

1,2,3

Common Space
— Landing

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Brushed and waxed aluminium
33.8 x 118.9 x 121.3 cm
Courtesy of the artist
- ii** Flowers by Taiyo Shimokawa
- iii** Three browsable shelves of books relating to 1,2,3

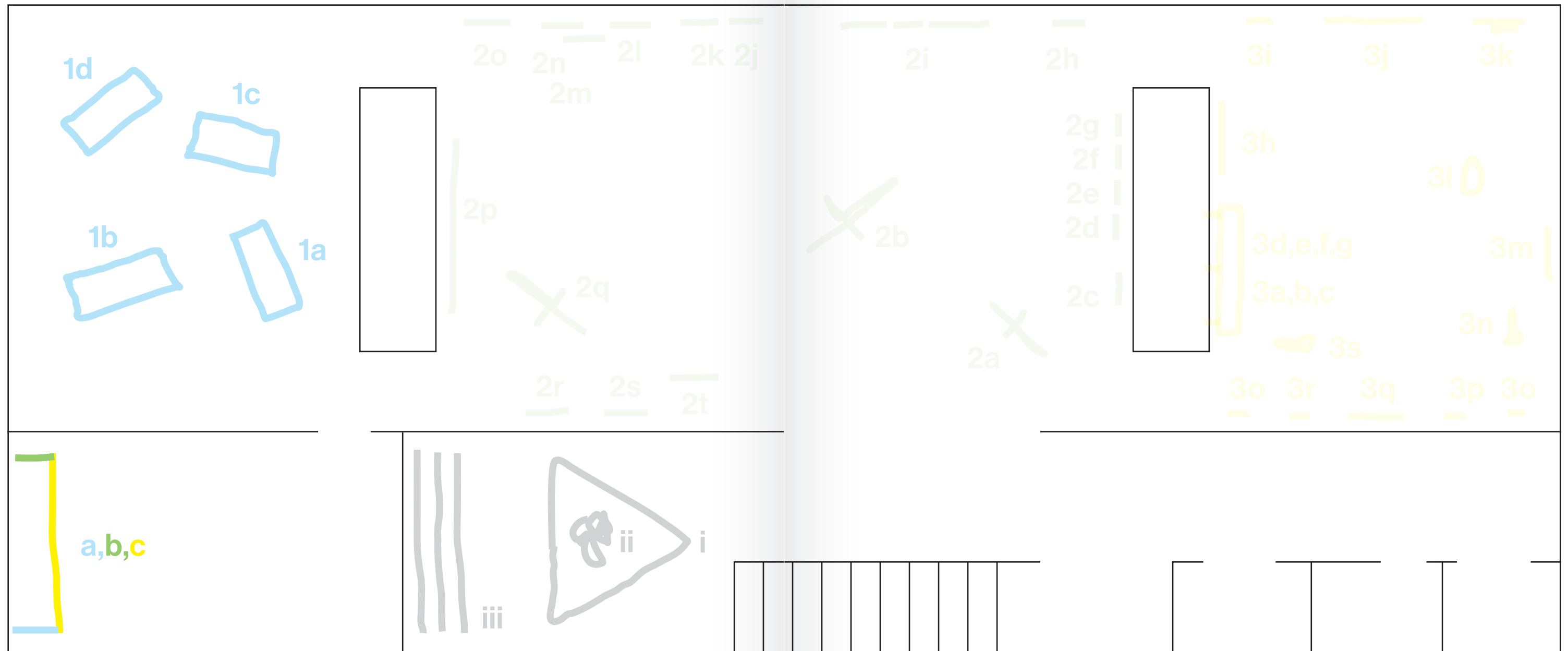
Common Space
— Video room

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32 sec
Courtesy of the artist
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Video presentation of book accompanied by 'Meditations for Ziyanda: Siyokukhumbula' (2021), composed and performed by Nduduzo Makhathini
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Courtesy of the artist
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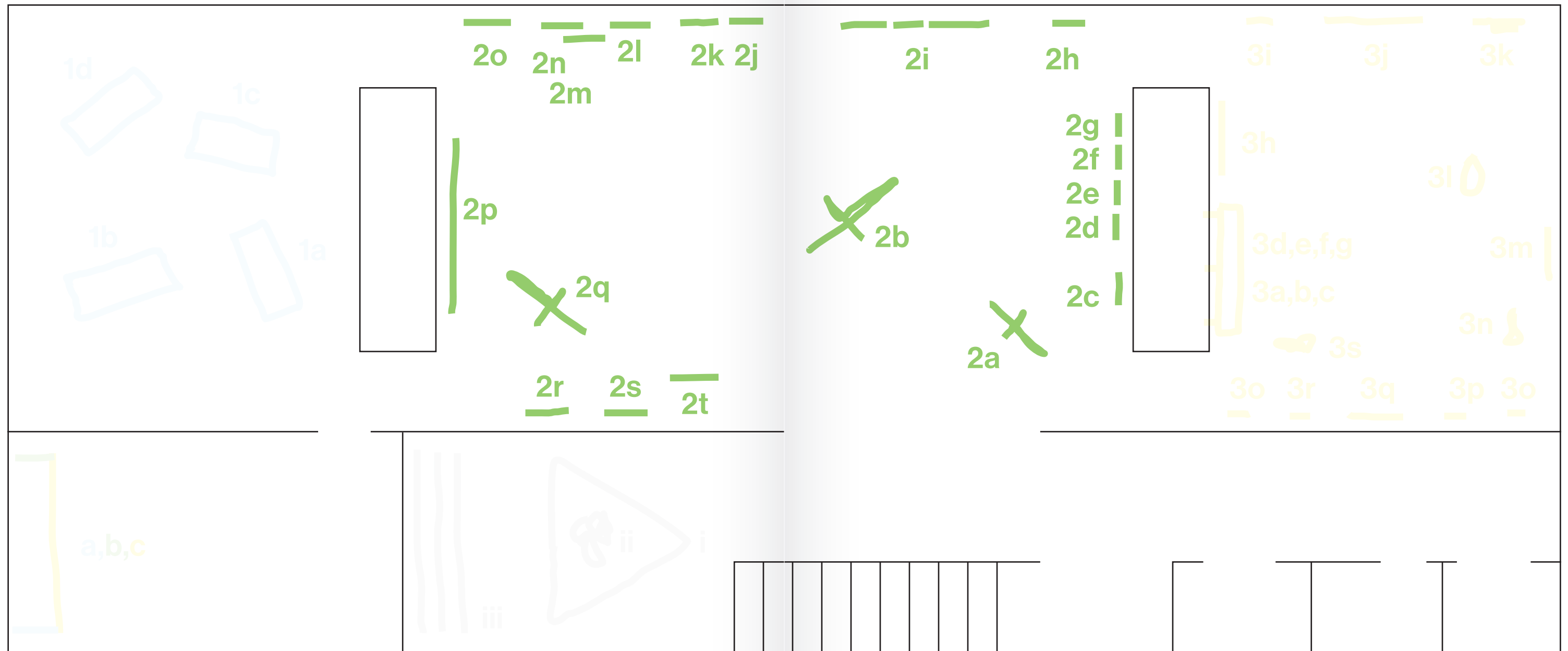


