

Nicholas Hlobo  
The Art Show 2022 | Booth D22  
Park Avenue Armory, New York  
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Nicholas Hlobo, *Isithunywa somnyele nonomatse*, 2022.

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Lehmann Maupin returns to ADAA with a presentation of new works by gallery artist Nicholas Hlobo that capture his newfound engagement with acrylic paint—a medium that he has not employed since his days as an art student. The gallery's installation in booth D22 marks the first time that Hlobo's work will be featured in New York in more than four years. Hlobo's use of acrylic builds a new complexity into his signature multi-media canvases, combining historically-specific materials to explore race, gender, and identity—specifically, his identity as a Black, gay man—within the context of his South African heritage.

Best known for his weaving and stitching of metaphorically charged materials, such as colorful ribbon, leather, wood, and copper, Hlobo creates composite objects that are intricate and seductively tactile. In his new paintings, the artist renders semi-anthropomorphic forms through acrylic and ribbon, synthesizing the historically-gendered practices of painting (historically championed by the “male artistic genius”) and craft (historically relegated to the domestic, “feminine” realm), to create amalgamated forms that feel at once familiar, alien, and ancient. In this way, his practice engages themes of self-discovery and invention, uniting craft and fine art materials as a means to resist strict dichotomies and embrace fluid hybridity.

Hlobo's acrylic and ribbon abstractions seem to move and shift, taking on animalistic or semi-human qualities as though they have come alive. While the creatures in each canvas inhabit their own vivid worlds, Hlobo has woven myriad relationships between them; each piece is connected by color, texture, and movement. In *Abafaz'abane* (2022), Hlobo loosely identifies his subject with a grouping of four women, while in *Umntan'ezulu* (2022), he references a mantis-like insect. Both forms unfold alike from dense torsos of paint, spilling their long and textured tendrils throughout their respective canvases. Grounded in thick, expressionist mark making and animated through outward movement and fine linework, Hlobo's creatures exist somewhere between reality and imagination. In this way, the works lure viewers into a liminal space that both suggests and resists identification, asking them to navigate a new world free of category and hierarchy.



Nicholas Hlobo, *Abafaz'abane*, 2022.



Nicholas Hlobo (b. 1975, Cape Town, South Africa; lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa) received a fine art degree from Johannesburg's Technikon Witwatersrand in 2002. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (2021); Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2019); The Maitland Institute, Cape Town, South Africa (2018); Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town, South Africa (2017); Uppsala Art Museum, Uppsala, Sweden (2017); Museum Beelden aan Zee, The Hague, the Netherlands (2016); Locust Projects, Miami, FL (2013); National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Oslo, Norway (2011); Savannah College of Art and Design, Lacoste, France (2010); Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2008); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2008); and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Savannah, GA (2007).

Recent group exhibitions featuring his work include *Allied with Power: African and African Diaspora Art from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL (2020); *Alpha Crucis*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2020); *In the Spotlight of the Night - Life in the Gloom*, Marta Herford Museum for Art, Architecture, Design, Herford, Germany (2019); *Kiss My Genders*, Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2019); *Queer Abstraction*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS (2019); *Material Insanity*, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakesh, Morocco (2019); *Face to Face: From Yesterday to Today, Non-Western Art and Picasso*, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada (2018); *After the Thrill is Gone: Fashion, Politics, and Culture in Contemporary South African Art*, The Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2018); *Art/Afrique, le nouvel atelier*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (2017); *Energy and Process*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2016); *The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists*, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2014), and Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C. (2015); *A History (art architecture design, from the 80s to now)*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2015); *Intense Proximity*, La Triennale 2012, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2012); and *Flow*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2008). Hlobo has participated in multiple biennials including the 11th Liverpool Biennial (2021); the 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012); the 54th Venice Biennale (2011); the 6th Liverpool Biennial (2010); and the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008).

His work is included in numerous international public and private collections, including the Arquipelago – Centro de Artes Contemporaneas, Azores, Portugal; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, Savannah, GA; South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Unisa – University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa; and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town, South Africa.

Hlobo has received several honors and distinctions such as the Villa Extraordinary Award for Sculpture, The Claire & Edoardo Villa Will Trust, Midrand, South Africa (2016); Rolex Visual Arts Protégé (2010-11); Standard Bank Young Artist Award, Standard Bank of South Africa (2009); and the Tollman Award for Visual Art (2006).



Portrait of Nicholas Hlobo, 2022. Photo by Ilan Godfrey

## ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Exterior of Lehmann Maupin, 501 West 24th Street, New York. Photo by Matthew Herrmann