

We, the People: 30 years of Democracy in South Africa



An exhibition of South African art
curated by Liese van der Watt
Norval Foundation, Cape Town
5 December 2024- 22 November 2025

We the people: 30 years of democracy in South Africa

This exhibition starts from the premise that democracy is a verb: in other words, democracy is not something we have and own, it is something we need to do, continually. To secure a stable and liveable future, successful democracy requires that we *work* at it. Democracy asks that we step out of our private worlds of individual religious, cultural or ethnic affiliations, and participate: finding commonalities, building connections, sharing responsibilities, identifying mutual goals and shaping community.

Following this idea that democracy requires us to act, the art works in this exhibition have been chosen for the ways in which they engage democracy. All the works were produced after 1994, thirty years during which the landscape of art production in South Africa has changed dramatically, primarily due to a vastly more diverse student body attending South African universities and art schools. And since an exhibition “happens in the world – and carries with it the noise, pollution, dust and decay that come from that world” as the late Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor put it[1], the works on this show shed light on, reveal, question, challenge or celebrate our three decades of democracy. Indeed, drawing on visual theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff’s writings on countervisuality, the artworks have been selected and curated to actively ‘counter’ the kind of homogenous and silencing visuality that was so part and parcel of the apartheid past.

This means that this exhibition sets out to name ongoing privilege and to foreground persistent power relations, it wants to be attentive to alternative ways of seeing our world, and to make and hold space for marginal voices and dissident performances. This may require the critical reading of over-familiar works, but it also demands that we hear narratives and knowledges that have been silenced by historical matrices of power: it compels us to listen and see attentively. After all, the ghosts of the past haunt our everyday, the past *is* our fractured present.

In short, the call to countervisuality that the exhibition proposes, promotes a gaze that disrupts, unworks, resists: it wants to claim “the right to look” which, as Mirzoeff explains “is not about seeing. It begins at a personal level with the look into someone else’s eyes to express friendship, solidarity or love. That look must be mutual, each person inventing the other, or it fails.”[2]

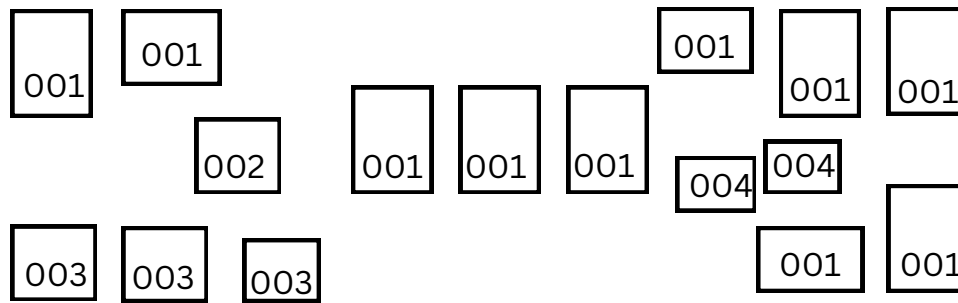
At 30 years of democracy, this exhibition invites us to find one another, and be open to each other.

 1] Okwui Enwezor, Introductory remarks to *All the World’s Futures*, 56th Venice Biennial, 2015.
 [2] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look. A Counterhistory of Visuality*, Duke University Press, 2011, p.1.

We, the People: 30 years of Democracy in South Africa is guest-curated by Dr. Liese van der Watt, with support from Norval Foundation’s curatorial team, especially Carmen Joubert and Brett Scott. The exhibition draws on local art collections, galleries and artists, and the curator and Norval Foundation would like to thank everyone who has so generously made work available to us, including the Emile Stipp Collection, Homestead Collection, Hoosein Mahomed Collection, Kilbourn Collection, Revisions Collection, Scheryn Art Collection, Southern Collection, Spier Collection, IZIKO South African National Gallery, Keiskamma Art Project, UCT Art Collection, Zeitz MOCAA Permanent Collection, AFRONOVA GALLERY, blank projects, Everard Read Gallery, Goodman Gallery, Marvol Gallery, RESERVOIR, Stevenson, WHATIFTHEWORLD and the lenders who would like to remain anonymous.

Corridor: 1994 Elections

Artwork guide



001

Paul Weinberg (b.1956)
1994 elections
Photographs

Homestead Collection

In April 1994 about 20 million South Africans voted in the country's first democratic elections, an 89% turn-out in a generally peaceful climate.

Paul Weinberg was the official photographer for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) that oversaw the historic elections in 1994 from February to May 1994. He covered all aspects of the election process from voter education to political campaigns and events around the elections, the historic voting process itself and finally, the inauguration that saw Nelson Mandela ushered in as President of the country.

002

Jenny Gordon (b.1955)
Untitled (1994)
Photograph

Private Collection

Gordon became a freelance photojournalist in the 1980s and was the director of the Market Photography Workshop in Johannesburg.

003

Ruth Seopedi Motau (b.1968, Soweto)
1994 elections
Photographs

Courtesy of the artist and Marvol Gallery

Ruth Seopedi Motau became a photojournalist after studying photography at the Market Photo Workshop. She was the first black female photographer to become photo editor of a South African newspaper, *Mail & Guardian*, from 1995-2002, followed by *The Sowetan* (2004-2008) and *City Press* (2008-2010).

004

George Hallett
Mandela first encounter. Johannesburg
(1996)
Photograph
Courtesy of the Hallett trust

George Hallett
Mandela on phone with domestic worker, Johannesburg
(1996)
Photograph
Courtesy of the Hallett trust

Corridor

Opposite entrance text

Inga Somdyala (b.1990 Komani)

Pompa Funebris III (2024)

Soil, ochre, mineral oxide and ribbon on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and RESERVOIR

The title of this work is derived from an old Roman ritual of funeral procession, where deceased nobles and aristocrats were paraded through the streets for the collective grief of the nation prior to their burial. Somdyala plays on the pomp of the funeral costume to create a flag that resembles a formal ecclesiastic dress with decorated collar, a ribbon-stitched bodice culminating in a bow at the collar above, with a sweep that rests on the floor below.

Somdyala chooses to render the South African flag in earth colours by using soil, ochre, oxides and other natural pigments as a way of grounding the lofty ideals of the postapartheid Rainbow nation in a local context. The humanised flag suggests a body in mourning, drawing on associations of burial ceremonies, collective grief and memorialisation that places Somdyala's readings of South African history in proximity to his lived experience.

He observes: "Since my undergraduate years at UCT during the 2015-16 #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and Shackville protests, I have been sceptical of monuments, architecture or flags as expressions of national unity and collective identity, and have harboured a certain cynicism for the neat, vibrant six-colour rainbow flag. As a 30-year-old 'born-free' reflecting on 30 years of democracy, I would rather express a worn flag in these dimmed, muddy colours." (2024)

Opposite Elections wall

Mikhael Subotzky (b.1981 Cape Town)

Voter X (2004)

UCT Art Collection

Peter Alexander voted on 14 April 2004 in South Africa's third democratic election at the Dwaarsrivier Prison in the Western Cape. He was allowed to vote after urgent action was brought to the Constitutional Court by the NGO *NICRO* on behalf of two prisoners. The Court decided to extend the right to vote to all eligible prisoners.

Civil society and two prisoners managed to successfully challenge the legislative status quo through an independent judicial system of appeal. Alexander observed that "I have been a prisoner for many years and I no longer kid myself that I am in any way free. But this decision that I too can vote has given me, for just one moment, the feeling that I am more than just some sick prisoner who is left to rot behind these high walls".

In his Constitutional Court ruling, Justice Chaskalson stated, "In the light of our history where denial of the right to vote was used to entrench white supremacy and to marginalize the great majority of the people of our country, it is for us a precious right, which must be vigilantly respected and protected". (Subotzky 2004)

Corridor: TRC

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity in 1995 to help deal with the violence and human rights abuses that happened under apartheid.

The TRC's core mission was to uncover truths about severe human rights violations spanning from March 1960 to May 1994. Through over 2,500 hearings, it allowed individuals to seek amnesty and listened to around 21,000 victims, with 2,000 bravely sharing their stories in public sessions.

Operating under the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, the TRC's recommendations are still being put into action. This includes compensating victims, creating appropriate memorials, offering medical support, aiding affected communities, and providing educational bursaries to descendants of apartheid-era victims.

Artwork guide

001

002

003

004

005

001

Jillian Edelstein (b. South Africa, lives and works in London)
Bishop Tutu with his head on his hands, Cape Town (2000)
Photograph

Collection of the artist

002

Jillian Edelstein (b. South Africa, lives and works in London)
Mrs Sepei and Jerry Richardson (1997)
Photograph

Collection of the artist

“On August 8, 1990 the Rand Supreme Court sentenced Jerry Richardson to death for the murder 14-year-old Stompie Sepei. Stompie Sepei was a child activist and member of the infamous Mandela Football Club established by Winnie Mandela as a front for the political mobilisation of township youths to stand against apartheid.

Jerry Richardson abducted Sepei and three other boys near the Methodist Church (Manse), Soweto and took him to Winnie Mandela's home. Richardson alleged that Winnie Mandela initiated the torture of Sepei, who was sjamboked and bounced on the floor by Richardson. Sepei was allegedly tortured and killed for sexual misconduct with a Methodist reverend Paul Verryn who was accused by some of the boys for having homosexual practices with young boys. Winnie Mandela also accused Sepei for being a police informer, a charge that carried a death penalty in terms of township mob justice. Winnie Mandela denied any involvement in the death of Stompie Sepei and accused Richardson of lying. However, the judge implicated Winnie Mandela in Stompie Sepei's death by ruling that she was present when Stompie Sepei was tortured.

The death of Sepei continued to haunt Winnie Mandela until some closure was reached when Winnie Mandela accepted, before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, some responsibility for the death of Sepei. Winnie Mandela had already apologised to Sepei's mother for the loss of her son, but maintained her innocence.” (www.sahistory.org.za)

Corridor: TRC continues

003

Jillian Edelstein (b. South Africa, lives and works in London)

Ntisiiki Biki, the widow of Steve Biko (1997)

Photograph

Collection of the artist

004

Jillian Edelstein (b. South Africa, lives and works in London)

Hennie Smit with his dove Snow White, Pretoria (1997)

Photograph

Collection of the artist

Hennie Smit's eight-year-old son, Cornio, was killed in 1985 by a bomb blast in the Sanlam Shopping centre in Amanzimtoti, Natal, just before Christmas. Four other people were killed and over sixty injured. Three MK members were arrested and sentenced to death. It was claimed that the bomb had been planted in retaliation for a raid by the security forces on an ANC base in Maseru, Lesotho, which had killed nine people. Three MK members were executed.

Hennie Smit spoke very movingly about how, after one of the bombers, Andrew Zondo, had been hanged, he had gone to visit Zondo's parents to console them. He told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that at first he hated all blacks for killing his son, but now he had come to realize that his son was a hero of the struggle who died so all South Africans could be free...

Mr Smit lives in Pretoria where he buried his son. He breeds doves and repairs broken television sets." (From Jillian Edelstein, *Truth and Lies*, p. 204)

005

George Hallett (b.1942 Cape Town, d. 2020)

Jann Turner, daughter of slain activist Rick Turner, with Eugene de Kock, the commander of Vlakplaas, the infamous farm where victims were tortured and killed. TRC Headquarters, Cape Town (1997)

Photograph

Permanent Collection, IZIKO South African National Gallery

George Hallett studied photography by correspondence with City and Guilds of London at the age of 20. He freelanced as a photographer for Drum magazine but couldn't find consistent employment in apartheid South Africa. He moved abroad in self-imposed exile in 1970 and spent many years in Europe, before finally returning to Cape Town in 1995. He is well-known for his poignant documentation of District Six before the bulldozers moved in after it was declared a whites-only suburb by the 1966 Group Areas Act. In 1994 he was commissioned by the ANC to document South Africa's first democratic elections, resulting in the book *Images of Change*.

Gallery 3&4: TO PROTEST

Political transformation has not led to social or economic transformation.