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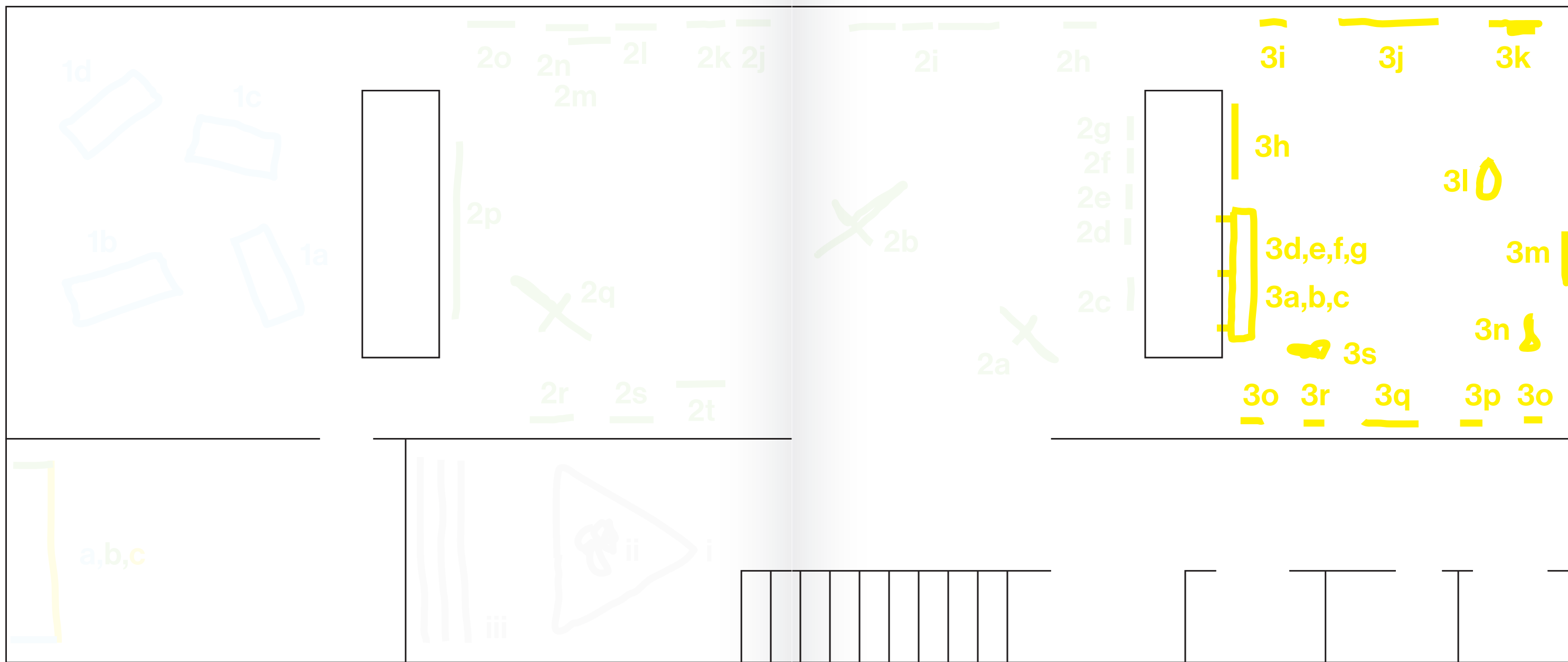
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Ponte City

THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

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Live and go out

OUR LIFE

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PORT 106

EUROPEAN GENTS HERE





1 Ponte City: Making a Scene

Lemeze Davids is the first curator to interact with the *Ponte City* book towers, helping the artists test the capacities and parameters of the work by constructing a scene. What follows is an abridged excerpt from a conversation between Davids (L.D.), Mikhael Subotzky (M.S.) and Patrick Waterhouse (P.W.) about that process.

21 April 2026

Since 2023, János Cserhádi, together with the A4 team, has been working with Ponte City (2014) artists Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse to create what we have colloquially come to refer to as the 'Ponte City Book Towers'. Now complete, these four custom-built light boxes are also bookcases that contain magnetic vinyl images, wood and magnet props, paper material, and reconstructed book dummies holding the history of artists' bookmaking process for their ambitious Ponte City project. These artworks as resources can also act as theatres for unpacking and testing large ideas, from which participants build scenography using the props and casing.

L.D. Do you see either the unrealised versions of the book you wanted to make, or the dummies that were made in preparation for the publication of *Ponte City* (2014) as more truthful versions of the project? Do these *Book Towers* resist the authority of the finished book?

M.S. The 'authoritative' book, *Ponte City* (2014), houses different booklets that can be rearranged, removed, and

separated from each other. In this way, it has more of a sense of fluidity or continued emergence than what would be a typical front-to-back book. We are planning to publish a final book, *Ponte City Revisited: 54 Storeys*, as a more traditional 'book'. But is trying to establish coherence in this way not perhaps fighting against what the project is really about? What's powerful about this work that we've made with A4 is that these boxes can be reconfigured to tell any story.

L.D. It seems like you could even be open to people appropriating the *Towers* to make scenes, create stories or forward agendas you don't agree with. Have you totally released control over how people interact with the ephemera?

M.S. We've never released control until now, but in theory, that's what we've wanted to do. My biggest fear would be the project requiring our involvement to be effective. It will give me huge pleasure and relief if people can build their own stories independently.

L.D. Could you talk a little bit about your hopes for how people would make scenes?

P.W. We've imagined a whole spectrum of processes from the structural and analytical to the playful. We hope it meets people where they are at and works across age groups – children should also be able to use it to tell their stories. We'd like it to be accessible, and for participants to be able to follow a route or interact more freely with their own ideas. There's a book called *Finite and Infinite Games* (1986) by James P. Carse about the fact that there are two

forms, basically, of game play: one is rule-bound, and the other is much more emergent and doesn't have a winner or loser. Art-making, as a provocation, is an infinite game. The creative act is about creating a restriction, or a rule, which you can live by. It's also about whether people feel like they have permission to do that in this situation or whether these towers will feel like too much of a sacred object.

M.S. What process did you go through, Lemeeze, when you made this *Lighthouse* scene?

L.D. In the lead up to the exhibition, I'll be facilitating workshops with different groups, from urbanists to school children, following your interest in all the ways people might engage with the material. But for this scene, I used the previous scenes that you both had made, *Structural Conditions* and *Social Fabrics*, together with the list of available props, as a sort of map. These showed me what I had to work with under the motifs of migration, light, and journey. From there, I decided to go back to the *Ponte City* publication (2014), look through all the booklets, and find my own connections. While the list of props that I wished I had grew longer as I got to work, I made do with what I had been given. As with any artwork, everybody comes with their own views and interests. I constructed the story based on what patterns I saw in the material that you have collected over time.



Scene: The Lighthouse

Taking inspiration from *Luminosity* written by Harry Kalmer, the fourth booklet in *Ponte City* (2014) by Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse, a scene is constructed on the shelves of the artists' 'book towers' using cutout props and ephemera from their *Ponte City* archive. The elements are placed and the 'towers' reconfigured, proposing one specific reading within the project's findings, titled *Lighthouse*.

Kalmer's narrative follows a chance encounter between the character Haasbroek and an enigmatic Italian man, I. Calvino. Initially, Haasbroek makes the natural assumption that he is speaking with the Italian author, Italo Calvino. A monumental figure in postmodern literature, Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* (1972) is structured around fictional conversations between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo, describing the fantastical cities Polo had come across on his travels. A paragraph within it bears striking resemblance to the architecture of Ponte City: "[F]our aluminium towers rise from its walls flanking seven gates with spring-operated drawbridges... dividing it into nine quarters, each with three hundred houses and seven hundred chimneys." (p.9)

The Calvino in *Ponte City* (2014), however, possesses a more earthly fascination: with the neon sign that crowns the building, which he pragmatically describes as "2 400 hours and 21.2 kilometres of electric wires" (p.7). This shared interest precipitates a game of hide-and-seek, a night drive with the specific objective of determining the maximum distance at which Ponte's luminous cap remains visible. At the conclusion of their drive, Calvino hands Haasbroek a business card, finally disclosing his full identity: *Isidoro* Calvino. The card reveals his profession, not as a celebrated author, but as a simple lighting engineer.

