

CAPE



to

TEHRAN

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Cape to Tehran: Re-imagining and re-imagining personal history in post-Apartheid South Africa and post-revolutionary Iran

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CAPE to TEHRAN

Re-imagining and re-imagining personal
history in post-Apartheid South Africa
and post-revolutionary Iran

Curated by Sepideh Mehraban



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Cape to Tehran

Re-imagining and re-imagining personal history in post-Apartheid South Africa and post-revolutionary Iran

Sepideh Mehraban

In this empire, the art of cartography was taken to such a peak of perfection that the map of a single province took up an entire city and the map of the empire, an entire province. In time, these oversize maps outlived their usefulness and the college of cartographers drew a map of the empire equal in format to the empire itself, coinciding with it point by point. The following generations, less obsessed with the study of cartography, decided that this overblown map was useless and somewhat impiously abandoned it to the tender mercies of the sun and seasons. There are still some remains of this map in the western desert, though in very poor shape, the abode of beasts and beggars. No other traces of the geographical disciplines are to be seen throughout the land.

Jorge Luis Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy* (1946)

Borges' story of an imaginary empire with the exact delineation of its borders established by cartographers, makes me consider what new generations have inherited from the past. Constituting part of my PhD research, the exhibition *Cape to Tehran* is an attempt to re-image and re-imagine personal history in post-Apartheid South Africa and post-revolutionary Iran.

The title of the exhibition references Cecil Rhodes' uncompleted Cape to Cairo Railway that was embarked upon during western colonial rule in South Africa. The project was an attempt to connect African colonies of the British Empire from Cape Town, South Africa to Cairo, Egypt. Rhodes' ambitious railway was intended to enable trade and military movement to conduct war. In this project, I have drawn upon this contentious history and consider the relationship between Cape Town, South Africa and Tehran, Iran. I have done so in order to start a conversation through art that reflects upon shared personal experiences of social-political turmoil and argues for countries to be freed from borders in a movement towards peace.

Living in South Africa over the past five years has made me conscious of the many similarities between this country's current political turmoil and that of my homeland, Iran. Both of these countries have complex histories marked by trauma. I am learning the personal and public histories of South African's through artists who process that in their art.

In 1948, the National Party was elected to power in South Africa, which saw a strengthening of the racial segregation initiated under Dutch and British colonial rule in the 14th century. This resulted in the legally-institutionalised, racial segregation that defined the Apartheid system. Despite the legal fall of Apartheid in 1994, the aftereffects of these discriminatory laws are still present in post-Apartheid South Africa.

Unlike South Africa, Iran has never been colonised by western powers and has been ruled by a monarchy since the 6th century BC. However, this has not lessened the effects of western interference in the governance of the country due to its rich natural resources and geopolitics. While the country has a 3000 year history of upheavals, my focus for this project is on the more recent 1979 revolution. The revolution of Iran in 1979 was a populist and nationalist movement that consisted of many different opposition groups – Marxists, Islamic socialists, secularists and Shi'a Islamic groups. These diverse groups united to overthrow the monarchy and bring about democracy; however, the revolution resulted in Islamic fundamentalists taking power. Instead of a democracy, a theocracy was created under the leadership of Ruhollah Khomeini. The social and economic upheaval caused by the collapse of the old political system reached a crisis with the seizure of power by Khomeini and his supporters in 1982 (Bakhash, 1990: 57). The eight-year war with Iraq and the Iranian Hostage Crisis had dramatic effects on Iran's international standing and politics for decades to follow, resulting in a weakened economy and disarray in military and security forces (Keddie, 2006; Takeyh, 2011).

The recent student movements in South Africa, such as *Rhodes Must Fall*, *Fees Must Fall* and *Open Stellenbosch*, are indicators of social and political changes in the country. These protests influenced governmental action and university fees were allegedly frozen after the *Fees Must Fall* campaign in 2015. However, there are still protests occurring as students are demanding a long-term resolution from the South African government. There have also been student uprisings on the other side of the hemisphere, in Iran, after the 2009 controlled presidential election¹ that saw Mahmoud Ahmadinejad come into power. This outcome of this election was pre-determined by the state, a situation that led to protestors being violently apprehended by the Iranian government. In both countries, the student uprisings and protests were characterised by trauma towards and upheaval of ordinary lives. In both countries, protests are indicative of a need for political change and transformation.

The disillusionment that my generation feels with the false promises and oppressive rule of the Iranian government is furthered by the severe measures of censorship and restrictions on Iran's national media,² to the extent that coverage of the uprisings was completely absent from the national media. The 2009 uprising in Iran was only covered by the independent media. This situation is mirrored in the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) recent refusal to report on student protests that are critical of the government.³

Curating this exhibition is a way to relate (re-image or re-imagine) the personal experiences of people who live through political turmoil and transformation. The exhibition focuses on the process of creating art as a medium and method of reflecting on, rather than merely representing, these experiences of conflict and change. I intend to provide a platform to hear other voices and create new narratives. Artists from different generations and geographies will present their unique voices rather than adhere to a singular exhibition narrative. I invited artists from both Iran and South Africa to participate in this

exhibition to attempt reveal what we have inherited from the political transformation that has allegedly occurred in our countries. Curating my body of work in relation to selected artists who also deal with socio-political matters of their homeland opens a space for conversations surrounding our personal experiences.

Endnotes

- 1 Iran's presidential elections take place every four years and only two major political groups are allowed to nominate candidates. The final candidates presented to the public are selected after they have been vetted by the government – it is a very strictly controlled process.
- 2 Here, I specifically refer to Iranian national media and I intend 'national media' to denote state-controlled publications. I am aware that mass media is complex and multi-dimensional, constituting digital media (internet and mobile mass communications), outdoor media (billboards and advertising), print media (books, newspapers, magazines) and public speaking. I am also aware that a robust free media continues to exist in South Africa despite the government's best efforts to gain control over public media, but I fear for its future.
- 3 Further ties between South Africa and Iran were demonstrated on the 27th of May, 2016 when iAfrica announced that the SABC would not cover violent protests. The public broadcaster's CEO, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, said, "It is regrettable that these actions are disrupting many lives and as a responsible public institution we will not assist these individuals to push their agenda that seeks media attention" (iAfrica, 2016). He added that the decision was in line with the broadcaster's mandate "[...] to educate the citizens, and we therefore have taken this bold decision to show that violent protests are not necessary. We would like to encourage citizens to protest peacefully without destroying the very same institutions that are needed to restore their dignity. The SABC would like to stress that we will continue to cover news without fear or favour. We will not cover people who are destroying public property."

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Disrupting Division

Cape to Tehran

Quanta Gauld

Imbued with symbolic weight in the post-colonial imaginary, the proposed Cape to Cairo Road of the 1890s, also known as the Pan-African Highway, epitomises colonial conquest in its vision for a route that would connect the major cities of the African continent. Though it never came to fruition, the plan put forward by the British government and one of its main proponents, Cecil John Rhodes (though he advocated for a railway instead of a road), emphasised the significance of enabling easier and faster connection between the African nodes of the British Empire at the time. Of course, with the benefit of over a century of hindsight, the project has become emblematic of the oppressive political and economic control welded over the continent in the name of the ‘civilising’ imperial mission.

Referencing this history in its tongue-in-cheek title, *Cape to Tehran* recognises and reflects upon the value of transcontinental connection in the contemporary moment, considering the ways in which dialogues that disrupt division and inspire greater empathy across disparate geographies and cultures may open up avenues through which to engage with painful histories. With artists harking from South Africa and Iran, and others who fall into the illusive category of ‘transnational’ artists, the exhibition is the result of connections across national boundaries. Amidst mounting questions of, and global sensitivity towards, how histories of oppression linger and reveal themselves in the intricacies and intimacies of individual lived experience, *Cape to Tehran* serves as a platform for transnational conversation, a space in which the human-ness of the often abstract accounts of historical and current political and social trauma is made evident.

The exhibition, curated by Iranian artist living in Cape Town, Sepideh Mehraban, is comprised of works by 19 artists. As noted by Mehraban (2018), an individual’s “telling of the past is only one voice amongst many voices that remain concealed.” Mehraban’s gathering of the artists on show in a single space reveals a collection of voices that, though diverse in age, culture, history and circumstance, relay narratives of individual and collective trauma and healing that cannot avoid being read off of one another. The question of individual voice in the context of the containing and panoptic function of national borders and bureaucracy is audibly foregrounded and emitted throughout the exhibition space in the work of Emmanuel de Montbron, a French artist who lived and studied for a time in Cape Town. His video installation entitled *Somewhere over the rainbow* (2015) comprises of a tightly-framed close-up of a man speaking, his lips covered with colourful paint that is visibly cracking with every vehemently uttered word. Considering the experience of the outsider and the alienating nature of national bureaucracies, the work raises the question of the experience and individual identity within systems of inscrutable power.

Visual similarities aside, the visceral nature of Montbron’s work and the fragmentation of individual identity within oppressive political systems that it implies, is elegantly replied to by the works of South African artist Rory Emmett and Iranian artist Neda Razavipour. Emmett’s investigation into the malleability of identity as it relates to personal and national histories relies on an evocation of the impermanence of the human body; the artist’s own identity as a young, ‘coloured’ man is represented as fractured, fluid and in the process of becoming something new. The questions of individual agency and subtle disruption in the presence of oppressive political systems is echoed in Razavipour’s work, which, with strong visual and conceptual links to Montbron’s, is a silent video of the artist’s face that serves as a response to the interrogations that occurred after the 2009 protests in Tehran jails. This concern with the generative potential of disrupting institutional systems is strongly conveyed in the works of many of the other artists on show. Thulile Gamedze (ZA), for instance, closely considers the current and pressing issue of transformation in South African education systems, with a keen focus on redressing past and present inequality through reframing the fundamental ways in which education and the academy is seen to intersect with and inform contemporary South African identity politics.

Also tied up in many of the artists’ investigations of personal and collective identity in the context of the traumatic past and present politics of Iran and South Africa, are questions of home, land and space. In her *Scorched Earth* series, South African artist Svea Josephy shares an ongoing project of visual toponymy, the study of place names, as she presents images of two or more identically named places that exist in different geographical locations. The disparate social and economic conditions of the photographed sites are evident when presented side-by-side as diptychs. In these works, the significance of human connection to place, and the collective aspirations and associations that are embedded in the language with which spaces are described, are brought to the fore. In a similar documentary approach, Kamran Adl’s photographs of high-rise buildings being constructed atop the demolished city gardens in Tehran quietly suggest human relationship to space, but are eerie in their blatant absence of human inhabitants.

Linked to Josephy and Adl’s work by implying a hidden or complete lack of human presence within private and public spaces, the works of Shagha Ariannia (IR), Sepideh Mehraban (IR) and Roderick Sauls (ZA) evoke veiled truths and scenes or histories that are only partially revealed. Ariannia’s video shows security camera footage of the empty rooms within the artist’s grandparents’ home in Tehran, while songs of the 1979 revolution and recordings of Ariannia’s voice as a child sound in the background. The interweaving of the personal and political histories of the people who inhabited these spaces is made known by their absence. Similarly, Mehraban’s works present a palimpsest of personal and collective memory and identity, as images and text from Iranian news media are obscured beneath veils of fleshy pigment, drawing into question the nature of truth and the discrepancies between personal and political narratives within contexts of socio-political conflict, censorship and abuse of power.

