



**Front Room**, 2022 Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Botswanian (active Canada), Oil and pencil on linen 2022.82 G374

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum's mixed media painting, *Front Room*, features the artist's alter-ego Asme ("as me") seated centrally in a domestic interior accompanied by three other women. Two of the women hold Asme's hands, offering comfort and assurance, while the third appears distracted, attending to her personal appearance. Sunstrum's composition references a similar scene in the **1866 painting *La Fiancée Hésitante (The Hesitant Fiancée)* by 19th-century French Salon painter Auguste Toulmouche (1829-1895)**. In contrast to the bourgeois sentiment of Toulmouche's painting, in which a bride-to-be reveals momentary doubt, here Asme expresses barely restrained rage, a defiant reaction to her realization of powerlessness over social and cultural expectations that frequently regulate women's roles, behavior, or appearance. With its reductive design, flattened pictorial space, and conspicuous patterning, *Front Room* also demonstrates Sunstrum's decorative impulse experienced within a woman's domain.



**Hesitant Fiancée** by Auguste Toulmouche

This website is from Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC. -- the write-up is all about fashion -- not the artist or the painting.

<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1866-toulmouche-hesitant-fiancee/>

This is a very brief critique of the piece and does make you reconsider Mia's painting:

[https://www.ninertimes.com/arts\\_and\\_culture/a-rhetorical-analysis-of-the-hesitant-fianc-e/article\\_caad3e74-29a3-11ed-ab63-67ed9200f935.html](https://www.ninertimes.com/arts_and_culture/a-rhetorical-analysis-of-the-hesitant-fianc-e/article_caad3e74-29a3-11ed-ab63-67ed9200f935.html)

Who is Pamela Sunstrum?



Her website has a lot of intriguing "Drawings and Paintings" you can quickly skim through: <https://www.pamelaphatsimosunstrum.com/drawings>. If you google her there are a lot more articles and videos of her.

**Wikipedia:** Driven by a fascination with ancient mythologies and scientific theories, Sunstrum muses on the origins of time, geological concepts, and ideas about the universe. Her works on paper, large-scale installations, and stop-motion films are rooted in autobiography, addressing the **development of transnational identities, human connections, and cross-border rituals. Motivated by her experiences in diverse locales, Sunstrum explores how one's sense of identity develops within geographic and cultural contexts.** Her drawings – narrative landscapes that appear simultaneously futuristic and ancient – shift between representational and fantastical depictions of volcanic, subterranean, cosmological, and precipitous landscapes.<sup>[4]</sup>

Having lived in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the United States, Sunstrum developed an alter-ego, Asme, to convey her evolving selfhood.<sup>[5]</sup> The image of Asme is often superimposed with overlapping gestures as a means of suggesting compounded time, illustrating her universal, atemporal existence. Sunstrum's landscapes also expand on themes of timelessness; she reconstructs sites both real and imagined to reveal the small scale of individuals within the vast universe, a concept that is reminiscent of 18th-century notions of the sublime.<sup>[6]</sup>