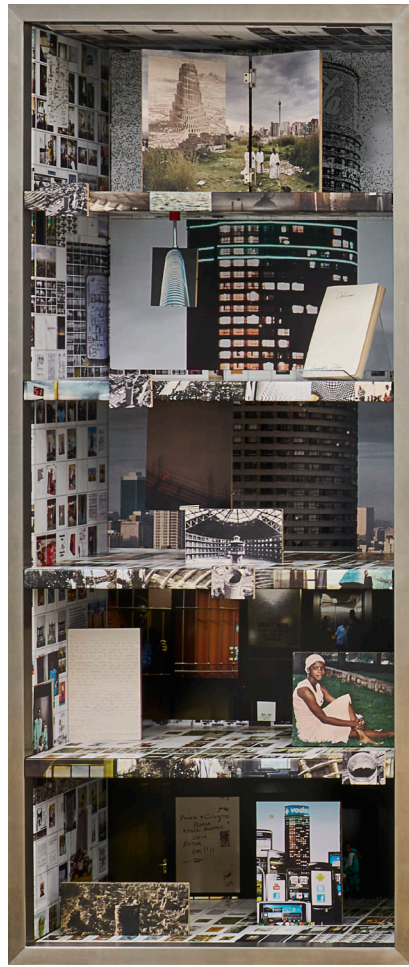
Lighthouse embarks from this misadventure: the physical form of the building, towering and illuminated, and the implication that Ponte's presence in the city feels vigilant or inescapable. Kalmer writes, "Through the lace curtains of the bedroom window [Haasbroek] could see Ponte City and its Coca-Cola crown. It felt as if the neon light was watching him" (p.9). Percy Zvomuya echoes this sentiment in the thirteenth booklet of the *Ponte City* publication, *Across the Chasm*. He describes the "concrete, steel and glass tower" that seemed
"emblematic of the heartless city, built on violence and
dispossession" (p.3). The critical view stands in contrast to

Calvino's infatuation with Ponte's glow. If the building is re-imagined as a 'lighthouse' shining from afar, it has the potential to transcend the story of Calvino. What does it mean to be guided towards a destination, seeking refuge or a better life, at the end of a long, arduous journey?

The props used in the scene point to cross-continental migration, light and safety – a directional desire – like the bus poster advertising a journey from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Johannesburg. Yet, the traditional function of a lighthouse doesn't invite or direct arrival to a safe haven, but rather communicates a stark warning that there is imminent danger. As a central metaphor, it introduces an essential counter-narrative (the hidden dangers that lurk at the destination). Ultimately, the scene compels the audience to ask critical, socio-political questions: who is seen, from where, and at what distance?

This interrogation of light and journey becomes a metaphor for socio-economic status, geographical marginalisation, and the act of being perceived within the vast, luminous expanse of Johannesburg, under the watchful eye of Ponte City.

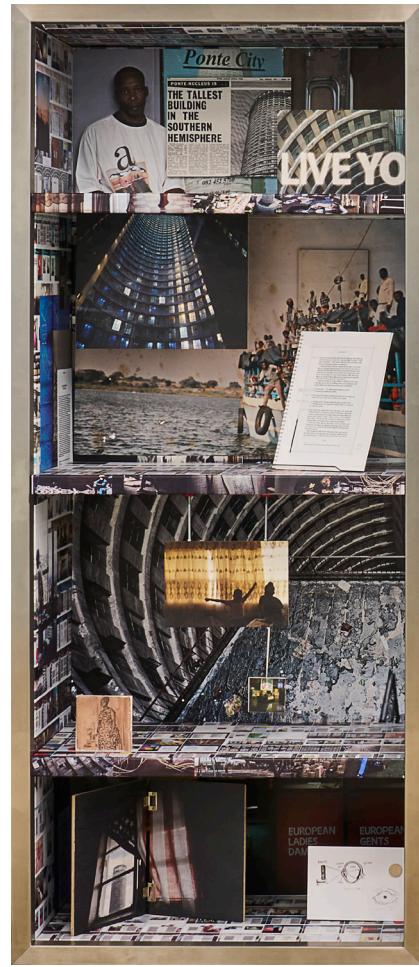
— Lemeze Davids



The Book To Begin (2026)

Stainless and galvanised steel, castors, perspex lightboxes, honeycomb board storage boxes, printed vinyl, printed magnetic sheets, printed plywood, restored and reproduced print ephemera
201 x 81 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artists and A4 Arts Foundation

The Book to Begin relates to the period 2008–2012 and contains notebooks, dummies and prototypes of the artists' earliest attempts at editing the *Ponte* photographs and associated printed-matter debris into a book.



The Book That Never Was (2026)

Stainless and galvanised steel, castors, perspex lightboxes, honeycomb board storage boxes, printed vinyl, printed magnetic sheets, printed plywood, restored and reproduced print ephemera
201 x 81 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artists and A4 Arts Foundation

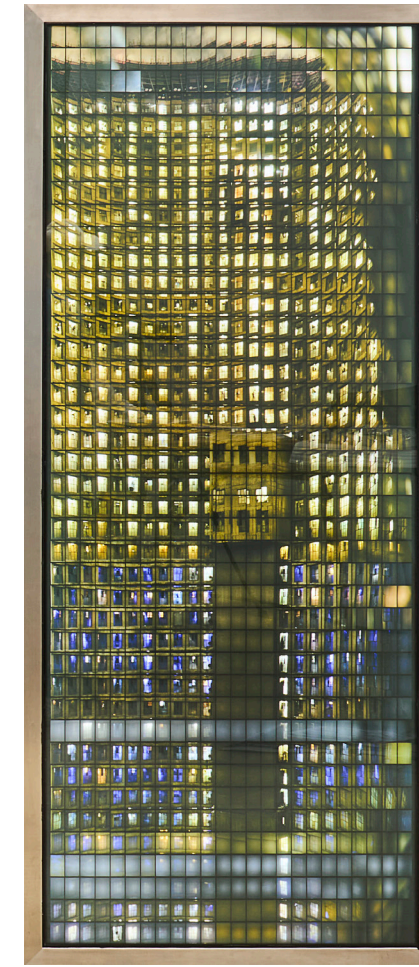
The Book That Never Was, the second book tower, contains the attempts towards a book that Waterhouse and Subotzky conceived of between 2012–2013 that was too unwieldy, ambitious, and complicated to ever publish. However, in being unrealisable, it did lay the foundation for the book that would be published, *Ponte City* (2014), the subject of the third tower.



The Book That Became a Box (2026)

Stainless and galvanised steel, castors, perspex lightboxes, honeycomb board storage boxes, printed vinyl, printed magnetic sheets, printed plywood, restored and reproduced print ephemera
201 x 81 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artists and A4 Arts Foundation

The tower for *The Book that Became a Box* holds the story of making *Ponte City* (2014). Considered by the publisher to be a workable version of the artists' ambitions, *Ponte City* (2014) is a box containing a book and seventeen booklets. These seventeen small books are texts or visual essays compiled by Ivan Vladislavić, who edited the project, and the artists, together with commissioned pieces, or a combination of approaches. Some of the booklets' authors took an imaginative route through the content, writing fiction or narrative responses. The artists and editor assembled these booklets into a timeline, with the cover image on each booklet corresponding to a photograph in the main book.



The Box That Becomes a Book (2026)

Stainless and galvanised steel, castors, perspex lightboxes, honeycomb board storage boxes, printed vinyl, printed magnetic sheets, printed plywood, restored and reproduced print ephemera
201 x 81 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artists and A4 Arts Foundation

The fourth tower, *The Box That Becomes a Book*, relates to a more recent period when the artists found themselves once again en route to bookmaking, anticipating the publication by Steidl of *Ponte City Revisited: 54 Storeys*. *The Box That Becomes a Book* holds the artists' intentions and wishes for this forthcoming publication – a more traditionally 'bookish' housing that is accessible for readers.

2 Between the motion & the act

Abridged and edited excerpts from Khanya Mashabela's (K.M.) visit with Jo Ractliffe (J.R.) in her studio.

20 April 2026

K.M. Perhaps because of its technological underpinnings, photography has hierarchies and conventions around what makes a 'good' or 'bad' picture. With this in mind, I'm interested in your process of coming to a place where you're accepting or even welcoming of the 'errors' – the blurriness or the shadows. When did that become comfortable for you?

J.R. You're speaking specifically about South Africa?

