



What is

South Africa,

even?

Vol. 2

Curated by
Carlyn Strydom

BAG FACTORY ARTISTS' STUDIOS
28 FEBRUARY – 20 MARCH 2019

Reflection and memory are essential to us as human beings. Reflecting on the present not only forces us to confront our daily realities, it also forces us to confront the pain and trauma of the past. As our present is guided by the past, memory and reflection can serve as a tool for learning and healing. *What is South Africa, even?* aims to work through this.

The exhibition is a long-term project which reflects on our shared experiences as people living in South Africa. This second iteration of *What is South Africa, even?* continues to explore the notion of a country coming to terms with itself as a diverse and complex society. Not bound by national borders or nationality, the exhibition is an attempt to understand and imagine a country beyond the outdated and parochial definition of the term 'nation'.

Each selected artist brings personal insight to the theme, contributing to a wider conversation on the relevance of such a term given our myriad 'origin stories' (thinking historically).

The question *What is South Africa even?* is one that is open to all. Each iteration, located in a different part of the country, brings an entirely new set of experiences and answers to this complex question. We do not attempt to give a definitive answer, rather it is an attempt to gather as many experiences as possible so that we can reflect on our hopes, our dreams, our aspirations and the difficulties we face. It is a recording of our everyday lives, from the ground up. We are creating an archive for the future. Recording beyond the dominant narrative(s).

The selected artists have produced works, in a variety of mediums, which reflect on issues such as identity, isolation, migration, poverty, gender relations and history. As we continue to survey the current climate, we must ask ourselves: How different is the past from today? What have we learned?

Carlyn Strydom

Curator: ***What is South Africa, even? Vol.2.***

February 2019

Carlyn Strydom

Carlyn Strydom is a researcher and curator with an interest in South African history and heritage particularly as it relates to slavery and the effects of that system on contemporary society. Her research extends to the role of museums in society and the nature of contemporary African art. She holds a B.A in English and Media Studies, a B.A Honours in Curatorship and an MPhil in Heritage and Public Culture. She currently works as an independent curator in Gauteng, and is the founder of Museum Her, an online platform for art and culture in Africa.

What is South Africa, even? Vol.2 and the Bag Factory's 2018 Curatorial Development Programme, of which Carlyn Strydom was the recipient of, is made possible by the Department of Arts and Culture.

Bag Factory Artists' Studios

The **Bag Factory Artists' Studios** is located on the border of the vibrant suburbs of Fordsburg and Newtown in Johannesburg. Founded by South African artist Dr David Koloane, and British art lover and philanthropist Sir Robert Loder, the Bag Factory has been a space for visual artistic creativity since its inception in 1991.

Established in an old bag manufacturing warehouse converted to provide studio space to artists from different racial, cultural and educational backgrounds, over more than two decades the organisation has grown to be synonymous with inclusion and diversity. Its ground-breaking and internationally renowned visiting artists' programme as well as its numerous professional practice workshops and exhibitions have extended the scope of the organisation towards one that supports, promotes and develops the visual arts and artists in South Africa.

Some of South Africa's now most famous artists started their careers at the Bag Factory, including Helen Sibidi, Debora Bell, David Koloane, Sam Hlengethwa, Pat Mautloa and Penny Siopis, to name a few. The organisation is still a launching pad for emerging artists while enabling them an opportunity to be mentored by established, full time practicing artists.

Through its various programmes, it aims to address the needs of local artists, promote the visual arts in South Africa, and encourage international networking and learning by exchange. The organisation's programmes continue to stand for inclusion and diversity, built on an idea of open access.

Andrew Ntshabele was born in the small rural town of Moruleng in the North West province of South Africa. In his formative years his family moved to the city of Johannesburg amongst the hustle and bustle of the urban life, where he currently resides. His passion and love for the visual arts was identified by his teachers through nursery school right up to high school. This led him to enrol at the University of Johannesburg, which enhanced his knowledge in the world of visual arts and enriching his opportunities.

Andrew completed his National diploma in Fine Arts in 2012 in painting and drawing, and in 2013 he completed his BTech degree majoring in painting. He has participated in group exhibitions at the University of Johannesburg, North-South central Fringe of Johannesburg, and the North-South student show case traveling group exhibition to name a few.

His most notable achievements are receiving the painting merit award at the Ekurunuleni Thami Mnyele Fine Arts Awards in 2012, being commissioned to paint a portrait (mine worker) for the Exxaro portrait project in 2012, being commissioned to paint the Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom for Meetings Africa in 2015 at the Sandton convention centre and exhibiting at the Turbine Art Fair in

2015 as part of the emerging artists mentorship programme, hosted by Assemblage Studios and Fresh Produce. The majority of his works are painted and drawn in realistic style. In 2015 he joined LAE (Living Artists Emporium) where he was taught the business of art under the mentorship of Cores Bo, founder of the Superstroke art movement. He was a member of the Superstroke art movement where he was part of group exhibitions with fellow LAE artists. While he was part of LAE, Andrew's work started gaining national and international exposure.