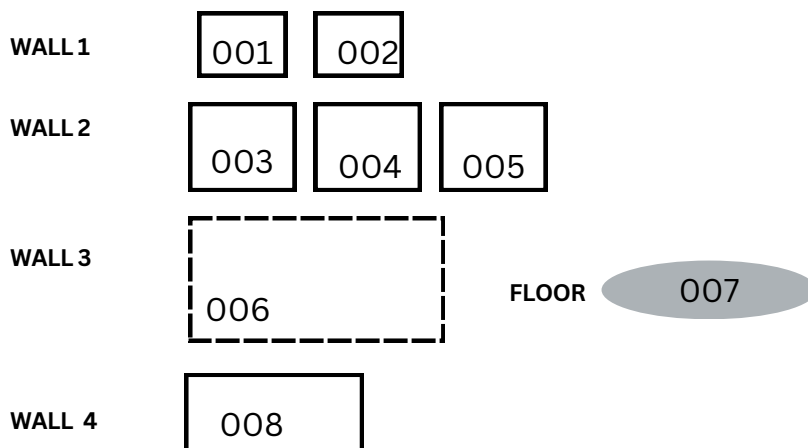
This was forcefully communicated when student Chimani Maxwele threw excrement at the statue of British industrialist Cecil John Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape Town in March 2015. This visceral act of symbolic violence embodied the anger of a generation of so-called “born-frees”, frustrated by the slow rate of change that characterises South Africa’s democracy, and feeling betrayed by a negotiated settlement that left economic power intact in the hands of mainly white South Africans. The RhodesMustFall, FeesMustFall and Shackville campaigns that followed on UCT campus and expanded to universities across South Africa, were directed at both economic and social transformation, asking for a decolonised education in an economically equitable environment.

South Africa has a long history of protest and collective action that have been used to voice frustration and to hold politicians to account; indeed, apartheid came to an end partly because of popular protest. But deep inequality remains after centuries of colonial rule and apartheid, despite the advent of democracy and a constitution that explicitly recognises social and economic rights for all. Resources have simply not been sufficient or adequately spent to guarantee suitable housing, healthcare, education and social security for all. Relying on these rights that are pledged in the constitution, increasing numbers of social movements and informal mass actions have emerged in the last three decades to protest against poor service delivery, widespread unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, landlessness and rampant corruption in government. Indeed, the right to freedom of assembly and to protest peacefully is enshrined in the constitution and frequently exercised.

However, the burning of infrastructure, the barricading of roads and clashes with a police force that seems to be every bit as violent as during apartheid, have become routine and challenges all fantasies of a healthy and peaceful democracy. When protests erupt into violence and anger, when mass action scapegoat African migrants for local economic hardship, when striking mine labourers are gunned down by the police, democracy is threatened on every level and violence seeps into our political life.

The artworks in this section ask what it takes to dismantle power, they challenge us to speak out against injustice and remind us that solidarity is about sharing a burden - essential to nurture democracy and a stable future for all.

Artwork Guide: Gallery 3



Gallery 3: TO PROTEST

WALL 1

001

Thabiso Sekgala (b.1981 Johannesburg, d. 2014)
Sitting on a koppie during the last days of the strike, Marikana (2012)
Inkjet print on archival fibre paper

Courtesy of the Thabiso Sekgala Estate and Goodman Gallery

002

Thabiso Sekgala (b.1981 Johannesburg, d.2014)
Second Transition 17 (2012)
Inkjet print on archival fibre paper

Courtesy of the Thabiso Sekgala Estate and Goodman Gallery

In March 2012 the ruling ANC party under President Jacob Zuma's lead, put together a policy document using the term 'Second Transition' as a vision forward to transform South Africa economically, after the so-called first transition in 1994 brought political, but little economic, empowerment.

A few months later, on 16 August 2012, the police opened fire on thousands of striking mineworkers at the Marikana platinum mine, 100 km southwest of Johannesburg. The workers were armed with machetes and sticks; the police gunned down 112 men, killing 34.

The Marikana massacre continues to serve as a tipping point in South Africa's post-1994 history as it clearly laid bare South Africa's continued inequalities, but also demonstrated that the very leadership who once fought apartheid and oppression, were now capable of spewing violence and protecting their own economic privilege.

These two images by Thabiso Sekgala are taken from his Second Transition series which was photographed in and around Rustenburg in 2012. Sekgala steers away from the blood and violence of the strike but quietly observes the aftermath. He shows the economic imbalances that persist in South Africa, focusing on social barriers that render some people more visible than others. Exploring the lasting geopolitical effect of apartheid, Sekgala focuses on themes of abandonment, spatial politics and notions of home.

Sekgala studied at Johannesburg's Market Photo Workshop from 2007 to 2008. He died in 2014.

WALL 2

003

Svea Josephy (b.1969)
Marikana (Beacon) (2013)
Photograph

Collection of the artist

004

Svea Josephy (b.1969)
Marikana (Marker) (2013)
Photograph

Collection of the artist

005

Svea Josephy (b.1969)
Marikana (Danger Tape) (2013)
Photograph

Collection of the artist

Gallery 3: TO PROTEST

WALL 3

006

Lerato Shadi (b.1979 Mahikeng, lives and works in Berlin)

Motlhaba wa re ke namile (2016)
HD video projection with audio

Collection of Emile Stipp

In this video the artist is filmed eating and gagging on the red soil that surrounds her home village of Lotlhakane in Mahikeng in the Northwest Province of South Africa. While the visceral struggle to swallow the soil of her birth village is a literal attempt - and failure - to contain and hold onto ancestral land, it also makes for a deeply uncomfortable viewer experience, near impossible to watch. Eating soil was also a method of suicide employed by enslaved Africans, and Shadi reminds us that these desperate acts were also courageous forms of resistance.

WALL 4

008

Lungiswa Gqunta (b.1990 Port Elizabeth)

Untitled (2016)

37 beer bottles, bed frame, wallpaper and spray adhesive

Zeitz MOCAA Permanent Collection

Broken beer bottles are a recurring theme in Gqunta's work, often filled with petrol to invoke, through smell and sight, the makeshift petrol-bombs used against official and unjust force. Here these threatening bottle necks are incongruously juxtaposed with crooked floral wallpaper, invoking a feminine domestic realm.

Thuli Gamedze writes: "Having grown up in a home where familial relationships were irrevocably intertwined with alcohol, Gqunta's first-hand knowledge- the coming of age in a shebeen-household- is rife with complex tensions and contradictions. In this atmosphere, the relationships of domestic masculinities and femininities are interwoven with a close, dependent relationship on alcohol- a substance providing income, education and assets, and simultaneously breeding addiction, pain and trauma...."

Of course, the repurposing of these bottles into weapons of guerilla tactical violence, speaks both to a reclaim of agency, but also to the radical intention of that agency in addressing systemic violences of the nation that have often involved the use of alcohol." (text for *Qokobe*, solo exhibition at WHATIFTHEWORLD, 2016).

FLOOR

007

Dineo Seshee Bopape (b.1981 Polokwane)
footnotes, Lerole (2023)

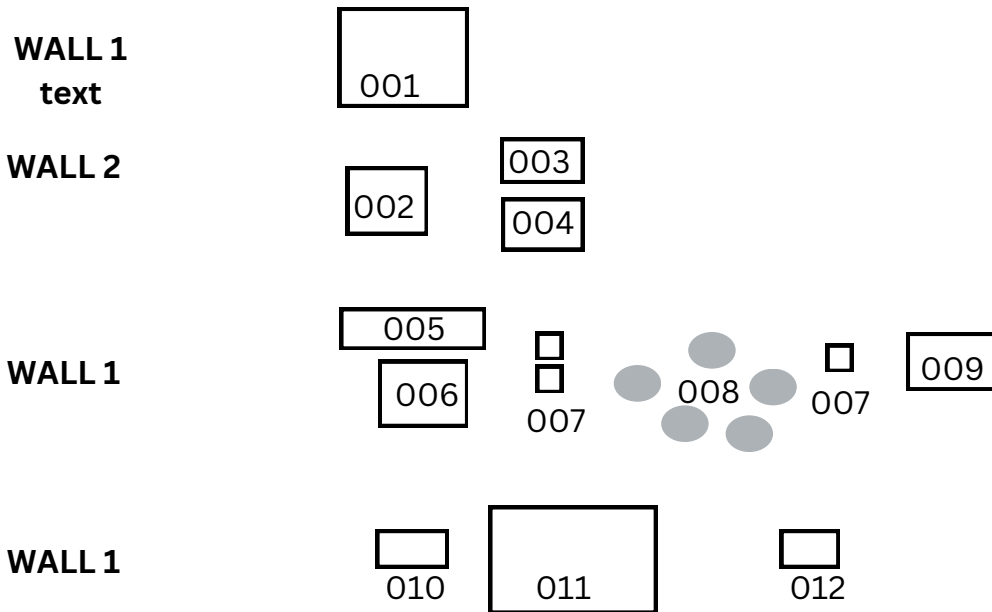
Unfired clay bricks, various clays, beach gravel and sand from the southernmost tip of Africa, pine wood plaques

The Southern Collection

This installation is both a commemoration of the past and a rousing look towards the future. Small wooden plaques detail acts of indigenous resistance to slavery and colonization, while clay objects shaped in clenched fists invoke the gesture of Robert Sobukwe, co-founder of the PAC, who apparently greeted new political prisoners on Robben Island with a handful of clenched soil. En masse, these clay fists remind us of the galvanising strength of collective action.

Gallery 4: TO PROTEST continues

Artwork Guide



WALL 1

001

Berni Searle

Archive I (after Jagger), (2023)

Archival pigment ink on Baryta paper

Courtesy of the artist

This photograph was taken in the aftermath of a devastating wildfire that destroyed much of the Special Collections department at Jagger library at the University of Cape Town in April 2021. This department held the African Studies collections of pamphlets, rare books, several specialist compendia and one of the largest African film collections.

In this image a small figure is standing in a doorway at the far-end of the wrecked library. Light shines from an adjacent room that was inexplicably unharmed by the fire, framing the figure in a small rectangle of orange light. She is shrouded in a cloak, as if waiting to enter the ruin, an illuminated golden phoenix rising from the ashes of the burnt archive.

The figure is a promise and a beacon, a symbol of new beginnings and radical reinvention despite devastating loss. Decolonising the archive means tackling the colonising principles that have defined education in the past and are still present today; it means questioning entrenched narratives, rebalancing power and addressing omissions in our collective knowledge systems.

Gallery 4: TO PROTEST continues

WALL 2

002

Alfred Thoba (b.1951, d.2022)
Black Lives Matter, 16 June 2020, 2020
Oil on Canvas

Homestead Collection

003

Lindokuhle Sobekwa (b. 1995, Katlehong)
After a protest related to continuous power cuts during lockdown level 5 in Thokoza (2020)

Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

004

Lindokuhle Sobekwa (b. 1995, Katlehong)
Death of George Floyd (2020)

Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

During lockdown, Lindokuhle Sobekwa photographed life in Thokoza where the effects of the Covid pandemic were exacerbated by poverty and unemployment.

He observes:

“My family and I live in a squatter camp, where small shacks are crowded into one small area. There is not enough space to move, let alone to social distance. Water is from shared taps and this is a real problem. We do not have enough taps for everyone. Washing hands regularly is a challenge. People work very hard to get electricity. Recently there was a protest over service delivery and large rocks were thrown onto the main road and it was forced to close to traffic. The people who live in the squatter camps are facing serious difficulties with accessing electricity and they are resorting to connecting illegally. They can only connect at night because during the day the police will arrest them if they get caught... Electricity continues to be a problem, something that keeps taking people a step back from any progress they might make. The biggest downfall of this on and off electricity is that people have to throw food away because of spoilage as their fridge has been off for five days or more. People who were retrenched from their work are all looking forward to receiving food parcels that have been promised.

Despite this, much of life still carries on as normal. Not everyone can afford a mask or hand sanitizer. Those who do own masks reuse them multiple times because they don't have money to buy more. Proper sanitation continues to be a big issue. In my community, we still use a bucket system for the latrines. Every Friday the sanitation people from the municipality come and empty the buckets.” (Sobekwa 2020)

Lindokuhle Sobekwa took up photography as a way of recording life around him, after taking part in an educational program for high school students in Thokoza in 2012. In 2015 he was awarded a scholarship to complete a foundation course at The Market Photo Workshop and in 2022 he was selected to be a full member of the prestigious cooperative Magnum Photos.

