

Everard Read Cape Town is proud to present *Material City*, a group exhibition curated by Sandile Radebe. The exhibition features painting, sculpture, video and mixed media artworks and will run until 18<sup>th</sup> November.

A portfolio is available upon request.

### Curatorial Statement

*Material City* was conceived as part of the twentieth anniversary of Everard Read Cape Town. My appointment by Charles Shields for a curatorial role is in one way a form of disruption of the expectations that art lovers might carry or associate with the gallery.

The show is thus fertile ground to exercise experimentation and generally play outside the safe perimeters of convention. I always find experimentation and playing outside the rules exciting. Maybe it has to do with my naughty and inquisitive nature as a child. Maybe it has to do with the subversive nature of 90's hip hop culture that moulded me as a teenager growing up. Either way the notion was irresistible. Not surprisingly, I wanted to exploit this opportunity as a springboard to bring to the fore discussions about new imaginaries – surfaces and boundaries that are outside of the conventional perception we carry about city spaces.

As a curator invited to bring artists and their work on board, I looked at artists who have a particularly keen, discerning or even peculiar relationship with materials in their practice. Materials are a layer of meaning in reading artworks and therefore can be charged with emotion in order to persuade the viewer to sway towards a certain sensibility about the subject. In that tiny little gap between the viewer's deliberations and the tactile nature of material, I have an opportunity to impact the nature of the conversation that is happening through the use of the gallery setting. 'Materiality' then becomes an interlocutor of the artists' ideas, experiences and notions of 'citi-ness'.

I approached artists whose works I was familiar with and whose sense of materiality spoke to me. Some artists who I invited to the show had already been producing artwork that interrogates various conceptions of city spaces and its role in human interaction through using certain materials that are associated with 'citi-ness'. **Francois Knoetze's Cape Mongo** series interrogates the environmental impact that our consumerist habits have on the planet. **Gogga** has been creating spatial awareness in city spaces for more than twenty years through the use of colour. **Kira Kemper's** installation looks at the architecture of the city of Johannesburg specifically and the relationship it has with the street vendors. Her performance documented as video work speaks to issues of access in city spaces which adds to **Amber-Jade's** aluminium wall that also deals with issues of access and security. **R1** reappropriates street signs towards an aesthetic end. These artists' narratives already fit the thematic as such. It was a matter of conversation to ascertain the most relevant pieces for the show.

On the other hand, other artists made work specifically for the show. **Theko Boshimane** shot a video and made paintings looking at materialism or the notion of being cool. This interrogation also reveals the underlying socio-political ramifications that are camouflaged by being hip and being cool. This also speaks to a death of culture in a manner that is different to **Phumlani Ntuli's Lefu lahau Lamphidisa** which speaks of death as a redeemer. These varying views on the same subject serve to expand our thinking about such realities of human habitations. **Mandy Coppes-Martin's** archaeology of discarded objects also gives another perspective of life and death through objects that inhabit the city. **Io Makandal's** performative installation manipulates an unlikely combination of found

materials, debris and sourced material as drawing instruments that create an unusual relationship between form, colour and space to achieve a spatial sensibility that encourages one to see and engage with these materials anew. The process of watching these artworks develop after the brief posed uncertainty fused with excitement at the same time - the pleasures of locating yourself at the periphery of convention.

Nevertheless, I was interested in their take on how materiality can denote meaning and value in our conception of the city. These apparent conceptions are to be contested and challenged by the various takes on the same theme. This enriches the dialogue with many 'voices' and distinctive nuances that sometimes complement or oppose each other. The catalogue is a documentation of these ideas that have been percolating for a long time in my mind and finally expressed through various artistic voices. My role as a curator of the show is primarily to mediate these messages by how I present this material experience to the viewer and the conversation that happens between these artworks and the gallery space that the works inhabit.

The works range from video to painting, drawing, sculpture, installation and performance. All these modes engage materiality in its various forms - from organic, manufactured and discarded to repurposed - all with the end goal to imbue materiality with new meaning that fosters critical and new perspectives on city spaces. The gallery serves as a platform for this open-ended discussion to take place through hosting these interpretations, deliberations, comments and engagements.

The aim is not to find a resolution but rather to find terms which we can use to organise and make meaning of the role of human beings in the context of a city. The viewer's role is to bare witness to this conversation between the artworks in relation to each other and in relation to the formal space the works inhabit, and also in relation to the notions of 'city'. The ultimate aim is to stimulate a visual language that engages ways "... to think and talk about this new spatial reality in a meaningful and distinctive terms..." (Hajer, M. and Reijndorp, A., *In search of a new public domain*, 2001, pg. 32).

Sandile Radebe, Johannesburg, October 2016

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