

RHODES

Fine Art

**GRADUATE
EXHIBITIONS**

2017

Simone Soutter

Tayla Hoepfl

Thabiso Mafana

Amy von Witt

Francesca Roberts

Tayla Shan Solomon

Candice Philip

Tebogo Boikanyo Matshana

Tinotenda Mubvumbi

Uyanda Tom

Ashley Hodgson

Sarah van der Spuy

Shannon Hansen

Novisha Steyn

Stephanie Proctor

Mosa Anita Kaiser

Lauren Pascal King

SCHOOL OF ART

- Simone Soutter
- Tayla Maclure Hoepfl
- Thabiso Mafana
- Amy von Witt

RHODES THEATRE COMPLEX

- Francesca Roberts

RANDELL HOUSE ANNEX

- Tayla Shan Solomon

ALBANY NATURAL SCIENCES MUSEUM

- Candice Philip
- Tebogo Boikanyo Matshana

ALBANY HISTORY MUSEUM

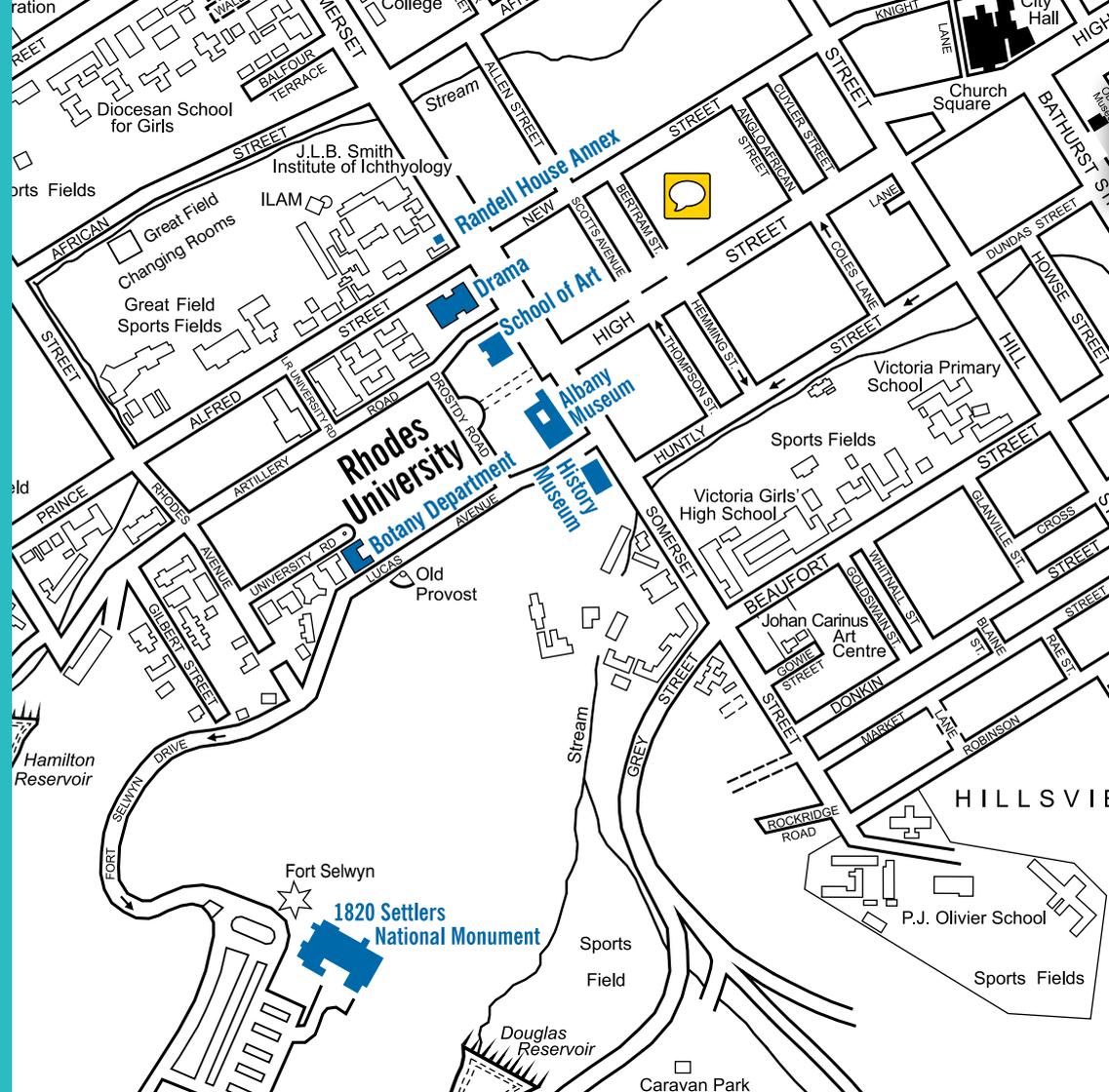
- Tinotenda Mubvumbi
- Uyanda Tom
- Ashley Hodgson
- Sarah van der Spuy