Gallery 4: TO PROTEST continues

WALL 3

005

Layziehound Coka (b.1982 Bilanyoni, lives and works in Johannesburg)
The great spectrum of ordinary men (2016)
Charcoal on canvas

Kilbourn Collection

Layziehound Coka moved to Gauteng in 2001 and started studying engineering in 2003 at Pretoria Technikon. He gave up engineering for fine art in 2005 when he started with print making at Newtown's Artist Proof Studio. He has been working as a professional artist since graduating from APS in 2007 and predominantly works with acrylic and charcoal on paper or canvas.

007

Jabulani Dhlamini (b.1983 Warden)
Umlando IV, V, VI (2019)
Photograph X 3

Collection of Emile Stipp

008

Wim Botha (b.1974)

Study for portrait of a dispute 1 (2011)
Rhodesian teak parquet blocks
Kilbourn Collection

Study for an outraged youth (2011)
Wood on wooden base
Scheryn Art Collection

Untitled (Ecstasy 6) 2011
Carved Afrikaans Bibles, wood, stainless steel
Courtesy of the artist

006

Johann Louw (b.1965)
Two men against a wall (1995)
Oil on Canvas

Kilbourn Collection

Anonymous round-shouldered men in suits often feature in Johann Louw's work from the mid-1990s. Enclosed in tight grey spaces, and always avoiding any interaction with the viewer, these men seem at once intimidating and somehow pathetic in their social remoteness and ineptitude.

Untitled (Bywoner 7) (2014)
Encyclopaedias, wood and stainless steel on a wooden base
Scheryn Art Collection

Untitled (Ecstasy 7) (2011)
Carved Afrikaans Bibles, wood, stainless steel
Courtesy of the artist

Gallery 4: TO PROTEST continues

WALL 3

008

Wim Botha continues

Since exhibiting his first paper bust in 2003, Wim Botha has returned to, and is perhaps best known for, his sculpture busts made from bibles, encyclopaedias, wood, marble, wax, bronze etc. Botha takes this art historical convention – invented to commemorate great men as the building blocks of Western history – and subverts both the convention and the masculinity it upholds. Often suspending these sculptures, thus removing them from pedestals meant to instil distance and respect, and showing signs of their production such as seams and screws, these men are dethroned, they become less than solid, arbitrary incidents of history rather than omnipotent agents.

009

Mwande Ka Zenzile (b.1986 Lady Frere, Eastern Cape)

People need to be controlled (The Fall) (2015)

Cow dung, earth, gesso and oil on canvas

Collection of Emile Stipp

This work is based on the iconic image of Saddam Hussain's statue being toppled in Firdaus Square, downtown Baghdad on April 9, 2003. Ka Zenzile translates the image into a local context by using dung and earth in addition to the more traditional art materials of gesso and oil.

He writes that “cow dung is traditionally smeared onto the floors of the houses in Eastern Cape and is used as a binder when building mud houses. It too has an aesthetic quality that attracted me to using it in my art. Cow dung has become a predominant cultural material in my work and a language to communicate with creatively”. (Ka Zenzile, *Stagecraft*, Stevenson, 2015). By using dung and other signifiers taken from Xhosa culture, the meaning of the original source is altered. Ka Zenzile observes that in order to access meaning in his works, it is useful “to respond not only to Western aesthetics”, but also to the “visual and material references specific to the cultural experience that inform my creativity.”

Gallery 4: TO PROTEST continues

WALL 4

010

Gugulective

Tiger (2010)

Digital print in pigment inks on cotton rag paper

Scheryn Art Collection

011

Gugulective

Debt Trap (2010)

Wood and wire

Scheryn Art Collection

Gugulective was established as an artist network in 2006, consisting of fine artists, musicians, writers, DJs, rappers and poets active in Cape Town's eastern townships. It was born out of the need for creative spaces in the townships and in the face of waning art instruction in township schools due to economic hardship.

The collective operated from Kwa Mlamli shebeen in Gugulethu, pointedly choosing to have art exhibitions, performances and discussions in their own neighbourhood and for the local community, rather than in the more mainstream and commercial art world of the Cape Town city centre.

Although the collective was only active for a few years, Gugulective represents a crucial moment because it clearly signals the ongoing re-writing of South African art histories and the shifting of its narratives. Many of the members went on to have prominent cultural careers at home and abroad, such as the curator of the Stellenbosch Triennial and the 2023 Liverpool Biennial, Khanyisile Mbongwa, artists Kemang Wa Lehulere and Ziphokenkosi Dayile, and art critic and writer Athi Mongezeleli Joja.

Gugulective has consistently used its art projects to comment on the disappointments of democracy in South Africa, especially the economic crisis at its centre. In post-1994 South Africa, economic power remains in the hands of a white minority and more recently a small black elite, prospering on the back of BEE and Affirmative Action, while mass poverty remains.

The artists explain that "the reprinting of money – ridding the South African note of the image of Jan Van Riebeeck – has been meaningless and that the legacy of inequality that began with colonisation remains... The motif of people queuing – a poignant one in South Africa – as well as the old South African Rand notes and mousetraps communicate how current society has to pay the debt of the previous regime and how the masses become mice in the gigantic capitalistic economic system." (text from *ITYALA ALIBOLI / DEBT DON'T ROT*, exhibition held at Goodman Gallery, 2010).

012

Jane Alexander (b.1955)

Faith (2003)

Photolithograph

Spier Collection

Gallery 5 & 6: TO BELONG

The struggle for land, like everywhere else in the world, has been central to South Africa’s history and is one of the most serious but also most intractable problems facing democratic South Africa. Dispossession of land goes back to colonial times and was legalised by the 1913 Natives Land Act that effectively allocated just 7 percent of the land to black people. The forced dispossession and relocation of millions of black people from farmland and cities and towns to under-serviced urban townships and far-flung areas – called without irony “homelands” - became a feature of the apartheid government after 1948. It created a migrant labour system whereby black people, no longer able to provide for themselves and their families off their own land, had to seek employment away from their homes.

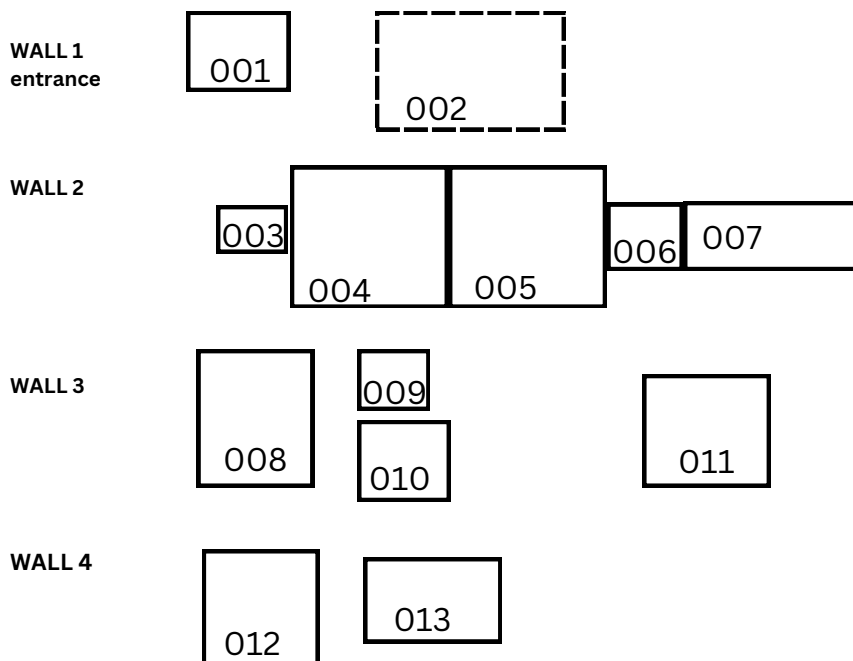
Racial thinking came to mirror spatial thinking in our cities. By 1994, almost a century after the Native Land Act, 87% of land was in the hands of only 4% of the population. The Restitution of Land Rights, passed in 1994, has struggled to make headway towards equitable land restitution.

In the context of what is clearly a profound failure of our democracy – the redistribution of land - the art works in Gallery 5 and 6 foreground questions about the right and access to land, and about ownership and control of land. More precisely, they push us to think about belonging in relation to land and place: How does land and our sense of place impact notions of belonging and dignity? At a time when so much of land is privatised, how and where do the homeless and landless belong? And belong to what? On whose terms?

In fact, does land ever really “belong” to us or do we belong to the land? Faced with a history of widely divergent notions about ownership of land, dominated by the narratives of the land-rich, how do we resolve conflicts over land that fixate on debates around host/stranger and first-comer/ latecomer, especially when these issues expose rampant inequality that followed the historic dispossession of land and is still crippling contemporary SA?

Finally, how do we imagine different ways of belonging?

Artwork Guide: Gallery 5



Gallery 5: TO BELONG

WALL 1

001

Dan Halter (b.1977 Zimbabwe)
The Social Contract (2001)
Screenprint

Kilbourn Collection

002

Mosekwa Langa (b.1975 Bakenberg, Limpopo)
Where do I begin? (2001)
Single channel video, 4:51

Collection of Emile Stipp

Mosekwa Langa was born in Bakenberg in 1975, a small village 300km north of Johannesburg. Growing up, Bakenberg was never listed on official apartheid-government maps, a small detail of bureaucratic erasure that has come to inspire and mirror what Langa describes as the central topic of his art, namely searching for his place in the world.

In this video a row of anonymous legs are readying themselves to step onto a waiting bus, polished shoes against red soil. The idling of the engine is heard over the refrain of Shirley Bassey's *Where do I begin*, the loop never quite reaching the crescendo that the orchestration promises. The setting is the dusty landscape of Bakenberg; the travellers poignantly caught in perpetual departure, never arriving.

WALL 2

003

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
Ghost (2008)
Photograph

Kilbourn Collection

004 & 005

David Goldblatt
Sheep farm at Oubip, between Aggenys and Loop 10, Bushmanland, Northern Cape (5 June 2004)

Diptych

Archival pigment ink on cotton rag paper

Collection of Emile Stipp

006

Susan Kruger-Grundlingh (b.1952 Cape Town)
Title deed, from the series *Karoo* (2005)
Acrylic on canvas

Kilbourn Collection

007

Susan Kruger-Grundlingh (b.1952 Cape Town)
Rumours of rain, from the series *Karoo* (2005)
Oil on wood

Kilbourn Collection

For Grundlingh "Landscape has always been an emotionally loaded subject and the South African landscape is drenched with the ongoing history of people disowned and moved from their land. 'One merely has to present oneself and a narrative starts unfolding', she says, 'Like a stage for our human drama with that big neutral sky as a backdrop, the Karoo wants to tell its stories.'" (*Artthrob*, September 2005)

Gallery 5: TO BELONG

WALL 3

008

Asemahle Ntlonti (b.1993 Cape Town)

Imvakalelo 1 (2024)

Acrylic paint, paper, acrylic gel, cotton, and leno thread on canvas

Scheryn Art Collection

In a restrained palette of milky whites and blotches of what she refers to as “shy” colours – leftover and discounted tins of paint often used to adorn houses in the rural Eastern Cape – Ntlonti’s abstract paintings translate the ageing walls of her family’s homestead in Mqonci onto canvas. She works, it seems, from inside the canvas: obsessively painting, collaging, sanding down, washing out, ripping and stitching, as if exteriorising a cycle of keep and repair, visible every December when she visits her grandmother’s house in the Eastern Cape. These canvases become landscapes and maps to find her way “home,” a spiritual journey to ancestral ties and to belonging. The title *Imvakalelo* invokes a deep intuitive feeling, and she describes her art “as a way of knowing who I am and where I come from.” (*Inzonzobila*, blank projects)

009

Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980)

Forgotten Land, from the series *At Home* (2004)

Hand-printed silver gelatin print

Collection of Emile Stipp

Sabelo Mlangeni moved from Mpumalanga to Johannesburg in 2001 to study photography at the Market Photo Workshop, graduating in 2004.

His series *At Home* (2004 to 2009) explores the depopulation of rural areas as working adults move away to look for work. Using atmospheric far-off shots, this series presents landscapes that seem other-worldly, often emptied of human activity and seemingly frozen in time, as if belonging to the realm of memory. Despite poor conditions in many rural areas, “at home” is where the heart and roots are, an enduring connection to land and ancestral ties that Mlangeni conveys so strikingly through these stilled scenes of rural life.