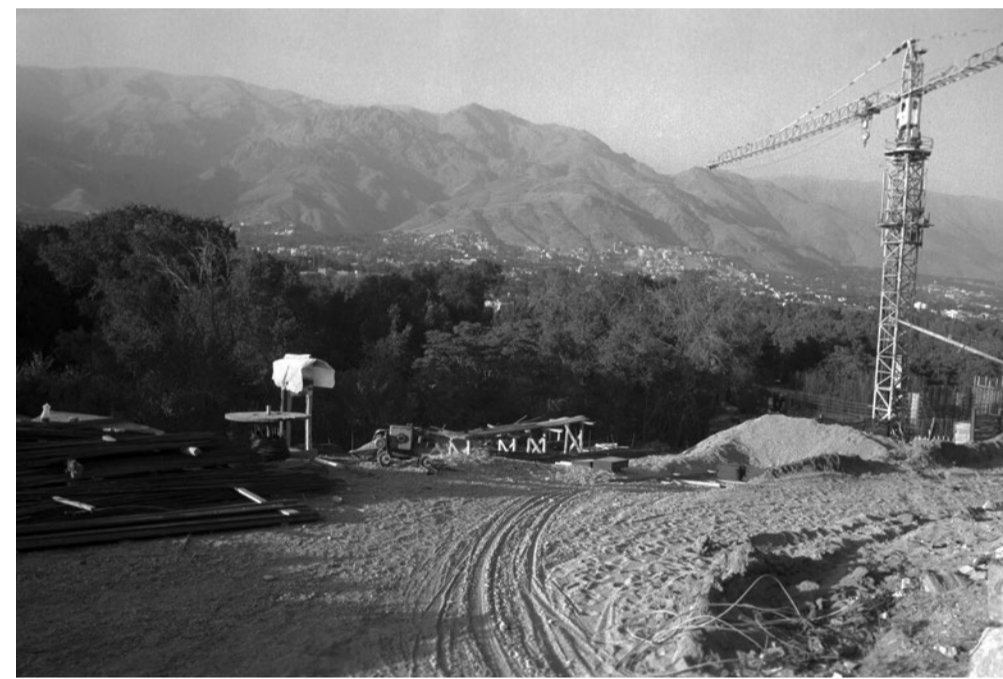
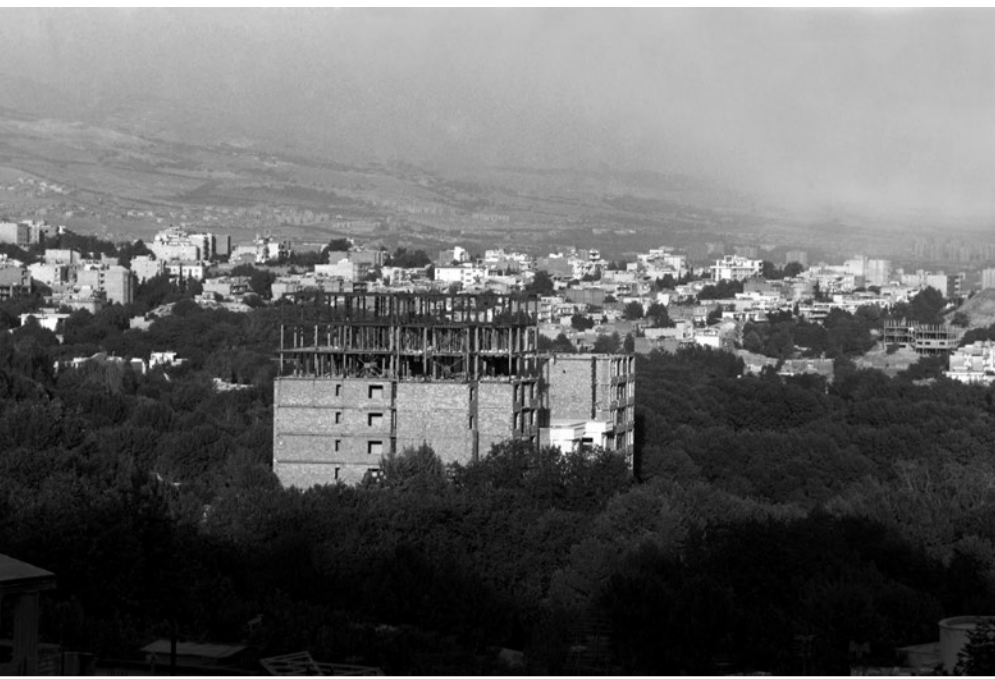
This question of the power dynamics that are revealed in human relationships with place, and thus the possibility to subvert and question the identity of the individual in relation to political systems of control, is further considered in the intimate works of South African artists Stephane Conradie and Roderick Sauls. Echoing the subversive sentimentality of Rory Emmett’s *Coloured Photo Album* (2017), Conradie’s mixed media assemblages and Sauls’ hand-printed garments explore the cultural and historical narratives with which domestic objects are imbued. As such, they speak of how artifacts within the personal, domestic archive may tell seemingly lost stories of human experience and trauma, and by so doing serve as tethers to specific times and places.

Unlike these works that speak of human experience through the absence of the human form in the works themselves, other artists on show question the meaning of specific spaces through deliberate insertions of the human, or semi-human, body into those spaces. South African artists Francois Knoetze and Berni Searle’s fantastical, apocalyptic scenes establish an empathetic link to the figures who occupy the unsettling landscapes and environments. The relationships of the human figures to the environments they inhabit in these works visualise the intersectional nature of human and environmental trauma. Contributing to this conversation through the use of different media, South African artist Rowan Smith and Congolese artist Patrick Bongoy employ materials and objects that hold weight in an African context as symbols of crisis and revolution, namely the burning rubber tyre. The works underscore a strong connection between site, the viscosity of the human body and social trauma, particularly in the context of pre- and post-independence conflict in many African countries. In another, perhaps more direct, engagement with site and the body, South African artist Sethembile Msezane and Iranian street artist collective Black Hand occupy public spaces with performances and gestures that memorialise and give voice to the previously silenced and marginalised voices of women, specifically the black female voice in Msezane’s case.

The negotiation of individual identity and experience within current global systems of bureaucratic control, which themselves are imbued with the vestiges of historical trauma, surfaces throughout the exhibition. In many of the artists’ work, these conversations point towards the ways in which healing and growth may emerge from painful histories. This question of the transformative aspect of pain is most prominently explored in Jo Voysey’s medicinal paintings, Kathy Robins’ symbolic use of soil and the egg and Wonder Marthinus’ abstract musings on new physical and mental landscapes. It is not likely that one would be able to articulate the complexity of the conversations generated by the collection of voices that *Cape to Tehran* presents. However, it is the awareness of the malleability of human identity and the public socio-political frameworks within which it is constrained that permeates the exhibition as a whole, causing seemingly ‘fixed’ boundaries to become unstable and fragmented in a most generative sense.



Artists



Kamran Adl

Kamran Adl was born in 1941 in Tehran and holds a diploma from the technical college of photography in France. He returned to Tehran in 1968 at the invitation of the newly established National Iranian Television Organization to head the photography team and taught at the Cinema and Television School for Higher Education during the widespread student strike during the 1970s. Adl was active in the fields of journalistic photography, stage photography (television, theatre, cinema and the Shiraz Art Festival), architectural, social photography and setting up the archives.

From 1975 until the Islamic Revolution, he worked with the offices of Farah Pahlavi, the ex-queen of Iran. During this time, he photographed and documented the carpet museum, the Reza Abbasi Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Kerman Museum, the Rasht Museum and undertook various photography projects for publications, including ten volumes on the *Implementation of Design in Iranian Tile Works*, *Passage Through Chahar Mahal & Bakhtiyari*, and *The Contemporary Architecture of Iran*. From 1979, he began his cooperation with the newly-established Agha Khan Cultural Foundation as photographer of the jury for the Agha Khan Award for Architecture, also taking photographs of various cities in the Islamic world. This is an on-going work. He has been involved in photographing the biggest industrial centers and architectural activities in Tehran, including the progress of building work at the Ahvaz Steel Complex, the Tehran metro operations, the former National Parliament and Islamic Parliament renovations, and the Islamic Conference Centre at Sa'd-Abad (The Ministry for Housing and Urban Development). One of Adl's arts and culture projects is his Iranian Garden installation at the Sa'd-Abad Gardens (March 2005). At the request of Mir Hossein Mousavi – who is an architect by profession – Adl photographed his works in 2007, accompanied by his annotations. This collection of 144 photographs was exhibited at the Saba Cultural Centre and attended by 8000 visitors on opening day.

In March 2008, Adl was chosen as a member of the Global Nomination Panel of 40 leading experts from six continents to select the photography to which The Pictet Photographic Award in Sustainability would be awarded in association with the London Financial Times. During 2012, Adl photographed Tehran as part of his sixtieth anniversary of his career. In 2013, this body of work titled *Hopes Broken and Dreams Destroyed* was exhibited in Etamad Gallery (Tehran). He photographed Paris in 2014-2015, the images from which are to be exhibited in June 2018 as part of Iran-France Friendship Association in Sa'd-Abad Museum in Tehran. To date, eight short and long films have also been made and shown by Adl. The last one was a three-hour television programme, the filming of which was left unfinished due to the unrests of 2009.

Hopes Broken and Dreams Destroyed series
2013
Six Light Jet Prints
45 x 29.5 cm each
Edition of 5



Two Americas Away
2012
Security camera data archive (Single channel video)
30 minutes (loop)
Dimensions variable
Edition of 5



Our Future is The Approaching Past
2012
Family archive/Audio recording
30 minutes (loop)
Edition of 5

Shagha Ariannia

As an Iranian Immigrant to the USA post 9/11, in her multi-disciplinary practice, Ariannia regards political and cultural identity as a site in which to play and struggle. Her strategy originates in the feminist maxim, ‘the personal is political’ and its translation through diverse modes of address that include video installations, drawing and painting, as mechanisms for social critique. She explores questions of citizenship, national belonging, the fantasy of immigration and global power relationships as they assert themselves within the framework of the intimate domestic sphere.

Ariannia is fascinated by the fact that contemporary life means that people all have a relationship to war or the threat of war, no matter how far from us it may be. As a result of our experiences and the representations of the media, contemporary life is often made paranoid, creating the sense of a split subjecthood that the spectacle of war produces. The artist aims to investigate this contemporary post-colonialism as a political space in which to question hegemonic personal narratives. Through drawings and paintings, she considers the ironies of war, participation in state-sanctioned ideologies and the Du Boisian notion of “double consciousness,” reflecting the constant reconciliation of two often-opposing cultural vantage points. Translated through, at times, whimsical and humorous audio and images, her works underscore the fragile construction of collective identities through the languages of assimilation and mechanisms of political control.

Born in 1984 in Tehran, Iran, Ariannia is an interdisciplinary visual artist whose work has been exhibited at the University of California Irvine, 18th Street Art Center, Kchung TV as part of Made in LA (2014), Commonwealth and Council, Art Platform, Co/lab, PØST, the Torrance Art Museum in Los Angeles and Galerie der Hochschule in Braunschweig, Germany. Ariannia holds a MFA from CalArts and a BA from the University of California, Irvine. She is a 2016 recipient of the California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists.