BOTANY DEPARTMENT

- Shannon Hansen

1820 SETTLERS MONUMENT

- Novisha Steyn
- Stephanie Proctor
- Mosa Anita Kaiser
- Lauren Pascal King



Foreword: what is happening here?

Art has a power of agency, of making things happen, of transforming ideas into actions. As a form of critical thinking, art does not necessarily equal positive understanding (that is, interpretation of the "right answer") but rather generates an experience that activates doubt or stimulates a question, such as, what is happening here? ... [T]he work of art invites the viewer to "think with it," often unlocking philosophical and/or social themes, and when this thinking happens, the work releases its ideas or affect.

Su Baker, in Rethinking the Contemporary Art School (2009)

This catalogue introduces the creative research of seventeen aspirant and emerging artists: the Fine Art Practice class of 2017. It affords a glimpse of the exhibitions they have produced in the culminating year of their Bachelor of Fine Art degree at (the university currently known as) Rhodes. In essence, the catalogue is *about them* – a celebration of our students' inventiveness, creativity and insight. But, to take up Su Baker's suggestion, it is also an invitation (to you, the reader/viewer) to "think with" the art (and not just *about* the art). It invites you into a space of open-ended questioning: "what is happening here?" In taking up this 'simple' invitation, you too might begin to engage the unique transformative potential of art.