010

Daniel Naudé (b. 1984)

Xhosa cow sitting on the shore, Mnenu river mouth, Eastern Cape, 4 December 2019 (2019)

Lightjet C-print

Courtesy of the artist and Everard Read Gallery

For over a decade Daniel Naudé has photographed the indigenous cattle that still roam the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. These cows date back to at least the 16th century when sightings were recorded by shipwrecked sailors and have always stood central to Xhosa culture where they are linked to wealth and revered as life-sustaining animals. The cattle started to decline in the 19th century when Dutch settlers introduced Friesland bulls that brought with them bovine lung diseases.

Gallery 5: TO BELONG

WALL 3 continues

011

Walter Meyer (b.1965, d. 2017)

Colesberg Scrapyard (n.d.)

Oil on canvas

Kilbourn Collection

WALL 4

012

Gerard Marx (b.1976)

Plot (2017)

Reconstituted map fragments on acrylic ground and canvas

Kilbourn Collection

Born from an experience in the 1990s when a map he was using no longer corresponded to the terrain it was supposed to represent, Gerard Marx started to deconstruct maps in various ways. By getting rid of the implied viewer's stable position in relation to the map – whether by cutting the maps up, fragmenting, dissecting, floating, re-constituting, collaging in three dimensions, or annotating them - Marx metaphorically shifts the ground beneath his viewers' feet.

In the process we come to realise the fundamental unreliability of maps in charting and capturing an actual place; their inadequacy to border and segment land that is always more than just territory. Marx helps us to recognise that maps are devices that chart and segment, they express desires to include and therefore they exclude, they register possession and transgression but never represent the fullness of experience.

013

Ben Stanwix & Xhanti Zwelendaba (b.1986 Durban; b.1992 Alice)

Untitled (2024)

Ear tags (plastic & steel) on cured cow hide

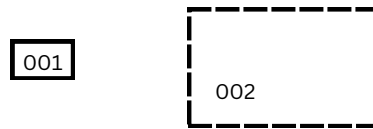
Courtesy of the artists and RESERVOIR

“Our collaborative work explores a shared interest in land, landscape, and history in South Africa. In *Untitled*, we use cowhide and the plastic ear tags used to identify cattle in a commercial herd, to create a landscape of markings, or an abstracted map, with unclear meanings.” (Stanwix & Zwelendaba 2024)

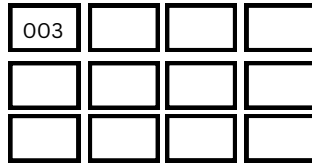
Gallery 6: TO BELONG continues

Artwork Guide

WALL 1
entrance



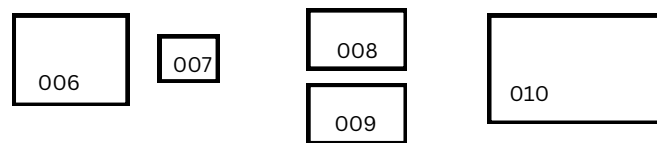
WALL 2



WALL 3



WALL 4



WALL 1

001

Alexander, Jane
Dig It All Yummy (2004)
Photograph

Collection of Emile Stipp

002

Steven Cohen
Chandelier (2002)
Single video, 16:24

Collection of Emile Stipp

In 2002, controversial performance artist Steven Cohen staged an intervention in Newtown, Johannesburg, at a site where squatters had constructed an informal settlement under the highway bridges. Cohen's visit coincided, unintentionally, with the arrival of bulldozers and so-called "red ants", men dressed in red overalls paid by the municipal government to demolish these shacks. Amid the desperation and poverty of people about to lose their only homes, Cohen struts about, incongruously, in high fetish heels, dressed in a corset, bandaged penis and illuminated chandelier with a Star of David and other markings painted on his face.

Projections of *Chandelier* have received predictably negative criticism. For many audiences, the audacity of a white man staging an indulgent art performance in a desperate situation is a racist and insensitive appropriation of suffering for the benefit of art-making, and of course, it is probably Cohen's whiteness that is allowing him the freedom to strut around the informal settlement.

But *Chandelier* can also be read more productively as a demonstration of displacement and incongruity. Literally embodying fragility and vulnerability by dressing in a chandelier, Cohen assesses the experience of loss and impotence of the shack dwellers but also of the red ants paid to carry out this hateful task.

It is also possible to read *Chandelier* as a meditation on the disappearance of normative whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. But, as in Cohen's other provocative works, *Chandelier* scrambles codes of Jewishness, queerness, whiteness and masculinity into a powerful statement about incompatible and contradictory identities. Moving between these different poles of his subjectivity and playing them off against each other, Cohen is confronted again and again with his own repeated displacement from the communities of sameness meant to harbour him.

Gallery 6: TO BELONG continues

WALL 2

003

Sue Williamson (b.1941 Lichtfield, UK)
Last Supper at Manley Villa (1981, 2008)
Photographs x 12

Private Collection

This work dates from before 1994, but includes an update from 2008.

In August 1981 Naz and Harry Ebrahim celebrated Eid for the last time in their family home where they had lived for many years. They had received notice that their house in District Six would be demolished to make way for a whites-only suburb, and friends and family had started to write messages on its walls as emblematic acts of resistance and remembrance.

Williamson returned to the site in 2008 to find a still empty plot, bearing silent witness to the complexities and deficiencies of land redistribution in democratic South Africa.

WALL 3

004

Igshaan Adams (b.1982 Cape Town)
Voetpadjies (2018)
Acrylic and wooden beads, cotton twine, mixed ropes

Homestead Collection

In his huge textile works, Igshaan Adams translates the physical terrain of places like Bonteheuwel, the working-class suburb where he grew up, into thread and bead. He traces the shortcuts, or what urban planners so eloquently call “desire lines”, onto woven landscapes that are organic, sensual, instinctive and abstract, thereby defying the rigid maps of forced segregation of his childhood. His work rethinks these often bleak landscapes as potentially vibrant and dynamic public spaces, animated by communal acts of choice and defiance as visualised by these imaginative voetpadjies.

005

Jane Alexander (b.1955)
Landowner (1995)
Silver print of fibre-based paper

Spier Collection

Gallery 6: TO BELONG continues

WALL 4 006

David Goldblatt (b.1913, d.2018)
Anna Boois, goat farmer, with her birthday cake and vegetable garden, Kamiesberge, near Garies, Namaqualand, Northern Cape, 20 September 2003 (2003)
Photograph

Collection of Emile Stipp

007

David Goldblatt (b.1913, d.2018)
A man building his house on his own plot of ground, Marselle Township, Kenton-on-Sea, Eastern Cape, 8 July 1990 (1990)
Photograph

Collection of Emile Stipp

008

Ashley Walters (b.1983 Cape Town)
Temporary Housing during the Upgrading of Social Housing, Eureka (2013)
Photograph

Scheryn Art Collection

009

Ashley Walters (b.1983 Cape Town)
Freedom Park, near Airport Industria (2013)
Photograph

Scheryn Art Collection

These two images are part of a series of photographs that document life in Uitsig, a community on the Cape Flats, skirted by the airport industrial zone. Walters takes unsentimental pictures of everyday life, revealing a complex picture of belonging and uprootedness, of making home and being unsheltered, in an area of Cape Town that is forever haunted by histories of forced removal and settlement.

010

Maurice Mbikay (b.1974 Kinshasa)
Bilele: Dressing for an occasion (2016)
C-print

Scheryn Art Collection

Mbikay's Techno Dandy draws on the tradition of the *Sapeur* hailing from his native Kinshasa. Sapeurs are stylish devotees of *La Sape*, an acronym for *Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes*, a subcultural form of expression that developed in the face of numerous dictatorial regimes in the Congo to preserve self-worth and dignity. Covered in obsolete computer keys, Mbikay's techno dandy takes a sartorial stand against extractive technological commerce in fragile socio-economic spaces: it is still the most vulnerable mine workers from places like his native DRC that are facilitating our obsession with technological innovation.

Here, Mbikay's techno dandy is relocated to the Cape Flats where he strikes a figure of hope and defiance. He writes

“I re-appropriate discarded computer parts, imagining a world in which e-waste is refurbished and recycled rather than dumped. By using found materials, I highlight the resilience of African people, who have found a myriad of ways to make use of limited resources. My sculptures depict figures who, in the midst of environmental, social, and political crisis, have created radical new approaches to reinvention and change.”

Gallery 7: TO CARE

“We are stuck with the problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination. Neither tales of progress nor of ruin tell us how to think about collaborative survival.”[1]

We may be stuck with the problem of living, as per Anne Tsing’s pragmatic warning, but we are also stuck with the problem of living *together*. If we accept that the climate crisis is closely connected to economic profit, continual growth and expansion, it becomes clear that the age of the Anthropocene – defined as our current epoch during which human activities are irreversibly impacting the environment – started in fact much earlier, with the advent of colonialism and extractive economies and the subsequent capitalist devastation of the natural world. Theorist Amitav Ghosh describes this as a history of “biopolitical wars waged against indigenous peoples... a war of the rich against the poor. And not just the rich in rich countries, but even the rich in poor countries”. [2]

How then, given these histories of inequitable sharing of the earth’s resources, where the extravagant consumption and accumulation of the few, impact the many, do we live together in South Africa, but also in the world? If our choices put large parts of the population in positions of precarity – the condition of being vulnerable to others – how do we rethink our relation to the world and to each other? In fact, how do we radically alter the idea of the earth-as-resource where “landscapes come to be regarded as factories and ‘nature’ is seen as subdued and cheap”? [3] What would it take to recuperate indigenous ecological knowledges, interacting with Earth as a living being, rather than a store to be plundered?

The art works in this section push us to think what South Africa would look like if we took care of the earth, of the environment and of one another? If pressures on infrastructure and demands for water and electricity grow unabatedly, how should we rethink our relationship to the earth’s resources? What does “collaborative survival” look like?

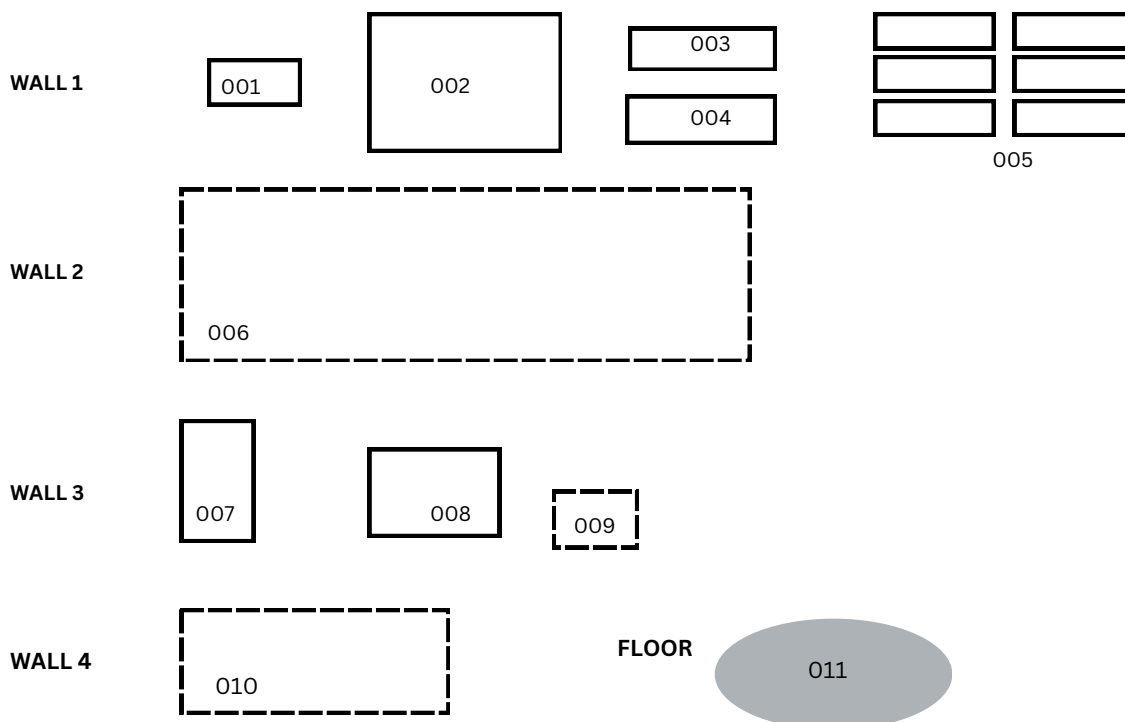
What would it take to cooperate with each other to secure a stable future for all, rather than for self?

