

MATERIAL TALES: GESTURES OF ABSTRACTION

TAQWA ALI, KIM BARTELT, TONIA CALDERON, ELKE FOLTZ,
NAOMI LISIKI, SENZENI MARASELA, GEORGINA MAXIM

5 December 2025 - 24 January 2026

Bode is pleased to announce the opening of the extensive and all female group show *Material Tales: Gestures of Abstraction*. Told by letting material, form, and gesture speak, the exhibition with works by Taqwa Ali, Kim Bartelt, Tonia Calderon, Elke Foltz, Naomi Lisiki, Senzeni Marasela, and Georgina Maxim gathers tales of abstraction.

Each of the artists approaching the discipline of abstraction in her very own narration, *Material Tales: Gestures of Abstraction* highlights the multimediality and interdisciplinarity within the artistic field. The exhibition's tale moves along Kim Bartelt's serene symmetry of geometrical forms layered on the canvas as paper cut outs, onto Elke Foltz's organic gestures which she accents and expands by collaging bits and pieces of sketches, studies, or drawings upon the surface. While Foltz integrates the exposed canvas as part of the work's visible essence, Taqwa Ali, Tonia Calderon, and Naomi Lisiki fill the space with color and scenic abstract movement. Shifting beyond the flat picture plane into another materiality of sculptural quality, Senzeni Marasela's and Georgina Maxim's works made from fabrics and wool play with the material's ascriptions and heritage while at the same time blurring boundaries between object, sculpture, and installation.

Throughout the exhibition, materials become storytellers, and abstraction turns into a tactile archive of gestures and memories. While at the same time, in dialogue, the works reveal abstraction as a living language of materials, gestures, and stories intertwined.

Taqwa Ali (*1997 in Sudan) is an interdisciplinary artist currently based in the Netherlands. Her work involves painting, sculpture, and performative interventions, frequently exploring themes of translocation, integration, memory, and reconnection through the symbolism of various materials. Ali's artistic practice is defined by her interest in organic materials and their ability to evoke sensory and cultural memory, especially in the context of diasporic experiences. She employs materials like soil, clay, Arabic gum, and dust to merge personal, political, and collective narratives. Her work investigates how displaced bodies and objects reverberate in new spaces, aiming to stitch gaps caused by migration and resettlement. Taqwa Ali graduated from Maastricht Institute of Arts, specializing in interdisciplinary arts where she earned the Henriette Hustinx Prize for best graduating artwork in 2023. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts, Cognition and Criticism at the University of Groningen, deepening her research into materiality and diaspora.

Kim Bartelt is a refined contemporary artist whose practice elegantly bridges painting and sculpture through the innovative layering of paper sheets of varying thickness onto canvas. This unique technique evokes a meditative exploration of ephemerality and poetic contradictions, where the seemingly simple forms and restrained color palette invite viewers to engage with both the visible and the intangible aspects of human experience. Her artwork is characterized by a consciously limited visual vocabulary, mostly composed of squares and rectangles, which harness complex emotional states within controlled, harmonious compositions. Bartelt holds a BFA in Fine Arts from Parsons The New School of Design in New York and has further honed her expertise through studies in Paris at Parsons and Icart, focusing on Art History and Art Management.

Tonia Calderon (*1987 in San Jose, California) is a Los Angeles-based visual artist, whose work intricately explores the poetry inherent in everyday life. Reflecting her Mexican, Dutch, Indonesian, and Chinese heritage, Calderon creates large-scale abstract paintings that investigate life's complexities through natural materials such as flower pigments intertwined with chemical elements. Working with a diverse palette of materials—ranging from acrylics and floral pigments to fuel, glass, ink, sand, and resin—Calderon creates richly textured abstractions that balance impulsive gestures with intentional restraint.

Elke Foltz (*1990 in Lagny-sur-Marne, FR) is a Berlin-based artist known for her dynamic exploration of form, color, and spatial relationships through painting and mixed media. Her vibrant compositions merge abstract expression with geometric precision, creating immersive works that invite viewers into vivid visual narratives. Foltz's practice is characterized by a deep engagement with materiality and process, reflecting her interest in the interplay between structure and spontaneity. She holds a Bachelor degree in Applied Arts and Graphic Design at the University Jean Jaurès, Toulouse in France, where she developed her distinct approach to abstraction and conceptual layering, which continues to inform her evolving artistic vision.

Naomi Lisiki (*1997 in Guadeloupe, French Caribbean) is a Brooklyn-based visual artist. Her practice explores the sensation of living through abstract painting, aiming to encapsulate experiences of womanhood, spirituality, and collective memory. Inspired by natural systems and ancestral history, Lisiki channels emotions into delicate, abstract works that act as visual memories, evoking landscapes, bodies, and landscape-like shapes. Her work is characterized by a poetic use of color and form, resembling cyanotypes and alternative printing processes, creating a visual language rooted in sensation and collective memory. Lisiki holds an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art (2020) and a BFA in Fine Arts from The Cooper Union (2018).

Senzeni Marasela (*1977 in Thokoza, South Africa) is a cross-disciplinary artist who explores photography, video, prints, and mixed-medium installations involving textiles and embroidery. Her work deals with history, memory, and personal narrative, emphasizing historical gaps and overlooked figures. Marasela is part of a generation of post-apartheid female South African artists, who continue to re-centre bodies-of-color through the strategy of performative fictive masquerading. Marasela has obtained her BA in Fine Arts at the Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, ZA. She was part of the South African Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and most recently has received the K21 Global Art Award 2023.

Georgina Maxim (*1980, Zimbabwe) is a Harare-based artist and curator whose work bridges making, organising, and community-building. She co-founded Village Unhu, an artist-run initiative that nurtures both early-career and established artists, and draws on extensive experience in curating and arts administration. Textiles lie at the centre of Maxim's practice: she cuts, stitches, weaves, and layers used garments, transforming discarded clothing into intricate compositions. These reworked materials hold traces of the people who once wore them, becoming carriers of memory and personal histories. Rather than fitting neatly into a single category, her work occupies a space where material, narrative, and lived experience converge. She received her Diploma in Education in Creative Art and Design from University of Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe in 2002 and her MA of African Visual and Verbal Art from University Bayreuth & Iwalewaha in 2019.

We look forward to welcoming you at the opening reception of the exhibition on

05 December 2025 (6-9 pm)

at

BODE
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