Looking into... and Seeing beyond

UNISA STAFF EXHIBITION 08 – 31 October 2022



PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Gwenneth Miller
Lawrence Lemaoana
Daniel Mosako
Ania Krajewska
Nombe Mpako
Sango Filita
Odun Orimolade

Looking into... and Seeing beyond

Curatorial statement by Dr Ania Krajewska

This group exhibition aims at showcasing the current visual art research activities by artists affiliated with the department of Art and Music at the University of South Africa. The intense meaning-searching and meaningmaking present in the exhibited works are driven by two significant phases, intricately intertwined in any substantial art-based practice: research and exploration. The title of the exhibition, Looking into... and Seeing beyond, signals the entanglement of these complex processes and shows how they bring about new and alternative ways of looking at and seeing the world. Thus, out of these intense and passionate involvements with the world some alternative and individual comprehensions emerge. Looking into indicates the commitment to the visual and theoretical research conducted to create the exhibited artworks, while Seeing beyond speaks to the generating and bringing forth new knowledge, enriched by personal discoveries, and fresh new ways of seeing beyond the obvious.

The works on the exhibition explore a variety of mixed media such as 3D and digital prints, tapestries, traditional and alternative painting and drawing, sculpture, installation, and video. By weaving intricate narratives of societal and environmental values, the artists enrich the world of visual storytelling and bend perceptions.

Gwenneth Miller

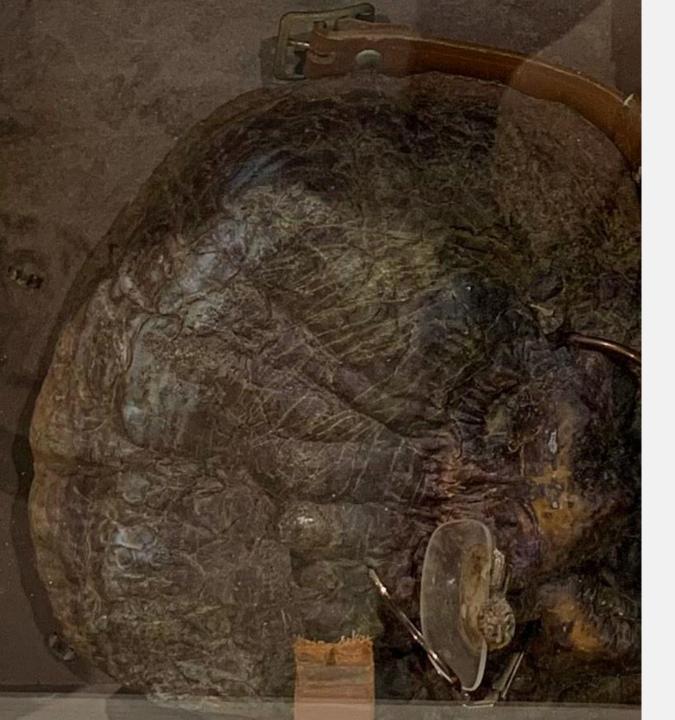
UNDER THE SURFACE







GWENNETH MILLER



Gwen merges landscapes, objects, and fungi to consider relationships between materials and meaning. The broader exhibition theme, Looking into...and seeing beyond, speaks to her passion for finding links between objects that are not immediately apparent. In this group of work, her fascination with mushrooms led to a 'collaboration' with fungi: placing objects on the young growths and letting the objects be partially or entirely unified with the shelf mushrooms. An artist friend has a wooded wild garden, and it was here that an abundant source of wood became the laboratory.

A forested environment brings contemplation - thinking can flow freely without judgment and one's mind can find new connections. In Gwen's practice of drawing bells as a meditative act, the link between states of mind has brought the bells and fungi into a visual relationship. In this body of creative research, one can also find an embedded critique of the tensions between human cultural practices and our ideas of nature.

https://www.gwennethmiller.com/exhibitions























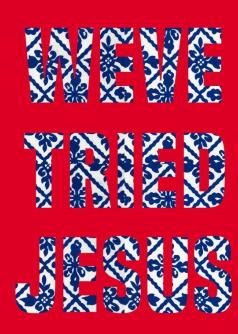
LAWRENCE LEMAOANA

DRAPETOMANIA

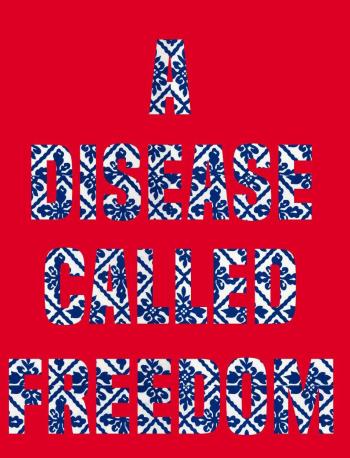


Drapetomania was a supposed mental illness that, in1851, American physician Samuel A. Cartwright hypothesized as the cause of enslaved Africans fleeing captivity.