[1] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, 2015, p.19

[2] Amitav Gosh interviewed by Rajat Ghai for *DownToEarth*, 31 July 2023.

[3] Amitav Gosh, *The Nutmeg’s Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, 2021, p 73.

Artwork Guide



Gallery 7: TO CARE

WALL 1

001

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
Vissershok (2001)
Photography

Collection of Emile Stipp

003

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
"Signal Grace" Verlorenvlei
(2006)
Pigment print on cotton paper

Spier Collection

005

Matthew Hindley (b. 1974 Cape Town)
Burning Forest 1-6 (2015)
Oil on canvas x 6

Kilbourn Collection

002

Kate Gottgens (b.1965 Durban)
Hot as Hell (2020)
Oil on canvas

Homestead Collection

004

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
Diamond Field (2007)
Pigment print on cotton
paper

Spier Collection

WALL 2

006

Minnette Vári (b.1968)
Quake (2007)
Single video with stereo sound; 6:23

Collection of Emile Stipp

Minnette Vári often uses her body as medium to explore powerful concepts of alienation and displacement that stand at the core of her work. In *Quake* her concern is geopolitical: veiled figures morph out of sandy terrain, while in the background a city endlessly collapses on itself. The sound is windstorm over desert, the scene grainy, the city dim and far-off. *Quake* presents an apocalyptic and restless present where fugitive figures are unable to find shelter.

Gallery 7: TO CARE

WALL 3

007

Chris Soal (b.1994)
In the midst of our unbecoming
(2021)

Discarded beer bottle caps
threaded onto electric fencing
cable, held in polyurethane
sealant on board

Scheryn Art Collection

008

Penny Siopis (b.1953)
She breathes water (2019)
Glue, ink and oil on canvas

Collection of the artist,
courtesy of Stevenson, Cape
Town, Johannesburg and
Amsterdam

009

Penny Siopis (b.1953)
She breathes water (2019)
Single video with stereo
sound, 5:12

Collection of the artist,
courtesy of Stevenson, Cape
Town, Johannesburg and
Amsterdam

In *She breathes water*, Siopis turns her attention to climate breakdown and ecological violence. In our age of the Anthropocene - which refers to a time of irreversible man-made damage to the environment - Siopis uses the octopus as an emblem that challenges us to think of the world differently. The octopus breathes water and is therefore inherently part of the aquatic world in which it exists; there are no boundaries between octopus and habitat - it is porous, its world literally flowing *through* it. Instead of existing in a relation of dominance or subjugation to the environment, she exists *in* and *because of* her symbiotic connection.

Siopis has long focused on the porous potential of life as an alternative way of being, challenging the hierarchical dualism that characterises so much of Western thought. Her turn to glue as medium exemplifies this concern: the viscosity of glue exists in a very material way in a continuum with the world around us, while the free-flow of ink-stain on canvas emphasises fluidity – qualities that stand in contrast to a world forged in the foolish myth of human dominance.

We are haunted by the final question in the film: “Can you write a history not all about your might?”

Gallery 7: TO CARE

WALL 4

010

Simon Gush (b. 1981 Pietermaritzburg)

Without light (2016)

Single video with stereo sound, 11:16

Collection of Emile Stipp

Without light continues Simon Gush's ongoing interest in the relation between light – electric and natural – and labour. In this work Gush ruminates on the effects of light and darkness on our working life and how electric light enables us to prolong labour even after official working hours have ended.

For a South African viewer it is impossible to watch this video without also thinking of our dependence on electricity and the effects of on-going load-shedding (powercuts) on our productivity and general well-being.

FLOOR

011

Patrick Bongoy (b.1980 Kinshasa, lives and works in Cape Town)

Killing time (2017)

Recycled rubber on fibreglass cast and found wooden log

Kilbourn Collection

Drawing on traditional basket-making techniques, Patrick Bongoy weaves waste material obtained from industrial packaging, textiles and rubber from the inner tubes of spent tyres, into new sculptural forms. By consistently re-cycling and re-purposing existing materials to make his art works, he brings the circular economy into the art world, urging us to think of the enormous burden of waste created in a culture obsessed with renewal and consumption.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

“Stories bring us together, untold stories keep us apart... Not to be able to tell your story, to be silenced and shut out, therefore, is to be dehumanised.

In losing our voice, something in us dies.”[1]

The art works in this gallery have been chosen for the diverse stories they tell. Many of these narratives were deemed undesirable pre-1994, others were consciously erased or carelessly sidelined; some involve discovering new histories or reviewing existing ones.

Yet this is not simply a regurgitation of the concept of the Rainbow Nation, that structuring myth of the new South Africa coined by Bishop Desmond Tutu in 1994. Meant to celebrate the coming together of diverse peoples, the Rainbow Nation was soon threatened by rifts and entrenched racial attitudes that have remained largely unchanged, fuelled by poor governance, corruption, misuse of public funds and continued inequality in almost every walk of life. Rather than a story of the Rainbow Nation that masked the realities of post -1994 by putting emphasis on unity in diversity, it is perhaps time to consider our diversity more seriously.

It may be useful to think of South Africa as a space for world-making, a concept that was adapted from queer theory where it related to sustaining life worlds, and is now more broadly used to refer to the unending processes whereby we constantly shape our world, hoping for a better reality and another way of living. World-making takes time: it is present when groups share unique experiences, when traditions are conveyed, adapted and reinterpreted, when minority or marginalised histories are told to people who will listen, attentively. World-making is important because it gives hope and support to those who experience the present as oppressive, it broadens our imaginations and helps us to see a more inclusive and just future. It acts as a bridge between imagination and real-life possibility, encouraging us to question, dream, and ultimately shape our collective reality.

The art works gathered here insist on telling their stories as a way to restore agency, thereby continuing to make worlds that push us to question the status quo, and to imagine new possibilities for collective existence and understanding.

 [1] Elif Shafak, *How to stay sane in an Age of Division*, Profile Books, 2020, p.9.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Red wall - front



001

001

Lerato Shadi (b. 1979 Mahikeng, lives and works in Berlin)

Bhato ba me (2020)

Text based neon installation on red wall

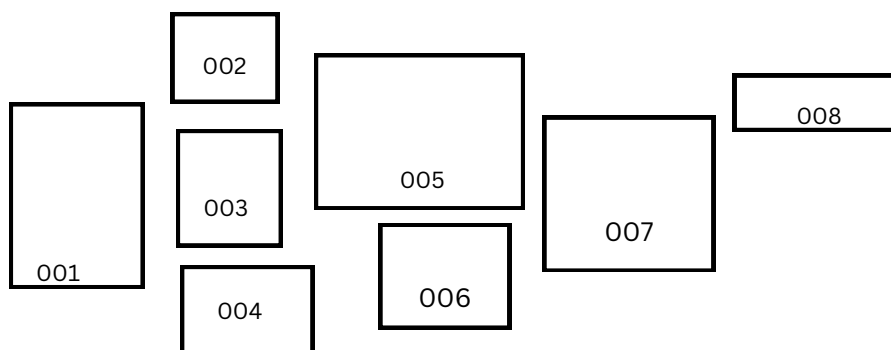
Courtesy of the artist

“ ‘Batho ba me’ is a Setswana commonplace specifically used as an appeal in political speeches that can be translated as ‘my people.’ For a number of years, Shadi has often used Setswana in naming exhibitions and works. With the choice of language alone, she poses questions about inclusion and exclusion: who is being addressed and how, and who is not? Today, Setswana is one of South Africa’s eleven official languages and is spoken by nearly 10% of the population. During apartheid, it was one of the country’s repressed languages.

The installation text ‘We the people’ [is] in black font on a red background. This expression is found in preambles of constitutions around the world. With two neon elements, Shadi sharpens these words into a question targeted directly at the viewer: ‘Are we the people?’ For whom is the ‘we’ claimed here actually a reality and how is this ‘we’ defined? Shadi is referencing an essential discrepancy between inclusion and exclusion that always arises when communities are formed. ‘We’ is especially used in political discourses in order to claim a feeling of community that must always be critically questioned. Debates about the access to human and civil rights show repeatedly that the question about ‘we’ is always problematic.” (Lerato Shadi 2020)

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Red wall - back



001

Tom Cullberg (b.1972 Stockholm, lives and works in Cape Town)
Gimme some truth (2021-23)
Acrylic on wood, wood and glass

Collection of the artist

Tom Cullberg's work is born from a lived reality where memories of a childhood in Sweden pushes in and converse with an adult life lived in South Africa. His work invites collaborative remembering. He makes rough miniature wooden versions of familiar objects and duplicates buildings, books- and album covers in paint. He displays these objects on shelves as in a domestic library and lets the narrative unfold. These objects and images provide flickers of recognition and memories that viewers may slot into private or public stories. Cullberg calls these "constellations where associations between them take the viewer on a journey in tangible and intangible worlds between fiction and reality."

The title *Gimme some truth* is taken from a John Lennon song and the artwork features moments of small human activity such as fishing, horse-riding, camping and standing at a pedestrian crossing. It includes a painting of the BP building and Golden Arrow buses of the Cape Town of the 1980s and 90s. References to music include Arthur Russel's *Not Checking Up*, Pulp's *Different Class*, Gill Scott Heron's *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* and ABBA's *Super Trouper*. The synchronised clocks are from artist Felix Gonzalez Torres work *Perfect Lovers* and the Tulbagh landscape from a Gwen Fagan photograph.

Together they tell a universal story of inner lives forged from different realities under the influence of pop culture, literature and various other rich imaginary stimuli.

002

Sam Nhlengethwa
The Party (1992)
Collage on canvas

Homestead Collection

003

Sitaara Stodel
Home is the best place to be (2018)
Photomontage and collage on linen

Private Collection

Sitaara Stodel's idiosyncratic use of collage and photomontage seems to emphasise rupture and discontinuity even more effectively than this medium typically does.

Cut-up photos of domestic interiors and random found photographs settle sparingly on empty canvas like patchy memories. Stodel relates how her family moved house forty times, including into properties that they could not afford and were evicted from. Her collages are attempts to remember and imagine domestic life, but they literally refuse to add up.

004

Sam Nhlengethwa
My grandmother's home in the 60s (1998)
Lithograph

Kilbourn Collection

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Red wall - back

005

Brett Murray (b.1961)
Rainbow over Nkandla, from *Made in China series*, 2012

Homestead Collection

006

Jabulani Dhlamini (b.1983 Warden)
Mamabuda, Bophelong (2013)
Pigment inks on fibre paper

Kilbourn Collection

This photograph is part of a series entitled uMama, in which Dhlamini pays tribute to the single mothers and grandmothers who are raising children on their own in South African townships.

007

Pieter Hugo (b.1976 Johannesburg)
Pieter and Maryna Vermeulen with Timana Phosiwa, from the series *Messina/Musina* (2006)
Photograph

Collection of Emile Stipp

This photograph is often touted as an emblem of a new South African family, but the truth behind this work is even more interesting and far more nuanced. Pieter and Maryna Vermeulen were renting accommodation from the child's father, and when he had to spend a lengthy time in hospital after being shot in the spine during a heist, they agreed to take care of his child.

Hugo is often criticised for the harshness of his photographic eye that tends to emphasise those aspects that mark his subjects as different or as outsiders, but it is worth noting that Hugo works in collaboration with his subjects and there is often an exchange of opinions about which photographs would be used.

And yet there is no denying that his gaze is direct, bordering on intrusive. In this picture a slightly elevated viewpoint enables us to look down at the somewhat stooping figure of Maryna, sunburnt and barefoot, embraced by Pieter with hairy torso and prosthetic leg on display. The picture's remarkable affect is located in the contrast between these two slightly dishevelled people and the neatness of the smartly-dressed little child that Maryna holds protectively on her lap.

This photograph forms part of a photo essay project entitled *Messina/Musina* for which Pieter Hugo photographed landscapes, portraits and still lifes in this northernmost town of South Africa. Located on the border with Zimbabwe the town is characterised by a transient carousel of people, including truck drivers, mine workers, soldiers, sex workers, farm labourers, AIDS- and social welfare workers, hunters and residents.