Maureen de Jager
Head of Department



Simone Soutter | *The fractured Catharsis of the fragile mind*

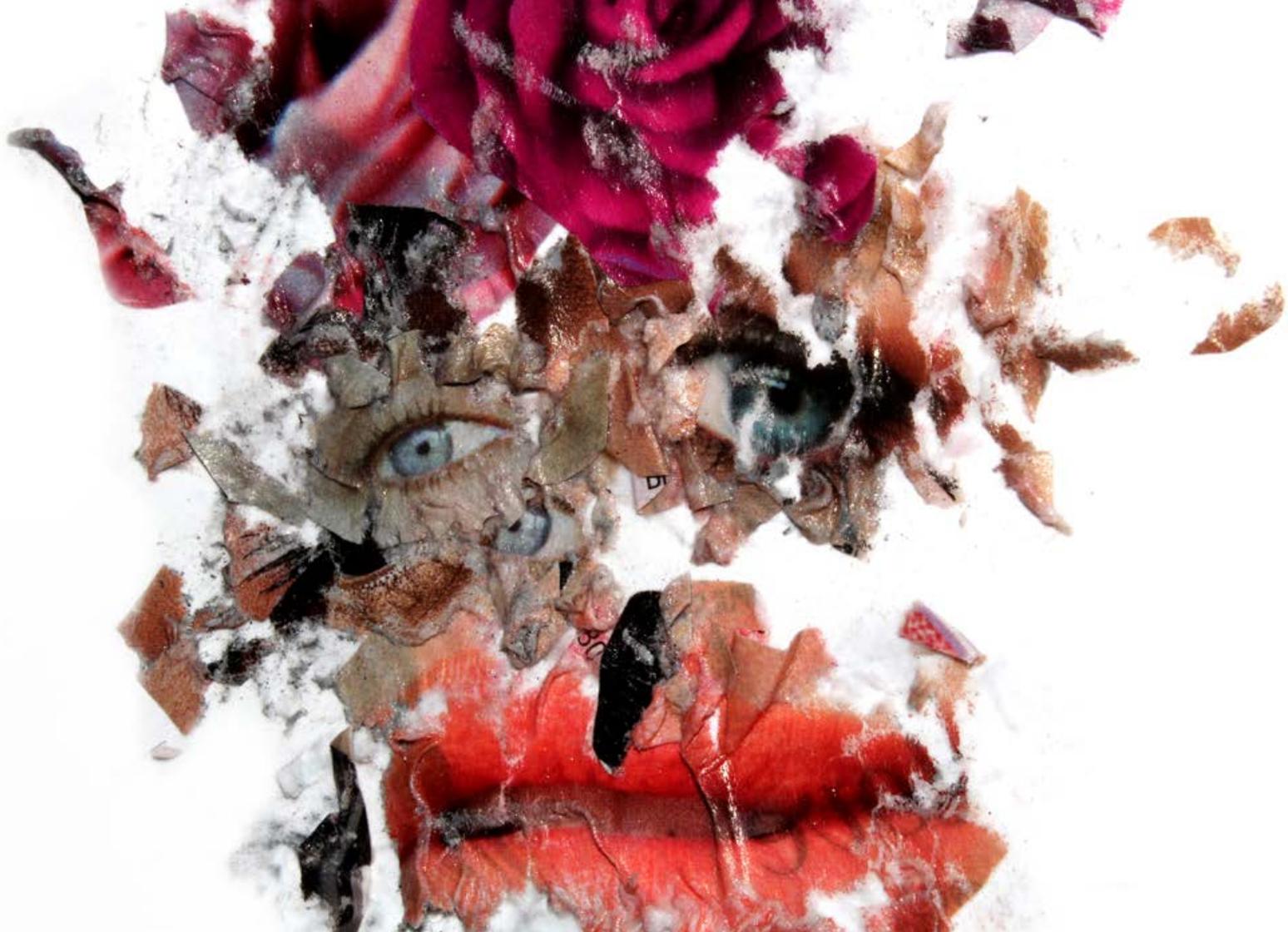
The art making process, for me, is infuriating and simultaneously blissful. Overall, however, I find it to be an invaluable process of catharsis. Through the medium of collage, I seek to represent the kaleidoscopic fractures that I experience, as it allows me to see, to touch, and to recreate my inner world of divine, creative chaos. I attempt to illustrate our ruptured reality and our troubled minds within this space.

The reference materials with which these collages are made, are sourced from old magazines and film stills. I connect deeply with these images and use their visceral and abject imagery, physical forms and absurd fissures, to create my own surreal symbolism. My paintings are a personal expression of my experiences with mental distress. This is an exploration of the worlds of the broken, the realities of the mad and the dreams of the diseased, interacting with the painfully disturbed world in which we live, in which we breathe, in which we destroy, and the world that we create.



MAIN GALLERY

School of Art,
Somerset Street



Tayla Maclure Hoepfl | *Wall Flower*

The overwhelming feeling of a pressing force upon my chest takes over as I step into a space of scathing eyes.

Social anxiety, especially in a society exposed to thousands of images of an imagined reality, has become a prominent issue for many individuals. We are expected to live up to certain expectations and beauty standards in order to fit the social norm, constantly comparing ourselves to others, and subconsciously judging others in the process.

Wallflower, an exhibition consisting of photography and collage explores the way I see others around me in a social setting. It explores the process of decay: the decay of my self-confidence within a crowd, the process of defacing individuals around me in order to avoid social interaction, and the overwhelming sense of judgement. Through this decay, the people around me are no longer individuals but unfamiliar subjects, creatures.



STUDIO GALLERY

School of Art,
Somerset Street



Thabiso Mafana | *The Army of 144 000*

*And I heard the number of those who were sealed,
one hundred forty-four thousand from all the tribes of Israel.*

Revelations 7:4

The *Army of 144 000*, an Afro-futurist approach to the biblical prophecy in Revelations, is about a chosen people that were endowed with a mission to free people of colour from the bondage and aftermath of colonialism and slavery. Out of 12 black ethnic groups, 12 000 beings were chosen in each. These beings, which make up an army of 144 000, will create a scientifically and spiritually advanced society of black people. They will establish an advanced government, free from the bondage of past and continuing present injustices.

