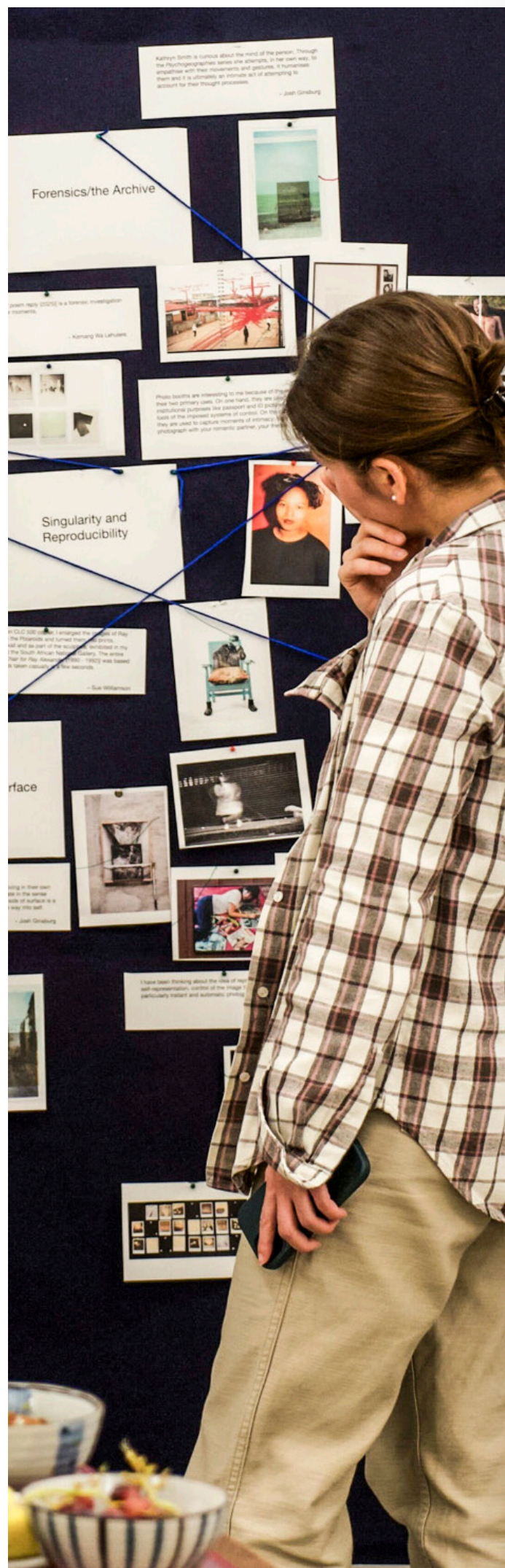


# Chrisara Agiradi

Curatorial  
Residency



# A research installation

With the support of L'Istituto Italiano di Cultura Sud Africa, Chiara Agradi visits Cape Town for a brief curatorial residency to explore the contrasts and resonances of photographic practice between Italy and South Africa. Paying attention to the use of Polaroid as a medium and a process tool, Agradi cites Polaroid's invention of instant, automatic image publishing as a "radical revolution in terms of technology, society and culture." She investigates its use by artists, but also by government agencies, and commercial and amateur photographers.

As part of her preparatory research, Agradi participated in a series of conversations with the A4 team. Khanya Mashabela called on Terry Kurgan, Sue Williamson, Kemang Wa Lehulere, and Roland Erikson to discuss the use of Polaroid and found photographs. Collected fragments from these conversations are presented here along with a list of the photographs, artworks and readings engaged towards this research installation.