K.M. Yes.

J.R. It's a curious thing when you have a medium that is technically complex – this is a generalisation, but I think quite often, people who work in very technical mediums, where skill and proficiency are highly valued, can sometimes be rather self-ghettoising – this is in relation to a contemporary art world where appreciation of an artwork is less about skill than it is a bunch of other factors. My experience is that professional photographers (compared to 'artists') struggle with this. I remember being invited to judge a photography award and there were these categories: aerial, wedding, cars, landscape, wildlife, and then there was just 'art'. Anything that was blurry went into 'art' and anything they felt would not meet the specs of another category.

I remember discussing this with my very dear friend Dennis De Silva. He's a master printer.

K.M. Yes, he also prints Sabelo Mlangeni's photographs.

J.R. Yes, that's right. He printed for David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng as well. Dennis said, "Jo, it all begins and ends with an opinion". That was his definition of contemporary art. For years I was between an art world and a photography world. At the time the focus was documentary and struggle photography, and my work didn't fit. Nothing was 'happening' in my pictures. But also, when I first showed with Goodman Gallery in 1997, Linda Givon said, "You're the first photographer I've allowed into the gallery". Which was true, I was the first photographer exhibiting at Goodman, before David and others.

And then, of course, all the mistakes became sexy. Taking a blurry, out-of-focus picture became about effect rather than an underlying conceptual premise.

K.M. Reading your interview with David in the *Mail & Guardian*, I laughed at your exchange about *Nadir* [Ractliffe's first solo exhibition, which Goldblatt hung at the Market Theatre Gallery in 1989] – though of course, without being in the room, one can't fully capture the energy of friendship underlying both your words. It reads as follows:

D.G. [...] *We argued because I pointed out that these were violations of photography.*

J.R. *Aberrations. You said they were aberrations of photography.*

D.G. *But I did appreciate the work.*

How do you think he saw your practice? What do you think he appreciated?

J.R. David and I had a curious relationship. I loved him as a friend – I never thought of him as ‘the David Goldblatt’ or as ‘the mentor’. He did become a person to bounce off ideas with, but quite often when we disagreed I knew I was on the right track.

[Laughs]

When I showed at Goodman with *Guess Who Loves You* (1997) – a series of giant photographs of dog toys – he said the toys were just detritus. I said, well somebody could look at a picture of a girl in a tutu like he had done with *In Boksburg* [*Girl in her new tutu on the stoep, 22 June 1980*] and think that was meaningless.

K.M. Yes, looking at *In Boksburg* or *Particulars*, the photographs are so ambiguous and soft in their approach to meaning-making or ‘truth-telling’.

Many of the works from Sabelo’s *Isivumelwano* series are dated 2016. In that same year, Sabelo notes that he had very generative discussions with David about his work. It’s interesting to see that this series has some of the clearest examples of what I would describe as ‘aberrations’ in Sabelo’s practice: burns, scratches, and blurs in the prints; faces obscured by shadows; strange angles.

I wonder – whether he articulated it or not – if you think you might have softened David to the idea of ‘showing your mistakes’ in some way?

J.R. Well, I don’t know. He loved my photograph of a dead donkey [*End of Time* (1996/1999)]. He saw it and said, “Now you’ve got it.”

K.M. This leads back to *Nadir*. I read an interview where David said,

“the kind of photography I am interested in is much closer to writing than to painting”. I imagine he was thinking about a particular kind of writing, like journalistic reportage. Looking at your initial words about *Nadir* in your Master’s thesis, you were interested in writing as well, but you were referencing poetry and speculative fiction.

J.R. It’s also a question of time and what was happening. The authoritative voice was really strong in the ‘80s, and that’s why I just didn’t fit. There wasn’t the space to interrogate the ambiguities of photography. It had to be about the truth. Because otherwise, what were you doing it for? It was about showing the violence of what was happening.

K.M. You produced *Nadir* in the midst of that time. How did you conceive of those works? Were there other photographers whose practices encouraged your more subjective approach and your use of photomontage?

J.R. You’re supposed to have some art historical basis for your work in an MA thesis. When I was finishing *Nadir*, I realised that I had actually spent the time reading literature and poetry. I ended up putting all of the work into a folder and going to see J.M. Coetzee at the University of Cape Town. By then I’d read *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). I remember him being very silent and... impenetrable. We had the works on the floor and he said, “I can’t comment on the merit of these artworks. But it seems to me that you’re interested in aspects of the apocalyptic”. And then he sent me a reading list. I still have that letter. So I started reading all of these books, like William S. Burroughs’ *Cities of the Red*

Night (1981) and *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding.

I knew nothing of South African photography. It was also a time when photographers didn’t often make books, except for David. Unless you knew the people, you didn’t know what they were doing. But in 1983, my dad brought a book back from his travels called *World Photography* and I found Robert Frank, my first love. *The Americans* (1958) was poetic and it had this feeling of being on the fly. Jack Kerouac wrote the introduction – I loved all of the Beat writers and poets. That was my first opening. I thought, “I want to make images like Robert Frank”. There was also Manuel Álvarez Bravo, who was like my God, and Josef Koudelka. His photographs look like theatre. And later, I came to know of Walker Evans and others.

K.M. So you’re into photography and you’re doing your MA... When did you decide on photomontage? It seems like such a bold choice in that context, especially because you still photographed all the works included in the collages. In your thesis you describe the process of going to junkyards and even dog training sessions, trying to get these shots.

J.R. In the third year of art school I had done a couple of photo-etchings and they were a mixture of found images and my own photographs. I really liked their surreal quality. I have a closet desire to be a Surrealist, but I could never do that with straight photography.

Where did you even find that thesis?

K.M. I downloaded it from the University of Cape Town’s website. Reading it gave me a great sense of calm. It supported many of my thoughts in the lead-up to the exhibition. Also, the exhibition’s title comes from T.S. Eliot, which I know can feel pretentious. I read your thesis and saw that you also quoted him and I felt like it might still be pretentious but at least somebody else did it too.

[Laughs]

J.R. Every single body of work I produce ends up with a quote that pulls it together. That’s how my brain works.

K.M. I relate to that. There has to be a phrase that keeps the texture or the temperature of the project in my mind.

K.M. I feel like photography forces you to be more social than other artistic practices. Maybe that’s too much of a generalisation...

J.R. That’s true to an extent. Market Photo Workshop (MPW) is the one community I found really generative. It was a world of working photographers and young, emerging photographers and we were all connected.

I was Sabelo’s mentor while he worked on his series on street sweepers in the Johannesburg city centre [*Invisible Women*] (2009)], through a fellowship he was awarded at MPW.

K.M. I didn’t know that. A beautiful, unintentional thing has happened where the photographers in the exhibition are so much more connected than I had thought. Almost everyone passed through MPW. Some of the artists

were in Of Soul & Joy [the photography programme for high school learners in Thokoza, established in 2012 and directed by Jabulani Dhlamini] and then went to MPW because of that experience.

In a book made in tribute to David Goldblatt after his passing, Sabelo wrote about a time in 2016 when they met regularly over the course of a month. He had reached out over email looking for critical feedback and David answered immediately, inviting him to his home. Sabelo said, "I walked out with a much better understanding of what I was doing and what I wanted to achieve with the work." This continuing circle of mentorship and friendship feels very special. I can only access these relationships through anecdotes and retellings of conversations, so I don't feel that I can express their full depth, but it is still present as an undercurrent.

K.M. I've been looking at photographs and wondering when particular artistic choices might have been made and how much of the work comes into being before, during, or after shooting. The answer is different for every photographer.

J.R. For me intention is at the forefront, although it's seldom formulated in any precise way. Rather I have a vague notion about something, an idea about the possibility of the photograph and how it would function within a particular context – like photography's capacity to work with silence, for example. And then I wait for something to happen, or something incidental occurs and I think, "This is interesting". It is about being attuned to what is happening conceptually and intellectually as you go, but it

is also an intuitive process; the integration of all these things.