Poverty, Unemployment, Inflation / For sale
2012
Graffiti on a wall in Tehran



I'm unemployed/ for sale
2012
Graffiti on a wall in Tehran



I have the right to live/ For sale
2012
Graffiti on a wall in Tehran



Poverty is not a crime/ For sale
2012
Graffiti on a wall in Tehran

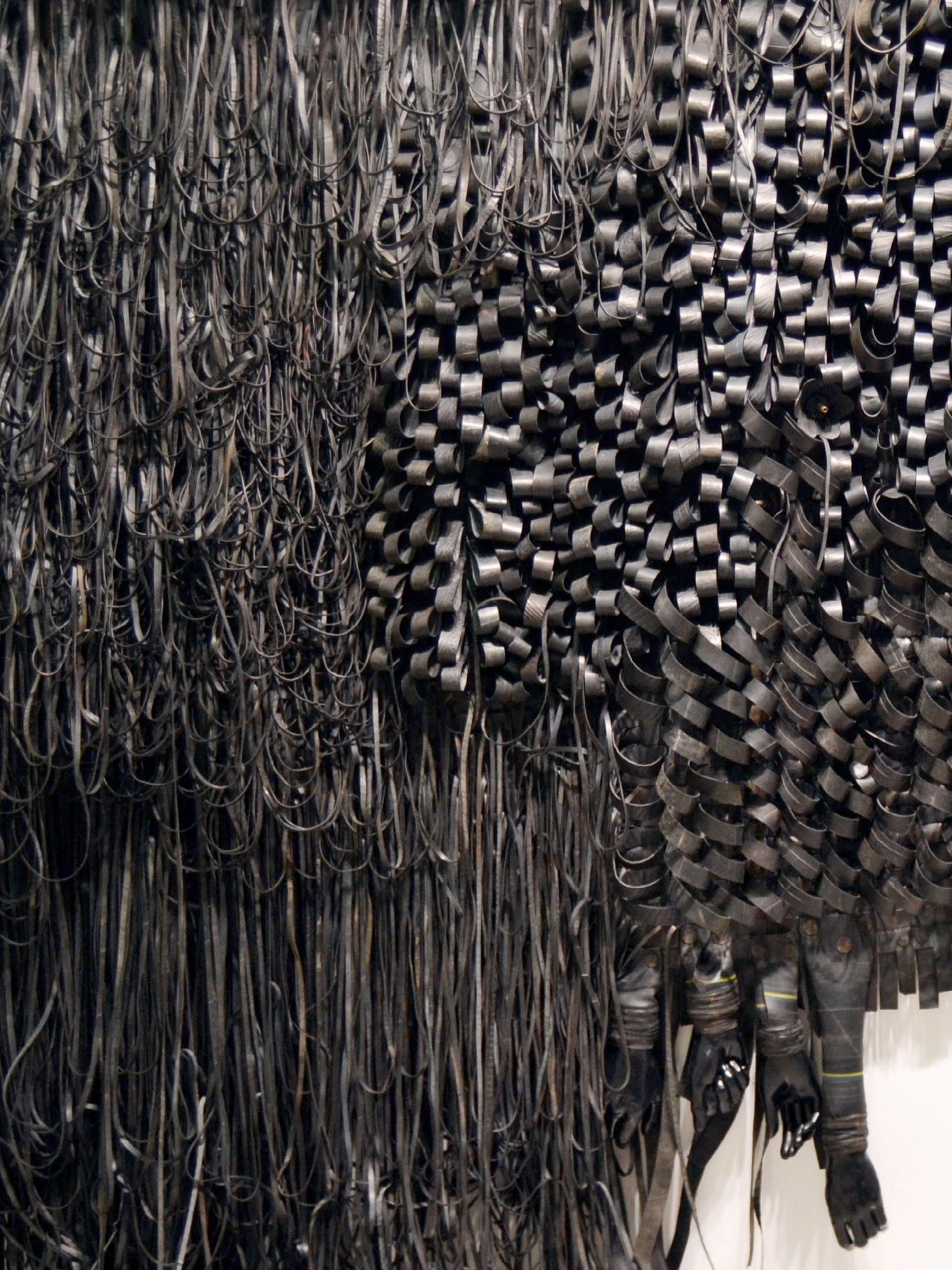
Black Hand

Black Hand's murals challenge viewers on issues of the environment, sociopolitics, women's rights, LGBT rights and other regional and international issues. Their works are not confined to certain groups but reach people from all social strata. Before expanding their works to gallery spaces, they created a pop-up gallery in an old building in one of Tehran's poorer neighborhoods in order to emphasise their independent nature, as well as the crucial importance of having an audience that is not confined to a specific class or background. The forms and content of Black Hand's street art empower many Iranians to become aware of, understand and start conversations with their peers and public officials about pertinent social issues. The team has participated in multiple exhibitions in galleries in Tehran, including Mohsen Art Gallery.

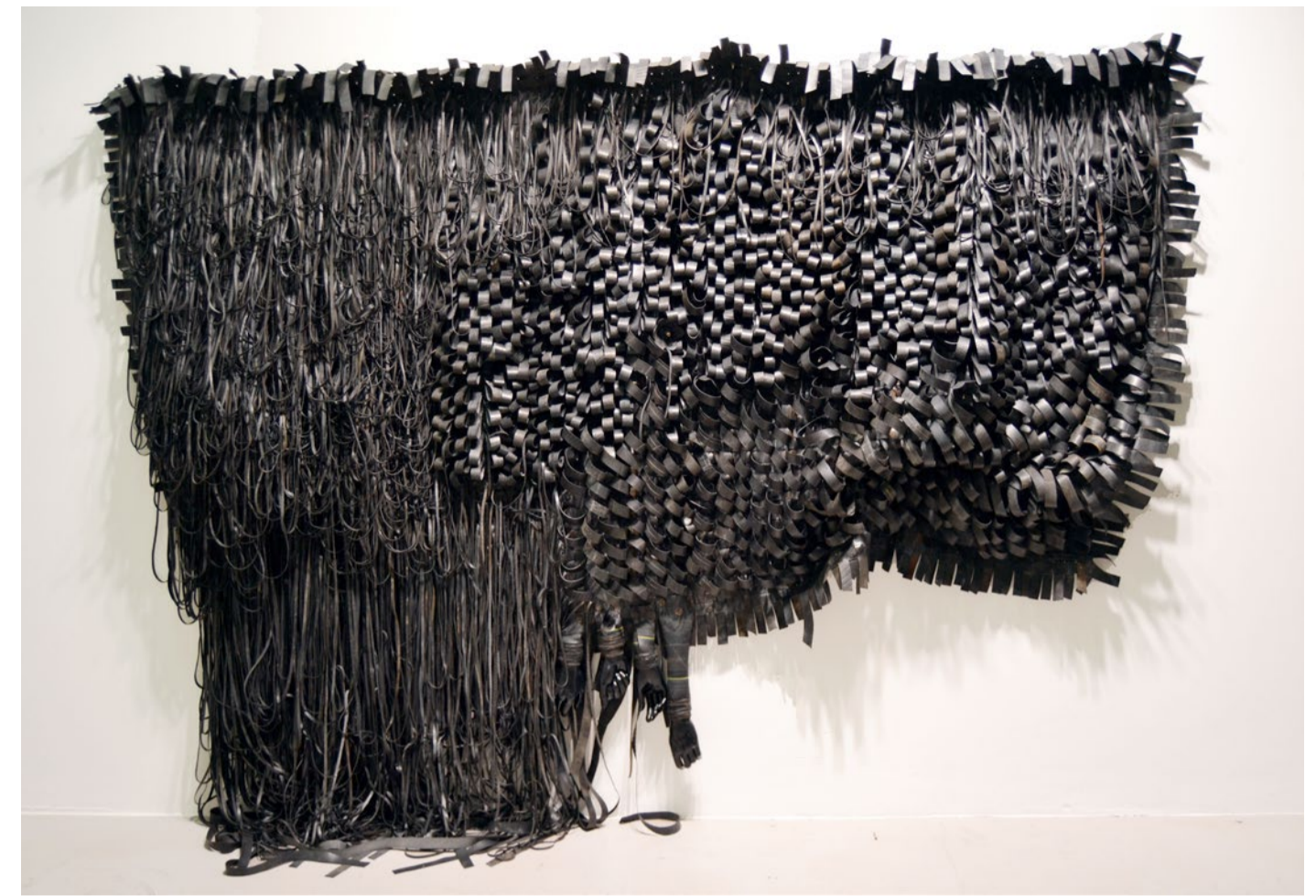
One of their prominent works was done on a wall in Tehran in June 2014. It portrayed a woman wearing the Iranian national football team's jersey and holding a dish washing liquid bottle above her head, as if it were a trophy. The work served as a direct comment on the exclusion of women from sports in general in the height of the football frenzy of the 2014 World Cup. The positive feedback Black Hand received for this work and the tangible influence of the work on its viewers increased the artists' dedication to working on women's issues.

In 2017, Black Hand worked for the Omid Foundation in Tehran, painting murals on the walls that were to be used as a background for a theatrical production. All roles in the play were performed by Afghan and Iranian girls sponsored by the Foundation and the brand name of Black Hand led to larger numbers of people attending the performance.

Black Hand is an Iranian street art and graffiti group. They have remained anonymous since eight years ago that the group began its work, because street art is illegal in Iran and subjects of Black Hand's works are controversial topics most of the times.



Entwined
2018
Rubber tubes
300 x 250 cm



Patrick Bongoy

Bongoy's work speaks in response to the global reality of literal and figurative environmental pollution. This encompasses the erosion of economic viability for people, socio-cultural decay that impacts community and individual behaviours and changes in natural, rural and urban landscapes as a consequence of environmental issues. He draws on the history of his roots in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as the irony of contemporary urban degradation masked as development.

Through the recovery of waste materials such as inner tubes from vehicle tyres, industrial packaging and textiles, combined with his use of paint and African fabric, he repurposes and reinterprets what others discard. Beyond the intentional recycling element of this process, these visual explorations surface a range of pertinent conceptual issues. Additional sculpted objects are superimposed on these layered backgrounds, which he creates as foundational canvases. This is also a visual referencing of some of the many laborious tasks undertaken by women in his country in order to make ends meet.

Bongoy tries to understand how the deterioration of natural and urban settings mirrors the visible 'rotting' displayed in the behaviour and habits of the population. Deprivation evidently continues to create further misery and desperation. Although his work reflects a kind of beauty, it also describes the destruction of a place and a people in which ethical values have been poisoned or fallen away, infecting human morality and dignity. The aftermath of several violent conflicts has created a nightmarish atmosphere in which people relive those moments in an extreme state of vulnerability and resignation to this state of affairs.

The artist's painted figures, always in silhouette with their deformed limbs and precarious stances, twist and turn in such spaces. They evoke a sense of uncontrolled or dynamic movement captured in a disjointed moment, as if their bodies are captured mid-execution of a questionable act. However, the internal versus external appearances and perspectives, what is seen in contrast to what is understood, becomes the site of re-imagination and unforeseen possibilities.

Patrick Bongoy was born in 1980 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo and currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa. Bongoy completed his BA in Fine Art from the Academy of Fine Arts Kinshasa in 2009. Bongoy presented his solo exhibition, Where are we? Where are we going? (2017) at Ebony Curated, Cape Town. His other solo shows include BA PAPER COLLECTION (2012) at the cultural center Muikka Theatre and BINGOTO at the space crossroads of the collective SADI. Bongoy has also been part of several group exhibitions including Feast your eyes (Nando's UK, Soho, London, 2017) and Présence Congolaise (Alliance Française, Cape Town, 2015). Bongoy's work is part of Nando's (UK) and SADI Collectif (DRC) collections.



