



# THE GODS OF PRETSHWANE

Sue Clark

2021







Cover:

Fig 1. Sue Clark. *PreTshwane as a forest* .(2021).

Previous:

Fig 2. Sue Clark. *Gatekeeper*. (2021).

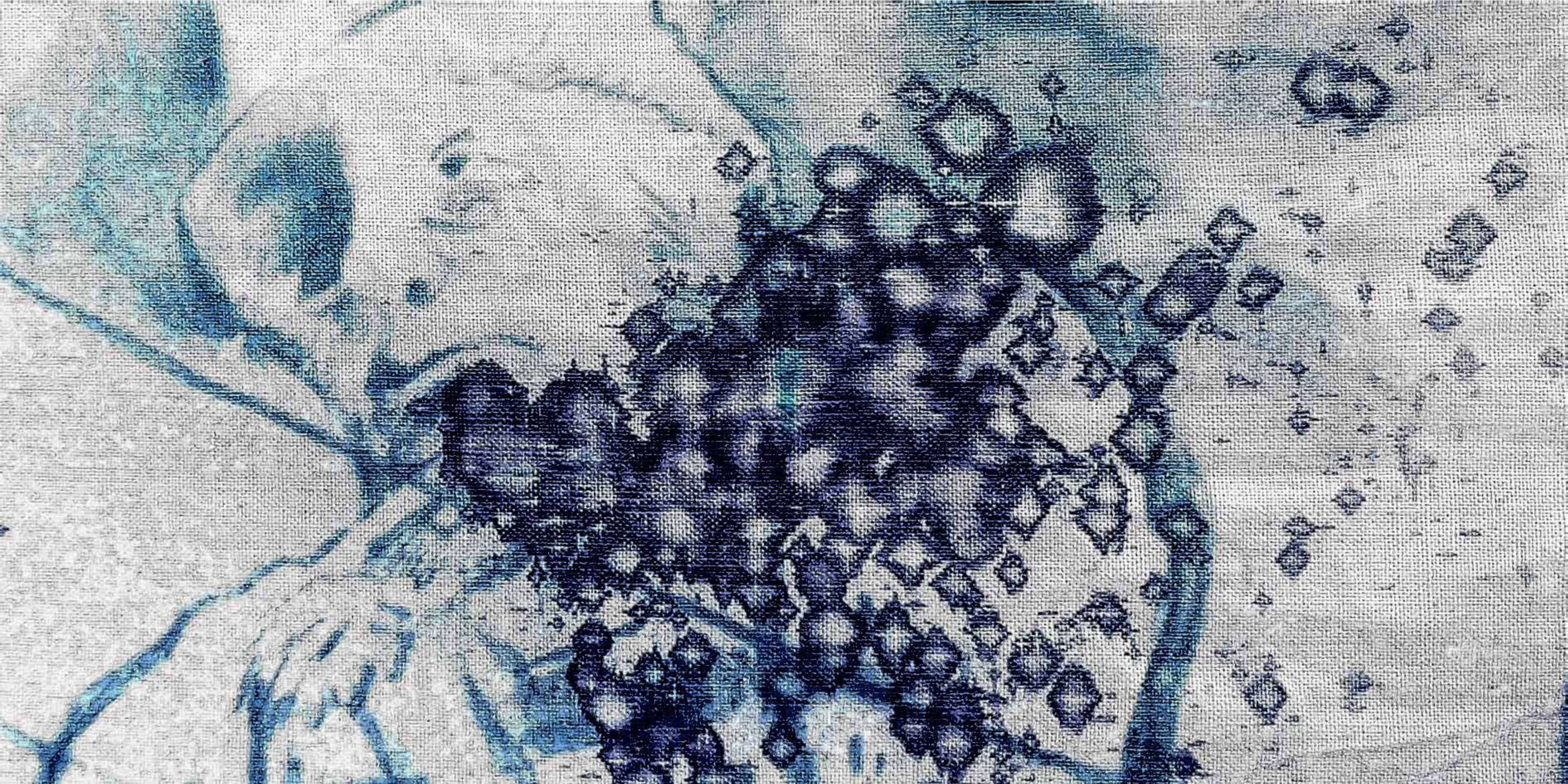
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Fig 3. Sue Clark. Cyanotype detail. (2021).

