

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
CAMH.ORG | #atCAMH

Press Release

Exhibition

Amoako Boafo: Soul of Black Folks May 27–October 2, 2022



Amoako Boafo, *Seye*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches. Courtesy Hernandahn Family Collection, Jacinto J. Hernandez and Chat Callahan, and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Robert Wedemyer.

HOUSTON, TX (April 25, 2022)—Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is excited to announce *Amoako Boafo: Soul of Black Folks*, the debut museum solo exhibition for Ghanaian artist Amoako Boafo (b. 1984), one of the most influential artistic voices of his generation. Working primarily in figuration, Boafo is known for his vibrant use of color and thick improvisational gestures, created by his finger painting technique emphasizing the contours and luminous skin tone of the body of his subjects. The show presents over thirty works created between 2016–2022, including a site-specific wall painting made specifically for CAMH. The subjects featured in Boafo’s paintings represent the nuance and complexities of Black life globally. Boafo creates images that actively center Black subjectivity, Black joy, the Black gaze, and radical care as a foundational framework for his artistic practice. Conditions such as COVID-19, the constant resistance against systemic oppression, the active combatting of Anti-Black rhetoric, and the commodification of Black bodies in the media are some of the concerns that heighten this exhibition’s urgency and relevance. The exhibition will be on view in CAMH’s Brown Foundation Gallery from May 27–October 2, 2022.

#AmoakoBoafo
#atCAMH
#TrustArtists

Press Contact

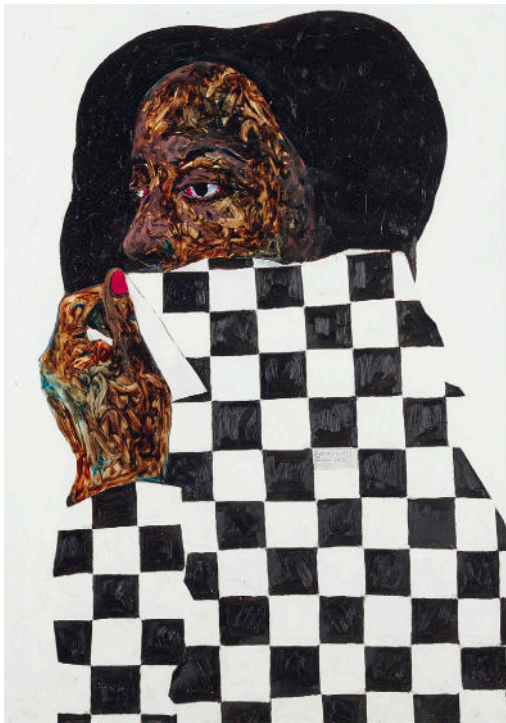
For high-resolution images or media inquiries, contact:
Michael Robinson
Communications and Marketing
Manager
mrobinson@camh.org
713.284.8255

“*Soul of Black Folks* is my museum debut, therefore I am intimately invested in each stage of the exhibition’s journey,”

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Amoako Boafo, *Black and White*, 2018. Oil on paper, 39 3/8 x 27 1/2 inches. Courtesy Private Collection and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles. Photo: Robert Wedemyer.

says artist Amaoko Boafo King. “I’m really excited for its next stop in Houston at CAMH in May. Here, the show will continue to communicate to the museum’s audience as it did in San Francisco. However, at CAMH it will grow in scope. I’m excited to embark on a site-specific mural at CAMH for the second stop for *Soul of Black Folks*.”

“CAMH is incredibly excited to co-present with MoAD the debut museum solo exhibition of such immense talent,” says Hesse McGraw, Executive Director of Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. “Boafo’s portraits are vital and urgent celebrations of Black joy, with unique tactile painting methods that go beyond representation to add life to each of his subjects.”

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to present *Soul of Black Folks* in collaboration with Amoako Boafo at CAMH in Houston,” says Curator Larry Ossei-Mensah. “This seminal exhibition is an opportune moment for attendees to gain a deeper understanding of Boafo’s artistic practice and explore why his works are more than just paintings. The exhibition is an evocative visual articulation of the dignity and importance of Black people to our society.”

