

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Past Present

Juan Araujo | Stephan Balkenhol |
Lisa Brice | Tom Friedman | Wayne
Gonzales, Ged Quinn | Deborah
Roberts | Yinka Shonibare CBE RA

Online: 26 March – 9 April 2021
Preview: 25 March



'Past Present' opens online to the public on 26 March at Stephen Friedman Gallery. The presentation brings together paintings, sculptures and editions by contemporary artists inspired by notable historical works by Picasso, Matisse and Moore amongst others. 'Past Present' highlights one work each by **Juan Araujo, Stephan Balkenhol, Lisa Brice, Tom Friedman, Wayne Gonzales, Ged Quinn, Deborah Roberts** and **Yinka Shonibare CBE RA**.

Artists have always taken note of other artists' creativity and work. While we tend to think of referencing as a postmodern phenomenon, the list of famous artists who documented admiration of past masters is endless; Landseer after Rubens; Singer Sargent after Velasquez; Latour after Titian, to name but a few. 'Past Present' continues this theme by exploring a selection of contemporary artists' reinterpretation of historical works and movements.

Sculpture is a major focus of the exhibition with works by **Stephan Balkenhol, Tom Friedman** and **Yinka Shonibare CBE RA**. Stephan Balkenhol references an eighteenth-century plaster cast of an original marble sculpture that he saw in the museum Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel. Instead of smooth marble, Balkenhol hammers and chisels a whole tree trunk, rendering the surface rough and exposing the trace of his tools to create a new 'Venus of Kassel' (2016). Balkenhol often references art history and contemporary culture by creating timeless, relatable and instantly recognisable figures. Also inspired by antiquity, Yinka Shonibare CBE RA reimagines 'Discobolus (after Naukydes)' (2017) portraying the eternally youthful, naked athlete paused in contemplation as he prepares to throw the discus. Shonibare's inspiration for this sculpture is a Roman copy of a now lost bronze work, attributed to the Greek sculptor Naukydes of Argos. Navigating the centuries, Tom Friedman is influenced by Henri Matisse's renowned painting 'La Danse' – Friedman's 'Circle Dance' (2010) consists of a circle of eleven polished stainless-steel figures joyfully dancing. These figures are at once light-footed and unerringly enduring as their balletic movements are frozen in time. Conceived in a majestic scale, 'Circle Dance' powerfully captures the playful exploration at the heart of Friedman's practice.

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Sculpture itself inspires **Juan Araujo** to create evocative work. Henry Moore's 'Double Oval' becomes the focus for his painting 'Sculpture Landscape - Double Oval' (2018 – 2019). The work depicts Henry Moore's monumental sculpture in the lush pastures of Perry Green. Using unpainted sections to contrast with the expressive brushwork and vividly rendered colours Araujo portrays Moore's sculpture from a vantage point on the far side of a manicured lawn. For **Wayne Gonzales**, Picasso's sculptural work also becomes a source of inspiration. 'Woman in the Garden' (2016 – 2017) is a painting based on a photograph of Picasso's sculpture of the same name that Wayne Gonzales took at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Picasso sculpture reduces the figure to geometric outlines, whose form is fractured into three-dimensional abstract shapes. Gonzales admires the graphic modernist lines of the work as much as the welded iron that it is made from.

Working within the parameters of art history, **Lisa Brice** echoes iconic compositions by artists such as Degas, Manet, Picasso and Vallotton, but instead lends her muses agency and self-possession. She is acclaimed for works that interrogate the male gaze and contest the misogynistic nature of historical figuration typically painted by white men for white men. 'Untitled' (2020) is a recent diptych created for her solo exhibition currently displayed at KM21, The Hague. Brice's use of cobalt blue obscures the naturalistic skin tones of the nude body to further discourage an easy 'read' of the female form. **Ged Quinn** uses a combination of artistic influences; as a major point of reference, we can look to Aby Warburg's 'Mnemosyne Atlas' project of 1929 as well as paintings by Spanish artists Juan de Arellano and Bartolomé Pérez. This depiction of the symbolically rich seventeenth century Spanish still-life painting is interwoven with photographic visions of contemporary iconography, producing a highly seductive and complex composite work. The title of Quinn's painting 'Cut' (2015) also refers to the process of collage and film edits. **Deborah Roberts** refers to art history and history itself. Often using collage as her tool of choice, the work of Roberts weaves together the complexities of Black identity and gender politics. 'One history, two versions (Bullet Points)' (2019) combines a badge referencing Martin Luther King's iconic 'I Have a Dream' speech of 1963 with the arm from King's memorial statue in Washington D.C., which appears to rest protectively over the head of a Black doll. Her work process alludes to the politically charged approaches of Cubist collage and Dada Photomontage movements that drew on the motifs of African masks and sculptures.

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