



# Museum of New Hymns for the Confused

A solo exhibition by Phoka Nyokong



# Exhibition Statement

## **Museum of New Hymns for the Confused**

**A solo exhibition by Phoka Nyokong, 2019 Absa L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award winner**

These paintings were produced while in residency at NIROX in 2022. They build on an ongoing series entitled, *Ethnology for Genocide: The History Paintings*. The series focuses on the entanglement of African cultural heritage with western anthropology, ethnology, museology, religion and psychology, particularly the so-called expedition orchestrated by the British against the Beninean kingdom in the late 19th century, which culminated in the destruction and looting of Benin's cultural art objects.

The paintings explore the politics and poetics of restorative culture, cultivating a speculative history through reimagining traditional myths from West Africa. This approach is premised on the understanding that the history of painting and sculpture — a genre traditionally reserved for Europeans — used motifs originating from Africa. My enquiry is, therefore, directed at the appropriation of some elements employed by classical Western painters. This includes the role of painting as propaganda (as seen in neo-classical times). Here, the medium becomes lithography, another classically refined process, once again alluding to my preoccupation with the use of classical (thought) processes in addressing contemporary questions of cultural heritage in Africa.

Through myth and satire, these works recall the classical (yet veiled) co-conspiring to enable the then theft of African cultural heritage. It also alludes to our collective confusion after re-emerging from a devastating international pandemic, as a hymn and metaphor for the imagined re-emergence of African cultural objects.



**Portrait of the Artist by the Artist**  
A self-portrait by the artist, featuring a small portrait of the artist at the top left and a larger, more abstract portrait below it.





# Phoka Nyokong

## Artist's biography

Phoka Nyokong is an artist, curator, writer and researcher. His practice is transdisciplinary, working across performance, sound/video and installation, photography, storytelling, curating, writing, drawing and a current extensive focus on painting. Previous exhibitions have been with mostly public institutions, and a few with private institutions. These include the Aardklop Arts Festival (2013), the Turbine Art Fair (2018 and 2019), the Pretoria Art Museum, Lizamore and Associates, the 2019 Absa L'Atelier Exhibition at the Absa Gallery in Johannesburg, the Ernest Mancoba Dialouge at A4 Arts Foundation (2020) in Cape Town, with the most recent group show being Black Luminosity with Smac Gallery in Stellenbosch. 2020 saw his first institutional solo exhibition titled Dinoolwane, Matlotlo le Baloi, at the North-West University Art Gallery, Potchefstroom.

Nyokong holds an honours in Curatorship from the Centre for Curating the Archive (CCA), and currently lives and works between Pretoria and Cape Town, where he is working towards his MA in Live Art, Interdisciplinary and Public Art with the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at the University of Cape Town.

He received the Absa L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award for 2019, the Mellon Scholarship in 2019, and most recently, the Live Art Fellowship from the Institute for Creative Arts at University of Cape Town.





**The Benin Conference (scramble for Europa)**

Triptych on loose canvas, Oils and glitter on linen  
2050 x 2750 mm  
2022

Unframed  
**ZAR 100 000**



**Theatre for the History of Refusal**

Gouache on brown paper  
1260 x 2020 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 48 200**



**Drawing in defense of the Confused**

Pastel, oils and glitter on arches  
1900 x 1140 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 48 200**



**Drawing in defense of the Confused**

Pastel and glitter on arches  
1250 x 1840 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 48 200**





**Drawing in defense of the Confused**

Gouache and glitter on arches  
1070 x 1120 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 27 200**



**Petelelo ya Benin (the Rape of Benin)**

Oils and glitter on cotton  
1090,5 x 1580 mm  
2022

Unframed  
**ZAR 33 000**



**Adoration of the Oba**

Oils and glitter on cotton  
1100 x 710, 5 mm  
2022

Unframed  
**ZAR 15 000**



**View of the Governor's interior with power figures, head and other things**

Pastel and glitter on arches  
1150 x 1340 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 27 200**



**Sekolo sa kwa Benin (School of Benin)**

Pastel and glitter on brown paper  
1250 x 1670 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 40 000**



