



Candice Berman

FINE ART GALLERY



450 Scarifications, 2017. Mixed Media on Canvas, 250 x 200 cm. 870004

Muse

Moroccan-born artist Booshra will be having her solo exhibition titled *Muse* at Candice Berman Gallery, Johannesburg from 29 June to 13 July 2017.

Hautingly beautiful, Booshra's colossal portraits have become iconic, shown internationally from Amsterdam, Belgium and Luxembourg to Miami and New York. With the surge of portraiture emerging as a genre in art, we have to ask ourselves what is the fascination with the study of the human face and its meaning, and how is Booshra's work an embodiment of this era?

The subject in the portrait mesmerises, holds your attention and creates an almost uncomfortable self-consciousness as you struggle to face the feeling of being seen. The gaze, challenging you straight on, forces you to acknowledge your presence and mirror our humanness. This non-verbal confrontation intensely distinguishes between the seeing individual and the individual as being 'seen'. When standing in front of the portrait you are defined as separate from the 'other'. This is the first lesson we learn as children, that we are separate from our parent.

It is an almost painful state of awareness. Separation dissolves the symbiotic illusion in which we are nestled. From the moment our parents see us, to when we become conscious of how we are being seen by the world, to when we embrace how time's narrative has inscribed itself upon our faces and bodies, we constantly struggle between the self as innate consciousness and the physical appearance of that self.

There is a definite emphasis on the physicality of the portrait subject. As we trace our eyes along the features, the composition, the proportions, emotions, and attitude of the portrait subject, we scrutinise this physicality, desperately searching for an understanding of the person behind the eyes and how that person is revealed in physicality. Do we see this physicality as morally prescriptive? Is there a connection between proportion, balance, individuality and what is good? We are forced to reconsider these subjects not just as ordinary people, but as Muses who embody principles and values to which we can aspire. They become ideal figures setting examples of what strength and self-acceptance look like.

Traditionally portraits intended to immortalise their subject and to place them above others. The scale of Booshra's works as well as the direct gaze of the subject contribute to the importance of the interaction. They are not just ordinary people, by portraying them they become our Muses. We look to them for inspiration, for calm, for strength and assurance. We need to consider what it is about them that needs to be recognised, respected and reconsidered. She is uplifting the nameless faces of the world. Her Muses are always self-assured totems to strength and independence.

A rebel artist with a spirit that cannot be tamed, Booshra's work is uncompromising and bold, almost defiant and embodies her strength of personality.

Booshra has said that if she were not an artist she would be an 'anthropologist-philosopher', fascinated by the magnetism of the eyes.

There is something to be said about the study of the human face at this particular point in time. We are struggling to make meaning out of our lives and struggling to find explanations to haphazard events. To whom do we look? The closest identifier is other humans. We desperately search the faces and gazes of

others in order to better understand ourselves. We come to terms with the discrepancy between our physical bodies and our internal mindscapes. The distinction is unsettling, but it is a reality.

There is always a part of ourselves striving to make meaning of things. To understand each scar and interpret each line. The inscriptions on the face proffer to reveal something about the subject but remind us of how we are seen in the world.

The beauty of the subject can charm and hypnotise, but the truth is in our shared humanness.

The Muse inspires the good and a striving for beauty and serenity. We come to realise that this beauty can be hidden in the most subtle of features, in the crevices of the subject and most importantly in the human interaction. **CF**

