

## curators' comment

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**exhibition opens:** Wednesday 25 September 2013

### **exhibiting artists:**

Tamlin Blake; *Footprint*: print exhibition; Stefanie Schoeman; Leanne Shakenovsky; *Veldfood*: print exhibition;

for more details on the artists' works, please read the texts on each artist's exhibition page.

### **key words and phrases:**

Green Living; the land; land issues; environmental issues; ecology; recycling; The Artists' Press; The Kuru Art Project; monotypes; lithographs; prints; installation; mixed media; the art/craft debate;

## **Earth Works**

A potted history of South African land disputes up until the present is inappropriate here. But suffice to say, land has always been an issue, and continues to be so today.

And our land is under threat environmentally: Rhino poaching, fracking, water pollution, plastics poisoning the seabirds, threats of extinction to flora and frogs, waste disposal, the carbon footprint ...

The concept of the land for most South Africans provokes strong emotions, simultaneously archetypal and deeply personal: memory, belonging, displacement, longing, resentment, nostalgia, the potential for abundance and loss, along with the bittersweet perception of the sheer beauty and natural diversity of this country.

These subjects have provoked many creative South Africans - whether visual artists, writers, poets, or musicians, whether traditional or contemporary - into making sincere and authentic work about the land that uses pure description or complex metaphor.

*When you write in your diary again  
Remember  
To look at the golden leaf in the summer sun  
Or maybe the blue Cape orchid  
Along one of our absent wanderings  
On Table Mountain.*

Ingrid Jonker (1966)

## Curatorial decisions

The idea for this group of curated shows began as a decision to create a complete shift away from August's edgy urban Joburg-based exhibitions.

The initial trigger had been our knowledge of Mark Attwood and Tamar Mason of The Artists' Press and their family's green living policy, so we thought that a good starting point. During a preliminary phone call in June, Mark was enthusiastic and invited us to stay there for a few days. We discussed the idea of creating an exhibition based on their lifestyle – Tamar refers to themselves as 'Eco-Worriers'! With Mark, we brainstormed the idea of artists who use the land as metaphor and started to look at appropriate, available prints on The Artists' Press website.

We were considering other aspects of the land and environmental issues when, in true **outoftheCUBE** form, a few serendipitous happenings and conversations led us towards the artists we are currently exhibiting. Like nature itself, our curatorial concept subsequently evolved organically – in fact, backwards - and veered off our mapped-out path.

During a trip to Cape Town, we were introduced to the works of Tamlin Blake and Stefanie Schoeman, both of whom are conscious of the artist's ecological footprint on the land. Mandy subsequently met these two artists and was impressed by their commitment and passion, as well as by the craftsmanship and conceptual underpinning of their work. Tamlin and Stefanie both acknowledged the labour-intensive, meditative nature of the time that goes into making their art. Again – another developing feature of **outoftheCUBE** – both shows here are non-commercial, as Tamlin's work is owned by The Spier Holdings Contemporary Art Collection, and Stefanie's is recyclable installation.

Back in Joburg, we met up with Leanne Shakenovsky, a young Wits Fine Arts graduate who has just taken the plunge to work as a fulltime artist. Her experiences in the world of art auctioneering have led to her artworks' ironic comment on the prices realised by South African 'Old Masters'. Her imagery is drawn from three of J H Pierneef's Station Panels, landscape icons in traditional South African visual culture. At last, we thought, a step towards landscape as metaphor.

So by the end of July we had found ourselves an interactive installation – the opening of Stefanie's exhibition at The Lovell Gallery in Cape Town had the crowd lying on their backs under the work, trying for a worm's eye view, gazing up at the small stones, bones and fragments of wood as though they were astrological configurations. And tapestries that appear traditional but are made from recycled newspaper. And Pierneef paintings reproduced small scale as paint-by-numbers, and in glitter.

And due to unmapped life events, the *Eco-Worriers* exhibition – the original compost - had to be put on hold until mid-October.

Finally, in August, we arrived at The Artists' Press with open minds and few preconceptions beyond our original idea of curating an exhibition around land as metaphor. And as the universe would have it, some artists from The Kuru Art Project in Botswana had just left the Press after making the most exquisitely coloured monoprints, jewel-like representations of their rural surroundings. No lengthy deliberation was needed to make the decision to include some of this work on **outoftheCUBE**! Our selection here created the print exhibition *Veldfood*, where we show images that three women

artists made of plants for food and healing plants in their environment, the women in their culture being responsible for the gathering of these for the community.

Finally, we had chance to examine the prints at the Press, and spent time selecting images that spoke, not only of land as metaphor, but of fragments, of the transitory interference of rock marking and evidence of human existence. We luxuriated in choosing images that engaged us, an indulgence we allowed ourselves after the months of hard work we had put into the other exhibitions. With this exhibition, named *Footprint*, we make our own mark on **outoftheCUBE**. After all, a footprint is spoor, an impression, a trace, and so is a lithograph. 'Footprint'... 'Foot print'. Willem Boshoff would be proud of us!

### Source

Ingrid Jonker, 1988. *Selected poems*. Human and Rousseau: Cape Town.