



Media release

ZEITZ MOCAA ANNOUNCES SOUTH AFRICAN PAINTER JOHANNES PHOKELA'S NEW EXHIBITION

- **Phokela's first institutional show in nearly a decade**
- **The exhibition forms part of Zeitz MOCAA's ongoing series of in-depth, research-based solo exhibitions that bring into focus and contextualises the practice of important African artists**
- **The exhibition will run from 28 October 2021 to 29 May 2022**

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(Cape Town, 18 October 2021): Today, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) announces a new exhibition by South African painter Johannes Phokela. The exhibition, titled *Only Sun in the Sky Knows How I Feel – (A Lucid Dream)*, marks nearly a decade since Phokela's last institutional show and includes a select survey of his oeuvre from the last three decades. The exhibition also includes new large-scale works produced for the exhibition, and an installation of archival material encompassing books, letters, photographs, visual references and drawings that provide insight into the artist's process and practice.

Organised around Phokela's obsessive engagement with pictures, the exhibition posits the artist as a painter of significance in both an African and international context. His concerns with pictorial traditions and images are used as tools to explore and critique social mores and corrupt value systems in the aftermath of empire.

"Phokela's vision is of a world history drenched in the spoils of violence," explains Senior Curator Storm Janse van Rensburg, who co-curated the exhibition alongside the museum's Executive Director and Chief Curator Koyo Kouoh, with assistance by Curatorial Assistant Beata America. "His sardonic and, at times, nihilistic take on current affairs and the state of things holds a mirror up to us. Despite lushly painted surfaces and allegory, Phokela's medium is not the message; his painting is a subversive tool in an intellectually rigorous practice that provokes the viewer."

Raised in Soweto during the Seventies and Eighties, Phokela pursued further studies in London from 1987, culminating in a master's degree from the Royal College of Art in 1993. He has since established an illustrious career punctuated by major exhibitions, awards and residencies to critical acclaim.

Adds Kouoh: "It is an important moment for us to consider Johannes Phokela's decades-long contribution to the artistic vocabulary of the continent. His searing, visual talent makes palpable the contradictions and ironies of our moment."



“We celebrate Phokela and his unrelenting commitment and intellectual engagement with his subject matter. He inscribes our history into the timeline of the world in an uncompromising manner.”

To support this celebration, Zeitz MOCAA will also be hosting a public opening from 6 pm to 8 pm on Thursday, 28 October. The public event will be limited to 100 visitors and all COVID-19 protocols will be in place. Tickets can be booked via [Webtickets here](#). Welcome drinks will be served on arrival and visitors will have the opportunity to view Phokela’s work during this time.

Johannes Phokela’s *Only Sun in the Sky Knows How I Feel – (A Lucid Dream)* will open on Thursday, 28 October on Level 1, Zeitz MOCAA.

About Johannes Phokela

Johannes Phokela (b. 1966, Soweto) is a South African artist currently living and working in Johannesburg. Phokela began his formal art career in 1984 at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) Academy in Johannesburg, where he obtained a three-year diploma. In 1987, he relocated to London, where he completed a year-long foundation course at Central St. Martins: University of the Arts London before acquiring a bachelor’s degree at Camberwell College of Art: University of the Arts London (1988). He then completed a master’s degree at the Royal College of Art (1993) and remained in London until his permanent return to South Africa in 2006.

Phokela has established a distinguished career both locally and internationally. He played an advisory role in establishing The Bag Factory, Johannesburg (1990) and was awarded the prestigious year-long residency at Delfina Studio Trust, London (1993). He was also one of the founding members of the Gasworks Studios, London (1994 – 2005), producing studio work as well as participating in the International Residency Programme. This inspired him to do volunteer work for The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1995 and led to his participation in a residency programme in Senegal through the British Council (1997). He is also a recipient of the Decibel Award from the Arts Council of England (2004).

Phokela’s prominent solo shows include an international touring exhibition commissioned by the Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA) in collaboration with The Gallery, Cafe Gallery Projects, London (2002); *Age of Enlightenment*, Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg (2003); *Landlord of the Lion*, Stephen Lawrence Gallery, London (2005); *Imagine Where You’ll Be*, Gallery MOMO, Johannesburg (2005); *Translation*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg (2006); *Compendium*, KwaZulu Natal Society of Arts, Durban (2007); *I Love My Neighbours*, a notable retrospective at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg (2009); *Collateral*, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein (2012); and *A World Sacred and Profane*, Gallery AOP, Johannesburg (2015), in addition to many others.

He has participated in numerous notable group exhibitions such as the critically acclaimed 2nd Johannesburg Biennale titled *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, Johannesburg (1997); *Unpacking Europe*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2001); *Figure of*, Battersea Pump House, London (2001); *Personal Effects*, Museum for African Art and The Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York (2004); *Tremor*, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Charleroi, Brussels (2004); *Erase Me From Who I Am: Elvieda Quin Soy*, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas (2006); *Body of*



Evidence, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C. (2006); *New Painting* at the KwaZulu Natal Society of Arts in Durban, UNISA Art Gallery in Pretoria and Johannesburg Art Gallery in Johannesburg (2006); and *Still (the) Barbarians*, EVA Limerick Open, Limerick, (2016).

Phokela was represented in the South African Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2013), and his work can be found internationally in the collections of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.; in London at the Delfina Studio Trust; the London Arts Council Collection; and the South African High Commission. In South Africa, he is represented in the art holdings of BHP Billeton, Southern Collection, Scheryn Art Collection, Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Iziko South African National Gallery, amongst others.

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Issued by [Chimera Creative](#) on behalf of Zeitz MOCAA.

Please find imagery for *Only Sun in the Sky Knows How I Feel – (A Lucid Dream)* [here](#). For media enquiries, contact Zainab Slemang van Rijmenant at zainab@chimeracreative.co.za.

About Zeitz MOCAA

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) is a public not-for-profit institution that collects, preserves, researches and exhibits contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora; conceives and hosts international exhibitions; develops supporting educational, discursive and enrichment programmes; encourages intercultural understanding; and strives towards access for all. The museum's galleries feature rotating temporary exhibitions with a dedicated space for the permanent collection. The institution also includes the Centre for Art Education, the Centre for the Moving Image and The Atelier, a museum residency project space for artists living and working in Cape Town.

Zeitz MOCAA is situated at the Silo District, South Arm Road, V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, South Africa, and is open Thursday through Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm. [**zeitzmocaa.museum**](http://zeitzmocaa.museum)