

the gallery

catalogue of works from
PROXIES

curated by Nabeeha Mohamed, Kundai Moyo and Chloë Reid

In *Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis*, Elaine Scarry contends that flowers are the perfect size and shape for imagining. Their concave and convex forms which echo the shape of the eye, coupled with their relatively small scale enables a 'special imaginability'. This, in opposition to larger objects or scenes that require the effort of 'radical miniaturization' diminishing the quality of the imitated image in the mind.

proxies considers the persistence of flowers in contemporary South African art through the work of Fanie Buys, Erin Chaplin, Mia Chaplin, Githan Coopoo, Vanessa Cowling, Grace Cross, Ian Grose, Nonzuzo Gxekwa, Swain Hoogervorst, Nabeeha Mohamed, Anna Sango, Brett Seiler and Shakil Solanki.

Flowers are pictured variously for their economy and immediacy as subject matter, as indexes of sociality and sexuality, for their loaded spiritual and art historical symbolism, as marks of mortality, memory, sentimentality and nostalgia, as studies in form, light and colour and as expressions of consciousness and the imagination.

In almost every case flowers are proxies, standing in, representatives or in the service of something else. Why are flowers such ready paradigms? What is the significance of this in the context of South African contemporary art and its pervasive social and political claims?

In 1963, while exiled in Botswana, Bessie Head famously criticised Gladys Mgudlandlu's vibrant, dream-like painted scenes of landscapes, flowers and birds as escapist. She claimed that Mgudlandlu's expressive works served to feed the demand for naive work by black artists by the white establishment, thus reinforcing the oppressive racist regime.

Head's views were variously disputed at the time, with many arguing for the expressive character of her works as a humanising agent in a period of systematic dehumanisation. More recent discourse has reframed Head's interpretation of Mgudlandlu's work, specifically research by Nontobeko Ntombela, which considers how the biographies of South African artists are conditioned by the assemblage and accessibility of historical archives.

Expectations of an artist's subject matter relative to demographics and prevailing socio-political concerns are regularly used as a measure for value or relevance. It is evident that there is ample room in 2020 for flowers in the South African art space. Taking these two contentions as its starting point, proxies arranges work by a selection of artists who picture, manipulate or regularly make a study of flowers in order to imagine multiple and nuanced measures for contemporary practices in South Africa.

1. Elaine Scarry, *Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis (Particularly Delphinium)*, in *Representations*, No. 57. (Winter, 1997), pp. 90-115.
2. Nontobeko Mtombela, *A Fragile Archive: Refiguring | Rethinking | Reimagining | Re-presenting Gladys Mgudlandlu*, 2013, (thesis) University of the Witwatersrand

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MIA CHAPLIN

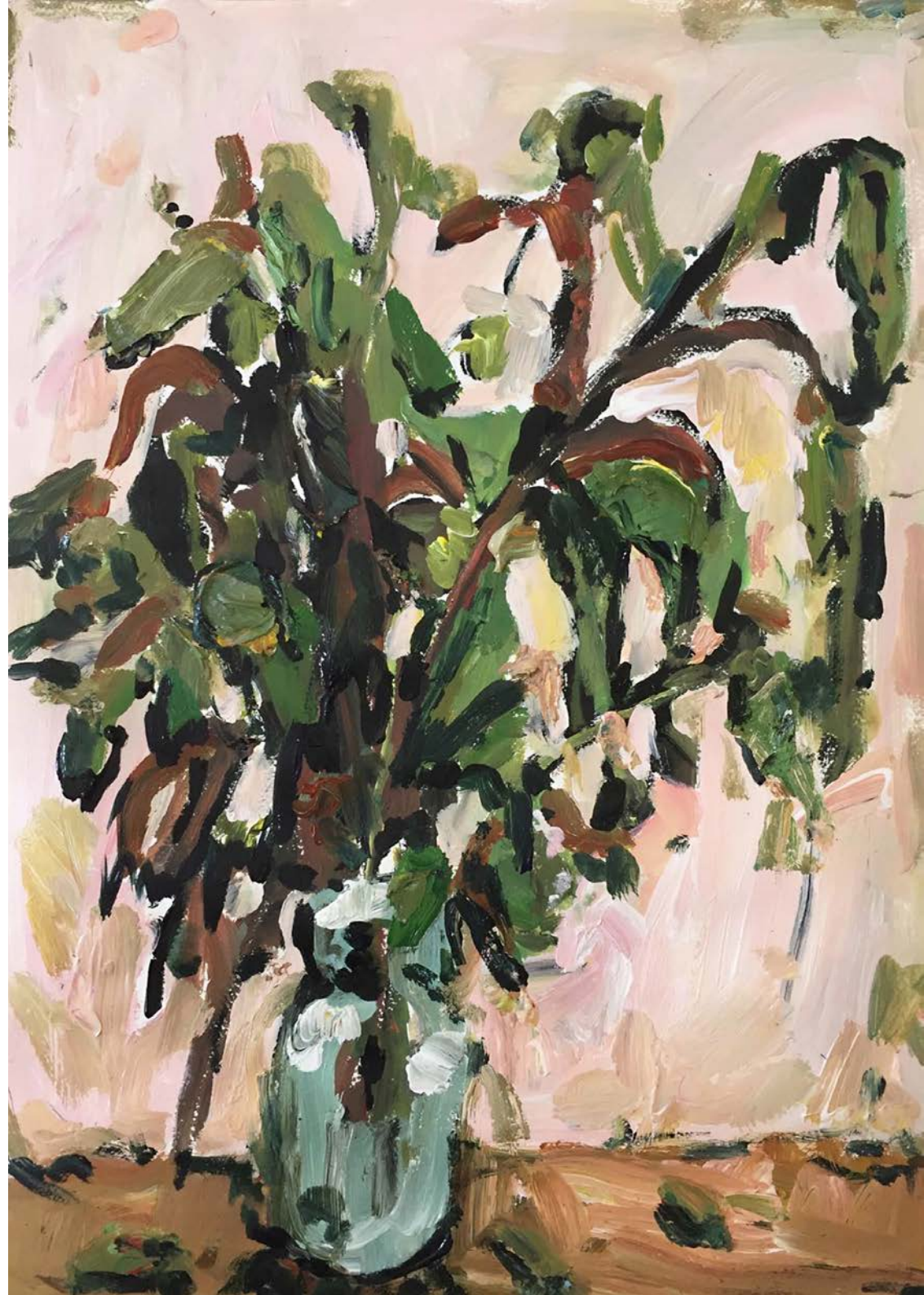
Mia Chaplin is a painter who lives and works in Cape Town. Working in oil on canvas and paper, her highly expressive works are characterised by their rich impasto surfaces and visible brushstrokes. Chaplin's most recent works emphasize a muted colour palette of pink fleshy tones and golden highlights. Consisting of still lifes, figure studies and landscapes, her work seems to meditate on the familiar. Her loose, erratic style of painting – synonymous with that of the impressionists – is intuitive, heightening the emotionality of her pieces. They communicate a sense of estrangement; reflecting a detachment between the self and her surroundings. Her works sway between voyeurism and intimate interaction, while remaining consistently self-referential.

