

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Artist: Lionel Smit
Date of Installation: 28 November 2022
Location: Kennedy Plaza
Partners & Sponsors: Mayor Jorge O. Elorza, City of Providence, Providence City Council

Kennedy Plaza
Providence
Rhode Island
United States of America

Sculpture Details:

Title: Morphous
Medium: Bronze
Dimensions: 375.8 x 135 x 240.8cm
Edition: 3 of 4
Date: 2014

We are excited to announce that Lionel Smit’s monumental bronze sculpture *Morphous* has found a permanent home at the *Kennedy Plaza*, downtown *Providence, RI*.



The unveiling of Lionel Smit’s *Morphous* as a permanent installation in *Kennedy Plaza, Providence* known as *The Creative Capital* on November 28, 2022 was made possible by the American Recovery Protection Act in collaboration with The Avenue Concept, Mayor of Providence, Jorge O. Elorza and PVD Art Culture and Tourism.

Cape Town (ZA) , 09 December 2022 – The permanent installation of *Morphous* in Kennedy Plaza, downtown Providence, RI is a wonderful celebration of South African artist *Lionel Smit*’s monumental bronze sculpture marking the end of 2022. The time of the sculpture’s installation in Providence, is also a time of transition broadly in The United States, and locally in Rhode Island. It is a powerful message of representation to consider this reference to *Janus* when depicting a young Black woman.

"Dedicated to the beautifully diverse community of Providence, my home. All the past and all the future meet at this very moment. Care deeply, question all, dream big, and create the new now." - Mayor Jorge O. Elorza, *The Creative Capital*, November 28, 2022

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Smit's particular piece evokes a question of time, of past and future, and the balance point at which his country found itself at the time of the sculpture's creation in 2014, one year after Nelson Mandela's passing. In 2014, South Africa embarked upon yet another chapter, a post-Apartheid and post-Nelson Mandela South Africa, a future South Africa. This *double-vision* is a foretelling, and an acknowledgement of what has already passed and an anticipation of what is still to come.

The figures are charged with an emotive and gestural energy, a hallmark of Smit's evocative work. Viewers familiar with Ancient Roman mythology and iconography will undoubtedly think of Janus, the double headed deity of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages, frames, and endings.

Morphous travelled to several cities being exhibited as a temporary installation across the United States, including Union Square in New York City (2017), Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (MOCA Miami, 2018), Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey (2022) before finally finding a life-long home in Kennedy Square.

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The journey of *Morphous* and exhibitions or previous installations it has been included in :

2022 - Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey

Grounds for Sculptures is a museum exhibition , sculpture garden and arboretum where art and nature are always at play.

Outdoors, nearly 300 contemporary sculptures are sited across 42 landscaped acres. Indoors, temporary exhibitions from established and emerging artists are featured in six galleries. Engaging and educational programs for all ages are offered year-round, and may include lectures from top minds, hands-on workshops, tours, concerts, and performances. *Grounds For Sculpture* was founded by artist and philanthropist Seward Johnson. It opened in 1992 on the former New Jersey State Fairgrounds and was a natural extension of its predecessor, The Johnson Atelier. Hundreds of artists studied and produced work at the Atelier, and Johnson saw the potential of the neighbouring bygone fairgrounds as a place where artwork could be sited within the landscape, and visitors could delight in discovering contemporary sculpture. More than 700 artists have had their work on view here. The collection contains sculpture by 150 artists, including Clement Meadmore, Anthony Caro, Beverly Pepper, Kiki Smith, George Segal, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Isaac Witkin, Joyce J. Scott, Willie Cole, and founder Seward Johnson. Many sculptors attribute their roots here, and each year, more artists are offered the unique opportunity to create new site-specific work for the galleries or outdoors. Grounds For Sculpture is a public not-for-profit organisation governed by a Board of Trustees who oversee the successful operation of the sculpture park and museum. As a nonprofit public institution, Grounds For Sculpture relies on the support of visitors, art patrons, donations and grants to offer its rich programs and activities each year.

July 22 – October 21, 2017 - Helen Day Art Center 90 Pond Street, Stowe, VT

With significant support from the Stowe community, the outdoor sculpture exhibition *Exposed* celebrated it's 26th year this summer 2017. Building on a tradition of excellence, this exhibition featured internationally renowned sculptors Mark di Suvero and Lionel Smit, alongside New York artist Victoria Palermo, and regionally established artists Judith Wrend, Walter Horak, Christopher Curtis, Ted Ceraldi, Karen Petersen, Tom Douglas, Rodrigo Nava, Colin Moore. Mark di Suvero.

The inclusion of the Lionel Smit sculpture *Morphous*, bronze, 375.8 x 135 x 240.8cm, edition 3 of 4, 2014 was made possible by the generous loan of Cynthia-Reeves.

March 8 – May 6, 2018 - Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami

The museum exhibition titled *Obscura* by Lionel Smit, in collaboration with *MOCA Miami*, explores how we are shaped — and placed — by our identity. Specifically, the paintings and sculptures included in this exhibition are representative of a group of people who are multiethnic and multicultural, and whose identity is constantly evolving. In probing how we are shaped – and placed – by our identity, Smit homes in on an ethnic group with a rich, complex and often fraught history: the Cape Malay people of Cape Town.