Going to Johannesburg from Cape Town – from the Michaelis School of Fine Art to the University of Witwatersrand – I felt intellectually ill-equipped. I felt I needed to make up for it by being clever in other ways. "I'm not good at theory but I'm clever at paying attention."

K.M. At the outset of this project I thought, I'm doing a photography exhibition, maybe I need to look back to Roland Barthes like we did in university. Reading *Camera Lucida* felt very different now than it did then, more emotional and less theory-heavy. He expresses something so vital about photography... that at its core, photography is unlike any other media in the sense that it is about light particles captured from a physical body or object and processed by a machine, magically appearing onto the page in silver molecules. Distortion and montage can't entirely take away the relationship of the photographic image to the reality of the thing itself.

J.R. It's alchemical. Which is why I still work with analogue. Obviously I've made digital prints when I needed to, but I prefer analogue. In the beginning of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes says, "I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor." When I first read that, I misunderstood it. I thought he was talking about the eye of the photographer. I didn't realise that there was another gaze from within the picture outwards to the viewer. I used to say that photographs are inert projections. Now I understand that they are not passive things. The photograph pushes back at you.



Between the motion & the act

*Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow*

— T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* (1925).

Photographers are subject to forces outside of their control: light and shadow, movement, human behaviour, unfamiliar environments, and more. Responsivity, intuition, and an openness to chance are essential. *Between the motion & the act* is an exploration of the ways in which contemporary South African photographers invite or adapt these conditions while asserting their own artistic agency before, during, and after the shot.

Though the manipulation of images is as old as photography itself, the medium remains within the public imagination as a tool for truth-telling. David Goldblatt – whose work epitomises the tradition of South African documentary photography – embraced subtlety, ambiguity, and the everyday. He also believed that photographers “should simply reveal the truth”.¹

In 2011, Jo Ractliffe interviewed Goldblatt for the *Mail & Guardian*. Reflecting upon their first professional engagement, they had the following exchange:

- J.R. *You hung my first exhibition.*
D.G. *Yes, those collaged dogs of yours, Nadir. And we argued because I pointed out that these were violations of photography.*
J.R. *Aberrations. You said they were aberrations of photography.*
D.G. *But I did appreciate the work.*²

Ractliffe’s “aberrations” were works of photomontage inspired by poetry, fiction, and film, produced in 1987. She was not rejecting photography – she captured the landscapes and the dog protagonists that appear in the series herself – but questioning and pushing its boundaries. Through intervention, Ractliffe articulated the existential angst, social disorder, anxiety, and absurdity which pervaded the country as the state attempted to slow the inevitable end of apartheid through escalating acts of covert violence and disinformation. *Between the motion & the act* focuses on artworks which meander between Goldblatt’s commitment to plainly articulated truth and the poetic interventions of Ractliffe’s ‘Nadir’ series.

It was my curiosity about Sabelo Mlangeni’s practice that initiated this exhibition. (Incidentally, Mlangeni was mentored by both Goldblatt and Ractliffe). He demonstrates a deep desire to engage with people through his camera by documenting South African material culture, while also making his presence felt by upending photographic conventions. Images are abbreviated and obscured by shadows and ‘errors’ in the printing process. Like brushstrokes in a painting, these compositional gestures convey energy and emotion.

Mlangeni’s openness to unconventional aesthetic choices and subjectivity is shared by Thembinkosi Hlatshwayo, Tshepiso Mazibuko, Lunga Ntila, and Lindokuhle Sobekwa, though their methods vary. The exhibition brings their practices together and shows them alongside established documentary photographers – Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, and Ractliffe – looking for moments of resonance and contrast. It is unintentional but noteworthy that all of the exhibited artists, with the exception of Ntila, are associated with the Market Photo Workshop (initiated by Goldblatt in 1989) as alumni, mentors, and teachers.

Seen in the light of a rapidly expanded and destabilised image economy, the exhibited works demonstrate a reluctance to play the role of authoritative narrator, a continued commitment to the idiosyncrasies of photography – most notably its near-magical ability to capture fragments of material reality – and a shared belief in the capacity of photographic images to express “not simply the fact which it shows, but also the social tendency expressed by the fact”.³

— Khanya Mashabela

¹ Douglas, T. (16 October 2018). *The final frame: an interview with David Goldblatt*. Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. [Online]

² Ractliffe, J. (27 June 2011), ‘Reflections on life in a rearview mirror’, *Mail & Guardian*. Johannesburg.

³ Ades, D. (1976) *Photomontage*. London: Thames & Hudson.

2a



Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *Umlindelo wamaKholwa* (2016), from the series 'Umlindelo wamaKholwa' (2002–2018)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
60 x 50 cm (paper size)
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2b



Santu Mofokeng (b.1956, Soweto; d.2020, Johannesburg)
Concert at Sewefontein, Bloemhof (1989)
Silver gelatin print
100 x 150 cm
Private collection

2c



Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *KwaMaseko Eshabalala* (2017), from the series 'Umlindelo wamaKholwa' (2002–2018)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
52.5 x 38.7 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2d



Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *Ekupheleni kwenyanga* (2010), from the series 'Ghost Towns' (2009–2011)
Silver gelatin print
47 x 46.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2e



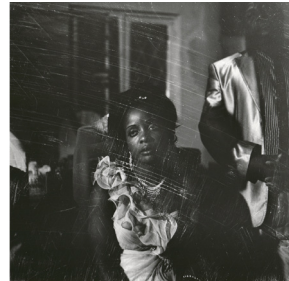
Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *Ukugiyela izinkomo, Umabo, Umkhwenyane umashidini amhlophe* (2014)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
53 x 41 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2f



Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *Impelesi enkulu Zakhele Maseko no Mkwanyana* (2003), from the series 'Isivumelwano' (2003–2020)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
53.5 x 41 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2g



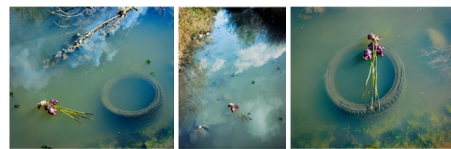
Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *Rafito and his wife-Xhikeleni, Maputo* (2013), from the series 'Isivumelwano' (2003–2020)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
53 x 43.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2h



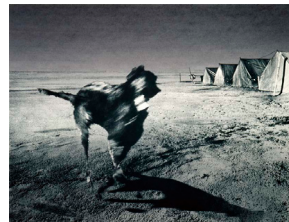
Tshepiso Mazibuko (b.1995, Thokoza) *Untitled, Beirut*, Thokoza (2019), from the series 'Between Spaces' (2018–2019)
Inkjet print on cotton rag
41.4 x 28.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

2i



Lindokuhle Sobekwa (b.1995, Katlehong) *Dead Roses, Thokoza, Johannesburg I, II, and III* (2023)
Inkjet print on Baryta
Triptych: 111 x 138; 111 x 90; 111 x 38 cm
Private collection

2j



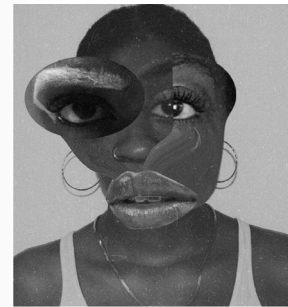
Jo Ractliffe (b.1961, Cape Town) *Nadir 2* (1987)
Screen-printed photographic lithograph
33 x 45 cm
Private collection

2k



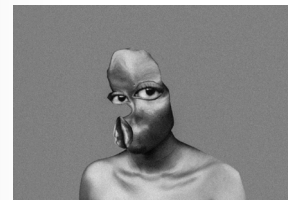
Tshepiso Mazibuko (b.1995, Thokoza) *Mamoloi shops, Thokoza* (2022), from the series 'Awukho umdlalo ongena babukeli' (2020–)
Inkjet print on cotton rag
41.4 x 28.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