In 2018 Andrew was part of the twelve artists chosen by The Travelling Art Gallery to exhibit his works in pop up exhibitions in three German cities: Hamburg, Ludwigshafen, Hildesheim, where he received an overwhelming response to his work selling a majority of his work. Andrew's work is also part of a corporate collection, PWC Cape Town, Nando's New York, Bowman Gillifilan attorneys, The Department of Public Works in South Africa just to name a few.

Andrew's works have been part of international and national auctions. His studio is currently based in Johannesburg's inner city at August House and he is represented by The Henry George Gallery.



ANDREW NTSHABELE

Will yesterday's burdens be today's gripes

2019

Acrylic on historical documents

104 x 82cm

R 12 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 13 800.00 (incl. VAT)

Andrew Nsthabele

My work focuses on urbanisation in Johannesburg. My interest in the city of Johannesburg developed out of the fact that it is the city that I have grown up in since the age of four. I have had the pleasure of witnessing South Africa's first democratic votes in 1994, and seeing Johannesburg's transformation from the early and mid-nineties to the present. I still live in Johannesburg and am confronted by poverty, pollution, and urban decay every day of my life.

My areas of interest are the people who live in the inner city and the environment within the inner city. My work deals with the negative effects of rapid urbanisation in Johannesburg and the pressures and the strains of the people I encounter and interact with on a daily basis as we go about our business. Based on my encounters with these people I felt the need to investigate the social predicament of my city and understand the root causes of the current inner-city decay. My work is a form of social commentary and deals with the socio-economic challenges that the majority of black South Africans face in post-colonial South Africa.

My paintings incorporate more than one medium as they are a fusion of collage and acrylic paint. My works are produced from actual photographs that I take on my daily travels around the inner city of Johannesburg and its outskirts.

I am currently working with newspaper as medium where I paint on newspaper articles. The process involves priming a canvas, selecting newspaper articles and gluing the articles on to the primed canvas using non-acidic glue. I then draw on the newspaper after I paint on the drawn image. After the painting process, I varnish the newspaper using a water-based varnish in order to protect the newspaper.

The images I select are often times the way I feel or what is on my mind at the time I start a piece. The images I select to paint on the newspaper, at times, relate to the newspaper article and at times the image and the articles do not relate to each other, which leaves the work of art up to interpretation by the viewer.

Jasmin Valcarcel completed her BA Fine Art (Hons.) at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the end of 2017. Specialising in photography and mixed media installation, Valcarcel has used the medium to investigate its historical use and contemporary power potentials. As such, her work has centered around and across themes surrounding notions of race, beauty and empowerment. Her subject matter subsequently confronts these representations in history and contemporarily in art and the media, often by turning the gaze of the camera back on herself as a vehicle of expression.

The representation of the body in Valcarcel's work carries layers of signification and meaning highlighting those bodies that are often overlooked.

By using her own body and those of her family as core primary subjects, she deeply engages with notions of influence, narrative and heritage through their embodied manifestations.

Since antiquity the way people and their bodies have been represented has shaped individual and collective identities in ways that have empowered some and hindered others.

With a primary focus on investigating representation of black bodies in the media, Valcarcel's work offers insight into the complex engagements around perception, assumption and interaction. In doing so, her work presents an opportunity for further discourse and interrogation, both into the work and techniques of making as well as the sometimes jarring manifestation of its necessary existence.

Valcarcel's work explores her own dual heritage and identity within her multiple cultural heritages. Born of a German mother and a father from Freetown in Sierra Leone, her understanding of identity is charged with the stark heritage she inherits from both her parents.

Having grown up in South Africa alongside its democracy, notions of black consciousness, pride and privilege have gone hand in hand, particularly as the majority of her university education has been shaped, impacted and even interrupted by the wide-sweeping calls for free decolonised education in South Africa from 2015. As an emerging artist, Valcarcel hopes to continue to make work that encourages dialogue, self reflexivity and engagement with the world at large.

JASMIN VALCARCEL

Foreigner 1.2.

2017

Mixed media on Kallitype

Edition 2/3

100 x 68 cm

R 6 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 900.00 (incl. VAT)





JASMIN VALCARCEL

Foreigner 1.1.

2017

Mixed media on Kallitype

Edition 2/3

100 x 68 cm

R 6 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 900.00 (incl. VAT)

The work titled Foreigner, deals with the complexities of my own identity as a woman of mixed race, my multiple heritages and how I experience social interactions as such.

The notion of multi-culturalism and multiple identities is something I explore through my use of Shweshwe fabric in my self-portraits. The fabric is infamous for its origins through trade across borders and the adoption of the fabric in many different cultures globally, specifically its ties to Germany, having been known as Ujamani among some in South Africa.

