

# Abalozi Bayeza / Os Deuses Estão Chegando

SMAC Gallery is proud to present Abalozi Bayeza / Os Deuses Estão Chegando, a new 'constellation' of works by Lhola Amira. This body of work is born from a series of Appearances by Lhola Amira in Bahia and surrounding Brazil, over a period of weeks in late 2018. Translating from Zulu and Portuguese as "The Gods Are Coming" and comprising of new installations and photographic narratives Abalozi Bayeza / Os Deuses Estão Chegando presents an introduction to Amira's ongoing engagement with Brazil.

# Inkanyiso

Let there be light for all the beautiful ones who are born and die everyday. What is bestowed upon the beautiful ones in our mother's wombs comes back to haunt 'us' in our everyday. To acknowledge rather than deny burdensome legacies and contentious episodes of the past, what does it mean to walk a landscape, where bones are still laid bare, fragile and broken? In Abalozi Bayeza by Lhola Amira we are taken on a journey defined as umzila¹ wamakhosi², where we become witnesses to the loss of land and our collective identities in the diaspora of Bahia. The seashore becomes the vista where many who left the African lands were traded as slaves to become meagre labour in the Caribbean and the Americas. Amira traces the tracks of those who were forcibly displaced and forced into permanent exile through the gift of imilozi (whistles).

# Umzila: Sibiziwe sasabela

In a song titled, Namhlanje by Abdullah Ibrahim and Johnny Dyani from the album Echoes of Africa, the opening verses begin with, "Bayasibiza bathi masigoduke, bayasibiza bathi masigoduke,... masigoduke siy' ekhaya eAfrika...". These lyrics reflect the content of the photographic narrative titled Obawo bayeza where we witness Lhola Amira's journey, traversing the landscape of Pindorama<sup>3</sup>, in the state of Bahia, Brazil. Armoured with a whisk as umkhomba ndlela and in the other hand carrying a blue suitcase. What seems clear is that Amira is on a quest, which I term umzila, a path led by those who guide her and the spirit of Yemoja – a sacred female force, according to the Yoruba people.

- 1. Umzila: a mark or track made by dragging any heavy body along the ground.
- 2. The term makhosi or amakhosi in direct translation means king or a person of royalty. This term is used mostly by traditional healers when talking to each other.
- 3. Before the colonization of Brazil, the territory was named 'Pindorama' by the Tupi Guaran people, meaning "land of palm trees".

# Umkhomba-ndlela

The Ishoba<sup>4</sup> (whisk), held by Amira, gestures towards ukuzilinda (to guide oneself) but also pronounces a collective of abadala (spiritual ancestors) who accompany her to the territory of Bahia. This gesture of ukuzilinda further centralizes the word ukuhlonipha, linked to ukukhunga (to acknowledge that you are in union with another human being who is a spiritual being with a soul that operates in a non physical dynamic).

In Amira's Abalozi Bayeza, this is done in the form of a prayer while holding a candle. But if we look at it in terms of African culture and religion, it means respect for people in power. Who are the people in power in the space and place in which Amira is situated within the photographs? The red beads in the image signify those in power and a gesture of sowing of beads is to solicit their power. How does one negotiate a space and place where the spirits of those who did not have a proper burial to place them in their proper positions in the world of the ancestors? This gesture allows the prevailing order and a march towards a state of being and as a symbolism of offering actualizing of a new state.

# Imfihlo yobuhlalu (Secrets of the beads)

The installation *Philisa*, is a circular suspended beaded structure with a heap of coarse salt placed on the ground. Amira's engagement with the potency embedded within symbolic materials, such as white beads (associated with amathwasa and healers) and coarse salt, points to processes of healing that our bodies need to go through. One might ask what forms of healing? When we talk about post-memory, in a country still grappling with effects of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, how do we erase the memory of violence in our psyches and bodies? And who has the responsibility of such a task? The installation was first presented in Cape Town, SMAC Gallery as part of *SINKING*: *Xa Sinqamla Unxubo* and as constellation witnesses we were invited to enter the sacred space resembling Indumba<sup>5</sup>. One may ask what does it serve to have such a sacred space in a contemporary gallery and whom does it serve? Philisa as an installation serves to remind 'us' to take heed of the violent times we live in and through silence, we may find ways of starting to locate generational trauma, which is our lived reality as subjugated black people.

- 4. ishoba is an animal's tail that is used by traditional healers as a tool to guide divination bones during divination.
- 5. Indumba is a word referring to a hut in which a traditional healer or shaman carries out cleansing ceremonies and the ritual itself.

