

Antionette McMaster

South Africa

Biography

Visual artist born in 1970 and raised in Sasolburg (Free State), South Africa. She is currently studying for an Honours Degree in Fine Art at UNISA. Antionette McMaster works in all media but prefers mixed media. Some of her works have been selected to hang in the UNISA Faculty of Fine Arts building and her workbooks are used for teaching purposes. Other works are on display in the main Art Faculty Building on the Sunnyside campus.

She has participated in several group exhibitions since 2017. The Julie Miller African Contemporary Gallery in Craighall, Johannesburg, represented her from 2017 to 2020, and in October 2019, three of her artworks were selected to be exhibited at the African National Fashion Week at the Sandton Convention Centre. In 2020, 645 female artists were invited to submit artwork for the #ALLWOMXNMATTER for the Julie Miller African Contemporary Gallery in collaboration with Art@Africa. The top 50 participated in the exhibition at both galleries; I was chosen as one of the top 5 artists.

Her work is in various private collections. In addition, she has done commissioned works for various people; including the President of the High Court of Gauteng, Justice Dunstan Mlambo.

On Art, Aesthetic Position(s)

My work deals with constructed masks and costumes photographed in specific locations.

It is about the hidden personality of the victims behind the masks and costumes, but there are subtle hints of the abuse the victim is experiencing. There will always be a hint of abuse, no matter how hard the victim tries to hide it. My intention is to create a space and platform that brings forth a different narrative and helps spark conversations about how to overcome these horrific atrocities against women and children.

My goal is for viewers of my art to be called not only to compassion, but to social action. With the Covid 19 pandemic lockdown, violence and abuse escalated at an alarming rate as victims were with their abusive partners 24 hours a day.

Artworks

Not Quite Hidden

Photography

125 x 80 cm

2020

3 prints

600€

The Invisible and the Malignant

Photography

125 x 80 cm

2020

3 prints

600€

Could I

Photography

125 x 65 cm

2020

3 prints

600€

Ariel

Photography

43 x 59,6 cm

2021

3 prints

600€

I unpeel

Photography

70 x 60 cm

2021

3 prints

600€

Work comment by kukutana

Antionette McMaster shows violence done to women, the women in lockdown in the confines of the home, in captivity. Her staged photographs pointed out the facts of the case. Without faces, her female figures present themselves, yet full of dignity. Often they stand in the surroundings of withered trees, framed or tormented by branches; the skies are muted, dark, indeterminately brooding. In the photograph "Not quite hidden" the head consists of a reddish blossom, a symbol of innocence, like a wound. The iconography recalls Georgia O'Keeffe's large-scale flower paintings, their symbolic vulnerability. In her white glove-clad hands, the female figure holds brownish objects whose shape is reminiscent of morels, certainly also of a penis. The photograph, one might think, shows a crime scene after the fact. In the photograph "Unseen", the head and face of the female figure are covered with something organic, reminiscent of plant material in the shape of a beehive. The body is enveloped by a darker similar material. Branches suggest the figure against a sulfurous sky. Is it a spirit, a totem, a messenger from another world? The configuration acts as an evocation of an absence that is nevertheless so full of forebodings, of hidden hints, of deeds that could happen at any time. This also becomes clear in the two photographs "Shrouded" and "Could I". In them, the head has become a mask, the other realm from which the figure comes is represented by smoke. A red line or path runs from the forehead down to the end of the mask at the neck: blood? The pandemic, the artist elaborates, has increased the suffering of women for South Africa; she makes this forcefully visible.

With a series of black and white photographs against the backdrop of a room, a cell, she continues her investigation of female circumstances. "Ariel," an air spirit, notorious in Shakespeare's "Tempest," for example, shows a shadowy female figure with no recognizable face. Behind her a block, a bed, a sacrificial stone? She shows herself frontally to the viewer, the viewer, with raised arms - in a gesture that chargés between fright and blessing. On the walls of the room, the cell behind her, writings, signs are recognizable. Were there other inmates before her? Is she free or not? Was it she who wrote, who expressed herself, who wanted to leave something for those who come after her in this cell, this room? In "I unpeel" the same woman can be seen in front of the same room, in front of the same cell - only this time she can be seen in detail, she has moved closer. Now one can recognize the block more exactly: rectangular, like a slaughter bench, but with a bedstead at the end pressed against the wall. Head bowed, captured in the

blur of movement, the figure pauses, is she advancing slowly? She peels out, defoliates, alienates herself, as the title reveals. Is she a butterfly, an offering - did she decide herself, was she forced? Has she reached an end and does this slipping out of the shell mean a transition, also into death?