2l



Lunga Ntla (b.1995, Johannesburg; d.2022, Johannesburg) *Something keeps calling* (2019), from the series 'Ukuzilanda' (2017–2019)
Inkjet print on archival paper
50 x 45 cm
Courtesy of the Raven Art Collection

2m



Lunga Ntla (b.1995, Johannesburg; d.2022, Johannesburg) *N-Side 2* (2019), from the series 'Ukuzilanda' (2017–2019)
Inkjet print on archival paper
50 x 45 cm
Courtesy of the artist's estate

2n



Theminkosi Hlatshwayo (b.1993, Johannesburg) *Sdakwa (7)*, from the series 'Slaghuis I' (2018)
Pigment inks on fibre paper
20 x 30 cm
Private collection

2o



Theminkosi Hlatshwayo (b.1993, Johannesburg) *Untitled (23)*, from the series 'Slaghuis II' (2019)
Pigment inks on fibre paper
60 x 40 cm
Private collection

2p



Jo Ractliffe (b.1961, Cape Town) *Vlakplaas: 2 June 1999 (drive-by shooting)* (1999)
Exhibition print
39 x 226 cm
Private collection

2q



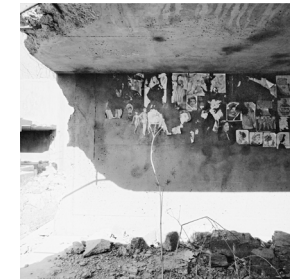
Jo Ractliffe (b.1961, Cape Town) *Vlakplaas: 2 June 1999 (drive-by shooting)* (1999)
Digital video, sound
2 min 30 sec
Private collection

2r



Sabelo Mlangeni (b.1980, Driefontein) *1994* (2016), from the series 'Isivumelwano' (2003–2020)
Hand-printed silver gelatin print
60 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Blank Projects

2s



David Goldblatt (b.1930, Randfontein; d.2018, Johannesburg) *Pinups in the remains of a mine worker's bunk. Probably New State Mines, near Springs. July 1965* (1965)
Silver gelatin on fibre-based paper
68.5 x 66.9 cm
Private collection

2t



Lindokuhle Sobekwa (b.1995, Katlehong) *Family group photo on a Christmas Day* (2026), from the series 'I carry Her photo with me' (2017–)
Exhibition print
15 x 10 cm; 2.28 x 2.37 cm (double-sided)
Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

3 Me, We

Dada Khanyisa (D.K.),
Daniel Malan (D.M.),
Khanya Mashabela (K.M.), and
Lemeeze Davids (L.D.)
in conversation at A4 Arts Foundation.

23 April 2026

D.M. This conversation about doing something together began last year when I approached you about making a zine. Having known you for years and the care you take in collecting the objects you surround yourself with, I'm interested in how you think about collecting and how you select things. We decided to look at the things that are already here and that A4 is custodian of. What does it mean to look at and work with other people's collections?

D.K. I'd been thinking about the idea of a home – about the part of a house that feels public but also carries all those elements that remind you that you're in someone's personal space. Like the parts of the house that are visible from the outside being a reflection of the people who live inside. You made this particular assortment of things available, within reach. I felt I needed to introduce something personal to me through the selection of works and in the way the space is arranged, the palette of the room, and the inclusion of other objects.

D.M. Art in a collection, in an archive, has its challenges. How to live alongside it? This project is an opportunity to set the mood of a space. When we began making the selection, one of the works that we decided to include was your *02 Jan 2022*, made in 2023, a year after

the events described. How did this work come about? Were you in town when Parliament was set alight?

D.K. I was in town, yes, and I remember hearing that the building was burning. I remember the day, it could have been a Sunday, it was such a calm morning. It didn't feel like there was any panic in the air. It wasn't pressing. We all just got on with it, kept going.

D.M. One of the photographs you used as a reference was from a *Daily Maverick* article. I'm curious to know how you go about finding the images you later work from.

K.M. Having spoken to you about this previously, Dada, I understand that you often find photos in the way that we all do – the infinite scroll and just being on the internet. I've always had the sense that photography as a medium is really important to you, but I hadn't realised that you yourself engage with film photography. How do you understand the role of photographic images in your work?

D.K. To me, photography restores order in a way. It accesses some kind of truth. When I reproduce a photo, it anchors the work to a particular event. We know that Parliament caught fire on the 2nd January because of photographic evidence.

K.M. Are most of the photos that you reference found photographs, or do you ever work from pictures that you've taken yourself?

D.K. It's a mix of both. I also refer often to screenshots from films, interesting moments where light

meets the intensity of one's facial or physical expression. I keep screenshots and clips of my favourite TV moments.

L.D. I feel that the curation of this space is itself a scene-making gesture, which recalls something of the *Ponte Tower* 'scenes' on the far side of the gallery, space '1' in this exhibition. You're building an environment beyond the discrete works included. There's a theatrical element to it – if you'd agree with that word. You're staging an environment in order to produce a given effect.

D.M. I've been describing the space as 'Lynchian'. There's something about this space that feels perhaps more cinematic than theatrical to me.

D.K. One of the key ideas Daniel and I landed on was creating a listening room. From the beginning, we wanted to include seating and a sound system, a place where we could gather, where people could hang out, get comfortable.

D.M. When we were trying to imagine what the space would be, the idea of people spending time in here became primary. Perhaps it's ambitious to expect someone to sit down for 15 minutes. But part of that invitation has to do with the furniture. Another is the mood of the room and its contents. How can we shift the default setting of our collective, fragmented attention span?

D.K. The initial question was, "Where's the central focus?" For now, it's the TV, right? It's 31 near-silent minutes of video. You sit here, you take it in. It acts as a window in the space. The action on the screen becomes the action happening outside.

D.M. It's interesting you say that, Dada, because when we walked into the gallery together, I saw the windows open onto the street for the first time. I've worked here for four years, and the windows have always been covered, but as soon as I saw them uncovered, there was a strong sense that we had to leave them like that. Windows recur in your work; they become a way of framing your subjects and your scenes. And then there's also A4's proximity to Parliament, which I find really interesting in relation to *02 Jan 2022*. We're only a few hundred metres away. If you look out the window, you can almost see it.

L.D. The *Ponte* project offers parallels to these reflections. Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse went into these private spaces, into each and every apartment in the building, and spent time with the people who lived there to explain what they were doing, what their project was about. But then, instead of foregrounding the interiors of these homes, they took pictures of all the windows and all the doors and all the TV sets. So you have this catalogue of what everyone was watching, what everyone's view was, what everyone's door looked like. It made me think about how the stuff around us tells us so much about who we are as people. Similarly, this collection of works speaks to something about you as people, Daniel and Dada, and as artists.

D.M. Following Lemeeze's thought, even within this space, there's a division of a kind, where a quarter of it becomes desaturated, greyscale. We understand this section to represent the archive, or something of the past.

D.K. I've been thinking around or thinking about segregation in a very practical,

physical way. This does feel like the past, to me, this section. The grayscale images do feel like they belong to a different chronology. Like the work by Neo Matloga – though it's very contemporary, there's something about it that takes you back in time. But then, the Goldblatt image could have been taken today. There's a confusion of distance.

D.M. Where, in comparison, there's something quite joyous about the main part of the room. I hope we've created a comforting space, an invitation to people to step into a world. One of my favourite conversations we've had towards this exhibition was when you spoke about the Ernest Mancoba sculpture, *Figure of a Woman*, from 1936 – the attention to detail in the face and torso, which peters out at the figure's waist, so that the lower half of the sculpture becomes a cubist abstraction. And I asked you, why do you think Mancoba had made that decision? Do you recall your answer?

D.K. I think I said something along the lines of: you can't communicate through feet. It's a wasted effort to render perfectly pedicured toes. It demands too much time. You need to focus on what you can communicate through, like the facial expression, the hands. You can't communicate with ears either; ears also don't say anything.