# Amakhubalo esizwe

In the work titled Amakhosi So(u)Idiers, the choice of triangular approach resembles a militaristic formation used in combat when in a combative situation. What comes to mind is the role and contribution of womxn globally in various warring/wa-rlike contexts. What songs would they chant and sing? In the book The Southern Eastern Bantu (1930: 19) John Henderson Soga states, "In all tribal wars the presiding figure who prepares the army, and instills into it courage and determination to conquer the enemy, is the war doctor (itola)". In Amakhosi So(u)Idiers, Amira makes a proposition to revisit old forms of healing through Umthandazisi, Umkhuseli and Umboni holding a small forked branch as a whisk (ixhayi) and a wand called (icamagu), normally adorned in beads indicating each successive state of progress of their apprenticeship.

# **Umthandazisi**

"Serving through stillness and presence, the So(u)Idiers gesture for the mending and repairing of the wound of the land and water through being in the experience of their truth. Umthandazisi walks alongside through the journey, witnessing the undoing of the wounds while validating their continuing existence. Anchors the energy for the work to happen: the call's purpose, those participating in the fulfillment of that purpose, the consciousness that has evoked that purpose".

# Umkhuseli

"The guardian and custodian of the ancestral, the spiritual and the living. Warrior and defender as WE seek the wounds, work through and within the wounds. *Umkhuseli* is the safe-keeper of the sacred, the restorer of the ancient, as our bodies remembers, *Umkhuseli* protects through the journey".

# Umboni

"The spiritual medium to gaze ahead and act as a divine intervention as to how the future may manifest itself. Seeks knowledge to map time as an unfolding past, present, future. The prophet that un-bounds the wounds through time. Becoming visible, as the future will not be colonized. *Umboni*, is an ancestral guide that serves time's past, present, future".

In this series of miniature sculptures, Amira proposes an alternative vocabulary to perhaps heal the "watery unhealing wounds" and aid in the navigation - to walk the overmedicated ground as result of homeless spirits who were displaced to foreign lands - and as witnesses of this work it is a way to remind, acknowledge and connect with overlooked silenced **her**stories.

Abalozi Bayeza by Lhola Amira, could allude to guidance from abantu abadala/amakhosi (imilozi) in assessing knowledge and the vast experience in dealing with ukuthwasa<sup>6</sup>. (Mlisa,2009: 121). This is partly due to Amira's spending an extraordinary amount of time half-submerged in a sea and atop rock. Lhola Amira seems to be calling for a reclamation and restorative gesture of the living dead and as both a personal and communal responsibility.

# Text by Sikhumbuzo Makandula

# References:

- 1. Marianne Hirsch, 2012, The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust. Columbia University Press, New York.
- 2. Mlisa Lily-Rose, 2009, Ukuthwasa Initiation of amagairha: Identity Construction and Training of Xhosa Women as Traditional Healers, University of Free State, PhD

Amira would like to extend her gratitude and acknowledgment to the following people who played an integral part throughout the journey of this 'constellation'.

OUR mother Busela Mbongwa - Beading assistant Maiara Cerqueira - Photographer Isaac Zavale - Print Technician UBukhosi - Studio Ngimkhethile Nique Sithole Noncedo Gxekwa

<sup>6.</sup> Ukuthwasa: being called by the ancestors to train as an igairha (prophet / traditional healer).









Lhola Amira iNyembezi zomKhathilibe / lágrimas do universo 2019

Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: Sizes Variable Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



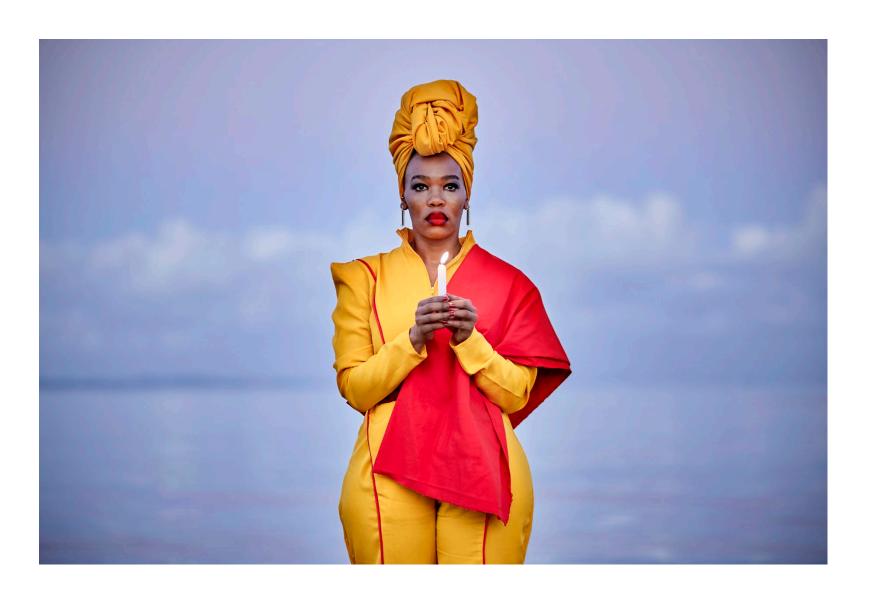
iNyembezi zomKhathilibe / lágrimas do universo 2019



