

Thirza Schaap

portfolio.

**Berman
Contemporary
South African
All Women Art**



THIRZA SCHAAP

ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIOGRAPHY

Along the coast of South Africa, Thirza Schaap collects discarded bottles and shopping bags to create fanciful sculptures, often to photograph them afterwards. The juxtaposition of repulsion and beauty is imperative in these images; the artist aims to break down these barriers by challenging our perception of what we find attractive. These photos are beautiful but also highlight a disturbing reality.

From witnessing how debris would wash onto the local beach like confetti in the sand, Schaap was inspired to start "Plastic Ocean" as an ongoing project "to raise awareness around

pollution...to try and prevent, or at least reduce, the use of plastic." Straws, flip-flops, toothbrushes, bottles, and more are collected, dried, and carefully sorted to create a surreal collage. Re-shaped still life arrangements, the items are shot on pastel sheets of paper or sand in bright, natural daylight. The effect is quirky, playful, and pop; paradoxically, this debris does not disgust us. Their dainty look seems to gloss over the urgency of plastic pollution on our beaches, but this first impression soon fades.

Thirza Schaap plays with this using and adding dusty colors, striking shadows, and everyday odds. Her work seems to play a game asking whether these object's aesthetic appeal can outweigh their utilitarian dullness and, in the case of Schaap's objects, the danger they represent.

Despite their sweet allure, Schaap's images are also deeply troubling. There has, after all, been a global party, and these pictures are glimpses of its ugly aftermath, shards of the unsustainable volume of refuse from our collective voraciousness. As sites of celebration so often appear the morning after, Schaap's compositions are full of spent enjoyment, of things now devoid of use, faded, deflated, or broken. These things have been thrown away, but they persist, unable to decompose, resisting deletion.

Thirza Schaap graduated from the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague in 1996. Since then, she has been working as a photographer and is now exploring new art forms through her Plastic Ocean project. She has been living and working both in Amsterdam and in Cape Town, South Africa since 2013.

Thirza Schaap is represented by Berman Contemporary.

Instagram @thirzaschaap
Website: thirzaschaap.com

Berman Contemporary South African All Women Art

ARTIST RESUME

Solo exhibitions

2026	Plastic Ocean, Berman Contemporary, Cape Town, South Africa
2026	Fatal Flowers, Candice Berman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2023	Cast Away, Bildhalle, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2023	Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver, Canada
2021	Plastic Ocean, Bildhalle, Amsterdam (book launch and exhibition), The Netherlands
2021	Toronto Photo Festival, curated by Sra Knellman, Toronto, Canada
2021	Candice Berman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
2021	Standard Vision, large scale exterior display, Los Angeles, USA
2019	DSM Heerlen, curated by Catharien Romijn
2019	Greenpeace Africa, Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa
2018	O'Wonder!, Ubuntu, Plastic Ocean, Christie's Amsterdam, curated by Colette Olof
2009	Play Dead, Gallery Christian Ouwens, Rotterdam (exhibition and book presentation)

Group Exhibitions

2025	Flora in Contemporary Art & Culture, Saatchi Gallery, London, United Kingdom
2025	Blooming, Bildhalle, Zurich, Switzerland
2023	Rethink the present, Remake the past Modern Art Museum, Shanghai, China
2023	A Room With A View, Ebony Gallery, Franschoek, South Africa
2023	Group show, Delphain Gallery, London, United Kingdom
2022	Group show, Ebony Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2022	Transformation/Liberation, Wembley Park, curated by Averil Curci, London, United Kingdom
2022	Royal Academy Summer show special guest of Farshid Moussavi, London, United Kingdom
2022	Ocean, summer show, Bildhalle, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
2022	The garden of delights, curated by Claudia Küssel, Budapest, Hungary
2020	Permanent exhibition at United Nations environmental programme, Zurich, Switzerland
2017	Finders Keepers, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Duo Exhibitions

2025	Tokara, Julia Meintjes, Stellenbosch, South Africa
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Art Fairs

2026	Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Candice Berman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2025	Investec, Samuel Meanhout gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2025	RMB Latitudes Art Fair, Johannesburg South Africa
2024	Investec, Samuel Meanhout gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2023	Photo Basel, Bildhalle, Basel, Switzerland
2023	Investec, Samuel Meanhout gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2021	Art Rotterdam, Bildhalle, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
2021	Unseen, Bildhalle, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
2020	Art Rotterdam, WeLikeArt, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
2020	Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa
2019	Art Rotterdam, WeLikeArt, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
2019	Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa

