

**Cinga SAMSON**

*What to See Right Now in New York Art Galleries*

*March 2020*

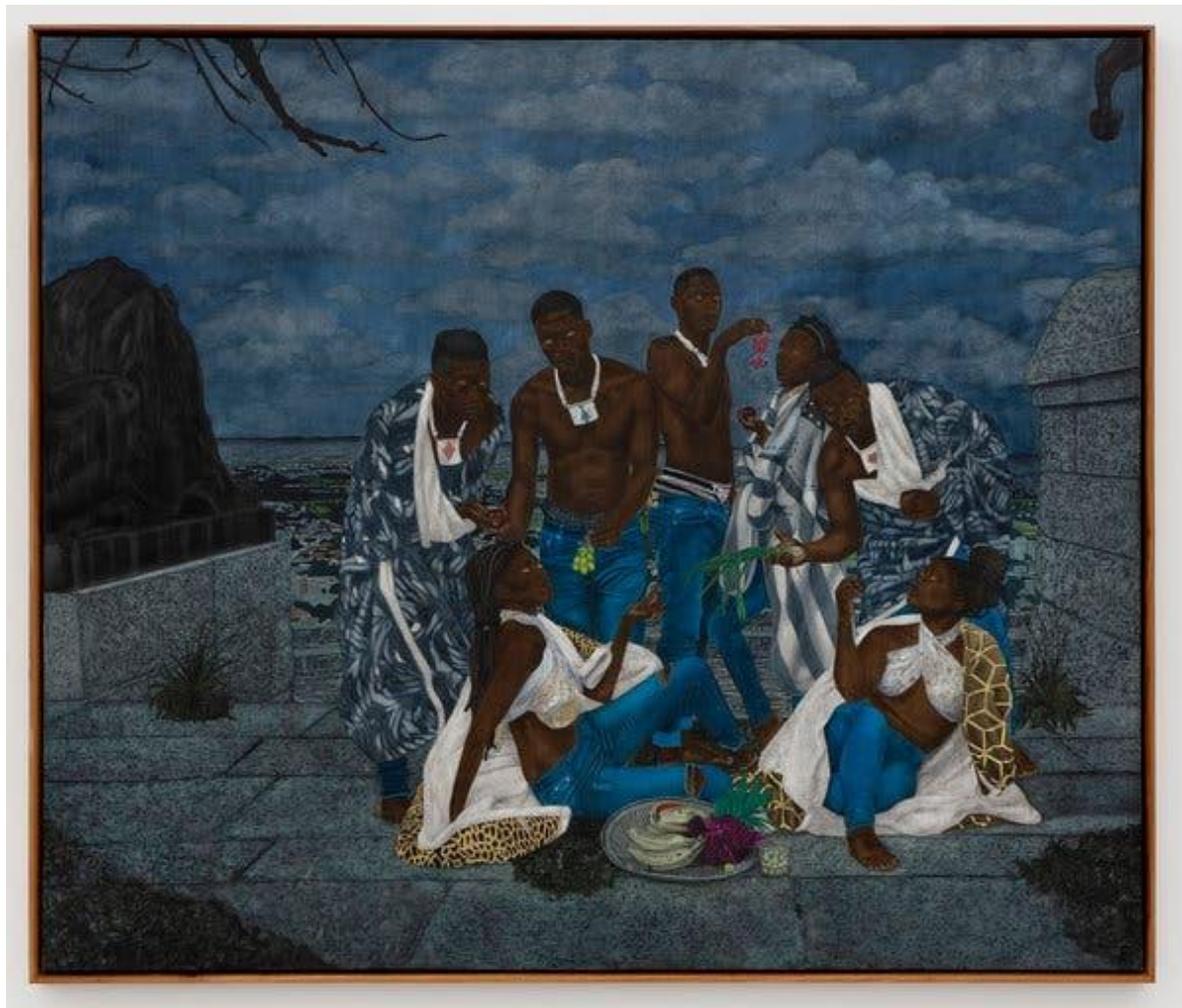
# What to See Right Now in New York Art Galleries

Ja'Tovia Gary's film installation; Trevor Shimizu's landscapes; Kurt Schwerdtfeger's light-and-color work; Cinga Samson's portraits.

[...]

## **Cinga Samson**

Through April 11. Perrotin, 130 Orchard Street, Manhattan; 212-812-2902, [perrotin.com](http://perrotin.com).



“Inyongo 1,” by the South African painter Cinga Samson, at Perrotin. Credit...Cinga Samson and Perrotin

The South African painter Cinga Samson's first U.S. solo show, "Amadoda Akafani, Afana Ngeentshebe Zodwa (men are different, though they look alike)" at Perrotin, is triumphantly single-minded. His portraits are made in oil the slow, painstaking way, with a dark, compressed palette and close attention to backdrop detail; his figures, alone or in groups, exude a commitment to daily joy edged with swagger.

A country kid from the Eastern Cape who made his way to Cape Town and its rough, sprawling Khayelitsha township, Mr. Samson bulled his way into a local art center and rose from there, undaunted by rejections from university art programs and determined to both inhabit and extend the art-history canon. His characters are black people, unperturbed and living their best lives; they mix jeans and undershirts with Xhosa robes and beads, tote shopping bags from the mall, feed each other grapes in a Dionysian scene at the Cecil Rhodes memorial, brandish a red lollipop against the green overgrowth of a lush urban pastoral.

Then there are the eyes. Mr. Samson leaves them empty, milky ovals on otherwise finely rendered faces that invert the quizzical gaze of figures in a Belkis Ayón collograph, and echo the ghostly migrants returned from a sea disaster who prowl Dakar in Mati Diop's film "Atlantics," demanding accounts. Mr. Samson's people — including himself, through a set of small, intense self-portraits in the upstairs gallery — aren't angry, but won't cooperate with the viewer's gaze. They navigate an exploitative world without sacrifice, spiritually armed. *SIDDHARTHA MITTER*