

Interior Design



Interior Design offers three engagements with printed matter. The title riffs on artist Cameron Platter's presentation in the lobby and central room of the gallery, 'Inferior Design'. This installation of hanging mobiles, tapestries, and sculpture follows A4's publication of *My Work Here Is Done* (2026), which details Platter's collaboration with the weavers of the ELC Art and Craft Centre at Rorke's Drift in KwaZulu-Natal. 'Inferior Design' grew out of an ambition to turn that zine into a space – like a pop-up book. 'Inferior Design' is bordered on one side by 'AGR', a studio in which an annual general report is rendered as a high-gloss magazine. At the far end of the gallery, 'Dressing' revisits A4's *Sightlines* project towards a publication on a collection of artworks. A sightline places works in conversational groupings using cards as stand-ins for those that are absent. *Interior Design* invites your read on interiority and composition (from 'psychological decor' to outward expressions) while playfully querying tensions between the categories of 'fine art' and 'furnishings'.



* 1 Agnes Ndlamlenze and Lyness Magwaza – *My dream garden*, 1965

p. 24–25

Inferior Design:
Cameron Platter

- 2 *Hand*, 2018
- 3 *Table and Chair*, 2026
- 4 *Snake*, 2018
- 5 *Cream*, 2014
- 6 *Pool Noodle Stool Stool*
Chair Chair Mobile, 2026
- 7 *Zero Ultra*, 2020
- 8 *Get Lost*, 2022
- 9 *Kiss*, 2018
- 10 *Laundry Light*, 2026

- 11 *Bang*, 2013
- 12 *Brick Chair*, 2026
- 13 *Bin*, 2025
- 14 *Transdimensional Control*, 2022
- 15 *Lovers Plus*, 2020
- 16 *Four Hours*, 2013
- 17 *Everyday People*, 2025
- 18 *Behind*, 2014
- 19 *Trash Can Stool Bucket*
Cinderblock Mobile, 2026
- 20 *Monster Chair*, 2020
- 21 *Everyday People*, 2019–2025
- 22 *U-SAVED-ME*, 2016

Sightlines:
Dressing

p. 33–37

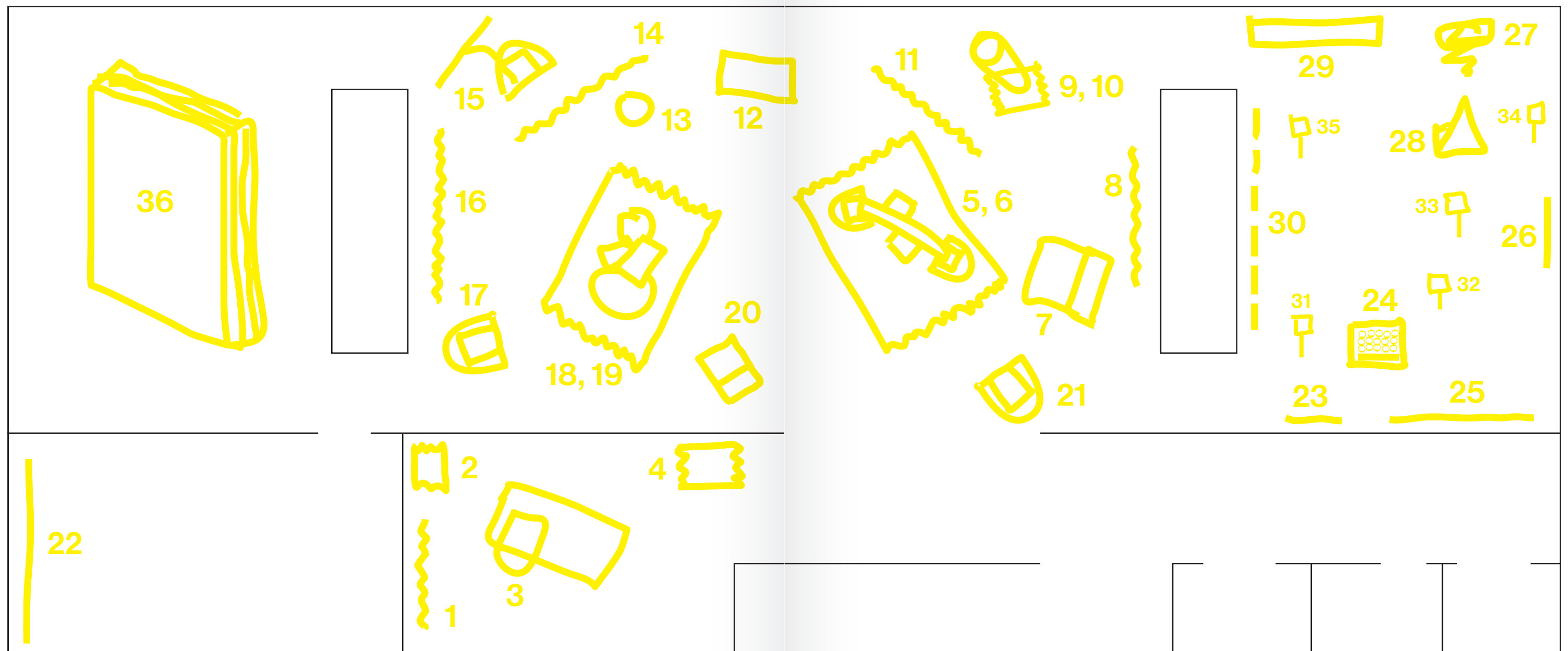
- 23 Athi-Patra Ruga –
Regatta Bitch, 2010
- 24 Walter Battiss –
My Typewriter, c.1960s
- 25 Dor Guez – *Jacob*, 2021
- 26 Jo Ractliffe –
Roadside stall on the
way to Viana, 2007
- 27 Igshaan Adams –
Untitled, 2017–2022

p. 38

- 36 AGR – Annual General Report

- 28 Penny Siopis –
Column Cake, 1982
- 29 Kevin Beasley – *Arizona South*
Africa, 2020
- 30 Steven Cohen – *Untitled*, 1999
- 31 Lisa Brice – *Untitled (Blue)*, 2016
- 32 Tracey Emin –
Just Love Me, 1998
- 33 Glenn Ligon – *Stranger 58*, 2012
- 34 Zanele Muholi –
Martin Machapa, 2006
- 35 Agnes Martin –
Untitled No. 1, 1992

