

Senzeni Marasela  
Maheder Haileselassie  
Yassmin Forte  
Tshepiso Moropa

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PHOTO LONDON FAIR 2024

Catalogue

# SENZENI MARASELA

THEODORAH COMES TO JOHANNESBURG

IZITHOMBE ZENDAWO ESIZITHANDAYO

IJEREMANI LAM: WAITING FOR GEBANE

LAST KNOWN LOCATION

FAILING

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Senzeni Marasela lives and works in Soweto, South Africa. A cross-disciplinary artist who explores performance, photography, video, prints, and mixed-medium installations involving textiles and embroidery, her work deals with history, memory, and personal narrative, emphasising historical gaps and overlooked figures.

In 2023 Marasela became the recipient of the inaugural K21 Global Art Prize in Dusseldorf, awarded to artists with courage and vision, at the beginning or middle of their careers, by the Kunstammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen museum. Her work is in prominent international collections, including the Newark Museum, Smithsonian Institution and MoMA, New York, the Kunstammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen museum as well as private collections such as the Leridon collection in Paris, the Harry David collection in Athens and the Sindika Dokolo collection in Angola.

Marasela is interested in the multiplicity contained within the experience of waiting and in the pathologies of women who are made to wait or who, perhaps, choose to do so. Her work is monumental in number, scale and duration, echoing the countless untold and unheard stories of black women in her home country and, by extension, across Africa.

In 2003, Marasela began to tell the story of a woman called Theodorah, whose husband, Gebane, has left their rural home to find work in Johannesburg. The narrative began with a durational performance based on her own mother's stories about the eleven-hour journey from the rural area of Mvenyane to the city. Marasela wore a yellow dress that her mother gave her, taking the name and person of Theodorah as her alter-ego. Over the following two decades Marasela has continued to depict Theodorah waiting and searching for her husband.



Theodorah comes to Johannesburg, 2004  
Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



## THEODORAH COMES TO JOHANNESBURG

2004

In this series of rarely seen photographs, Theodorah sets off to Johannesburg to find her husband Gebane. As she traverses the city, Theodorah occupies various historical sites such as the Hector Peterson Memorial and the apartheid museum in Soweto. She is also seen sitting on the sidewalks and benches of affluent suburbs and parks which represent the city's spatial and socio-economic inequality. These spaces become portals through which the artist connects the city's past to its present and maps the ongoing legacy of apartheid.

Theodorah comes to Johannesburg, 2004

Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Theodorah comes to Johannesburg, 2004

Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Theodora comes to Johannesburg, 2004  
Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Theodora comes to Johannesburg, 2004  
Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Theodorah comes to Johannesburg, 2004  
Fuji Crystal Archive C-type Matt , 29.7 by 42cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP

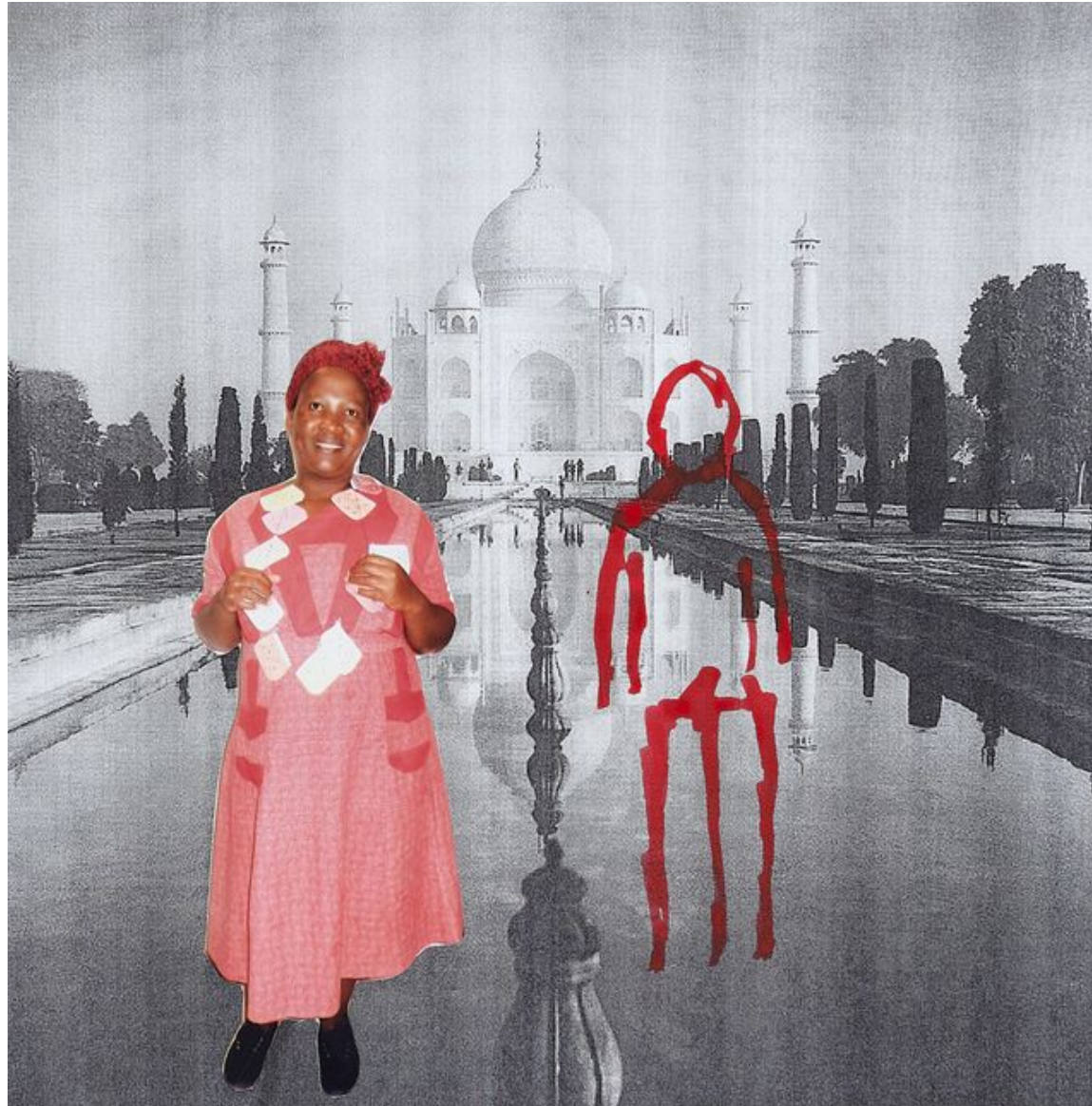




IZITHOMBE ZENDAWO ESIZITHANDAYO

2017

Many years later, Theodora, at home in her village in the Eastern Cape, imagines travelling abroad when Gebane returns to her. In these images, the pixelated backdrops and Theodora's dramatic poses question the idea of an objective photographic lens by capturing performed urban ideals of modernity and leisure. They are reminders of postcard souvenirs, records of adventure and happy times, that provide transactional, sentimental value. Theodora does not experience this respite in her search and wait for Gebane. The photographs represent the lack of mobility that women in waiting experience.



Izithombe Zendawo Esizithandayo #4, 2017

Photomontage, pen, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 24.5cm by 24.5cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Izithombe Zendawo Esizithandayo #19, 2017

Photomontage, pen, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 24.5cm by 24.5cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Izithombe Zendawo Esizithandayo #19, 2017

Photomontage, pen, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 24.5cm by 24.5cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Izithombe Zendawo Esizithandayo #19, 2017

Photomontage, pen, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 24.5cm by 24.5cm, Edition of 10 + 2AP



