

What If

10.10.2023

14.10.2023

The obsession of expressing all emotion in plastic writing, a kind of aggravated malady, or a kind of aggravated state of grace.

—Le Corbusier

MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is very pleased to present *What If*, the first chapter of Ludovic Nkoth's forthcoming exhibition at Maison La Roche, opening October 17th 2023.

Black experience. An experience that is often reduced as a site of struggle. Nkoth seeks reconciliation by depicting subjects in mental repose. Given the artist's diasporic background, having been born in Cameroon and then spending a better part of his teenage years in South Carolina, he understands that interiorities can contain multitudes.

During the course of his year-long residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, Nkoth delved into the archives of Maison La Roche, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, exploring the relationship between Le Corbusier and collector Raoul La Roche who together created the Maison. The home, which embodies the cardinal points of Le Corbusier's architectural vision, was conceived specifically for La Roche's collection, acting as an exhibition space for his acclaimed collection of avant-garde artwork. It also forms a pure assemblage of spatial volumes in which domicile and gallery intertwine within a model example of a "promenade architecturale."

Playing with our expectations, Nkoth conjectures: what if a family of color had lived at Maison La Roche? The paintings rearrange the La Roche "household" physically and visually in order to showcase alternative narratives of home life. Painting for Nkoth grounds this tension, and yet a new narrative is created through it. One pertaining to a sense of belonging and alienation. The ground for his images enfolds within it a surrounding room, its history, and its limitations; just as the ground for the room contains the whole history of architecture. Figuration, materiality, the movement in brushstrokes, the room, and the building: all of them are widening concentric circles in the matrix

of sensation within this imaginary. Nkoth arrives at making sense of this sensation.

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Artwork

System (Green II), 2023

Acrylic on canvas

152 × 122 cm / 59 3/4 × 48 inches

Ludovic Nkoth

Leaving his birth-family and siblings at the age of 13, Ludovic Nkoth found solace and comfort in the creative process while being raised primarily as “a stranger in a strange land”. It wasn’t until he migrated to the United States that he began to reconsider his own culture as a catalyst to locate his identity. Nkoth’s works are both personal, as he reconnects with his family and his country of birth, and reflections on the broader social and political issues within Cameroon. 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 works portray not only the subject but the personal relationship which the artist has with them. While the works explore the artist’s own feelings of nostalgia for the country and family he is often distanced from, this distance has also given him a different perspective of the challenges and lack of opportunity which those that he knows in Cameroon face. Holding a dual point of perspective, Nkoth’s work is imbued with questions of identity and the ambiguous feelings associated with belonging. Nkoth’s work 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.

The works presented at Maison La Roche illustrate an evolution in Nkoth’s practice, who undertook a residency in Paris to create these works, visiting the Maison’s archives and immersing himself in the aesthetic canons of Le Corbusier.