

# PRIME

ART'S NEXT  
GENERATION

PHAIDON

### What is PRIME ?

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PRIME showcases more than 100 of the most distinctive and innovative young artists from around the world working today. Born between 1980 and 1995, their age range roughly aligns with the millennial generation, a designation once used principally as a marketing demographic but which has now come to encapsulate a cultural sensibility shared by those who grew up in tandem with the internet and came of age in the nascent years of social media. In taking this slice of the contemporary art world, readers are invited to explore the similarities and differences in the work of international artists whose most immediate connection is the historical moment they jointly occupy. ▲ The selection for PRIME was made by inviting figures from many of the world's leading art institutions to nominate the artists who, in their opinion, are making the most exciting work today. The only requirement was that artists be born no earlier than 1980—age forty or younger at the time of nomination. The nominators and writers themselves also fit within the same age parameter, their own creative careers developing in parallel with the practitioners they champion. Almost 700 different names were proposed, from which a shortlist was devised, of artists working with a multitude of materials and hailing from around the globe. The final list offers a snapshot of today's art world as envisaged by the critics, curators, art advisors, and academics who are ardently shaping its contours. ▲ PRIME is Phaidon's first cross-media survey of contemporary artists in more than a decade and is the first to introduce a specific age requirement for its participants. The *Cream* series, published by Phaidon between 1998 and 2010, can be seen as this book's predecessor. For the titles in that series, Phaidon hand-picked ten curators to each choose ten artists who exemplified what was happening in contemporary art at that moment. Age was not an explicit determining factor; instead, the curators and artists were characterized as "emerging." Early in the development of PRIME, a decision was made to avoid this term, as in recent years "emerging" has become increasingly, and erroneously, associated with age, when in fact it more accurately describes an artist's degree of exposure or visibility—measures in which age is not always irrelevant but is by no means determinative. PRIME can also be seen in relation to Phaidon's *Vitamin* series, ongoing since 2002, which showcases the most innovative artists working in specific mediums, with no age limitation. Establishing age as the sole requirement for consideration in PRIME has allowed for the inclusion of artists whose diverse practices defy easy categorization by material or technique, or who work in a medium not yet surveyed in the *Vitamin* series. ▲ This book's title lends itself to several readings. The artists here may be said to be in the prime of their lives; they might represent the prime suspects for such a survey; perhaps they are priming viewers for the future. But more than anything, PRIME is an introduction to the artists who will continue to grace the biennials, triennials, and other major exhibitions of the coming years. It presents the art world as it exists today, guided by those who are leading its future: it is, in other words, a primer.

▲ SIMON HUNEGS AND REBECCA MORRILL

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# MAWANDE KA ZENZILE

b. 1986, Lady Frere, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

Mawande Ka Zenzile locates his practice between the disciplines of painting, sculpture, performance, and installation. Often, the setting against which his work is exhibited, such as the color of the walls or the texture of the ground, is critical in communicating meaning. Through a minimalist language, he explores and deconstructs methods of knowing, from history and politics to philosophy and economics, and his work offers a space for reflection, where narratives merge to challenge the workings of power in society. Within his paintings, oil paint and gesso are often mixed with earth and cow dung—traditionally smeared onto the floors of houses in his home region of Eastern Cape, South Africa—to create rich and complex shades of color that at times complement each other and at other times repel. In *The Problem We Didn't Create*, a book of his work published by South Africa's Stevenson gallery in 2015, the artist wrote, "Sometimes I contrast the cow dung mixtures with oil paint colours and consciously allow an aesthetic dichotomy to unfold." Ka Zenzile's practice is grounded in tactility—materials and objects such as wood, drums, stones, and mud bricks function as a physical and conceptual framework to draw attention to his Xhosa heritage. ▲ Ka Zenzile's 2017 exhibition *Archetypocalypse* at Stevenson marked a shift toward nonrepresentational imagery, moving away from the figures that characterized earlier works such as *Double Date* (2014) or *Trap I* (2015). He began focusing on the use of line (*Wei-wu-wei [Wave]*, 2018), shape (*Institutionalized Guilt*, 2018), and color (*Ingethe*, 2020), combining them with a significant use of text, as demonstrated in the oil painting *Goals* (2017). *Goals* reads like a stream of consciousness or a tongue-in-cheek countermanifesto, calling on the viewer to "prevent the rise of a 'messiah' who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement." In *Ascended Masters* (2020), twenty names are written on panels with a dark background. The work pays homage to historical figures considered to have contributed important knowledge to the world. Ka Zenzile's ode recognizes "ascended masters" from different cultures, geographies, and timescapes, thereby resisting any constructed hierarchies between them—the Hindu deity Krishna, for example, sits alongside Christian religious leader Isaiah Shembe and Tibetan disciple Djwhal Khul. ▲ By employing a wide range of cultural references, Ka Zenzile resists dominant schemes of classifications and ideologies. He simultaneously draws on academic thinkers—such as Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop, and Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek—and popular culture in the form of film and television. By interweaving iconography from literature, Western art history, and his personal experiences, he unsettles the ways in which knowledge is produced and shared. ▲ NKGOPOLENG MOLOI

