

*Esther Mahlangu: Time in Color*  
Ross + Kramer | New York

Exhibition Dates: November 21, 2024–January 25, 2025  
Opening Reception: Thursday, November 21, 2024 | 6pm–8pm



---

Ross + Kramer is pleased to present *Esther Mahlangu: Time in Color*, a solo exhibition of work by Dr. Esther Mahlangu, opening November 21, 2024.

Dr. Esther Mahlangu (b.1935, South Africa) is a multi-award winning South African visual artist and a cultural ambassador of the Ndebele tribe. For centuries, Ndebele women have painted the facades of their homes with large colorful geometric murals as a symbol of enduring pride in their culture and heritage. These murals are not merely decorative, but serve as a tool for storytelling, symbolizing identity and values, and are used to herald news of important life events such as a birth, death, or a wedding.

Inspired by the traditional Ndebele painting style—which she learned from her mother and grandmother—Mahlangu's bright, modern, abstract paintings celebrate the principles of 'Sacred Geometry' through their balance and harmony of line, color, and form. Bringing this traditional style to new platforms and mediums, Mahlangu has reimagined Ndebele design to tell contemporary stories. Her distinctive style goes beyond celebrating her heritage to address broader themes of identity and the interconnectedness of all living beings. Throughout her career, spanning seven decades, Mahlangu has made invaluable contributions to the contemporary art world, expanding the canon of abstract painting. The exhibition includes over 30 paintings by Mahlangu, created over a 10 year period—from 2011 to 2021—as well as a fully handpainted art car.

Dr. Esther Mahlangu's work gained international recognition in the 1980's when she was commissioned to paint a replica of her muraled home for the eminent *Magiciens de la terre* exhibition at the Centre Pompidou (Paris, France). Soon after, Mahlangu was asked to create murals on the walls of the Musee d'Art Contemporain in Montréal, Canada. Since then, she has spent decades making art, and has collaborated with numerous internationally renowned museums, galleries, curators, art fairs, celebrities, and global brands. It is her creative, innovative, and disruptive spirit that has led her to being open to exploring different media and to high-profile collaborations with celebrities like John Legend and Absolute Vodka, becoming the first woman and first African to be invited to participate in the BMW Art Car project in 1991. Mahlangu is heavily involved in community projects in the Mabhoko village of the Mpumalanga province to teach young community members traditional Ndebele painting and beadwork techniques. In October 2024, Mahlangu unveiled her first public mural in the UK at Serpentine Gallery and her institutional retrospective *Then I Knew I Was Good at Painting: Esther Mahlangu, A Retrospective* is currently touring museums throughout South Africa.

Mahlangu has an extensive exhibition history, with solo exhibitions held in such prominent venues as Almine Rech (Paris, France and London, England), The Melrose Gallery (Johannesburg, South Africa), and UCT Irma Stern Museum (Cape Town, South Africa), amongst numerous others. Her work is held in various private and public collections worldwide, most notably in Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, France), Musee des Beaux Arts (Paris, France), Hirshhorn Museum (Washington, D.C.), Museum Bochum (Bochum, Germany), South African National Gallery, Iziko Museums (Cape Town, South Africa), and Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, NY). In 1992, Mahlangu's work was included in the quinquennial contemporary art exhibition, *Documenta IX*, in Kassel, Germany and in 2000 she collaborated with Sol LeWitt on a presentation at the 5th Biennale in Lyon, France. Throughout her lifetime Mahlangu has received wide recognition, being honored with such prestigious awards as Order of Ikhamanga from the Government of South Africa, France's Officer of Arts and Letters award, and 1st Mbokodo Award. In 2018, she was conferred with an honorary doctorate (*Philosophiae Doctor honoris causa*) by the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

*Esther Mahlangu: Time in Color* will be on view November 21, 2024 to January 25, 2025 at Ross + Kramer New York. The gallery is located at 515 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001 and is open to the public Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm. For images or more information, please contact [cielle@rkgallery.com](mailto:cielle@rkgallery.com).