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THE FEMALE LINE
Group Exhibition

29.08.19
12.10.19

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To be feminine is still defined by the dividing lines that bore its name, even after the milestones achieved by the oppressed to take these meanings as their own, and make of themselves what they want. These violent lines etched into the history of womanhood are not all that exist for femininity to draw from. *The Female Line* serves as homage to the heritage that has been passed down in spite of every effort to mould, malign and mystify its legacy. This exhibition asks, what lies in the bones of our matrilineal society that could illuminate every innate desire; sense of shame; connection or fear? What binds us in our otherness? What strips us of our togetherness? This group exhibition aims to address the narrative at its nexus; in all honesty, polarity and universality that is uncovered in the wake of its pursuit.

In isolating the inherent roles within matrilineal ancestry, the artists approached the task of deconstructing certain cultures, which had laid its foundations upon the grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, and nieces who supply it. How do these roles define those who are confined by them? How do these roles affect the society that created them? These cultures exist under our collective dismissal, disbelief and shame-inducing ignorance. Our passivity adds the kind of nuance that cannot be circumvented by any medium, and therefore cannot be ignored. Simphiwe Buthelezi speaks to this with her piece *Abadala Bayakhuluma* (2019), using themes of ancestral guidance and the belief that these connections thrive in us, compel us to acknowledge them, and be empowered by them. Romina Bassu's work, *Precept*, challenges this as well, by paying attention to the physical and social cues used to direct womanhood and subject it to its binary form.

Engaging in this narrative with artists from across the globe embodies the aim of the exhibition to do more than pay homage to womanhood; but to unravel it to its very core, from every possible angle and understanding. To honour *The Female Line* is to draw it out; to see where it leads, who it follows, who it binds, and to prove how it is a living and breathing thing weaving its way through all of us. Perhaps it is a simple yearning for connection; perhaps it is an outright command for respect. Deconstructing what the female line presents itself as for each artist, and allowing for every perspective shift between pieces to inform the last in this ongoing conversation is more than a metaphor - it is a practical obligation on behalf of the audience to cease assumption or expectation. Chechu Álava's *Rebel Kid* (2019) stares directly into the debate of presumptuousness; who is to say what bravery looks like? Who is to say how trustworthiness settles on the colour of our skin? These comparisons occur because of social associations. Challenging this is done simply by offering up the truth in comparison. It is done by giving form to the secrets passed down to each by stern telepathy and in doing so, scrutinising the aftermath of following these orders as portrayed in Bassu's work, *Precept* (2017).

Looking at our past while emphasising womanhood, is essential in recalibrating our thinking as well as understanding our place and power within it. Richard Mudariki's *History Book* is a poignant collection of colour, character and summation of this sentiment. There is weight in what needs to be unpacked, and that takes the kind of detail and attentiveness – also shown in Sepideh Mehraban's works.

The dedicated dissonance of modern media that induces misogyny, racism, homophobia and a blanketed ignorance, that surveys everything that dares to simply exist in its wake - how does this warp us all? Brett Seiler's works speak to this. These bigotries compound to form obstacles between what we yearn after and what we ask for. More obstacles take the shape of poverty, excess, illness, honour and disaster. Any and every path is chosen by the artists and their subsequent experiences should be seen not as a divergence from, but rather a constant reinterpretation of *The Female Line* that connects them all. The experience of being borne of this sphere of knowledge grows beyond its own definition. It isn't bound by those who attempt to restrict it to a malleable, compliant stereotype – instead, it is a manifestation of metamorphosed patriarchy: capable, cunning and ready to be whatever it chooses.

What lives in the subtleties of the divine feminine? Which connotations turned to definitions? How has modern society prescribed madness or malignancy here? In unveiling each artist's puzzle piece, *The Female Line* is an opportunity for each of them and each audience member in fact, to analyse themselves as we have analysed all others against "the other". It is an opportunity to speak to every elemental factor of being under the guidance of the line itself, so to speak. In which ways does femininity adapt to us? Do our cultures, our belief systems, principles and experiences layer us in disguise to one another, or do they produce languages of body, eye and mouth that only we who accept can decode? What does this inheritance present us with, molecularly? Whose memories have burrowed into our muscles, twitching at the call of resignation? What is the magic that animates our resilience, our distance from the expected?

This group exhibition presents itself as a platform upon which artists can navigate these realities in their own time, and in their own manner. A catharsis of character that is aware of what should be kept and honoured, destroyed and denied access to the sacred space being carved here. Perhaps *The Female Line* is a hope for grieving, liberation or evidence, but that is not to say each artist is accessing only one of these elements at a time. The line infiltrates not only heritage, or trauma or genetics, but also connects the artists through the multidimensional nature of what they all represent.

A tribute of textures, text, humour and hope, showcasing beadwork and tapestry amongst frames of oil and watercolour to draw the eye from one piece to the next. The stories told in each artwork create a journey out of the exhibition; a journey taken beyond bias, or perhaps despite its very existence. *The Female Line* is recentering womanhood on itself and freeing it from obligation – its supposed template – allowing it to take its true form.

"Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another." – Toni Morrison

The exhibition includes the works of Chechu Álava (Spain), Romina Bassu (Italy), Simphiwe Buthelezi (South Africa), Jeanne Gaigher (South Africa), Gabrielle Kruger (South Africa), Sepideh Mehraban (Iran), Richard Mudariki (Zimbabwe), Kresiah Mukwazhi (Zimbabwe), Asemahle Ntlonti (South Africa), Talia Ramkilawan (South Africa), Brett Seiler (Zimbabwe), Iris Shomaker (Germany).

