

**BERMAN  
CONTEMPORARY**  
SOUTH  
AFRICAN  
ART

**LEARNING TO BREATHE  
DIFFERENTLY**

CHRISÉL ATTEWELL

Curated by Els van Mourik

## **LEARNING TO BREATHE DIFFERENTLY**

**...in a time of not knowing.**

Curatorial statement by Els van Mourik

"A studio is a sacred place that you come to to do some reflection and thinking",  
El Anatsui, Nigeria-based sculptor

Studios are often an escape from outside distractions and can be profoundly creative environments that foster experimentation, problem-solving and personal growth for artists and non-artists alike, a place for pleasure as well as productivity. A space that enables you to seek 'below the radar', keep yourself on a single track and, yes, there's something enjoyable about that journey of reflection, just as the caterpillar needs to transform within its cocoon before it emerges as a butterfly and starts its journey into the outside world. New art, tied to the memories of the lockdown period and COVID-19, will find its way into future exhibitions and will give us time to digest those uncertain moments that have arisen during this historic pandemic.

In the meantime, with half of humanity in some form of lockdown, we are truly living in strange times. There are many impossible paradoxes we need to face personally and as a society: physical and social distancing is required to prevent the spread of infection to our loved ones and strangers, especially the most vulnerable among us, but loneliness can cause social and emotional isolation and make us sick in its own way. Large gatherings such as music and art festivals, exhibition openings and food markets have been cancelled to prevent the transmission of the virus, but this is advancing the sense of isolation from one and another, making us forget that we're in this together. Already we are beginning to see suspicion and paranoia play out in public spaces.

The creation of a purposeful exhibition as a space for personal thinking and reflection takes on a wider meaning and a greater weight in the current reality of the lockdown. In the present moment it is also a space of hope, affirmation, empowerment and healing. Conceived in the context of the continuing threat to the lives of many people, as well as the social trauma affecting the collective, the exhibition offers opportunities to explore conscious and unconscious perceptions and meanings, as well as unexpected visions of the future. Engaging with the works in this exhibition will hopefully spark your capacity for lateral thinking and human creativity.

For quite some time now, many have realised that we are living in an era of increasingly frequent and severe ecological crises, but this awareness has a peculiar characteristic – with each alarming report it flames up anew, only to subside back into a restless dozing soon after. This time, there are more than enough disquieting circumstances that are urging us to take a look at the uncertain future of humans. Not only does the earth provide us with everything we need to survive – like air to breathe and materials to build our shelters – it also provides us with inspiration for art.

The exhibition 'Learning to Breathe Differently' is a culmination of work from artists for whom the complex beauty of (human) nature has shaped and inspired their language, mark- and sense-making. All four artists included in this exhibition – Ingrid Bolton, Chrisél Attewell, Marian Hester and Stefan Blom – are considering different aspects of the undercurrent of life in their artmaking. Their work reveals unexpected, unforeseen and sometimes disturbing elements of destruction and are uncomfortable reminders reflecting the delicate balances between human nature and nature in general. They take the beauty and transpose it into an entirely new medium such as a canvas, sculpture or print.

**.....AND WE ALSO LEARN TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY**

Have a look at our 3D virtual tour of the exhibition at [www.bermancontemporary.com](http://www.bermancontemporary.com)

## **Chrisél Attewell**

### **ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIO**



“I work in multiple mediums, including experimental printmaking, sculpting, painting and installation. My work often explores different ways in which energies, moments, memories and histories can be captured, documented and preserved. The work is very experimental in nature and often takes a performative approach to the process of making. In this, there are initial intentions, but there is an overlapping of uncontrolled processes. These processes ricochet off one another within my different mediums where a shared language emerges from the collective of my work”.

Chrisél Attewell was born in 1994 in South Africa. She received her BA Fine Arts degree from the University of Pretoria in 2016. Chrisél was selected as a Sasol New Signatures finalist in 2016 and 2017. In 2017 she was chosen to participate in the Assemblage Peer Mentoring Program and the RMB Talent Unlocked exhibition at the Turbine Art Fair. Hereafter she continued to showcase her work in multiple group shows around South Africa where her work has become part of various national and international collections. In 2018 and 2019 she participated in several group exhibitions in Johannesburg and was selected as a Top 100 finalist for the ABSA L’atelier Art Competition. She had three solo exhibitions: “Architectus Konstruksie” at the Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees (KKNK), “Under Construction” at Assemblage in Braamfontein, and “Substratum” at Lizamore & Associates in Rosebank. Attewell was selected as a 2018 recipient of the Young Female Residency Award with The Project Space, founded by Benon Lutaaya. Chrisél currently lives and works in Johannesburg where she has a studio at End Street Studios in August House, Doornfontein. She is represented by Berman Contemporary in Johannesburg.

