraiture to expressionism. Although his paintings focus on human figures, his lively mark making creates a new heightened palette to convey mystical emotion.

His subject's are buoyant, some on monochrome backdrops, their luminous flesh painted with the artist's fingers in lieu of brushes. The faces and hands of Boafo's subjects are formed in whirls of blue and brown oil paint, so thin that every stroke evokes the figures to pulse with energy, drenched in color, and almost sculptural.

Boafo emphasizes, *"I've explored many technical and figurative expressions of skin tone and movement, realizing my process is best embellished when I paint with my fingers. The lack of instrument, allows the contour of the works to be confined, yet the skin tone remains expressive."*

The new works maneuver amidst maximum expression to minimalism. In certain areas, the forms are reduced to impressions or partial figures and limbs. Boafo leaves out all that is unnecessary, diminishing his backgrounds to a simple wash of colour, to focus on his primary interest, his subjects.

The artist celebrates the subjects bound to the world around him, inspired by powerful Black emerging designers and creatives. In his tableau vivants, Boafo places the figures at a higher recognition, both physically in regards to the size and spiritually in terms of their grandeur. To the artists disclosure, some remain anonymous, and some revealed subtly through suggestive elements in the title of the works. Regardless of the viewer, the gaze of the subject functions to disrupt observations from canonical, often white, viewership and put forward definitive sentiments of how Black people are constructing their own identity.

Boafo uses sourced European wallpapers to explore the possibilities of the transfer method, inviting new connections to emerge between his composition and stylistic influences. Textiles adorn the figures and the backgrounds are created with a photo transfer method. Through this technique, Boafo continues to expand his own practice of painting and mark making, finding new ways to treat his subjects.

Abstract voids surrounding the portraits create an intimacy that is free of distraction, promoting a focus towards human interiority rather than bodily form. These negative spaces reveal abstract expressionist movement, bestowing harmonious balance between the foreground and background. The works in I STAND BY ME entrance the gaze of the viewer, an invitation for a critical reflection and celebration of oneself.

Artist Biography:

Amoako Boafo is a painter, born in Accra, Ghana, and is based between Vienna, Austria and Accra, Ghana.

Regarded as a notable young voice in art of the African diaspora, Amoako Boafo has emphasized new approaches to the "representation, documentation, and celebration of Blackness."

Within his vibrant portraits, the figures' are the only factors in the painting to formally analyze. Viewers have to pay attention to them, their posture, what they are wearing, and the stroke of their skin, to understand the doughty statements Boafo presents. His subjects are often fitted within the frame of the canvas, just as his signature is squeezed within a small box; a technique popularized by major figurative and expressionist painters such as Egon Schiele. The framing devices serve as a reminder that these portraits are condensed and there is more to them than what is restricted by the painter's material.

Boafo studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. In 2017 was awarded with the jury prize, Walter Koschatzky Art Prize. In 2020, he participated in a residency with the new Rubell Museum in Miami. Widely collected by private and public collectors and institutions, most recently by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Aishti Foundation, the CCS Bard College Hessel Museum of Art, the Pizzuti Collection of Columbus Museum of Art and the Rubell Museum.

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