CHECHU ÁLAVA

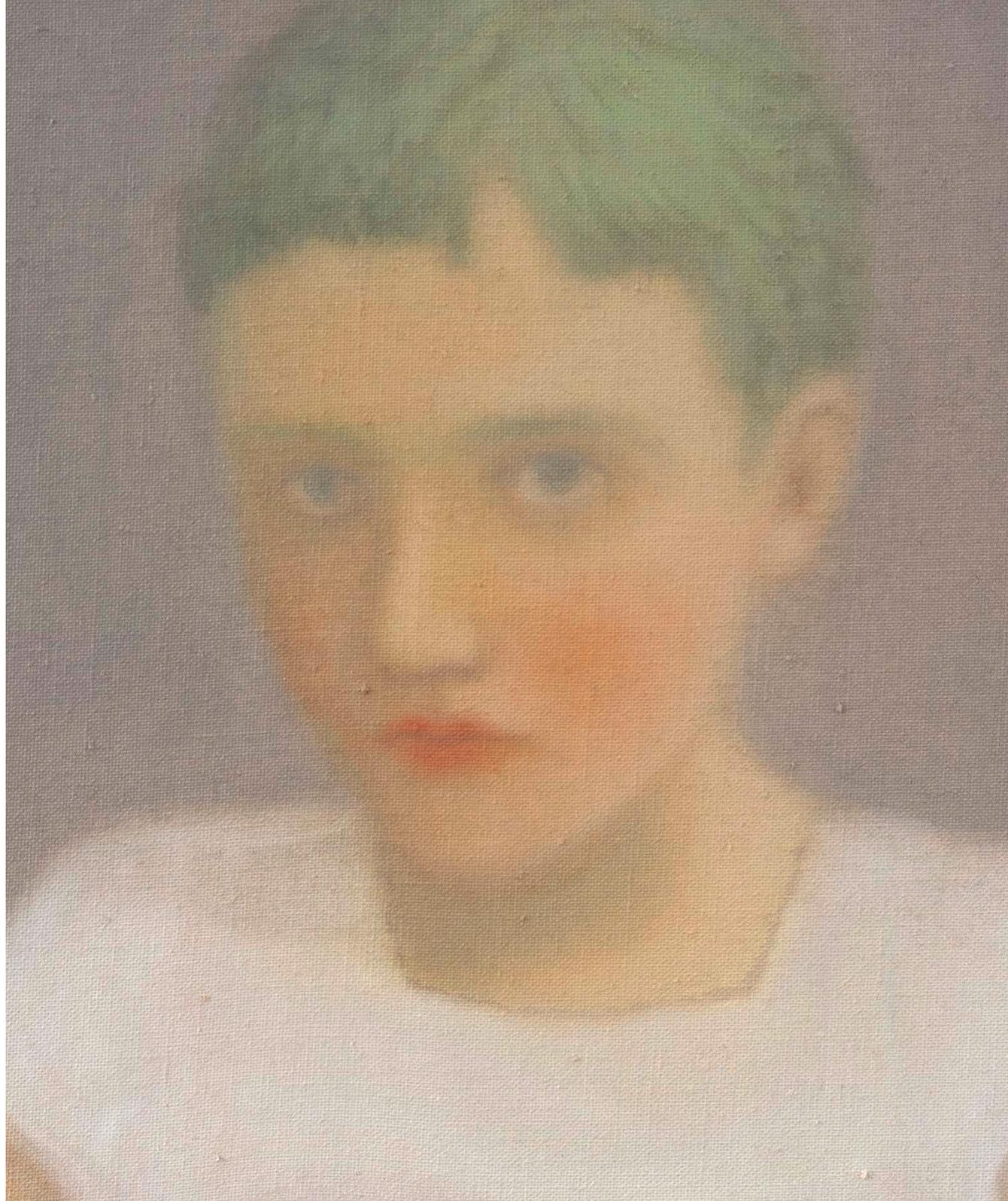
b. 1973 in Asturias, Spain.

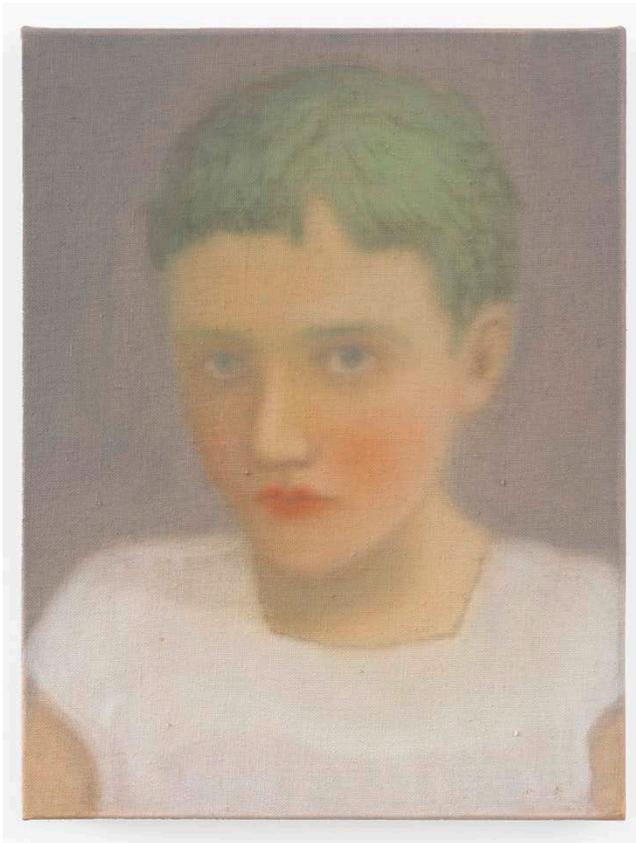
Currently lives and works in Paris, France.

Chechu Álava obtained her Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Salamanca in 1995. She was awarded the Erasmus Scholarship to study at the Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam in 1995. Álava's work is focused on the eternal need for representation of what surrounds us and the search for identity through painting.

In 2019 Alava presented her solo exhibition *Primeros retratos* at IES Bernaldo de Quirós in France; and a group exhibition *Valhalla at Gallery Weekend Berlin* at Liquid Space Gallery in Berlin Germany. Álava will present her first museum exhibition at the Thyssen Museum in Madrid Spain in late 2019

Álava's works from part of private and public collections in Holland, Austria, Mexico, Colombia, Germany, Portugal, USA, South Africa, France and Spain.





Chechu Álava
Rebel Kid
2019
Oil on Canvas
35 x 27 cm
Unique



Cechu Álava
Mother and Daughter
2019
Oil on Canvas
19 x 24 cm
Unique

ROMINA BASSU

b. 1982 in Rome, Italy.