As an artist with an interest in black science fiction and afro-futurism, I use cultural aesthetics, the philosophy of science, history and religion, combined with elements of science fiction, historical and religious fiction. Afro-centric, magic realism with depictions of African cosmologies predominate in my paintings which are visual metaphors of empowerment. This is done not only to critique the present-day injustices black people experience, but it is also to revisit, interrogate, and re-examine the historical injustices of the past. In subverting historical black stereotypes and inequalities, I seek to inspire people to be thinking in terms of advancing the black community through science, art, philosophy and spirituality, as these concepts may have been taken away from people of colour during times of colonialism and slavery.



**NEW STUDIO
GALLERY**

School of Art,
Somerset Street



Amy von Witt | *Deflowered*

Coming from a line of matriarchal natural healers, I try to tap into my inherited healing power through the use of plants in my art-making. *Deflowered* is a multidisciplinary exhibition comprising primarily of sculpture and installation art, but which also includes performance and video works. Interrogating the notion of comfort, and juxtaposing it with implied sexual violence, I take a strong feminist stance on womxn's sexual agency.

Deflowered makes use of plants and fruit in a number of different ways to comment on issues pertinent to womxn's rights – using word play and symbolism to elude to certain connotations. The materials of the works in this exhibition include found objects, plants, plaster, ink, paint, wool and fabric. I take solace in my work, and the act of making art is also a process of personal healing and coming to terms with the sexual violence that I, like many womxn, have experienced.

Deflowered is my eco-feministic attempt to find comfort and heal my female psyche in a violently patriarchal world.



SIDE GALLERY

School of Art,
Somerset Street



Francesca Roberts | *Cul-de-sac*

Cul-de-sac is a mixed-media installation interrogating the opulence, fear, fantasy and paranoia of the most securitised space in South Africa—the upper middleclass suburb. In particular, the work draws attention to the securities and insecurities that define how many white South Africans live—boomed-off and walled-in.



BOX THEATRE

Rhodes Theatre
Complex



Tayla Shan Solomon | *Insects are people too*

There was once a dungbeetle who lived a crappy life, no one cared, and then he died.



RANDELL HOUSE
ANNEX,

17a Somerset Street



Candice Philip | *Dying to be cool*

This exhibition consists of a series of portraits of friends of mine who smoke/used to smoke cigarettes, as well as a self-portrait. With subjects who have all at some point been tempted to smoke, painted against the bright primary colours used by cigarette brands, this series of paintings aims to express the enticing aesthetic trap of cigarette smoking.

It is generally known by most that smoking kills, and today the bold warning signs printed on each box makes this fact even more clear to consumers. I grew up convinced that I would never be tempted to pick up a cigarette, so I was surprised when the temptation did start to sneak up on me. The nicotine addiction that comes with excessive smoking does not explain why individuals who have never smoked before feel tempted to start. I believe that the main reason that people start smoking cigarettes does not lie primarily in their material content, but rather in their external meanings and associations.

Cigarettes are associated with rebelliousness, sex appeal, and social deviance. Smoking is perceived as a signifier of being 'cool'. For decades cigarette companies capitalized on the symbolic nature of the cigarette, and have marketed the aesthetic appeal of cigarettes to individuals whom they see as disposable consumers. The decrease in smoking rates since its medical risks were discovered is deceptive, as it does not apply to the social groups that are in fact experiencing increasing smoking rates the more socially unacceptable it becomes.



SHELL GALLERY

Albany Natural
Sciences Museum



Tebogo Boikanyo Matshana | *Little Bird Soars*

*While a cartographer draws up a map,
the trees remain in place,
they are steadfast and grounded,
while the lines on the map are fleeting.*

The interactive, animated game, *Little Bird Soars*, is a narrative based on my maternal grandmother's experiences growing up and having lived through the 1956 Group Areas Act. At its core, the game considers the transitory nature of the boundary lines in South Africa. It considers the ways in which boundary lines are constantly changing and taking on different shapes. While the trees in the narrative remain rooted, the protagonist's family is uprooted as a result of the National Party's effort towards creating neat compartments of ethnic groups (namely Bantu Stans). The game grapples with the shape of the South African map as a structure consistently subject to change, while the land remains the same entity re-shuffled time and time again. Boundaries, maps and lines then, appear only to carry weight, for we people allow them this authority. The narrative considers how boundary lines exist as arbitrary and administrative tools imposed onto the landscape at hand and while they embody a finite persona, they are in many ways transcended; they are traversed by both culture as well as flora and fauna. The trees in the narrative watch as the lines take form, face reassurance and re-appear in different shapes. The trees are the constant while the lines bear a transitory nature.



