



LIONEL SMIT
Prelude



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11 November – 7 December 2021



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Everard Read London presents *Prelude*, an exhibition of new paintings and bronze sculpture by Lionel Smit, one of South Africa's most celebrated and recognisable artists.

The exhibition includes 10 large-scale oil paintings on linen and 10 new sculptures – from intimate works to a 1.3 m double portrait and a monumental mask measuring almost 2 metres.

In this new body of work, Smit gives form to his deep and abiding interest in classical painting and his many influences from art history – from leading lights of the High Renaissance period to Romanticism as expressed in the landscapes of Constable and Turner, as well as the realism, vivid hues and religious themes of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Smit's portraits present as realistic renderings often with classical, triangular compositions, but here are set against painterly, abstract backgrounds. Inspired by painters of the Romantic period, Smit uses swathes of paint and colour, in some of the works, to evoke a dream-like atmosphere with glorious skies and landscapes. Looking to Romanticism was compelling for Smit at a time of uncertainty and anxiety, in fact was a deliberate response to the preponderance of negative news that characterised 2020–21.

Several of the works in this exhibition draw on Biblical paintings which Smit saw as a young boy in books, in church and during his art studies. In *Preventative Image*, Smit's figure shields her eyes as she looks to the earth, recalling for the artist, *The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*. Smit's *Interrupted Shape* series has at its core, a classical portrait seen throughout history while #3, in particular, evokes the seated Madonna, rendered in the colours and mark-making of Pop and Street art.

The exhibition also includes Smit's textured bronze sculptures which transmute his brush marks into three-dimensional form and draw inspiration from ancient ritual and mythology. Many of his bronze visages exude serenity and, with closed eyes and muddy-earth or ashen patinas, are reminiscent of death masks. Smit's *Mortal Form* recalls Medusa with her tangled ribbons of hair, while his monumental *Enswathed*, with its embalmed physiognomy, continues the artist's meditation on life and death in a time of plague and political turmoil.

Prelude marks Lionel Smit's 13th solo exhibition with the Everard Read group and his third solo exhibition with Everard Read London.







Prelude
oil on linen
150 x 150 cm
(59 x 59 in)



Pending Sky
oil on linen
150 x 170 cm
(59 x 66⁷/₈ in)



Rmerge
bronze, edition of 12
45 x 31 x 25 cm
(17⁵/₈ x 12¹/₈ x 9³/₄ in)



Counterpoise
bronze, edition of 12
81 x 35 x 30 cm
(31 ⁷/₈ x 13 ³/₄ x 31 ⁷/₈ in)



Preventative Image
oil on linen
100 x 120 cm
(39 1/4 x 47 1/8 in)





Transmute
oil on linen
100 x 120 cm
(39 1/4 x 47 1/8 in)







Enswathe
bronze, edition of 6
192 x 130 x 100 cm
(75 1/2 x 51 1/8 x 39 1/4 in)





Excluded Form
oil on linen
150 x 170 cm
(59 x 66⁷/₈ in)



Expectancy
oil on linen
140 x 170 cm
(55 x 66⁷/₈ in)





Amalgamate
bronze on oak, edition of 12
48 x 36 x 30 cm
(18 ⁷/₈ x 14 ¹/₈ x 11 ³/₄ in)



Interruption Shape #1
oil, spraypaint and charcoal on linen
150 x 150 cm
(59 x 59 in)



Interruption Shape #2
oil on linen
150 x 150 cm
(59 x 59 in)





Unforseen
bronze, edition of 8
56 x 45 x 27 cm
(22 x 17⁵/₈ x 10⁵/₈ in)





Interrupted Shape #3
oil on linen
150 x 150 cm
(59 x 59 in)