Currently lives and works between Rome, Italy and Seville, Spain.

Romina Bassu studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Rome and the Faculty of Fine Arts of Seville. In 2004 she started a collaboration as an assistant for Alberto Fabio and Cristiano Pintaldi. She continues her artistic research between London, Berlin and Spain where she started her Anonymous Archive project.

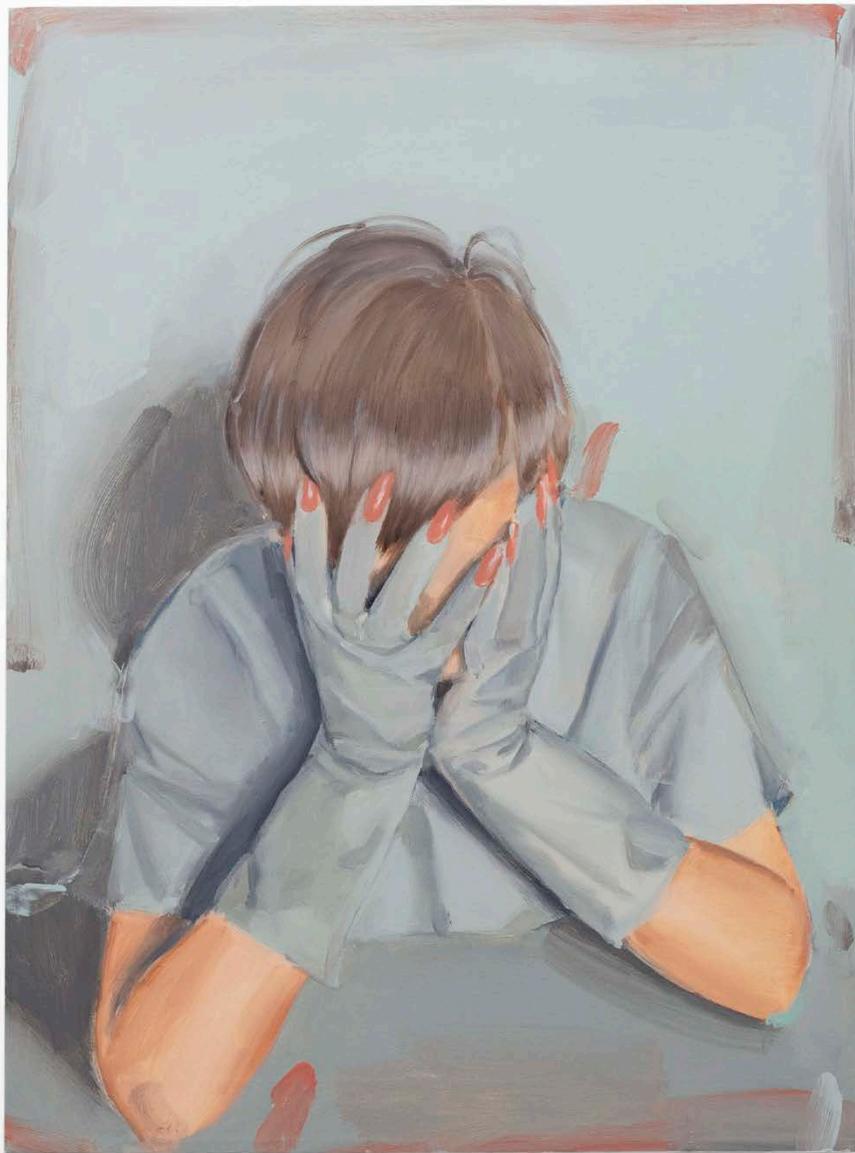
Over the years her research has increasingly focused more and more on the representation of feminine stereotypes, modelled accordingly to the needs of male culture and society of consumption. Through her work, she tries to evoke the sense of time passing by erasing human images and turning them into nostalgic figures. In this perspective, she creates an "individual mythology" in which we can all recognise in ourselves.

She has exhibited her works in galleries and museums in Spain, Germany, UK and Italy. Recent exhibitions include: 19° PREMIO CAIRO at Palazzo Reale in Milan in 2018; Artissima in Turin, Italy in 2018; ArtVerona in Verona, Italy in 2018 and *Young & Forever Young* at Galleria Anna Marra Contemporanea in Rome in 2017.





Romina Bassu
Precept
2017
Acrylic on Canvas
100 x 80 cm
Unique



Romina Bassu
Invisible woman
2019
Acrylic on Canvas
80 x 60 cm
Unique



Romina Bassu
Pause
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
40 x 30 cm
Unique