Lhola Amira iNyembezi zomKhathilibe / lágrimas do universo 2019



Ihola Amira
iNyembezi zomKhathilibe / lágrimas do universo
2019
Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec
Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: 29 x 43 cm
Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



Ihola Amira
iNyembezi zomKhathilibe / lágrimas do universo
2019
Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec
Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: 29 x 43 cm
Ed 1/3 + 2 AP









Abadala banginika impisi / os anciãos me deram lobo 2019

Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: Sizes Variable Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



Abadala banginika impisi / os anciãos me deram lobo 2019



Abadala banginika impisi / os anciãos me deram lobo 2019



Abadala banginika impisi / os anciãos me deram lobo 2019



Abadala banginika impisi / os anciãos me deram lobo 2019









Lana siyaminza, siyahlanza, siyaphila / aqui nós drien, purificamos, curamos 2019

Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: Sizes Variable Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



Lana siyaminza, siyahlanza, siyaphila / aqui nós drien, purificamos, curamos 2019



Lana siyaminza, siyahlanza, siyaphila / aqui nós drien, purificamos, curamos 2019



Lana siyaminza, siyahlanza, siyaphila / aqui nós drien, purificamos, curamos 2019



Lana siyaminza, siyahlanza, siyaphila / aqui nós drien, purificamos, curamos 2019









Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: Sizes Variable Ed 1/3 + 2 AP

















Kancane kancane, nyathela / pouco a pouco, ande 2019

Epson Hot Press Natural Giclée Mounted Diasec Artwork sold as a grouped narrative: Sizes Variable Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



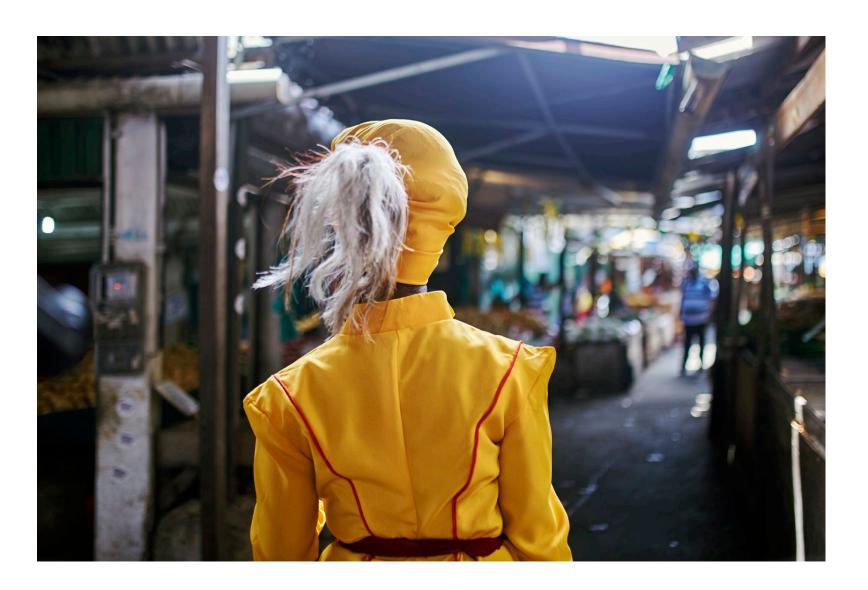
Kancane kancane, nyathela / pouco a pouco, ande 2019