Awards

2021	Winner of Inspiratie prijs Humanistisch Verbond, The Netherlands
2021	PANL Photography award, The Netherlands
2013	Short film Lina nominated for Montreal film festival, Canada

Publications

2022	Included in Flora Imaginaria by William Ewing
2021	Plastic Ocean, published by 1605 Publishers, Bastiaan Woudt, foreword by Lidewij Edelkoort
2009	Play Dead, published by Christian Ouwens and text by Bianca Stigter

Collections

NN Group (NL)
DSM (NL)
Het Radboud, UMC (NL)
KPMG (NL)
United Nations Environmental Programme (CH)
DHB (NL)
Swiss, RE (CH)
Fidelity Investments (USA)
Dutch Embassy (NL)
Vanderlande collection (NL)
ASR Nederland (NL)

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ARTIST RESUME

Podcasts, webinars, lectures

2021 World Hope Forum Designweek Lidewij Edelkoort webinar, Eindhoven, The Netherlands
2018 Lecture at the Fabbrica Research Center, Venice, Italy
2018 Nu oceans by Hadrien Lejeune podcast, London, UK

Highlight of publications

Aperture, i-D vice, The Guardian, Sunday Times, Vogue, L'Officiel Homme, Dazed and Confused, Elle, Numéro, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Harper's, La Repubblica, Tableaux, Musée magazine, Volkskrant, News 24, Designboom, Ignant, Kinfolk, Feature shoot, Feminist, Trendtablet.

Award

2021 Inspiration award received from Hedy D'Ancona and the Humanistic association, Plastic Ocean Project, The Netherlands

Tutoring

2019 Derya Cinar, Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam
2019 Lieve Nieuwland, Artemis Amsterdam
2018 Dolian Mara, Artemis Amsterdam

Book covers

2021 Carolyn Jess-Cooke, We have to Leave the Earth, UK
2020 Laura Broekhuysen, Flessen post uit Reykjavik, The Netherlands

Charities

Cure for Cancer, auction, The Netherlands
Kika Cancer Foundation, auction kinderen kanker vrij, The Netherlands
Pictures for Purpose print sale for Dutch food bank, The Netherlands

Plastic Ocean

"As a child, I would walk over beaches and through fields and forests to collect beautiful shells, shimmering stones, feathers and funnily shaped branches.

Much later, when spending more time on the beaches all over the world, I found myself doing the same thing. Only to discover, that I started filling my pockets with trash instead of treasure.

Plastic from the Ocean.
Colourful and beautiful in its own tragic way.

'Plastic Ocean' is an art project, which I started to create awareness around pollution to try and prevent (or at least reduce) the use of plastic.

In making artistic sculptures out of the objects I find, I try to evoke an emotional response from my audience by creating a contradiction.

A clash between initial aesthetic attraction and after a second look: repulsion and the realisation of the tragedy trash causes.

Our beaches are covered in plastic confetti and there really is nothing to celebrate."
Thirza Schaap