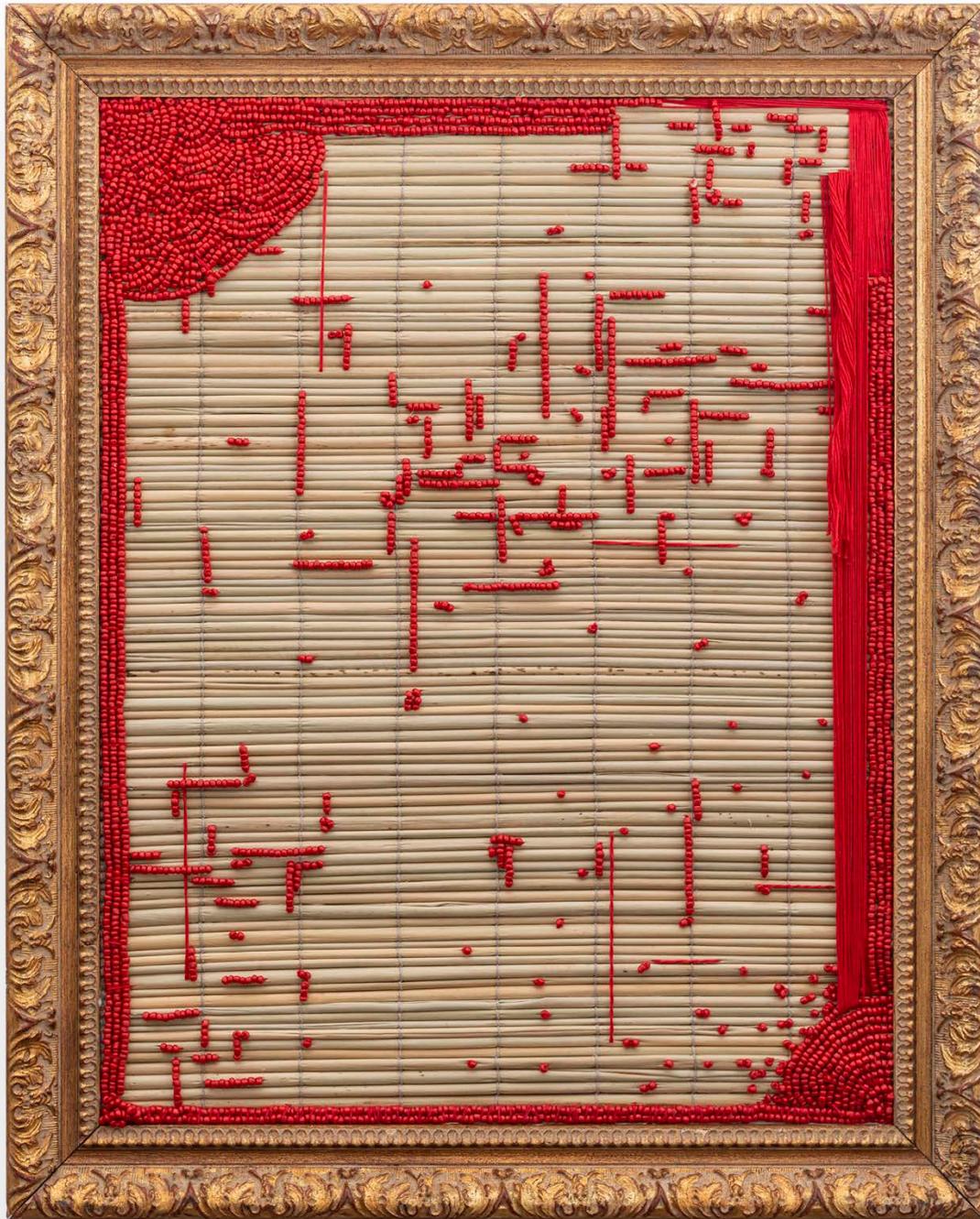
SIMPHIWE BUTHELEZI

b. 1996 in Benoni, South Africa.
Currently lives and works in Johannesburg,
South Africa.

In 2016 Simphiwe Buthelezi participated in a peer mentoring programme hosted by Assemblage Studios which launched her development as a young artist. Her artistic practice reflects her ongoing interest in the endurance of the female form, sites of blackness, tradition and the gendered gaze in relation to family bonds. Buthelezi is the recipient of the 2018 Blessing Ngobeni Art Prize culminating in a residency at the Bag Factory Art Studios

In 2019 she presented her first solo exhibition '*Lala La*', curated by Chumisa Ndakisa at The Bag Factory Studios in Johannesburg, South Africa. Most recently, Buthelezi exhibited work as part of *Preview#3* in Milan, Italy in 2019 and *NOW*, curated by Aysha Waja at St Teresa's Art Festival at the Keyes Art Mile, Johannesburg, in 2018.





Simphiwe Buthelezi
Abadala bayakhuluma (The elders speak)
2019
Straw Mat, Beadwork in Gilded Frame
65 x 53 cm
Unique



Simphiwe Buthelezi
Wangithelela uju (She poured me honey) I
2019
Straw Mat, Beadwork in Gilded Frame
65 x 53 cm
Unique



Simphiwe Buthelezi
Wangithelela uju (she poured me honey) II
2019
Straw Mat, Beadwork in Gilded Frame
65 x 53 cm
Unique

JEANNE GAIGHER

b. 1990 in Cape Town, South Africa.
Currently lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.

Jeanne Gaigher completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the Stellenbosch University in 2012. Gaigher draws from a broad reservoir of references – foreign and local - but consistently bases her thinking around place relative to her own presence in it. Thus a distant, mesmerising outer world becomes intimately her own. She is interested in the fluidity of subject matter, and how, through the act of painting, she can expand an object's meaning.

Gaigher's works have been included in notable exhibitions and art fair presentations including: *Another Antipodes / Urban Axis Exhibition* in Perth, Australia in 2017 and SMITH's presentation at *Also Known As Africa Art Fair* in Paris, France in 2016.





Jeanne Gaigher
Thank You Sand
2019

Bookbinding Cloth, Thread, Pigment Print on Canvas, Ink
136 x 128 cm
Unique



Jeanne Gaigher
Conditions of the day I
2019

Canvas, Bookbinding Cloth, Thread, Acrylic, Ink, Dye
142 x 138 cm
Unique

GABRIELLE KRUGER

b. 1993, in Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

After graduating from Stellenbosch University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2015, Gabrielle Kruger went on to complete a Master of Fine Arts degree from Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2018.

Kruger's unique practice involves harnessing the materiality of acrylic paint to create complex, layered, 3-dimensional installations. Freeing the paint from the surface of a canvas or board, the artist interrogates the constructed-ness of both the tradition of landscape painting and the modern natural environment itself. Kruger has exhibited widely within South Africa.

Solo exhibitions include *Ungrounding Landscape*, at Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2018, and *Growing Intrusions*, at the University of Stellenbosch in 2015. In 2018, she was awarded a Certificate of Excellence from the 33rd Chelsea International Fine Art Competition which culminated in a collective exhibition at Agora Gallery in New York, USA.