CUBE GALLERY

Albany Natural
Sciences Museum

RHODESIA



PASSPORT

Tinotenda Mubvumbi | *Vatorwa*

V*atorwa* is an exhibition that explores ideas around xenophobia and belonging. The struggle of foreign citizens often goes unnoticed or unexpressed, due to the silencing that takes place in society. The works highlight personal thoughts, fears, experiences and things I have seen since migrating to South Africa. In my work, I link current experiences of xenophobia to the colonial legacy that has played a part in propagating it. Media has long turned a blind eye to these realities that are taking place. Ideas of national identity, and its ties to indigeneity, are slowly fading away with the rise in globalization. An increase in questioning historical accounts of African history is important as we investigate another history which involved a lot of migration and sharing of knowledge amongst Africans before the colonial era. My work also addresses the experience of foreigners being othered by other "othered" bodies, and navigating this current political climate in which we live. Xenophobia is more a fear of constructed boundaries within our minds, than it is about the dictionary definition that defines it as a fear of foreigners. Rather than being caught in the ambiguity of difference, we should be embracing it.



GRAHAMSTOWN
GALLERY,

Albany History
Museum



Uyanda Tom | *Iqhawe(-kazi)*

Take the hero and make it bigger.

The title of this exhibition plays with constructions of gender binaries when it comes to the idea of a hero or warrior. Using a combination of iqhawe (meaning hero), and iqhawekazi (meaning heroine or a hero among heroes) I point to the relationship between the two.

My title evokes a hero that is distinct from others.

This is an exhibition about my mother, her resilience and her triumphs. While the exhibition examines her struggles specifically, it also speaks to the resilience and power of Black women around the world. My mother grew up under the wing of the church, which became a symbol of hope where people not only gathered as a congregation for prayers, but also where they found love and peace – something that was very rare in my mother's life. The church was her safe space and became her life.

In my work, I acknowledge the importance of our culture in my mother's lifestyle alongside, and often integrated with the church. Although, at times, our culture was viewed as an example of inferiority by dominant western patriarchy, black women recognise the importance of indigenous culture within their society and protected it.

By using the metaphor of the traditional domestic mat, Ukhuko, I try and reclaim some of our dismembered culture. While from western perspective, one may see the Ukhuko as a symbol of female inferiority and subordination, our culture teaches us that it is one of the sacred objects in our tradition. There are certain things you cannot do with Ukhuko – for example you may not walk on the mat, you cannot stand on the mat with your shoes on, and you certainly can't place it rolled upright as these things may create bad omens. It is intrinsically strong and resilient, carefully cut and crafted. Like our lives – woven together.



GRAHAMSTOWN
GALLERY

Albany History Museum



feet

What beauty is like



Ashley Hodgson | *The Art of Adulthood*

For the longest time growing up, I used to think that the most ideal age to be was twenty one – not too old, not too young and just right. Of course, when I got to twenty-one I started along the lines of Peter Pan - "never grow up". I am sure many can relate to that feeling of either shock or disappointment when adulthood didn't fit your childhood romanticized idea of what it would be like to be an adult.

My subject matter combines scenes from children's movies with adult and 'real life' imagery - a comparison between childhood fantasies and adulthood realities. For me, these paintings take a comical and sexual look at that transition phase between childhood and adulthood; designed to create that same feeling of shock when you realize that adulthood is, well, no walk in the park.

I view my body of work as two sub series: The QR code series and the Advertising series. The QR code series places your typical childhood idol into sexual fetish scenes because, well, adults like sex and who would of expected little old me to paint them. Certainly not my dad.

The Advertising series collages characters with modern adverts, which although comical, say something important about adulthood and media. Are smooth legs really what beauty feels like?