008

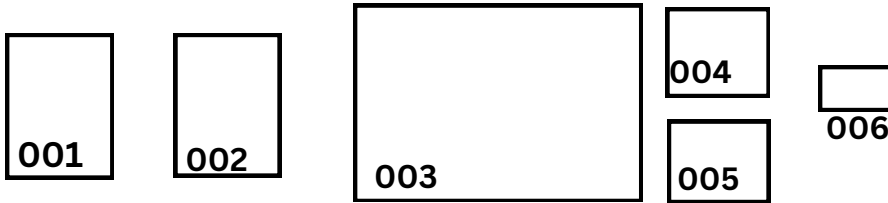
Candice Breitz
Ex Libris South Africa (2009)
Photograph

Collection of Emile Stipp

The 47 books in this photograph were found on a shelf in Bikini Beach Books in Gordon's Bay in January 2009. They tell a story of white anxieties, fears, hopes and expectations that have marked life in South Africa for nearly a century.

GALLERY 8 : TO BE HEARD

Wall 1 - right side of entrance



001

Dan Halter (b.1977 Zimbabwe)
New Identity (2015)
Hand-woven archival ink-jet print
Scheryn Art Collection

002

Dan Halter (b. 1977 Zimbabwe)
South Africa / Zimbabwe Border Fence (2013)
Hand-woven archival ink-jet print
Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD

003

Serge Alain Nitegeka (b.1983 Rwanda, lives and works in Johannesburg)
Black Subject(2009)
Charcoal and acrylic on wood
Private Collection

“The migrant experience, and its narratives, influences my work immensely. Like trauma or a life-changing experience, it’s hard to forget or do anything else.”

Nitegeka was 11 years old when his family fled the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, with no time to gather even the “fragile cargo,” the essentials that migrants put together when they leave. They travelled first to a refugee camp in Congo, then to Nairobi where he completed school, and finally he managed to get to Johannesburg and WITS art school. For years Nitegeka has been confined to South Africa, unable to leave while he waits for his citizen claim to be resolved.

Nitegeka often works with the kind of raw, cheap wood we associate with packaging materials, derived from the crates in which his art and other objects are shipped around the globe. These pieces of wood act as an index of passage and trade, always bringing his works back to this context of dislocation and “an elsewhere”.

His works frequently bear a claustrophobic sense of containment: painted blacked-out figures often stoop, seemingly too large for the edges of the artwork, while even his abstract works and obstructive wooden installations are boxed-in by physical or metaphorical boundaries.

004

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
Frontier with Ghost (2007)
Pigment print on cotton paper

Spier Collection

005

Jane Alexander (b.1959)
Corporal (2008)
Pigment print on cotton paper

Spier Collection

GALLERY 8 : TO BE HEARD

Wall 1 - right side of entrance

006

Roelof Petrus van Wyk (b.1969)

SODOMONUMENT for ADAM VIGELAAR van DELFT, JAN THEUNISZ van GRONINGEN, PIETER ANDRIEZ FRITS van HAARLEM, NICOLAUS FRIDERICH EINFELD van HANNOVER, JAN DE BREEKER van GORCUM and ANDRIES VAN IJSER van ZWOLLE. (2024)

Engraved brass plaques on various media plinths

Collection of the artist

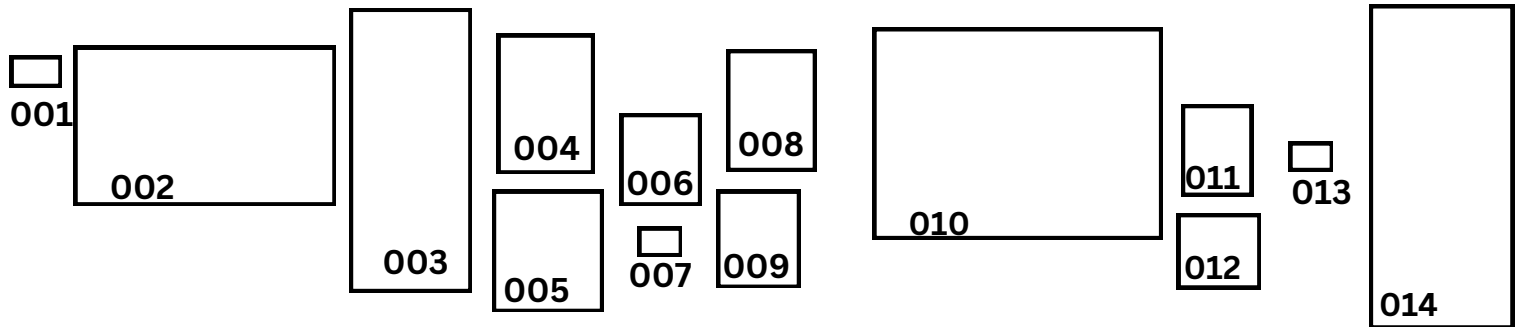
"There are no memorials or monuments in the Western Cape for queer men killed during the Colonial era for their same-sex desire and queer being in the world. These memorial plaques are an attempt towards recognition.

The Cape of Good Hope, between 1652 and 1795, under the rule of the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), was unexpectedly rich ground for intertwined alternative cultures. The VOC licensed gambling, alcohol consumption and dancing as they contributed to the company's coffers. Prostitution and homosexuality also thrived in the shadow of Dutch rule, albeit highly restricted. Van Wyk is interested in tracing and imagining the development of a same-sex subculture under the Dutch Roman Sodomy Law. The research archive in this forensic investigation comprises approximately 200 recorded Sodomy cases in the Western Cape archives. In the court case conjured in this instance, five men were accused of the fulfilment of the act of Sodomy with soldier ADAM VIGELAAR van DELFT. Of the six accused, five were found guilty, three were executed by drowning with heavy weights in Table Bay, two received lighter sentences, and the outcome of the sixth is unknown. Vigelaar is also the first male on record in the Cape to declare his romantic love for another man, sailor PIETER ANDRIEZ FRITS van HAARLEM, in public, identifying their relationship beyond the physical act." (Van Wyk 2024)

Van Wyk is applying formally to the City of Cape Town to install a set of plaques, as exhibited here, at cited sites such as the Company's Garden, the Nassau Bastion at the Castle, the stone gate of the Dutch Landdrost's official home and Robben Island.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side



001

Roelof Petrus van Wyk (b.1969)

SODOMONUMENT for ADAM VIGELAAR van DELFT, JAN THEUNISZ van GRONINGEN, PIETER ANDRIEZ FRITS van HAARLEM, NICOLAUS FRIDERICH EINFELD van HANNOVER, JAN DE BREEKER van GORCUM and ANDRIES VAN IJSER van ZWOLLE. (2024)

Engraved brass plaques on various media plinths

Collection of the artist

002

Nicholas Hlobo (b.1975 Cape Town)

Intlambo Yochulumanco (2021)

Ribbon, leather and thread on canvas

Homestead Collection

Nicholas Hlobo draws on his experience of being a gay man growing up in Xhosa culture. His stitched “paintings” are abstract compositions that “draw” with rubber inner tubing, lace, silicone, thread and ribbon. While eschewing recognisable subject matter, he nevertheless succeeds in foregrounding issues of sexuality and desire, masculinity and femininity through his considered choice of materials. His art often relies on the interplay between hard and soft materials, and often feature protrusions out of the canvas, to probe the construction of masculinity in Xhosa culture.

The title of this work translates to “Abundant joy” or “Happiness.” Hlobo mostly uses Xhosa titles because, as he observes “The language I use does not have a long history as a written language, but it is quite rich in grammar, in poetry, in metaphors. I like metaphors. They’re open-ended. Or they can close things that are very open. All spoken languages employ metaphor. I also like inventing my own metaphors. I think it's fun. They can soften the subject matter.”

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side

003

Pierre Fouché (b.1977 Pretoria)

1994.77 or Lebenslanglichen Explosionsgluck (2019)

Parachute silk cord

Homestead Collection

The German title of this work, meaning “Life-long explosive happiness” was printed on crumpled newspaper that formed the core of a ball of parachute silk cords dating from World War II, gifted to Fouché. Taking his cue from this context, Fouché weaves a complex bobbin lace interpretation of an iconic photograph taken by Horace Bristol in 1944 of a naked World War II marine, manning a machine gun in the blistering hot dome on the fuselage of an airplane.

Lace making, like most needlework, is heavily coded as women’s work and as craft – a seemingly arbitrary but in fact heavily politicised distinction that accords with Fouché’s interest in critiquing accepted gender roles and divisions. Trained originally as a sculptor, Fouché was drawn to the programmatic nature of bobbin lace making and started attending weekly meetings of the Cape Lace Guild to learn this complicated skill.

In this work the gossamer pattern woven from thin but very strong threads, belie the violence alluded to by the subject matter. The incongruity of medium and subject is echoed in the eroticised but lethal naked soldier, and seem to mirror the absurdity of society that expects young men to become killing machines in the name of patriotic ideals.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side

004

Abri De Swardt (b.1988 Johannesburg)

Outeniqua I: Hansie Cronje (it's just not cricket/ in a moment of stupidity and weakness my whole world turned dark (2012)

Light jet print on Fuji crystal archive metallic paper

Collection of the artist

005

Abri De Swardt (b.1988 Johannesburg)

Outeniqua III: King George III (the tongue of malice may not paint my intentions in those colours she admires, nor the sycophant extoll me beyond what I deserve/ every man who does not agree with me is a traitor) (2012)

Light jet print on Fuji crystal archive metallic paper

Collection of the artist

“What does it feel like to inhabit a white body in places haunted by the protracted effects of settler-coloniality and masculinity?”

This is the question posed by De Swardt in this series of self-portraits in which he reimagines three presences still haunting the Outeniqua Mountains in his home town of George in the Southern Cape: the match-fixing Afrikaans cricketer Hansie Cronje who fatally flew into the mountains in 2002, the indigenous Quagga equine which became extinct in 1883 due to ruthless hunting by settlers, and King George III after whom the city of George was named in 1811, ironically the year he was deemed mentally “unfit” to reign.

Outeniqua, in Khoe etymology, means “those who bear honey” and here, like bees, swarms of cut-outs from contemporary print media such as lifestyle, news, fashion, sport, and science magazines, as well as reproductions from medical and art history anthologies, colonise the naked body of the artist. Images of whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity and madness collide on the queer body, but through the medium of collage, these worlds are powerfully disassembled, reconstituted and subverted.

The title of *Outeniqua I* refers to the words of South African cricket captain Hansie Cronjé who was banned from cricket after a match-fixing incident against India in 2000. Cronjé explained that “In a moment of stupidity and weakness I allowed Satan and the world to dictate terms to me. The moment I took my eyes off Jesus my whole world turned dark.”

Outeniqua III's title refers to the words of George III: “Whenever God of his infinite goodness shall call me out of this world, the tongue of malice may not paint my intentions in those colours she admires, nor the sycophant extol me beyond what I deserve.”

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side

006

Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980)
Madlisa from Country Girls (2009)
Hand-printed gelatin silver print

Collection of Emile Stipp

Sabelo Mlangeni moved from Mpumalanga to Johannesburg in 2001 to study photography at the Market Photo Workshop, graduating in 2004. The series entitled *Country Girls* (2003-2009) looks at gay men in Mpumalanga around small agricultural and mining towns such as Ermelo, Bethal, Piet Retief, Standerton, Sekunda and Driefontein where Mlangeni grew up. Even though gay life is sometimes seen to be “un-African” and subjected to violent homophobia, Mlangeni’s pictures reveal a community of support and respect that makes these lives not simply possible but also joyful.

007

Roelof Petrus van Wyk (b.1969)
SODOMONUMENT for ADAM VIGELAAR van DELFT, JAN THEUNISZ van GRONINGEN, PIETER ANDRIEZ FRITS van HAARLEM, NICOLAUS FRIDERICH EINFELD van HANNOVER, JAN DE BREEKER van GORCUM and ANDRIES VAN IJSER van ZWOLLE.(2024)
Engraved brass plaques

Collection of the artist

008

Zanele Muholi (b. 1972 Umlazi)
Miss Lesbian II (2009)
Photograph

Scheryn Art Collection

In the canon of South African art history, Zanele Muholi’s influence on subsequent generations of black artists exploring histories of non-conforming gender and sexuality, cannot be overstated. Muholi is the original queer black activist, whose career testifies to their* courage and resolution to confront rampant homophobia in South African society. While homosexuality is technically protected by the South African constitution, homophobia and homophobic attacks are still a grim reality.

