

Portals into Domestic Worlds

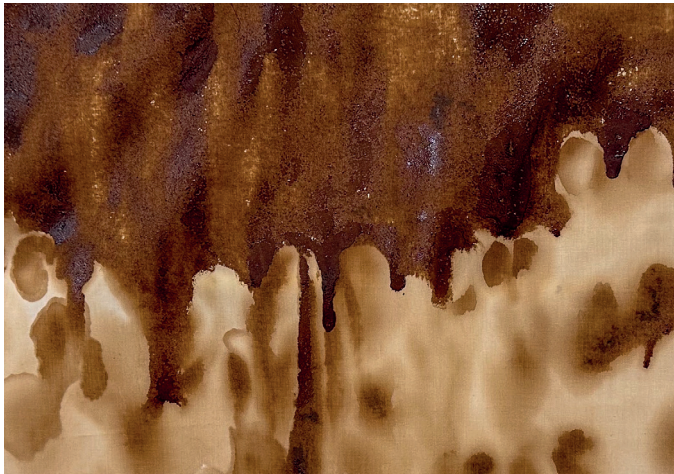
Artists: Vida Madighi-Oghu and Zenaéca Singh

Front Gallery - 25.04.24 - 06.06.24



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Sport, Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Detail of (Clockwise)

Zenaéca Singh - *Lost in Time*

Vida Madighi-Oghu - *Mary Jones wrapped in Yorubaland*

Zenaéca Singh - *Happenstances*

Portals into Domestic Worlds

The exhibition looks to present a discourse around the erasure and lack of intimacy in archives. It considers the inside/outside dynamics of culture and world-building at the hands of brown/black womxn. Singh explores the implications of South African Indian women's lack of presence in the archive. Her practice critiques and subverts the patriarchal nature of colonial archives. Whereas Madighi-Oghu looks into the absence of womxn in epistemic practices.

Vida Madighi-Oghu uses the poetics of speculative play to wrestle with themes of absence. This manifests in Nsibidi terrapolis, an ongoing narrative where language and materials of knowledge systems find flesh bodies and be/come landscapes. At the foundation of Madighi-Oghu's practice is Nsibidi; an ideographic language from the Cross-River area of modern day Nigeria. The language was subjected to both colonial erasure and today intimate knowledge and practice of the glyph based language is mostly limited to male secret societies.

'Terrapolis' is borrowed loosely from Harraway's terrapolis a "fictional integral equation, a speculative fabulation a "niche space" for multispecies becoming-with". Nsibidi terrapolis treats language, materials and body as species that come together in symbiotic, fluid, boundaryless relationships. As living knowledge creatures, the subjects of Nsibidi Terrapolis are not tied to any one body, they are queer by nature and in mobility. Nsibidi Terrapolis is in constant play with itself, discovering new forms, building and being built from its domestic landscapes.

Singh's research-based practice engages facets of South African Indian historiography through a gendered lens to address the representations of South African Indian women. Available archives remain limited due to them being predominantly forms of colonial documentation such as ledgers, commissions and legislative reports of Indentureship in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Accordingly, Indian women appear as passive figures confined to the home space or contrastingly in extreme moments of violence. Lost in this archive are the matrilineal stories of courageous and brave women who dared to escape patriarchal structures and sought their own desires and means of living and being.

Sugar hereby acts as a potent signifier in Singh's artistic work to expand on the cultural economy of sugar to include the silenced history of indentureship and its gendered dynamics. In using sugar glass as a lens, Singh distorts colonial imagery and attempts to re-imagine the inherited legacy of Indianness. The sugar glass of which is also known as break-away glass holds a metaphorical reference to the women's act of defiance and subversion of the plantation and state.

Portals into Domestic Worlds grapples with the lost, absent and erased stories and bodies. Materiality; fabric, sugar, colour, memory and the speculative are employed to tell a story using the archive as a tool to discuss history while creating space for transforming and transgressing the patriarchal colonial narratives.

Zenaéca Singh

Zenaéca Singh's work explores the complex history of the sugar economy in South Africa and its entanglement with migration, colonialism, labour exploitation, and the dynamics of the domestic sphere. Working across painting, sculpture and installation, she investigates archives of images and text related to indentured South African Indians in the period 1860 - 1911. Her current works draw primarily on family photographs, transforming them into alluring paintings and assemblages made from molasses, sugar and sugar paste in different states of crystallisation. Singh uses domestic references and imagery to trace connections between the sugar economy and its impacts on domestic culture and conventions for South African Indians. She acknowledges the gendered history of the home space, situating her own making and identity in relation to this history.



Zenaéca Singh

Belong, 2024

Photomontage, sugar-glass and resin

18 x 23 x 1,9 cm

R 5300 (Inc. VAT) framed



Zenaéca Singh
Lost in Time, 2024
Molasses on cotton
20 x 30 cm
R 4240 (Inc. VAT)



Zenaéca Singh

The Visitors, 2024

Photomontage, sugar-glass and resin

18 x 23 x 1,9 cm

R 5300 (Inc. VAT) framed



Zenaéca Singh
Happenstances, 2024
Molasses on cotton
54 x 44 cm
R 6890 (Inc. VAT)



Zenaéca Singh

More than ..., 2024

Photomontage, sugar-glass and resin

14.9 x 19.9 x 1.5 cm

R 4240 (Inc. VAT) framed



Zenaéca Singh

In time to come, 2024

Molasses on cotton

14.9 x 19.9 x 1.5 cm

R 3180 (Inc. VAT) framed



Zenaéca Singh

Those few and far between, 2024

Molasses on cotton

85 x 59 cm

R 13250 (Inc. VAT)



Zenaéca Singh
The Ending, 2023
Sugar-glass, plaster and resin
26 x 12 x 9 cm
R 4240 (Inc. VAT)

Vida Madighi-Oghu

Vida Madighi-Oghu is a Nigerian born Cape Town based artist. Madighi-Oghu graduated from Michaelis School of Fine art in 2022 and earned an honours degree from the Centre for Curating the Archive in 2024. Madighi-Oghu describes herself as a storyteller with a research first approach rooted in themes from her Nigerian and multicultural upbringing such as language, traditional wear, historical objects and migration. Colour is used in Madighi-Oghu's practice as a means to illustrate movement, invisible phenomenon and as part of her speculative play in treating the process of visualising translation. Through both her art making and curatorial practice, Madighi-Oghu seeks to weave connections between culture production and the greater socio-geopolitical historical narratives linked to the textiles and language.



Vida Madhigi-Oghu

Mary Jones wrapped in Yorubaland, 2024

Porcelain clay, glue, pigment, linseed oil, polyester lining, hessian

130 x 56 x 13 cm

R 13780 (Inc. VAT)



Vida Madhigi-Oghu

Unravelled Doek, 2024

Clay, organza, glue, spray paint, polyester lining, hessian

25 x 23 x 7 cm

R 7420 (Inc. VAT)



Vida Madhigi-Oghu

Material Terrapolis Study, 2024

Clay, organza, glue, spray paint, polyester lining, hessian

25 x 23 x 7 cm

R 4240 (Inc. VAT)



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