Mellaney Roberts

portfolio.

Berman
Contemporary
All Women Art
V&A Waterfront

MELLANEY ROBERTS
ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIOGRAPHY

As a Coloured, in the collective memory of my story, I always felt like an invisible individual trapped between Black and White classifications. Therein lies an untold story of being somewhere between and not represented, creating the feeling of 'not-belonging'. Through constructing narratives of lived experience, hybrid communities can challenge dominant stereotypes and subvert discourses of otherness and difference.

My work focuses on presenting ceramic sculptures depicting the fluid shift of borders. I use borders as a metaphor for the way that our identity transforms as we experience various spaces. My ceramic sculptural forms are often cut, pierced, or demarcated showing the divisions in cultural differences. The divisions emphasise how the parameters of identity are often blurred and how an object's placement in space can reference things other than itself, acting as a memory trigger.

Mellaney Roberts (b. 1988) is a South African ceramic artist, academic, and educator whose work explores material memory, land-based narratives, and intergenerational histories within marginalised communities. She attained a National Diploma in Fine Arts (2010), BTech Fine Arts specialising in Ceramics (2011), and Masters of Fine Arts, cum laude (2017) from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.

Currently serving as a lecturer in Fine and Applied Arts at Tshwane University of Technology, Roberts has over a decade of experience in higher education, previously teaching at Lovedale TVET College, Ubuntu Education Fund, and Nelson Mandela University. Her academic work is further strengthened by roles as an external moderator and examiner for Nelson Mandela University, the University of Johannesburg, and Rhodes University.

Roberts' work has been exhibited at the Investec Cape Town Art Fair (2025), Ceramics Brussels Art Fair in Belgium (2024) and the Turbine Art Fair and RMB Latitudes. Since 2023, she has participated in various group exhibitions at Berman Contemporary. Her ceramic sculptures are housed in the collections of the Spier Arts Trust, Art Bank of South Africa, Corobrik Collection, and the University of Pretoria. In 2025, she presented her first solo exhibition 'Waar bloed nie loop nie' at Berman Contemporary. In the same year she also participated in the Art/Educator Residency at the University of Education Weingarten, Germany.

She has received numerous accolades, including the 2024 Certificate of Artistic Merit from La Pinacothèque Museum of Luxembourg and a Top 21 finalist position in the 2024 Henrike Grohs Art Award. She was also the 2017 recipient of the prestigious Nina Hole Memorial Residency at Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center in Denmark.

Mellaney Roberts is represented by Berman Contemporary.

Instagram: @mellaney.coza

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ARTIST RESUME

Solo Exhibitions

2025 Waar Bloed Nie Loop Nie, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg

Group Exhibitions

2025 Contours Unveiled, Berman Contemporary, Cape Town
2025 Echoes of Elsewhere, Spier Arts Trust, Union House, Cape Town.
2025 Through form & meaning, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
2024 Pretty Brilliant, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
2024 A SCULPTURAL SYMPHONY, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
2024 #ARTladies, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
2023 THE 2020's: new forms of abstraction – part 2, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
2023 Nando's Creative Exchange, GFI Gallery, 30 Park Drive St George's Park, Port Elizabeth
2023 Ceramic South Africa: Gauteng Ceramics Regional's, GIBS, Johannesburg
2023 An Act Of Faith – A New Ceramics Exhibition. Spier Wine Farm, Stellenbosch
2022 Corobrik, National Biennale Exhibition: Ceramic South Africa, 6 Spin Street Gallery, Cape Town
2022 True Fall, an autumn group exhibition, Gallery at Grande Provence, Franschhoek
2022 Sasol New Signatures 2022: Emerge Top 100 SA Artist, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria
2021 Ceramic South Africa: Gauteng Ceramics Regional's, GIBS, Johannesburg
2021 Coronart - The Third Wave, Kingsbridge Art gallery, Stellenbosch
2020 Reflections, The Viewing Room Gallery, Pretoria
2019 In Living Palette: Trent Gallery, Pretoria
2019 Compulsive, Johann van Heerden's Art Gallery, Garsfontein, Pretoria
2017 Top 40 Emerging creative: Design Indaba, Cape Town
2017 Polyphonic, Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center in Skælskør, Denmark

Art Fairs

2026 Investec Cape Town Art Fair (Main Booth), Berman Contemporary, South Africa
2025 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, South Africa
2024 Ceramic Brussels Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, Belgium
2022 Turbine Art Fair, Sculpt division, Johannesburg