Waiting For Gebane, lishweshwe fabric dress, 2013-2019

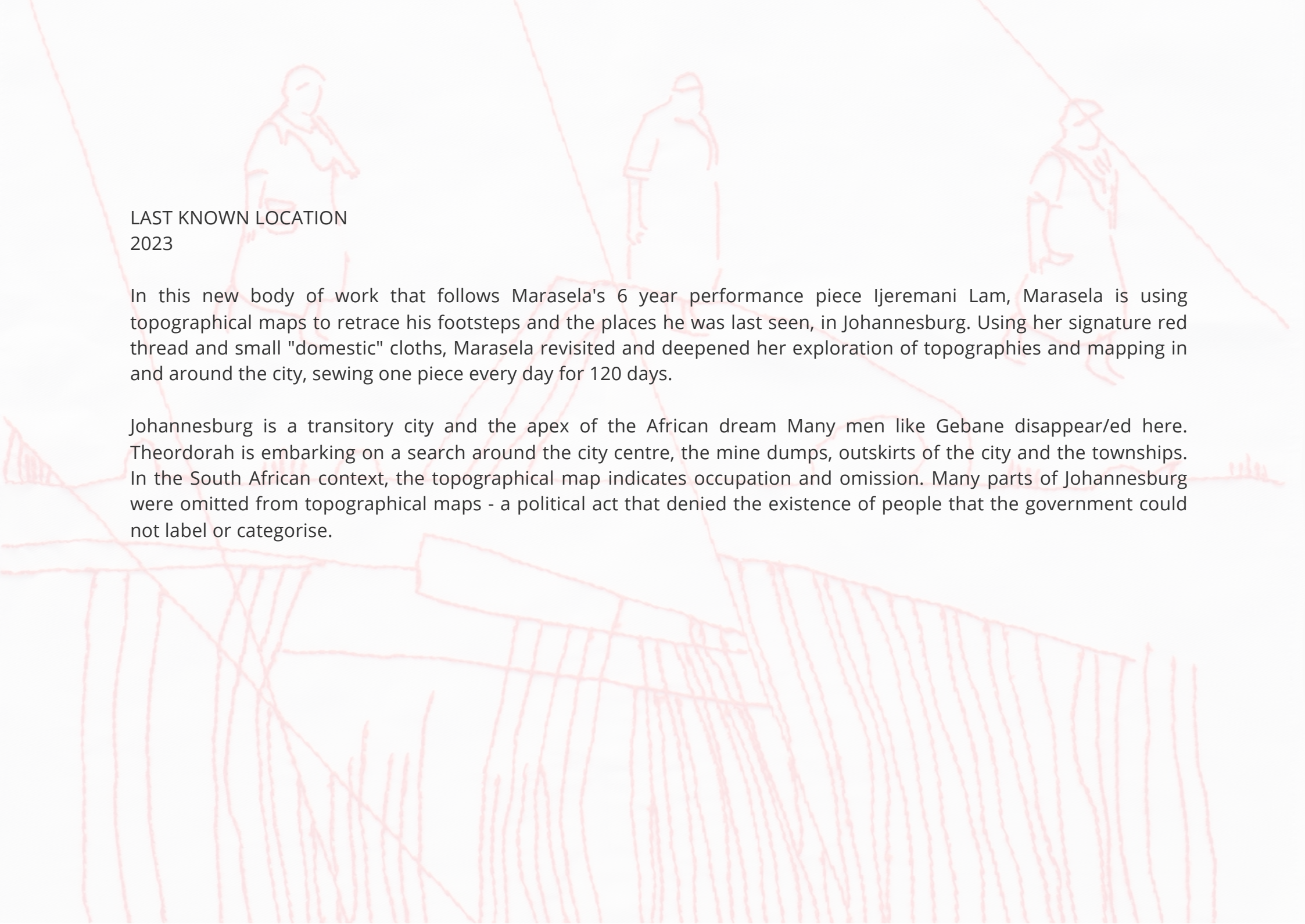
IJEREMANI LAM  
2013 - 2019

Every day for six years, Marasela wore a red dress made from ishwehwe fabric, 38 dresses in total for the performance. The dress hangs as it did in Marasela's closet, marking a new day and a new period of waiting.

Ishwehwe was introduced to South Africa during the nineteenth century by French missionaries who gifted it to King Moshoeshoe I of the Basotho kingdom. The textile's history is indelibly tied to histories of ownership, colonial trade, and modernisation. In recent years, ishwehwe has been incorporated into contemporary fashion design as a form of radical appropriation and reclamation of its cultural heritage.

In her embodiment of Theodorah, Marasela challenges our view of Theodorah and Marasela as separate individuals. The association of the textile with rural life and traditional Sotho and Xhosa culture was disruptive in the urban and suburban public spaces that Marasela moved in. She would be ignored by men who assumed she had a husband, or be offered food and money, by people who assumed that she was a migrant woman in need.



The background of the slide features a red line-art illustration. At the top, three stylized human figures are depicted in various poses. Below them, a large, irregular grid pattern is drawn with red lines, resembling a topographical map or a city layout. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and artistic.