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# Introduction

As an architect and long-time local resident, the built environment of Pretoria/Tshwane is of specific interest. Over the last few years, I have become increasingly fascinated by the public statues in the city. My current work layers the memories represented in public art and architecture with contemporary imagery to imagine its future potential. An almost archaeological investigation is augmented by visual research (and natural curiosity) through experimental works in various media, including drawing, collage, stitching, animation and augmented reality. My work creates a visual balance between growth and decay, memory and forgetting, the past, the present and the city's imagined future.

Fig 4. Sue Clark, Cyanotype experiments (2021).

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Fig 5: Sue Clark, Animation workstation (2021).





# Background

Walking around the city during the first Covid-19 lockdown was inspiring. I conducted in-depth historical research and created drawings and collages which morphed into animations. I became obsessed with the magic of technology and its ability to bring static images to life.

The city has changed immeasurably over the past 50 years. In the last decade, people have vacated the city for suburban security laagers<sup>1</sup>. A new community has occupied existing spaces where growth and decay entangle as the ambivalent city surges and contracts. This is aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's opposition to the root-tree, favouring stems, flows and rhizomes in various cultural contexts, to describe multiplicities that provide a more radical understanding of an ontological dynamic and mutating processes (*Oxford University Press online* [Sa]. Sv "rhizome").

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<sup>1</sup> Definition of laager: South Africa: an encampment protected by a circle of wagons or armoured vehicles (*Merriam-Webster Disctionary* [Sa]. Sv "laager").







The name change from Pretoria to Tshwane continues to be confusing<sup>2</sup>. Although Pretoria refers only to the centre of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality<sup>3</sup>, the city is still referred to as Pretoria. I play with a creative hybrid name, PreTshwane, signifying the state of limbo between what was Pretoria but is not yet Tshwane. This hybrid name suggests that collective memories can be altered, not only through the physical artefacts themselves, but their renaming.

- 2 Tshwane is the original name of the area. The word originates from the Setswana word, tshwana referring to a black cow used to break a drought. It is also said that the name honours the son of Chief Mushi who settled there before the Voortrekkers. The Municipality argues that Tshwane means 'we are the same' although this is contested: some say it means 'we are not the same' (*African Languages*. [Sa]. Sv "Tshwane").
- 3 Approved in May 2005, Pretoria was officially renamed Tshwane, but this was rejected by many citizens. The change from Pretoria to Tshwane been challenged by business organisations, media and local and international institutions. The city is still commonly referred to as Pretoria. (*SA History Online*. 2019. Sv "Pretoria / Tshwane").

Previous spread:

Fig 6. Sue Clark, *How PreTshwane got its name*. Detail (2021).

Fig 7. Sue Clark, *Other gods* (2021).





# Thematic Concern

I investigated PreTshwane's monuments, their contexts and how they reflect the past and the present. The notion of a monument as a permanent memory is a Western concept (Forty 1999:2). In retrospect, most memories are questionable, and the relevance of public monuments is being contested globally. According to Hardt's study on the neurobiology of memory, it is impossible to have proper memory function without the capacity to forget (Gravits 2019).

According to Marshall (2010:305), postcolonial society promotes the coloniser's language to describe or to correct its biased representations. Contemporary society emulates the colonisers' strategy of memorialisation, appropriating the same commemorative language.

I have juxtaposed public statues, buildings, and city scenes representing various times in PreTshwane's past and present. According to Lefebvre (1991:121), nothing disappears entirely. The remaining traces cannot define what came before because the past underpins what follows.

I have investigated the significance of PreTshwane's statues. Several depict mythical gods, but most portray apartheid heroes. There are few contemporary statues in the city centre. War heroes and classical gods abound reflecting the predominantly patriarchal and western hegemony of its past.



Fig 8. Sue Clark, *Loftus rugby gods* (2021).



# Influential Artists

I am significantly influenced by South African women artists, Sethembile Msezane and Leora Farber.

Msezane stands adjacent to static patriarchal monuments, celebrating the living black female body, interrogating how some histories are celebrated while others are omitted. Her performances challenge the Western memorial tradition, forming part of the ephemeral monument traditions of non-Western cultures.