Commissions

2023 PESP3 Art Creating programme, National Museum and Art Bank of South Africa

Publications

2026 Featured artist for Berman Contemporary, VISI Magazine, Feb/March 2026
2025 Sacred Earth: Mellaney Roberts' Waar Bloed Nie Loop Nie at Berman Contemporary, ArtThrob, August 2025
2025 Shaping Memory, VISI Magazine, July 2025
2023 Meet the Nando's 2023 Creative Exchange artists, Nando's Creative, May 2023
2021 Mellaney Roberts: Somewhere in between and not represented, Exploring Visual Cultures, 2021
2021 Somewhere in between and not represented form by Mellaney Roberts, Arts & Culture, 2021
2017 Design Indaba Emerging Creative: Mellany Ruiters, VISI Magazine, April 2017
2014 Making history in the park, HeraldLIVE, February 2014
2013 Argilos 13, Eastern Cape Ceramics, November 2013
2011 Ceramics South Africa, National Ceramics Magazine, vol 96, 2011

Awards

2024 Certificate of Artistic Merit, La Pinacothèque Museum of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
2024 Top 21 Finalists: Henrike Grohs Art Awards
2023 1 Ton Clay Award: Ndebele Mining, Ceramic South Africa: Gauteng Ceramics Regional's
2021 Top 20 Finalists: Ekurhuleni Thami Mnyele Fine Arts Awards
2017 Nina Hole Memorial Residency Award: Guldagergaard, International Ceramic Research Center, Denmark
2013 New Signatures at ArtEC- Floating Exhibition, Bird Street, Central, PE
2013 Best Porcelain Award: Ceramics South Africa ,Eastern Cape Ceramics Regional's, Bird Street, Central, PE

Collections

2022 Corobrik Ceramic Collection
2022 Art Bank of South Africa
2022 University of Pretoria art museum
2021 Art Bank of South Africa
2020 Guldagergaard, International Ceramic Research

Residencies

2025 Art/Educator Residency, University of Education Weingarten, Germany
2017 Guldagergaard, International Ceramic Research Center in Skælskør, Denmark

Education

2022 Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland.
2017 Mtech in Fine Art, specialising in ceramics, Cum Laude, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
2018 Small Enterprise Start Up Course; National Youth Development Agency
2011 Btech in Fine Arts specialising in ceramics, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
2010 National Diploma in Fine Art, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

WAAR BLOED NIE LOOP NIE (WHERE BLOOD DOESN'T FLOW) | 2025

This body of work arises from an open-ended question. The making begins with contemplating my lineage, my ancestral knowledge and ultimately my becoming. Through the work, I explore themes of home, identity, land, heritage, and the collective memory of the Baviaanskloof Coloured community. These sculptures and installations build on an earlier body of work, wherein I explore the intersection of the tangible and the intangible memories that bind me to the Baviaanskloof. I explore the absence and silence of the lost and forgotten voices in shaping presence and meaning. I draw from their fragmented histories, memories, and untold stories.