Through the process of bleaching and reprinting into the blank spaces of the fabric I contemplate the erasure and changing of identity that is linked to time and place.

Being multi-cultured is more often than not, a privilege and allows insight into various cultural perspectives, however it also presents various barriers. Ee kam from another place explores some of these barriers, such as but not limited to social, cultural and linguistic barriers, and questions of belonging.

JASMIN VALCARCEL

Foreigner 2.2.

2017

Mixed media on Kallitype

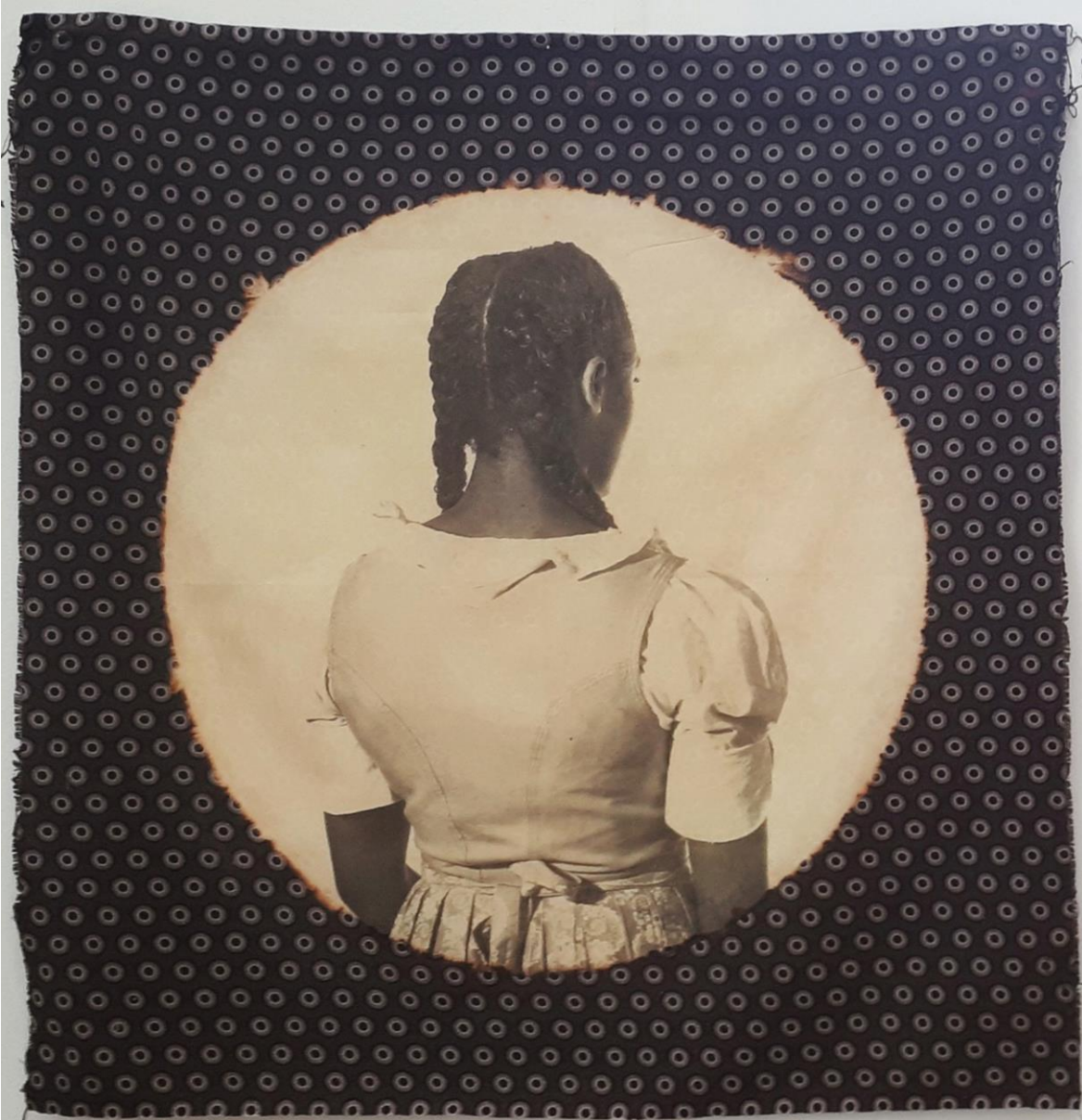
Edition 1/3

80 x 80 cm

R 6 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 900.00 (incl. VAT)





JASMIN VALCARCEL

Foreigner 2.1.

2017

Mixed media on Kallitype

Edition 1/3

80 x 80 cm

R 6 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 900.00 (incl. VAT)



JASMIN VALCARCEL, *Ee kam from another place*, 2017, Digital video, 3 min, 45 seconds, Not for sale.