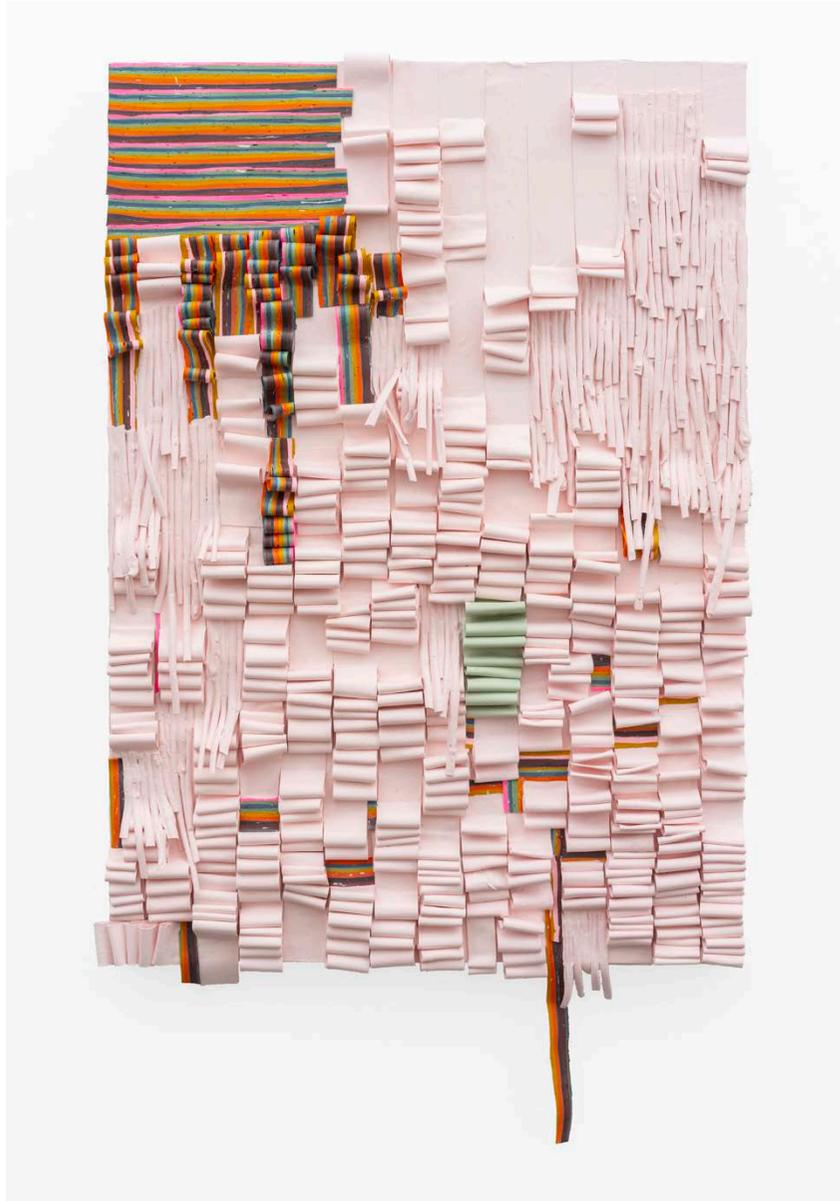




Gabrielle Kruger
Pleated Painting
2019
Acrylic on Board
60 x 46 x 5 cm
Unique



Gabrielle Kruger
Ribbioned Painting
2019
Acrylic on Board
72 x 47 x 5.5 cm
Unique



Gabrielle Kruger
Skinned Painting
2019
Acrylic on Board
75 x 42 x 5 cm
Unique

SEPIDEH MEHRABAN

b. 1986 in Tehran, Iran.

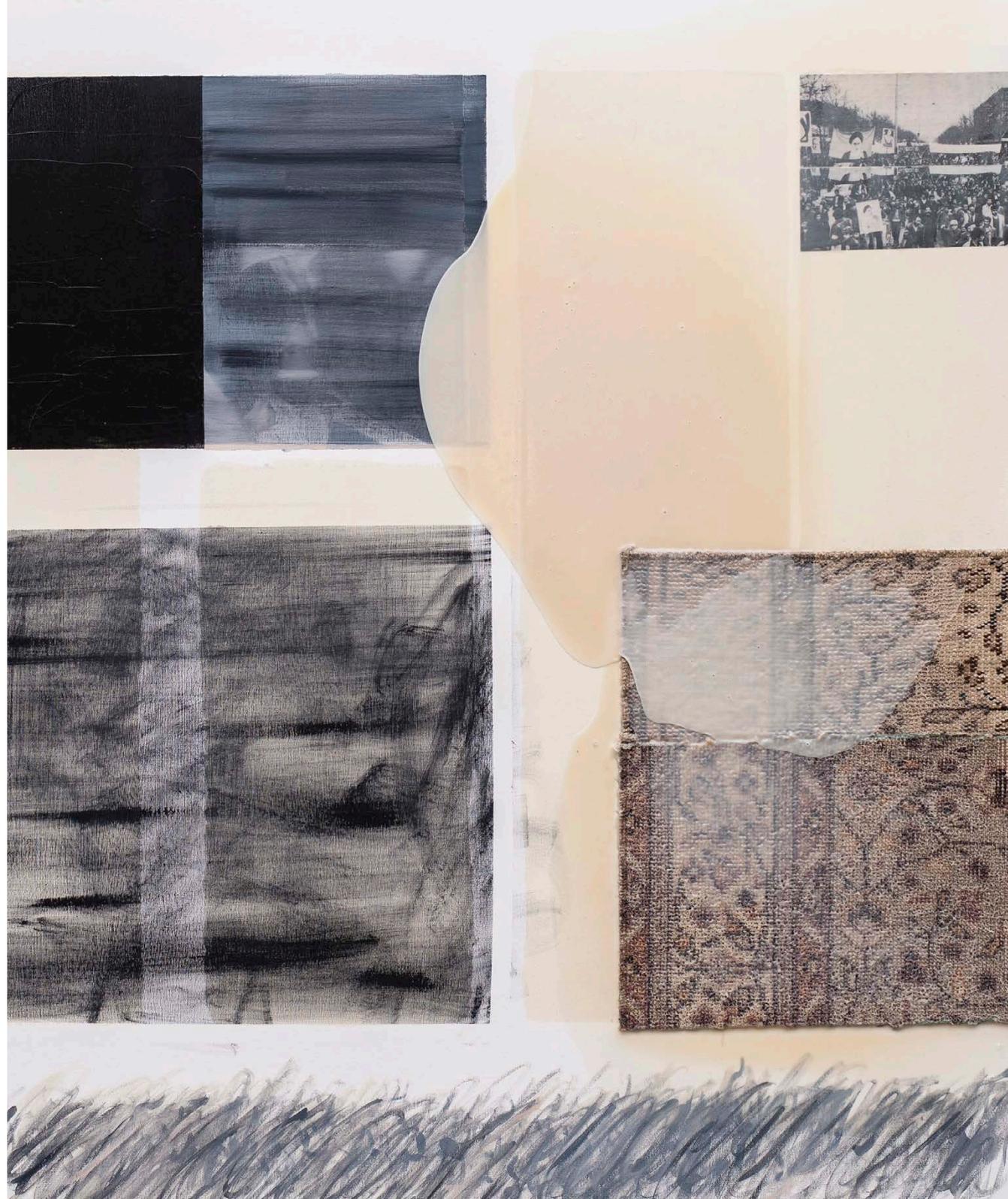
Currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