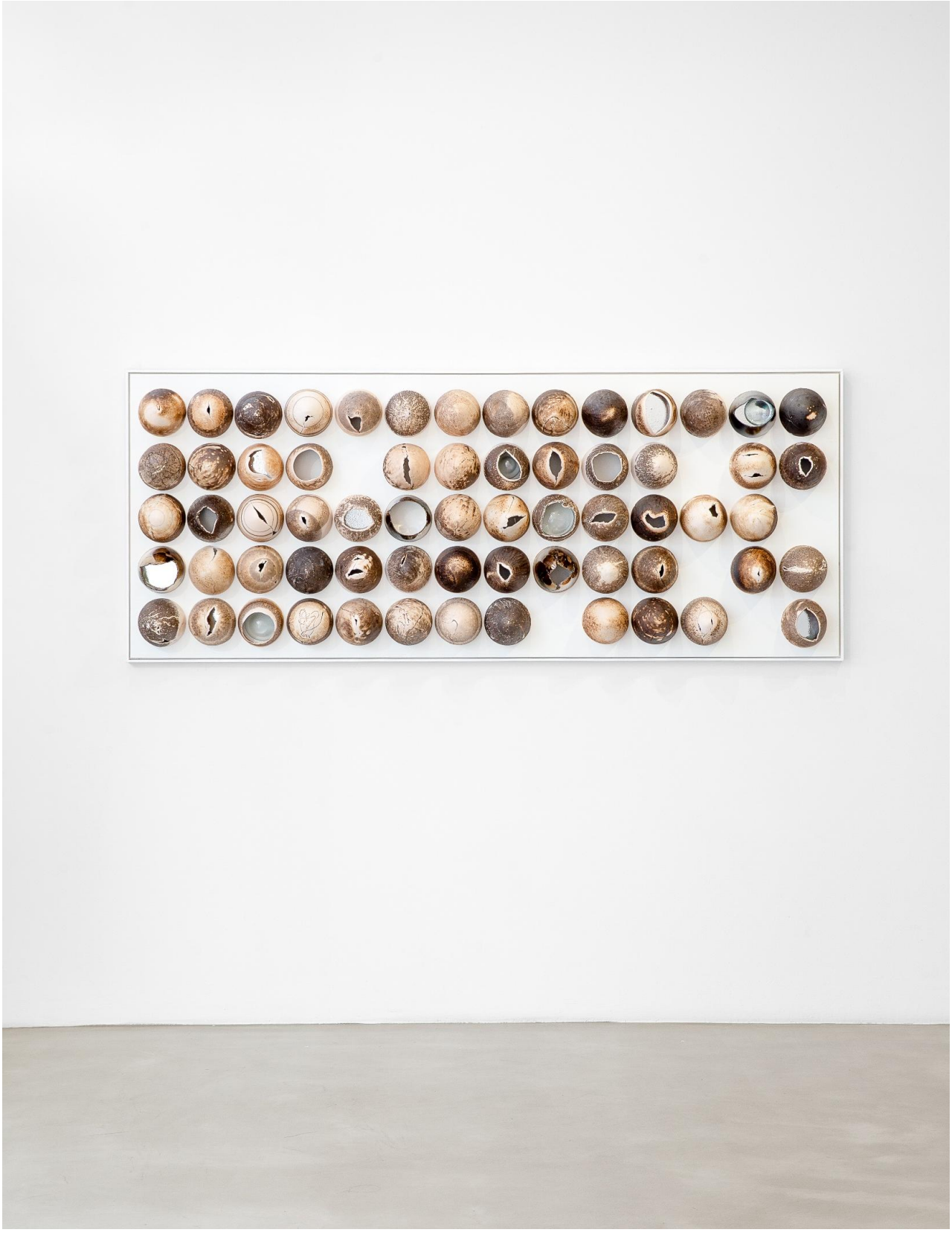
In this body of work, I am the artist yet also archaeologist, I am a community member in search of an answer. Clay, as my predominant medium, is sacred and personal; it plays an important role in capturing memory. It is a transformative material through which I construct complex narratives, embodying both permanence and fragility, much like memory.

Through clay, I engage with the layers of history embedded in the land and its people. I explore a sense of belonging and the spaces held by ancestral bloodlines, excavating cultural ties long forgotten. This work invites viewers to navigate these metaphorical spaces. Like the blood of the Baviaanskloof, clay shapes my sense of being.

Nestlings: The inheritance, 2025
Ceramic
189 x 375 x 13 cm (Ceramic Installation)

The Ancestor, 2025
Ceramics, sand, and rope
200 x 200 cm (Installation)
55 x 51 x 66 cm (Large center ceramic

What the Land Remembers, 2025
Ceramics, mirror, copper, and red sand
52 x 52 x 142 cm (wall-mounted tap)
80 cm Diameter (mirror Installation)
(total installation variable)



Seeds of Self, 2025
Ceramics, glass, and mirror vinyl
205 x 83x 14 cm
Framed 205.5 x 83.5 x 14 cm

Echoes in the reeds, 4 , 2025
Ceramics, Perspex, copper wire, copper tubes and Oregon pine wood
88 x 122 x 6.5 cm

The Ancestor miniature, 2025
Bronze and glass dome
20 x 20 x 10 cm
20 x 22 cm (jar Dimensions)

RESPONSE | 2022 - 2023

This body of work is a collection of sculptures, distinguished by their substantial size, intended to evoke a profound sense of confrontation. These works are in a transformative phase, transcending from the representations of a dwelling to a sort of morphing of a human form. These sculptural forms no longer hold or contain the emotions, but rather the forms react to the sensations of discomfort and not-belonging, attempting to release a wounded soul.