Untitled
2017
Mixed media relief sculpture: resin, found objects,
imitation gold leaf, enamel paint and spray paint
110 x 60 x 60 cm



Inalienability
2017
Mixed media relief sculpture: resin, found objects, imitation gold leaf,
enamel paint and spray paint
80 X 40 cm



Hier het ons gestaan, maar waar is ons goed begrawe?
2017
Mixed media relief sculpture: resin, found objects, imitation gold leaf, enamel paint and
spray paint
80 x 80 x 70 cm

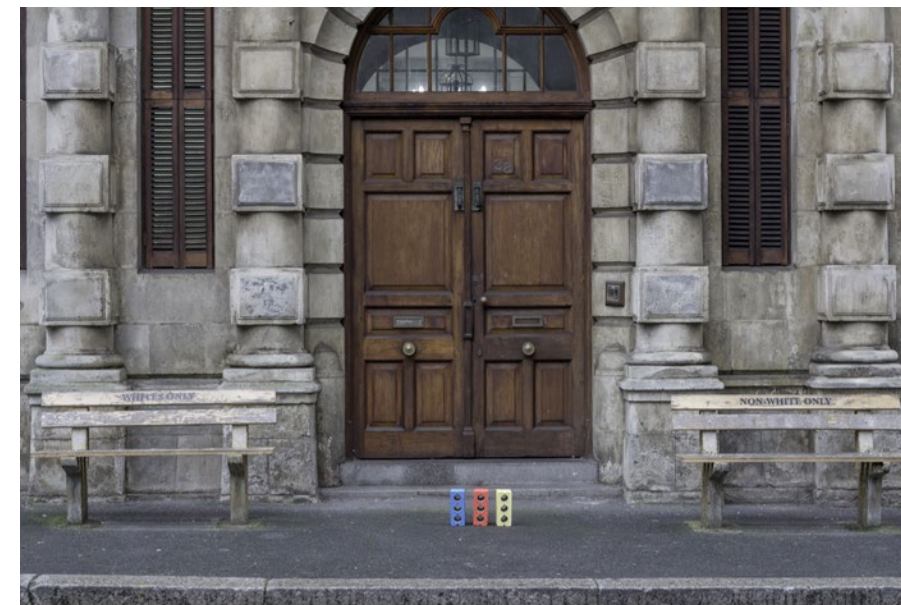
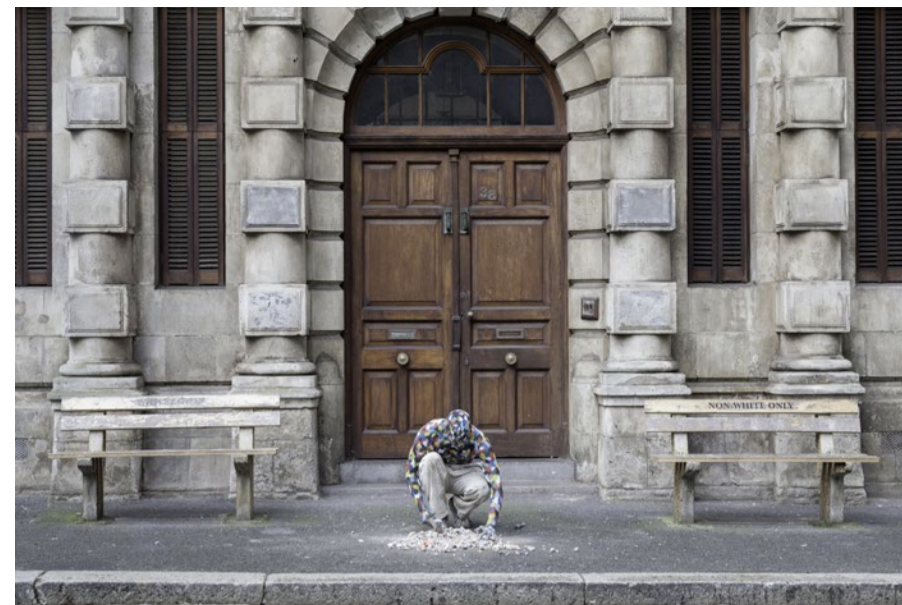
Stephané Conradie

In coloured neighbourhoods of the Cape in South Africa, there are objects in people's homes that live in a unique historical and cultural moment. This artwork on show constitutes a reflection of the neighbourhood of Cloetesville, Stellenbosch, where the artist is currently doing field research for her PhD. The assemblage seeks to consider how objects inside residents' homes tell a story of a creolised people and the locations in which they are situated. In the case of Cloetesville, as in many neighbourhoods that arose from a history of forced removals, many people experience various social and economic problems. Usually, coloured people's identities are thought to be tied up in these problems. However, this work seeks to suggest an alternative way of exploring coloured identity through looking at objects in households and broader living environments. By considering nostalgic and *ordentlikke* (respectable) sentiments of belonging, specifically cabinets in living rooms, the artwork engages with the repositories of such sentiments in the home and how, in and of themselves, the objects symbolically ground their owners in the neighbourhood of Cloetesville.

Although primarily a trained printmaker, Stephané Conradie (Namibia b. 1990) is most known for her bricolage assemblages made from found objects and resin. Conradie is a PhD candidate in Visual Arts at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, where she also completed her MA in Visual Arts (Art Education) (cum laude) and her BA in Visual Arts (Fine Arts) (cum laude). She is a lecturer in printmaking and art education at Stellenbosch University. Her work focuses on trying to make sense of her social and economic 'situatedness' in a South African context. She is interested in how the material culture she is surrounded relates to identity formation.



Neda Razavipour / Stephané Conradie
Installation view, Gallery MOMO, Cape Town



Concerning Alchemy
2017
Single channel video & sound
Edition of 5 + 2 AP's

Rory Emmett

In the work on show, Emmett attempts to grapple with the act of painting in relation to labour, particularly within the context of Cape Town. *Occupation* (2018), a site specific performance and sculptural installation, comprises of the artist building a wall with his father. The work functions in physical and symbolic ways as he seeks to further interrogate the privilege that makes one person's work worth more than another person's work or labour. The installation *ReImagined* consists of artifacts from Emmett's family's collection, as well as extracts from a visual document called *Coloured Photo Album* (2017), in which the artist rendered images from his family's photographic archive. In the video performance *Concerning Alchemy*, Emmett performs as *Colourman*, a constructed avatar. His exposed skin is covered by a painted patchwork motif. The performance takes place outside the Cape High Court between two benches that were created by artist Roderick Sauls as a commission for The Sunday Times Heritage Project. The benches are marked "Whites Only" and "Non-Whites Only", mimicking Apartheid-era public benches. In Emmett's performance, the artist uses a chisel and hammer to carefully obliterate three concrete blocks painted in the primary colours, yellow, red and blue. The bricks are slowly disintegrated into a powder. In mixing the colours to produce a chromatic grey, Emmett attempts to consider the 'alchemy' of pigmentation production and the liminality and malleability of identity. In this process, he uses 'Colouredness' as a medium to make sense of and deconstruct systems of classification.

Rory Emmett completed his BAFA at the Michaelis School of Fine Art (UCT) in 2014. He majored in painting and in his final year was awarded the Judy Steinberg Painting Prize. He was also the 2014 recipient of the Hoosein Mohamed Award and the Director and Staff Special Prize. His work now forms part of one of UCT's permanent collections, at the Centre for Curating the Archive, as well as a number of private and corporate collections.

Emmett was a Top 5 Sasol New Signatures Merit Award Winner in 2015 and an SPI Portrait Award 2015 Finalist. He has participated in a number of group shows including Greatest Hits: A Domestic Odyssey & Claims to Land at the AVA Gallery in 2015, Movie Snaps: Cape Town Remembers Differently at the District Six Homecoming Centre in 2015, New Monuments at Commune.1 in 2016, the Barclay's L'Atelier 2016 regional selections exhibition, the 2017 Cape Town Art Fair, DRESSCODE at Gallery MOMO in 2017, A Painting Today at Stevenson Gallery in 2017 and Throughlines at Greatmore Studios in 2017.

Emmett lives and works in Cape Town, where he held his first solo exhibition titled Concerning Alchemy at the end of 2017.



snow is white and very cold
2017
Mixed media collage
300 x 150 cm
Installation view, Gallery MOMO, Cape Town



Thulile Gamedze

snow is white and very cold

In recent years, hip contemporary intellectuals have imagined that exploiting 'the black archive' would lead all of us to some kind of inclusive global historicity. Of course, the global south in general has endured a lot of violence, and still operates according to concretised *coloniality*, a word we use to describe an unchanged exploiter-exploited power dynamic that can be easily identified through the eras of colonialism, 'independence', and neoliberalism. So, while this does mean that the voices of black people have often been erased, their cultures repressed and their histories silenced, we should understand this as a process that happened and happens within *mainstreamed* white life. While we cannot get away from navigating around (and being paid by) this power, our intention in re-historicising 'other' histories should always respond first to whether or not we even agree with the validity of having a 'mainstream' at all.

What if we were uninterested in the mainstream, and we acknowledged that not seeing ourselves in it, or being poorly represented by it, was more of an intellectual blessing than the opposite – having to identify with a western modernity that maintains a brutally capitalistic structure simultaneous to its bland cultural nature? What if, when we entered mainstream spaces, we turned our attention to the real designers of 'blackness', 'queerness' and 'otherness' – those who projected every fear, insecurity and anti-creativity onto the bodies of millions of people who, until the colonial era, had been occupied with maintaining *multiplicity* – of ways to see and know, to understand identity, to make, to learn and to be together. What if we were to study the people who created the very notion of the mainstream, of the centre and the margin, of difference as precursor to violence? *snow is white and very cold* is a multimedia collage that exists as part of an ongoing curated study of white people.

Thulile Gamedze is an artist and writer based in Cape Town, South Africa. She is working towards a Masters in Philosophy, considering the implementation of creative methodologies to disrupt the pervasive coloniality within educational institutions. With a constant focus on maintaining a transdisciplinary approach in all her work, Gamedze's output is varied in nature, including membership in the collective iQhiya, part time lecturing and tutoring, text-based explorations of art, art criticism and storytelling, as well as disturbingly frequent participation in panel discussions. Gamedze is interested in the radical potential of education as a central project of liberation, with her practice borrowing from strategies of collaboration in popular pedagogy and subaltern African histories.



Kosovo, Cape Town, (Remove)
(Detail)
2014
C Print
105 x 105 cm



Separation Wall, West Bank(East Jerusalem)
(left)
2014
C Print
60 x 60 cm



Separation Wall, West Bank(East Jerusalem)
(right)
2014
C Print
60 x 60 cm

Svea Josephy

Scorched Earth

These images are part of an ongoing photographic investigation into South African places in relation to similarly named places in other parts of the globe. The body of work is concerned with the South African urban landscape and serves as an investigation into the naming of places as it relates to colonial legacies, Apartheid planning and sites of conflict and war. The project consists of large colour photographic works, often displayed as diptychs, and has been shown on solo exhibitions *Twin Town* (2007/8), *Third Worlds: Model Cities* (2010) and *Satellite Cities* (2016), and a number of local and international group exhibitions.

In *Satellite Cities*, the photographs place the suburbs and areas surrounding South Africa's cities at the heart of a network of interconnected perspectives and relationships. These branch out to reveal differences and parallels with other places within South Africa and throughout the world. The place names evoke violent sites in one's imagination. They bring to mind places, cities and countries located all over the globe that are evocative of conflict, war or disaster, such as Marikana, West Bank, Iraq, Vietnam, Kosovo, Kuwait, Beirut, Bosnia, Harare, Tsunami, Taiwan, Burundi, Congo and Cuba. The names of these places connect the different locations as sites of conflict, disaster, struggle, war, liberation and reconstruction. The act of naming a place after war or disaster foregrounds parallels in life circumstances, facilities and infrastructure between the conflict zone and the local settlement.

Names of places are adopted at the time of settlement, and in this there is often a reflection of the violence felt by residents. Naming happens in different ways, but one noteworthy practice is when settlements are named after current news such as wars. This draws parallels with events taking place in the war zones and similar perceived conditions in the places in South Africa at the time, for example Kosovo, Cape Town or Beirut, Johannesburg. On the other hand, there are several West Banks that are literally that, the west bank of a river; however, the suggestion of conflict still rests in that name.

Svea Josephy is an Associate Professor in Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. Josephy has held a number of national and international solo and group exhibitions of her creative work. Josephy's research interests include Southern African photography, documentary photography, contemporary art and colonial photography. Her writing on these areas has been published in various books, journals and catalogues on contemporary art and photography. Josephy's research is concerned with the politics of post-Apartheid photography, particularly as it connects to the politics and representation of land, space and identity.



The Big Hole Counter Narrative Project
 2017
 Single channel HD video
 15 min
 Edition of 5

Francois Knoetze

My work explores junctures between material and social histories, examining ways in which ‘human’ and ‘thing’ co-constitute each other. I use waste as a medium, exploring the plethora of combinatory possibilities garbage presents for questioning systems of value and the myths that underpin them.

In my *Mongo*¹ sculptural suits, the synthetic is welded to the human, bringing focus to the objectification of persons through the personification of objects. The shell-like sculptural suits act as a type of protective layer, creating distance between my body and the spaces in which I perform. In my work, costumed performance speaks to a split between the fantasy and the everyday, between the desire to take on a hidden, costumed identity, and the desire to reveal and confront the largely invisible ways in which white male identity continues to suggest normativity.

