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New Modernism

31 July – 28 August 2021

A red, cloud-like shape with multiple rounded lobes, serving as a background for the artists' names.

Liberty Battson
Palesa Motsomi
Janine Allen
Senzeni Marasela

Modernism is dead or is it?

The works on exhibition form part of a current vanguard of artists displaying New Modern identities and frontiers.

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Senzeni Marasela

Liberty Battson

Palesa Motsomi

Janine Allen

Price

+



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 37,
2020. R30000
\$2,163.00



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 36,
2020. R30 000.00 each
\$2,163.00



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 35,
2020. R30 000
\$2,163.00



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 34,
2020. R30000
\$2,163.00



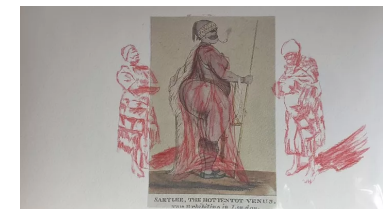
Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 33,
2020. R30000



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 32,
2020. R30 000.00 each



Senzeni Marasela, Imithwalo 31,
2020. R30000



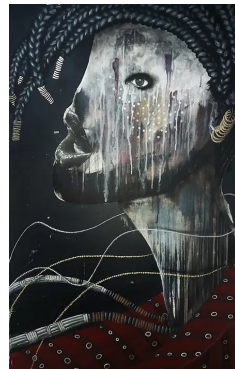
Senzeni Marasela, Untitled 2,
2020. R15000

\$2,163.00

\$2,163.00

\$2,163.00

\$1,082.00



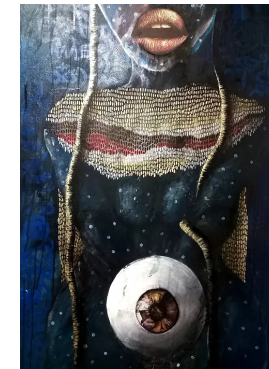
Palesa Motsomi, Recreate me, 2021. R14000

\$1,010.00



Palesa Motsomi, I see you, 2021. R12000

\$866.00



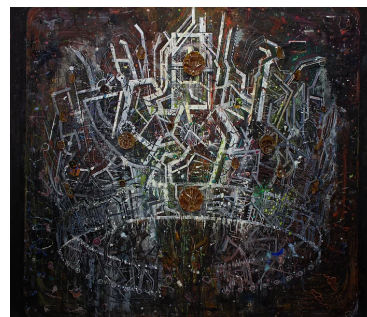
Palesa Motsomi, The lamp, 2021. R12000

\$866.00



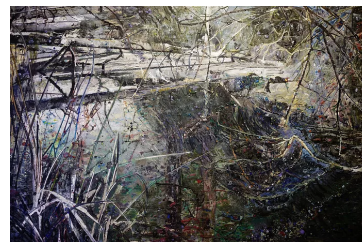
Palesa Motsomi, They said I'm African, 2021. R10000

\$721.00



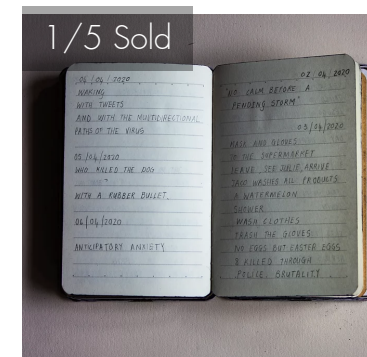
Janine Allen, Corona (2020). R25000

\$1,803.00



Janine Allen, Breathe, 2020. R23000

\$1,659.00



Janine Allen, Who killed the dog with the rubber bullet? (2020). R5000

\$361.00



Janine Allen, Of gloves and a selfie-stick (2020). R7000

\$505.00



Janine Allen, *Caverning* (2020).
R10000
\$721.00



Janine Allen, *Vapour (Wormwood)* (2020). R5000
\$361.00



Janine Allen, *Gift of the givers* (2021). R12000
\$866.00



Liberty Battson, *Humor, Ambiguity and Chance...*, 2018.
R28000
\$2,019.00

Modernism/Postmodernism

A Modern sensibility emerged from around 1850 converging with Industrialisation and the advent of the machine. Modernism was grounded in idealism and a utopian belief in progress, fuelling new visions and imaginations, which led to a break with past traditions and conventions, new ways of thinking and vanguard experimentation. Stylistic movements such as Expressionism, Surrealism, Abstraction and Minimalism were born. The predominant term for art produced since the 1950s is 'contemporary art'. Another term, 'Late Modernism', is general accepted in the visual arts as the period of art production spanning from after World War II to just after 2000. The similarities between Late Modernism and Postmodernism are minimal, although there are differences, mainly located in changes in technology usage (digital culture) and a changing world, thus a different subset of issues/content.