* Made at the ELC Art and Craft Center, Rorke's Drift
Karakul hand-spun wool, 146 x 157.5 cm



Cameron Platter

Inferior Design

Therapy Session

Cameron Platter (C.P.), Josh Ginsburg (J.G.), Lucienne Bestall (L.B.) and Sara de Beer (S.d.B.) in conversation, 29 September 2026.

J.G. The gallery looks amazing. There's stuff lying all over the place.

C.P. Yeah? Thank you. 'My Work Here Is Done', you know? Let's go!

[Ed.'s note: *My Work Here Is Done* (2026) is the zine A4 published with Cameron Platter that inspired the current exhibition of his work.]

J.G. Exactly! Our plan is to make a first position in the gallery with your artworks, a preliminary sketch in advance of your arrival, and then when you get here you can edit, change, demolish, do as you please, but at least we'll have put up something to which you can respond.

C.P. Okay. I had a sort of a crazy idea to throw at you off the bat. I know this conversation's not really about this, but we've been talking about hanging the tapestries. What about the tapestries on the floor and the sculptures all suspended?

J.G. I really like that. What about we do both?

C.P. Okay, why not? Yeah.

J.G. Because then their hierarchy will be collapsed, if both. What we already noticed is that if we hung all the tapestries, it might be too busy in the space. We'll test both of those strategies on Friday and see. So in terms of where this conversation is going, it's for our wayfinder. This document is free – a takeaway from the exhibition. We have a wonderful opportunity to share content and give our community access to the artist in their own words. We're very proud of these documents – we treat them as publications but we print them at A4 and we keep iterating them. It's both serious and light. Most importantly, it is a conversation, so you get to ask whatever you want. There's no bounds necessarily, but we do want to give people an opportunity to get closer to the things you do.

C.P. From my side, I would much rather be asking you guys questions about all the stuff that you've seen come through your practice and all the paths that you've walked. Sara was asking me earlier before you stepped into the conversation about whether I like or don't like a particular work. The answer can be quite prosaic and – for want of a better word – boring. I'm always quite curious to find out about other people. That's how I get into the works as well, by being curious about lots of different things.

J.G. As I stepped in, you said something that I wanted to follow up on. You said, "I love it, but I don't understand it." Or "I love it and I don't understand it."

C.P. Well, that's why I find myself doing what I do – it's because I have no idea what the hell's going on, you know? **When I find something that I really don't understand, I get a lot more intrigued about it.** People often ask, "Well, why do you do that?" I'm always really surprised when artists have the perfect answer: "I do that because of XYZ, and da-da-da." For me, it's absolutely not that. There are multiple roots shooting off, dead ends, and meanderings to other pathways. **For example, if you ask me why I like plastic chairs, I'll give you a lot of answers, but those will change every day. And I think maybe that's why the chairs fascinate me. In a way, they are un-understandable objects.**

L.B. I went down to the gallery earlier. Your chairs are arranged very haphazardly at the moment because we haven't yet developed the installation. **I was struck by how they almost become part of this urban formalism – en masse, you're not reading each individually. They become composite things that collectively add up to something else. I found myself reading them not as chairs so much as parts.**

C.P. I don't really see those as a group when there's four or five chairs together. I would see 100 chairs as a group, you know? I find it interesting when I see a car pulling a stack of 100 or 200 chairs to a wedding or a funeral. I'll whip the phone out and try and get a pic, but yeah, while driving, that could be hard. They become these weird sort of...not quite

anthropomorphic, but they appear as things that group and cluster.

J.G. **Cameron, you said earlier, which I really appreciate, that in effect, the more uncertain or unclear the motivation, the more motivated you are to pursue it.** I don't know whether this is a good way to describe it: there's a big question mark, or a series of questions, and then there's this enthusiasm to pursue it, or walk into it. What happens if or when it starts to become clearer: do you become less interested and pull away?

C.P. Maybe. **But I like the clarity as well. I'm searching for that clarity, you know? Especially within the really uncertain and sort of 'casino life' of an artist.** I'm always searching for that clarity but when things become too clear I get less interested. Maybe I should become more interested, and be a better brand manager.

J.G. No, please don't. I identify with what you've said. I don't find it particularly interesting when artists have an absolutely practised response. **There are a range of risks when the artist is very clear as to what they intend to do, or why they do it. That's not to say that the outcomes can't themselves be uncertain and generate all kinds of curiosities, because they can, but they often don't.** They're often too prescribed to allow any uncertainty down chain. So I'm very enthusiastic and interested by the opposite: the artist as someone who is willing to step into and negotiate uncertainty productively.