A South African photographer, now living in the United Kingdom with dreams of seeing as much of the world as possible. **Neo Gilder** is a recent photography graduate who obtained her degree at the Cambridge School of Art.

She aims to highlight controversial issues in her photography through use of portraiture. Through her journey in the United Kingdom she has focused her work on various themes such as; sexual abuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the relationship between Africa and the Western world, the Rwandan Genocide and she is now currently working on a project focusing on depression in African men.

A final piece of this project was exhibited at the Ruskin gallery in Cambridge, in London at the Truman Brewery and the Winns Gallery also based in London.

Depression in African men focuses on people Neo encountered across Africa. One of the things that stood out for Gilder, particularly in African men, is how depression, as an illness, is regarded as a foreign concept.

This work challenges the idea of internalizing true emotions, due to society's adherence to toxic forms of masculinity. These images were taken as a platform, for African men to know that they are not alone and a hope that they can feel that their emotions are not alien, but are welcomed.

VOL.2

NEO GILDER

Depression in African men 2
2018

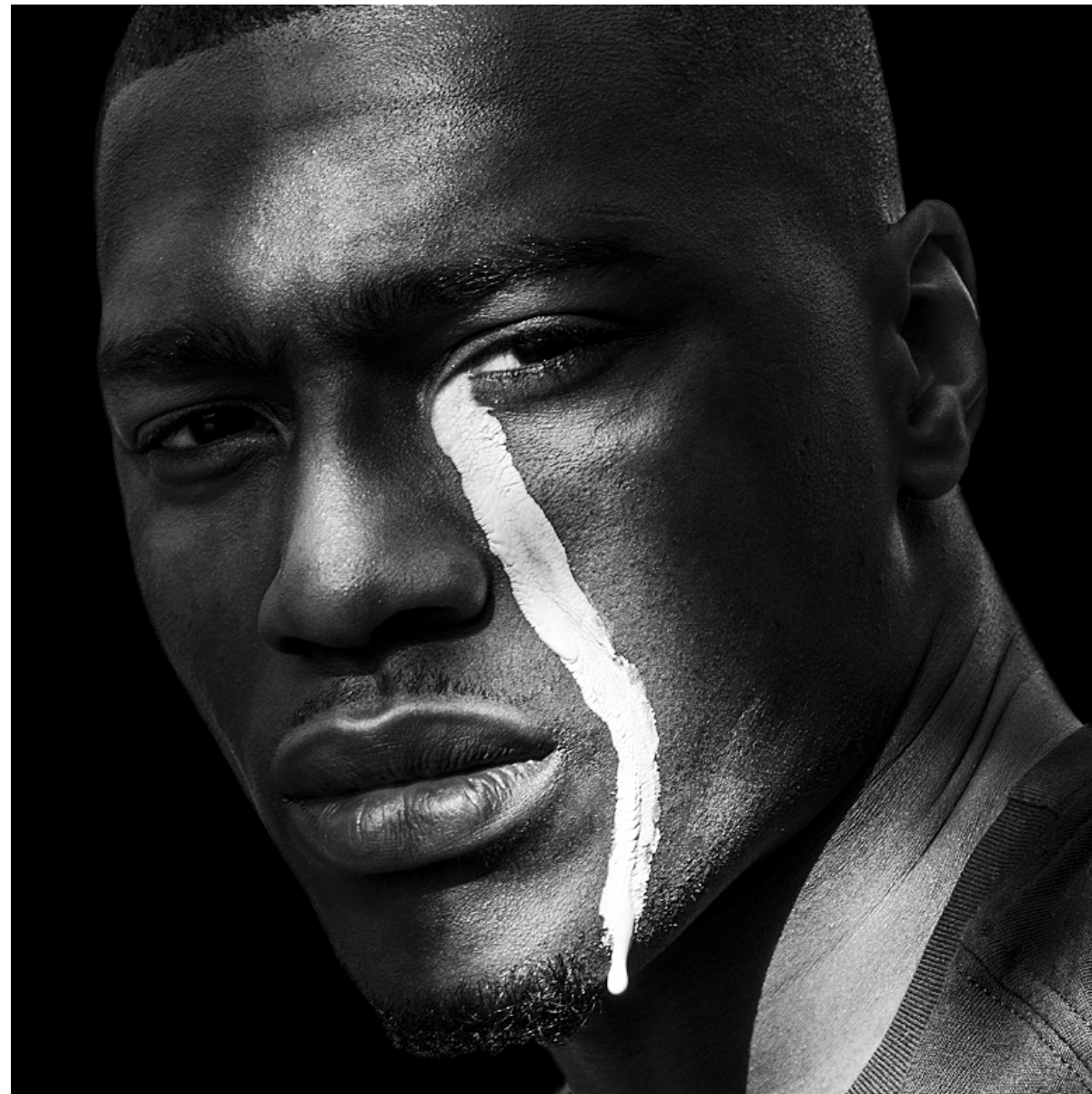
Photo Rag Baryta 315 GSM

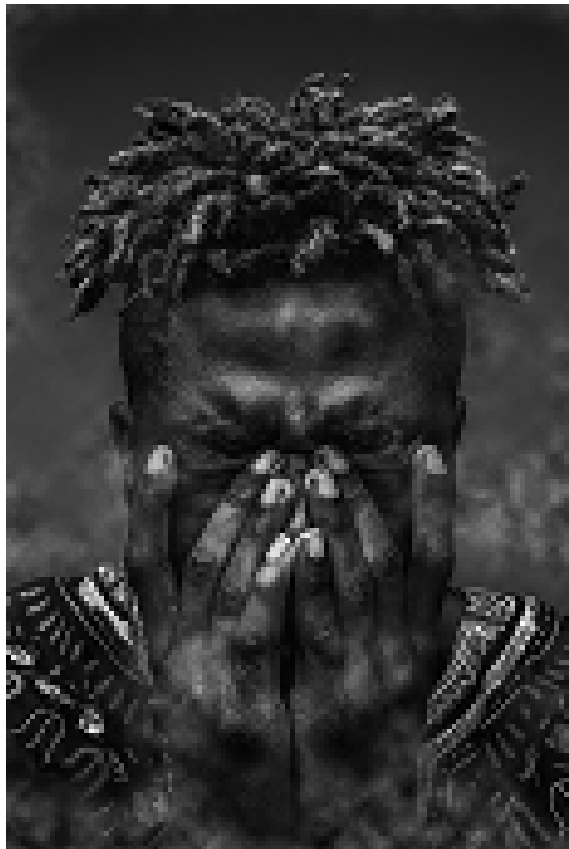
Edition 1/10

42 x 59,4 cm

R 6 800.00 (excl. VAT)

R 7 820.00 (incl. VAT)





NEO GILDER

Depression in African men 3

2017

C-type matt paper

Edition 3/10

41,9 x 59,4 cm

R 11 050.00 (excl. VAT)

R 12 707.50 (incl. VAT)

Ronald Muchatuta

Ronald Muchatuta is a Zimbabwean-born contemporary artist currently residing in Cape Town. He specializes in drawing, painting and mosaics. He began his career at the age of 16 as a pottery decorator at Ros Byrne Pottery in Harare, Zimbabwe in 2001. Muchatuta was mentored at Gallery Delta in Harare and finished his fine art exams through the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in 2003. He then relocated to South Africa in 2007 to pursue his career as an artist. He is recognized as a qualified Master Mosaic Artist from Spier Arts Academy in Cape Town, where he completed his studies in 2012.

He primarily works through the mediums of drawing, painting and creating mosaics. The aesthetic appeal of his works is a result of the relationship he has fostered between his concepts and the media he uses. This is projected through the cross-pollination of his media. His hybrid art is a dialogue on matters such as African migration and the turmoil and triumphs that stand, after significant social and political events occur in Africa. His works also hold layers of his personal experiences, which further speak to the discourse of humanity. He articulates his social commentary on these matters with each and every medium that he creates from. His current body of work is inspired by the theme of African migration, which transpires into a global dialogue.