# List of photocopies, artworks, and ephemera included in the installation

— Reference photocopy of Nicole Gravier, *Roberto (Moro)*, 1976–1980.  
— Reference photocopy of Tomaso Binga, *Mater*, 1977–2015.  
— Reference photocopy of Anna Oberto, *Scritture d'amore. La Seduzione Mer Mère Aimer*, 1984.  
— Reference photocopy of Marcella Campagnano, *L'invenzione del Femmine: Regalità* (series), 1974–1980.  
— Reference photocopy of Giulia Iacolutti, *001, Città del Messico*, 2017.  
— Reference photocopy of Lisetta Carmi, *Ezra Pound*, 1966.  
— Reference photocopy of Lisetta Carmi, *I travestiti, Sissi*, 1965–1967.  
— Reference photocopy of Lisetta Carmi, *I travestiti, Dalida*, 1965–1967.  
— Artwork: Moshekwa Langa, *True Confessions: My Life as a Disco Queen, as told to John Ruskin [1]*, 1998.  
— Reference photocopy of Berni Searle, *Not Quite White*, 2000.  
— Artwork: Berni Searle, *Still*, 2001.  
— Artwork: Lindokuhle Sobekwa, *After a protest related to continuous power cuts during Lockdown Level 5 in Thokoza*, 2020.  
— Reference photocopy of Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement, *Manifesto*, Published: 21 March 1971, the 11th Anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre.  
— Reference photocopy of Jabulani Dhlamini, *Ntate Mokhehi, Rooistena, Sharpeville* (diptych), 2015.

— Artwork: Street photographer's advertisement board with photographic portraits. Found in Cape Town by Sabelo Mlangeni and Jabulani Dhlamini during their residency at A4 in 2018.  
— Reference photocopies of Terry Kurgan, *Portraits of the Joubert Park photographers*, from the 'Park Pictures' series, 2004.

1. Name: Santos Cossa  
Date of Birth: 9 November 1961  
Place of Birth: Maputo Mozambique  
Relocation to Johannesburg: 1990  
Currently resides: Joubert Park  
Occupation: Photographer  
Working in Joubert Park: Three years
2. Name: Robert Madamala  
Date of Birth: 6 July 1968  
Place of Birth: Venda, South Africa  
Relocation to Johannesburg: 1989  
Currently resides: Diepkloof  
Occupation: Photographer  
Working in Joubert Park: Thirteen years
3. Name: Bheki Mthethwa  
Date of Birth: 6 May 1981  
Place of birth: KwaZulu Natal, South Africa  
Relocation to Johannesburg: 1998  
Currently resides: Jeppestown  
Occupation: Photographer  
Working in Joubert Park: Three years

— Artwork: Unclaimed photographs from Terry Kurgan's 'Park Pictures' series, 2004.  
— Photographs included here are taken by many of the same photographers who sat for their portraits in the previous listing, including Robert Madamalala, Gibson Moyo, Mduduzi Ntshangase, Santos Cossa, Oscar Khumalo, and Jabulani Mpofu.  
— Reference photocopies of Terry Kurgan, *Hotel Yeoville*, 2008.  
— Reference photocopies Franco Vaccari, *Photomatic d'Italia*, 1972–1974.  
— Artwork: Sue Williamson, *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart*, 1990.  
— Artwork: Sabelo Mlangeni, *A morning after (UmlindeloUmlindelo wamaKholwa)*, 2016.  
— Reference photocopies of Sue Williamson, *A Chair for Ray Alexander*, 1990–1992.  
— Reference photocopies of Jacopo Benassi, *Fags*, 2024.  
— Reference photocopies of Paulo Gioli, *Dormire nella maschera altrui*, 1990.  
— Reference photocopies of Paulo Gioli, *Fotofinish, Tokyo*, 1996.  
— Ephemera: Kemang Wa Lehulere, *Untitled* (82 Polaroids from the artist's studio), undated.  
— Artwork: Selection from Kathryn Smith, *Psychogeographies: The Dieppe Series*, 2003–2004.







Photographs are like infidels.

The Polaroid controversy in South Africa in 1977 may offer a starting point because it points to Polaroid's ID system, which was commercialised around the world. This is a reflection of a broader tendency to attempt to identify and 'format' people. I'm interested in the role that Polaroid – and photography in general – have played in this system of control.