During the late 1970s Postmodernism evolved as a reactionary movement of radical questioning and suspicion, but also of re-appropriation of Modernist styles. A move to individualism, personal experience and issues of the human condition on planet earth emerged; whereas Modernism was marked by reductionism, Postmodernism embraced meaning, eclecticism and often contradictory complexities. Being anti-authoritarian in principle, Postmodernism does not subscribe to a single style and collapsed the distinction between art and everyday life. Contemporary art as a broad term, however, covers spectrum of work that is inclusive of Modern, Late Modern and Postmodern sensibilities. It has become difficult to and also unnecessary to apply such distinctions. Arthur Danto argues explicitly in *After the End of Art* that "contemporaneity was the broader term, and that postmodern objects represent a subsector of the contemporary movement which replaced modernity and modernism".

Art theorists do not all agree that all art after Modernism is Postmodern or that Modernism is over. Labelling our time as 'Postmodern' has become suspect in terms of the breakdown of boundaries between what can be perceived as 'Modern' or Postmodern'. Artists have been moving in and out the styles of the last 150 years and have been doing their own thing, not adhering to anything else. Body and self consciousness has become prominent in contemporary culture and art. enforced by social media and digital culture. and categories such as gender, race or context have become useful tools in understanding

gender and any, emerged by social media and digital culture, and categories such as gender, race or colour have become useful tools in understanding things, or hermeneutical analysis. Yet, considering the kind of body consciousness that was produced by dada artists or during early twentieth-century Expressionism, is it really that different? Contemporary architects continue to be inspired by the Modernists and their sleek designs, collapse of interior and exterior spaces and sense of 'truth to materials'. We can go on.

New Modernism

However, the term 'New Modernism' has also become widely used. In art, design and architecture it indicates a blending of seemingly disparate styles – described above as 'contemporary' – and which is often understood to be stark, hard-edged, eclectic and even industrial. However, more rigorously, it

indicates a revisionist approach to the sweeping Western-European basis that has been accorded to Modernism. 'New Modernism' represents a more nuanced and diverse understanding of Modernism, disavowing a single or narrow delineation thereof. One such view deconstructs Western Modernism into African art as the basis thereof. This is grounded in the fact that in 1878 in Paris there was an exhibition – entitled the Exposition Universelle – of Oceanic and African art at the Trocadero Palais in its Museum of Ethnology (during the Paris World Fair of 1878). It had a major influence on the cosmopolitan group of artists in Paris that formed the art centre of the world at the time. The stylisation and flatness in the African works influenced many artists such as Picasso to adopt a 'Modernist' style. African Modernism entails a nuance of this view whereby for instance the dating and context of the modernist sensibility is different to that of Western Modernism. Another one is the decoloniality viewpoint, whereby it is understood that that colonial enterprise affected the constitution and extent of the Modernist impulse differently in the world.

Considering this exhibition entitled *New Modernism*, the four selected artists present nuances of New Modernism in different guises. They depict experiences of the Self in current context whilst simultaneously appropriating past sensibilities. Palesa Motsomi's work is engaged with a search for roots and ancestry, and with what it means to be modern in an African context. She says: "My work is a search of myself as an African. I am a daughter of two tribes, within my parents runs the blood of more tribes. Does this make me a daughter of many tribes? Previously, the now modern world - then called western - didn't have a place for Africans for many generations, divisions were created within the one people."

Janine Allen's eclectic New Modernist works reflect a sensibility of free choice of media and form of expression ranging from evocative painting to photography, digital production and Performance; also coupled with a strong environmental awareness. She states: "In the Anthropocene Age (the age where humans have made a destructive impact on ecosystems) and even more so comprehended in the times of Covid-19, humans may attempt to reconnect with nature from which we have become so far removed from. However, our attempts to becoming organic or entering the wild are always overshadowed by the distance between humans and nature in the Anthropocenic Age".

In Liberty Battson's work direct reference is done to Modernists such as Salvador Dalí, Robert Morris and Niki de Saint Phalle. *Ambiguity in chance and light* is an appropriation of a Performance by De Saint Phalle who created several shooting works such as *Shooting Painting American Embassy during "Homage to David Tudor"*, a Performance programme she staged with Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jean Tinguely in 1961. *Shooting Picture* was done by shooting with a gun at bags of paint that were placed on the canvas. Her other works evoke Modernist two-dimensionality and use of primary colours sans art-for-art's sake-ness.

Senzeni Marasela creates doppelgängers to tell her mother Theodorah's story of displacement through the figures of Sarah Baartman, Theodorah and herself. Her series of artworks since 2003 are concerned with Theodorah's journey to Johannesburg in search of her husband Gebane who left to find work, and her return to her home in the Eastern Cape as a perceived 'safe place'. Marasela role-plays her mother and positions herself in the urban context,

and in some works she combines them with the colonial figure of Sarah Baartman. Entrenched in the notion of an ideal society as posited during apartheid South Africa, the Theodorah works presents a polarity of place: for Marasela, the city is a modern healing space of reconciliation, but she also portrays the rural home as a place of sanctity. Each of these two 'places' are connected to utopian dreams for South Africa as a country, spanning and conflating the periods of colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid. — Elfriede Dreyer



BUSINESS HOURS: Online gallery 24/7; special open hours as advertised; and by appointment

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