

## Hamid Nii Nortey

Faith in Strangers

February 14 – March 19, 2022

Organised by Daniel Lippitsch and David Omari

**Hamid Nii Nortey (b. 1987)** lives and works in Accra, Ghana. His most recent body of work will be displayed in his first European solo exhibition *Faith in Strangers*. This compelling series of paintings addresses the diverse socio-political intricacies of migration, spanning from historical references, via expatriatism to political persecution.

Nortey, a self taught emerging Ghanaian artist, developed his interest in painting as a pupil in Mandla Dada basic school in La Accra, Ghana, and stood witness to the city's considerable transformation from then on. His compelling and colorful figurative paintings delve into Ghana and the continents fast evolving social landscape shedding a light onto its diverse social classes, as well as the resulting generational developments. Nortey's works are characterized by his signature cross hatching technique which he applies onto the skins of his figures. Contrasting the artist's broad and smooth Impressionist colour palette, the close-knit parallel lines, varying in spacing and width, create a rough, loose organic texture, conveying the at once visual and tactile qualities of natural skin. Starting from meticulous and playful sketches, his portraits grow into lifelike, and lively, visual impressions.

He reflects upon his engagement with architectural structures to create sceneries of different composition, modern home decor and different image perspectives that resonate and compel his viewers to be physically and emotionally invested in the subjects story.

The exhibition *Faith in Strangers* is separated into two sections with the first focusing on historical as well contemporary aspects of African and Afro-American migration, which is being resembled by the central work group depicting the Great Migration in the US. The Great Migration described the movement of six million African Americans from rural areas of the Southern states to urban areas in the Northern states between 1916-1970, which was motivated to escape racial violence and pursue economic and educational opportunities in the North. Nortey furthermore discusses forms of African migration in daily situations as well as through the depiction of *Fulani Pathways*, referring to the ethnic group of the Fulani, who were considered as one of the largest nomadic ethnic groups contributing to the rich cultural landscape of Western Africa.

The second section focuses on the juxtaposition between forced migration and leisure travel to present the significant differences in how Western perception can diverge from African reality. Forced migration being motivated by internal and external conflicts, referring to the refugee crisis over the last years is being portrayed in elemental visual forms such as despair, helplessness, violence and death. In conjunction with this, the works *After a while just living becomes a full-time job*, *no wonder we need a break* and *Pleasure without champagne is artificial* deliver a contrasting reality of the economically affluent part of African society and also deliver a tragically self-reflecting irony.

The central dialogue created in *Faith in Strangers* is being addressed by Nortey's meticulous analysis to dissect historical, political as well as social aspects of African and Afro-American issues, being expressed through the concept of migration, by displaying it in its violent and joyful reality.