

PAMELA PHATSIMO SUNSTRUM

I have withheld much more than I have written

September 8 - October 22, 2022

Opening Thursday, September 8, 2022, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Artist in conversation with Tao Leigh Goffe: Saturday, September 10, 2:00pm - 3:00pm



Pamela Phatsimo
Sunstrum, *Frangipani*,
2022.

Galerie Lelong & Co., New York is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, the artist's first major solo exhibition in New York. *I have withheld much more than I have written* will feature new works: a large installation and a suite of paintings. The figures in Sunstrum's works—often her alter-egos—are situated in undefinable landscapes; an exploration of cultural embeddedness within geology that reflects overlapping issues of colonialism, capitalism, and so-called global migration crises. With references to domestic environments, rurality, and systems of control, Sunstrum's work journeys into processes of disintegration—processes that are at once intimate, violent, sensual, madding, and tender—in the pursuit of home and wholeness.

The central thesis of the exhibition recalls the first vehicle for spectacle—Daguerre's diorama of 1822—with a new installation *Mumbo Jumbo and the Committee* (2022) from which a narrative saga unfolds. Upon entering the smaller gallery, visitors are met with a diptych depicting seated men and women in Victorian dress, their appraising gazes looking into the distance past a red projector and an empty red chair. Wooden pews invite visitors to sit and face the same direction as the figures, toward a free-standing installation on the other side of the room. A wooden structure that parallels the architecture of Victorian theatre through the proscenium arch frames a video work containing a living room setting; replete with the chairs and settees of Sunstrum's paintings and the volcanic landscape from Daguerre's diorama. Figures appear in the space, their gaze meeting those of the committee.

This atmosphere of surveilling tension seeps into the rest of the exhibition where new paintings are on view, rendered in oil and pencil on linen. As with much of Sunstrum's oeuvre, the works emerge from a constellation of literary references including Dionne Brand's *The Blue Clerk* (2018) (a quote from which gives the title of the show), and most notably, the writings of Bessie Head (b.1937-d.1986). In particular, Sunstrum references Head's *A Question of Power* (1973), a semi-autobiographical work set "amidst the compartmentalization, fragmentation, and preoccupation with taxonomy that characterize and undermine life in Southern Africa." Exuding a fluidity in her visual poems, Sunstrum layers references and metaphors within each work; a plastic chair ubiquitous in the Global South misses a leg, black and white checkerboard flooring do not offer a sense of place.

The figures of Sunstrum's work stand as a collective; they are often representations of herself through the alter-ego Asme ("as me") or based on historic photographs of Black ancestors. "Identity, power, selfhood and the political power that comes along with those ideas can never be reduced to a single standing being. My single body is a representative of masses of bodies, whether as community or as ancestry or as collective history or collective memory, of solidarity," the artist has said.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London.

About the Artist

The imagery in Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's work reflects the diverse genealogies of her experience living in different parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the U.S. as well as ongoing research of ethnography, ecology, and quantum physics. The artist's boundary-crossing practice centers Black female identity in the discourse of postcolonialism and neocolonialism, highlighting the contributions of overlooked historical figures while emphasizing modes of knowledge and communication beyond the status quo.

In 2023, the artist will show a newly commissioned solo project at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto and participate in the 15th Sharjah Art Biennale (SB15).

Key exhibitions and performances include: *Greater Toronto Art 2021 (GTA21)*, MOCA Toronto, Canada (2021); *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures*, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York City (2021); *WITNESS: Afro Perspectives from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection*, El Espacio 23, Miami, Florida (2021); *Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum: All my seven faces*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2019); Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa (2019); The Wiels, Brussels, Belgium (2019); Kunsthaus Zürich (2019); The Nest, The Hague (2019); Michaelis School for the Arts at the University of Cape Town (2018); Artpace, San Antonio, Texas (2018); The Phillips Museum of Arts, Lancaster (2018); Interlochen Centre for the Arts, Interlochen (2016); NMMU Bird Street Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth (2016); Tiwani Contemporary, London (2016); VANSa, Johannesburg (2015); Brundyn Gallery, Cape Town (2014); FRAC Pays de Loire, France (2013); the Havana Biennial (2012); and MoCADA, New York City (2011).

Sunstrum was born in Mochudi, Botswana, in 1980 and now lives and works in Ottawa, Canada. The artist is represented by Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and London and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

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HIGHLIGHTS



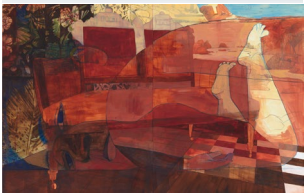
Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum
Frangipani, 2022
Oil and pencil on linen
78 3/4 x 66 7/8 in (200 x 170 cm)



Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum
Balebetse (the sky the stars), 2022
Oil and pencil on canvas
61 3/8 x 61 3/8 in (156 x 156 cm)



Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum
Front Room, 2022
Oil and pencil on linen
78 3/4 x 86 5/8 in (200 x 220 cm)



Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum
Sinner Get Ready, 2022
Oil and pencil on wood panel
40 1/8 x 63 3/4 in (102 x 162 cm)