MIA CHAPLIN

Dead Inside, 2020

acrylic on paper
420 x 594 mm

R 15 100 (framed)





MIA CHAPLIN

Poodles, 2020

acrylic on paper
297 x 210 mm

R 8 650 (framed)



MIA CHAPLIN

Salma, 2020

acrylic on paper
297 x 210 mm

R 8 650 (framed)

MIA CHAPLIN

Warm Blooded, 2020

acrylic on paper
594 X 420 mm

R 15 100 (framed)





MIA CHAPLIN

Baby Blue, 2020

acrylic on paper
594 X 420 mm

R 15 100 (framed)

NONZUZO GXEKWA

Nonzuzo Gxekwa is a self taught photographer from Ladysmith, KwaZulu Natal. Her work favours the everyday over the spectacular. She uses the camera to notice and share, actively avoiding preconception where possible. Gxekwa has collaborated with a number of photographers and artists in Johannesburg where she lives and works.



NONZUZO GXEKWA

Untitled, 2020

inkjet print on fibre-based
baryta paper, Edition of 8 + 1AP
419 x 290 mm

R 3 960 (framed)
R 2 900 (unframed)

NABEEHA MOHAMED

Nabeeha Mohamed was born in Cape Town in 1988. She studied at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. Mohamed's very personal work grapples with the contradictions of identity and class privilege in post-Apartheid South Africa. Her position as a woman of colour, hushed during her childhood years in an attempt to assimilate to the white society and culture she grew up in, is now celebrated in her paintings where colour and strangeness take centre stage. These celebrations of identity are intersected with a playful critique of the capitalist economy and class privilege from which she benefits.



NABEEHA MOHAMED

Give Up Girls, 2020

watercolour on paper
420 x 297 mm

R 7 200 (framed)