Through the visages contemplated in his sculptures and paintings, Smit closely observes this fluidity, challenging simplistic race-based physical stereotypes by depicting a succession of dynamic and multifaceted personae. His subjects may identify with a particular group, but their diversity within that social structure renders them unique. Observing the tension between abstraction and representation, here is a sense of unity conveyed by

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Smit's portraits in *Obscura*, with the multiplicity of partial or fragmented representations serving to create a holistic image in the mind's eye.

Psychology tells us that often, that which appears to obscure can, in fact, serve to reveal, imply and illuminate. We invite the observer to contemplate the secrets belying these ostensibly inscrutable faces in Lionel Smit's *Obscura*.

The Lionel Smit sculpture *Morphous*, bronze, 375.8 x 135 x 240.8cm, edition 3 of 4, 2014 was a centre-piece to the show.

June 13 – April 30, 2017 - Union Square, New York City

This latest work by Lionel Smit, *Morphous*, is an exploration of hybrid identity and its ever-changing nature within South Africa's social landscape. This particular piece evokes a question of time, of past and future, and the balance point at which his country finds itself as it embarks on the next chapter of a post-Apartheid and post-Nelson Mandela South Africa, a future South Africa. This *double-vision* is a foretelling, and an acknowledgement of what has already passed, a societal commentary without judgment

Working in tandem with municipalities, non-profit entities, curators and public parks, the exhibition *INFLUX*, as part of *The Avenue Concept* consecutive public art exhibitions realised by the *Cynthia-Reeves gallery*, international and museum exhibiting artists Lionel Smit, Jonathan Prince, JaeHyo Lee and George Sherwood were publicly installed. Featured in downtown Providence, Rhodes Island is Smit's *Colossal Fragment* sculpture (Bronze, 315 x 180 x 110cm, Edition 3 of 6, 2016).

With significant support from the Stowe community, the outdoor sculpture exhibition *Exposed* featured internationally renowned sculptors Mark di Suvero and Lionel Smit, alongside New York artist Victoria Palermo, and regionally established artists Judith Wrend, Walter Horak, Christopher Curtis, Ted Ceraldi, Karen Petersen, Tom Douglas, Rodrigo Nava, Colin Moore. Mark di Suvero. This was with the inclusion of the Lionel Smit sculpture *Morphous* (Bronze, 375.8 x 135 x 240.8cm, Edition 3 of 4, 2014). Curated by Rachel Moore, Director and Curator at the *Helen Day Art Center* and Stephanie Walker, Assistant Curator.

NYC Parks' Art in the Parks program has consistently fostered the creation and installation of temporary public art in parks throughout the five boroughs. Since 1967, collaborations with arts organisations and artists have produced hundreds of public art projects in New York City parks.

The Union Square Partnership (USP) is a not-for-profit community-based organisation proudly serving the 14th Street-Union Square neighbourhood for 40 years. *USP's* mission is to improve the quality-of-life for the district's residents, businesses and visitors, by providing public safety, sanitation, economic development and marketing services, and investing in the beautification of *Union Square Park*.

Cynthia Reeves, in collaboration with the *New York City Parks Department*, the *Union Square Association*, and *Art New York*, presented *Morphous*, a bronze sculpture by South African Artist Lionel Smit, installed in Union Square. The sculpture is an exploration of hybrid identity and its ever-changing nature in South Africa's social landscape.

Media:

[Lionel Smit unveils 'MORPHOUS' in Union Square, New York by Art Africa](#)

[Museum of Contemporary Art \(MOCA\), North Miami Presents "Obscura" by South African Artist Lionel Smit, March 8 – May 6, 2018 by Duree & Company](#)

[Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Lionel Smit: Obscura, 2018 by Chana Budgazad Sheldon](#)

Press Releases:

[CYNTHIA-REEVES OPENS LANDMARK SCULPTURE INSTALLATION IN UNION SQUARE, NYC](#)

Photo's:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/khbrfna4b82xc4n/AAxGVizpUltK_Zr1qpUVIFPa?dl=0

Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/171392845>

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About the artist: Lionel Smit

Lionel Smit was born in Pretoria in 1982, and lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa. His artistic diversity is pursued through a variety of mediums, and he is best known for his contemporary portraiture. Smit's work has been the subject of several international solo exhibitions. His painting has been exhibited at the *National Portrait Gallery* in London receiving the *Visitors' Choice - BP Portrait Award 2013*. Museum shows include solo exhibitions at *MOCA Miami (Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami)* and at the *Didrichsen Art Museum* in Helsinki, Finland.

Lionel Smit is one of South Africa's most prolific and exalted artists. His artistic diversity is pursued through a variety of mediums and he is best known for his contemporary portraiture. His art is defined by a deeply rooted symbiotic relationship between sculpture and painting. Today, each of Lionel Smit's works offers us an entry point into the variety and richness that lies beneath every face we encounter in life, whether applied in bronze or paint. The blending of techniques across genres is a display of Smit's work in multiple media, all bearing a visible and tangible overlap.

www.lionelsmit.com

About Lionel Smit Studio

The home of Lionel Smit is an awe-inspiring studio located in the historical Paardevlei precinct in Somerset West, 40 km from the City of Cape Town, South Africa. Lionel Smit Studio aspires to serve all people through exploring and experiencing art and creativity, as well as encouraging curiosity and appreciation of the world of visual art.

The studio believes in accessibility and aims for the highest standard of quality in all its endeavours. It is not only an art gallery, but a destination where you'll find space and inspiration through art, and architecture.

For further press information and images:

Veronica Kotze
veronica@lionelsmit.co.za
+21205 6867
www.lionelsmitstudio.com