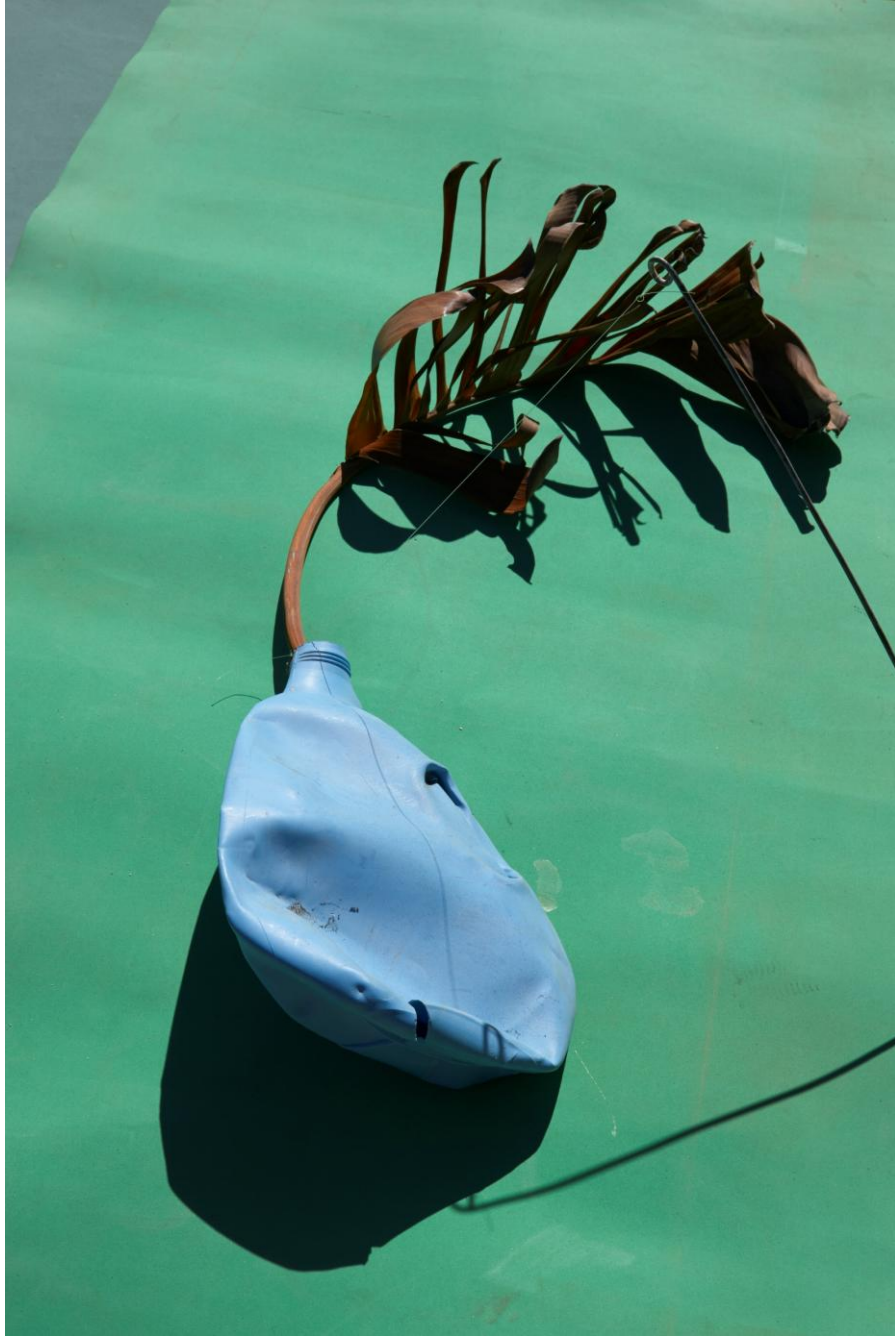
Comfort
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Anemone
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Artefact
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Caught
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Comfort
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Fellas
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Flowerbomb
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Gekko
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Safeguard
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Southeaster
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof



Valentine
Archival Inkjet print onto Epson Hot Press Natural 300gsm paper
(Diabond deep-framed in TSP profile white duco)
45 x 30 cm | 75 x 50 cm
Edition of 10 plus 2 artist's proof

Berman Contemporary All Women Art V&A Waterfront

Berman Contemporary is a concept-driven, practice-led gallery founded by Candice Berman in 2016. Based in Cape Town, the gallery works with artists whose practices unfold through sustained inquiry, experimentation, and material investigation. We platform women artists because many of the most rigorous and conceptually engaged practices today are being developed by women.

We do not simply present objects. We present how artists think.

We understand exhibitions as propositions: spaces in which artistic practices are brought into conversation and ideas can be encountered through form, material, and process. Against accelerated and image-driven modes of consumption, we create conditions in which art can be encountered slowly, thoughtfully, and with curiosity.

Through exhibitions, publications, events, and collaborative projects, the gallery cultivates sustained engagement with contemporary art and fosters exchanges between artists, ideas, and audiences.

Our programme brings together emerging and established artists whose practices are driven by questions rather than predetermined outcomes. We work with artists who test the capacities of their materials, challenge ways of seeing, and open new possibilities for experience. The gallery's commitment is to artistic rigour, intellectual generosity, and the long-term support of artistic practice.

Website bermancontemporary.com

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