— Lindokuhle Sobekwa, 2020, at a roundtable discussion at A4 for the exhibition Tell It to the Mountains with Thembinkosi Goniwe, Khanya Mashabela, and Sean O'Toole

— Chiara Agradi, 12 March 2025







Nicole Gravier is a French artist working in Italy. During the 1970s, she developed Fotoromanzi, a series of artworks inspired by a genre of books of the same name. These books are visual, depicting love stories in which the protagonists are represented as silly women desperately waiting for a man to come home at night. Gravier plays with and makes fun of the genre, staging photos of herself on beds and sofas, captioned with phrases like, "I can't live without you!" and "Please, come back home! I feel lost without you." In these images, she is often surrounded by romance novels but also by books written by philosophers like Carla Lonzi and Hegel.

How is intimacy performed and created, and where is it simulated and falsified?

I have been thinking about the idea of representation, self-representation, control of the image through photography, particularly instant and automatic photography.

Unlike film where you can print as many pictures as you'd like from the negative, the Polaroid is a singular form, like a drawing. It's a unique object.

— Chiara Agradi, 12 March 2025

— Kemang Wa Lehulere, 30 April 2025







Photo booth and automatic photography are interesting to me because of the contrast of their two primary uses. On one hand, they are used for institutional purposes like passport and ID pictures, acting as tools of the imposed systems of control. On the other hand, they are used to capture moments of intimacy: taking a photograph with your romantic partner, your friends, or alone.

In Moshekwa's *True Confessions* self-portraits (1999), it feels like he's performing for himself. His body language seems informed by popstars and 'Page Three' girls. He's taking ownership of or reflecting on a very 'public-facing' sexuality.



The Joubert Park photographers had unintentionally created an informal archive of the social history of Johannesburg's inner city at a particular time in its history. They might have kept the unclaimed photographs because they believed someone would eventually come back for them one day, but I also think it was because of their respect for the meaning of a photographic portrait, and the sense of it being a real part of the person who had commissioned it.