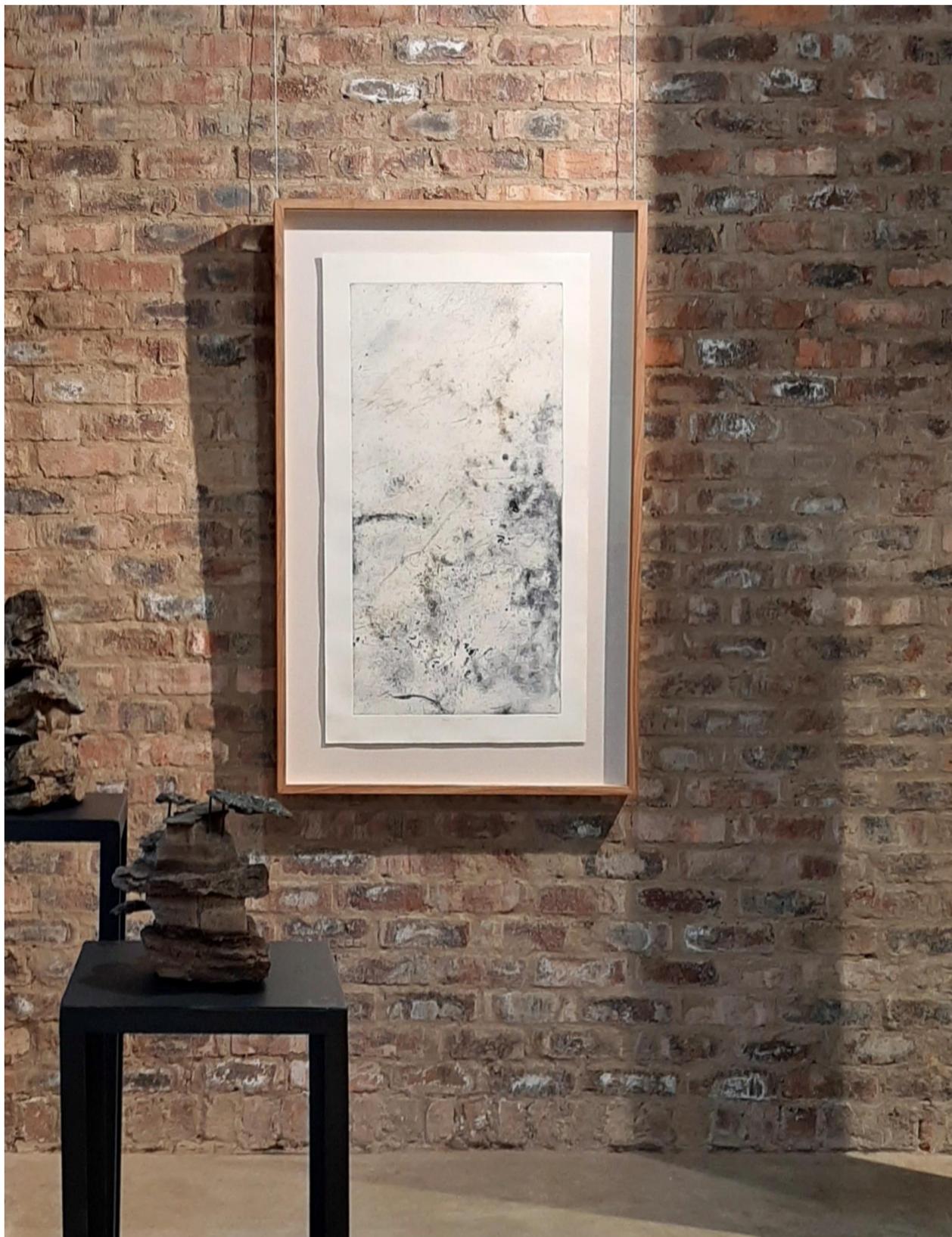
# Learning to Breathe Differently

Ingrid Bolton | Chrisél Attewell | Marian Hester | Stefan Blom

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Berman Contemporary

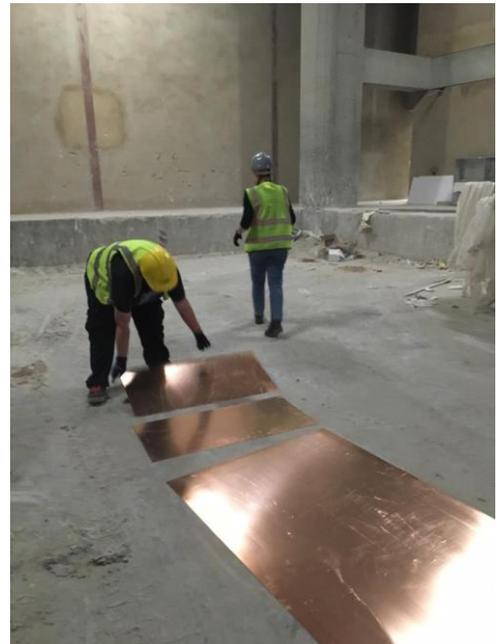
3D Virtual Exhibition



## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH CHRISEL ATTEWELL

Instagram: [@chrisel\\_art](https://www.instagram.com/chrisel_art)