NABEEHA MOHAMED

Stay at Home and Do
Nothing Girls, 2020

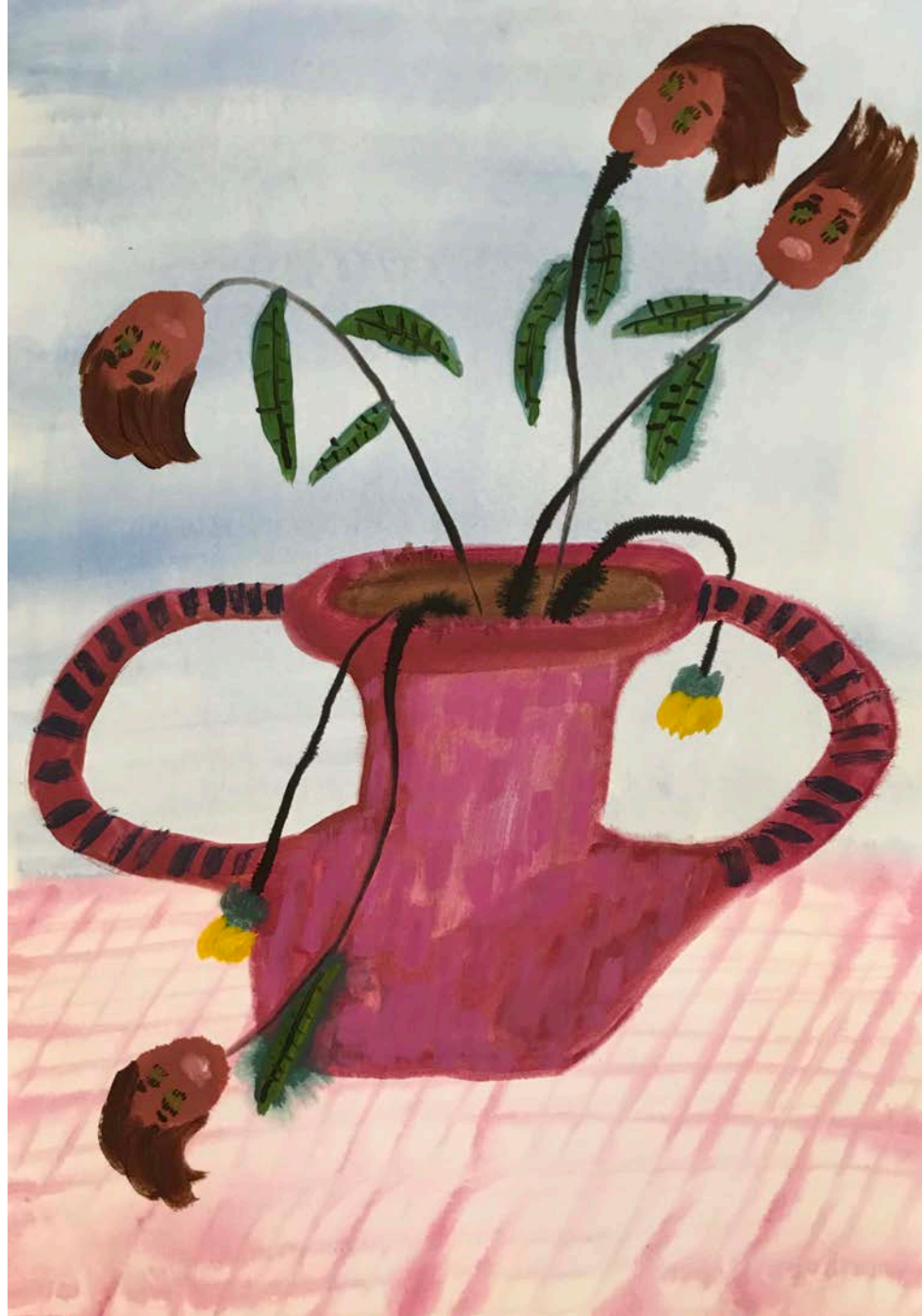
watercolour on paper
420 x 297 mm

R 7 200 (framed)

following page:

Girls in Sync, 2020

watercolour on paper
420 x 297 mm





GRACE CROSS

Grace Cross is a material painter who draws symbols about motherhood, home, belief structures, and land; making shifting recipes rooted in history, performative archaeology and African cosmology, to reflect her cultural transmission across national boundaries. Her diverse upbringing informs her painting practice, where she fuses cultural storytelling, spirituality, and the archaeological mining of symbols in her loud and colourfilled canvases. Cross was born in Zimbabwe and currently lives and works as a mother and painter in Cape Town.



GRACE CROSS

Spill, 2020

oil on canvas
510 x 400 x 50 mm

R 8 000

GRACE CROSS
Pump, 2020
oil on canvas
406 x 406 x 35 mm
R 4 000



BRETT SEILER

Brett Seiler was born in Zimbabwe and lives and works in Cape Town. Seiler uses painting, installation and performance to reflect on personal and collective queer experience. Longing and nostalgia are pervasive modes in his work which blends historical narrative with romantic gesture, sexual interaction. Working humorously with language and recurring motifs such as hands, rainbows and flowers, Seiler's practice is in part an attempt to understand past and current struggles for gay liberation.

MY FATHER
GREW
ROSES AND
RAISED
A PANSY

BRETT SEILER

Pansy, 2020

bitumen on canvas
615 x 430 mm

R 6 800 (framed)

VANESSA COWLING

Vanessa Cowling lives in Cape Town where she works as an artist and lecturer. Her interest in photography lies in its fundamental and magical nature: to draw or “paint with light.” Her practice explores the fragility of time and space and intentionally moves beyond the photographic misconception of photograph as document.



VANESSA COWLING

Blush, 2020

archival pigment on
hahnemuehle paper
540 x 540 mm

R 17 910 (framed)



VANESSA COWLING

from left Past, Present, Future 1 & 3
2020

polaroid emulsion lift on cotton paper
160 x 160 mm

each R 2 900 (framed)



VANESSA COWLING

Blue, 2019

archival pigment on
hahnemuehle paper
540 x 540 mm

R 11 760 (framed)

VANESSA COWLING

Bud, 2019

polaroid emulsion lift on
cotton paper
160 x 160 mm

R 2 900 (framed)



VANESSA COWLING

Orchid (preserved) (back), 2019

polaroid emulsion lift on cotton paper
160 x 160 mm

R 2 900 (framed)



VANESSA COWLING
Bouquet, 2019
polaroid emulsion lift on
cotton paper
160 x 160 mm
R 2 900 (framed)