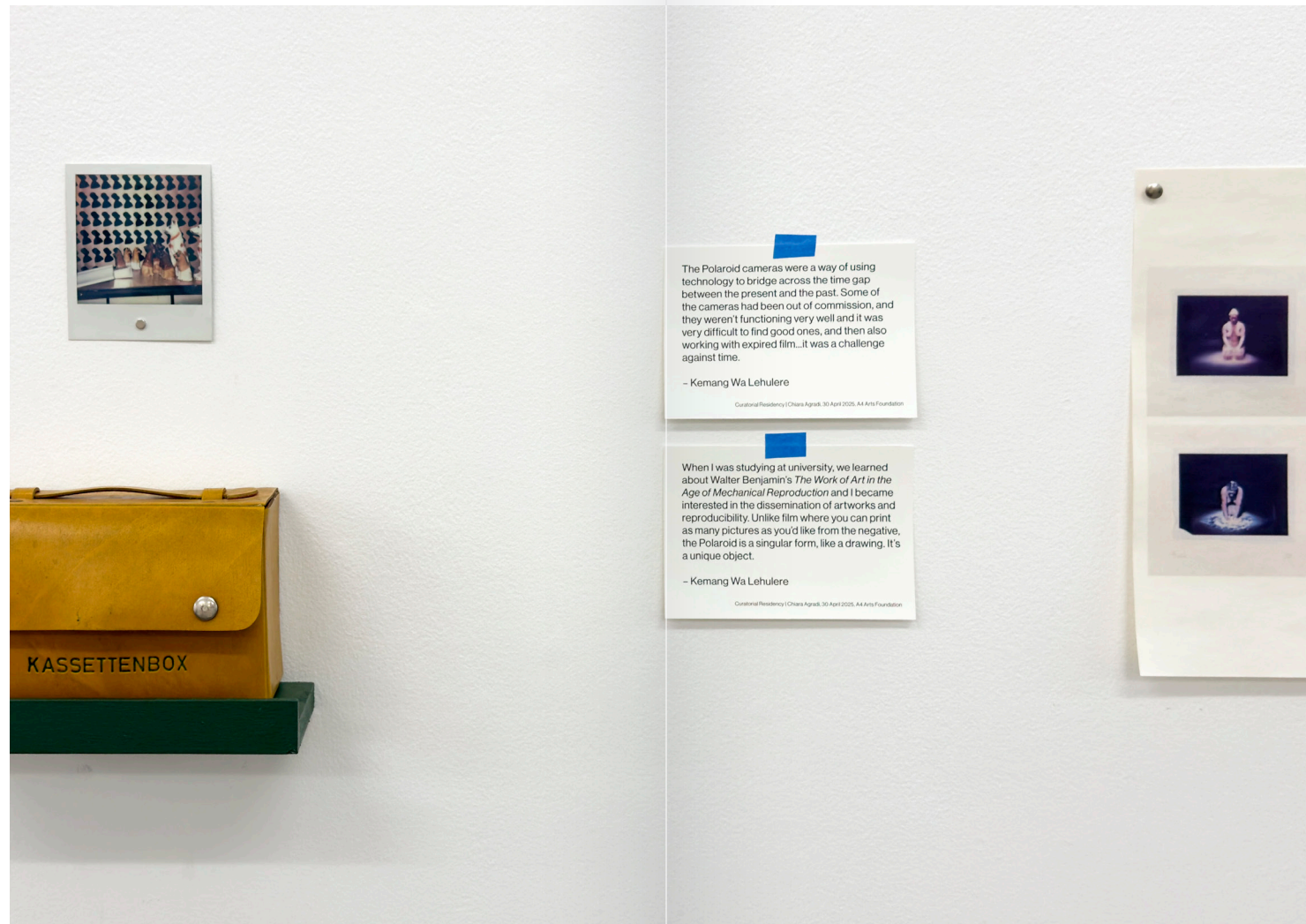
We were at the opening event of my residency in the South African National Gallery's Annexe, and Ray [Alexander] looked so great sitting in a chair. I didn't have a camera with me (it was before smartphones) but Kathy Grundlingh, the photography curator at the SANG, had a Polaroid camera. I asked her to take the shot. She took two versions: In one, Ray is sitting with her hands on the arms of the chair. In the other, she is leaning sideways, with her hand under her chin. Using my Canon CLC 500 copier, I enlarged the images of Ray from the Polaroids and turned them into prints, shown on the wall and as part of the sculpture, exhibited in my retrospective at the South African National Gallery. The entire installation, *A Chair for Ray Alexander* (1990–1992), was based on those two Polaroids taken casually in a few seconds.

— Terry Kurgan, 19 May 2025

— Sue Williamson, 13 March 2025







Lisetta Carmi is an important Italian photographer, and the first in Italy to document the lives of transgender people. She was based in Genova in the early 1960s, a city which was known at the time for its underground art scene. Her work is a poignant example of freedom of representation through photography.

— Chiara Agradi, 9 May 2025

Most amateurs would have used the Kodak version of the instant camera, as they were almost half the price of the Polaroid cameras. In the 1980s in Cape Town, we sold the Kodak instant camera all of the time.

— Roland Erikson, 5 March 2025



I found the idea of forensics interesting. Kemang Wa Lehulere described making the works in the *World of Nat Nakasa* series as an attempt to gather traces of Nakasa's thoughts and ideas through gestures, and then arranging them in this storyboard-like form to create an abstracted narrative. It is an attempt to build an image of who this stranger might be.

I think it is similar to Kathryn Smith's work in the *Psychogeographies* series. It is also what we do as researchers with archival photos and artworks. What one ends up with is a perception of someone, which can never be fully whole.

— Khanya Mashabela, 9 May 2025



What struck me and attracted me to these unclaimed photographs was that they were of people performing their best selves for the camera. And we will never know who their imagined audience might have been. They made my heart ache. How melancholic it is to commission an image that becomes orphaned. These images are orphans.