Architectus Konstruksie is an experimental and ongoing project by Chrisél Attewell. Architectus Konstruksie is a body of work that plays on the notion of construction, the documentation of the creation of the city, and the capturing of moments, memories and history. The body of work mainly focusses on drypoint etching prints and sculptures created from the copper plates used to create these prints. "The prints in this body of work is created on metal sheets that I work on at different construction sites in and around the city of Johannesburg. Having limited control over the creating process, I place the plates in certain areas on the sites for specific periods of time to allow the plates to spontaneously capture and document the activities of the sites. The transformed plate becomes a memory of the construction of the city in that specific time and place. Through observing the goal-directed movements, scratches and damage of the plate transferred to a print, I aim to utilize the mirror neuron system of the viewer to allow for an empathetic engagement with the work."





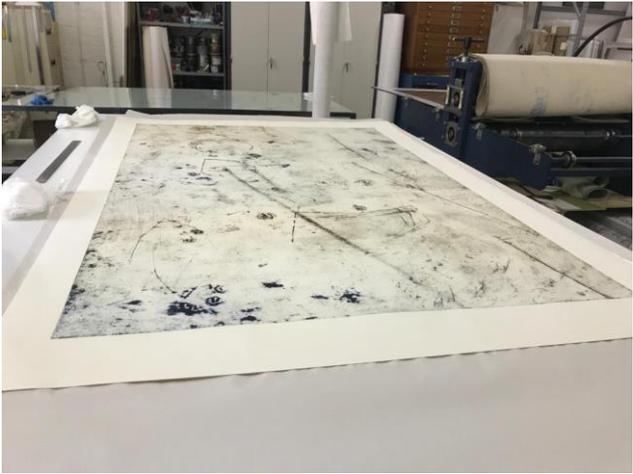
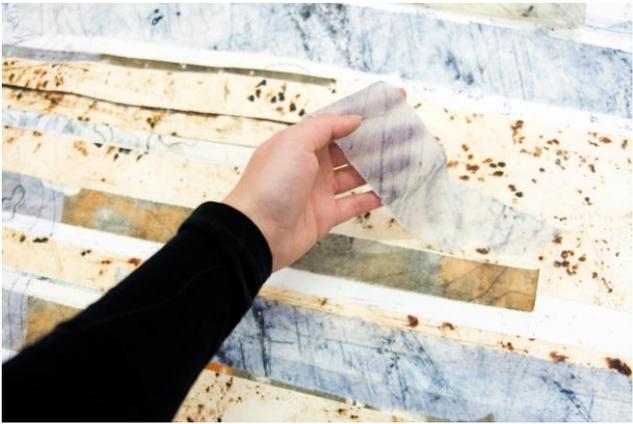
“The plates were scratched, dented and transformed by actions of man and machine. Both the copper plates, now displayed behind the reception desk of the Leonardo building, and the prints created from these plates, tells the story of the building. It not only tells about the creation and history of the building, but it also honours the workers. People with often talk about the Leonardo for being the tallest building in Africa, or about its luxuries and delicacies, but with these works, I would like to express the importance of the people who worked on the site to build such an iconic building in the Johannesburg cityscape. These works are a documentation of the energies of the workers and labourers captured in a moment in time.” – Chrisél Attewell



Memories of the Leonardo II, 2019  
Drypoint etching on 340gsm Hahnemuhle paper  
100 x 50cm  
Edition of 1



Memories of the Leonardo V, 2019  
Drypoint etching on 340gsm Hahnemuhle paper  
150 x 100cm  
Edition of 1





Gelukkig-toevallig III, 2019

Unique Bronze

31 x 13 x 10cm

August Potholes I , 2018  
Pelindaba Rock and Bronze castings  
33 x 39 x 20cm  
14.4kg



August Potholes II , 2018  
Pelindaba Rock and Bronze castings  
24 x 22 x 24cm  
6.5kg



August Potholes III , 2018  
Pelindaba Rock and Bronze castings  
21 x 15 x 8cm  
1.5kg





## Learning to Breathe Differently

Ingrid Bolton | Chrisél Attewell | Marian Hester | Stefan Blom

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Berman Contemporary

3D Virtual Exhibition

Berman Contemporary is rooted in the growing understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of South African contemporary art. The gallery's collection centres on a vibrant group of artists living and working in South Africa.

Through studio visits, the gallery establishes connections to artists from all walks of life whose unique artistic processes celebrate their historical and cultural heritage and give voice to their complex societal realities, evoking an active and interpretative experience for the viewer.

Berman Contemporary was established to promote the work created by these local artists. The gallery further aims to establish a synergistic network between South African artists and their global contemporaries, many of whom evidently want to engage with the current South African art scene – not only as observers, but as active analysts, experimenters and contributors within this context and with this specific audience in mind.

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[bermancontemporary.com](http://bermancontemporary.com)

[gallery@bermancontemporary.co.za](mailto:gallery@bermancontemporary.co.za)

+27 (0)84 843 8302



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