Fig 9. Sethembile Msezane, *Chapungu:the day Rhodes fell* (2015).

Leora Farber's photographs, *Ties That Bind Her* (2007-2008), explores the difficulties experienced by white English-speaking South Africans in adapting to change. (Falkof & Cashman-Brown 2020:207). Her chimaeric performance photographs depict indigenous plants grafted to her body. This symbolism is aligned with the entanglement of Pretoria into Tshwane, echoing the city's transformation and diversity explored through my works.

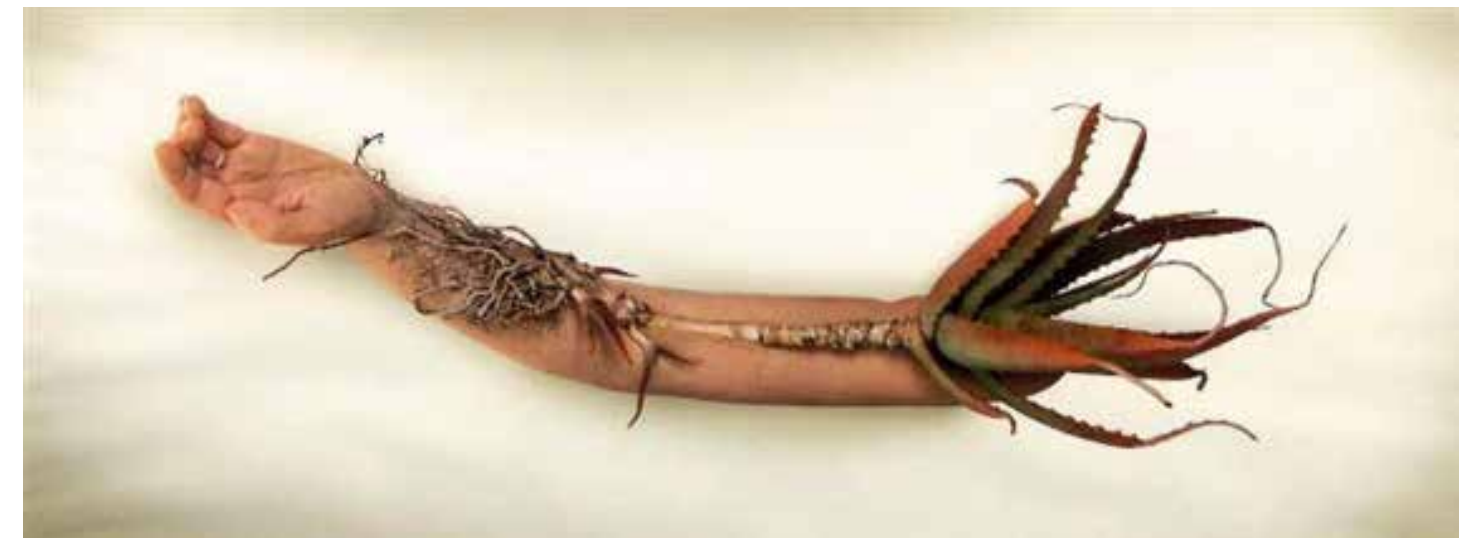


Fig 10. Leora Faber, *Aloerosa:transplant* (2010).







# My Works

My early intuitive works done while exploring the city on foot, reimagine the city as an overscaled still life forest. It incorporates decaying buildings, local flora, fauna and human hands, representing regeneration, nature and humanism to create an inclusive city.

I first investigated the Union Buildings and Loftus Versfeld Stadium. The fairly recent statue of Mandela, with his Christlike stance, juggles the figures of Atlas atop the Union Buildings in drawings, collages, and animations.

The Mandela statue by Andre Prinsloo and Ruhan van Rensburg (2013) features Madiba with outstretched arms, reminiscent of Jesus Christ in Renaissance works and in contemporary evangelical media, implying that he is a patriarchal god bestowing blessings on his flock. Surrounded by statues of classical gods and Afrikaner leaders, the statue is situated in the gardens of the Union Buildings, in the suburb of Arcadia. The potency of the mythological name is enhanced since it is the seat of government.

The controversial hare is depicted jumping in and out the ear of a life size section of the Mandela statue's head in an augmented reality animation of the graphite drawing.