— Terry Kurgan, 19 May 2025



# Visual References

## Representation/Self-representation/ Performance

- Tomaso Binga, *Mater* (1977–2015)
- Marcella Campagnano, *L'invenzione del Femine: Regalità* (series) (1974–1980)
- Nicole Gravier, *Roberto(Moro)* (1976–1980)
- Giulia Iacolutti, *001, Città del Messico* (2017)
- Moshekwa Langa, *True Confessions: My Life as a Disco Queen, as told to John Ruskin [1]* (1998)
- Sabelo Mlangeni, *Invisible Woman II* (2006)
- Berni Searle, *Still* (2001)

## Surveillance and Control

- Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, Exhibition: *To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, January 24–February 16, 2013
- A member of the Red Brigades, *Untitled* (a picture of Aldo Moro after being kidnapped by terrorists) (1978)

- Jabulani Dhlamini, *Ntate Mokhehi, Rooistena, Sharpeville* (diptych) (2015)
- Franco Vaccari, *Photomatic d'Italia* (1972–1974)
- Sue Williamson, *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart* (1990)

## Objecthood and Surface

- Jacopo Benassi, *Fags* (2024)
- David Goldblatt, *Pinups in the remains of a mine worker's bunk. Probably New State Mines, near Springs. July 1965* (1965)
- Thembinkosi Hlatwayo, *Untitled (23)* from the series 'Slaghuis II' (2019)
- Sabelo Mlangeni, *A morning after (UmlindeloUmlindelo wamaKholwa)* (2016)
- Anna Oberto, *L'Utopico. Eanen al momento della scrittura* (1974)
- Kathryn Smith, *Psychogeographies: The Dieppe Series* (2003–2004)
- Kathryn Smith, *Sad Sketches* (2007)
- Mikhael Subotzky, *David, Hout Bay Beach (0212)* (2005)
- Kemang Wa Lehulere, *Untitled* (82 Polaroids from the artist's studio) (2012–2020)
- Sue Williamson, *A Chair for Ray Alexander* (1990–1992)

## Forensics and Archives

- Terry Kurgan, *Park Pictures* (2004)
- Kathryn Smith, *Psychogeographies: The Washing Away of Wrongs* (2003–2004)
- Kathryn Smith, *Sad Sketches* (2007)
- Kemang Wa Lehulare, *The World of Nat Nakasa (Sketch 3)* (2013)

## Singularity and Reproducibility

- Terry Kurgan, *Park Pictures* (Unclaimed photographs) (2004)
- Kemang Wa Lehulere, *Spatial poem reply 2* (2015)
- Berni Searle, *Still* (2001)
- Sue Williamson, *A Chair for Ray Alexander* (1990–1992)

## Intimacy and the Illusion of Intimacy

- Bridget Baker, *So I become small and active* (2000)
- Lindokuhle Sobekwa, *Mandla II* (2018)
- Kathryn Smith, *Psychogeographies: The Washing Away of Wrongs* (2003–2004)
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Currently based in Paris, Chiara Agradi (b.1992 Milan) is working towards a PhD at École du Louvre and Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Her area of research is the correlation between the commercial activities of the Polaroid company and artistic creation, focusing on the practice of Italian photographers from the seventies to the present day. She is a member of the curatorial board of the Polaroid Foundation.

A research installation curated by Chiara Agradi, 2025

Conversational excerpt from Lindokuhle Sobkewa included from a previous engagement at A4 for the exhibition Tell It to the Mountains, 2022

All other conversational excerpts included in this wayfinder are compiled and edited by Khanya Mashabela including the lists of photocopies, ephemera, and artworks and the reference lists.

For artworks in this installation, thank you to the artists and lenders.

For photocopies and reference images included, thank you to the artists, makers, and publishers.

All contributors to this installation and accompanying wayfinder reserve the right to be recognised as the artists, and speakers, of their works and words, and retain their intellectual property rights.

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# A4 Reading Room

29 May –  
6 June '25