This hypothesis centered around the belief that slavery was such an improvement upon the lives of slaves that only those suffering from some form of mental illness would wish to escape.



Xes.









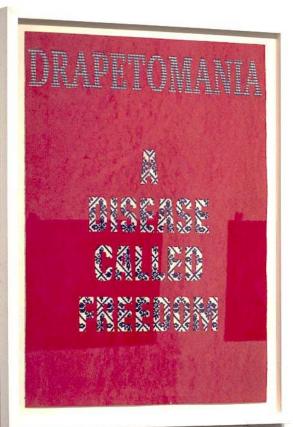




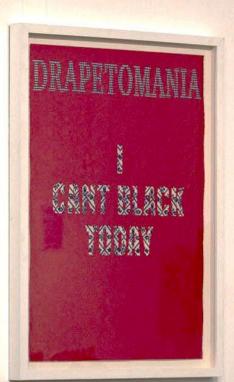














DANIEL MOSAKO

SWINGS

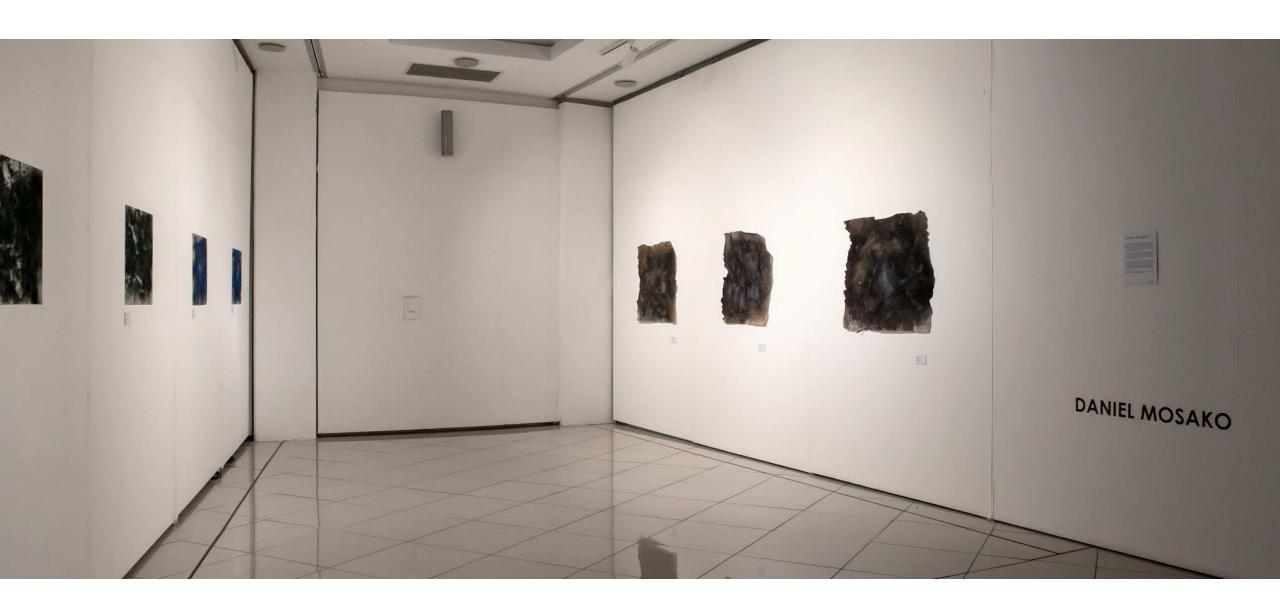


The current theme that I am pursuing is characterised by extreme mood swings. These can range from extreme highs (mania) to extreme lows. Keeping in mind that people have different personalities and mood swings. I identified these personalities with the functionality of the human brain. The brain is the primary organ that makes discretions of how to cope with stress, and recuperation mechanisms, that sometimes lead to physiological instabilities or inabilities.

In the same breath, it is incredible to note how the state of personality disorder can be restored for positive outcomes through psychological and psychiatric attention. Similar restorative energy can be referenced to human growth whereby human beings stand a chance to have their emotional moods transformed in a positive manner and surpass the mental state of existence or lifestyle.