**A Headrest for Matriachs**

Pastel and glitter on arches  
800 x 1000 mm  
2023

Framed  
**ZAR 23 500**



**Thero kwa Igodomigodo (sermon at Igodomigodo)**

Gouache on brown paper  
1270 x 1130 mm  
2022

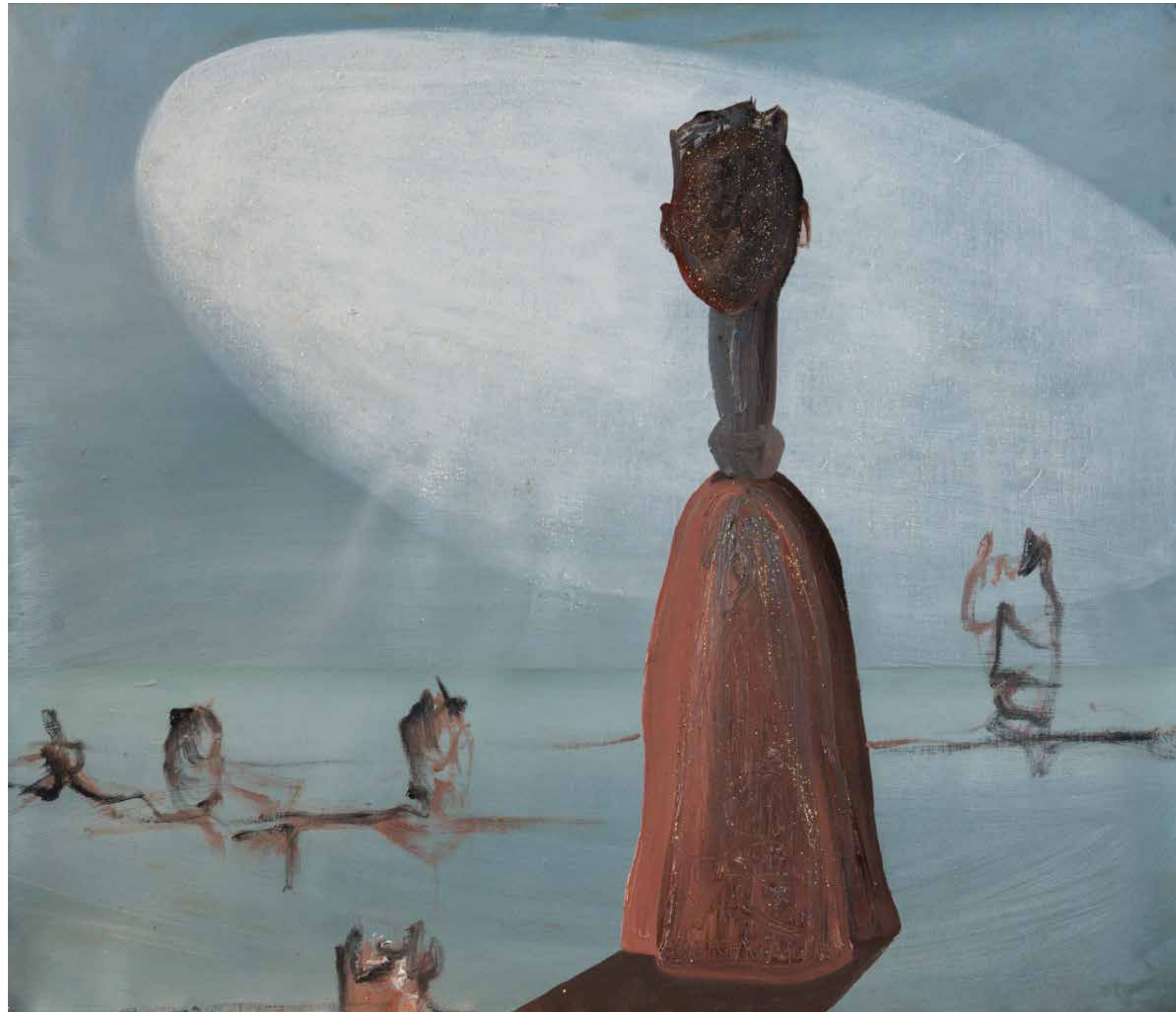
Framed  
**ZAR 27 200**



**Green portrait (Sankara)**

Oils and glitter on linen  
850 x 750 mm  
2022

Unframed  
**ZAR 6 700**



**Blue portrait (K.S D)**

Oils and glitter on linen  
710 x 850 mm  
2022

Unframed  
**ZAR 6 700**



**The Benin tableau (for Charles Nkosi)**

Pastel and glitter  
1270 x 1000 mm  
2022

Framed  
**ZAR 27 200**



**Allegory for Mukomberanwa**

Water colour pencils on pastel paper  
481 x661 mm  
2013

Framed  
**ZAR 6 700**



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These paintings are a collection of stories or what is called 'the world of the artist'. The artist is a young man from the townships of Johannesburg, South Africa. He is a self-taught artist who has been painting since he was a child. His work is a mix of traditional and contemporary art. He uses a variety of materials and techniques to create his pieces. His art is a reflection of his life and the world around him. It is a way for him to express his thoughts and feelings. His work is a testament to his talent and his dedication to his craft.

For more information about Phoka's art, visit his website.





[www.latelier.absa.africa](http://www.latelier.absa.africa)  
[www.absa-arthotspot.online](http://www.absa-arthotspot.online)