

CYNTHIA-REEVES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NORTH ADAMS, MA.....CYNTHIA-REEVES presents new paintings, work on paper, and sculpture by South African artist Lionel Smit at 1315 MASS MoCA Way, the gallery's venue on the MASS MoCA Museum campus. The featured work continues Smit's ongoing exploration into figural work and double imagery. His monumental sculpture, MORPHOUS, currently on view in Union Square in New York City through April of next year, is a seminal expression of this inquiry.

CYNTHIA-REEVES on the MASS MoCA campus is open 7 days a week, 11 – 5 p.m. through Labor Day; in September, the gallery is open Wednesday – Sunday, 11 – 5 p.m. The show will be on view through September 25th.

Smit's interest in the themes of duality arose organically. He writes: "I wanted to merge the idea of the abstract and the naturalistic form. I love Rorschach images, and so I started doing drawings that incorporated two faces, identical but with different attitudes. It seemed to capture the whole idea of peering into the psyche, of seeing in a different way who we are. My work is very involved with identity and, in the past few years, I predominantly started working with the faces of the Cape Malayan woman, a culture of people that evolved through Colonialism. The image of the double head also has a relationship to Janus, the Roman god of beginnings and transitions, that of looking into the future while simultaneously looking into the past."



Reverb 2, 2016, oil on Belgian linen, 59 x 67 in (150 x 170 cm)

In MORPHOUS, Smit conflates the dream of Morphous and double head of Janus into a divining of the future and, simultaneously, assessing where we have been – a Rorschach that balances the past and future with equal weight. The gaze is stoic, accepting: a portal both to what has



Echo Series 2, 2016, oil on Belgian linen, 59 x 67 in (150 x 170 cm)

occurred and what is yet to come, as captured in their quiet witness. As the artist notes, it suggests, "where have we come from as people and how are we developing as people."

The exhibition at the gallery's MASS MoCA venue showcases Smit's large-scale canvases. These are vibrant, bold works, which demonstrate his free hand in laying down paint, often in broad swaths of clear color. The drips and splatters communicate a certain dynamism and urgency – there is an intensity behind these graceful, calm faces. Smit notes: "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."

The exhibition also includes a maquette of MORPHOUS, complemented by a series of masks entitled *Origins Broken Fragment*. These incorporate his strengths as a figurative painter, transposing those skills into impactful, dimensional work. The textural surfaces and free use of color belie the artist's predilection toward paint, and his conviction in what the painted surface can communicate, regardless of media. "Smit relies on his hand to transcribe form, 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.



Origins Broken Fragment S, 2015, bronze, 21 x 12 x 12 in (54 x 30 x 31 cm)



Origins Broken Fragment V, 2015, bronze, 21 x 12 x 12 in (54 x 30 x 31 cm)

Lionel Smit was born in Pretoria, South Africa in 1982, and now lives and works in Cape Town. He began exhibiting his work straight after art school at Pro Arte Alphen Park. Best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvases and sculpture, Lionel is highly regarded artist in South Africa, now showing internationally in London, Europe and the United States. Over the past ten years, he has established a substantial international following: his work is included in the collections of the Standard Chartered Bank, the Laurence Graff Art Collection at Graff Delaire wine estate, among other corporate collections, and top private collections in Europe, Asia, South Africa, and the US. His paintings have been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London, where it received the Viewer's Choice Award; his next museum exhibition will be in Helsinki in September 2016. 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; on the current exhibition of his work at the gallery on the MASS MoCA campus in North Adams; or for information on the current exhibitions at the gallery at The Barn on 28 Main in Walpole, New Hampshire, visit the online site at CYNTHIA-REEVES.com or call 212 714 0044.

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