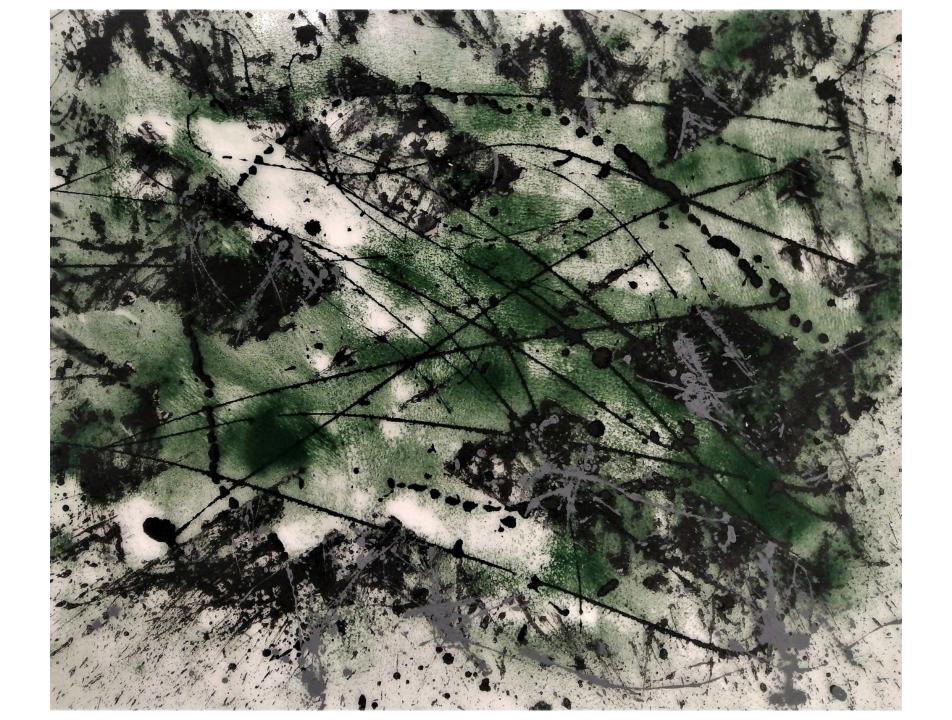
The manner in which the human brain responds to nervous system illnesses including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, stroke, and traumatic brain disorders is through this complex network. These ailments and injuries serve as a reminder of how crucial our biological foundations are to our behavior. Surprisingly, the human brain deals with processes that, according to the theory of biopsychology have an impact on how we think, feel, react, and behave, using such multidirectional (lines) linear networks.

Kietzmann et al. (2019) perceive the human brain to be a complex network, which I relate to how the human brain works.

















ANIA KRAJEWSKA

PLANTS HAVE POEMS INSIDE THEM





ANIA KRAJEWSKA

Being an attentive, keen, and tender observer of leaves and their life processes was the key drive behind this project. Leaves not only tell us their stories of the unstoppable transience states but connect us to the living world. Their breath-outs are our breathins forming a continuous harmony between the interiority of multitudes of chloroplasts tightly packed under their epidermis and their bond to the vastness of the outer space and the energy of our closest star. As the poet, Maria Pawlikowska Jasnorzewska (1891-1945) said, plants can be our role models for leading congruous and worth-while lives: "This group of entities taking from life what is good: peace, quiet and clear conscience. In harmony next to each **other**, they heal us with their example of undisturbed peace. The forest is more than a wood-sap treasure to our breath, a pitchy balsam for our tired lungs or a green kaleidoscope for our eyes."

That the present atmosphere is rich in oxygen is the result of 2.7 billion of years of photosynthetic processes initiated by the first unicellular organisms like cyanobacteria, which unfailingly kept releasing oxygen into the Earth's gases as a by-product of transforming carbon dioxide and sunlight into energy (Lane 2003). And artists like Joe Davis unfold the drama of these life-giving photosynthetic processes and pay tribute to "lower" life forms in RuBisCo Stars (2009) whereby sending chemical formulae of chloroplast enzymes19 (1) essential for photosynthesis as radio signals into the cosmos to be the ambassadors of life on our planet, attest to the non human part of ecology.