VANESSA COWLING

Orchid (preserved) (front), 2019

polaroid emulsion lift on cotton
paper

160 x 160 mm

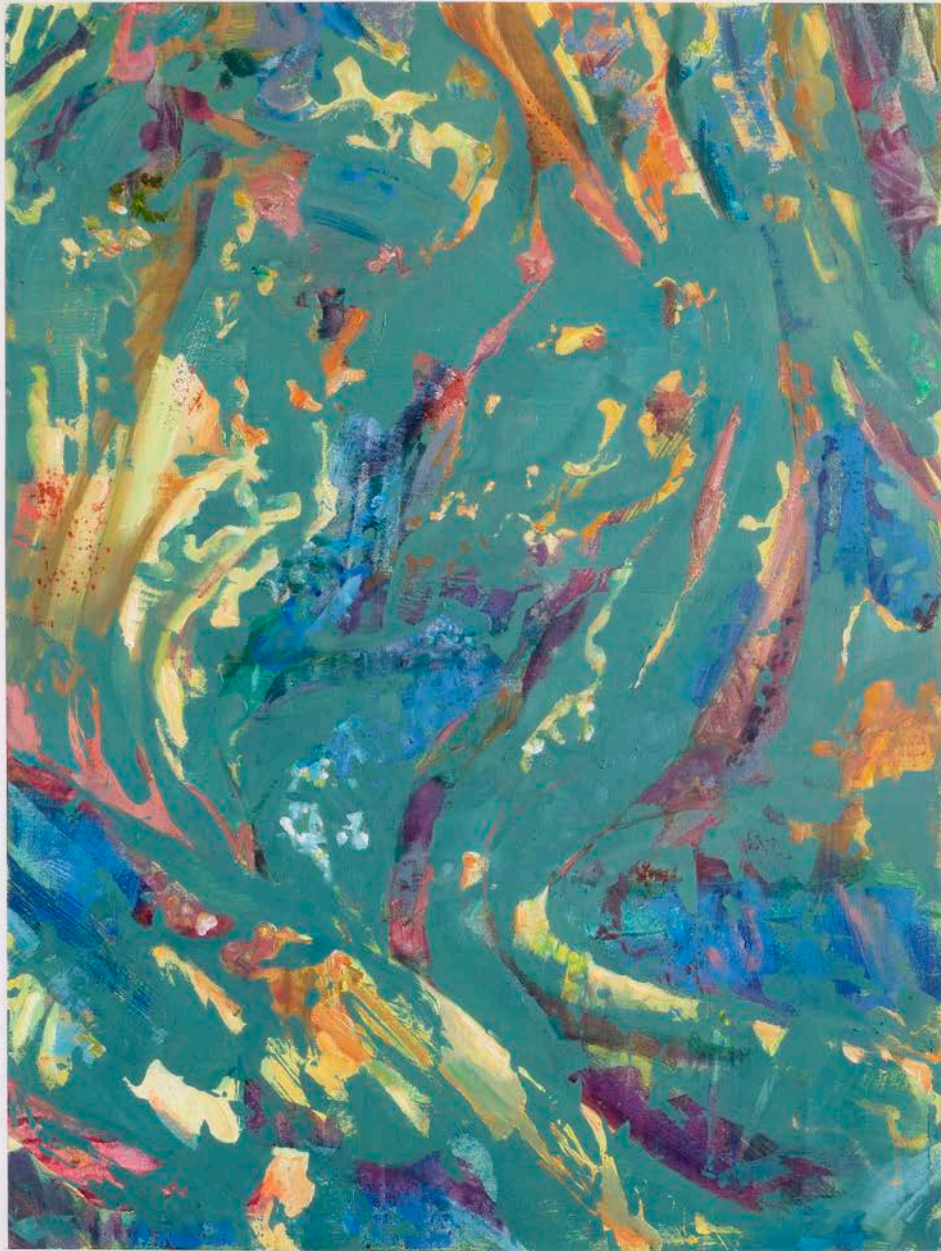
R 2 900 (framed)



IAN GROSE

"I've found that images of floral fabrics are a type of image to which I've often returned, as they can be starting points for exploring many of the things I care about in painting. Ultimately I'm concerned with how formal elements can be intuitively combined to arrive at a kind of visual alchemy. In the process of trying to achieve that, my mind is occasionally occupied by emerging conceptual tensions (picture plane and illusion, repetition and accident, etc) -- although the most important tension is that between boredom and excitement. The images, digitally manipulated to suit my purpose, serve as pretexts, each with their own latent 'mood', for beginning a painting that will have to be brought to resolution on its own terms."

- Ian Grose



IAN GROSE

Untitled #1, 2020

oil on linen
1000 x 750 mm

R 75 000 (unframed)

SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Swain Hoogervorst is an artist based in Cape Town. He started painting flowers in 2018, as a departure from his main body of work. "I needed a way to simplify my practice. There was a pot plant in the corner of my studio; I decided that the simplest thing I could do was to focus on it. Initially I began painting the plant because I wanted to make large-scale paintings of forests. Painting from photographs had lost its appeal, and I thought it shrewd to paint an individual plant from life before taking on an entire cluster. I realised, however, that visually there was enough information to keep me preoccupied with one pot plant for the rest of my life." What started off as a morning routine eventually became a much larger body of work, resulting in a 2018 show of 42 paintings.

SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Friday 21 February (Time Unknown), 2020

oil on belgian linen
590 x 460 mm

R 16 400 (unframed)



SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Friday 21 February 21:53, 2020

oil on belgian linen
590 x 460 mm

R 16 400 (unframed)





SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Friday 22 February 14:21, 2020

oil on belgian linen
230 x 180 mm

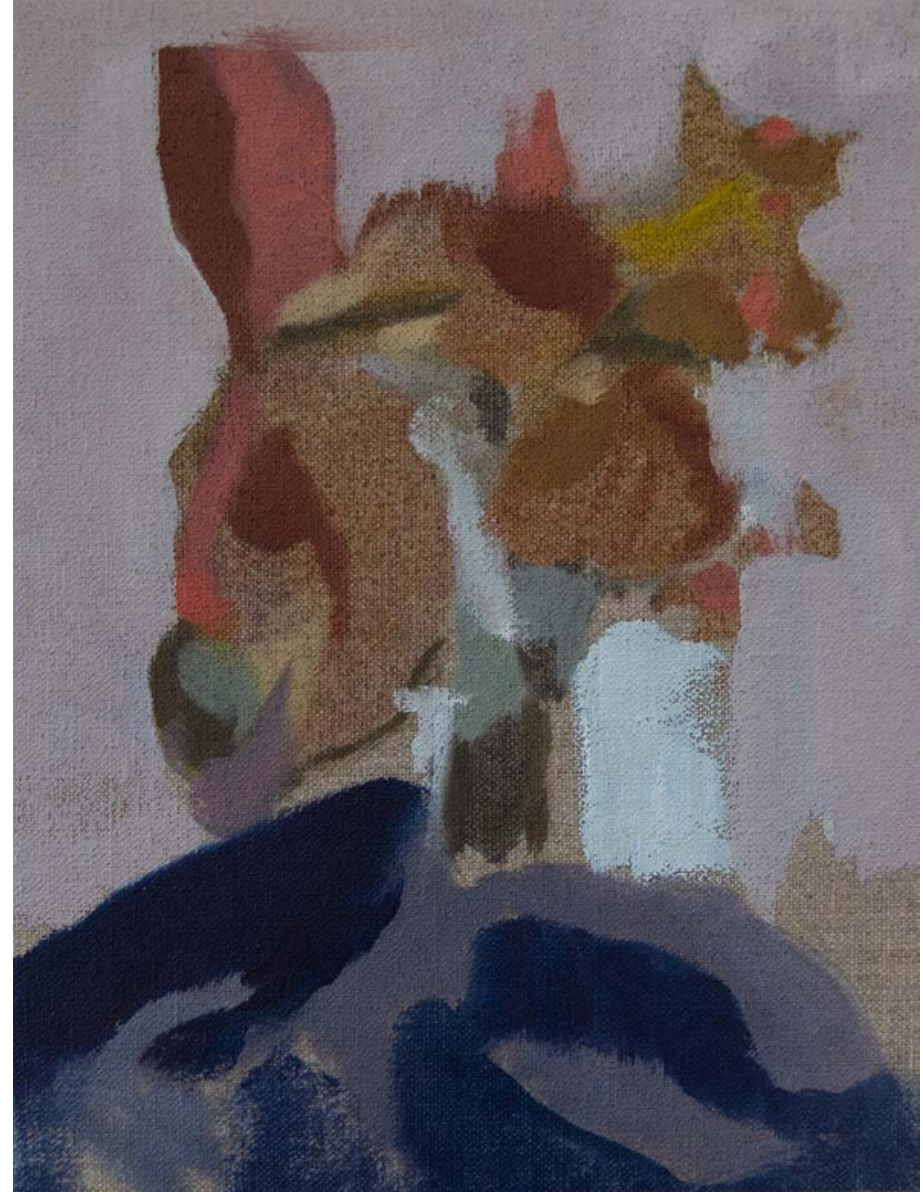
R 4 000 (unframed)

SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Friday 22 February 16:43, 2020

oil on belgian linen
230 x 180 mm

R 4 000 (unframed)



SWAIN HOOGERVORST

11 September 15:53, 2019

oil on belgian linen
205 x 160 mm

R 3 450 (unframed)



SWAIN HOOGERVORST

25 September 14:42, 2019

oil on belgian linen
205 x 160 mm

R 3 450 (unframed)

