

## **SHIRLEY VILLAVICENCIO PIZANGO**

The paintings and objects of Shirley Villavicencio Pizango (°1988, Lima, Peru) enable the viewer to become acquainted with the cross continent histories and people that surround the Ghent based artist. Through the use of brightly coloured brushstrokes to depict her friends and families, she creates a microcosmos that is defined by her personal memories and the drive to understand the different identities around her.

The process of painting is very important to the Belgian Peruvian artist: it allows her to capture these emotional identities. Especially during the modelling sessions, a bond is created between the artist and the person in front of her. She continuously transfers her personal memory that is dearly precious to the artist, into a figure on the painterly surface. Transferring her deeply intimate relation into something recognisable for all viewers - they are depicted as archetypes, symbols resonate within our shared mental framework.

Recurring themes in her paintings are masks, plants and pots, objects that you can also find in Shirley's atelier. She says that a room doesn't feel comfortable unless there are plants. They remind her of Santiago De Borja - a small village in the Amazon rainforest in Lima, where she lived in her younger years. At the same time, her walls are covered by several masks from the many places in the world that she has visited. In a sense Shirley is creating masks for all the people around her, she is trying to capture their emotions. She is deeply interested in their social interconnections. By including the characters, she is surrounded by on a daily basis, she invites us in. Through direct contact with these depicted individuals Shirley tries to understand the world around her.

This direct contact is driven by the strong contrasts that is continuously present in the work. As a backdrop of her portraits, the artist adds bright lines that divide the frame, creating two parts within the painting. She exaggerates this by leaving blank spaces and working with opposing graphic and organic shapes. This creates a flatness of the

painting's surface that is highlighted by the fluid perspective lines and the flat shaped faces, vases and vegetation.

Hidden in these paintings are silent icons that reflect Shirley's personal journey. Several of the paintings include Nazca lines, ancient check-like patterns used in various textiles in South America. These graphic patterns are never truly straight, making them perfect and imperfect at the same time. The colours green, red and

yellow keep on recurring in the paintings and are references to the traditional colours of Pre-Columbian textiles. Direct links to her early years in Belgium are made through depicting white people with white mouths, a reference to the time when the young Shirley wasn't able to understand anyone in Belgium.

Shirley has very direct contact with the surface of her paintings. After preparing the canvas, she paints a tinted white base colour over the whole surface. The colours she uses are mixed on the palette, but mostly on the painting surface itself, creating the signature colour planes on the various faces. As well as working with live models, the artist also departs from (analogue) photographs and draws on her own memories. She is currently working on a series of self-portraits that she completes without using a mirror. "If I paint myself it is not a direct depiction of myself, but more the idea of who I am."

**Shirley Villavicencio Pizango** (°1988, Lima, Peru) grew up in Lima with her mother. In 2007 she moved to Belgium. After studying Graphic design at the Royal Academy of Arts in Ghent Belgium she continued experimenting with painting and developed a unique direct figurative style with psychological layers that are deeply personal and universal at the same time. She is currently a laureate in post-graduate HISK in Ghent. After showing her work in various group shows in Belgium, Villavicencio is now represented by Antwerp based gallery Geukens en De Vil, who included her in the group exhibition *Ecce Homo* (2017). She had her first major solo show *Salty Rain - this is not a déjà vu* (2018) in the same gallery. In 2019 Shirley showed her work at Art Lima, her first solo exhibition in her home country. In May 2020 she will present a new, highly personal body of work about her family members and her Peruvian memories in Gallery Geukens en De Vil.