I'm curious to know whether you think that your approach to these mundane objects and the kind of uncertainty associated to the reproduction of them and the negotiation of them translates in any way to your engagement with uncertainty of life at large? Is there an art-life intersection here? **Can the lessons learned from embracing uncertainty, in the fashion you do in the studio, afford you any comfort in the world that is at best, uncertain?**

C.P. I wish it would. I hope it might equip one. I'm astounded how people go through life quite certain. It blows my mind. I'm in awe of that kind of artist: they've found the Holy Grail. There are brilliant artists that can do that, but I think it's quite rare. I'm sort of walking around like, oh, shit, shit, the whole time...

Maybe that way of looking and engaging, whether with one's own art or the artworks of another, is about attention, about giving that attention to an odd object. This can translate into giving that attention to other aspects in life as well. But it doesn't make it any easier, if that answers your question?

J.G. From what I've seen, a lack of uncertainty is the remit of the maker who treats art more like design. And I don't mean design here in a negative light. I mean, to solve a problem, applying a design logic that is conscious of the infrastructure, recognises and presents a solution to a problem.

Can we return to something you said earlier? You said the "casino life of an artist". Can you explain that?

C.P. It's kind of obvious. It's the real up and down. It goes back to the uncertainty, the chance, the randomness of it all, of being in the studio and picking up something, even that thing you've thrown away, and suddenly it appears to you in a new light. For example, looking at those tapestries on a ladder and seeing how they came together, you know, it's those chance elements.

Being an artist is, at least in my experience of being an artist – it's not like being a salaried person. There's nothing guaranteed in it. I think that's why I'm drawn to casinos as a subject. I'm not a gambler at all because I'm engaged in gambling every day in my studio and my work. The studio is a metaphor for me.

J.G. Lucie, does this bring up anything for you in relation to what you've been recently writing about Cameron's practice?

L.B. The relationship to unknowingness that you mention, Cameron, is curious, because you often iterate on the same form, like the plastic chairs or your bumper sticker tapestries. When one first embarks on a new form, or one is testing materials, **it makes sense that there's unknowingness, but that you can hold onto not knowing, even while you reproduce along a similar vein...** I suppose I'm curious about this in relation to a conversation we had about art and therapy – iterating, repeating, revisiting – and in relation to the title 'Interior Design'.

[Ed.'s note: Cameron later iterated on this propositional title to name his installation 'Inferior Design'. The three-part project in the gallery retained the title *Interior Design*. It was initially named for his project, like the title track of an album.]

C.P. Yeah, I mean, to me, art is definitely the way of processing things around me. If I return to a subject again and again, be it a chair, or a crocodile, or a casino, that's because I haven't quite figured out what it is or what it's doing for me – what message it's sending out to me. I'll return and work on things over years and years. And I know, when I'm returning to certain things, and they're coming up again, that they're there for some sort of reason. To do a little jump into the therapy thing, there's some sort of processing going on there.

L.B. Have you ever felt that you've reached some sort of resolution and you therefore have to discard that particular line of enquiry or that particular material experiment?

C.P. No. I think it gets a little quieter, maybe, and then it'll pop up in another way. Certain works, when I make them, I think, "I really don't understand this. I don't like this." In the back of my mind, I know that those works that I have that kind of feeling towards often jump up again. Certainly it's that way with the chairs. I guess I'm looking for this particular quality in a lot of different ways in the works that I do: an open-source quality, whether it can be pirated. Something like that.

I'm sort of making pirated versions of chairs, tables, tapestries.

L.B. You find the chairs. They have a certain patina to them. I'm curious as to how that history of use is actively translated into the wooden sculptures or if it's just part of the game of making that you have to find them in the world – that they can't be store-bought, brand new plastic chairs from Makro.

S.d.B. Lucie, would you mind detailing this process of Cameron's chair finding, the way you understand it to be? For the sake of this document it would be good for people to be able to read that origin story.

C.P. Go for it, Lucie.

L.B. I'll tell you what I understand, and you can tell me if I'm correct.

C.P. Sure.

L.B. You trade new plastic chairs for ones that have a history of use that you find in the urban or suburban environment?

C.P. Yes!

J.G. But they're haphazardly found? You might just be driving past someone and see them sitting on a chair on the porch and think, "Hmm, I like that chair. Let me see if I can find an equivalent and trade it with them."

C.P. Well, yeah. I'd see a chair. I'd think, "Damn, that would be good." The trade is not really the crux of the project.

but in doing a number of these trades, I've realised that exploring that aspect would be a fascinating project in and of itself. But to respond to Lucie, I've got nothing against a store-bought Makro chair. If it's got a good shape, I'm into it. But there is a wonderful thing about seeing a chair with patina, with life on it, with history on it, and then engaging with the person about it. Invariably, people are a bit suspicious about what I'm up to. This thing that I do, it's a very odd thing to do! There have often been people who I've approached for the chair they are sitting in and they say straight up, "No". And then I have to leave. When I was doing it actively, I'd actually gone to Makro and bought a whole bunch of chairs, so I had a little stockpile to swap out for. I would go and trade, talk a little bit about the project and its history. Most of the time, people would be like, "Okay, cool, you know, this guy is clearly bonkers. But he's sincere."

L.B. It would be great to have transcripts of these conversations and engagements you've had with people asking if you can take their chairs.

J.G. I like that you had a batch of chairs, like having a chunk of change when you're running a lemonade store.

C.P. Yeah, but the problem is I'm not driving around with hundreds of chairs on the backseat. Often, I see a great chair, and I've got to get home, and get that new chair, and get back, and then the person's not there.

S.d.B. If only you could keep a chair in

your pocket at all times.

C.P. Exactly. You know, I've come back before, and the person's not there, but their banged-up chair is... I'll admit there are times I've taken it and left a new chair in its place.

