

PALIMPSEST

Catalogue



Leeunhof Gallery - Second installation



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The history of enslavement is global. The Remembrance Gallery at Leeuwenhof hones its focus on the provincial histories, and so it should. The Cape was built through slavery. Enslaving people from Dutch Batavia (modern-day Southeast Asia) and African countries along the Indian Ocean trading route, predominantly but not exclusively from Madagascar and Mozambique, they were brought to the Cape by the VOC. Today in South Africa slavery is remembered selectively, fitfully, and in contested ways - and that's when it's not forgotten entirely. The post-apartheid state and the national discourse of reconciliation - focused on coming to terms with the tyranny of South Africa's more recent oppressive past - this meant the earlier, brutal, colonial history and its legacies in the Cape were marginalised.

The legacies of slavery are encoded in the Cape's built environment, spatial planning, geographical names and agrarian systems. Generational poverty, trauma and violence, racial discrimination, and discriminatory practices in the agricultural and labour industries; these are but a few of the factors that affect our perspectives and realities today. The Cape is a palimpsest - land which has been written on, had the original writing rubbed out or removed, and then rewritten on, time and again. However, traces of each layer remain visible beneath the new.

This is where we find ourselves, at what was the Leeuwenhof Slave Quarters, a site steeped in violence and sorrow - now reimagined as a remembrance gallery. Perhaps serving as a bridge to recognise colonialism's cruel history, and the density of its repercussions and legacies. Slavery is a monumental subject. No singular artwork, site or exhibition can convey a conclusive picture of the systematic atrocities or the unique, individual stories, and this exhibition - Palimpsest - makes no claims to the contrary.

Zyma Amien's installation *Inaudible*, guides the viewer to focus on labour exploitation within the garment and textile industry. Amien's interest stems from a familial link to the industry. Installed in what was the slave quarters, the work chimes with an aspect of exploitation under slavery, and amplifies the work's original reading.

Dion Cupido's mixed media works, *Fool's paradise* and *Remembering paradise*, are created through layers, upon layers, of tags and graffiti; the writing on the wall is mastered into a portrait of an individual. The titles, and mood captured, convey an unsettling reflection on place.

Sahlah Davids' practice presents an affiliation to the realm of religious politics. Davids draws on the skills of her heritage and lineage, the history of their struggles through the generations, and ultimately the embodiment of their spirituality, in the creation of her sculptures *Waa-hid* and *Quiet Memor II*.

Garth Erasmus' artwork, *Rivers in the Ocean II*, reads like sound. His visual gesture is reminiscent of the music Erasmus plays on self-made instruments, inspired by the immersive expression of his Khoisan ancestry. The

title alludes to bodies of water - and people - that have been brought from many places but merge together in an ocean.

Gary Frier's oil painting *Skrik wakker* is a reaction and a commentary on the dispossession of culture and land, an assertion to wake up to the implications of colonial history. *Kykuit raakwys* subverts the hubris of 'old masters' artworks; reconstituting and challenging the print made by Godfried Friedrich Riedel that commemorated the corporate colonialism of his day.

Rentia Retief's painting series *Droster*. *Freedom of the mountains* draws the viewers' attention to how geographical names act as not-so-silent reminders of the Cape's history under slavery. 'Droster' a derogatory name for a runaway slave, a person who sought refuge from slavery in the mountains. There is a *Drostersgat* in the *Overberg*, a *Drostersberg* in the *Witzenberg* and *Du Toitskloof*, and a *Drostersnes* in *Grabouw*.

Kenneth Shandu's installation *Invisible* is a visual exploration of the everyday experiences of economically marginalised people, living on urban streets. The wire figures are see-through, emphasising how individuals go unseen, and how society looks right through them.

Fatiema Ward's traces her ancestry to the Cape Malay Slaves brought to the Cape by the VOC. Ward's grandmother Galieja Saban was born in the Bokaap in the early 1900's and worked a corsetière until 1970. Ward's mother Abeda Martin started as a sample hand, and later became a bridal dress maker. Ward, born in District 6 in 1974, was four months old when her family was forced to relocate to Grassy Park. Inheriting her grandmother's, and mother's passion and mastery of beaded handwork, Ward took over the family business. Later economic conditions forced its closure. Cape Malay culture is being forgotten on the Cape Flats, beaded handwork a rare skill. Ward's sculptures foreground the mastery and beauty of this cultural language.