D.M. And that's apparent in your work, in the compositional decisions you make. Your figures are more often seen from the waist up. But to your point about feet, we've included a work from David Goldblatt's *Particulars* series you gravitated towards. In these framed feet, there's so much emotion. The image of people lying on the lawn speaks back to

your picnic scene. Ultimately, I think all these works are in conversation with that same work, with *02 Jan 2022*. In gathering all these artworks and artists together, how did you make your selection?

D.K. At first, it was largely intuitive. I looked through what you sent me and clicked on whichever thumbnail caught my attention. If I clicked on it, I saved it. This became the shortlist. I thought, "This is what I have, and now let's look at it." I remember we then sat down with printouts and narrowed it down. Two groupings became apparent: the grayscale works and the colourful ones, like Penny Siopis' *Setting*. But then, how do we contextualise each decision? To express what we are communicating here?

D.M. The way I saw the Siopis work in relation to this project goes back to a conversation we had around chaos and leisure. Here, the artist painted a banquet during apartheid, picturing this sense of excess and indulgence while the world was burning. And I thought there was perhaps a quite literal connection between it and *02 Jan 2022*. Perhaps it also goes back to this divide, this segregation of monochromatic and chromatic works.

L.D. And perhaps there's a correspondence between the three-dimensional quality of this painting and your wall sculptures, Dada.

K.M. Thinking about the room in its entirety, and the kind of feeling that it evokes, and going back to what Lemeeze was saying earlier, it might appear as a domestic space,

but really, it's a theatrical imagining of a domestic space. The idea of creating a place that's hospitable, a place that feels welcoming, I think that really speaks to the way you communicate in your work, but also you as a person. The desire to facilitate a good time is really present, a sense of generosity and openness to people.

D.M. Generosity is the right word.

L.D. There's also a playfulness.

D.K. And problem solving, working with the time we have, trying to settle on decisions – the world is big with possibilities.

D.M. I had a million ideas initially, and you said to me, "Don't waste resources. Make do with what you have available." And I suppose you've always had that inclination.

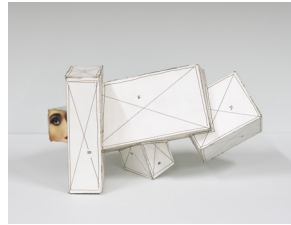
D.K. I have a workshop full of wood. I can't buy more wood. That's my rule. Sometimes we have what we need. I remember us deciding that the green rug we had wanted was –

D.M. Extravagant. It was going to blow the budget. But I kept insisting on it. I kept telling you that I could make it happen. But the truth was, I couldn't make it happen.

D.K. It's also important to think, "What will happen to all these things after the show?" I enjoy these limitations. Things and spaces have a long life.

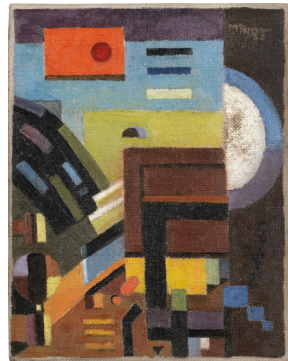


3a



Kyle Morland (b.1986, Johannesburg)
Maquette for 'Glitch' (2016), part of 'Various Maquettes on shelf' (2018)
Mixed media
17.3 x 29.5 x 20 cm
Private collection

3b



George Pemba (b.1912, Gqeberha; d.2001, Motherwell)
'In Quest of Beauty' (Abstract) (1953)
Oil on board
33.5 x 25.5 cm
Private collection

3c



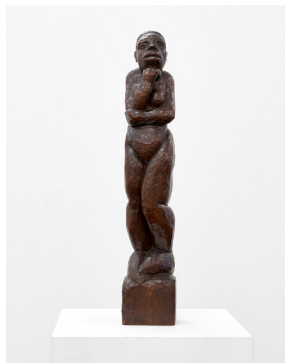
Cameron Platter (b.1978, Johannesburg)
Ghettoblaster (2007)
Carved and painted wood
50 x 30 x 15 cm
Private collection

3d



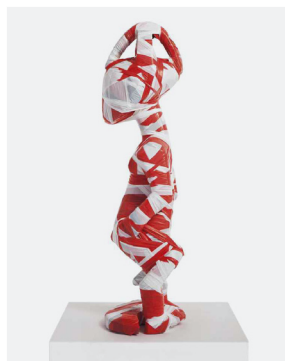
Annabelle Agbo Godeau (b.1995, Paris)
Hand in hand (2024)
Oil on canvas
13 x 18 cm
Private collection

3e



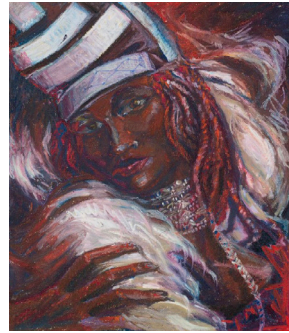
Ernest Mancoba (b.1904, Turffontein; d.2002, Clamart)
Figure of a Woman (1936)
Carved wood
58.2 x 10.2 x 9.5 cm
Private collection

3f



Kendell Geers (b.1968, Johannesburg)
Twilight of the Idols (2005)
Chevron danger tape on found object
54 x 14 x 14 cm
Private collection

3g



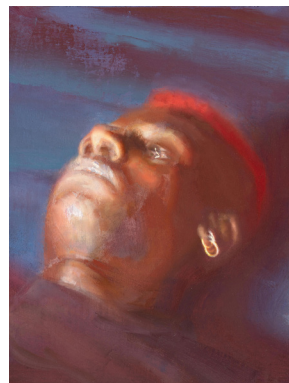
Athi-Patra Ruga (b.1984, Mthatha)
Normalizo Khwezi from the Lunar Songbook (2021)
Oil stick and pastels on canvas panel
50 x 40 cm
Private collection

3h



Kapwani Kiwanga (b.1978, Hamilton)
Vumbi (2012)
Single-channel digital video with sound
31 min
Private collection

3i



Ian Grose (b.1985, Johannesburg)
Terence in the last light (2021)
Oil on linen
35.5 x 28 cm
Private collection

3j



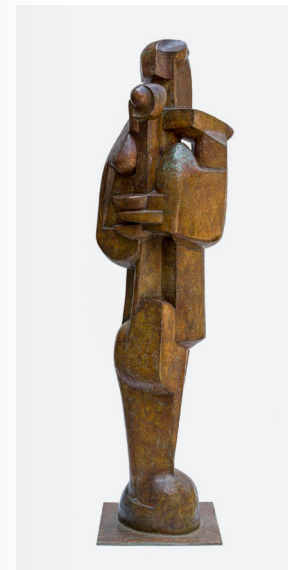
Penny Siopis (b.1953, Vryburg)
Setting (1986)
Oil on canvas
150 x 182 cm
Private collection

3k



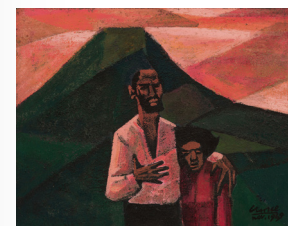
Dada Khanyisa (b.1991, Umzimkhulu)
02 Jan 2022 (2023)
Oil on canvas, artificial grass, cloth and wood
108 x 73.5 x 19 cm
Private collection

3l



Edoardo Villa (b.1915, Bergamo; d.2011, Johannesburg)
Mother and Child (1963/2010)
Bronze with brown patina
201 x 66 x 51 cm
Private collection

3m



Peter Clarke (b.1929, Simon's Town; d.2014, Ocean View)
Evening Story (1969)
Acrylic on canvas laid on board
20 x 25.2 cm
Private collection

3n



Lucas Sithole (b.1931, Springs; d.1994, Pongola)
The Guitarist (1988)
Ironwood
136 x 49 x 24 cm
Private collection

3o



David Goldblatt (b.1930, Randfontein; d.2018, Johannesburg)
Photographer and client, Braamfontein. Johannesburg (1955)
Silver gelatin print on fibre-based paper
Diptych: 13.5 x 20 cm each
Private collection