L.B. Christmas chairs.

J.G. You said something earlier that's been ringing for me. John Cage said this wonderful thing about giving the kind of attention that we normally give to art, to the everyday. That's at least the central tenet of his kind of conceptual practice: listen to the traffic. That will become a sound composition, defined to some extent by giving it a beginning and an end. You've got the kind of practice that teaches people to pay attention to the everyday. So, the other day, in Naples, I walked past an office chair, and I thought, "How's that chair?" This is a function of your project, turning me onto that. [Ed's note: Josh shares his screen showing the picture of the scene.]

C.P. That's a good chair, the office chair.

J.G. These guys – it's a classic European scene, you know, sitting outside, the older men would maybe in the past have been drinking a coffee, or reading the newspaper, here they're on their phones. For all three cafe owners I passed, I noticed each one's chair in a way I hadn't before. Your project brought me into that world.

C.P. I see chairs. I see chairs everywhere, you know? And that kind of office chair...oof, you know, it's quiet, it's got a real little something. I haven't figured out how to do an office chair yet.

J.G. How are they made?

C.P. The monobloc chair, it's sort of spat out, singly. One thing, two minutes, no joins, from a mould. I mean, that's been the highest order of chair making for so long: to have no joints or screws. But with these ones, I'll find the prototype, and then I work with a Mozambican carver. We'll then look for trees – sometimes these are trees on the side of the road that need to be felled. I'll seek out the imperfections in the wood, if there are knots in the tree, that's gold, for me. They're roughly chainsawed, roughly shaped, and then they go into a kiln to dry for a couple of weeks before they're reshaped and painted.

J.G. They're at once sculptures and chairs?

C.P. I think so. I use them. There are two in this show that I use, that are used every single day in our house – they're the most ergonomically comfortable ones.

J.G. That's interesting. The objects can flow in whatever direction you choose. They transform. It's a wonderful expression of the framing of a thing defining its identity.

C.P. Well, it's also about hierarchy. I like looking at stuff

that collapses hierarchy, whether that's source material from an advertisement or an energy-drink can or whatever...I think of those as equal as a John Cage piece. I'll look at them with the same sort of intensity.

And this undoes the hierarchy, especially in the art world, where it's very 'country-clubbed'.

J.G. But there is a unique, transformative power in your status as an artist that allows you to flatten those hierarchies.

C.P. Okay.

J.G. George Brecht advertised three iterations on a sink in a single newspaper's 'classifieds'. First, he listed it as a white sink accompanied by a certificate. Purchasing it entitles you to all the events in which it takes part. Brecht was a Fluxus guy, he's treating the sink there as a ticket of sorts. Then the sculpture, *White Sink* by George Brecht, is for sale. Third, a listing of a standard white porcelain sink. The object had three different identities concurrently through his declaration. I'm reiterating the obvious: that you, as the artist, get to transform objects through your declaration: you have the power to change the status of a thing into the singular status of 'artwork'.

L.B. I would like to speak to the idea of this collapse, because I think the tapestries are a succinct example of this. You're using either the degraded covers of old porn DVDs, or bumper stickers, and giving each over to this time-consuming process of tapestry

making, which is seemingly a much higher form of art than making a pornographic DVD cover might be.

J.G. Yes where do the porn DVD covers fit it? The illicit, the public, something of the casino in there?

C.P. I think using the porn DVD covers was a refusal of polite society, you know? This was pre the days of porn being accessible everywhere like now where it's all over the internet. Talking about it in 2026...it wasn't ubiquitous back then. I refused politeness by rubbing up against unliked things.

Again, it is the same conundrum as placing an advert alongside an artwork or the design of a Monster Energy drink as deserving the attention of a painting, for example. I actually found the design work on the covers innovative and interesting. There's a designer behind each of these DVD covers, thousands of them. The person who did this has taken some care to make it look enticing. Those weren't made by AI. I came across them in images online, and quite often they would be quite badly pixelated. This was over fifteen years ago. The image quality online wasn't what it is now. Because of this, they started to appeal to me in a kind of fuzzy, Abstract Expressionist painting type of way. I thought I would see how far I could push that digitally so that it became an abstract piece.

J.G. That was on the cusp of a time when interacting with media was still somewhat discreet. I don't mean in relation to porn, necessarily, I mean in relation to being exposed to a

continuous stream of media rather than the act of seeking out a singular material object like a DVD, or even VHS preceding that.

C.P. I was making them at a time when DVDs weren't yet completely redundant. They were not yet dinosaurs.

S.d.B. Josh, could you explain how Cameron's project came to be in the gallery alongside these other two under the shared title, 'Interior Design'?

J.G. It emerged as we went along. We've got two primary ways of using our gallery at A4: the first is 'the exhibition' as a standard format and the second is 'the studio'. I don't need to detail what an exhibition is – that's clear enough. The studio is our acknowledgement that the gallery and our gallery are really incredible spaces in which to test ideas. And so we'll have times where there's an exhibition, and others where we treat the gallery like a studio and afford ourselves and artists space to test out ideas. It's not always absolutely clear what the difference is – I guess a certain leniency to how a gallery works? We are more lenient to what the presentation is when we've declared we're working in studio mode: the public is still invited to interact with the space but the focus, in those instances, isn't on the presentation – it's on the work and the process. In the past, this has played out as having artists in residence in the gallery, as an example.

S.d.B. The gallery functioning as Cameron's casino metaphor:

putting time and money behind something with no certainty of its outcome.