\* 1  
*Ascended Masters*, 2020, cow dung, oil paint, and gesso on canvas, 20 panels: each 15 ¾ x 15 ¾ in. (40 x 40 cm)

\* 2  
*Ingethe*, 2020, cow dung, oil paint, and gesso on canvas, 39 ¾ x 78 ¾ in. (100 x 200 cm)

\* 3  
*The Enigma*, 2016–17, cow dung and oil on canvas, 59 ¾ x 29 ¾ in. (151.5 x 74.5 cm)

\* 4  
*Intellectual Convictions*, 2018, cow dung, gesso, and oil on canvas, 35 ¾ x 70 ½ in. (90 x 179 cm)

\* 5  
*Erratum*, 2017, cow dung and oil on canvas, 14 ½ x 23 ¾ in. (36 x 60 cm)

\* 6  
*Wei-wu-wei (Wave)*, 2018, cow dung and oil on canvas, 19 ¼ x 46 ¾ in. (49 x 118.5 cm)

\* 7  
*Institutionalized Guilt*, 2018, cow dung, gesso, and oil on canvas, 36 ¾ x 36 ¾ in. (93.5 x 93 cm)

\* 8  
*Goals*, 2017, oil on canvas, 74 ¾ x 53 ½ in. (190 x 135 cm)

Krishna	Isiah Shenbe	Ganesha	Hilarion	Jesus	El Morya	Babaji	Buddha	Engenas Lekganyane	Zoroaster
Yuktswar	Djwhal Khul	Christinah Nku	Sanat Kumara	Afra	Aranda Mayi	Hermes Trimegistus	Enoch Ingijima	Confucius	Yozaranda

