

Timothy Taylor



Sahara Longe, *Police Man*, 2023 © Sahara Longe

Sahara Longe

New Shapes

2 June — 8 July 2023

Private View: Friday 2 June, 5 — 8pm

15 Bolton Street, London

Timothy Taylor is pleased to present *New Shapes*, a new exhibition by British artist Sahara Longe (b. 1994), on view at the London gallery from 2 June to 8 July 2023. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery and first solo exhibition in the UK, which will be followed by a solo presentation of paintings at Frieze Seoul in September 2023.

In Longe's new body of work, highly stylized abstraction overlays a documentary approach. Like the British painter L.S. Lowry, whose cartoon-like crowd scenes of industrial English workers influenced Longe, the artist takes the everyday for inspiration: the crowd passing through her local Brixton train station, sports, offices, or people walking in the street. The title, *New Shapes*, signals a newly geometric departure in the artist's compositions.

The paintings recall ordinary social rituals, yet Longe imbues these scenes with discomfiting, uncanny abstract forms that allude to contemporary urban tensions. In *Police Man* (2023), a large-scale diptych, ghostly silhouettes confront a blue-suited London police officer. As in many of Longe's works, figures

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gaze past one another as if unaware of the presence of others, their blank expressions, bell-shaped coats and dresses, and frieze-like arrangement conspiring to distance them from the viewer.

Longe's interest in society as a kind of performance or facade has a strong tradition in post-war British portraiture. In *Office Scene* (2023), a diptych set in an office, three men and women in dark suits float around a black cube recalling the invisible cages of Francis Bacon's 1950s portraits, which referenced stages or arenas as metaphors for the repression of urban life. Though Longe provides no hint of context, her paintings give a sense of peering into a vitrine, a voyeuristic act both hidden and revealed. They burn with quiet sympathy for the men and women she translates, and their inability to reach past their own dissociation.

Painted in soft, murky shades of cobalt green, blue, and crisp cadmium white, Longe's paintings take a pared-down and focused approach to social documentation. "They're snapshots of people," Longe explains of the series. "I imagine what people are doing, and saying, and create my own story about what their lives might be like."

About the Artist

Sahara Longe (b. 1994, London, UK) is a British artist who lives and works in London. Vibrantly coloured and often large in scale, Longe's soft, flat-edged portraits focus on the mysteries of human psychology in social interactions. Longe was classically trained in a Florentine studio under a tradition of portrait painters dating back to John Singer Sargent. There, Longe learned to create the glazes and raw pigments modelled on lost Old Master painting methods that she continues to use today.

Selected solo exhibitions include Frieze London (2022) and Deli Gallery, New York (2022). Longe has been included in institutional group exhibitions including The Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022); York Art Museum (2022); Palazzo Monti, Brescia (2021). Longe's work is in significant private and public collections worldwide including the York Art Gallery, UK; The FLAG Art Foundation, NY; and the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection.

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