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Shendi, Sam (1975 –)  
Conversation with a Bird  
Fibreglass/resin

# A DOSE OF ART AND CULTURE

*As you head south along William Nicol towards Sandton you can't help but notice the large distinctive outdoor banner announcing in bold, bright, uplifting colours the current contemporary exhibition being held at Graham's Fine Art Gallery in Bryanston.*

The charismatic personality at the helm of this 800 square foot gallery is Graham Britz, who has close to 30 years' experience in the art market, specifically South African modern art, such as Irma Stern, Gerard Sekoto, JH Pierneef, Alexis Preller, Maggie Laubser, Walter Battiss and Robert Hodgins. More recently, however, the gallery's contemporary programme has developed a strong identity, and the 2017 programme is filled up with returning artists, and new ones, to introduce to the South African art

market and public at large.

Graham is a staunch 'painting person' (oil on canvas particularly) and believes that in today's global world a good painting will always be relevant, no matter where the artist hails from. Neither is he afraid of beauty, or believing in and supporting a sophisticated universal aesthetic.

Paintings exhibited at the gallery are "All to be seen in light, line, form and colour. The gallery is a celebration of the organic functioning of interrelated disciplines of architecture, art and design," explains Graham, who encourages visitors to "tap into the universal creative energy."

To this end, the gallery actively seeks to represent artists whose subject matter and application of oil on canvas is expressive and positively uplifting, and whose use of colour is highly emotive. Perhaps most unique from other South African galleries, however, is the lack of importance placed on political or social statements and whether or not the artist is specifically African. The gallery currently represents artists from Germany, Russia, Holland, London and Egypt.

In her second solo exhibition at the gallery, Jennifer Morrison's bold and colourful exhibition, *ColourFlux*, will launch the gallery's 2017 calendar. Morrison's work deals predominantly with colour and shape, and she uses these elements to explore juxtaposition, repetition, movement and rhythm. For example, thin and thick application of paint, dense versus transparent strokes, ordered pattern and free pattern, ad hoc marks, controlled brushstrokes and ones that allow for accident and free rein. Painting is, for Morrison "a physical encounter of freedom; it is essentially a bodily act and experience".

Morrison explores the way that abstraction allows for ambiguity, and does not necessarily need or want definitive answers or didactic explanations. "Whether it is a plant or clouds or smudges on a wall, these can all serve as inspiration for me and act as a starting point for a painting. My inspiration comes from the world around me and then it becomes something of its own. It is sifted through my memory and imaginings," says Morrison.



Although she has lived in London for two decades, the vivid colours of South Africa have never left her and remain a central influence in her work. Born in Durban, Morrison initially studied art at Natal Technikon and later at the University of South Africa but soon left to pursue her studies in London where she attended the Chelsea College of Art and Design and graduated from the prestigious Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design. She has enjoyed solo exhibitions in London, and has exhibited in group shows in London and New York, as well as appearing in various corporate venues. Her work can be found in private collections in South Africa, Singapore and London. The opening night of Morrison's exhibition at Graham's Fine Art Gallery on the 26th of January starts at 6pm and the exhibition concludes on the 11th March 2017.

March sees the first solo exhibition in South Africa of Egyptian born sculptor, Sam Shendi. Now living in the UK, Shendi creates joyfully coloured abstractions of the human figure, which with the subtlest of indicators, hints at the complexity of human interactions. His sculptures reference 'minimalism', the style of paring-down design elements and focusing on the medium of steel, aluminium and paint. His works whittle down the human figure to its simplest form enabling the exploration of the idea of the human form as a vessel. By reducing the human body to a minimal shape, his creations become centred on an emotion or an expression.

Shendi's colourful architectural forms abbreviate the human figure and nod to his background in monumental sculpture and interior design. His works are a fine balance between public art, sculpture and design. He juxtaposes cartoonish lemon, ultraviolet and pumpkin-coloured blocks, conjuring associations with children's toys and industrial design, lending his pieces an emotive and playful quality. His candy-coated palette animates the archetypal themes he addresses in his work. Shendi has held group shows in and around London and Amsterdam and solo exhibitions in London and Berlin.

So next time you are sitting in bumper-to-bumper, rush hour traffic along William Nicol, why not make a small detour at Dover Road and pop into Graham's Fine Art Gallery for your monthly "dose of art and culture" (as described by one recent visitor). There is always a cappuccino, glass of wine, or champagne on offer too! ■

Photos: Courtesy Graham's Fine Art Gallery

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