SWAIN HOOGERVORST

Friday 21 February 20:54, 2020

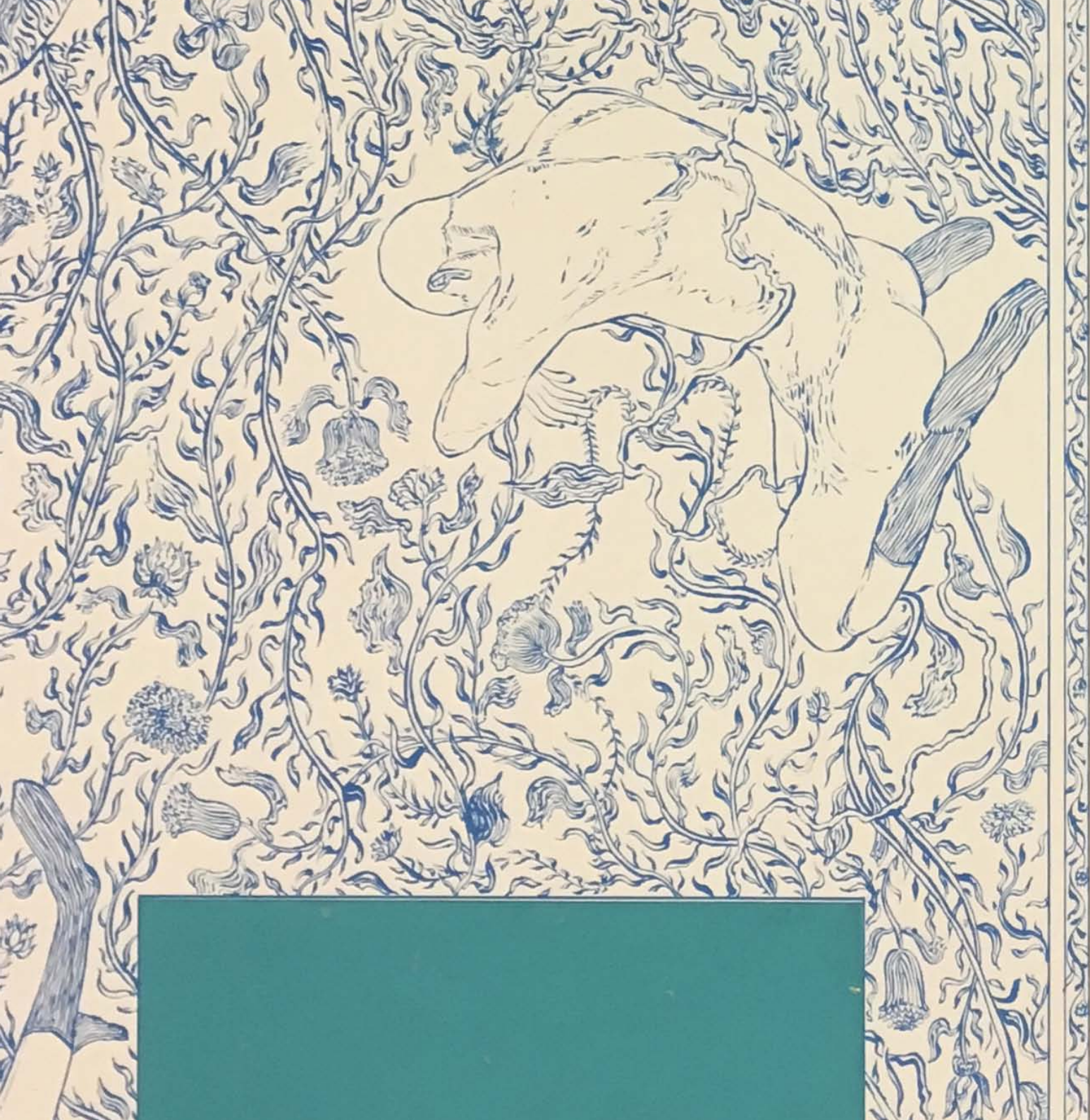
oil on belgian linen
590 x 460 mm

R 16 400 (unframed)



SHAKIL SOLANKI

Shakil Solanki is an artist based in Cape Town. In his work, he interrogates dynamics of intimacy, using the space of a secret garden to explore dualities of tenderness, desire and violence. His experiences as a queer brown man remain central to his practice, with classical Eastern art standing as a prominent source of inspiration. This vernacular is repurposed, encompassing homoerotic dialogues to evoke lush, dreamlike lands, which remain both romantic and discomfiting at once. The trope of a secret garden is used as a liminal space, where contrasting emotions of trauma and longing exist hand-in-hand with moments of stillness, using the theme of intimacy as a point of convergence to explore its many dynamics.



SHAKIL SOLANKI

'Kiss me
Kiss me again
and again
Never enough
Greedy lips
Blue skies.', 2020

(section this page and
previous page)
hexptych of lithographic
prints with chine collé inlay
260 x 260 mm

R 21 200 (framed)