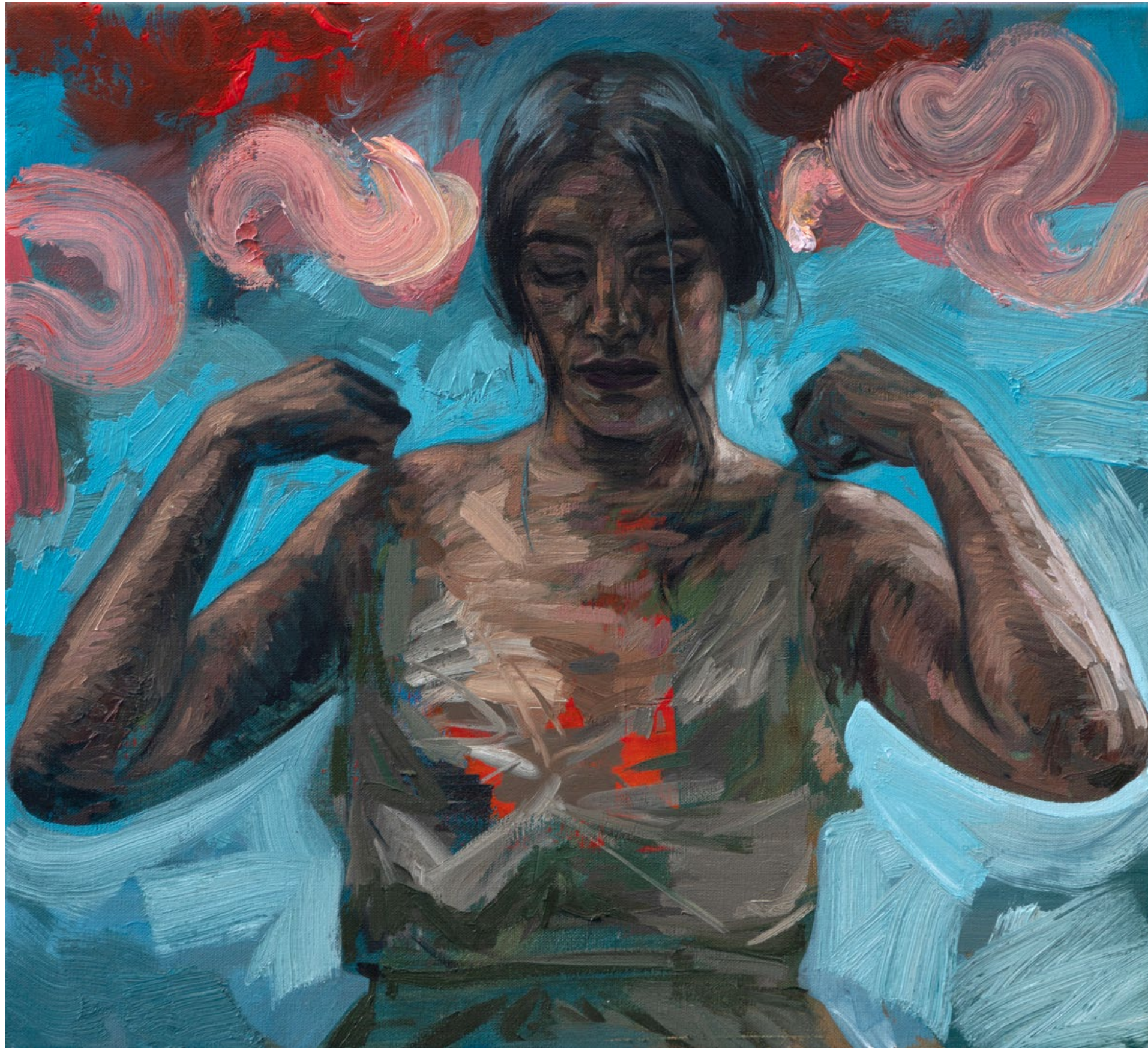
Adaptive Application #1
bronze, variable edition of 12
45 x 26 x 20 cm
(17⁵/₈ x 10¹/₈ x 7³/₄ in)



Adaptive Application #2
bronze, variable edition of 12
49 x 29 x 20 cm
(19 1/4 x 11 3/8 x 7 3/4 in)



Adaptive Application #3
bronze, variable edition of 12
44 x 28 x 20 cm
(17 1/4 x 11 x 7 3/4 in)



Probable Light
oil on linen
55 x 60 cm
(21 ⁵/₈ x 23 ¹/₂ in)



Mortal Form
bronze, edition of 8
62 x 46 x 26 cm
24 ³/₈ x 18 x 10 ¹/₈ in



Sky Pending
oil on linen
165 x 165 cm
(65 x 65 in)





Surge
bronze, edition of 6
135 x 70 x 50 cm
(53 1/8 x 27 1/2 x 19 5/8 in)



LIONEL SMIT

b. 1982, South Africa

Lionel Smit is best known for his contemporary portraiture executed through monumental canvases and sculptures. Perhaps more than anything else, Smit's work is defined by a profound and ongoing dialogue between sculpture and painting.

A multidisciplinary artist, each of Smit's works offer us an entry point into the variety and richness that lies beneath every face we encounter in life, whether applied in bronze or in paint. While retaining their austerity and meditative aesthetic, Smit's figures remain highly charged with the emotive and gestural energy of his creative process.

Smit's paintings begin with abstract lines and swathes of colour that establish a foundation for the subsequently overlaid image of a face or bust – in most cases of anonymous models from the Cape Malay community. For Smit, the Cape Malay woman epitomises hybrid identity within a South African context and reflects the fragmentation of identity within our increasingly globalised world.

Smit's bronzes are created using the lost wax casting method. Patinas commonly available to artists working in bronze include natural browns, blacks and greens. However, given the importance of colour to Smit, he uses alternative methods that result in a unique fusion of intensely saturated patinas. Brilliant streaks of blues and greens enrich the grooves of an ear, while the natural shadow of an eyelid is intensified by the deepening of rich black patinas. Smit's ability to manipulate the patination process, coupled with his focused enthusiasm for surface gradations, has allowed him to consistently push boundaries.

Based in Somerset West, Cape Town, Smit's process as an artist today remains adaptive, inventive, and physically engaging and he has achieved success internationally, from Hong Kong to London and New York.

Click [here](#) to read full biography.



