



UN Women's New Benefit Auction and Show Spotlight Black Women Artists across the World



Ascendants XII (And Still I Rise), 2021, UN Women Benefit Auction, \$36,000 (2 bids)

Over the past several decades, we've witnessed many notable strides and attempts to fill crucial art history gaps, yet Black women artists are still frequently held back. And though the art world's traditions of gatekeeping persist, the work of countless committed researchers, curators, archivists, and historians has proven that women artists of African descent are beyond due to receive well-deserved recognition, support, and patronage.

This July, UN Women—the branch of the United Nations dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment—is holding “A Force for Change—UN Women: Benefit Auction 2021.” The online auction, which opens exclusively on Artsy today and runs through July 30th, will benefit UN Women's Black Women Programme, which will support a number of Black women-led organizations across the globe. Works in the sale will be shown in a group exhibition in New York organized by curator and art advisor Erin Jenoa Gilbert, open from July 27th through 31st at 530 West 25th Street in Chelsea. The show features 26 rising women artists of African descent working across photography, painting, drawing, sculpture, and film. Proceeds from the auction will go to UN Women's Black Women Programme and the featured artists.

“A Force for Change” spotlights work from esteemed names like Cassi Namoda, Wangari Mathenge, and Tschabalala Self, but also from lesser-known artists living and working in Africa, the Caribbean, South and Central America, Europe, and the United States, like Cinthia Sifa Mulanga, Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi, and Sungi Mlengeya.

“Racial justice and gender inequality are not separate but integrally linked—and UN Women’s work prioritizes both,” said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, in a recent press release. She added, “Through the global Black Women Programme, and this exhibition that will raise funding for that work, we will support Black women’s movements and organizations in different parts of the world to foster closer ties and give greater power to their voice and actions.”

As Gilbert wrote in the exhibition’s curatorial statement, the featured works are “statements of survival and of solidarity.” In many ways, they nod to the survival of the past year; the deep psychological impact that the pandemic made upon countless individuals worldwide; and the way that COVID-19 exacerbated many of the conditions of oppression that marginalized communities were already facing. Even more so, the works draw on the spirit of ancestral survival that African diasporic women carry with them every day—from the constant acts of oppression over the past 400 years to all the moments of joy in between. The works are statements of solidarity with Black women whose lives have been taken due to racial violence; women around the world who are leading social justice movements, like the Black Lives Matter movement and Until Freedom organization; and everyday Black women who look out for each other when the world doesn’t look out for us.

Daria Harper - Edited version – full article available at <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-womens-new-benefit-auction-spotlight-black-women-artists>