SHAKIL SOLANKI

'Kiss me
Kiss me again
and again
Never enough
Greedy lips
Blue skies.', 2020

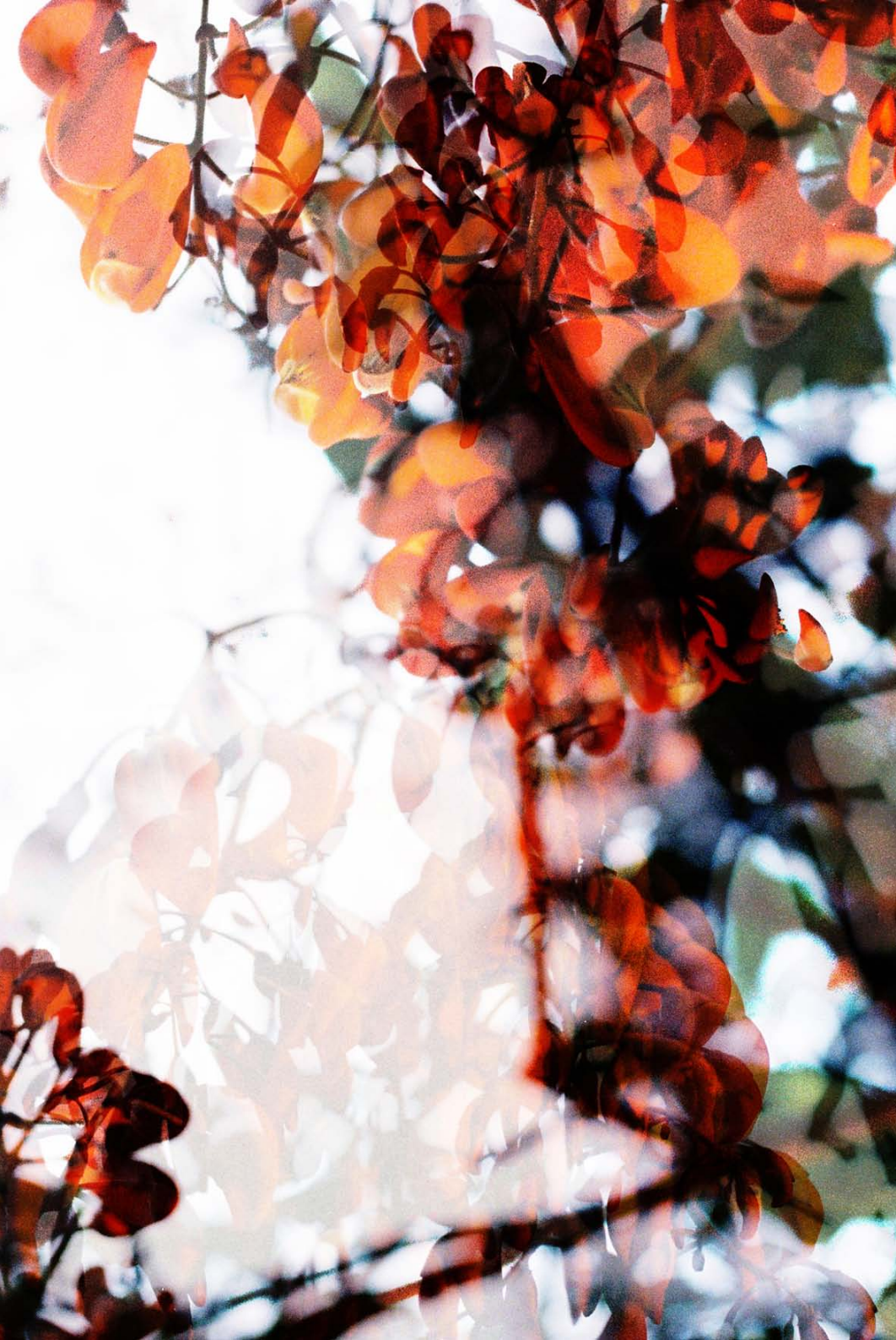
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previous page)
hexptych of lithographic
prints with chine collé inlay
935 x 345 mm

R 21 200 (framed)



ANNA SANGO

Anna Sango is a photographer and urban researcher/storyteller based in Johannesburg. She has an academic background in architecture and urban planning, where her most recent research focused on gender, transnational mobility and the informal socio-economic networks shaping African cities. As a photographer, she is interested in challenging representations of urban African environments, and the people therein, and roots her practice in engaging with the everyday, lived experiences of urban residents in and around the immediate spaces that she occupies.



ANNA SANGO

Untitled, 2020

inkjet print on cotton rag

edition of 8 + 1AP

482 x 342 mm

R 2 750 (unframed)

ERIN CHAPLIN

Erin Chaplin is a self-taught artist who was born in Durban and now lives in Cape Town. Working mainly in oil painting, she uses everyday subject matter to consider the relationship between nature and artifice. She draws on the temporary and changing character of flowers to reflect on what and how it is to be present.



ERIN CHAPLIN

Hedonist, 2020

oil on canvas
460 x 355 mm

R 8 250 (unframed)

ERIN CHAPLIN
Purple Tulips, 2020
oil on canvas
490 x 545 mm
R 11 290 (framed)



FANIE BUYS

“George is a like an in-joke. If you’ve never lived there you won’t get it. It is very beautiful, everyone who lives there knows it’s very beautiful, but if you look properly you’ll see it isn’t. It’s almost like a picturesque veneer has settled on the town, like grime on a long forgotten biscuit tin on the top shelf. These works are all done from images off the flickr hivemind. I wanted to find a totally oblique way to illustrate what George looks and smells like between 3-6pm on a weekday in November. When everyone is at work but their sprinklers are on: unattended children, underpaid household staff, mournfully barking dogs, and the promise of a hot, claustrophobic summer.”