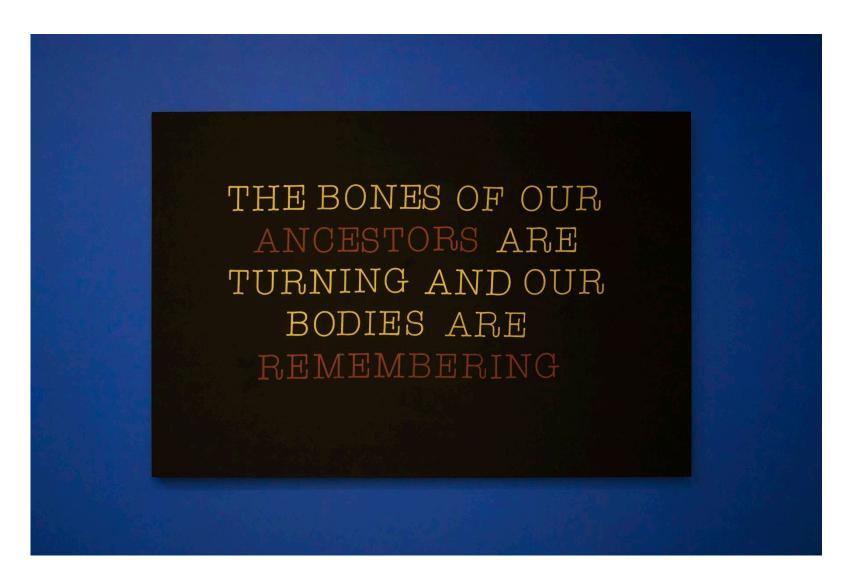
Kancane kancane, nyathela / pouco a pouco, ande 2019



Kancane kancane, nyathela / pouco a pouco, ande 2019



Lhola Amira Kancane kancane, nyathela / pouco a pouco, ande 2019



The bones of our ancestors are turning and our bodies are remembering 2019
Screenprint on Cotton Fabric
135 x 200 cm
Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



# Lhola Amira Bayeza nam'yeza 2019

Screenprint on Cotton Fabric 135 x 200 cm Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



# Lhola Amira Thokoza Axè 2019 Screenprint on Cotton Fabric 135 x 200 cm Ed 1/3 + 2 AP



# Lhola Amira Philisa 2018 Beads, Salt Dimensions Variable Unique

# LHOLA AMIRA

b. 1984. Gugulethu, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

Lhola Amira was born in 1984 in Gugulethu, South Africa, and currently lives and works in Cape Town. Their practice includes 'Appearance', photography, video and sculpture. Amira exists as an ancestral presence, cohabiting with the South African curator, Khanyisile Mbongwa.

In 2020, Amira will be included in NIRIN, the 22nd Sydney Biennale curated by Brook Andrews. Further group exhibitions of note include: KUBATANA, at Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium in Vestfossen, Norway and Present Passing at OSAGE Gallery in Hong Kong, China, both in 2019; The Powers of Emotions symposium at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France; the 33rd São Paulo Biennial, Affective Affinities, curated by Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro and Forward? Forward! Forward ..., Stellenbosch University Museum in Stellenbosch, South Africa, all in 2018; African Voices: Confronting Frontiers of Reality at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare, Zimbabwe and 29°06'S 26°13'E, [Appearance] as part of Museum Night, curated by Jay Pather, at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAA) in Cape Town, South Africa, both in 2017.

The artist refers to the solo presentation of her work as a 'constellation'. In 2019, Amira will be presenting Abalozi Bayeza / Os Deuses Estão Chegando, at SMAC Gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa; followed by BAYEZA naMAYEZA / De Kommer Med Medicin, her constellation for the Skövde Konsthall & Konstmeséum in Skövde, Sweden. Further selected constellations and Appearances include: SINKING: Xa Sinqamla Unxubo at SMAC Gallery in Cape Town in 2018; LAGOM: Breaking Bread with The Self-

Righteous at SMAC Gallery in Cape Town and Looking for Ghana & The Red Suitcase at SMAC Gallery in Stellenbosch, both in 2017. While filming for Looking for Ghana & The Red Suitcase in 2016, Amira made Appearances at Studio Accra, as well as Brazil House in Jamestown, Ghana. Amira has presented screenings and talks at various occasions, most recently at the Goethe Institut in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil and the Göteborg Film Festival, both in 2018, with an upcoming screening and panel discussion at the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art in 2019. Amira has also been awarded a number of residencies, namely the AiRS (Artist in Residence Skövde Art Museum) residency in Skövde, Sweden in 2017; the Jiwar Creation and Society residency in Barcelona, Spain in 2015; and at Vasl Artists' Collective in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2010.

Amira's work has been included in art fair presentations at Artissima, the Investec Cape Town Art Fair (including a solo booth at the 2018 SOLO section, curated by Nontobeko Ntombela), LOOP Barcelona, and the FNB Joburg Art Fair.

Selected collections include: The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), Cape Town, South Africa; Skövde Konstshall, Skövde Sweden; the Tiroche DeLeon Collection, Gibraltar; and the Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.