Sepideh Mehraban's work explores memory and landscape, looking at the overlaying and veiling of paint as a means of expressing layers of existence and experience.

She obtained her BA (2009) and MA (2011) from Alzahra University in Tehran, Iran. In 2012, Mehraban was awarded a postgraduate diploma in Fine Art at Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town, South Africa and has since also completed a second Master's degree from the same institution.

She is currently a PhD candidate and lecturing at the University of Stellenbosch. In her academic work, as well as in her professional practice, there is sensitivity toward recent history in Iran, which she incorporates and explores through text, figurative works and abstraction, often drawing on the grid format of a newspaper as a source of inspiration.

Mehraban's works have been included in notable exhibitions including: *A Painting Today* at Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa in 2017 as well as *Imago Mundi* at Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice in 2015.





Sepideh Mehraban

Untitled (1)

2017

Oil Paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper, Carpet on Canvas

110 x 143 cm

Unique



Sepideh Mehraban
Palimpsest IV
2017

Oil Paint, PVA, Cold Glue, Paper on Canvas
60 x 40 cm
Unique



Sepideh Mehraban

*Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will
always glorify the hunter*

2019

Mixed Media on Carpet

88 x 58 cm

Unique



Sepideh Mehraban
Untitled II
2018
Silk and Wool Tapestry
301 x 203 cm
Edition 2/3

RICHARD MUDARIKI

b. 1985 in Seke, Zimbabwe.

Currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

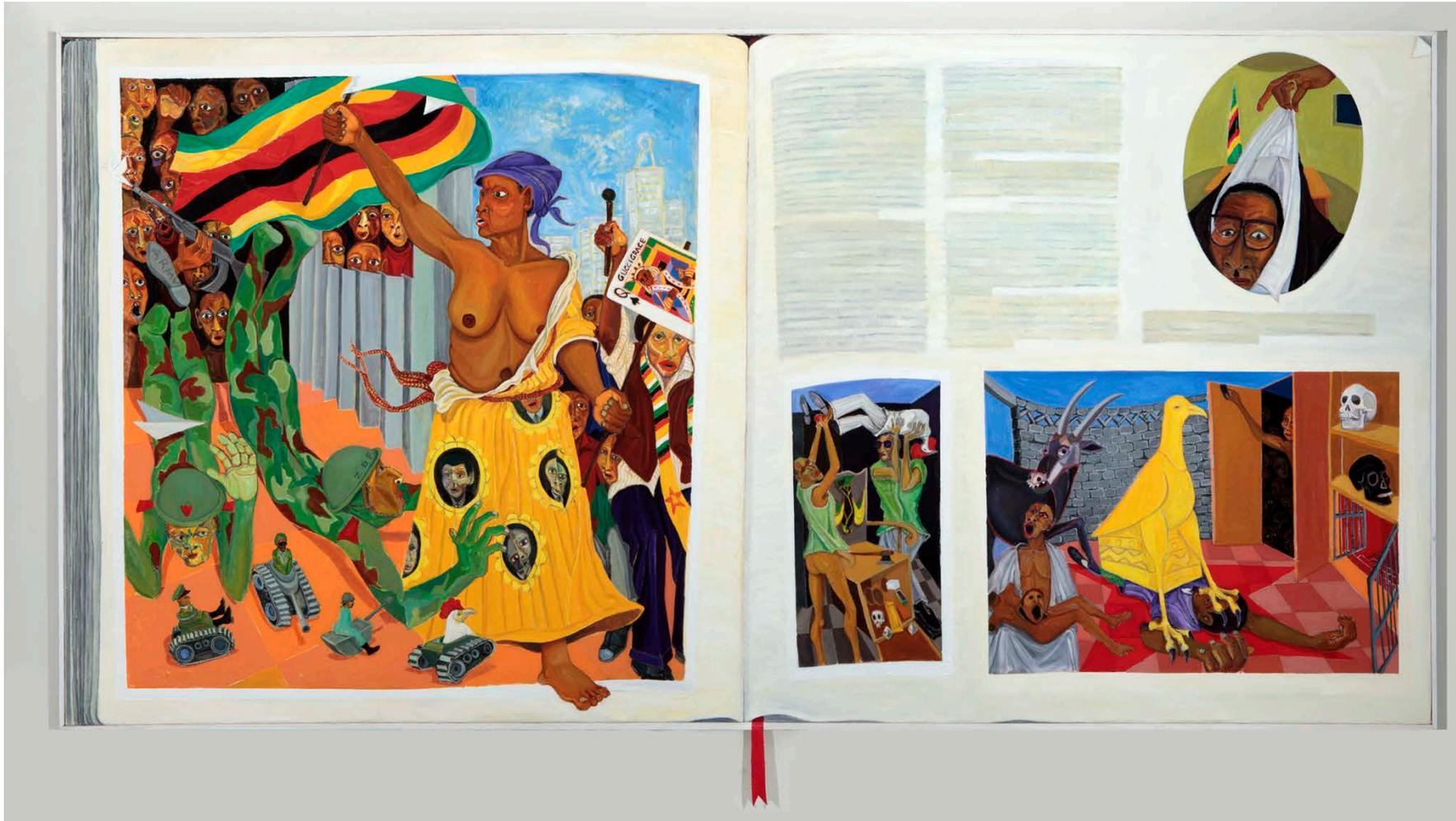
Richard Mudariki studied painting under the mentorship of renowned painters Allen Kupeta in Chitungwiza, as well as Helen Lieros and Greg Shaw at Gallery Delta in Harare, Zimbabwe.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies from Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe. Mudariki's work is known for his original contemporary paintings where his satirical use of iconic figures and symbols provide commentary on the socio-political issues of his homeland and beyond.