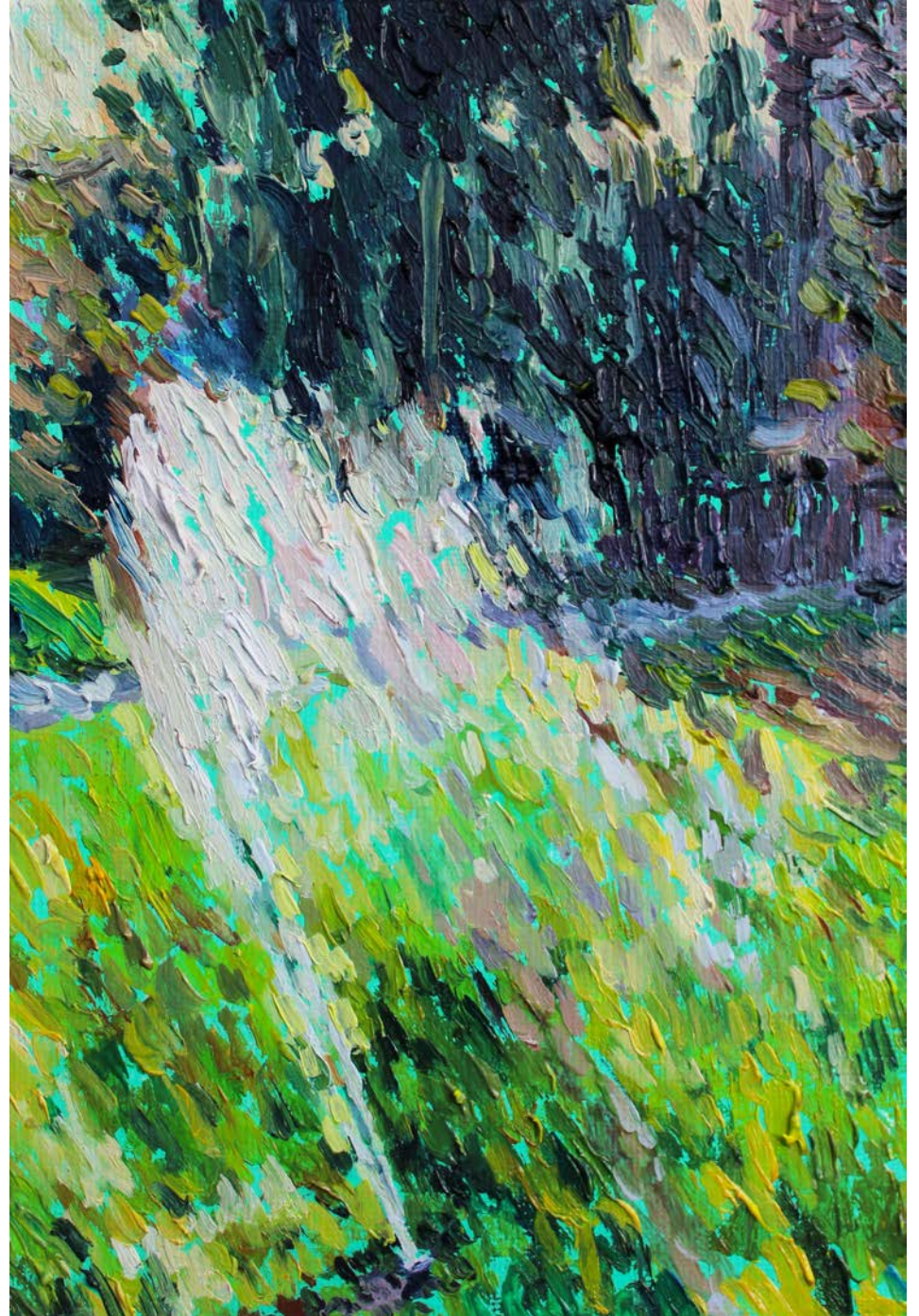
- Fanie Buys

FANIE BUYS

Poem about the
Police Academy in
Heatherlands, 2020

acrylic on canvas board
148 x 210 mm

R 1 970 (framed)





FANIE BUYS

Empty Plots, 2020

acrylic on canvas board
105 x 148 mm

R 1 750 (framed)

FANIE BUYS

Alida looked out of the window and said "at this time in the afternoon you can hear the grass growing", 2020

acrylic on canvas board
148 x 210 mm

R 1 970 (framed)



FANIE BUYS

I don't actually know
where the bowls club
is, but I know it's there,
2020

acrylic on canvas board
105 x 148 mm

R 1 750 (framed)





FANIE BUYS

Painting dedicated to
the sponsors of the
York High astro, 2020

acrylic on canvas board
105 x 148 mm

R 1 750 (framed)

FANIE BUYS

Denneoord (Pine
Neighbourhood), 2020

acrylic on canvas board
148 x 210 mm

R 1 970 (framed)



GITHAN COOPOO

Githan Coopoo is a self-taught ceramicist and jewellery maker in Cape Town. He chooses to work exclusively with clay for its simplicity and tactile character, 'I hope my pieces bring a subtle sense of self-awareness to their wearer – an almost grounding sensation. To adorn the body with a fragile ornament is to make a commitment to sensibility and sensitivity'. For proxies Githan is working with cement for the first time on a scale and in a context that is also new to his practice.

As Githan's work is installation-based, it will only be available for viewing in the gallery itself at the end of the current shutdown.

the gallery is a platform for contemporary art developed by the atelier and gallery, gallery. Its programme includes exhibitions, exchanges, workshops, publications and residencies.

If you are interested in any of these works, we encourage you to purchase the work before the end of the shutdown as it will enable *the gallery* and its partner, *the atelier*, to continue to operate and employ its staff.

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