3p



David Goldblatt (b.1930, Randfontein; d.2018, Johannesburg)
Women at play during their lunch-hour. Pieter Roos Park, Johannesburg (1975)
Silver gelatin print on fibre-based paper
22.9 x 22.5 cm
Private collection

3q



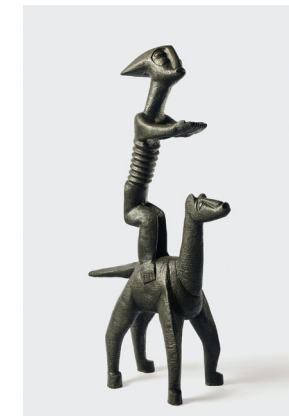
Neo Matloga (b.1993, Mamaila)
Ntsware ka tsoekere (2019)
Collage, charcoal, soft pastel, and ink on canvas
170 x 140 cm
Private collection

3r



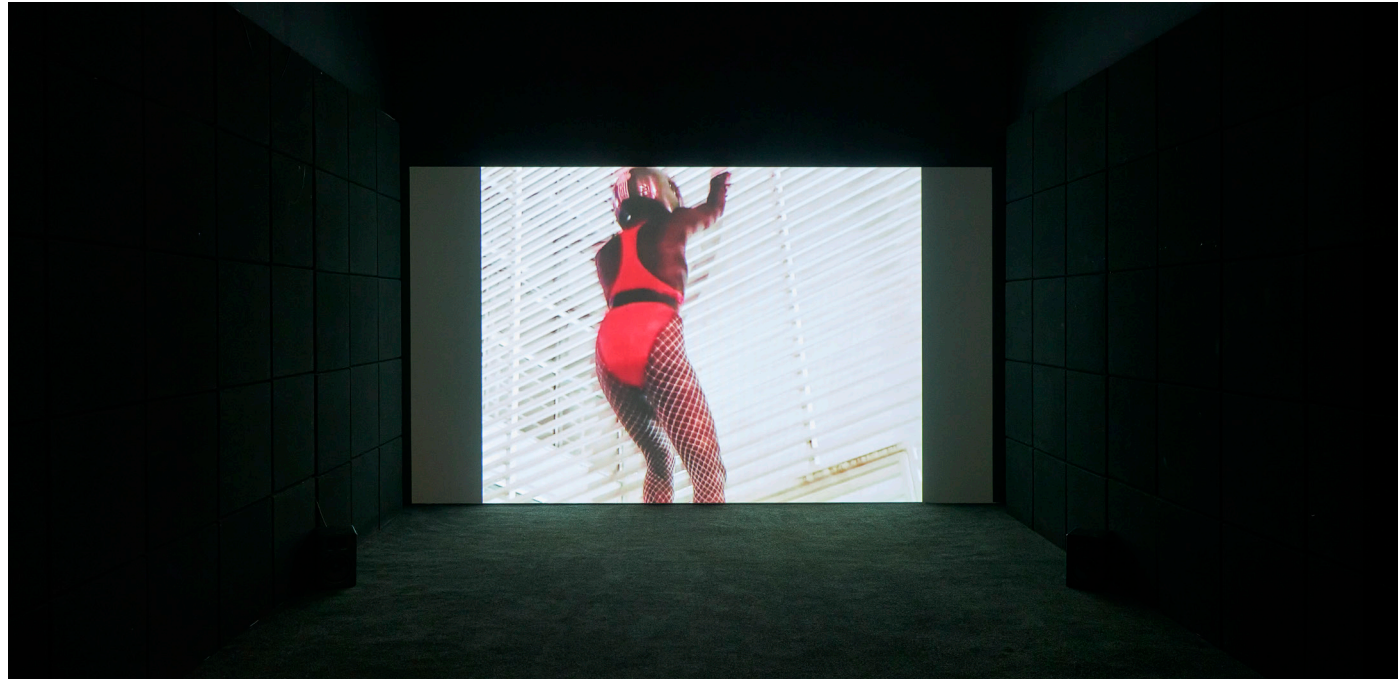
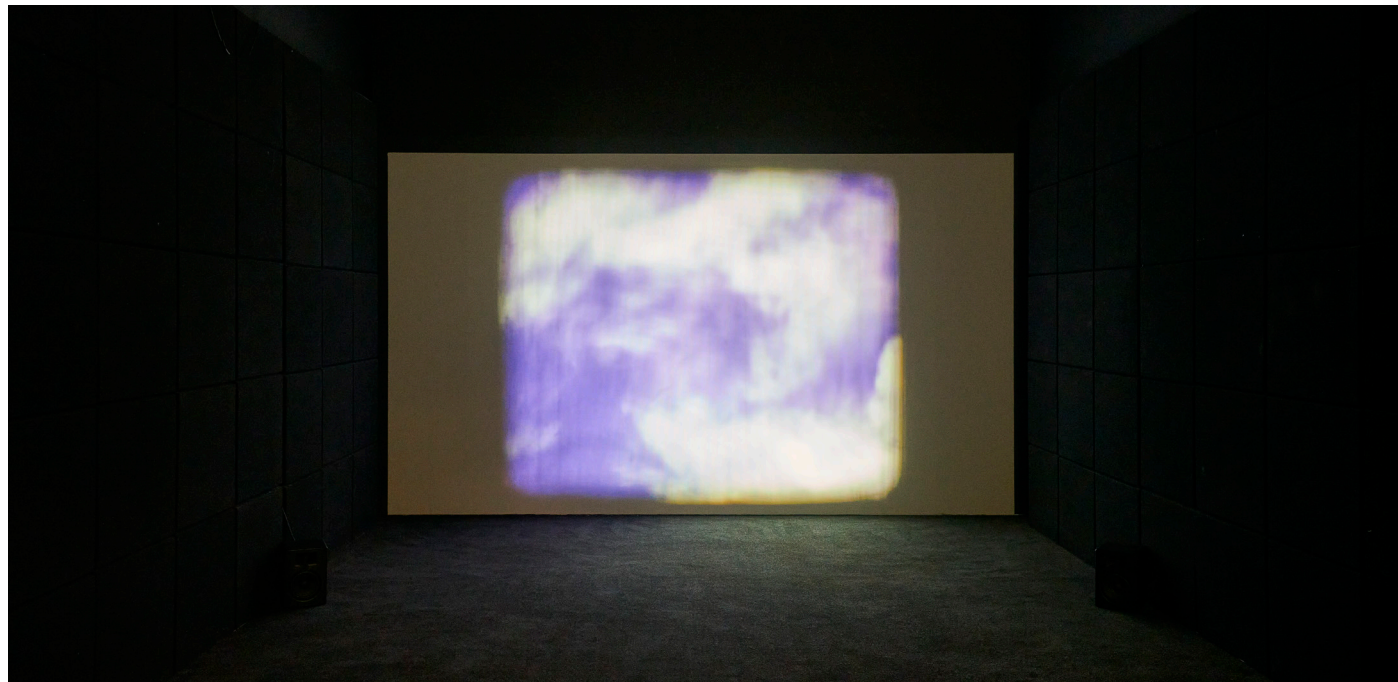
Zanele Muholi (b.1972, Umlazi)
Inkanyiso I, Paris (2014)
Silver gelatin print
50 x 34 cm
Private collection

3s



Sydney Kumalo (b.1935, Sophiatown; d.1988, Johannesburg)
Mythological Rider II (Study for Mythological Rider) (1970)
Bronze on wooden base
123 x 65 x 30.5 cm (excluding base)
Private collection





- a Stephen Hobbs, *54 Storey's* (1998)
- b Lindokuhle Sobekwa, *I carry Her photo with Me* (2021)
- c Athi-Patra Ruga, ... *After He Left* (2008)

1, 2, 3

Wayfinder

—

Design: Ben Johnson

Editors: Sara de Beer, Lucienne Bestall and Chloé de Villiers

Exhibition

—

Curators: Lemeeze Davids, Khanya Mashabela, Dada Khanyisa and Daniel Malan

Producer: János Cserhádi

Fabrication, Installation and Photography: Kyle Morland

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A4

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