The questions I raise are environmentally ethical in the sense that Antonio Damasio (2003:171), the behavioural biologist and neuroscientist, claims Spinoza adumbrated,

The biological reality of self preservation leads to virtue because in our inalienable need to maintain ourselves, we must, of necessity, help preserve other selves. If we fail to do so we perish and are thus violating the foundational principle and relinquishing the virtue that lies in self-preservation. The secondary foundation of virtue is the reality of a social structure and the presence of other living organisms in a complex system of interdependence with our own organism. We are in a bind, literally, in the good sense of the word...

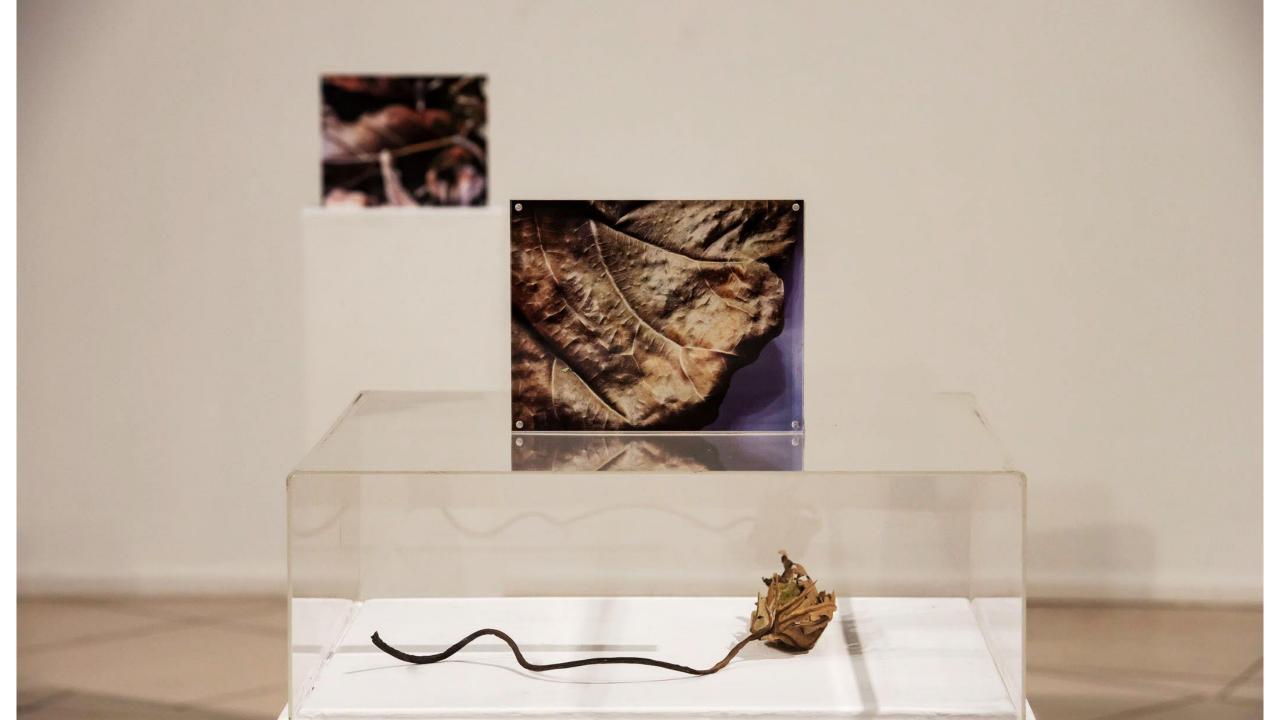
Spinoza ties it to a biological principle - the mandate for self preservation ... the foundation for a system of ethical behaviours and that foundation is neurobiological.

In other words, engaging with preservation and paying deep attention to our biological environments is crucial for our own self-preservation. However, while the ethical and mindful living is pivotal to the *Plants have Poems inside them*, the work is also driven by the re enchantment with the "in betweenness" and transience of all life forms. Looking at leaves close and anew, devotedly photo-documenting different stages of their being and paying attention to the entities usually taken for granted, can bring about a contemplation on our own brevity.

https://www.aniakrajewska.com

⁽¹⁾ Full name: Protein Ribulose - 1,5-bisphosphate Carboxylase Oxygenase. The Foundation of all life on Earth.