Muchatuta's works and special commissions are displayed worldwide and in prestigious locations within South Africa. He has also participated in commissioned mosaic artworks for clients in England, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, and Cape Town to mention a few. He has exhibited at the 'African Art Fair 2015' Paris, France and the 'UN–Milan Expo 2015', representing Africa in Milan. He has exhibited at Gallery University Stellenbosch (GUS) and Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town, and a vast number of commercial galleries in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Ronald currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa (Biography courtesy of Gallery of African Art).

The thought process in which Muchatuta finds himself reflecting on the past and current issues that affect the youth who inhabit South Africa pushes him to conceptualize a body of work that interrogates commonalities within the different fabric of generations.

What their plights for democracy and a freedom where pre-1994 and what the current generational struggles and disappointments are regarding the current status-quo of the prevailing democracy. This viewpoint encompasses both Non-South African, South African, the older and younger generation too.



RONALD MUCHATUTA, *Ukubhabha/ Kumbururuka / To Fly*, 2018, Mixed media on board, 300 x 500 cm,
R 500 000.00 (excl. VAT), R 575 000.00 (incl. VAT).

Simphele Buthelezi

Simphele Buthelezi was raised in a small town called Vryheid situated in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province. Her artistic practice is a manifestation of her ongoing interest in the endurance of the female form. She explores this, through her use of the traditional straw mat, truthfully referred to as *iCantsi* (Zulu), experimental photography, sculpture and the traditional histories of monotype printmaking.

Existing in a dimension of patriarchy, boundaries, sites of blackness, tradition and the gendered gazes in relation to family bonds, I strive to inject melancholic fragilities on the overbearing sites of femininity. Through the use of the traditional straw mat, truthfully referred to as iCantsi, experimental photography and the traditional histories of monotype printmaking, I continue my ongoing interest in the endurance of the female form.