I am particularly interested in drawing links between the worlds of objects and those of people and highlighting how myths and grand-narratives relating to certain identities manifest materially on interpersonal, local and global scales. By inserting myself into the circuitry or fable of the object-becoming-object-becoming-object again, my work seeks to reconcile the fate of things. From this disordering, I hope to create potential for new patterns and relations to occur. In the co-mingling of found objects and found video footage, my practice is an attempt to retrieve life from the growing dumps of consumer culture by rendering permeable the rigidly constructed margins that separate and classify spaces, objects and persons.

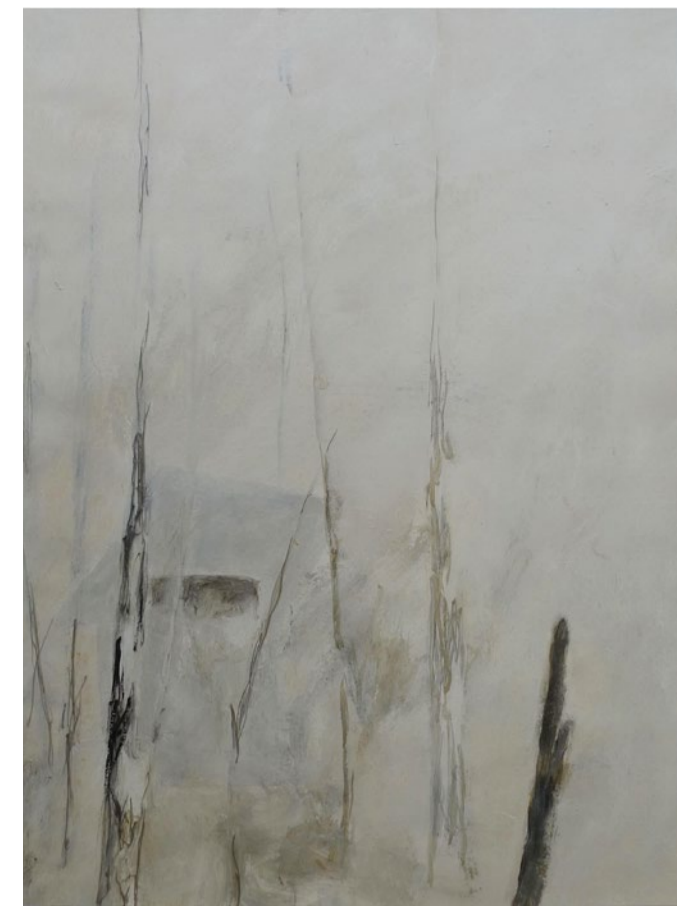
The Big Hole Counter Narrative project is a collaborative piece between Amandla Danca Teatro (under Mkhululi Mabija), Sol Plaatje University’s Anthropology department (under Carina Truys) and Francois Knoetze. In partnership with the Goethe Institut Johannesburg as part of the Goethe Institut Project Space. The project aims to disrupt odious colonial narratives that romanticize Kimberley’s history of diamond extraction.

Francois Knoetze is a Cape Town based performance artist, sculptor and filmmaker. He holds an MFA from the University of Cape Town. Notable exhibitions include A Secret Rancour – Notions of Resentment at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgium (2017), U/Tropia at the Wiener Festwochen in Germany (2015) and Designing Futures at the Lagos Photo Festival in Nigeria (2015). In 2015, Knoetze was featured as one of Mail & Guardian’s ‘Top 200 Young South Africans’.

¹ Mongo n. slang. object thrown away and then recovered



Dance studio
2015
From the series 'Nine times'
Acrylic on paper
20 x 15 cm



Jagerstand
2015
Acrylic on paper
40x30 cm



Field
2015
From the series 'Nine times'
Acrylic on paper
20 x 15 cm

Wonder Marthinus

Wonder Marthinus currently works in his home studio in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town. His works consider abstract concepts of reality, time, place and actuality. Reflecting these concepts, the paintings themselves range from being completely abstract to abstract-expressionist in style. Over the last several years, Marthinus has been working in Cape Town and Germany (Freiburg). The artist has mentally stored images from this experience and draws upon them in the creation of his paintings. Some of these images include physical photographs and drawings, while others are memories. By drawing on these images, the artist plays with the idea of eluding time, place and actuality in his work in order to 'map' new scenes and landscapes.

Wonder Marthinus is a painter living and working in Cape Town, South Africa. Marthinus' works have been included in multiple local and international exhibitions and publications and the artist has been involved in numerous social outreach initiatives. Recent solo exhibitions include Malerei at Kunstverein Schallstadt (2013) and the Greatmore Studios 10th Year Celebration at the Irma Stern Gallery (2010). Recent group shows on which Marthinus has shown include The Artist's Prism at Eclectica Modern (2015) and The Lookout by the AVA Gallery at the Cape Town Art Fair (2013). The artist has been involved in various outreach projects in Cape Town around issues of homelessness, justice and reconciliation, child abuse and mental health.





Somewhere over the rainbow
2015
Single channel HD video
8 min
Edition of 5 + 2 AP's



Emmanuel de Montbron

From the perspective of a foreigner in South Africa, though this is often true for locals as well, living and working in the country can easily become a bureaucratic nightmare. This common 'bureaucratic experience' – which most South Africans are usually quick to describe in pejorative terms oscillating between humour and anger – is nevertheless the visible aspect of a much broader and complex system, the inner workings of which are highly opaque. The extreme frustration one experiences in confronting this bureaucratic realm is partly a consequence of the perceived murkiness of the system embodied in the uncanny structures that contain it.

Indeed, bureaucracies embody a strange and terrifying paradox: the inscrutability of power. In South Africa, the Department of Home Affairs is a case in point. As a government bureaucracy, it perfectly illustrates Veena Das¹ definition of the state as “a form of regulation that oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being.” Indeed, though bureaucracies theoretically represent rationality and order, their opacity and arbitrariness renders them as illegible, 'magic' entities. Therefore, what happens within the bureaucratic realm is always invariably imagined, fantasised. From an outsider's perspective, bureaucracy is as much a fiction as it is a reality.

The film entitled *Somewhere over the rainbow* constitutes an attempt to materialise this mysterious bureaucratic 'magic'. It forms part of a broader project entitled the *The Department of Some Affairs*, conceived as the inner psychic realm of an imaginary bureaucracy, cut-off from the world, paranoid, xenophobic and hallucinatory. The work engages with the ambiguities and complexities of bureaucratic alienation through the staging of an immersive space that is intended to be at once alienating and alienated. In this dark and mysterious bureaucratic world, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between rational bureaucrats and the invasive 'aliens' they are precisely trying to eliminate.

Emmanuel de Montbron (b. 1983) completed his BA in Political Science at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Lille (2007) before studying at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town, where he majored in painting. He lives and works in Paris, France.

¹ Das, V. 2004. The signature of the state: the paradox of illegibility. In *Life and words. Descent into the ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 162-183.



Untitled (Heritage Day)
2013
From the 'Public holiday' series
594 x 420 (Image size)
Photographic print on archival matte paper
Edition of 5 + 2 AP's

(far right)
Untitled (Freedom Day)
2014
From the 'Public holiday' series
594 x 420 (Image size)
Photographic print on archival matte paper
Edition of 5 + 2 AP's



Sethembile Msezane

As a woman born in the 1990s, Msezane investigates herself in relation to space and time. *The Public Holiday Series* (2013-2014), became a platform from which to challenge institutions and the structural systems of a colonial legacy, highlighting the discontent of the youth under neocolonialism that far exceeds the democratic condition in South Africa.

The body of work reacts to the overly masculine public architecture and public statuary that continues to celebrate colonial and Afrikaner histories while highlighting the paucity of the black female body in memorialised public spaces.

The women Msezane created in this work emerged in a time when there were contested notions of gender roles and tradition within contemporary South Africa, when the center of power was no longer solely defined by masculinity. The artist is interested in the female body as a site of power. For example, a woman undergoing the practice of *Umemulo* is seen as engaging in a process of knowledge-making and self-affirmation through other women.¹ This power is also evident in recent protests, where the presence of partially clothed or naked women in public space is a potent political symbol.²

Msezane's aim in the *Public Holiday Series* was to highlight the significance of black women in the South African (political) landscape by asserting her own body in public space as a living sculpture through a process of temporary monumentalisation. This further alludes to the appreciation of women's participation in South Africa's liberation struggle.

Sethembile Msezane (RSA b.1991) completed her Masters in Fine Art (2017) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Msezane maps out how the process of commemorative practice informs constructions of history and mythmaking, and ultimately addresses the paucity of the black female body in the monumentalisation of public spaces. She was shortlisted for ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art (2017). She was a TEDGlobal Speaker in Ausha, Tanzania (2017) and a TAF & Sylt Emerging Artist Residency Award Winner (TASA) (2016). Msezane was the first recipient of the Rising Light award at the Mbokodo Awards (2016) and is a Barclays L'Atelier Top 10 Finalist (2016). She performed at the removal of the John Cecil Rhodes statue at UCT (2015) and is a Sasol New Signatures Merit Award winner (2015).

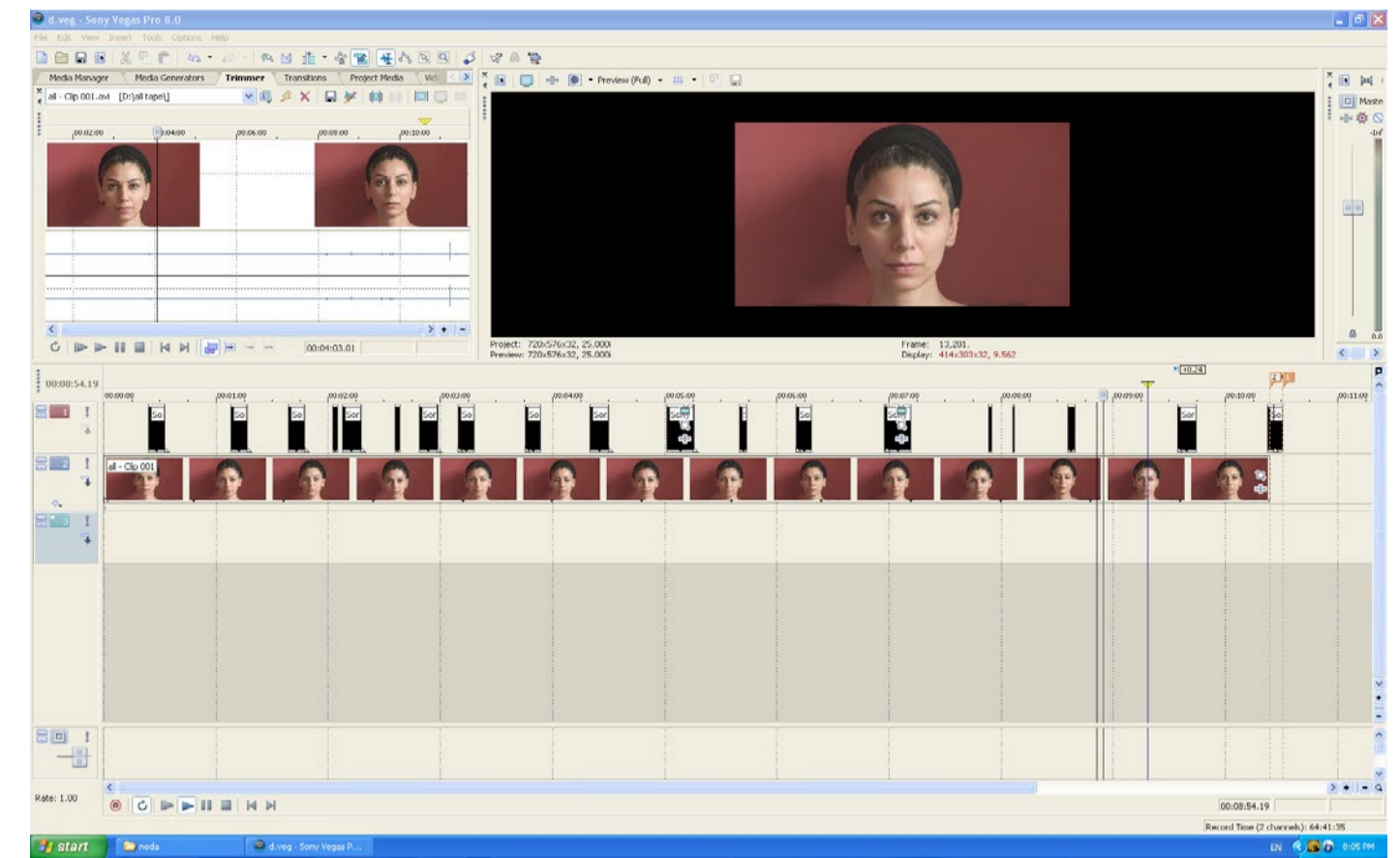
Msezane has held solo shows at Gallery MOMO (2017) and the FNB Joburg Art Fair (2017). Selected group shows include participation in 1:54 Contemporary Art Fair, London (2017), Dis(colour)ed Margins at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe (2017), Women's Work and The Art of Disruptions at the Iziko South African National Gallery (2016), Re[as]sisting Narratives at Framer Framed, Amsterdam (2016), Dance, if you want to enter my country! Global Citizen at GoetheOnMain, Johannesburg (2016), Nothing Personal at SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, #theopening at Greatmore Studios, Cape Town (2016), Translations at Emergent Art Space and Reed College, Portland, Oregon (2015) and Anywhere the Wind Blows at Brundyn+ (2014). Her work sits in prominent collections such as the Zeitz MOCAA and the IZIKO South African National Gallery.