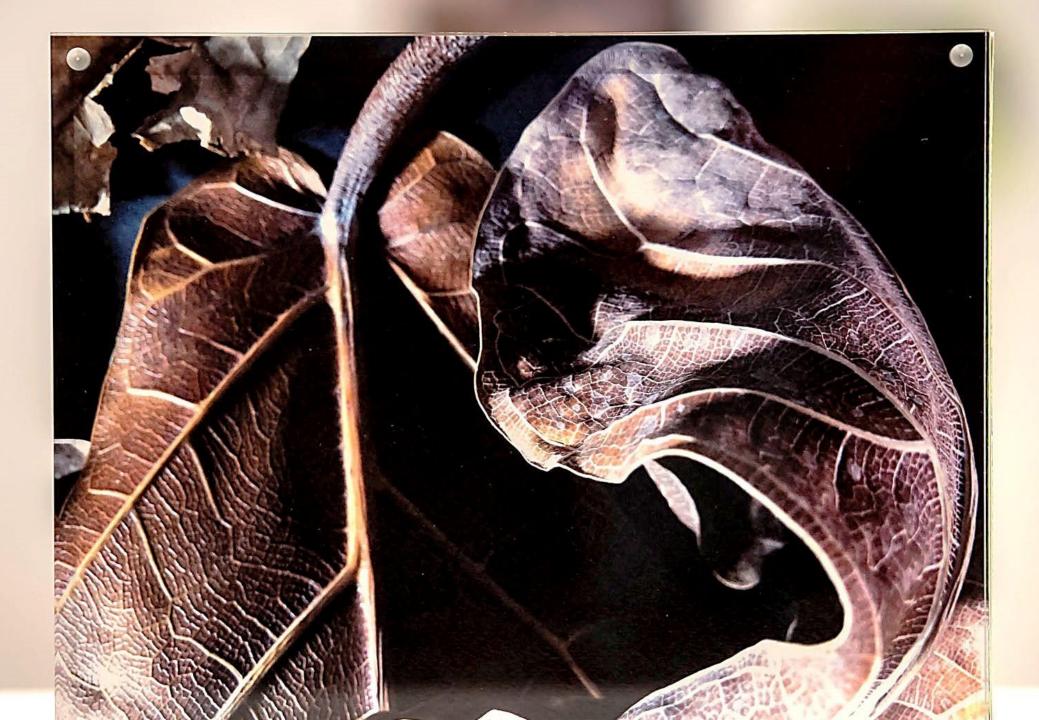
















NOMBE MPAKO

SITHWELENZIMA BAZALIKAZI

The exhibition entitled "Sithwelenzima bazalikazi" (we are struggling mothers) is activism for single parented/parenting motherhood presented through actionism artistic discourse. The featured works epitomize single parenting mothers' struggles depicted in mundane and ordinary women chores. The stop frame animation first showcase the verbatim stories from 65 women who participated in this study and can be accessed via QR Codes.

The second part of the stop frame animation are messages from the participating mothers to their daughters and sons cautioning them about life in general and in particular about issues surrounding domestic abuse and gender-based violence, a scourge that is destroying the moral fiber of our society, and is a concern for all South Africans. These stories are meant to encourage this type of dialogue between mothers and their children to as being natural and not a taboo. The messages are accompanied by the artist adding her voice condemning GBV and its repercussions. The titled of the stop frame is "Umzimba wam' uyabila ayandisinda' mabali" (my body is steaming the stories are heavy on me), and "Umzalikazi wamashumi asithandathu anesithandathu" (Mother number 66).

The works presented in this exhibit seek to campaign not only to bring about social change, but to honour single parenting mothers for their tireless caring, and unconditional love for their children despite the difficulties that surround their lives especially the difficulties caused by gender-based violence.





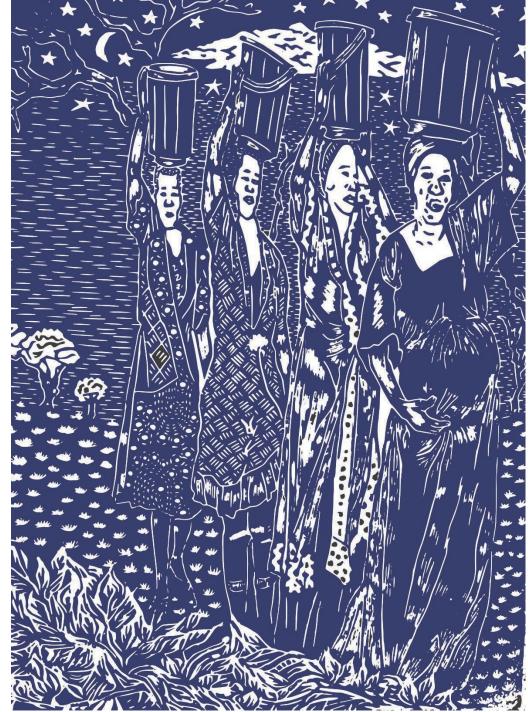














SANGO FILITA

AMAHLATHI APHELILE

(The forests are gone, or the forests are exhausted. The truth is out)