In realising that the honour of a home is a site of rest from the daily pressures of mental violence, I have this to say: "Can't I disagree, without the fear of punishment?" My artistic practice gazes into the black female's voice in relation to the male. It questions patriarchal notions in relation to the female form and how certain traditional practices reinforce the oppression of women.

I explore and investigate how the absence of fatherhood perpetuates these patriarchal notions through the undeserved entitlement and the subtle oppression of African women.

Tradition is used as a tool/weapon to justify this sense of entitlement. This form of oppression is not immediately recognised due to the thin veil of patriarchy which has sutured itself into our traditions. My work communicates how tradition and culture are man-made ideologies which alter and overlap over time. These traditions dictate the role of the black woman within the family structure and as these traditions and patriarchal notions overlap, the role and worth of the black female fragments. My drawings and prints depict the fragility and passive aggressiveness which I have struggled with as young black woman and I depict this through an auratic presence created by the physical imprinting of myself which is then combined with various explorations of Collographic print and collage to form peculiar portraits and figures within my art. The nature of my work is instinctive, abstract and minimal, expressing aggression and dynamics of power in a subtle manner; playing with the idea of passivity. I intend to empower and celebrate the African female voice through my practice by telling stories of the unseen.

SIMPHIWE BUTHELEZI

Elathini

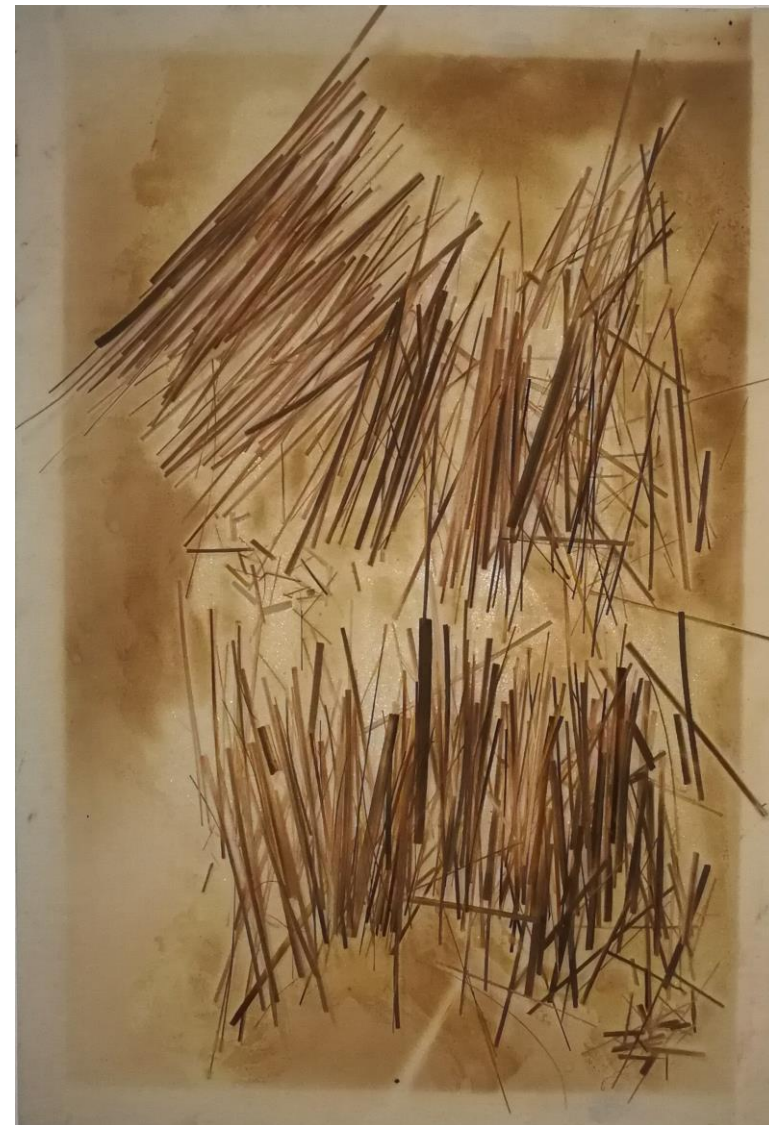
2019

Straw on canvas

55 x 80 cm

R 4 500.00 (excl. VAT)

R 5 175.00 (incl. VAT)





SIMPHIWE BUTHELEZI

Ezikhaleni

2019

Earth, straw, and beadwork on canvas

96 x 85 cm

R 9 800.00 (excl. VAT)

R 11 270.00 (incl. VAT)

SIMPHIWE BUTHELEZI

The letter

2019

Oxidised brass, and synthetic hair on
straw mat

93 x 22 cm

R 7 800.00 (excl. VAT)

R 8 970.00 (incl. VAT)



Thina Dube's work has long explored identity politics in South Africa: he frequently references identity's many layers, both visible and hidden, and its fluid qualities, constantly changing and responding to social environments.

