

Tschabalala Self

17 January – 12 March 2017

(Preview: Monday, 16 January, 6–8 p.m.)



Left: *Sapphire*, 2015. Oil, pigment and fabric on canvas, 213.3 x 152.4 cm (84 x 60 in). Courtesy of Wassim Rasamny. Photograph by Thomas Nelford. **Right:** *Carma*, 2016. Fabric, linen, Flashe®, acrylic and pastel on canvas, 182.9 x 121.9 cm (72 x 48 in). Courtesy of Jackson Tang, Florence. Photograph by Dan Bradica.

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is delighted to present a solo exhibition by American artist Tschabalala Self. Showing for the first time in the United Kingdom it brings together works drawn from the first five years of her artistic career.

Self's expressive and dynamic works, which include painting, print, collage and sculpture, depict the human figure. The fluidity of movement and exaggerated form of her images are quick to capture the attention of viewers and elicit a vivid response. Primarily concerned with the concept of the Black female body within contemporary culture, Self examines the confluence of race, gender and sexuality through a variety of forms and narratives in which each subject – or as she prefers, *character* – expresses an individually powerful identity.

In her bold, confident and vibrant paintings and works on paper, Self plays inventively with figuration, deconstructing and recreating the Black female body, using various techniques, including collage. Pieces of collected fabric – sometimes African or African-inspired cloth given to her by her mother – and paper or perhaps sections of an earlier unresolved work, are sewn directly onto a work. The fractured figure so created seems to assert its own self-defined identity, and thereby fulfil the artist's intention. Working in this way with mixed-media allows Self to blend fact with fiction, reality with imagination as she explores how the Black female body functions as a social and political symbol.

Voyeurism, the act of watching and of being watched, is an important component in Self's work, which encourages a world of imagination, transformation and fantasising around a particular subject. Never imposing any vulnerability or sense of victimhood upon her characters, Self instead endows each of them with a positively pulsating confidence. At times, the unseen voyeur is made visible in her paintings: for example, through the huge, cartoonish eyes afloat in the background of *Mira Mira*, 2016; or the two staring brown eyes in *Bodega Run*, 2015. We are prompted to ask ourselves, whose eyes are they? Yet, the ever-watchful eyes seem to have no affect on the subject herself. In *My Black Ass*, 2016, her most recent animation work, the Black female character comes to life, displaying her buttocks and genitals in an energetic dance, clearly indifferent to any watching eye. Although based on a particular ethnicity, Self's innovative works nonetheless speak universally of all humanity and its collective concerns.

This *Tschabalala Self* exhibition, curated by **Ziba Ardalan**, is accompanied by a comprehensive publication and a full programme of educational events that aims to engage the public.

Note to Editors

Artist Biography

Tschabalala Self, born 1990 in New York, currently lives and works in New York and New Haven, USA. She holds an MFA in Painting/Printmaking from the Yale School of Art, New Haven, and a BA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. Her work was recently included in *A Constellation* at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, and in *A Shape That Stands Up* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA. She has had solo shows at T293, Naples, Italy; The Cabin, Los Angeles, CA; Thierry Goldberg, New York, NY; and at Schur-Narula, Berlin, Germany. She has exhibited in group shows at, among others, Maccarone, New York, NY; Salon 94, New York, NY; 11R, New York, NY; Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles, CA; Kate Werble Gallery, New York, NY; and at James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY. As well as her 2017 exhibition at Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London, UK, she has a show coming up at Pillar Corrias Gallery, London, UK. Her work has been positively reviewed in, among others, *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and *Artsy*.

Parasol unit appreciates the generous support of Fabio Agovino, Jackson Tang and Tschabalala Self's commercial galleries.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Founded in December 2004, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is a registered educational charity and a not-for-profit institution that operates purely for the public benefit. Every year the foundation organises four challenging and thought-provoking exhibitions of works by international contemporary artists working in various media and arranges other artistic projects. The foundation also engages with the public and its neighbouring community through a full programme of educational events. In its genuine mission to serve the public, the foundation does not bear the name of its founder, and its exhibitions do not derive from any particular private collection. Admission to all exhibitions at Parasol unit is free of charge. Thanks to its innovative model between private funding and public support, one of London's most vibrant contemporary art spaces has come to exist and thrive.

Free Admission

Parasol unit
14 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW

Opening hours:

Monday, by prior arrangement
Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Sunday, 12 – 5 p.m.

Directions: Tube to Old Street or Angel
Buses: 43, 205 or 214 via City Road

For more information please contact:

Kirsteen Cairns

T: +44 (0)20 7490 7373, ext. 24
E: kirsteen@parasol-unit.org