## LAST KNOWN LOCATION 2023

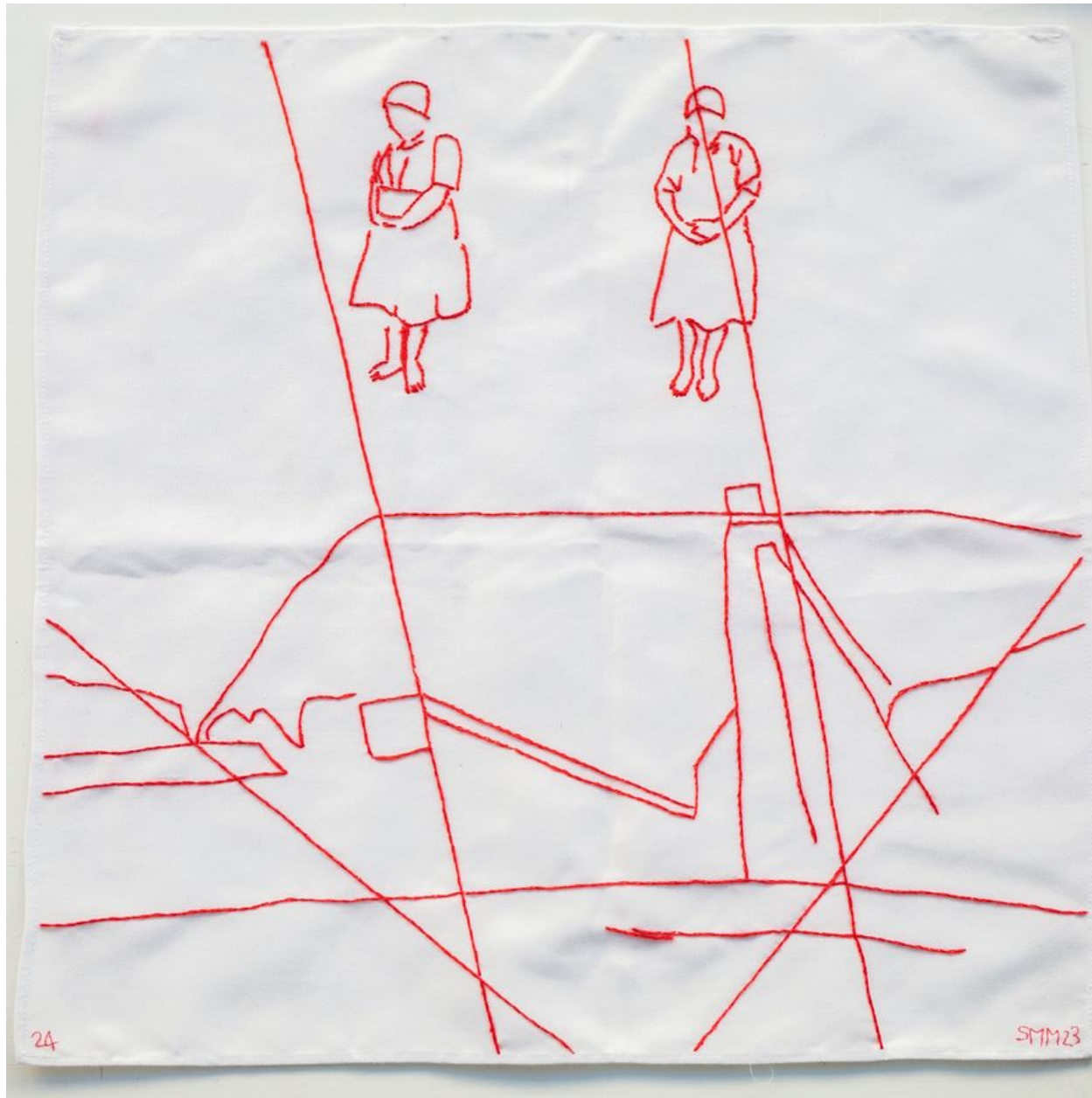
In this new body of work that follows Marasela's 6 year performance piece Ijeremani Lam, Marasela is using topographical maps to retrace his footsteps and the places he was last seen, in Johannesburg. Using her signature red thread and small "domestic" cloths, Marasela revisited and deepened her exploration of topographies and mapping in and around the city, sewing one piece every day for 120 days.

Johannesburg is a transitory city and the apex of the African dream. Many men like Gebane disappear/ed here. Theodorah is embarking on a search around the city centre, the mine dumps, outskirts of the city and the townships. In the South African context, the topographical map indicates occupation and omission. Many parts of Johannesburg were omitted from topographical maps - a political act that denied the existence of people that the government could not label or categorise.





Last Known Location #40, 2023  
Embroidery, red thread on domestic cotton, 45cm by 45cm



Last Known Location #24, 2023  
Embroidery, red thread on domestic cotton, 45cm by 45cm



Last Known Location #20, 2023  
Embroidery, red thread on domestic cotton, 45cm by 45cm



FAILING  
2017 - ongoing

Theodorah marks out the sites of her search for Gebane using loose, hanging threads.

Red wool represents the seasonal marker of the soil and dust of the mine dumps around Johannesburg, symbolising the slag heaps of the City's decommissioned mines whose falling slopes fill the air with toxic particles.

Marasela's red topographies are created on ityali: wool blankets which are traditionally worn as shawls by Xhosa wives. The weight of the blankets on the body reflects the burden carried by wives who have lost their husbands through the apartheid labour system and its forced urban migration.