Mudariki's works have been included in *Five Bhoobh - Painting at the End of an Era* at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in 2018; *Mutara Wenguva (Time Line)* at Sanlam Art Collection in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa in 2017.

His work forms part of numerous private and public collections including: Museum Of Modern Art: Equatorial Guinea; The Bruce Campbell Smith Collection; Sanlam Art Collection and Iziko South African National Gallery.





Richard Mudariki
History Book
2018
Oil on Canvas
170 x 303 cm
Unique

KRESIAH MUKWAZHI

b. 1992, in Harare, Zimbabwe.
Currently lives and works in Harare,
Zimbabwe

Kresiah Mukwazhi received her introduction to visual arts and photography at the National Gallery School of Visual Art in Harare, Zimbabwe and the Design and the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Her work focuses on the empowerment of the female body in relation to patriarchal societal norms and raises questions around belief and conformity. Recently, Mukwazhi was a resident at Nafasi Art Space, culminating in workshops and an artist talk in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2019.

Exhibitions include her solo presentation, *Bedroom Interview* at SMAC Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa in 2018; *In My Private Moments* at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in 2016; and most recently *Five Bhozh – Painting at the End of an Era* at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town, South Africa in 2018.





Kresiah Mukwazi
Shiri yakanaka unoendepi?
2018
Mixed Media
214 x 297 cm
Unique

ASEMAHLE NTLONTI

b. 1993 in Cape Town, South Africa.
Currently lives and works in Johannesburg,
South Africa.

Asemahle Ntlonti graduated from the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2017, where she majored in sculpture.

Her practice is concerned with history, drawing from her life as a young woman growing up in the colonial Cape, in relation to the lives of her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. These historical comparisons aim to talk about the repletion of violent histories across generations, but also to engage with the way the forms of racialized violence have changed.

Ntlonti was a top 10 finalist for the Barclays L'Atelier Award 2016, participated in Infecting The City Arts Festival 2016 and was also a finalist for Sasol New Signatures Art Competition in 2015. She is a member of iQhiya, a collective of 11 black women based in Cape Town, Johannesburg, South Africa and Botswana.





Asemahle Nlonti
Nonkosiyethu
2019
Metal, Canvas and Wool
179 x 149 cm
Unique

TALIA RAMKILAWAN

b. 1996 in Cape Town, South Africa.
Currently lives and works in Cape Town,
South Africa.

Talia Ramkilawan obtained a Bachelor in Fine Arts at Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2019, majoring in sculpture. She is currently completing a postgraduate degree in education.

Ramkilawan's work aims to address her own specific experience with South Asian identity, culture and trauma. She uses mixed media in order to visualise the complexity of one's relationship to trauma using various mediums including tapestry, video, performance and installation.

She has participated in exhibitions including SMITH's presentation at the Investec Cape Town Art Fair at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), and *Mothers, Money, Manuscripts and Minutes*, curated by Thuli Gamedze in Cape Town, South Africa in 2017.





Talia Ramkilawan
"The cows have come and have brought us good fortune. In our stalls, contented, may they stay!"
2019
Wool, Cloth, Hessian
88 x 66 cm per panel
Unique

BRETT SEILER

b. 1994 in Zimbabwe.

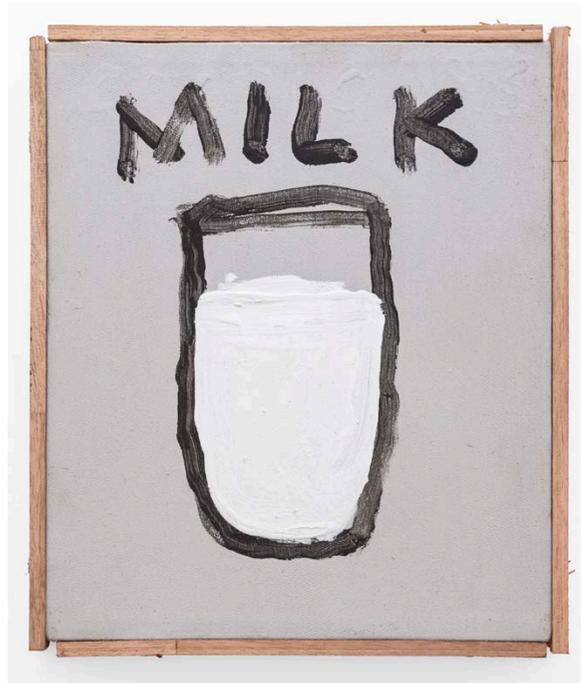
Currently lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

Brett Seiler graduated from The Ruth Prowse School of Art in 2015. Seiler's work takes the forms of painting and installations. For Seiler, the use of text and language is critical; often poetic, religious references and retrospective sediments appear in various forms of confessional dialogue. Dealing with ideas of romantic gestures and sexual interactions, Seiler's works dives into historical gay modes of communication and conduct.