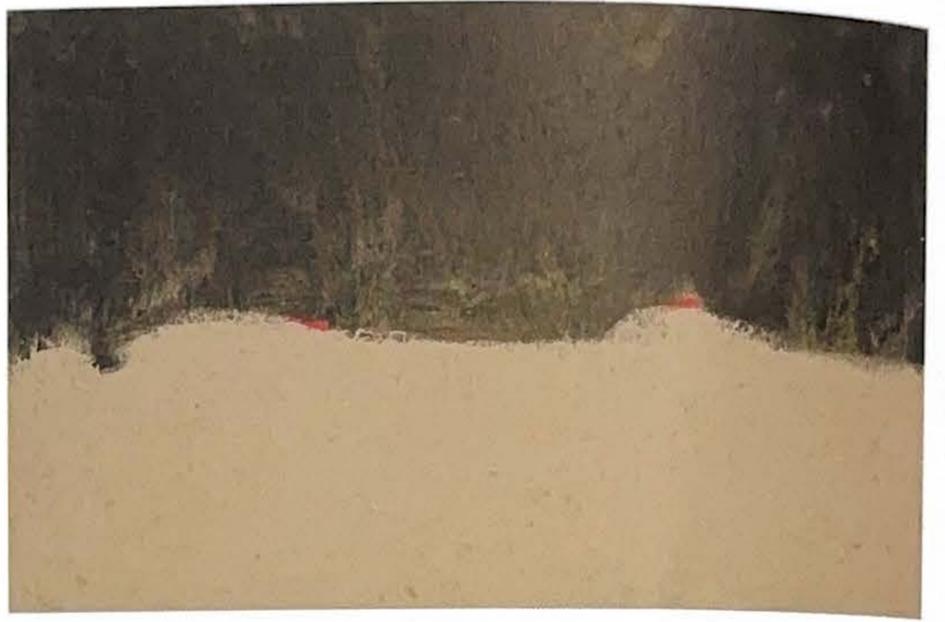
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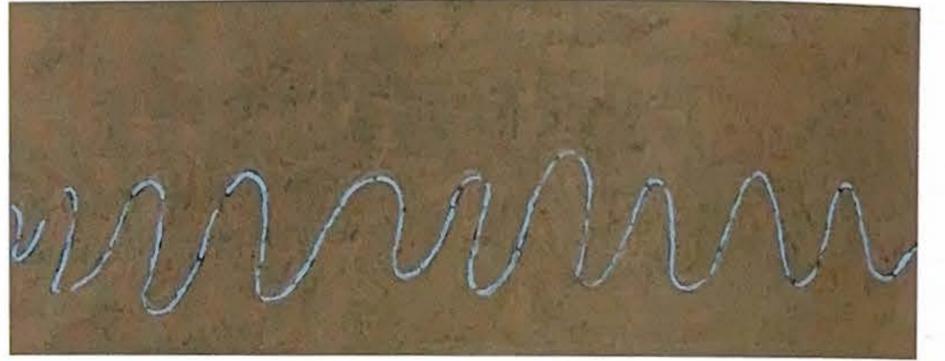
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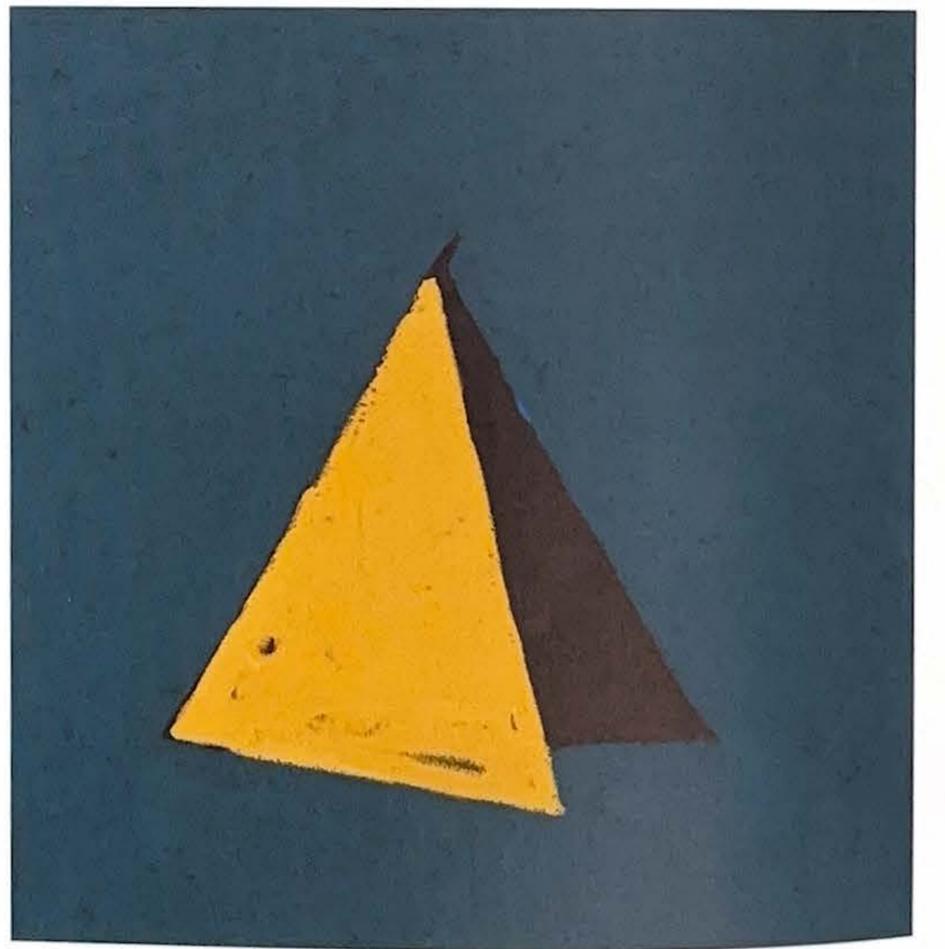
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\*4

## GOALS

1. Prevent the coalition of militant black nationalist groups. In unity there is strength; a truism that is no less valid for all its triteness. An effective coalition of black nationalist groups might be the first step toward a real "Mau Mau" [black revolutionary army] in America, the beginning of a true black revolution.
2. Prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement. Malcolm X might have been such a "messiah," he is the martyr of the movement today. Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael and Elijah Muhammed all aspire to this position. Elijah Muhammed is less of a threat because of his age. King could be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed "obedience" to "white, liberal doctrines" (nonviolence) and embrace black nationalism. Carmichael has the necessary charisma to be a real threat in this way.
3. Prevent violence on the part of black nationalist groups. This is of primary importance, and is, of course, a goal of our investigative activity; it should also be a goal of the counterintelligence program to pinpoint potential troublemakers and neutralize them before they exercise their potential for violence.
4. Prevent militant black nationalist groups <sup>and</sup> leaders from gaining respectability, by discrediting them to three separate segments of the community. The goal of discrediting black nationalists must be handled tactically in three ways. You must discredit these groups and individuals to, first, the responsible Negro community. Second, they must be discredited to the white community, both the responsible community and to "liberals" who have vestiges of sympathy for militant black nationalist (sic) simply because they are Negroes. Third, these groups must be discredited in the eyes of Negro radicals, the follower of the movement. This last area requires entirely different tactics from the first two. Publicity violent tendencies and radical statements merely enhances black nationalists to the last group; it adds "respectability" in a different way.
5. A final goal should be to prevent the long-range growth of militant black organizations, especially among youth. Specific tactics to prevent these groups from converting young people must be developed.

**TARGETS:** Primary targets of the Counterintelligence Program, Black Nationalist-Hate Groups, should be the most violent and radical groups and their leaders. We should emphasize those leaders and organizations that are nationwide in scope and are capable of disrupting this country.