Walk into this exhibition with an open mind, and without any of your children, and relive the period



STANDARD BANK
GALLERY

Albany History
Museum



Sarah van der Spuy | *Obscura*

Google Earth is essentially a corporate database disguised as a photographic representation. In this database, our homes, our cars, our habits, and perhaps even ourselves all exist in terabytes of data.

Google Earth determines what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe - building a grammar, or a set of rules for seeing.

The artwork presented in my installation is an exploration of these statements and examines how Google Earth has become the modern-day equivalent of the camera obscura. Always watching, capturing, observing and surveying.



ALUMNI GALLERY

Albany History
Museum



Shannon Hansen | *Anti Botanical*

(Tax)onomy:

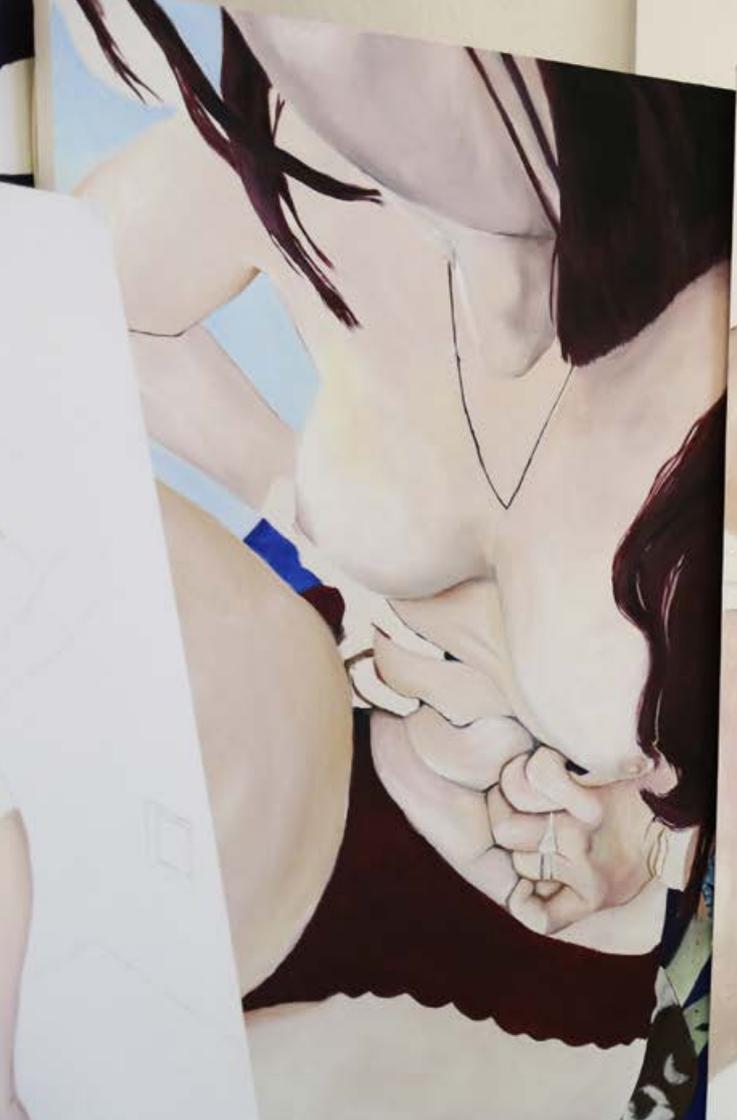
My work has been drawn towards spaces where nature and ecology, science, and spirituality intersect. I explore the history of science as a philosophical and socially constructed field of study which has become increasingly dogmatic and isolated from lived experience, presenting an authoritative veil of "universal truth". In many ways, western science has been complicit in the development of imperial, patriarchal agendas. The understanding of life and matter as mechanical, unconscious and essentially purposeless, has skewed human relationships with the natural world, justifying the capitalist notion of progress, industrialisation and urban expansion, at the cost of the ecological crisis which we now face. In response, I have moved toward a process of art-making which I refer to as 'anti-botanical'.

