

Shaun Motsi***Browns*****23 May - 06 July 2024**

blank is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new paintings by Shaun Motsi, his first with the gallery.

'I'm hoping they land somewhere between a poetics of non-disclosure and what-you-see-is-what-you-get', to quote the artist. And with that sentiment one must attempt to reach some kind of non-settling, formless cohesion in their encounter with Motsi's latest series of oils on linen which appear uncannily like giant-sized squares of nut-studded chocolate.

There is a deceptiveness in the apparent simplicity of these works, hiding in plain sight the fact that they are the distillation of a multitude of references and metaphors. Art historically they deal in the Renaissance techniques of brunaille underpainting and trompe l'œil. Conceptually they borrow from the anticolonial philosophy of Édouard Glissant - the main impetus coming from Glissant's clarion call for '..the right to opacity for everyone. I no longer have to 'understand' the other, that is, to reduce him to the model of my own transparency, in order to live with this other or to build something with him...' (extract from the lecture titled Culture and Identity in Introduction to a poetics of diversity, 1996).

With the proviso that 'what you see is what you get', the viewer first encounters undulating colour fields of brown tones resembling Ritter Sport chocolate slabs sensitively rendered in various states of shelf life: broken up, cracked, some pristine. Closer engagement with the glistening surfaces of the paintings reveals a deft use of loose brushwork to create their delectable textures and mounds and suddenly the motif dissolves into a layered mass of casual mark-making. The challenges that this body of work dares us with make a compelling argument for the defence of the opaque as a strategy for representation while simultaneously granting licence to the viewer to form their own impressions of the paintings.

Born in Harare in 1989, Shaun Motsi spent his childhood in Zimbabwe and South Africa before relocating to Canada in 2005. He is a graduate of the HfbK Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main (2020), and is currently in residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. Recently his work has been presented at Auto Italia, London (2023); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2023); Freiburg Biennial, Freiburg (2023); Juf, Madrid (2023); Goethe Institut Paris (2022); CFA, Milan (2021); The Wig, Berlin (2021); Shedhalle, Zürich (2020); Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2020); PAGE (NYC), New York (2019); Longtang, Zürich (2019); and 3HD Festival, Berlin (2019), among others. Motsi currently lives and works between Berlin and Amsterdam.