

CYNTHIA-REEVES

June 23, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kristen Jussila
603 756 4160
k_jussila@cynthia-reeves.com

CYNTHIA-REEVES OPENS LANDMARK SCULPTURE INSTALLATION IN UNION SQUARE, NYC

CYNTHIA-REEVES, a gallery featuring works by artists from throughout the world, has installed a monumental sculpture by South African artist, Lionel Smit, in New York City's Union Square. Prominently featured in the Union Square Triangle, Smit's piece, *MORPHOUS*, will be on view through May 2017. This is another installation in an ongoing public art initiative overseen by the gallery, which has done eight projects to date in New York City alone.



Lionel Smit, *MORPHOUS*, Union Square, NYC

Lionel Smit's *MORPHOUS*, (2014) is an exploration of hybrid identity and its ever-changing nature within South Africa's social landscape. This particular piece evokes a question of time, of past and future, and the balance point at which his country finds itself as it embarks on the next chapter of a post-Apartheid and post-Nelson Mandela South Africa, a future South Africa. This "double-vision" is a foretelling, and an acknowledgement of what has already passed, a societal commentary without judgment. The figures are charged with an emotive and gestural energy, a hallmark of Smit's evocative work. This is the first time a South African artist will have a vanguard artwork in Union Square.



Working in tandem with municipalities, non-profit entities, curators and public parks, CYNTHIA-REEVES continues to gain recognition for coordinating public art initiatives in New York City and elsewhere. This current installation by Lionel Smit is in partnership with the NYC Parks, the Union Square Partnership, the South African Consulate, and the Art Miami group of art fairs. Other public art initiatives currently on view include a Jaehyo Lee sculpture, *LOTUS*, in the heart of Providence, RI; *RED* by Jonathan Prince at the Newport Beach Civic Center; and George Sherwood's *EVERY WATER* at the San Diego Botanic Gardens in CA.

Smit is considered one of South Africa's strongest artists, best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvases and sculptures. Each of his works offers us an entry point into the variety and richness that lies beneath every face – a task he undertakes with great sensitivity.

"My fascination with portraiture and the abstraction of color plays a dualistic role in my artistic expression and creation. The combination of the representation of human form, and the mercurial quality of emotions, translated by color, line and form, is what inspires the imaginative and abstract essence of the work." - Lionel Smit

A self-taught artist born in the shadows of the Apartheid, Smit's work centers heavily on identity, realized through the formation of disparate layering. In his paintings, his luscious, bold surfaces, upon closer inspection, expose his subject's geneology through sporadic and translucent complexions. The viewer is left to reconcile these overlapping styles and emotive gestures, symbolically referencing the new generation in his native country.

Lionel Smit's process is adaptive, inventive, and physically engaged. He paints abstract canvases and lets them sit around the studio, ideas gestating, until he is ready to project photographs of the model on them, in a mode that recalls Andy Warhol's approach to portraiture. But Smit does not work with reproductive processes..., instead relying on his hand to transcribe form, and frequently reworking images multiple times, such that color and line merge, breaking down both...His bronzes made in the traditional lost wax process, are treated as fragmented surfaces subject to polychromatic surface experimentation inside and out. – Jason Rosenfeld, Ph.D., Distinguished Chair and Professor of Art History, Marymount Manhattan College, New York



Artist Lionel Smit in New York City

Smit's paintings and small-scale sculptural works will be on view at the upcoming exhibition at the gallery's venue on the campus of MASS MoCA beginning July 30 through the end of September.

Lionel Smit was born in Pretoria, South Africa in 1982, he started exhibiting straight after art school at Pro Arte Alphen Park. He now lives and works in Cape Town. Best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvasses and sculptures, Lionel is represented locally in South Africa and internationally in London. He exhibits regularly and is considered one of SA's youngest proven artists. Over the past 10 years he has established a substantial international following with collectors ranging from the Standard Chartered Bank to Laurence Graff Art Collection at Graff Delaire wine estate. Smit's painting has been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, where it received the Viewer's Choice Award, as well as selected as the 'face' of the BP Portrait Award 2013 for all campaigns. He was recently honored with a Ministerial Award from the Department of Culture for Visual Art.

For more information on the Lionel Smit installation in Union Square or on the gallery's formal exhibition programs at their venues on the campus of MASS MoCA in North Adams, and at The Barn on 28 Main in Walpole, New Hampshire, visit the online site at CYNTHIA-REEVES.com or call 212 714 0044.

#