Untitled (Women's Day)
2014
From the 'Public holiday' series
594 x 420 (Image size)
Photographic print on archival matte paper
Edition of 5 + 2 AP's

- 1 A coming-of-age ceremony for a Zulu Maiden who is welcomed and celebrated into womanhood at the age of approximately 21.
- 2 "An attempt to involve students in finding solutions to sexual, gender-based violence at Rhodes University had to be adjourned after the meeting was disrupted by protesters, some of whom had stripped to their underwear" (Pillay, 2016). A woman caused a commotion when she stripped naked and caressed the statue of former president Nelson Mandela in Sandton (Sapa, 2014).



Dialogue with Open Eyes
2010
Video installation
10 min (loop)
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



Neda Razavipour

Neda Razavipour's practice connects everyday events with her works. She considers the challenges embedded in her society and personal life, and attempts to change the role of the viewer from ordinary spectator to active participant using a variety of media. Without appealing to direct language, she poses questions and encourages the viewer to interact with and react to her work in order to extend and complete its meaning.

In many of her works, Razavipour redistributes fragments such as broken pieces of drawings, photographs, moving images, etc., in order to question the making of the world through the languages of objects and ideas. For her, every facet of life is imbued with curiosity and deserves articulation. She is deeply committed to explore the private and societal life of women, while not being trapped by an approach that represents these concepts in a stereotypical or self-exoticising manner.

Dialogue with Open Eye

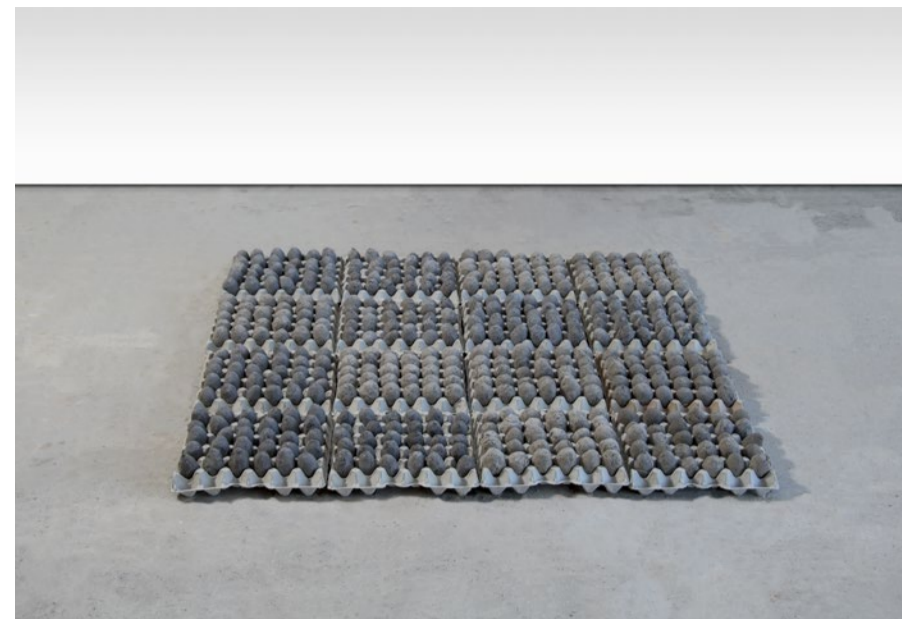
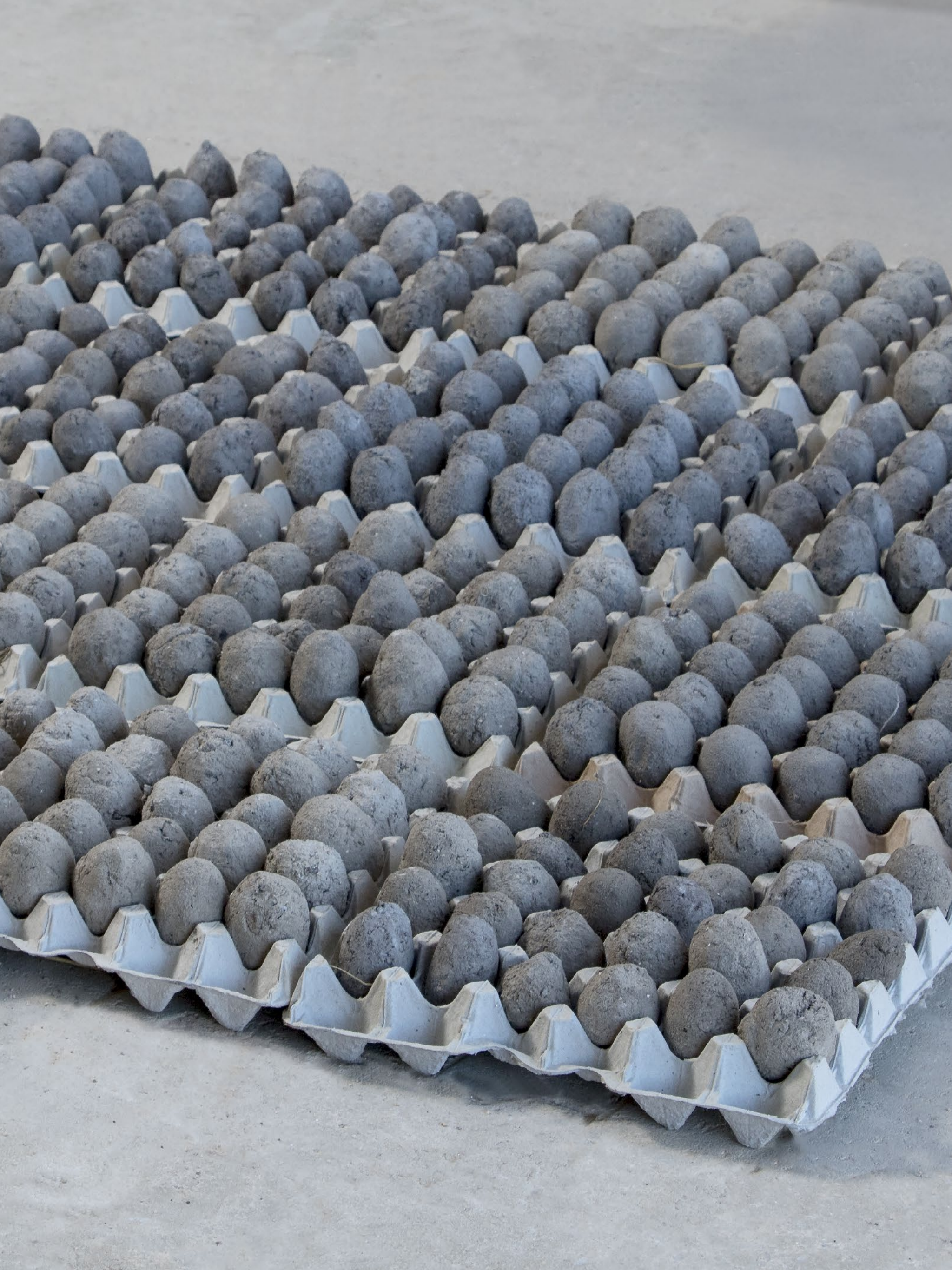
"This film is about Dialogue, or the Impossibility of Dialogue. How ever if I always wanted to believe in Dialogue. These days the Silence is becoming unbearable (Neda Razavipour).

By 'these days' Razavipour meant the early days of 2010, the days when Tehran's citizens were struggling to return and reform, and make a change in government policies – after the street outbreaks – at a time when the capital was entering the realm of dejection and sadness. 'Dialogue' is a term that added to the political discourse of Iran through the activities of reformists, and is a term that was eradicated from the political vocabulary after their [the reformists] elimination. *Dialogue with Open Eyes* is an elegy for this sudden elimination."

From the essay *Self Portrait as a Portrait of Society*, by Ali Etehad, Contemporary Practices.

Born in 1969 in Tehran, Iran, Neda Razavipour graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Paris (Pantheon-Sorbonne) and obtained her MFA from the Stage/Space Design Department (ENSAD), Paris. From 2001 to the present, her works have appeared in numerous exhibitions throughout the world.

As part of her practice, Razavipour has co-founded several collectives in Iran that are involved in a range of activities, including an experimental theatre company (Leeve), an artist collective space (Jalleh & Movazi), an artist health support network (Karestan) and an urban environmental NGO (Nafas).



Free Soil
2018
Soil, clay, crete stone, egg boxes
120 x 120 cm



Refuge
2018
Hay bail, cobbling materials, soil, lime, sand, stones
114 x 34 x 132 cm

Kathy Robins

Through her work, Robins aims to engage with issues of displacement and home in the context of entangled contemporary ecological and socio-political issues. The artist uses natural materials and forms to consider processes of human connection and interaction with the natural world. While connection implies a sense of human control over nature, it is also imbued with notions of nurturing, deep care and sense of integration with one's space, a leveling experience of what it is to be human on Earth. In the context of the current, international physical displacement and social disconnection of people from the land, Robins engages with materials and processes that echo issues of displacement and longing for a lost connection with place. The works on show reference ancient construction techniques, in which sun-dried bricks are made through a process of mixing hay, lime sand, clay and water. With their inherent binaries of durability and ephemerality, and reference to make-shift homes and the scale of the human body, the works bring to the fore questions of human and environmental transience, placelessness and human connection to land and space.

Kathy Robins has an MFA and PG Diploma in Fine Art from the University of Cape Town (2016, 2012), a B.Soc.Sci degree from UCT (1983) and a textile and product design degree from Parsons School of Design in New York (1989). Kathy has worked in community development, art, design and social activism throughout her working life. She founded and developed a Corporate Social Responsibility Programme in 1999 and continues to work in creative and educational development initiatives.

She has exhibited her work in local and international group shows, most recently The Space Between (South African Jewish Museum, 2016), Displacement (AVA Gallery, 2016), The Christmas Show (ISArt, 2016), Muse Montage (Eclectica Gallery, 2016), Fog Catcher Installation (Design Indaba, Cape Town, 2017), Master's Showcase (Michaelis Galleries, 2017), Dream Rift (Eclectica Gallery, 2017) and Mixed Methaphors (Kalk Bay Modern, 2017). Upcoming projects include a solo show at ISArt (2018) and the Arteles Residency (Finland, 2018).



