



## Roberts Projects: Amoako Boafo

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African painter Amoako Boafo is bringing a fresh and unique perspective to portraiture and figurative painting. Based in Vienna since about 2014, the young Ghanaian is now showing a series of new works titled "Black Diaspora" that cast a subtle, but probing look at the black experience in Europe and conservative Austria through the eyes of his subjects.



Amoako Boafo, *Blue Pullover* (2018). Oil on canvas, 55.16 x 62.99 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects.

Each subject was chosen for their willingness to share their personal story. *Tonica Hunter* (2017) is one example among the 10 portraits on view at Roberts Projects. Ms. Hunter is a musician and art/culture activist with Afro-Caribbean heritage who has been developing initiatives in Vienna, the U.K. and elsewhere to promote the importance of diversity. She has been particularly active in bringing together Vienna's black community. And like Boafo, her education and recognition has come about through the struggles of her mother.



Amoako Boafo, *Tonica Hunter* (2017). Oil on canvas, 31.50 x 35.42 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects.

In the painting, Boafo depicts her mouth hidden under a pullover that is reinforced by her hand, virtually muffling her powerful voice. Boafo appears to be reflecting his own experience through her silence; his true voice also muffled by negative preconceptions about his blackness, and notions of hyper-sexualized masculinity.



Amoako Bofo, *In Yellow with Malcolm* (2018). Oil on paper, 70.87 x 59.05 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects.

In contrast, he paints his subjects' skin tones with strong, beautiful brushstrokes, highlighted by the bright colors and patterns of his birthplace. Most of the subjects gently focus their eyes directly at us, the viewer. Powerfully engaging, it is a throwback to the techniques of traditional portrait artists of Europe and America. With Bofo's contemporary interpretation, however, he is building a new artistic path in the African diaspora.



Amoako Bofo, *Lighter* (2018). Oil on paper, 59.06 x 55.19 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Roberts Projects.

This path has emerged out of the creative freedom Bofo found in Vienna, yet his inspiration also comes from artists such as Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Jordan Casteel, Kara Walker, Kerry James Marshall, Derek Fordjour, and Kehinde Wiley.

Bofo's compelling portraiture and timely dialogue on the African diaspora will speak to an ever-widening audience. And yet, in his growing practice, will his muffled mouths always remain?

Amoako Bofo, "I See Me," January 12 – February 16, 2019, at Roberts Projects in Los Angeles, 5801 Washington Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232. [robertsprojectsla.com](http://robertsprojectsla.com)

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