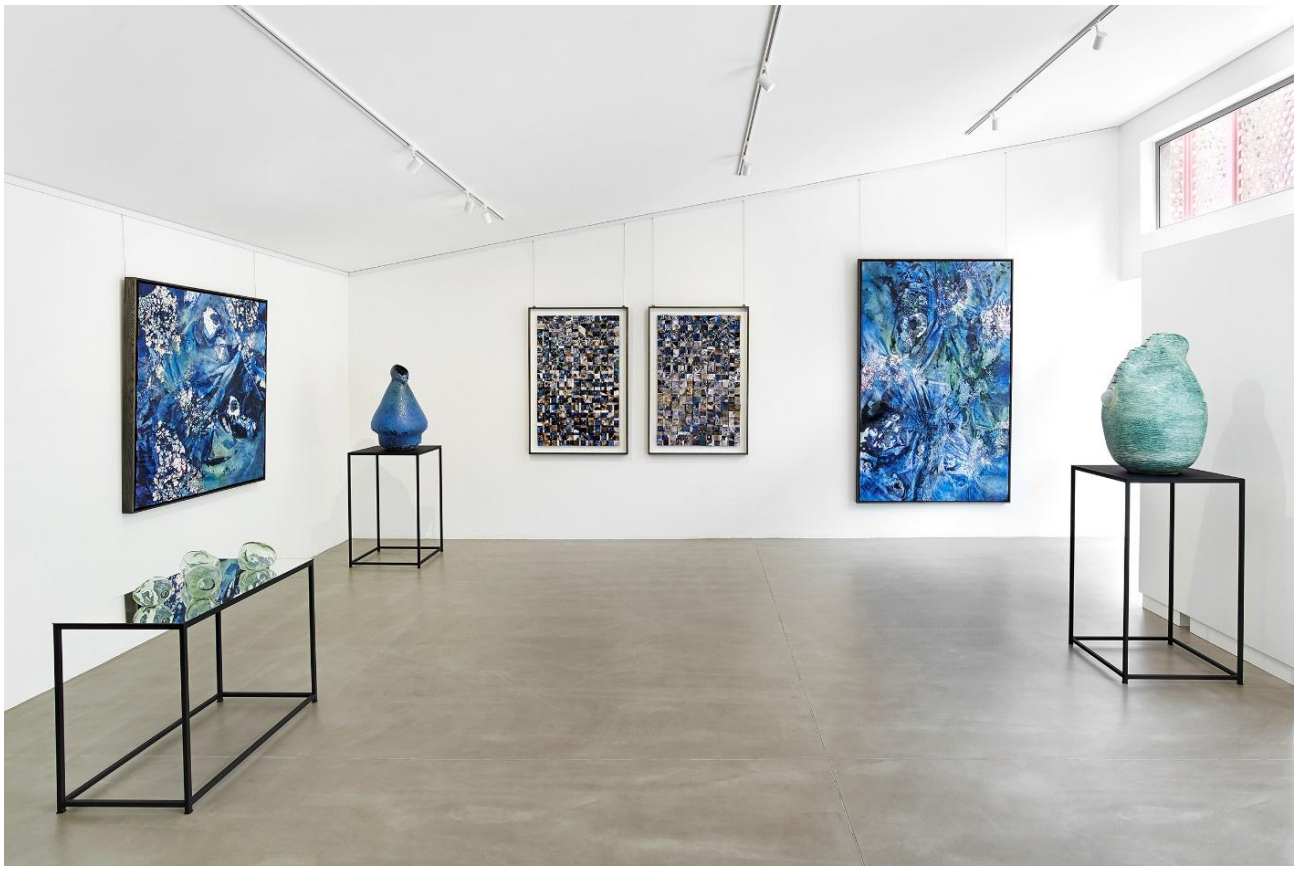
On the surfaces of these sculptures, I employ deliberate mark-making techniques to etch traces of scars and memories, inviting observers to delve beneath the external facade. I embed steel wool within the clay flesh and utilize fencing nails throughout theses sculptures, penetrating both the physical body of the form and the surrounding space. This intentional invasion instils a sense of irritation, disrupting what is being kept safe within these forms.

These fencing nails serve as a poignant metaphor, emphasising the emotional wounds—whether inflicted by harsh words said in anger or something more hurtful. It's crucial to note that nails and metal are unconventional materials to amalgamate with wet clay, often forbidden, because it poses a risk during kiln firing due to differing rates of expansion and contraction. This risk also acts as a metaphor for the immense pressure these forms endure.

The hands-on exploration of these ceramic sculptures allows me to delve deeper into the narrative of collective memories of not belonging, but rather focusing on the relationship between the object and the creator, the surrounding space, and the passage of time. These forms are a testament to resilience.

Irritations, 2022
Earthenware, glazes and oxides
78 x 52 x 47 cm

Consequences of past and present, 2023
Earthenware, glazes, oxides and nails
75 x 55 x 52 cm



INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPH | THE 2020'S: NEW FORMS OF ABSTRACTION – PART 2 | BERMAN CONTEMPORARY | 2023

ABIDE WITH ME | 2023

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

My current body of work, collectively titled: Abide with Me is named after a family hymn that my grandmother sang after evening prayer. The hymn served the purpose of a prayer casting a spell of protection over her loved ones within her presence or her distant family. The hymn is one of the underlying inspirations for the body of work focusing on the concept of home that embodies a physical, emotional, spiritual, and social space where individuals feel comfort, protection, and a sense of belonging.

