

TRANSFERRED MEMORIES (Work No Dey)

Ludovic Nkoth

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to announce Ludovic Nkoth's debut exhibition TRANSFERRED MEMORIES (Work No Dey) opening at MASSIMODECARLO London on April 8, 2022.

Born in Cameroon, Ludovic Nkoth (b.1994) moved to the United States at the age of 13, he now lives and works in New York. TRANSFERRED MEMORIES (Work No Dey) presents a new body of work distinguished by Nkoth's fluid expressionism, using family portraits and scenes of daily life in Cameroon as his subjects.

Nkoth's works are personal pieces; his process reconnects him with his family and his country of birth. However, the paintings are also reflections on the broader social and political issues within Cameroonian history, such as the African diaspora and colonialism. Taking inspiration from his family photo albums, the artist paints truthful portraits, which he calls 'honest paintings', where his subjects are free from exaggeration and embellishment. The artist portrays normal people with the intention of shining a light on subjects who have been traditionally ignored in the history of painting, reflective of societal hierarchies and prejudices. Nkoth says that 'by focusing on my memories and comparing it with today's reality, I hope viewers see my paintings as mirrors that allows them to see themselves, question themselves and our social systems'. Mirrors reflect the moment they are in, but also show and highlight things that we do not always notice or expect to see.

The portraits depict not only the subject but the personal relationship which the artist has with them. Despite growing up with them, the artist had not seen many of the subjects for over ten years, in these paintings he is trying to capture 'the memories that we hold together'. While the works explore the artist's own feelings of nostalgia for the country and family he is apart from, this physical and temporal distance and detachment has given Nkoth a different perspective of the challenges and lack of opportunity which those in Cameroon face; particularly regarding the educational system and lack of career options.

Nkoth draws inspiration from jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, Gil Scott-Heron and Fela Kuti, who he appreciates as activists, as well as musicians. They, like Nkoth, threw light upon overlooked people and encouraged silenced voices to be heard. The artist likens the effortless flow of their melodies to the energy and movements that direct his expressive painterly marks, shaping his brushstrokes as musical notes: 'I allow the painting to guide me rather than feel like I have to be in control of the whole thing'.

The expression 'Work No dey' in the title of the exhibition synthesises the multifaceted reality of Cameroon, theoretically bilingual but it is also home to over 200 languages where Cameroonian Pidgin English is one of them, expressing the complex history of the country. Holding a dual point of perspective, Nkoth's work is imbued with questions of identity and the ambiguous feelings associated with belonging. *TRANSFERRED MEMORIES (Work No Dey)* presents an insightful documentation of a very personalized view of the complexity of two opposing social and political systems as well as his own family history and traditions.

Ludovic Nkoth was born in Yaounde, Cameroon, Africa in 1994. He lives and works in New York, USA.

Solo exhibitions include KUNST IST. 25 anni di Merano Arte, curated by Luigi Fassi, Kunst Meran Museum, Merano, Italy (2021); You Sea Us, Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy (2021); Don't Take This Too, François Ghebaly, Los Angeles, USA (2021); Roots, West Main Artists Co-op, Spartanburg, USA (2020).

Group exhibitions include Something about Us, Anthony Gallery, Chicago, USA (2021); Portraiture One Century Apart, MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique, Paris, France (2021); Four Walls, Ross+Kramer, New York, USA (2021); Black Voices/Black Microcosms, CFHILL Art Space, Stockholm, Sweden (2020); Mostly fine Adults, Pfizer Building, New York, USA (2019). Public collections include High Museum of Art, Atlanta, ICA Miami and The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.