



Sesse Elangwe as Bwo's Inaugural Exhibition

Bwo is pleased to announce its inaugural opening on September 2nd, with a solo exhibition by Cameroonian visual artist Sesse Elangwe (b. 1994). For his first ever solo exhibition in his home country, Bwo will be presenting through September 23 a new body of work by the San Antonio based artist.

The contemporaneity of his acrylic-painted subjects is often in conversation with the colorful medium. A vacuum, a yellow safety jacket, a carry-on suitcase or simply the fashion statements are all clues relating to the space the artist and his subjects occupy. They translate a common experience of time and space through a personal lens, anchoring the work of the artist in burning socio-cultural realities. While the simplicity of the scenes seem insignificant, the direct gaze of the figures featuring the now signature asymmetric eyes of the artist encourage the viewers to connect and project themselves in this shared reality. They encourage contemplation and stand as an invitation to self-reflection as a beacon of hope. The stark black skin of his protagonists heavily contrasts with the other vibrant colors he uses, contributing in accentuating the perceived gravity of the artist's subjects. This pigmentation defines the limit of their bodies, a common thread in the work of the artist, but also a frontier across which contextualization matters. The clothes and the environment that accompany the figures embody the shaping materiality among which these bodies evolve.

Borrowing the framework of Nietzsche to interpret the message of the artist, one is struck by the balance of both strength and calmness embodied by these figures standing as a contemporary reinterpretation of the *Übermensch*, earthly being both compassionate and ruthless. The humble and neutral compositions allow for an objective reading of the situation: empowering and giving a voice to underrepresented, everyday people. Concerned with racial stakes, the artist wonders about combatting societal norms by delving into why structures exist and how to thrive under these limiting conditions.

In his upcoming solo exhibition at Bwo, Elangwe will present a new body of work that reflects on his personal life navigating between places and cultures, shedding light on the similarities and contrasts observed after having lived in Cameroon and the United States. Bwo's founders have been accompanying Elangwe since 2021, and are particularly pleased to be showcasing his work first, as his artistic quests as well as personal journey align with the purpose of Bwo, giving the gallery the perfect occasion to start exploring themes it identifies as relevant for our time; here being identity and the sense of belonging. "*My art is a reflection of my life experiences, adventures, hopes, aspirations, and the society I live in*" says Elangwe. By objectifying his lived reality and therefore a way of life, the artist positions himself both as an observer and a critic, sensitive to what defines a society. In that matter, the first solo exhibition of the artist, *Dawn*, presented in Houston, Texas (2022), touched upon integrating in the US after moving from Cameroon, and all the challenges that come with it.

Elangwe is a self-taught artist, who over the past nine years has participated in more than twenty exhibitions, among which three solo exhibitions that span four continents: Africa, Europe, North America, and Australia. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Buea in Cameroon. Works by Elangwe are in prestigious private collections across the globe, including: The Green Family Art Foundation (Dallas); W Art Foundation (Shanghai); Xitang Foundation (Beijing); Roberto Mancini Collection (St Tropez), Lester Marks Collection (Houston); Timothy Tan Collection (Manila); Pamela and David Hornik (Palo Alto); CCH Pounder Collection; The Schulting Collection (Amsterdam).

Earlier this year, Elangwe was featured in his first museum show in the group exhibition titled "*Sound of Blackness*" and curated by Larry Osei-Mensah at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. Later this year, he will be part of another museum group exhibition at the Kunsthal KAdE, in Amersfoort, Netherlands.