Home can be seen as a geographical location or a thought, an abstract memory tied to loved ones or engaging in activities that bring joy and contentment. The body of work consists of monumental ceramic sculptures inspired by a place where I spent much of my childhood in the Baviaanskloof. A place that speaks of family and community.

I use ceramic sculptures to focus on a memory narrative through the concept of home and the relationship between object, space, and time. When constructing these forms, I constantly question what defines a place to be called home, ranging from the physical structure of memory to the emotional and spiritual space within home. These domelike morphing abstract clay structures are also influenced by architecture designed to be safe spaces embued with personal significance and emotional attachments.

These sculptures are also cover by the hymn represent a sanctuary to where the individual can retreat, recharge, and express their true selves. The forms are often cut, pierced, or demarcated to show breathing moments and create quiet spaces during complexities within the home and family dynamic. These demarcations cut through window and door spaces in the forms to create passages between the physical and the spiritual presence.

The forms are constructed to emphasise that home extends beyond physical boundaries, and yet home does include a sense of community, belonging, and the surrounding environment. These are the support system that fosters the sense of belonging and enhances the concept of home.

Waar lê jou naelstring?, 2023
Earthenware, glazes, oxides and fabric
113 x 50 x 40cm

INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPH | CONTOURS UNVEILIED | BERMAN CONTEMPORARY | 2025

INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPH | CONTOURS UNVEILIED | BERMAN CONTEMPORARY | 2025

WITHIN/CONTAINED | 2022 - 2023

The Baviaanskloof holds a special place in my heart, stemming from the landscape of my childhood memories. It's a region characterised by its unique charm, where the houses I encountered were crafted using traditional methods, featuring clay walls and roofs fashioned from reeds. The distinctiveness and rawness of these structures deeply influence the essence of the dome-like sculptures within my artwork.

The convex-like appearance of the forms can also be seen as a dome or a dwelling form of the self, housing emotions and experiences from both the past and present. My sculptures are intricately cut, pierced, or demarcated, to create passages between the physical and the spiritual realm, to encourage viewers to explore the boundaries of identity and the profound silence they encompass.

The sculptural forms are meticulously crafted primarily using clay as the main sculpting material. Employing the hand-building technique enables precise manipulation of the clay, shaping it into distinct forms and facilitating surface embellishment.

To accentuate emotions of containment, weightiness, a sense of morbidity, and mixed feelings, the sculptures' bodies are deliberately adorned with layers of copper oxide and manganese dioxide. These surface treatments serve to deepen the emotional resonance, fostering an evocative narrative within the artwork.

Golden crown, 2022
Earthenware, glazes, oxides and nails
64 x 37 x 37 cm

What resides within, 2023
Earthenware, glazes and oxides
65 x 37 x 37 cm

Unwanted commentary, 2023
Earthenware, glazes and oxides
53 x 37 x 37 cm

INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPH | A SCULPTURAL SYMPPHONY | BERMAN CONTEMPORARY | 2024

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN AND NOT REPRESENTED | 2021

In South Africa, the term 'Coloured' defines a community as racially mixed and describes a hybrid community. The ambiguous nature of the Coloured identity, coupled with the absence of recorded histories and unambiguous identification with collective cultural codes, results in the representation of identity becoming challenged and borderline. This hybrid identity makes it difficult to reflect on a specific culture and social circumstances. When trying to imagine yourself differently, perceptions of identity and community become more difficult to pin down. This process can become painful.

As a Coloured, in the collective memory of my story, I always felt like an invisible individual trapped between Black and White classifications. Therein lies an untold story of being somewhere between and not represented, creating the feeling of 'not-belonging'. Through constructing narratives of lived experience, hybrid communities can challenge dominant stereotypes and subvert discourses of otherness and difference.

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My intuitive response to clay enlists the rich and multileveled reference that ceramics has as a medium, evoking the permanence and impermanence associated with time.

Somewhere in between and not represented form #1, 2021
Earthenware, bronze glaze, steel wool and nails
50cm x 37cm x 37cm

Somewhere in between and not represented form #2, 2021
Earthenware, oxide, steel wool and nails
48cm x 37cm x 37cm

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Berman Contemporary is a pioneering gallery dedicated to women artists. Through mentorship, visibility, and sustained support, we nurture creative practices and amplify women's voices. Our mission is to enable women artists to shape the future of contemporary art, both locally and globally.

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