This body of work is inspired by how commemoration/public art has been done before and after apartheid era. It also addresses some of the changes and developments that were made after democracy in South Africa. It portrays a visual representation of South African heroes who are now blamed for their impact in the South African Freedom. *Amahlathi aphelile* meaning: the forests are gone, or the forests are exhausted (the truth is out) focuses on how can we move forward as a country without blaming others for playing their roles.

This also emphases on the history of the Eastern Cape heroes and heroines who played part or who were misled in order to gain freedom as a nation. In the 1994 election the African National Congress (ANC) symbolised the moral and intellectual leadership of South Africa, this was largely due to its active involvement in the liberation movement. The ANC had asserted its hegemony, however, in recent years the power lines are shifting.

The decline started from Nongqawuse's prophecy about the cow killings during the arrival of the Western people. The Eastern Cape province was suffering until the late Tata Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela become the first president to liberate the country. After Mandela has served his term the Eastern Cape province was lucky to have Thabo Mbeki as second black president from the Eastern Cape to lead the country, he also tried but ignored everything about his Eastern Cape, now this province becomes one of the poor provinces that are always left behind when it comes to social services.

The human element in this body of work is important – depicting those with the authority to decide over others and equally important depicting the disappointment and doubt held in the faces of South Africans. Unfortunately many lives were lost, Xhosa people had to start over to balance their lives resulting in starvation while those privileged appear to continually benefit. The hardest hit in the country even resorted to looting; an incident that was deliberately misconstrued with the imprisonment of former President Jacob Zuma, now our current president does not seem to differ from what Nonggawuse did and now there places like Queenstown in the Eastern Cape who also had heroes such Chris Hani and Enoch Mgijima who fought for everything but ended up in street names that are not bringing any justice to those who suffer, therefore the aim of these artworks is to remove the blame game and find better ways to move on.

I chose the black paper to portray some of the issues that we end up commemorating as a country in a wrong or selfish approach only to benefit the few. This also allows me to visually represent how even those seemingly unrelated incidents are connected.









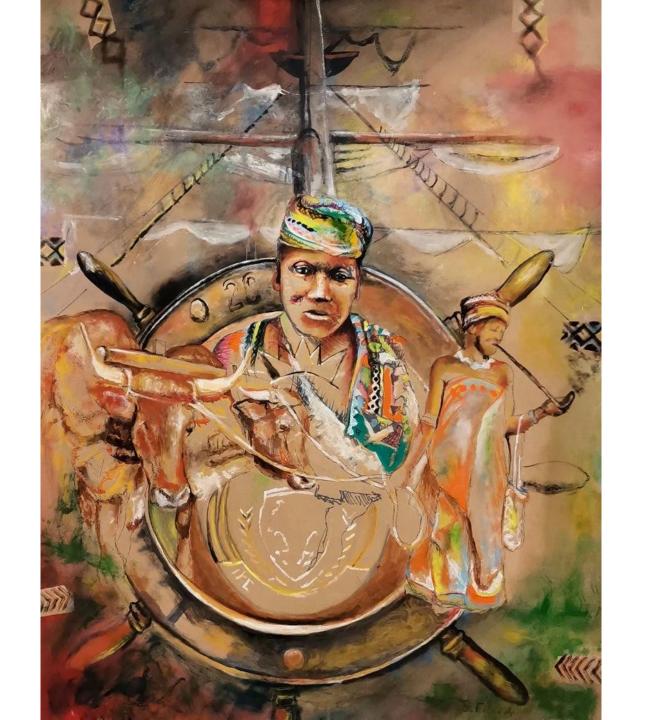
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ODUN ORIMOLADE

TRANSMISSION I



Transmission I is a process in triggering an activation of an already existing but unaware memory line. In navigating issues relating to a forgotten space, the space of the womb, one is confronted with a myriad of musings on the plausibility of lost events in memory.

It brings to the fore influences of the propaganda of history on our orientations and behavioral tendencies. Fetal memory here becomes a discourse of import. It engages a mix of information from science and the world of myths and fables linked through memories of generations and cultures. Ideas of this apprehension spread in a range of channels that present different types of memories (fictional, imposed, redacted, imagined etc.) and how it affects action and behavior.













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