



REVIEW / FAY JACKSON

LIONEL SMIT MORPHOUS

CIRCA



Lionel Smit, Maquette for *Morphous*, 2014. Bronze, 241 cm. Edition of 4 x 42 cm. Courtesy of Lionel Smit Studio.

Attempting to make the amorphous 'morphous' through the polymorphous exploration of a single figure; Lionel Smit's most recent body of work is a tactile exploration of the hybrid identity of the Cape Malay woman and her ever emerging and fluctuating experiences within South Africa's psycho-social landscape.

Paired charcoal drawings of the pensive subject, explored throughout 'Morphous', feature delicate, expressive line work over digitally manipulated Rorschach inkblots in red and blue, complementing and augmenting the exhibition's thematic premise. Although addressing issues surrounding the impact of racial segregation during apartheid and the

ensuing social inequities, Smit's motivation is not political. Rather, he focuses on how politics can act as a catalyst for exploring the human condition or, in this case, human identity. Beautiful bronze sculptures, featuring Smit's trademark dripping, painterly texture, are split down the centre, their sliced interiors a brilliant reflective gold. A small maquette in a vivid blue patina paves the way for the monumental work installed in Circa on Jellicoe's main oval exhibition space.

At the same time austere and serene, the enormous sculptural work dominates the gallery space, twin faces appearing to emerge from beneath the textured surface of the

bronze. Resonant with the energy of Smit's movements and gestures, the surface of the work is expressive, as if swiftly conjured in an emotive moment. Encircled by a ring of contrasting colour made up of a deep orange spice, the entire room is infused with a pungent aroma, summoning associations and vivid memories in the way that only a scent can. 'Morphous' embraces a state of ambiguity and fluidity, where decontextualised figures simultaneously merge and divide.