Donovan Ward's mixed media works critically position globalisation, its history and social legacies. The works pull no punches, *Real Estates 1*, *Stele to History 3*, *Temperance Seated on a Wall*, *The Atrocity Archive*, each work unpicks historical threads and highlights present social repercussions.

Artworks are manifestations of embodied storytelling, they have agency to stir both our conscious and unconscious thoughts, perceptions and emotions. Their agency works upon the viewer offering the potential of new recognitions. Some works presented here declare their story, some ask for an intellectual deconstruction, some motion a spiritual politic, some embody an inherited mastery, consciousness or visual language, and others make the unseen, the inaudible - perceptible. All are actions towards self-determination and self-possession, none claim to speak for others. Together, perhaps, they open the door for conversations about where the Cape is currently. - Kirsty Cockerill



Donovan Ward

'Temperance Seated on a Wall' . 2011

Acrylic, black and white crayon, gold paint and dust on masonite

122cm x 70cm

R144,000 (incl. VAT)



Donovan Ward

'Stele to History 3' . 2000

Cement, bone ash, paint flakes, acrylic, dust, silt,
lichen, rust stains, gravel, décollage on board

122cm x 199cm

R134,400 (incl. VAT)



Donovan Ward

'Atrocity Archive: Locations of Mass Graves'. 2007

Burnt hredded documents, paper ash
and adhesive.

21cm x 30cm

R12,350 (incl. VAT)



Donovan Ward

'Atrocity Archive: Names of Slaves'. 2007

Burnt hredded documents, paper ash
and adhesive.

21cm x 30cm

R12,350 (incl. VAT)



Donovan Ward

'Atrocity Archive: Records of People worked to Death'. 2007

Burnt hredded documents, paper ash
and adhesive.

21cm x 30cm

R12,350 (incl. VAT)



Donovan Ward

'Real Estates I' . 2001

Cement, bone ash, paint flakes, acrylic, dust, silt,
lichen, rust stains, gravel, décollage on board.

58cm x 45cm

R23,700 (incl. VAT)

Garth Erasmus

'Rivers in the ocean II' . 2003

Sand, acrylics, canvass on board.

110cm x 73cm

R17,000 (incl. VAT)



Dion Cupido
'Remembering Paradise' 2022
Mixed Media on Canvas.
160cm x 115cm
R50,400 (incl. VAT)



Dion Cupido
'Fool's Paradise' 2022
Mixed Media on Canvas.
160cm x 115cm
R50,400 (incl. VAT)





Fatiema Ward

'Bo-kaap Bride' 2007-2021

duchess satin with acrylic beads and sequins.

90cm x 90cm

R27,000 (incl. VAT)



Fatiema Ward

Fathiya's Dream 2007-2021

Duchess satin with acrylic beads and sequins.

50cm x 50cm

R18,000 (incl. VAT)



Kenneth Shandu

'Invisible' 2020 - 2022

Outdoor installation of steel cutouts.

140cm x 150cm

R64,400 (incl. VAT)



Rentia Retief

'As die middag kon sug (If the afternoon could sigh)' . 2021

Oil on Canvas.

150 x 110cm

R44,000 (incl. VAT)



Gary Frier
'Skrik wakker' 2019
Oil on Canvas.
83cm x 106cm
R37,300 (incl. VAT)



Gary Frier
'Kyk uit raak wys' 2020
Oil on Canvas.
80cm x 111cm
R37,300 (incl. VAT)





Detail of *'Quiet Memor II'*

Sahlah Davids
'Quiet Memor II' 2021
Mixed Media
100cm x 100cm
R17,500 (incl. VAT)



Sahlah Davids
'WAAHID' 2000
Mixed Media
46cm x 83cm
R12,000 (incl. VAT)



Zyma Amien
'Inaudible' 2019 - 2022
Installation, 8/8
R3,000 (incl. VAT)







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