Dance/Domestic
2001
Mixed printmaking media on fabric
Dimensions variable



Klopse (Carnival Jacket)
(detail)
1999
Mixed printmaking media on fabric
Dimensions variable



Klopse (Carnival Jacket)
1999
Mixed printmaking media on fabric
Dimensions variable

Roderick Sauls

Sauls' work explores, recognises and recuperates the vestiges, memories and identities of marginalised cultures with histories of loss, destruction and nostalgia. It not only excavates the lost, vanishing and fragmented remains of District Six, but also constitutes a discursive reflection on personal and socio-political apprehension in the context of an uncertain future and current efforts towards transformation.

The past and present collide in Sauls' work, revealing the ways in which the present is haunted by the ills of the past. Predicaments, tensions and uncertainties arise such as *memory 'against' forgetting, disadvantaged 'redeemed' privileged, perpetrator 'now' victim and centre 'without' margin.*

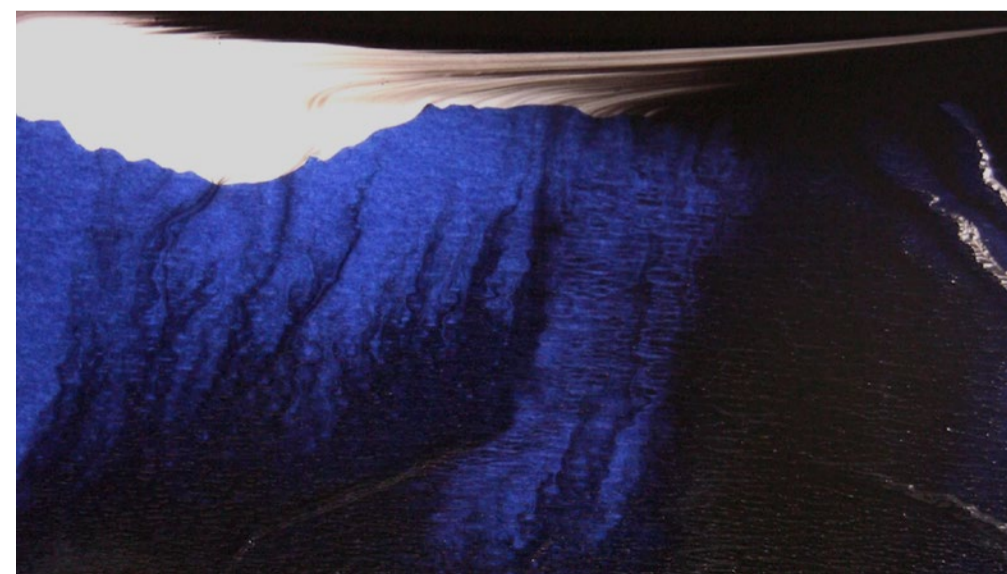
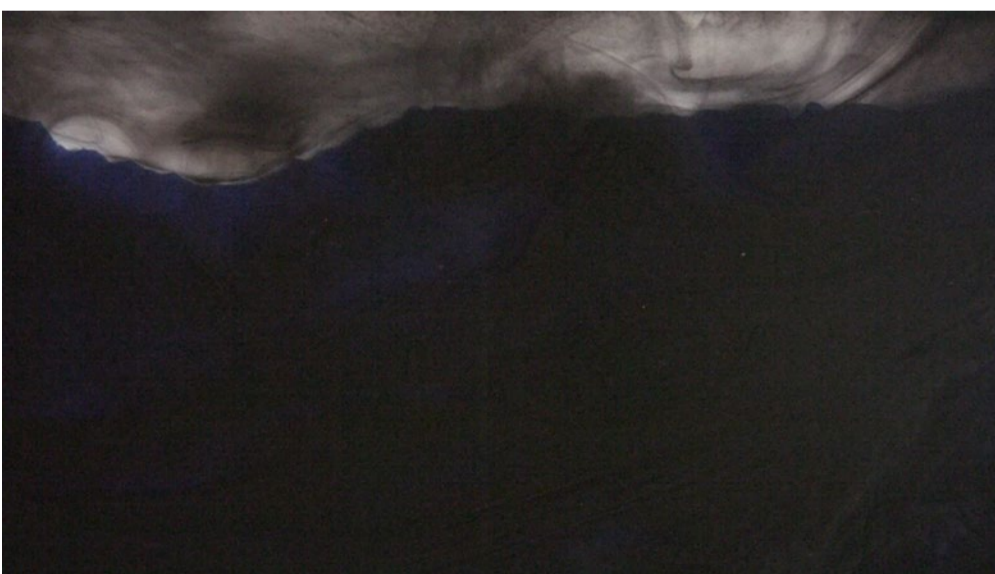
The works consider the articulation of memory without prompting anger, pain and hatred, as those born on African soil need to come to terms with the atrocities of the past, to remember and then forget in order to forgive. While these works are often considered to be critical commentary on the inhumane legacies of Apartheid, Sauls' primary intention is to inspire a vision that informs a better future for all who live in this country.

Roderick Sauls was born in a Cape Town ward known as District Six in the mid 1950s. Since the early 1960s, he has been residing in Bonteheuwel, a designated Apartheid 'township' in the Cape Flats. After finishing his secondary schooling in the early 1970s, he was obliged to seek employment, but returned to his tertiary studies in the historical year of 1994 and completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies in fine art in 2004. In 2006, he won an International Ford Foundation Scholarship to further his studies and was conferred a PhD in Sociology of Art in 2013, being the first scholar to achieve a doctorate in this sub-discipline of sociology in South Africa.

He is the author of short articles, including Antecedents, Memories of District Six, Heritage and Unearth, published in art and other academic journals. His artworks, including Moettie my vi'giettie, A Personal Memory, Os moettie vi'giettie, Die Bankie gedagte and Almal moet wiet van osse verdriet, are included in the permanent collections of museums and public spaces in Cape Town.



Roderick Sauls / Black Hand / Rory Emmett
Installation view, Gallery MOMO, Cape Town



Moonlight
2010
From the 'Black smoke rising' trilogy
Single channel HD video, colour, sound
6 min 5 sec
Edition 5 +2 AP's



Berni Searle

Berni Searle's *Black smoke rising* trilogy (2009-2010) comprises of three videos: *Lull*, *Gateway* and *Moonlight*, the third of which is shown in *Cape to Tehran*. The creation of these single-screen projections was sparked by the rising levels of civic discontent in the South Africa at the time. Reminiscent of political protests in many other parts of the world, this discontent manifested in protests by unions and mass demonstrations against poor service delivery, the lack of housing and rising unemployment in the country.

In *Moonlight*, a view of Table Mountain forms the backdrop of a desolate scene that was shot in a vacant plot in Philippi. Smoke rises from smouldering tyres while people search desultorily for remnants of wire; a burning tyre is dragged back and forth across the ground until finally the mountain appears to dissolve amidst inky black smoke. A faltering rendition of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* provides a disjunctive soundtrack that offers no consolation.

Berni Searle is a South African artist working with photography, video and film to produce lens-based installations that stage narratives connected to history, memory and place. Often, but not exclusively, using herself in her work, she has produced performative works that explore issues of self-representation, the relationship between personal and collective identity and narratives. Her use of metaphor and poetic ambiguity transcend the specificity of context, drawing on universal human emotions associated with displacement, vulnerability and loss.

Searle has won a number of awards and nominations including the Minister of Culture Prize at DAK'ART 2000, Senegal and the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Art (South Africa, 2003) and she was an Artes Mundi short-listed artist (Cardiff, Wales, 2004). She was the recipient of the Rockefeller Bellagio Creative Arts Fellow Award in 2014 and was the recipient of the Mbokodo Award in 2015.

Previous international exhibitions include the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and the 51st Venice Biennale (2005); Personal Affects, Power and Poetics in Contemporary South African Art, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (New York, 2004) and New Photography at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2007). More recently, she participated in Figures and Fictions at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2011); Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography at the Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2011); Earth Matters at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC, USA, 2014) and Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive at the Walther Collection, Ulm, (Germany, 2014-2015).

Searle is currently Associate Professor and Director of the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.



Untitled (Burn)
2012
Digital prints
72 x 48cm each

Rowan Smith

Rowan Smith's work takes the form of a multidisciplinary semiotic investigation into the ways in which cultural signs and signifiers can be read as artefacts. He examines how the meaning embedded in these artefacts fluctuates (and frequently deteriorates) in relation to ever-shifting sociopolitical contexts, often assuming a self-critical position that responds to his locality. He has focused on the complexities and contradictions of post-Apartheid South Africa in terms of class, capitalist economy, nationalism, globalisation and the relationship between the pervasive legacy of the past and the undefined present. He examines these concepts through acts of appropriation, defacement, destruction and reparation. By visualising the destruction of a society in this way, he intends to highlight the flaws embedded in its underlying structures so that they may be acknowledged and confronted. The physical materiality of the works is as crucial to his investigation as the concepts informing them; the two function in tandem in order to extrapolate the themes inherent to the work.

Rowan Smith was born in 1983 in Cape Town, South Africa and has been hailed as one of the country's 'Bright Young Things' by Art South Africa, the continent's leading art publication. Smith completed his BA in Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in 2007 (winning the Michaelis Prize for top graduate) and received his MFA degree at the California Institute of the Arts in 2012. Upon graduating, he was awarded the prestigious Joan Mitchell MFA Grant. Smith presented his acclaimed debut solo exhibition Future Shock Lost at Whatiftheworld (2008), followed by If You Get Far Enough Away, You'll Be On Your Way Home (2009), No Everything (2014) and Chamber of Mines (in collaboration with Xhanti Zwelendaba) (2016). He also presented a solo exhibition with the VOLTA NY gallery in 2012. Smith has appeared in a number of group exhibitions internationally, including COME ON YOU FUCKERS (in collaboration with Ingrid Lee) at The Wulf in Los Angeles, Objects of Revolution at Dominique Fiat Gallery in Paris, Ampersand at the Daimler Contemporary in Berlin, Circulate, Exchange at the University of California, Los Angeles and Green Flower Street at the recent Istanbul Off Biennial. The artist's work is included in the Hollard Collection in Johannesburg.

Untitled (Tyre)
2012
Bass wood
11.4 x 32 x 32cm



Dawn
2018
Mercurochrome, gentian violet and vita-thion on wood panel
175 x 195 cm

Jo Voysey

Jo Voysey explores medicine as a painting medium. The medicine comprises of pharmaceutical products for self-medication, tinctures and galenicals. She is interested in the associations implied by this medicine when it becomes a painted surface, the figurative forms the surface can evoke and how these can transform into visual metaphor for notions of trauma and healing. An important component of Voysey's process is the unpredictability of the medicine as a means for painting. The outcome of this process is based on chance and the uncontrollable aspects of the medium. It is the raw and bodily qualities of the medium that Voysey attempts to extract and highlight in a simple and organic way, allowing the medium a voice of its own. Affected with disappointment in humanity in our current circumstances, the artist uses her paintings to draw attention to a sense of loss and a longing for healing.

Jo Voysey (b. 1987, Johannesburg) completed her MFA at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, Cape Town in 2013 after obtaining a BA Fine Art degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (2010). Voysey currently lives and works in Cape Town.

*Voysey held her solo exhibition, *Animal*, at Commune. 1 Gallery in 2016. Her exhibition received international acclaim from publications such as *Vice* and *Huffington Post*. She was selected to participate in the KYTA artist residency in Himachal Pradesh, India, which concluded in a panel discussion at the Contemporary Art Week in New Delhi, India. Prior to this, Voysey presented a solo exhibition at the AVA Gallery, Cape Town (2014), which led to her work being exhibited at the Cape Town Art Fair.*

*Notable group exhibitions include: *Fortunes Remixed*, which travelled the country and concluded at the Bag Factory, Johannesburg in 2013; *Hans Ulrich's Do It* at the Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town in 2014; *Scintilla: An Alchemy Show*, Commune. 1 Gallery, Cape Town in 2014; *Load Shedding*, Commune. 1 Gallery, Cape Town in 2015; and *SS17* at Gallery Momo in 2017. Her works are included in the Spier Art Collections, South Africa.*



Jo Voysey / Sepideh Nehraban / Sethembile Msezane
Installation view, Gallery MOMO, Cape Town

Sepideh Mehraban

When the past has been embroidered, can we paint history?

