

NOW, THEY WERE ALL EXPOSED

Cinthia Sifa Mulanga

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Bode is pleased to announce ‚Now, they were all exposed‘, Johannesburg based **Cinthia Sifa Mulanga**’s second solo exhibition in our Berlin gallery rooms. In her latest work, Cinthia Sifa Mulanga again explores the complexity of Black women’s identity. Female figures appearing and reappearing on her canvases express individuality, transformation and a constant negotiation between the figure of average size and a giant.

The women shift, stretch, and expand in size and in expression, yet often appear cramped or constrained by their surroundings, pushing against the limits of space and self. This tension reflects the lived experience of Black women. The giant’s outgrowth and constant transformation contrasts the averagely sized figures, who seem more content with where they are and how they fit the space they’re occupying. Spaces that impose external expectations, limitations and strange ideals onto the giant, continuously impeding her navigation.

Where previous works explored notions of beauty and self-expression in controlled, intimate settings, Cinthia Sifa Mulanga’s latest series moves outwards into public spaces. Restaurants, Cafés, or Bars. Sites of visibility, where presence and perception unfold in everyday interactions. Spaces, that reflect transformation, community, and negotiation of the self-image. By allowing her figures to appear and reappear in these settings, Mulanga examines their interaction, and the tension between freedom of movement against the pressure of being observed, judged, or celebrated.

Not only Mulanga’s pictorial themes and the way she sensitively tells us stories of womanhood, but also her use of media is notably complex. Acrylic paint and oil pastels build the base, while painted paper cutouts or pop-culturally sourced influences are collaged onto the canvas. While these compositions are carefully arranged and deliberately layered, her use of color is more intuitive. Darkened warm tones lend a serene depth to the paintings. By blurring and overlapping figures, even morphing them into another at times, Mulanga’s highlights a multi-layered movement through space. Shifting the lens beyond private interiors, this body of work examines how Black women carry beauty, self-expression, and identity into public spaces. She shines a light on confidence and self-awareness, asserting Black women’s presence in environments shaped by both personal agency and external forces.

The recurring visual motif of the giant figure, sometimes powerful, sometimes restricted, reflects this constant negotiation between space, self-perception, and social structures.

Cinthia Sifa Mulanga (b. 1997 in Lubumbashi, CD) is an independent contemporary artist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo but whose practice is deeply rooted in her experiences growing up in South Africa. After her studies, Mulanga became preoccupied with painting and collage, mediums that have come to define her practice. They serve a dual interest in engaging with the history of western art and popular culture thus delving into African art. The focus of Mulanga’s practice is on the representation of Black women. Through their depiction, she looks to engage with different personas, emotions, or states of mind.

She trained as an artist at the Artist Proof Studio in Johannesburg and has participated in a variety of exhibitions which include her solo exhibitions at Bode, Berlin, DE; Latitudes Centre for the Arts, Johannesburg, ZA; Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, ZA, among others. The artist has taken part in group exhibitions at Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, NL; Bill Brady Gallery, Miami, FL, US; Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, ZA; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, ZA; African Artist Foundation, Lagos, NG; The House of Fine Arts, London, UK; Agora Gallery, New York, NY, US, among others. Mulanga has been recognized for her work by Artsy Vanguard (2023), the Normal Sovereign African Art Prize (2023); The British Fashion Council’s New Wave Creatives and collaborated with Fashion House Gucci, to reimagine the iconic Diana Tote Bag (2022).

Cinthia Sifa Mulanga lives and works in Johannesburg, ZA.