

Painting the Human Figure in the Era of Black Lives Matter

The human figure has long been linked to the narrative of struggle and resistance by black artists. Cementing the idea of the figure as a contested site of expression in painting, South African painter David Koloane (1938-2019), one of the most influential artists of the apartheid years, issued this statement:

My work can be said to reflect the sociopolitical landscape of South Africa both past and present. The sociopolitical conditions created by the apartheid system of government have to a large extent transfixed the human condition as the axis around which my work evolves. The human figure has become the icon of creative expression.¹

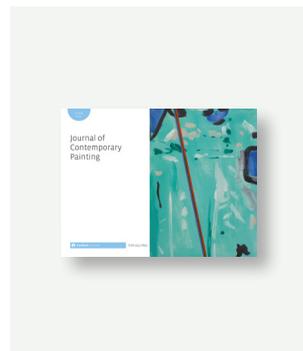
JCP issue 7.1 brings the discussion of the human figure in contemporary painting up to date by examining its current role in debates around power and race, as well as by speculating on the legacies it hopes to leave. As critical race studies assume a rightful prominence, educational and other institutions move to 'decolonise' with varying degrees of success. In addition, the Black Lives Matter movement has spread rapidly, building momentum with a network that spans the globe, and its influence on contemporary art practices is beginning to be played out. Work by eminent painters such as Kerry James Marshall, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Kehinde Wiley, Amy Sherald, Michael Armitage and Njideka Akunyili Crosby is currently exerting an important presence at biennales, galleries and museums, paving the way for future contributions by black artists worldwide. By investigating the relevance of figurative painting to political resistance, this timely and important issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Painting* addresses the broad concerns of the agency of contemporary painting and its modes of representation.

This Call for Papers is particularly interested in critical writing and other forms of contribution from artists and writers in the field on a range of topics, including:

- how notions of materiality and erasure are manifest in painting and drawing practices
- the practices and politics of portraiture
- explorations of generational influence
- new strategies for narrative and historical revisionist painting
- the pedagogical use of painting practices

The call is seeking contributions from a wide geographical spread and welcomes 300 words abstracts to the editorial group via the jcp@rca.ac.uk in the first instance. Two leading painters in this field, **Alexandria Smith** and **Dr Kimathi Donkor**, who are recent additions to JCP's Advisory Board will be editing this issue alongside artists and JCP Editors **Kelly Chorpene** and **Professor Rebecca Fortnum**.

Abstracts should be submitted by 30 November 2020; Full papers by February 2021



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CALL FOR PAPERS

1. The Artists Press www.artprintsa.com/davidkoloane.html. Accessed 25th September 2020.