This body of work has been a collaborate endeavour, in that a great deal of help and direction has come from conversations that I have had with beekeepers around Grahamstown, as well as conversations with strangers. I have used honeybees and their history of human husbandry as a point of entry. The deeper I look into these hardworking matriarchal colonies, the more parallels I begin to discover between bees and humans.



SCHONLAND
LABORATORY

Botany Department



Novisha Steyn | *Framed*

Do it for the body you always wanted
If at first you don't succeed, fix your ponytail, and try again.
Work out. Eat well. Be patient. Your body will reward you.

Do it for the after selfie

Do it for the "Holy shit, you got hot"

No sweat, no beauty. No squat, no booty.

No pain, no gain. Shut up and train.

Be a bad ass with a good ass

Suck it up. And one day you won't have to suck it in.

Be stronger than your excuses.

Frames of containment have made women believe that they can only be truly happy if their body fits within the parameters of an expected feminine frame of beauty. This frame is understood to have only positive attributes that portray worth and importance. When a body transgresses these preconceived boundaries, a woman may feel shame due to society's projections on what is perceived as excess and unhealthiness.



**MONUMENT
GALLERY**

1820 Settlers
Monument



Stephanie Proctor | *Thick-Skinned*

The Agave Americana (Century plant).

A natural barrier used to keep certain bodies in and others out.

Restrict one's access and view.

Protect the homestead and one's crops or animals from outsiders.

Thick-skinned plants that have great healing properties but can be violent and destructive. Not indigenous.

Rhinos are extremely sensitive, territorial and social animals. They are thick-skinned, however, they are also extremely shy and often anxious. I have come to see myself as the baby Rhino foetus - fragile and forever fixed.

Nothing remains but a trace of this fragile giant.

I grew up on a farm that hosted a white rhino breeding project.

My privilege of access - my father is the biggest private rhino breeder in the world.

I have always felt like a voyeur to his life and legacy.

Standing on the outside of the fence peering in.

Not quite able to see the full picture.



SIDE STAGE

1820 Settlers
Monument



Mosa Anita Kaiser | *The Assumption(s) of Mary (can these dry bones live?)*

"...then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman!

Where did your Christ come from?

Where did your Christ come from?

From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him."

– Sojourner Truth (1851)

(A Daughter's positionality)



GALLERY-IN-
THE-ROUND

1820 Settlers
Monument



I just want to be
a real princess!

Lauren Pascal King | #GalGamez

Videogame culture has privileged the default gamer, the white man, leading to a maintenance of whiteness and masculinity in this virtual setting. Games are expected to be a male activity, and any female presence may seem like an encroachment on male territory. **Jesse Fox & Wai Yen Tang,**

Sexism in online video games: The role of conformity to masculine norms and social dominance orientation. 2014: 315.

Geared as they are towards a presumed heterosexual (white) male audience, videogames have come to be defined by hypermasculinity, the degradation of the female body, and immersive interaction within a full-bodied world. Social protocol and negative conceptions of feminine technological competency in virtual spaces, such as online gaming, ensures that female participants are constantly reminded of the intended male subject position they are trespassing upon. #GalGamez – an immersive installation consisting of various videos and still images – represents a move towards actively intervening and disrupting the patriarchal privilege of videogames, in an attempt to reclaim the self-efficacy of the female gamer, whom I propose is as much a fully agential-technological being as any other (white) male is. The title #GalGamez is a play on the #GamerGate controversy – a keyboard-warrior movement driven by fear and distrust – whose members actively oppose progressive change within the videogame industry and silence feminist critique of videogames and gaming culture by means of conducting online and real-world harassment campaigns. Videogame culture actively sidelines women from the *boys' club* that is the gaming world, as well as denoting any feminine presence in it as merely ornamental and peripheral to the virtual experience. Although videogames represent imagined and fictional spaces, they necessarily entail real-world values which are inevitably reflected in various ways throughout gameplay by means of demographics and game content, narrative, and problematic modes of representation. In other words, games are inherently political. This body of work is thus a critical analysis of the state of toxic masculinity and the politics of gender representation that is manifest within virtual gaming spaces, and endeavors to assert an agential feminine presence in these virtual spaces that are perpetually riddled with hypermasculinity.



**B1 DRESSING
ROOM**

1820 Settlers
Monument

