



16 September - 28 October 2023

NEO MATLOGA FIGURES

STEVENSON

STEVENSON is pleased to present *Figures*, a solo exhibition of new works by Neo Matloga.

In this series of intimately scaled paintings, created in his Amsterdam studio, Matloga delves deeper into his connection with the fictional figures he portrays. The artist describes this current dominance of painterly gestures over collage elements as the yielding to 'a steadily intensifying urge'. He writes:

I have developed a growing curiosity towards the characters I have assembled in my collages over the years. In my pursuit of comprehending their essence, I have found that at this moment painting is the most effective means for me. Recently, my focus has been on exploring the formal elements of my practice, causing me to move away from creating socially confirmed situations and instead tap deeper into the act of painting and its significance. I have drawn inspiration from both formal instruction - including techniques such as alla prima, chiaroscuro, perspective and trompe l'oeil - and informal learning, such as memories of watching my mother paint the floor and walls in the household, especially how she intuitively moved her hands.





Paulina, 2023
Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas
100 x 140cm





Tebello, 2023
Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas
100 x 140cm

Departing from his previous mode, where theatrical compositions heightened by dramatic tension were at the fore, Matloga now positions himself as if he were painting live sitters. He actively speculates on the possible interplay of gazes and the physical demands of stillness:

Although I rely on reference materials, I let my imagination guide me during the painting process, sometimes not even recognising the subject on the canvas. The mystery of who I am painting adds to the surprise, leaving me to wonder whether they are individuals I may have encountered in a past life.

Collage, charcoal and ink are my chosen mediums, but at this point I've also turned to water to give me a chance to think differently about surface and additional time to make my gestures. It's ink's nature to dry quickly, it almost leaves me no choice but to act decisively. This new addition acts as a 'time expander' and adds to the tonality of the composition. The prevailing mood in the studio was of productive estrangement - everything that made sense suddenly had become unusual and was coupled with the unknown.





Rosa, 2023
Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas
100 x 140cm







Tsietsi, 2023

Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas

100 x 140cm

Matloga continues:

As I worked, I began communicating with myself, searching for a connection with the figure and coming to the realisation that no matter who is depicted on the canvas, we are all connected in some way. I imagined the process of painting a live model, envisioning their gradual discomfort as they remained in the same position for extended periods of time. As I painted to capture the nuances of their physical and emotional discomfort, my aim was to evoke a sense of raw unease in the viewer - the kind of discomfort that these subjects were experiencing in real time.

The contemplative portraits in *Figures* lend prescience to Azu Nwagbogu's commentary on Matloga's work, penned at the time of Matloga's solo exhibition *along came your eyes* at the Hermitage Amsterdam in 2022:

As the artist in Matloga matures, so do his subjects and their embodiment as characters. He takes them out into the contested territory of public space - a perilous journey for Black bodies. But these richly complex characters are free, and they own their space.



Dililah, 2023
Charcoal and ink on canvas
60 x 90cm



Moshoeshoe, 2023
Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas
100 x 140cm







Phillipi, 2023
Charcoal and ink on canvas
70 x 100cm



Betuele, 2023
Collage, charcoal and ink on canvas
100 x 140cm



Neo Matloga was born in 1993 in Mamaila, Limpopo, South Africa, and is currently based between Mamaila and Amsterdam. He studied Visual Art at the University of Johannesburg, and completed a residency at De Ateliers with a focus on painting. Matloga won the 2021 ABN AMRO Art award and the 2018 Koninklijke Prijs voor Vrije Schilderkunst.

Solo exhibitions include *along came your eyes*, Hermitage Amsterdam (2022); *my hero is always next to me*, Stroom Den Haag, the Hague (2021); *We just want to be closer*, Marta Herford Museum for Art, Germany (2021); *Neo Matloga*, S.M.A.K, Ghent (2021); *neo to love*, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden (2019) and *Good Morning Midnight*, De Ateliers, Amsterdam (2018). *Back of the Moon*, his first solo exhibition with the gallery, premiered online and took place at Stevenson Johannesburg (2020); his second, *Déjà Vu*, took place in Cape Town (2022).

Group exhibitions include *Brave New World: 16 painters for the 21st Century*, Museum Fundatie, Zwolle (2023); *When We See Us*, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art, Cape Town (2022); *We just want to be closer*, Marta Herford Museum for Art and Galerie der Stadt Backnang, Germany (2021); *HI-STORYTELLING*, Sfeir-Semler, Hamburg (2021); *ofte vojagantoj*, Wilford X, Belgium (2019); *Still Here Tomorrow To High Five You Yesterday*, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2019); *De Volkskrant Beeldende Kunst Prijs*, Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam (2019); *BIG AND PLENTY*, Foundation AVL Mundo, Rotterdam (2019); *Koninklijke Prijs voor Vrije Schilderkunst*, Koninklijk Paleis, Amsterdam (2018); *Tell Freedom, 15 South African artists*, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort (2018); *LET'S SEE, WHERE WERE WE, IN THE PIT OF DESPAIR*, De Ateliers, Amsterdam (2017) and *Post Its*, South African Constitutional Court, Johannesburg (2016).

He has taken up residencies at Foundation AVL Mundo, Rotterdam (2019); Thami Mnye Foundation, Amsterdam (2018); Zeitz MOCAA, Segera, Laikipia, Kenya (2018) and The Bag Factory, Johannesburg (2015).

Matloga was nominated for De Volkskrant Beeldende Kunstprijs in 2019, and was among the artists shortlisted for the 2015 Taxi Art Award.

www.stevenson.info
info@stevenson.info

@stevenson_za

STEVENSON

Buchanan Building
160 Sir Lowry Road
7925 Cape Town
+27 21 462 1500

46 7th Avenue
Parktown North
2193 Johannesburg
+27 11 403 1055

Prinsengracht 371B
1016HK Amsterdam
+31 (0)62 532 1380