

Paul Mpagi Sepuya

CONDO

11 January – 15 February 2020

As part of Condo, London, Modern Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of work by Paul Mpagi Sepuya, in collaboration with Team Gallery, New York. This will be the first solo exhibition of Sepuya's work in the UK.

In Paul Mpagi Sepuya's photographs, the history of the medium of photography studio portraiture forms the background for his exploration of the dynamics of intimacy. The figures populating Sepuya's photographs are people with whom he is close: friends, lovers, or members of the queer and artistic communities of Los Angeles and New York of which he is a part. Consistently, Sepuya himself is a subject of the photographs, often present only in fragments of his body – arms, legs, hands – his works make a point of showing him as their maker, with his arms positioning the camera, or his hands releasing the shutter button. Mirrors are therefore a reoccurring motif in his work, both functioning as a practical technology in the construction of his images and as a symbolic fulcrum through which to consider the many meanings – erotically charged and racially located - of his own body in relation to others.

The group of Sepuya's work shown at Modern Art is comprised of photographs made between 2016 and 2019. Seen together, the chosen works convey the scope of formal strategies employed by Sepuya. Ranging from close up portraits of interlocking body parts, to studio portraits in which subjects are carefully poised behind and with objects, to photographs of his collages of test prints and archival material of the studio, Sepuya's strategies each speak to the self-reflexivity inherent in his practice and reveal his sensitivity and skill in capturing bodies on camera. Whether at its centre or its edges, the camera and tripod are almost always evident and always implied somewhere in each image, bringing the work firmly back into dialogue with its own technical construction and object-hood, and to Sepuya himself.

Paul Mpagi Sepuya was born in San Bernardino, CA, in 1982 and he lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He completed his BFA at New York University Tisch School of the Arts in 2004, and his MFA at University of California, Los Angeles in 2016. Sepuya's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions such as the Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, TX, USA (2019); the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA (2019) and FOAM Fotografiemuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2018). His work has been included in group exhibitions at institutions including the Barbican, London, UK (forthcoming 2020); Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Los Angeles, CA, USA (2019); Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2019); Aperture, New York, NY, USA (2019); San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, CA, USA (2019); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2019); Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA (2019); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (2019); Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, UK (2019); Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA (2018); ICA Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA (2018); The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, USA (2017).

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