The title of this series alludes to the failure of the mining industry to provide economic prosperity for its workers and their families.

Failing 17, 2019  
Hand-stitched wool on mixed fabric blanket 147 x 116cm



# MAHEDER HAILESELASSIE

BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

2023

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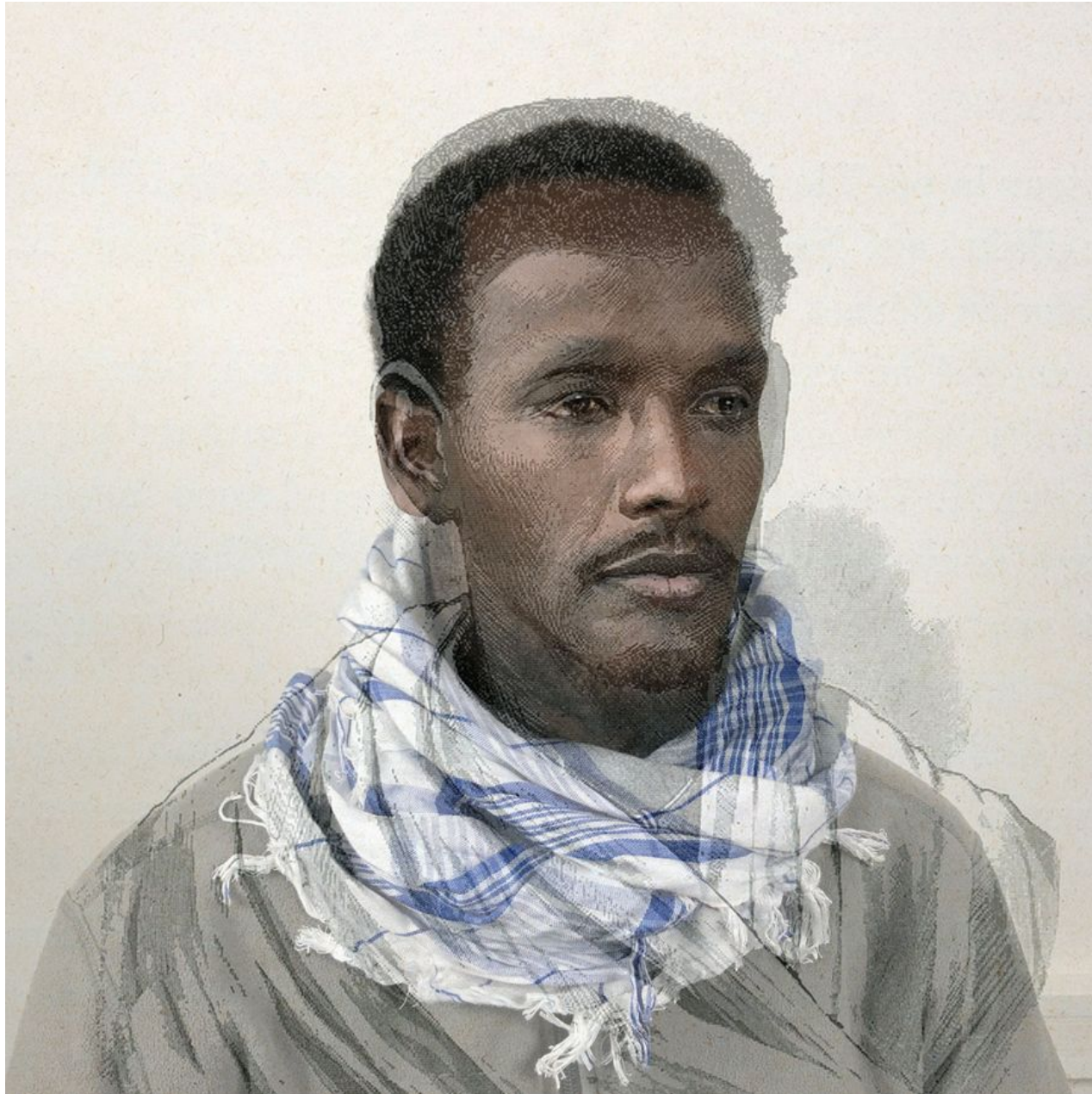
Maheder Haileselassie (b. 1990) is a self taught Ethiopian photographer and visual artist, born and based in Addis Ababa. Her work is inspired by her own history, memory and experiences as well as those of the people she engages with in her every day life. For her project, *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, she was a winner of the Contemporary African Photography Awards (2023) and recipient of the Prince Claus seed grant.