Thina's latest body of work reflects on how history is injected into contemporary identity politics to create a particular sense of unbroken temporality. He highlights the sense of societal post-traumatic stress disorder in post-apartheid South Africa, especially in relation to education, corruption and land distribution. Dube's imagery and mark-making references certain PTSD symptoms, both behavioural and psychological, ranging from agitation and hypervigilance to anxiety and mistrust.

The silhouettes start to question the notion of identity and the identity social media creates. Millennial's find sanity in the realm of social media as they do not have to conform to societal constructs, and they chose which aspect of themselves to represent.

Born in 1993, Thina is a graduate of the University of Johannesburg, holds a postgraduate diploma in Education, and has taught at the National School of the Arts. Thina is also an art therapist who works with children with special needs at Casa do Sol.

He has exhibited in group shows at Turbine Art Fair, Constitution Hill, Sguzu Press Soweto, and AVA amongst others. In 2018, he has exhibited at the Stellenbosch Museum, ABSA, Eclectica and In Toto, and completed a residency with First Floor Gallery Harare. Thina has worked with Guns & Rain since 2015.

THINA DUBE

All is lost

2019

Acrylic and soft paste on canvas

100 x 78 cm

R 11 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 12 650.00 (incl. VAT)





THINA DUBE

The places we meet

2019

Acrylic, charcoal, and masking tape on Fabriano

70 x 50 cm

R 7 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 8 050.00 (incl. VAT)

THINA DUBE

Ukubingelela

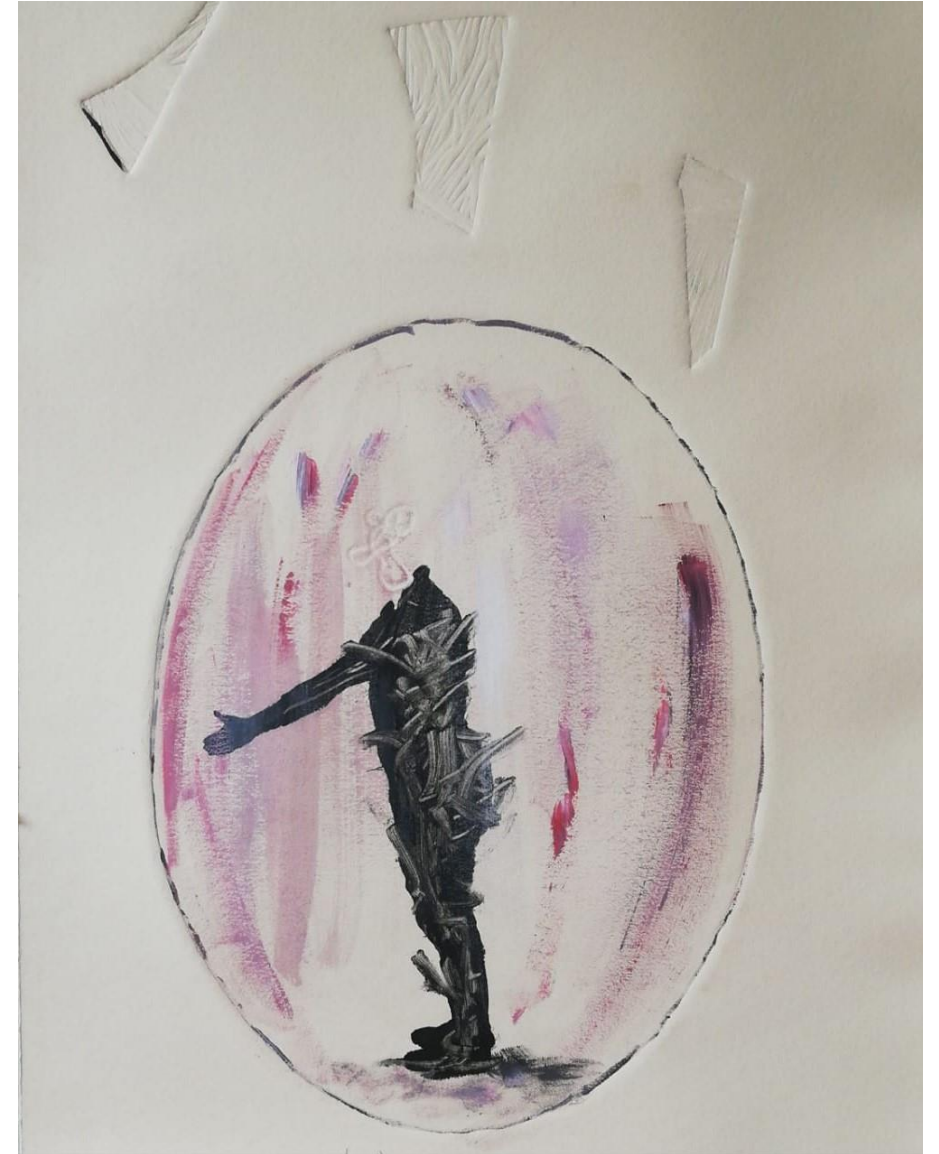
2019

Blind embossing, monotype, and acrylic
on Fabriano

60 x 41 cm

R 6 500.00 (unframed, excl. VAT)

R 7 475.00 (unframed, incl. VAT)



Vivien Kohler is an experimental mixed media artist from Cape Town based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He received his National Diploma in Fine Art from the Ruth Prowse School of Art and Design in Cape Town, 2000.