This early performative self-portrait by Muholi captures what is in many ways the central preoccupation of their career, namely to give visibility to and to tell the stories of black lesbian and gender non-conforming people in South Africa.

*Muholi is non-binary and therefore prefers to use “they/them” pronouns, observing “I’m just human.”

009

Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980)
Big Boy from Country Girls (2009)
Hand-printed gelatin silver print

Collection of Emile Stipp

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side

010

Igshaan Adams (b.1982 Bonteheuwel, Cape Town)
Al-Muhyee (Giver of life) (2020)
String, rope, fabric, and glass, wooden, bone and plastic beads

Scheryn Art Collection

This tapestry of a rose is a reference to Adams' interest in Sufism, a mystical form of Islam that he studied in his twenties under a Sufi master, Ma Rukea. She taught him that Sufism could provide a lens through which to look at the world and it helped him to navigate the conflicting aspects of his identity: growing up queer with a Muslim father and a Christian mother, during the last decade of apartheid, against a background of societal and domestic violence. Sufism provided the impetus to go inside, to examine pain and to strive for peace internally.

In the Quran Al-Muhyee is the name for God the giver of life, and the rose is the perfect analogy for life's journey – from seed to flower and back to seed, it symbolises life, death and rebirth. The rose's thorns represent pain but also protection and its falling petals reveal the seed inside. In the same way the removal of the proverbial 1000 veils in Islamic teaching offers a way to reach the true inner self, by getting rid of false desires and conceits.

011

Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980)
Isimakade from the series
Umlindelo wawaKholwa (2015)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print

Collection of Emile Stipp

012

Sabelo Mlangeni (b. 1980)
A morning after from the series
Umlindelo wamaKholwa, (2016)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print

Collection of Hoosein Mahomed

Mlangeni is a member of the Zionist Church, along with 30% of South Africa's population, making it the largest popular religious movement in SA. The church originated in the small town of Zion in Illinois in the USA as a Protestant healing community, and was brought to South Africa in 1904 by missionaries. Over the past century it has adapted to its South African context, with very little left of its American roots, except that believers still spend nights praying for healing powers. It has nothing to do with the Jewish variant.

This series is part of Mlangeni's ongoing interest in photographing various communities across South Africa with whom he is intimately acquainted. He observes: "The biggest question for me is being part of the community, part of the church. How can I point out other people as being 'amakholwa' ('the believers') when that is what I myself am? This is a body of work that doesn't 'look' at the Zionist church. It is very important for me to emphasise this, I am not interested in exotifying (sic) the church... I want to look at people gathering beyond church, and the strong spiritual relationships, which also include me...When I look at this work, what's important is the sense of intimacy between me and the church." (*Umlindelo wawaKholwa 2017*)

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 2 - garden side

013

Roelof Petrus van Wyk (b.1969)

SODOMONUMENT for ADAM VIGELAAR van DELFT, JAN THEUNISZ van GRONINGEN, PIETER ANDRIEZ FRITS van HAARLEM, NICOLAUS FRIDERICH EINFELD van HANNOVER, JAN DE BREEKER van GORCUM and ANDRIES VAN IJSER van ZWOLLE.
(2024)

Engraved brass plaques

Collection of the artist

014

Deborah Poynton (b.1970 Durban)

Subject 2 (2009)

Oil on canvas

Collection of Emile Stipp

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 3 - street side

001

002

003

004

005

006

007

008

009

010

011

012

001

Cedric Nunn (b. 1957)

Kids, largely the descendants of San/Bushmen who had occupied this region prior to the arrival of white settlers, and whose ancestors were massacred in a 'last stand', also in the region, refresh themselves in the afternoon summer heat of Pienaar Sig township. Nieu-Bethesda. (2018)

Photograph

Homestead Collection

002

Cedric Nunn

Gamkwa tribe Chief Hester Booysen. Hankey, Eastern Cape (2018)

Photograph

Collection of the artist

003

Cedric Nunn

Karretjie People settlement, Merino Station Outspan. Colesberg.

Anthropologist Michael de Jongh asserts that the so-called Karretjie People are in fact the descendants of the San/Bushmen who inhabited the region before it was settled by whites (2018)

Photograph

Collection of the artist

004

Cedric Nunn (b. 1957)

Memorial to the genocide of the San/Bushmen, which occurred progressively from the Cape Peninsula onwards, culminating in this region in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Graaff-Reinet. (2018)

Photograph

Collection of the artist

005

donna Kukama (b.1981, Mahikeng, lives and works in Cologne, Germany)

364 and still counting... (2016)

Blood, sweat and soil on paper

Courtesy of the artist and blank projects

"364 and still counting... is a handwritten layering of numbers from 1 to 364, written in Khoekhoe and Setswana. A re-counting of the number of years since the arrival of Europeans in Cape Town in 1652, the work is a physical trace of a violent act. The work is a miniature monument written with soil, sweat, and blood." (blank projects, Figure, 2017)

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 3 - street side

006

Bronwyn Katz (b. 1993 Kimberley)
kx (ii) 2019
Wire and string

007 - floor installation

Bronwyn Katz (b.1993 Kimberley)
X (2019)
Steelwool, cardboard, audio

Scheryn Art Collection

Collection of Emile Stipp

With this work Katz continues her interest in ancestral languages and lineages that have been all but erased by the advent of colonialism and apartheid. x, and the adjacent xk(ii), were both exhibited in 2019 at blank projects as part of a solo exhibition entitled / // ! ‡, referring to four clicking consonants that are typical of Southern African languages like the Khoekhoe* and other endangered variants such as !Ora (Kora).

The pillars of x seem to echo the vertical forms of the written click notation, while the steelwool provides sensory onomatopoeia for the guttural sound they emit. Katz produced a looped soundtrack with the help of Kenyan-South African sound artist Dani Kyengo O'Neill and invents an imagined creole language that is received through the entire body – sounds are meant to be felt, seen and heard.

Katz works with found materials in a sparse abstract aesthetic, and yet the found materials speak pointedly to sensory associations that evoke cultural memories and histories. The potscourers, for instance, conjure up derogatory connotations with black hair and evoke the labour of the black body at work, while her minimalist wire works are like drawings on the wall that register the artist's actions and movements, silent witnesses of being there in time and place.

*Although Khoekhoe is a national language of Namibia, only around 167 000 speakers of Khoekhoe remain. In 2019, the University of Cape Town ran a series of courses teaching the language while a new Khoi and San Studies Unit was launched in 2020.

008

Alice Mann (b. 1991)
Dernika Williams (2017)
Photograph

009

Alice Mann (b.1991)
Avondale Primary Drum Majorettes (2018)
Photograph

010

Alice Mann (b. 1991)
Taylim Prince (2017)
Photograph

Courtesy of the artist and AFRONOVA GALLERY

Alice Mann spent four years photographing drum majorettes in the Western Cape and Gauteng schools. As a sport, drum majorettes were popular in the early 1980s across South Africa but has since become rarer. Despite criticism that the sport promotes a problematic version of femininity, in many marginalised communities it is still very popular and provide a crucial avenue for young girls to belong to a sisterhood of support, and to express pride, discipline and camaraderie.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 3 - street side

011

Ravelle Pillay (b.1993)
Untitled (Father) (2021)
Oil on canvas

Ravelle Pillay's ancestors came to South Africa as indentured labourers from India in the late nineteenth century. Starting in the 1830s, the British "exported" indigent Indians to fill labour shortages that resulted from the abolition of slavery in 1807, to places all over the globe like Trinidad, Guyana, Réunion, Mauritius, Fiji and South Africa where they worked on the sugar plantations, railways and mines of colonial Natal.

It is a history not spoken about much in South Africa, and one that is entangled with personal narratives of displacement and trauma in Pillay's own family. She managed to trace her Indian ancestors to a paternal great great grandmother who came from a small village in the South of India, and later married the descendant of an English baron from Northamptonshire in England who found himself in South Africa.

012

Ravelle Pillay (b.1993)
Empty Rooms (2023)
Colour lithograph

Private Collection

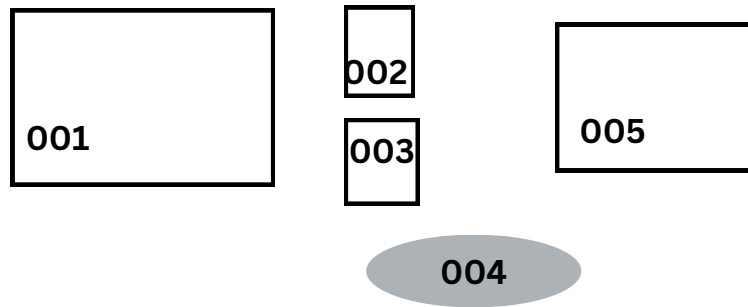
Empty rooms depict two buildings encircled by lush tropical greenery that seems almost to swamp the structures. One portrays Lilford Hall in Northamptonshire, the ancestral home of Pillay's great-great-grandfather, while the turreted one is a family home built by her maternal great-grandfather in Durban and repossessed by the apartheid government when her mother was a child.

These buildings become vestiges of Pillay's personal history. They feature in family narratives that Pillay grew up with, easily blending a distant Victorian aristocratic heritage with a much closer history of Indian indentured labour, when Indians were transported to European colonies and places like Durban, for contractual servitude following the abolition of slavery in the 19th century. Pillay follows these intertwined stories of colonialism, migration and repeated displacement that feature in her family's collective memory, uncovering an archive of trauma and violence that seems both intensely felt yet imprecisely remembered.

As in her large oil paintings of featureless portraits or unoccupied interiors, these two works speak of stillness and emptiness. When Pillay traced her mother's ancestral home, colloquially known as The Castle, she found a derelict ruin. These two houses sit like colossal effigies in their lush alien gardens, silent witnesses to a history of loss and recuperation.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 4 - left of entrance



Abstraction and the Right to opacity

Throughout his career the Martinican poet and philosopher Edward Glissant articulated the phrase “the right to opacity,” as an ethical stance that acknowledges that some aspects of identity are unknowable and cannot be fully understood. Glissant argued that there are large parts of the self that are beyond the reach of words, ineffable.

The right to opacity has been adopted in postcolonial activism and contemporary art. Julie Mehretu, the Ethiopian American artist, uses this phrase in relation to her large abstract works, refusing to be “the type of black artists we celebrate...who are dealing with their blackness, or otherness, in a way that offers an ‘insight,’ transparency, bombast or a claiming of a certain kind of negritude. It is a binary idea of what a black artist can be. You should be able to do that, and also something completely opposite.” (quoted in Cultured Magazine, 13 Sept 2016)

The works in this section all assert a right to be opaque, they are non-representational, they are attentive to the properties of material and composition, they are sometimes baffling and impenetrable, they choose to be beautiful or not.

In the context of thirty years’ democracy, these works assert the right to complicate and obscure, they refuse to tell the stories we expect of them.

It is in this refusal and ambiguity that new possibilities are born.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 4 - left of entrance

001

Jared Ginsburg (b.1985 Cape Town)

Hanging Drawing IX, XI, XII (2019)

Bamboo, rubber, string and wire

Private Collection

These three “drawings” are sculptural translations of an ink drawing into three-dimensional space. Ginsburg draws on the visual language of *arte povera**, an art movement that originated in Italy in the 1960s and employed simple and often perishable materials to comment on the increasing commercialisation of art and culture. This so-called “poor art” employed dirt, rags, twigs, rocks and other found objects to challenge traditional art practices and to foreground the materiality of art.

In Ginsburg’s hands, the povera idiom is conducive to a practise concerned with chance and fortuitous creations: suspended drawings are layered and thereby new compositional possibilities emerge.

**arte povera* as visual and conceptual language is also used by artists such as donna Kukama (Gallery 8), Dineo Seshee Bopape (Gallery 8) and Gugulective (Gallery 4).

002

Unathi Mkontho (b.1982 Peddie)

Flat sheet sentences 1 (2023)

Wood trim, balsa wood, plywood
cardboard and mounting paper

Kilbourn Collection

003

Unathi Mkontho (b.1982 Peddie)

Sentence construction, a fragment (2022)

Velcro on plywood and meranti

Kilbourn Collection

004 - Floor piece

Unathi Mkontho (b.1982 Peddie)

A wall (2023)

Wood, coated cardboard and mounting paper.