J.G. Or playing with a real commitment – as an organisation, to the artists with whom we work, and to our community – to express processes as something legitimate and not necessarily something that needs to be fully resolved in order to be justified. **Process is a good use of time. For the most part, life is expressed in process and not by way of a conclusion.** I think that's very much aligned with what Cameron was saying earlier. And by the way, I identify personally and wholly with what you said. I also sit around with ideas until I know what the experiment is, until I know what I want to know. At that point, I no longer am concerned about whether it's good. I am prepared to do it.

I also wonder after what 'interior design' could do when applied as a phrase to the internal landscape. It seemed like an affirming, creative relationship with one's internal world: What do you want this place to be like? How does it feel to be there?

S.d.B. **Cameron, you said, "Why do I like plastic chairs? It's a different answer every day." What's the answer today?**

C.P. I mean, just right now, I'm thinking about the little concave impression for one's butt. That's pretty cool. I mean, without joking around too much, **I like the**

fact that there are over a billion of them out there.

L.B. I also wanted to ask, do you keep your source chairs? Do you have an informal museum of vaguely messed-up originals?

C.P. No. There's one in particular that I love – it looks like it has been sewn together – that was special to me. But in the subtropics, even plastic tends to get mouldy. I don't keep them. The wooden ones are their celebration, or a marker.

S.d.B. Could you expand on that idea of the sculpture celebrating the chair?

C.P. **There might be a billion of these chairs out there: they are sort of 'throwaway' objects and people don't look at them.** They've been banned in some towns. I think Basel banned plastic chairs a while ago. **I have a real appreciation for 'trash', for throwaway stuff, thrown-away culture.**

Josh, you're certainly looking at chairs a lot, you know?

J.G. Oh, I'm looking at chairs because you made me look at chairs.

C.P. Yeah, maybe there are a lot of people looking at chairs now.

S.d.B. We've been using the language of 'flattening.' Perhaps it's nicer to say that you're elevating the everyday, giving the posture that's slumped in that chair after a day of work its due tenderness, immortalising that seat. These are

proletarian objects: the plastic chair to catch a rest, the Monster Energy drink chugged to survive the day's labour. You look for the tree; you carve the wood, you treat each part with solemnity. **Even though your practice doesn't scream 'solemnity' on the surface, there is a political dimension to it.** Punk is political. The whole idea of 'Interior Design' can sound like a posh, bourgeois thing to be concerned with. You undo that.

C.P. Thank you for that. Being an artist for me is more like a vocation than a career. The way I feel about it could be compared to someone who knows they want to be a teacher. It's the interactions with people that are most meaningful to me.

J.G. The sculptures disguise the seriousness that underpins them, entering the room with those pops of colour and such joy, but the imprints carry these sitters and their stories.









Hand, 2018
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
120 x 76 cm



Table and Chair, 2026
Carved and painted wood
Dimensions variable



Snake, 2018
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
100 x 67 cm



Cream, 2014
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
250 x 200 cm



*Pool Noodle Stool Stool
Chair Chair Mobile*, 2026
Carved and painted wood,
fishing gut
Dimensions variable



Zero Ultra, 2020
Carved and painted wood,
rebar
85 x 83 x 84 cm



Get Lost, 2022
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
285 x 180 cm



Kiss, 2018
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
75 x 40 cm



Laundry Light, 2026
Carved and painted
wood
155 x 51 x 70 cm



Bang, 2013
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
250 x 200 cm



Brick Chair, 2026
Carved and painted
wood
71 x 70 x 30 cm



Bin, 2025
Carved and painted
wood
42 x 29 x 29 cm



Transdimensional Control,
2022
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
230 x 180 cm



Lovers Plus, 2020
Carved and painted
wood, rebar, LED light
200 x 120 x 100 cm



Four Hours, 2013
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
250 x 200 cm



Everyday People, 2025
Bronze
84 x 60 x 60 cm



Behind, 2014
Hand-spun Karakul wool
and metal-complex dyes
250 x 200 cm



*Trash Can Stool Bucket
Cinderblock Mobile*,
2026
Carved and painted
wood, fishing gut
Dimensions variable



Monster Chair, 2020
Carved and painted
wood, Monster Energy
cans
78 x 40 x 60 cm



Everyday People,
2019–2025
Carved and painted
wood
86 x 55 x 50 cm



U-SAVED-ME, 2016
Video, colour, sound
21 min 5 sec

Sightlines *Dressing*

Sightlines

—

The room draws on a strategy developed for the exhibition *Sightlines* (opened 13 May 2025) that sees our team position artworks in small, conversational groupings. In preparation for that project, we printed a deck of cards, with each card representing a work. Multiple discrete objects, given this uniform 'frame', are played alongside one another. With everything pictured together, connections become visible across histories, geographies, and materials. Sets of artworks constellate along an axis and come into focus. This is a 'Sightline' – a passage to thought that emerges across the chatter of like and unlike things brought together. Where we are unable to loan artworks, the cards act as their 'stand-ins'.





Brice Lenoir
1924
Portrait of a woman, 1924
Oil on canvas, 100 x 150 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Emin, Tracey
470
Just Love Me, 1998
Soft glass, resin, 100 x 150 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York

'Dressing'

The impasto adorning *My Typewriter* (c.1960s) by Walter Battiss has stopped the machine's mechanism, swapping words for paint, trading labour for immortality. It is placed in the *Sightlines* 'Dressing' room to represent a statement Wittgenstein laid out in his early philosophy of language:

Everyday/ordinary language hides the true form of the proposition. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the clothed thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes.
(Section 4.002 of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921/2).