The concept of liminality; the liminal city and its people, lies at the core of Kohler's work, which explores migration, marginalization and displacement in the urban landscape of post-apartheid South Africa.

Fascinated by man's ability to transcend 'the conceptual decay', he captures, with gentle rawness, the complexity of human disposition. His work seeks to illuminate the duality of lived experiences by depicting, with an air of surreality, meditative moments of the individual, mentally cocooned from, yet physically enveloped by life's detritus.

Kohler has exhibited in art fairs and group shows locally and internationally («Is There Still Life» curated by Prof. Michael Godby which featured William Kentridge, Penny Siopis and Willie Bester). He has produced four solo shows to date; Given to Fly (2012), De(re)tritus (2014), Residuum (2016) and Clay Opera (2017). He received the ItWeb / brainstorm competition award (2012) with his entry commissioned by Vodacom.

In 2013 he was the winner of the Lovell Gallery artist competition, and in 2017 he won the sculpture merit award at the Thami Mnyele fine arts awards. His work is housed in both public and private collections, including the Nandos Collection, the Hollard Collection, SAB and Fusion UK.

The collection of cardboard works by Vivien Kohler featured in this exhibition, continues to build upon the conceptual and thematic framework which previous bodies of his work have had. Here, with his abstracted forms, which first arose in his *Pareidolia* series, themes of constructing hope and possibility out of impossibility resurface.

Beyond the far more literal readings of these works, which could easily slip into misinterpretations of these abstracted forms simply being representations of the Johannesburg cityscape; Kohler sees his works rather, as psychological internal mind-spaces; alluding to "Pareidolia", meaning the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern, Kohler's works become representations of the internal rather than of the external. These works which are continuations of Kohler's interest in mixing the found with the illusion, speak not only to the work's aesthetic appearance but to socio-economic and political realities of Afro-urban daily existence.



VIVIEN KOHLER

Aither

2017

Oil and found metal on board

192 x 125 cm

R 34 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 39 100.00 (incl. VAT)

VIVIEN KOHLER

Emergere

2019

Found objects and oil on board

164 x 47 cm

R 34 000.00 (excl. VAT)

R 39 100.00 (incl. VAT)



Vivien Kohler on his figurative works: *Circumstances, despite being formative, are not nor could they ever be the defining characteristic of the individuals and communities found within them. From a subjective point of view and to me, there is so much more to us than perceived. Immense complexities and layers exist within, as juxtaposed with society's view of us. From badlands, esteemed, revered and adored individuals have bloomed.*

Artists 'have the ability to restructure the residue'. They can find meaning within the chaos and build on the inherent positivity, optimism and history that emanate and flow from the cracks among the residue. This work is an 'explorative redefining' of the identity of these communities, a place called home.



VIVIEN KOHLER

A promise: Anlance

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass, silkscreened
ink, spray paint

26,5 x 27,5 cm

R 5 700.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 555.00 (incl. VAT)

VIVIEN KOHLER

A promise: Arbalest

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass,
spray paint

24 x 28,5 cm

R 3 700.00 (excl. VAT)

R 4 255.00 (incl. VAT)





VIVIEN KOHLER

A promise: Lance

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass, silkscreened
ink, spray paint

27 x 32,5 cm

R 5 700.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 555.00 (incl. VAT)

VIVIEN KOHLER

L://v-Lrr (Leveler)

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass,
silkscreened ink, spray paint

26 x 37 cm

R 5 700.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 555.00 (incl. VAT)





VIVIEN KOHLER

n0:34-D (Nomad)

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass, silkscreened
ink, spray paint

34 x 29,5 cm

R 5 700.00 (excl. VAT)

R 6 555.00 (incl. VAT)

VIVIEN KOHLER

WH_3lm3_r (Whelmer)

2018

Material one, pigment, resin, fibreglass,
silkscreened ink, spray paint

11,5 x 30 cm

R 4 500.00 (excl. VAT)

R 5 175.00 (incl. VAT)



What is South Africa, even? Vol.2., curated by Carlyn Strydom, and the Bag Factory's Curatorial Development Programme is made possible by the Department of Arts and Culture.

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arts & culture

Department:
Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Collectors Reserve