Collection of Hoosein Mahomed

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Wall 4 - left of entrance

005

Dineo Seshee Bopape (b. 1981 Mahikeng)

Uncontested metaphor (2013)

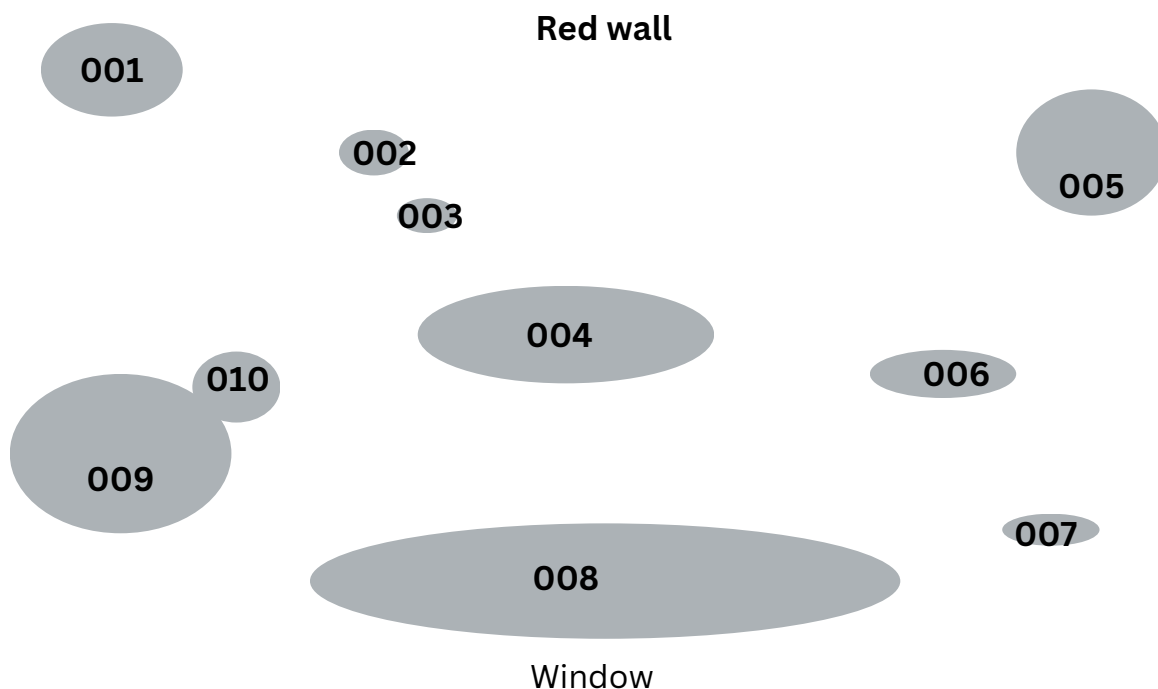
Fabric, crocodile clips, print on paper

Private Collection

“Born on a Sunday. If she were Ghanaian, her name would be akosua/akos for short. During the same year of her birth, there were perhaps 22 recorded Atlantic Ocean hurricanes. the Brixton riots took place; the song “endless love” is popular on the airwaves; two people were injured when a bomb exploded in a Durban shopping center; Bobby Sands dies; MTV is launched; the Boeing 767 makes its first airlight; Umkonto We Sizwe performs numerous underground assaults against the apartheid state. There was an earthquake that killed maybe 150 people in China; an International NGO Conference on Indigenous Populations and the Land is held in Geneva; The name ‘internet’ is mentioned for the first time; Hosni Mubarak was elected president of Egypt; there is a coup d’etat in Ghana; Princess Diana of Britain marries Charles; Bob Marley dies; apartheid SA invades Angola; AIDS is identified/ created/named; Salman Rushdie releases his book “Midnight’s Children”; the remains of the Titanic are found; Muhammad Ali retires; Winnie Mandela’s banishment orders are renewed for another 5 years; the first test tube baby is born, Thomas Sanakara rides a bike to his first cabinet meeting; Machu Pichu is declared a heritage site; her paternal grandmother dies affected by dementia; that very year millions of people cried tears (of all sorts), spoke words in many languages and billions of people dreamt.... some things continued, some things transformed, others ended(?). The world’s human population was then apparently at around 4.529 billion... today she (Bopape) is one amongst 7 billion – occupying multiple adjectives. Other concurrent events of the year of her birth, and of her lifetime, are perhaps too many to fully know...” (Dineo Seshee Bopape, *Artesmundi* 9, 2021)

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Floor pieces



001

Unathi Mkontho (b.1982 Peddie)

A wall (2023)

Wood, coated cardboard and mounting paper

Collection of Hoosein Mahomed

002 & 003

Stephané Conradie (b. 1990 Namibia, lives and works in Cape Town)

Bondel (2024)

Klinkende Simbaal (2024)

Mixed-media assemblage

Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD

Conradie assembles these bouquets from objects found in the homes of friends and family. They contain mass-produced glass objects, ceramic and brass knickknacks commonly displayed on side tables and sideboards, sometimes along with the “best” crockery.

Displaying objects in the home is where the public and private domains of the household meet: on the one hand these objects are placed to project an aspirational idea of “taste”, and yet they are also an index of very personal, often female, choices and identity. Clearly these objects *mean*, they are the stuff of sentiment and memories and bring with them the stories of lives lived in a very particular way, revealing of aspirations and dreams. In Conradie’s assemblages, these stories are further inflected with the politics of South Africa and a creolised biography of slavery and segregation, of land lost and discriminatory apartheid policies.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Floor pieces

004

Willem Boshoff (b.1951 Vereeniging)

Ostrakon (2003)

534 scarred and burnt ceramic tiles

Collection of Emile Stipp

“Ostrakon consists of 534 names painted onto ceramic tiles. They record South Africa's governors, presidents, prime ministers and cabinet ministers between 1900--1994. An ostrakon is a potsherd (a piece of broken pottery), an item used by voters in ancient Greece. The names of people in office they wished to banish (for various reasons) were written on the fragment of shell or pottery, in a vote to determine whether any person should be ostracised or temporarily banished. In some cases the bad administrator was stoned into exile with the very potsherds used in the voting process.

.....this work acts as a filing cabinet for names, in this case those of undesirable people. These persons come from previous political eras in South Africa, and belong to those who governed South Africa for almost the whole of the twentieth century. They were elected to their various positions and portfolios by the votes of the white minority who controlled South Africa during these years, who chose only white people to lead them.” (Boshoff 2003)

005

Ben Orkin (b. 1998 Cape Town)

PrEP, Present, Post (2020)

Clay

Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD

The title of this work makes reference to three medicines used in relation to HIV/AIDS:

- PrEP is consumed before exposure to HIV by HIV-negative people. It is a preemptive protective measure.
- ARVs are consumed by HIV-positive people to lower their viral loads turning the virus imperceptible in the body.
- PEP is consumed after exposure to HIV and prevents the virus spreading and duplicating in a HIV-negative person's body.

Orkin observes “These three medicines are the past, the present and the future. These three vessels are my attempt to understand and represent this time through the stacking of forms which move upwards, are static or move downwards. Their clay bodies are raw and exposed to any kind of fluid absorption. All feature pointed tips as though they could be inserted into the body like some kind of sex toy.” (2020)

006

Serge Alain Nitegeka (b.1983 Rwanda, lives and works in Johannesburg)

Fragile Cargo IX (2013)

Paint on wood

Collection of Emile Stipp

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Floor pieces

007

Gerald Machona (b. 1986 Zimbabwe, lives and works in Cape Town)

Flagging the Nation (2012)

Decommissioned currency (old South African Rand, Zimbabwean Dollar, Mozambican Meticalis, Angola Kwanza, old Zaires), fabric, stainless steel, marble, sand

Private Collection

Gerald Machona's planted flag with stars and stripes is a visual quotation of that iconic image of the American flag planted on the moon in 1969, itself a repetition of countless flags that were planted to proclaim territorial annexation by various colonial powers throughout history. But Machona's flag is fictional, amalgamated from various defunct currencies, and utterly unsuitable to endorse narrow ideals of national identity. Rather, this composite flag speaks of the opposite: of failed economies and migrations and of the arbitrary luck that determine national inclusions and exclusions.

Machona's interest in the constructs of nationalism and foreignness was ignited after he witnessed the horrific xenophobic attacks that erupted in South African townships in 2008, targeted at migrants from all over Africa.

008

Keiskamma Collective

The Keiskamma Altarpiece (2004-2005)

Beadwork, photographs on canvas, appliqué, embroidery on hessian

Private Collection

Between 1512 and 1516, Matthias Grunewald painted an altarpiece for the Monastery of St Anthony in Isenheim in the northeast of France. The Antonine monks cared for plague sufferers and victims of ergotism, a disease caused by consuming rye infected with a deadly fungus. The Isenheim altarpiece was supposed to offer comfort to dying patients with the image of Christ on the Cross symbolising hope to overcome physical pain and illness.

In 2004 the women living in and around Hamburg in the eastern Cape decided to make a similar piece to tell the story of the widespread suffering caused by AIDS, rampant in their communities. They had previously worked together on various embroidery projects and the story of the Keiskamma river and the surrounding area where they live were depicted in a monumental tapestry.

The Keiskamma Altarpiece was sewed with wool on hessian by a group of around 100 women and 3 men. When closed, it depicts a young Xhosa widow flanked by a grandmother and children, while portraits of two old women of Hamburg, widely admired for their strength and faith, are on the outside wings. Once opened there are various idealised visions of what Hamburg could be, filled with people worshipping, and nature, fish and birdlife in abundance. On opening the innermost doors, we see photographs of grandmothers with children. The entire altarpiece is an homage to the women, especially the grandmothers, who hold communities together, taking care of children as mostly younger adults are taken by the epidemic.

The Keiskamma Altarpiece has become a symbol of hope and tells a story of resilience, community and faith in the face of tragedy.

Gallery 8: TO BE HEARD

Floor pieces

009

Bronwyn Katz (b.1993 Kimberley)

X (2019)

Steelwool, cardboard, audio

Collection of Emile Stipp

With this work Katz continues her interest in ancestral languages and lineages that have been all but erased by the advent of colonialism and apartheid. x, and the adjacent xk(ii), were both exhibited in 2019 at blank projects as part of a solo exhibition entitled / // ! †, referring to four clicking consonants that are typical of Southern African languages like the Khoekhoe* and other endangered variants such as !Ora (Kora).

The pillars of x seem to echo the vertical forms of the written click notation, while the steelwool provides sensory onomatopoeia for the guttural sound they emit. Katz produced a looped soundtrack with the help of Kenyan-South African sound artist Dani Kyengo O'Neill and invents an imagined creole language that is received through the entire body – sounds are meant to be felt, seen and heard.

Katz works with found materials in a sparse abstract aesthetic, and yet the found materials speak pointedly to sensory associations that evoke cultural memories and histories. The potscourers, for instance, conjure up derogatory connotations with black hair and evoke the labour of the black body at work, while her minimalist wire works are like drawings on the wall that register the artist's actions and movements, silent witnesses of being there in time and place.

*Although Khoekhoe is a national language of Namibia, only around 167 000 speakers of Khoekhoe remain. In 2019, the University of Cape Town ran a series of courses teaching the language and a new Khoi and San Studies Unit was launched in 2020.

010

Igshaan Adams (b.1982 Bonteheuwel, Cape Town)

Cloud iii (2019)

Wire, beads and mixed media

Collection of Emile Stipp

Igshaan Adams repeatedly uses these spirals of wire “clouds” to evoke the dust billows that are kicked up when the Nama people dance their “riel” dance. Adams witnessed this dancing when he visited his grandparents' Nama community in the Northern Cape. The Riel is traditionally performed by the Nama, San and Khoi people and is one of the oldest courtship dances in Southern Africa.

Adams speaks of how movement and ritual can “dislodge” internal tensions and traumas that we carry in the body, and movement and ritual stand central to his work. An early performative piece between Adams and his father looked at the power of ritual to mediate painful interpersonal relations, and he has used dance to conceptualise some of his huge woven tapestries. Dancers from the Garage Dance Ensemble (a dance company formed by his uncle John Linden and his partner Alfred Hinkel) were asked to imprint their moving bodies on wet canvas to form the “maps” that are then woven and embroidered.

By referencing the rieldance, Adams is not simply referencing an ancestral custom that belongs to a marginalised group of people, but he is also advocating the curative potential of celebrating one's heritage, in this case through movement and dance.

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