Centering Boafo’s interrogation of self, *Soul of Black Folks* opens with his self-portraits. This series of paintings was created privately as a cathartic exercise while the artist was living in Vienna, Austria, experiencing racism and a lack of support for his practice. By starting with himself as his primary subject, Boafo emerged confident in his practice, resulting in his yearning to create portraits of others—friends, celebrities, and family which he has become known for over the past half a decade. His subjects’ accentuated and elevated figures are often isolated on single-color backgrounds, their gaze the focal point disrupting observation from canonical viewership. Boafo’s work then extends to groups hugging, depicting joy and radiating closeness in a time when we have had to accept social distancing and touch taking on extra significance and weight. These three stages of Boafo’s work comprise the first three chapters of the show. The final chapters a site specific mural commissioned and created in CAMH’s gallery by Boafo. This large-scale work will be a throughline of the exhibition and reflects the key components of Boafo’s artistic practice.

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Amoako Boafo, *Umbur Brown Belt*, 2020. Paper transfer and oil on canvas, 82 5/8 x 66 7/8 inches. Courtesy the Collection of Marilyn & Larry Fields.



Amoako Boafo, *Green Clutch*, 2021. Paper transfer and oil on canvas, 82 5/8 x 70 7/8 inches. Courtesy Private Collection and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago and Paris.

The exhibition's title is inspired by the seminal ethnographic study of Black life behind the veil of race by sociologist and Pan-Africanist W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois, who is buried near Osu—a neighborhood in Accra, Ghana near where Boafo grew up—conducted research that resulted in the coining of the phrase “double-consciousness,” which evokes the sense of Black people constantly having to look at themselves through the eyes of others. Du Bois's text serves as an invitation to think deeply about Boafo's artistic practice and how it challenges an “othered” gaze concerning the Black figure.

The works featured in *Soul of Black Folks* center the viewers' gaze on the presence of Boafo's subjects, who represent all walks of Black life. He vividly and attentively leverages his paintings as a forum to articulate the connectivity and cultural overlap of existence within the Black diaspora. Despite the physical and emotional friction of Boafo's mark-making, his painted subjects appear confident and steadfast. Boafo's paintings are deeply personal and intimately connected to his experience as a Ghanaian artist living and working between Vienna and Accra. His works serve as means of self-preservation—a celebration of his identity, Black people, and Blackness. More than mere portraits, they are images constructed to assert the dignity and importance of Black people.

Amoako Boafo: Soul of Black Folks is organized and presented in partnership by the Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. The exhibition is curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah.

About the Artist and Curator

Amoako Boafo was born in 1984 and raised in Osu, Accra in Ghana. He studied at the Ghanatta College of Art and Design in Accra in 2007, before attending the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria. Boafo was awarded the jury prize, Walter Koschatzky Art Prize in 2017, and the STRABAG Art award International in 2019 both in Vienna, Austria. In 2019, he participated in a residency with the new Rubell Museum in Miami, Florida and in 2020 collaborated with Dior for their Spring/Summer 2021 Men's Collection. His work is widely collected by private and public collectors and institutions, most recently by Leopold Museum, Los Angeles County Museum

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Amoako Bofo, *Monstera Leaf Cape*, 2021. Paper transfer and oil on canvas, 47.2 x 39.4 inches. Courtesy the artist.

CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming, and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

Hours

Wed 11AM-6PM
Thu 11AM-9PM
Fri 11AM-6PM
Sat 11AM-6PM
Sun 11AM-6PM

Museum admission is free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Rubell Museum, Marieluise Hessel Collection, the Aishti Foundation, Hessel Museum of Art, The Pizzuti Collection of Columbus Museum of Art, and the Albertina Museum in Vienna. Bofo is represented by Roberts Projects, Los Angeles and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, Chicago and Paris.

Larry Ossei-Mensah uses contemporary art as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. The Ghanaian-American curator and cultural critic has organized exhibitions and programs at commercial and non-profit spaces around the globe from New York City to Rome featuring artists such as Firelei Baez, Ebony G. Patterson, Glenn Kaino, and Stanley Whitney to name a few. Ossei-Mensah currently serves as Curator-at-Large at BAM, where he curated The New York Times' heralded exhibition *Let Free Ring*. In 2021, he co-curated the critically acclaimed 7th Athens Biennial - *ECLIPSE* with OMSK Social Club in Athens, Greece.

About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally. Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.

Support

Support for *Amoako Bofo: Soul of Black Folks* is provided by Louise Jamail, with additional support from Glenn and Debbie August, Jeffrey Childers and Onay Gutierrez, Scott and Judy Nyquist, and Anita and Gerald Smith.

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is funded in part by the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance.