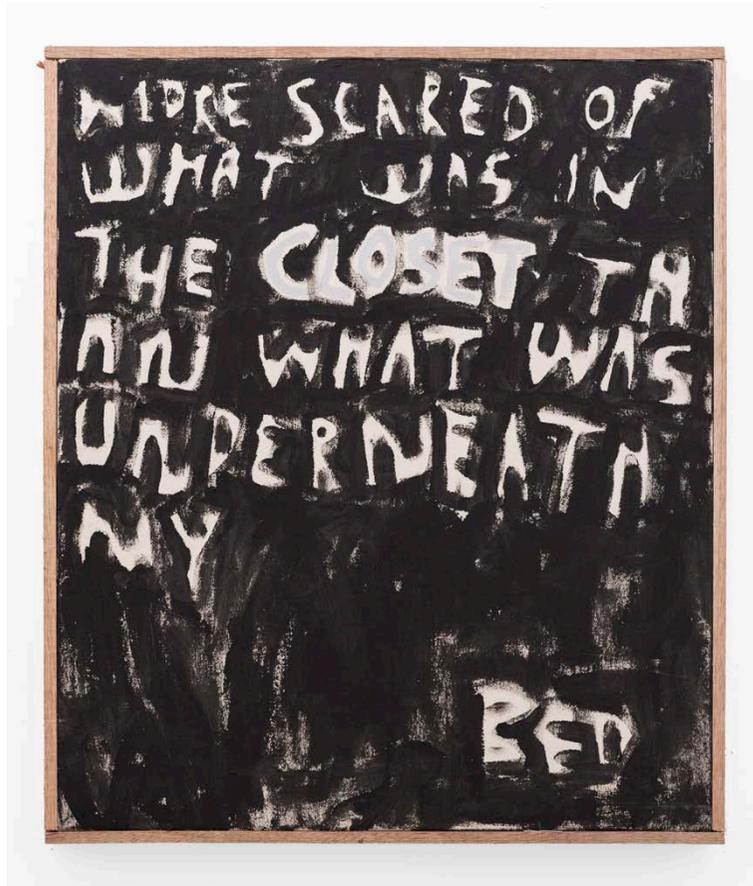
His interest in a collective memory of gay rights movements and focusing on the sexual oppression of gay men is approached from a perspective longing, distance and nostalgia.

Solo exhibitions include *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart*, at the Association of Visual Art (AVA) in Cape Town in 2016 and *More Scared Of What Was In My Closet Than What Was Underneath My Bed*, at CIRCA Gallery in Cape Town in 2018. Seiler has been included in numerous local group exhibitions including *One Straight Hour* performed for *The Main Complaint* exhibition curated by Micheala Limbris at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), in 2018 and a performance piece with Luvuyo Nyawose titled *Reading Homophobia*, curated by Kemang Wa Lehulere and Zipho Dayile at the A4 Foundation in 2017, both in Cape Town, South Africa.

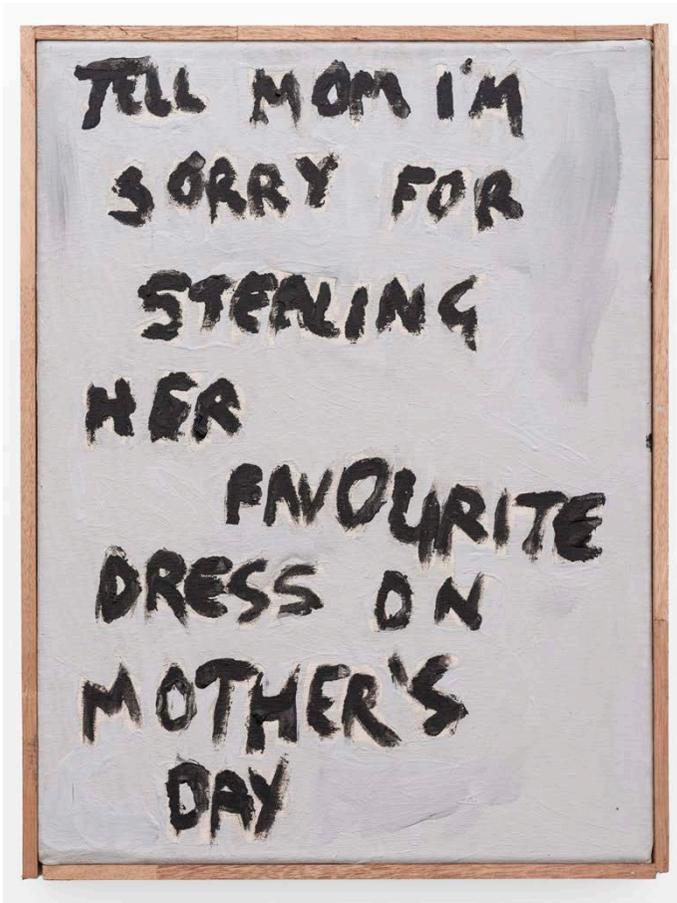




Brett Seiler
Milk
2019
Roof Paint on Canvas
29 x 24 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
*More Scared Of What Was In The Closet Than What Was
Underneath My Bed*
2019
Roof Paint on Canvas
54 x 46.5 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
Tell Mom I'm Sorry
2019
Roof Paint on Canvas
42 x 32 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
Family (Alek and Brett)
2019
Roof Paint on Canvas
72 x 62 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
Lovers (My Favorite Tattoo)
2019
Paint on Canvas
149.5 x 100 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
Lovers (writings on your back)
2019
Roof Paint on Canvas
201 x 149 cm
Unique



Brett Seiler
2019
Broken Arm
Chalk, Paint and Wood
50 x 46 x 45 cm
Unique

IRIS SCHOMAKER

b. 1973, in Stade, Germany.

Currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Iris Schomaker studied fine arts in Kiel and Hamburg in Germany as well as in Trondheim and Bergen in Norway.

She is known for her large-scale paintings on paper of landscapes and figures. To Schomaker, the images represented in the paintings themselves are secondary to the themes she explores through the process of painting. Herein, she focuses on forms of representation, the potential of painting, and the reproduction of atmospheric content.

These themes find expression in Schomaker's own visual language, which is characterised by the tension between figurative representation and painterly abstraction.

She has participated in various national and international exhibitions, including Kunstverein Schwimmhalle Schloss Plön, Germany in 2016; Beijing International Art Biennale, China in 2015 and Mediation Biennial in Poznan, Poland in 2014. Her works can be found in several public and private collections.





Iris Schomaker
Untitled (Selma)
2014
Oil and Watercolor on Paper
241 x 171
Unique

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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