The selected artworks assemble around this idea: that language is as different to thought as clothes are to the body. They do not seek to pull the mask from the idea. There is no dilemma to be found in this difference for the lines crossing Agnes Martin's *Untitled* (1992). These appear as two streams of thought content to run in parallel – separate together. Cutting at language can bring clarity and danger. Steven Cohen chooses embellishment, contortion, and silence where words fail. These artworks wear poetry. Like with Athi-Patra Ruga's *Regatta Bitch* (2010), the costume portrays a truer account. Glenn Ligon invents word plays and layers language in an effort to represent the cultures and customs it can be used to marginalise and exclude. Artists are perhaps the workers most equipped to transform ill-fitting ideas into something wearable. There are things that must be said that defy logical arrangement.



Athi-Patra Ruga
Regatta Bitch, 2010
Wool, tapestry, canvas
120 x 80 cm

Athi-Patra Ruga is an artist of rococo inclinations. Embellishments and high-gloss finishes characterise much of his work across mediums, be it photographic, performative, or sculptural, and the *petit-point* tapestries for which he is perhaps best known are rich in colour and detail, sensual in their materiality, and bold in their imagery. Such is the artist's vision of Azania, an African utopia of imagined abundance and indulgence. Ruga's ornate practice centres on the allure of this promised paradise as a compelling counterpoint to contemporary South African realities, the visual decadence of his work at once disguising and amplifying its social criticism. *Regatta Bitch* is one such example, with its curlicue designs and gold detailing, the posed and costumed figure seemingly excerpted from a fashion editorial.



Walter Battiss
My Typewriter, c.1960s
Oil and mixed media
37.5 x 33 x 25.5 cm

Walter Battiss remains an enduringly enigmatic figure in South African art history. In pursuing a new African modernism, he experimented with such seemingly incongruent styles as Post-Impressionism and Pop Art, paired with formal elements borrowed from San rock paintings, Arabic calligraphy, and Ndebele beadwork. While the artist described himself as the "first neo-primitive in South Africa", others variously classed Battiss as a "gentle anarchist", "amateur anthropologist", "paunchy painter-poet", and "wandering nude". *My Typewriter*'s genre-bending form signals the beginning of Battiss's more conceptual pursuits, the collision of mediums evincing the artist's limber engagement with material and form in service of thought.



Dor Guez
Jacob, 2021
Archival inkjet print
112 x 175 cm

After years spent living between New York and Jaffa, Dor Guez felt compelled to make a permanent return to his ancestral home, Lydda, where he now lives not far from the church where the life of his Christian Palestinian family and their community had, for centuries, revolved. Guez's work evidences borders and their bleed, his practice an act of returning and a form of maintenance against the threat of erasure. What customs are carried across time, when multiple identities tessellate in one terrain? *Jacob* (2021) finds Guez's Palestinian grandfather, Jacob Munayer, photographed in a Jaffa studio in the early 1940s. An array of cultural influences combine to form the scene: a papier-mâché-mache horse, Munayer's 'Western' cowboy costume and toy pistol, the Central European Backdrop and the presence of a Tiger.



Jo Ractliffe
Roadside stall on the way to Viana, 2007
Digital silver gelatin print
50 x 50 cm

To Jo Ractliffe, photography is “largely about guarding against loss,” of giving to memory an image, that it might be kept safe from forgetting. Her photographs more often speak of events past, considering the traces southern Africa’s recent conflicts have left on the land. Absence and the persistent presence of war’s aftermath are inscribed into all her photographs taken in Angola, a country she returns to time and again.

Seeing overalls hung from a leafless tree, captured in *Roadside stall on the way to Viana*, Ractliffe was struck by their ghostly appearance. “They are the hollow men,” she thought, recalling TS Eliot’s poem.

*Remember us — if at all — not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men*



Igshaan Adams
Untitled, 2017–2022
Cotton twine, polypropylene and button rope, wood, plastic, glass and crystal beads, polyester and tiger tail wire
279 x 80 cm

Collected under the loose description of ‘tapestry’, Igshaan Adams’s woven works – *Untitled* among them – offer a tactile meditation on the changeability of being, which is never static but always reworked, stitched and unstitched. To the artist, the ritual repetition necessary to his medium performs a spiritual simile, each bead strung a material *dhikr* or prayer. Bearing witness to life’s traces and traumas

as inscribed in overlooked spaces – particularly those of Bonteheuwel, the low-income suburb on the Cape Flats where Adams was raised – the artist transcribes desire lines across fields and paths worn into linoleum floors, honouring the passages of time and people that shaped them in objects of singular beauty and quiet dedication. This *Untitled* work has of it the sense of a shadow following behind, or the beloved wrapped for burial, the tapestry pointing to absence, to abstraction.



Penny Siopis
Column Cake, 1982
Oil paint and found objects on wooden base
145.5 x 22.5 x 22.5 cm

Penny Siopis’s practice is an “aesthetic of accumulation”, a logic of excess, a hoarding of signs. Edges, boundary lines, beginnings and endings, states of change – these are among the subjects that inform her enquiries. *Column Cake* forms part of Siopis’s early ‘cake paintings’ series, which introduced her lasting engagement with oil paint as both medium (paint-as-matter) and illusion (paint-as-image). Here, these considerations assume a sculptural expression. Small plastic figurines – ballerinas, angels, a wedding

topper – become the vanilla sponge of a towering confection onto which the artist piped white pigment like buttercream icing. Themes of decadence and decay, and allusions to the female body, which would come to figure prominently in Siopis’s work, are quietly anticipated in this composition.