Landscapes are a reflection of the complex relationship between political, social and economic contexts shaping the history and memory of Ethiopian people. Photographs taken during the course of her work and from family albums are superimposed on archival images from her father's history books. The superimposition "brings forward somewhat of a new being [and place] removed further from the original, speaking to not only the fluidity of memory but to the fluidity of identity in the present day as well".

For many Ethiopians, remembering is in their cultural DNA - whether in politics, art or in the form of conflict. Maheder says of her people: "they stand at an intersection between a yearning for the past and a longing for the future with profound uncertainty".

Haileselassie describes the act of remembering as "the act of feeling". For the series she delved into three types of archives: her own family's photograph albums, her father's history books and her own photographic work, seeking to address the concept of an involuntary memory, one of emotions and senses. The final images in the series contain layers from these archives, encompassing the rich social, natural and cultural histories of her country.

Maheder Haileselassie is shortlisted for the Grand Prix Images Vevey 2023/2024 award and Phmuseum grant. Her work has been exhibited at numerous venues, museums and festivals around the world and she has been accepted to programs such as World Press Photo Masterclass and New York Times Portfolio Review. She has collaborated with Frobenius Institute, University of Cambridge, The Ethiopian Institute of Architecture and the Goethe Institut on projects that look into the intersection between photography, history, anthropology and architecture. She also runs the Centre For Photography in her home country, a critical learning platform for emerging artists.



The Seduction of Memory I

Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP



Exploration IV  
Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP





The Castle Of Fasiledes

Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP



Exploration I  
Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2



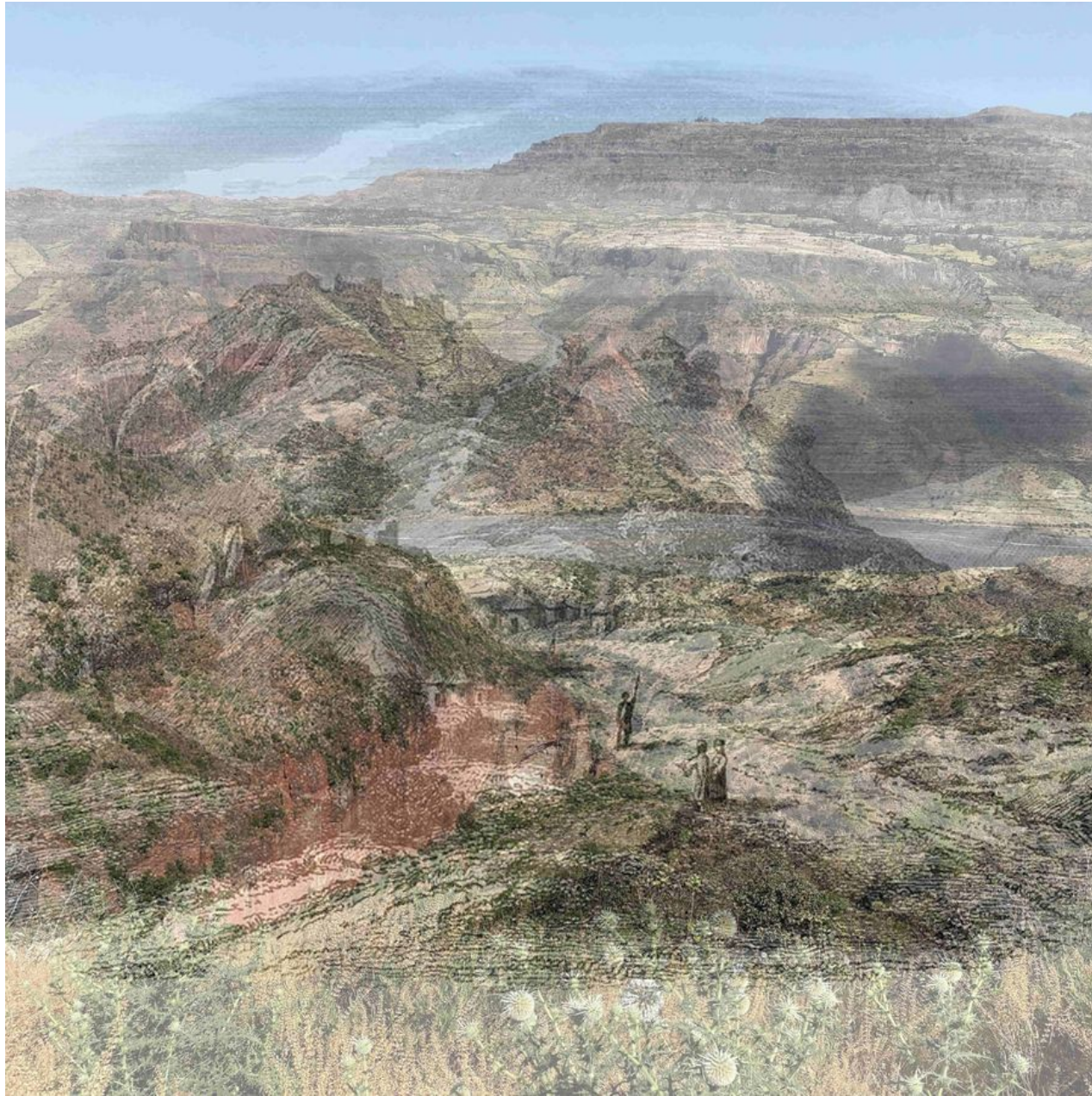
National Memories II, Wilful Remembrance

Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP



National Memories III, Shifting Identities

Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP



Exploration

Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP



The Seduction Of Memory II  
Pigment print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 308 gsm, 40 x 40cm, Edition of 7 + 2AP

# YASSMIN FORTE

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT MY FAMILY

2021-2022

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Yassmin Forte (b.1980) lives and works in Maputo Mozambique. She is interested in stories of Africans, told by Africans. Her series This Is A Story About My Family received the Contemporary African Photography award in 2023.

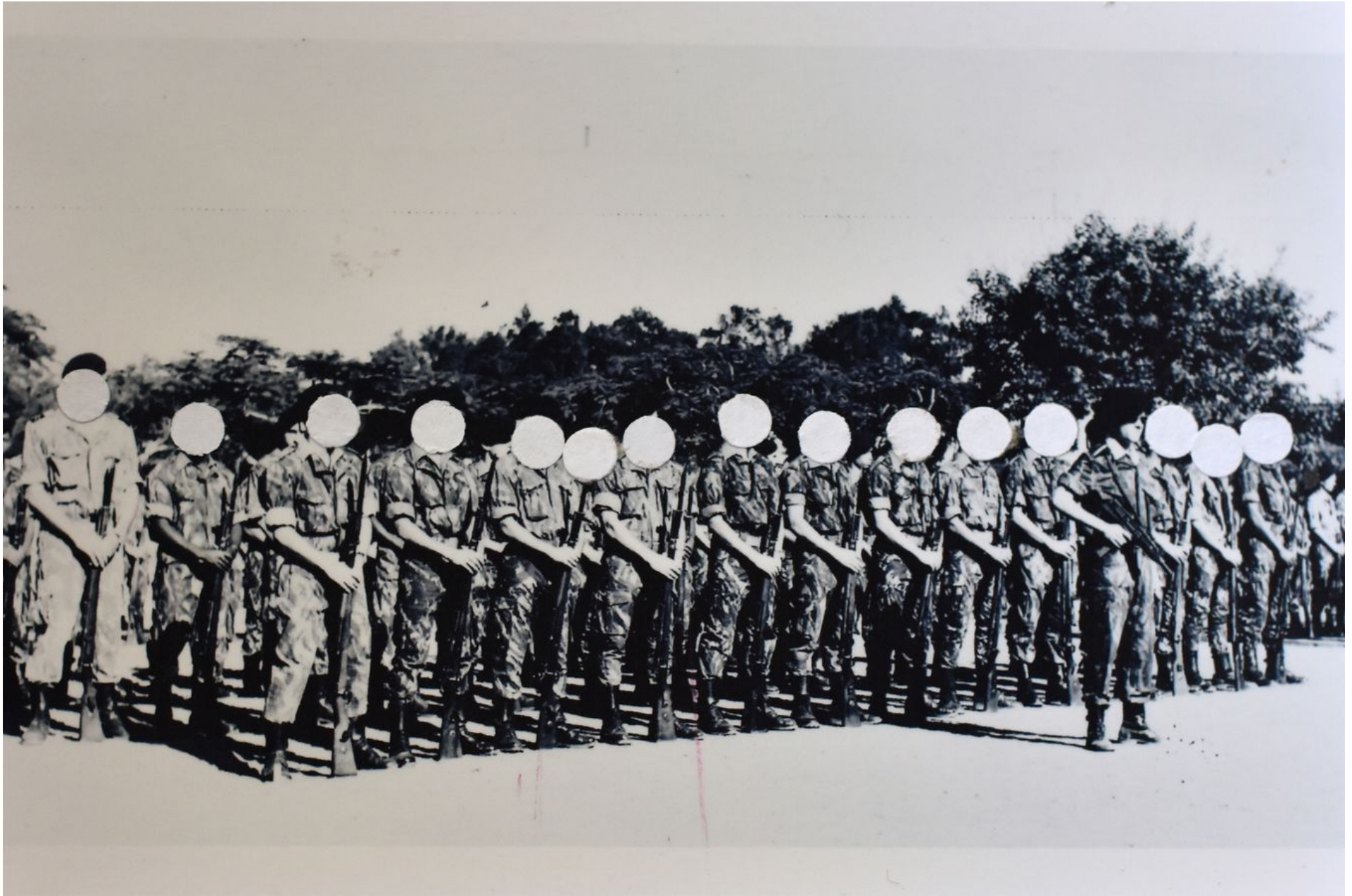
Forte's images attempt to dissect and navigate the effects of colonialism and migration from her family's history, using family archives and her own images to explore her African identity. In this process, she investigates how Africans have become the result of mixtures, migrations and colonisation, their histories blended in the repetition of patterns. Forte's own parents met and fell in love on a dance floor in Quelimane, Mozambique when her father was stationed there at the height of the Portuguese occupation of Mozambique. He was part of the armed forces, and her mother was a local Mozambican woman. When independence came in 1975, the Frelimo Party (The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) ordered the Portuguese to leave the country within 24 hours. Her father stayed...

