

# BODE

## So Close, Yet So Far

Tiffany Alfonseca, Rafael Baron, Muofhe Manavhela, Shaina McCoy, Tonia Nneji,  
Deborah Segun, Demetrius Wilson

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Proximity refers to the concept of closeness. It is not just a physical closeness, but a metaphorical nearness. It expands and contracts through space, time, and place. Closeness refers to the relationship we have with each other in presence or feeling. In painting, it is a poetic tool that serves to push and pull the spectator. However, it exists just as strongly within the artist's studio where a work first arises. It's from the artist's studio to the moment the work is experienced by others, that closeness comes full circle.

In painting, closeness occurs through different planes. It is present in the art space in which it is meant to be experienced as the spectator plays with proximity. The spectator interacts with an artwork, stepping close to further inspect and retracting to contemplate. In the studio, it arises in the artist's painterly expression of self. Whether the work is figurative or abstract, heavily gestural or minimalist, painting is the transfer of experience from the self to the body and onto canvas. It is a process of closeness that allows paint to be the language; while how it is applied, becomes the dialect. Delicate and intricate at times, while full and texturized in others. These historical and time-based produced dialects of the language of painting push and pull us to observe and interpret its form and concept, to decipher meaning. Much like our lips and hands interpret our thoughts and needs through various sounds and shapes with distinct pitches and dimensions, the artist's closeness to paint is the language that interprets our diverse forms of being through form and concept.

In *So Close, Yet So Far*, the works presented offer the opportunity to approach the expressed selves of seven contemporary artists. It is in the works that we must discover and decipher the dialects they present. Each work, unique in its expression of this language, offers a physical and internal exploration of self. Tiffany Alfonseca, Rafael Baron, Muofhe Manavhela, Shaina McCoy, Tonia Nneji, Deborah Segun, and Demetrius Wilson allow us to get close to who they are, not just by what is represented in their work but by their own expression of style and form. From the most detailed figures to the most abstracted shapes, the works presented are to be experienced in closeness, but also from our ability to imagine their creation from the distant studio from which they arose.

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**Tiffany Alfonseca** (b. 1994, Bronx, USA ) is a Dominican American mixed media artist. Alfonseca taps into her Afro-Dominican roots and leverages it as a conceptual cantilever that provides a dynamic framework for her artistic practice. Moreover, her work aims to visually articulate that the Black and Afro-Latinx diaspora does not exist within a monolith, but that these communities are a cultural cornucopia that is vast, varied, and complex. In her work, Alfonseca looks to express beauty, diversity, and multilingualism which she sees as exemplifiers of a strength within the Black and Afro-Latinx diaspora. She lives and works in the Bronx, New York City.

**Rafael Baron** (b. 1986, Nova Iguaçu, Brazil) is a Brazilian artist whose brightly colored portraits of diverse individuals look to propose an open dialogue on tolerance and diversity. Baron sees art as a powerful communication tool that can contribute to a harmonious social experience. His work starts from the examination of the human figure, through which he discloses the subjectivities of the personality of each individual, looking for unique attributes in the process of creating his characters. In his research, he addresses issues related to social prejudice, racism, LGBT phobia, misogyny, among others. Rafael Baron lives and works in Nova Iguaçu, Brazil.

**Muofhe Manavhela** (b. 2000, Limpopo, South Africa) is a multi-disciplinary artist who, through a variety of mediums like painting, printmaking, and embroidery, looks to communicate themes of sexuality, youth, freedom, pleasure, and the domesticity of women. Her vibrant work communicates the personal experience of a young black woman navigating the modern South African landscape. Influenced by artists like Lady Skollie and Andy Warhol, as well as taking from her experience in the 21st century, Manavhela explores a more nuanced perspective of the daily experiences of black womanhood. Muofhe Manavhela lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Shaina McCoy** (b. 1993, Minneapolis, USA) is a contemporary painter who works mainly with the figure. Using photographs of her family, her work builds up with thick, expressive brushstrokes. While her source material is deeply personal, McCoy renders her subjects without faces, inviting her viewers to project themselves and their own relatives into her scenes. Her faceless figures retain a sense of intimacy and nostalgia through the details that allow to contextualize time and place. Shaina McCoy lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Tonia Nneji** (b. 1992, Lagos, Nigeria) is a contemporary artist who draws from her experience in dealing with personal health issues. Nneji confronts a culture of suppression and silence on women's physical and mental health, body autonomy and sexual harassment in a bid to create safe spaces where conversations could be held freely. Her work also investigates the nature of commemorative fabrics and the ways they represent and transcend notions of place and belonging. This preoccupation with body forms and textile material navigates cultural and social meanings of fabric in contemporary African societies while also exploring the protective qualities of clothing. Tonia Nneji lives and works in Lagos, Nigeria.

**Deborah Segun** (b. 1994, Lagos, Nigeria) is a contemporary painter who through their practice, adopts a deconstructed, reductive, and almost Cubist approach to her work. In her paintings, she incorporates fragmented and exaggerated shapes, faces, and forms that delineate the female figure in contemplation or repose. Segun's exaggerated feminine silhouette is as much a commentary on the representation of women in an art historical context as of the the omission of black women therein. Segun describes her practice as a way of challenging reality. Deborah Segun lives and work in Lagos, Nigeria.

**Demetrius Wilson** (b. 1996, Boston, USA) is a painter who's works are informed by a plethora of experiences diversified in visual realms of personal and social realities, past and contemporary. He endures and grapples with the reconstruction of time, space, and memory, involving a level of personal resonance. This allows him to be in conversation with history while being present and responsive to the complex realities such as racial events and the violence attached to them. Through his work, Wilson tasks himself with the objective of looking at the world outside of himself, challenging the complexities that mold the realities we live in. Demetrius Wilson lives and works in New York City.