Kevin Beasley
Arizona South Africa, 2020
“Aid-to-trade” garments, housedresses, kaftans, resin, metal
189 x 260.5 x 12.5 cm

Kevin Beasley is preoccupied, above all, with provenance, with the inheritance of found objects, scenes and sounds. His conceptual and material fulcrum is cotton, the history of cotton and everything it has come to represent in black American culture as a symbol of labour and oppression.

Working with the social fabric of clothing, Beasley explores

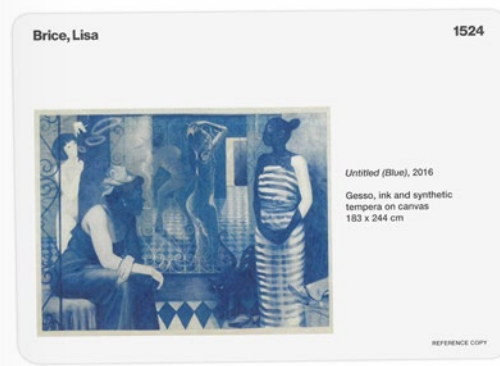
not only the past but aspirations for the future as reflected in society’s objects. *Arizona South Africa* was made during Beasley’s month-long residency in A4’s Gallery, extending the artist’s lasting preoccupation with the politics of cotton to a Southern African context.



Steven Cohen
Untitled, 1999
Hand-coloured photographic silkscreen on canvas and vintage cotton embroidered serviettes
187 x 280.5 cm

Steven Cohen is widely recognised for his baroque excesses and the “conceptual drag” – as he describes it – of his site-specific performances. The complexities of being, and the central, if self-limiting, role of identity’s descriptors, have remained a thematic constant in his work, from his

earliest screenprints to his elaborate costume and make-up designs, as well as his parallel practice of collecting darkly charged memorabilia and religious knickknacks. Difference is collapsed in this 36-panelled print, Cohen suggesting an equivalence (symbolic, moral, or simply pictorial) between unlike parts: a cross-section of a skull and a disconsolate child; vintage beauties and the artist’s personas; a pope and the devil; fried eggs and French actor Alain Delon.



Lisa Brice
Untitled (Blue), 2016
Gesso, ink and synthetic tempera on canvas
183 x 244 cm

Returning to the women of art history, Lisa Brice’s paintings and works on paper are studies in selfhood. The conceptual gesture is simple: *women drawn by woman*. “The simple act of repainting an image of a woman previously painted by a man – re-authoring the work as by a woman,” the artist suggests, “is a potent shift in itself.” Shown in various states of undress, the

figures in Brice’s *Untitled (Blue)* appear insensible to the viewer, existing in a quiet interior thick with intrigue and cigarette smoke. On Brice’s canvas, women who once played the part of muse or allegory now appear as actors waiting in the wings – unwatched, a little bored, resolutely themselves.



Tracey Emin
Just Love Me, 1998
Soft pink neon
27.2 x 101 cm

An artist profoundly without irony, Tracey Emin offers instead sincere, even radical, vulnerability. She is her subject; her life, her struggles. Returning to memories of past traumas, Emin mines her autobiography for moments of both pain and triumph. Confessional, explicit, provocative – her work is all

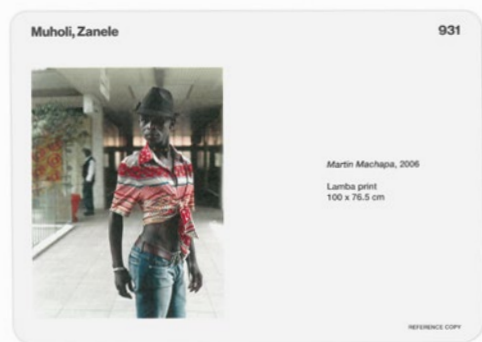
this, but something else besides. Emin's offerings are, above all, tender. Written in the artist's familiar hand (complete with spelling errors), Emin's neon works read as lines addressed to an absent other. They are, in turn, plaintive and passionate, these secret desires made signs. *I want my time with you – because of you I'm here – you forgot to kiss my soul – just love me.*



Glenn Ligon
Stranger 58, 2012
Oil stick, coal dust and gesso on canvas
243.8 x 182.9 cm

Recognised for his language-based conceptualism, Glenn Ligon works against the assumed legibility of black bodies to explore African American identity and queer sexuality while gesturing to the inadequacies of representation, to the imperfect translation of lived experience in image and word. In the *Stranger* series

(1966 onwards), Ligon uses black oil sticks and letter stencils to trace passages from James Baldwin's 1953 essay *Stranger in the Village*. The passage is obscured, a formal obfuscation that characterises his text-based works. Baldwin holds particular sway in Ligon's practice, not only because he, too, was black and queer, but because he understood the symbolic effect of language on its subject. "The root function of language," Baldwin wrote, "is to control the universe by describing it."



Zanele Muholi
Martin Machapa, 2006
Lambda print
100 x 76.5 cm

Zanele Muholi's photographic project addresses the absence of black, queer South Africa in the country's image archive and national imaginary. Turning on personal experiences and contemporary politics, their photographs offer an alternative representation of blackness in a country where homosexuality, while legal, is often

deemed 'un-African'. A self-described visual activist rather than an artist, Muholi frames their project as a restorative gesture, "marking, mapping, and preserving an often invisible community for posterity." *Martin Machapa* is one of a series of portraits included in 'Beulahs' (2006–2010), a colourful record of gay and transgender men asserting their identities in dress, boldly undermining gendered codes and social strictures of fashion that otherwise regulate sexual expression. "My practice," as Muholi writes, "looks at black resistance – at *existence* as well as *insistence*."