For the artist, collage exaggerates and emphasises this history, juxtaposing past and present, personal and national, to construct a perception of her own identity.



Reflexos de Mim  
Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 42 x 59.4cm, Edition of 5





Regime  
Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 29.7 x 42cm, Edition of 5



Military  
Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 21 x 29.7cm, Edition of 5



Marcha  
Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 29.7 x 42cm, Edition of 5



Saudade  
Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 21 x 29.7cm, Edition of 5



Infancia Feliz

Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 42 x 59.4cm, Edition of 5



Passado sobre o presente

Manual Collage on Photo Digital Print, Ilford Fine, Textured Silk 270gsm, 29.7 x 42cm, Edition of 5

# TSHEPISO MOROPA

THE WOMAN WHO WORKED ON A SABBATH DAY

AND OTHER STORIES

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Tshepiso Moropa (1995) is a visual artist and archivist based in Johannesburg. She produces work in a variety of mediums including photography, film, illustration, collage making, and painting. She holds a Degree in Psychology and Linguistics from Wits University and is currently working towards an Honours degree in Psychology, focusing on abnormal psychology.

Moropa's work explores themes of identity, family relations, violence, race, gender, love and sexuality, solitude and the sense of belonging. Her subject matter is gleaned from self-portraits and archived images of African women found in library resources or research sites on the internet. A rich source of material is also found in African folkloric tales that the artist translates from Setswana and re-constructs as short animations. She explores connections between South Africans living today and their forgotten ancestors, describing this process as a way of bringing the figures in the photographs back to life.

In this way the archive becomes an important site of excavation and recreation. The archived image serves as a proxy for memory - particularly memory relating to cultural heritage and the present time: "they celebrate blackness, being black, being proud of ourselves and our heritage and culture. It is not about finding a sense of belonging within others. It is about finding a sense of belonging within ourselves".



The Flying Girl, 2023  
Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 35 x 35cm, Edition of 7.





The Promise, 2024

Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 35 x 35cm, Edition of 7.



The Ride Home, 2024

Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 35 x 35cm, Edition of 7.



The Showdown, 2023  
Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 35 x 35cm, Edition of 7.



The Joy, 2023  
Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 25 x 35.3cm, Edition of 7.



The Woman Who Worked On A Sabbath Day, 2024  
Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 25 x 35.3cm, Edition of 7.



The Woman Who Worked On A Sabbath Day, 2024

Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 25 x 35.3cm, Edition of 7.



The Woman Who Worked On A Sabbath Day, 2024  
Manual Collage photo digital print on Epson Premium Luster 260gsm, 25 x 35.3cm, Edition of 7.



Koop Projects is an experimental gallery and project space focused on contemporary African art. Our intention is to create conversations between artists based in Africa and their counterparts in and around Brighton, where we are based. In the future we hope to bring these conversations to a wider audience through an evolving programme of exhibitions and platforms.

Our project emphasises the role of African art and artists as a dynamic source for learning and change, exploring the boundaries between art, craft and design and seeking connections in the places where these practices meet.

We promote sustainable art practices through an interrogation of materiality and the contexts in which artists across Africa make and show their work.

Click the logo to visit our website or click Enquiries to send an email.

## ENQUIRIES

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Helen Rogers  
helen@koopprojects.com  
+44 7483 163396  
www.koopprojects.com