Alice Womersley

Sepideh Mehraban's paintings speak to a collective history of government oppression and her personal story of living under that oppression. In her work there is a tension between needing to speak to the shared problems of state control and censorship, and allowing people to emphasize with this history through in a personal story. Mehraban does not claim to make a political statement but is rather looking at the processes of subjugation, the effects that it has on people and how to express these processes through the medium of paint.

Mehraban has remained interested in the concerns of her Master's show, *Retracing Memories: Public and Personal Histories in Contemporary Iran*, in which she examined the disparities between her family's experiences of living in Iran and the version of Iranian history that is presented by the Iranian government. Mehraban contests these histories through her paintings, the process of mark-making initiating the uncovering of meaning. Her articulation of these issues has shifted away from direct personal gestures. Instead of drawing from family photographs¹ her latest work uses copies of newspaper clippings. Mehraban is interested in what kind of images the public is allowed access to. In *Arrival* She uses the front page of *Ettelaat*, an Iranian newspaper, announcing Ruhollah Khomeini's 1979 return from exile. The newspaper clippings show the version of history presented and created through altering photographs by the Iranian government. Mehraban has described newspapers as 'visual markers' which when contrasted with the personal narratives point to multiple histories and 'truths.'

A new element to Mehraban's work is the inclusion of strips of old Persian carpets in works such as *Threads of Her Story*. They are a link to Iranian history, the act of creating and the homes in which they would have lain. The strips of carpet are juxtaposed with the painted rectangles and the newspaper clippings. The carpets seem to have replaced the family photographs as the signifier of the personal in Mehraban's work. They are the private objects from home brought into the public sphere. But they are fragments, cut away from the larger sense of the carpets' patterns. The carpet strips are submerged and covered by glue and paint. They sit on top of painted squares and puddles of glue. The traditional place of carpets, in the private histories of the home is evoked through Mehraban's use of carpet in her work.

Mehraban has solidified her rectangular blocks. The canvases appear like pages with the blocks appearing as columns or articles that have become unloosened from the surface of the 'page' and overlap and obscure each other. The *Palimpsest* series has a restrained palate with thick dark blacks that are redolent of tar or the smudgy black ink of newspapers. In *Erased 1* the ink blacks out a large portion of the 'page' suggesting the obliteration of information underneath. A few 'columns' of information remain, instructing us through their visibility to focus on them. The works appear like a collection of newspaper pages each telling a deeply fabricated story. While their surfaces are inscribed and re-inscribed, the blank-white canvas is visible in works like *Whose Choice*. The clear boundaries of squares are overrun by glue and over-worked with paint forming murky depths. A square of carpet exists on top of a square of dry-brushed paint while glue pools above. Squares of paint are completely submerged in glue.

The works form part of the Palimpsest series. The title suggests a surface that has been rewritten over or effaced through reworking. While it has been reworked it contains the marks and traces of its previous form. Mehraban looks at the articulation of societal trauma through the process of mark-making. She acts out the processes of veiling and unveiling, and of concealing and revealing. She covers her surfaces with glue and paint,

obscuring one with the other. She scratches paint away partially revealing what lies beneath. The scratching of the surface suggests a desperate violent need to uncover what has been covered or to deface the surface. Reworking through scrubbing or thick application of paint over previous layers hints at obliteration and mutilation. The painted surface is marked by these signs of unrest. Mehraban articulates trauma through the manner in which she applies paint.

Palimpsest also suggests that there is something below the surface, and that many layers are present. In these paintings Mehraban has replaced representations of veils with the act of veiling. In *Whose Revolution* black scribbles float on top of two dark and light-toned rectangles. The darker colour obscures the scribbles. In the center of the work thick pink paint clouds the glue beneath it. The glue veils rectangles of paint, a strip of carpet and a newspaper image. But some pieces of carpet and painted rectangles are uncovered by glue. A few rectangles are thickly painted while others are smoothly brushed on. She plays with opacity and translucency by layering paint, exploring different methods of application, roughly slathering on thick areas, gently smoothing on others and scrubbing a dry brush across the surface. The layers obscure and reveal one another, giving the viewer fragmented views of each set of information and forcing them to read the fragments in relation to each other.

Paintings incorporate carpets and carpets replicate paintings. Mehraban took two of her Palimpsest series and reproduced them as carpets. The rough textures of the layered and scraped paint are rendered smooth in the continuous surface of the carpets, the fractured elements bound together by the weave. In *Revisiting* Mehraban turns an old carpet into the surface of her canvas. She screen prints pages of newspapers onto the woven surface to track Khomeini's arrival back from exile and the subsequent events. The prints float on the surface in a ghostly white, and appear as if they are faded echoes of the past that have lingered and remain. The piece tells us how Khomeini's government embroidered this history. Subtle stitches worked through the carpet echo this. They leave traces of past constructs that have subsequently been removed. Mehraban is exploring a different type of mark-making with stitching; it is a new way of forming the image for her. The stitches are meditative and impose their own narrative on the surface of the carpet.

Sepideh Mehraban's paintings quietly explore the tension between representing shared public trauma and focusing on the individual personal experience. Her work speaks of both the history of government oppression and of her experiences of it. Mehraban explores oppression through her mark-making, which has expanded to include working with carpets and thread. Her work explores versions of history and layers them against one another so that the viewer is lead into thinking about the histories they are told or would tell and the discrepancies between public and private histories.

Endnotes

¹ In her *Family Album* series she referenced family photographs as a direct link to her experiences.



previous spread

Untitled I
(left)

From the "Palimpsest" series
2018

Hand woven tapestry with wool and silk
200 x 300 cm

Edition of 3

Untitled II
(right)

From the "Palimpsest" series
2018

Hand woven tapestry with wool and silk
200 x 300 cm

Edition of 3

Palimpsest series



Threads of Her Story
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
110 x 143 cm

Sepideh Mehraban

Sepideh Mehraban is an Iranian-born artist, working and living in Cape Town. Her work explores memory and landscape, looking at the overlaying and veiling of paint as a means of expressing layers of existence and experience. In her academic work, as well as in her personal projects, there is a sensitivity towards Iran's recent history, which she incorporates and explores through text, figurative works and abstraction, often drawing on the grid format of newspapers as a source of inspiration.

She was born in Tehran and obtained her BA (2009) and MA (2011) from Alzahra University (Tehran, Iran). In 2012, Mehraban worked on and was awarded a postgraduate diploma in Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art (Cape Town, South Africa) and thereafter completed a second masters degree with distinction there. She has worked as a set designer and collaborated on puppeteering projects. Mehraban has also worked as an assistant lecturer in the Department of Painting at the Michaelis School of Fine Art. She is a PhD candidate currently lecturing at the University of Stellenbosch.

Mehraban's first solo exhibition was titled *Retracing Memories* at Golestan gallery in Tehran (2015). A selection of recent group shows in which she has participated includes: *SS17* at Gallery MOMO (Cape Town, 2017), *Distill Motion* at Smith gallery (Cape Town, 2017), *A Painting Today* at Stevenson gallery (Cape Town, 2017), *Art Meets Camera: Closer than ever* curated by Michaela Limberis at Gallery MOMO (Cape Town, 2017), *Charting* curated by Andrew Lamprecht at Eclectica Contemporary (Cape Town, 2016) and *Imago Mundi* at Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venice, 2015). Her works are part of different private and public collections including: Alzahra University (Tehran), the University of Cape Town, the Spier Arts Trust (Cape Town) and the Thulamela Chambers (Johannesburg).



Nation of Traditions
 2017
 Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
 110 x 143 cm



She Was There
 2017
 Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Acetate
 40 x 60 cm



Erased II
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
75 x 110 cm



Erased I
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
75 x 110 cm



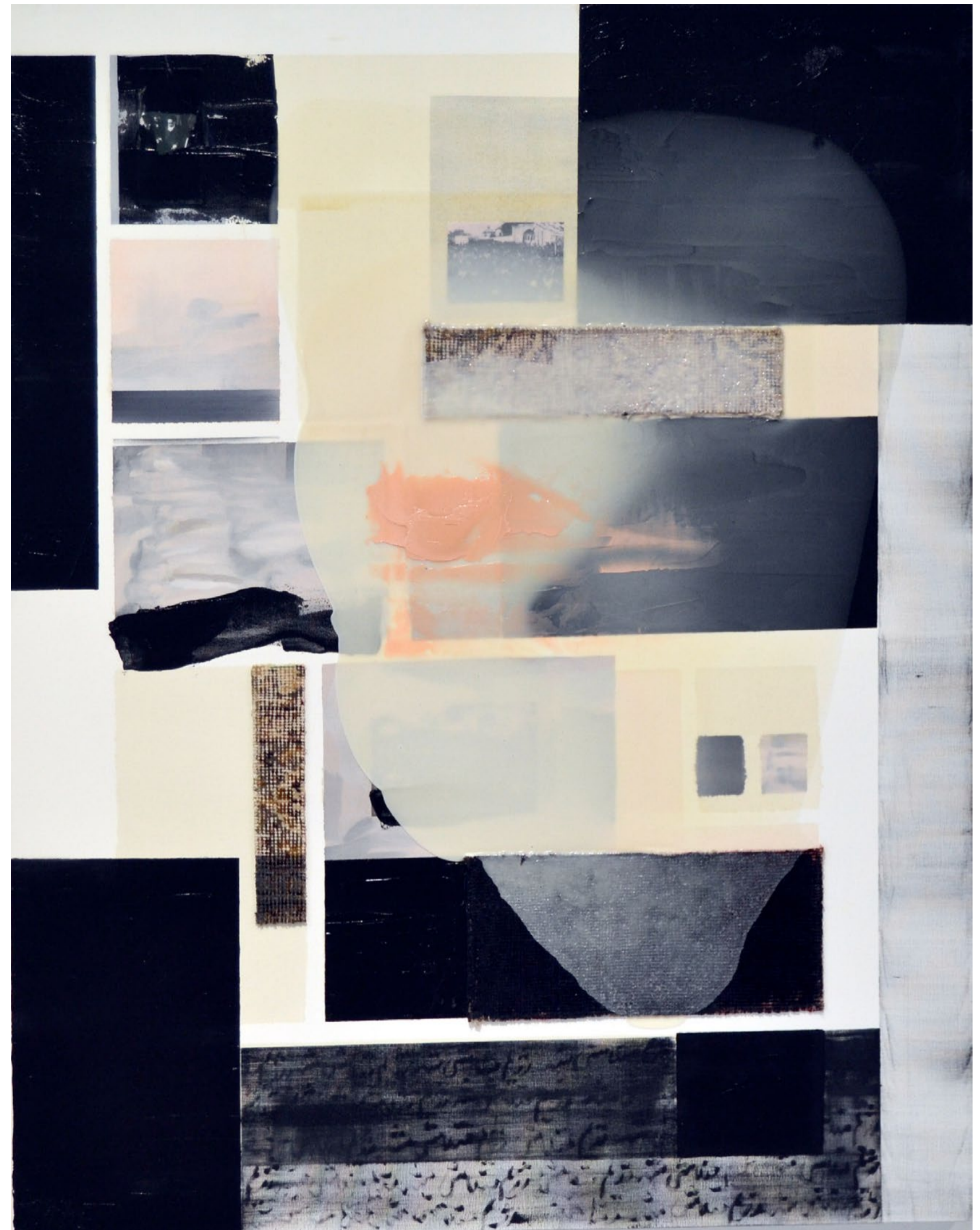
Arrival
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
75 x 110 cm



Scribble of The Constitution
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Carpet
75 x 100 cm



Whose choice
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Carpet
75 x 110 cm



Whose Revolution
2017
Oil paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet
110 x 143 cm