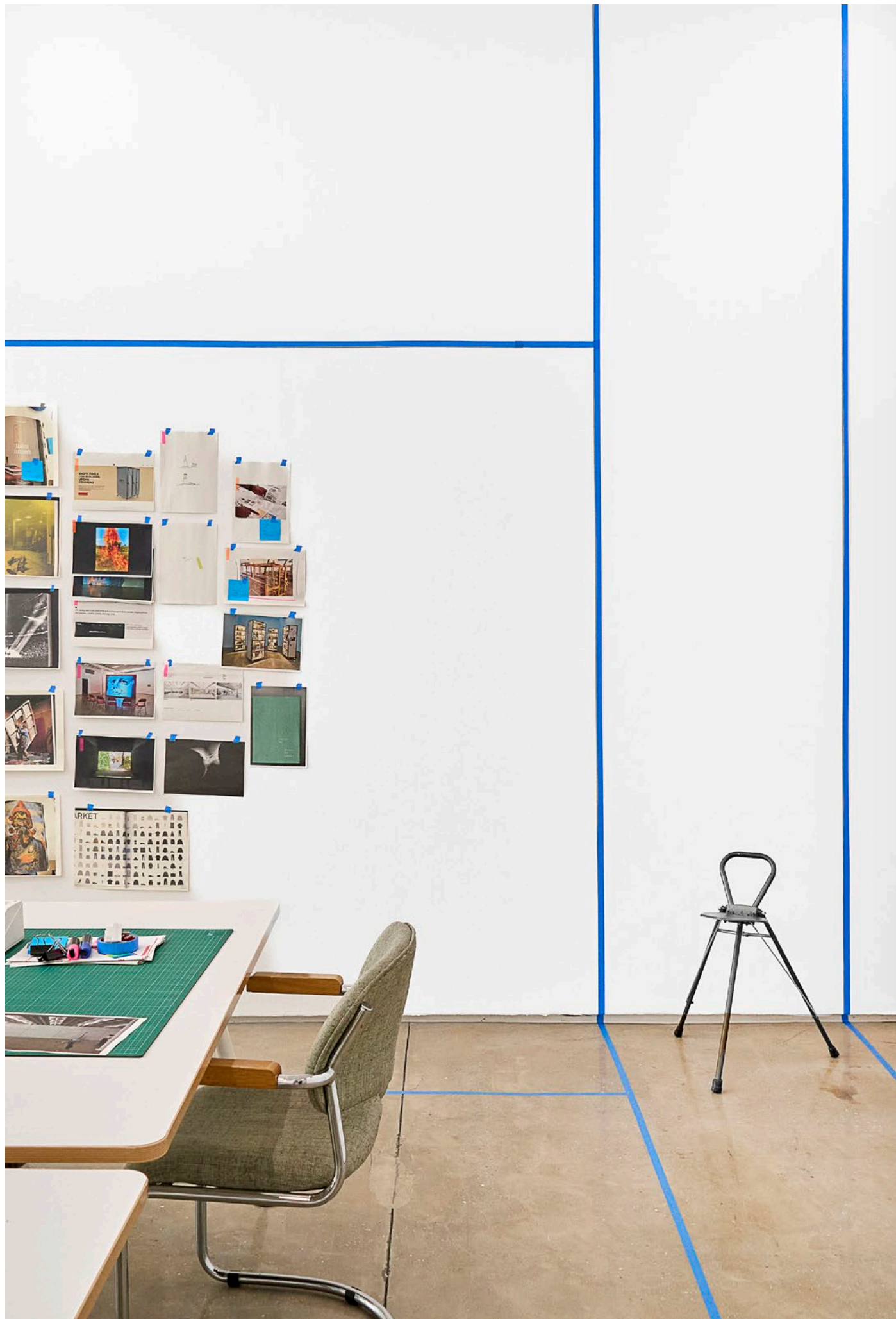
Agnes Martin
Untitled No. 1, 1992
Acrylic and graphite on canvas
182.9 x 182.9 cm

The life of latter-day mystic Agnes Martin is most often summarised in three movements: the artist's early years (from which few works survive, Martin given to destroying much of what she made), her New York decade beginning in 1957, and the monasticism of her later life, spent in the remote countryside of Taos, New Mexico. After leaving the city, and after a pause of almost seven years without painting, the gridded compositions for which she had become recognised gave way to horizontal graphite lines coloured with washes of dilute pigment, in part inspired by the ever-present, empty horizon of her desert home. Subtle, restrained, even serene – to Martin, her work expressed a "pure devotion to reality."

AGR

This working studio is set up to examine what will, in September 2027, be ten years of A4's projects from the foundation's curatorial studio in Buitenkant Street. This is in preparation to publish an 'Annual General Report' in the form of a magazine reflecting on A4's workings and processes. The magazine-making studio is helmed by Josh Ginsburg working with Ben Johnson. 'AGR' draws on a changing array of objects and artworks resonant to the projects that will be featured in the magazine, contained in blue masking-tape squares for the studio's duration.





Interior Design

—

Wayfinder:

Design – Ben Johnson
Editor – Sara de Beer
Writers – Lucienne Bestall, Sara de Beer,
and Chloé de Villiers

Printed and assembled at A4 Arts Foundation
All images and publication © A4 Arts Foundation, 2025
23 Buitenkant Street, District Six, 8001
info@a4arts.org

Exhibition:

Curator – Josh Ginsburg
Installation and Photography – Kyle Morland
Production – Janós Cserhati and Chloé de Villiers
Artist – Cameron Platter ('Inferior Design')

A4

**15 Oct —
7 Nov '26**