# smac

# **CURRICULUM VITAE**

LHOLA AMIRA

# C.V

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born 1984, Gugulethu, South Africa. Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

# **AWARDS & RESIDENCIES**

- **2018** Artist in Residence, Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP), Sao Paolo, Brazil.
- 2017 Artist in Residence, AiRS (Skövde Art Museum), Skövde, Sweden.
- **2015** Artist in Residence, Jiwar Creation and Society, Barcelona, Spain.
- **2011** Artist in Residence, Vasl Artists' Collective, Islamabad, Pakistan.
- **2010** Artist in Residence, Theertha Red Dot Gallery, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

# **SOLO PRESENTATIONS & APPEARANCES**

**2019 [upcoming]** BAYEZA naMAYEZA / De Kommer Med Medicin, Skövde Konsthall & Konstmuséum, Skövde, Sweden.

Abalozi Bayeza / Os Deuses Estão Chegando, SMAC Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.

**2018** WhatATimeToBeBlackWomxQueer, Goethe Institut, Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.

The powers of emotions, [Appearance] Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. SINKING: Xa Sinqamla Unxubo, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa. SINKING: Xa Sinqamla Unxubo, as part of Investec Cape Town Art Fair's SOLO Project, curated by Nontobeko Ntombela, Investec Cape Town Art Fair (SMAC Gallery), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

**2017** LAGOM: Breaking Bread with The Self-Righteous, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

Looking for Ghana & The Red Suitcase, LOOP Fair, (SMAC Gallery), Barcelona, Spain.

29°06'S 26°13'E, [Appearance], Vroumonument, Hoffmanplein & Soetdoring, in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Looking for Ghana & The Red Suitcase, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

2016 Looking for Ghana in Accra, [Appearance], Studio Accra, Accra, Ghana. Looking for Ghana in Jamestown, [Appearance], Brazil House, Jamestown, Ghana.

Lhola Amira Will Make You Cry, [Appearance], Association for Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

**2015** De/Colonial Love, [Appearance], Mitte, Barcelona, Spain.

**2014** Lhola Amira is Here, [Appearance], Greatmore Studios, Cape Town, South Africa.

Lhola Amira, Her & Him, [Appearance], Greatmore Studios, Cape Town, South Africa.

Lhola Amira neZambatho ezoMoya, [Installation], 6ix Studio, New York City, USA.

## **GROUP PRESENTATIONS & APPEARANCES**

[upcoming] NIRIN, 22nd Biennale of Sydney [Travelling Exhibition], Art Gallery of NSW; Artspace; Campbelltown Arts Centre; Cockatoo Island; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia; The National Art School, Sydney, Australia.

**2019 [upcoming]** Panel discussion & Screening, Gothenburg City Library in Gothenburg, Sweden.

KUBATANA, curated by Kristin Hjellegjerde, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Vestfossen, Norway.

Present Passing, curated by Natasha Becker & Patrick Flores, Osage Gallery, Hong Kong, China.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair, (SMAC Gallery) Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

**2018** Wish You Were Here, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

Forward? Forward! Forward ..., Stellenbosch University Museum, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Affective Affinities, curated by Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, 33rd São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil.

What is South Africa, even?, WORLDART Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

FNB Joburg Art Fair, (SMAC Gallery) Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Götenborg Film Festival- LAGOM: Breaking Bread with The Self-Righteous, [screening], Gothenburg, Sweden.

**2017** ARTISSIMA, (SMAC Gallery), OVAL Lingotto Fiere, Turin, Italy.

29°06'S 26°13'E, [Appearance], Museum Night, curated by Jay Pather, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAA), Cape Town, South Africa.

FNB Joburg Art Fair, (SMAC Gallery) Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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African Voices: Confronting Frontiers of Reality, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Chale Wote Festival, Looking for Ghana & The Red Suitcase, [Screening], Accra, Ghana.

Cape Town Art Fair, (SMAC Gallery) Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

2016 Lhola Amira in Conversation with Rinamanyanga Hariputirwe, [Appearance] at Instruments of Memory a solo exhibition by Masimba Hwati, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

As Long as the World is Anti-Black; Of-course This is Personal, [Appearance], Nothing Personal, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

- **2014** DETAILS, [Appearance], 6ix Studio, New York City, USA.
- **2010** Category Error 2, [Appearance] at Association for Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.
- 2009 Subvision Kunst, [Appearance], Off Festival, Hamburg, Germany.

# **COLLECTIONS**

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), Cape Town, South Africa.

Iziko National Gallery of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa.

Tiroche Deleon Collection, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Robert Devereux Collection, London, UK.

Skövde Art Museum, Skövde, Sweden.

Ekhard Foundation, Wassenaar, Netherlands.



# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact SMAC Gallery for more information regarding the availability of the works included in this portfolio, or for any other queries.

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