Previous spread:

Fig 11. Sue Clark, *Waiting for new gods* (2021).

Fig 12. Sue Clark, *PreTshwane's portal to the underworld* (2021).

Overleaf:

Fig 13. Sue Clark, *Still life of PreTshwane* (2021).







Loftus Versfeld Stadium's *The unknown rugby player's statue* (1978)<sup>1</sup> and Guy du Toit's *Rabbid* (2016)<sup>2</sup> are juxtaposed in collages and an animation commenting on how events and people are remembered. The rugby player's statue reflects the sport's aggressive white masculinity of PreTshwane's past. Rugby has become a national unifier after South Africa's victory at the 2019 World Cup in Japan under the captaincy of Siya Kolisi. Guy du Toit's *Rabbid* is an ageless, genderless, passive rugby player/student hybrid aiming to neutralise and democratise memorials.

The hare featured in these sculptures is aligned with the African myth of the hare as a trickster. The hare becomes a gentle, gender-neutral and humorous way to attract attention, although the tiny hare in Madiba's ear was deemed disrespectful and removed, evidencing the significance of what a statue memorialises.

The City Hall site with its attendant statues is cogent, considering how statues function to create or negate history. The reliefs, the tympanum of City Hall and statues depicting Chief Tshwane, Andries Pretorius and Marthinus Wessels Pretorius express collective, inevitably biased, memories of the city's origins.

*How PreTshwane got its name* (2021) (Figures 6 and 15) is a mixed media work which commenced with a collage of architectural elements surrounding the site. Made on old thermal drafting paper burnt and cut to create an animated transformation of the site,

1 The *Unknown Rugby Player* (1978) Eben Germishuizen (Bolsmann 2016:110)

2 *Rabbid* (2016) Guy du Toit. A Re Yeng artwork at stations. <https://www.tshwane.gov.za/sites/areyeng/Lists/LatestNews/FullView.aspx?id=58>



women are incised into the work, counterbalancing the males of the reliefs and statues, with the notable exception of one good wife on the tympanum.

The permanence and ability of bronze and marble to retain memories is compromised by vandalism and defacement of buildings and statues. Entangling roots and stems embrace and eventually conceal the depicted figures. It is ironic that the bronzes, designed as eternal memorials to heroes, are obscured and obliterated by organic plant life.

Fig 14. Anton van Wouw, *Paul Kruger standbeeld* (1896).



Fig 15. Sue Clark, *How PreTshwane got its name*. Detail (2021).



Paul Kruger's statue in Church Square is arguably the most illustrious in central PreTshwane. A significant divide exists between the eastern and western sectors, the axis created by Paul Kruger Street. Experientially divided, the western sector comprises historic Marabastad, the Asiatic Bazaar and abandoned buildings, whereas the eastern side is functionally superior. *Gatekeeper* (2021) (figure 1), an enormous man who sits astride the Department of Arts and Culture building, securing the east/west divide.

*PreTshwane's portal to the underworld* (2021) (figures 12 and 16), features the derelict modernist residential block, Kruger Park, located west of the city centre, overshadowed by an amplified statue of Paul Kruger. A failed apartheid development, Kruger Park was previously part of Marabastad's residential area. Depicted as a gateway to the underworld, the building and the statue are gradually gently concealed by greenery, creating a new hybrid landmark.

Fig 16. Sue Clark, *PreTshwane's portal to the underworld* (2021) Overgrown animation detail.





*Kruger Park entangled* (2021) (figure 22), is a variation of the overrun building/ statue. Created by stitching into an architectural archival plastic film print, it is a stop animation that alludes to healing through decay and forgetting.

*Marabi Girl* (2021) (figure 22) features the mouldering hybrid of Kruger Park and Paul Kruger confronted by a part-female, part-plant form of medical gauze and thread. A ghost from Marabastad's past, she heralds its vibrant multiculturalism before apartheid into the present with a renewed, organic connection to the earth.

*Waiting for New Gods* (2021) (figure 23) is a meditative piece that spans the entire project. During an early walk through Marabastad, I purchased some Shweshwe fabric.

Fig 17. Sue Clark, *Marabi girl* (2021).



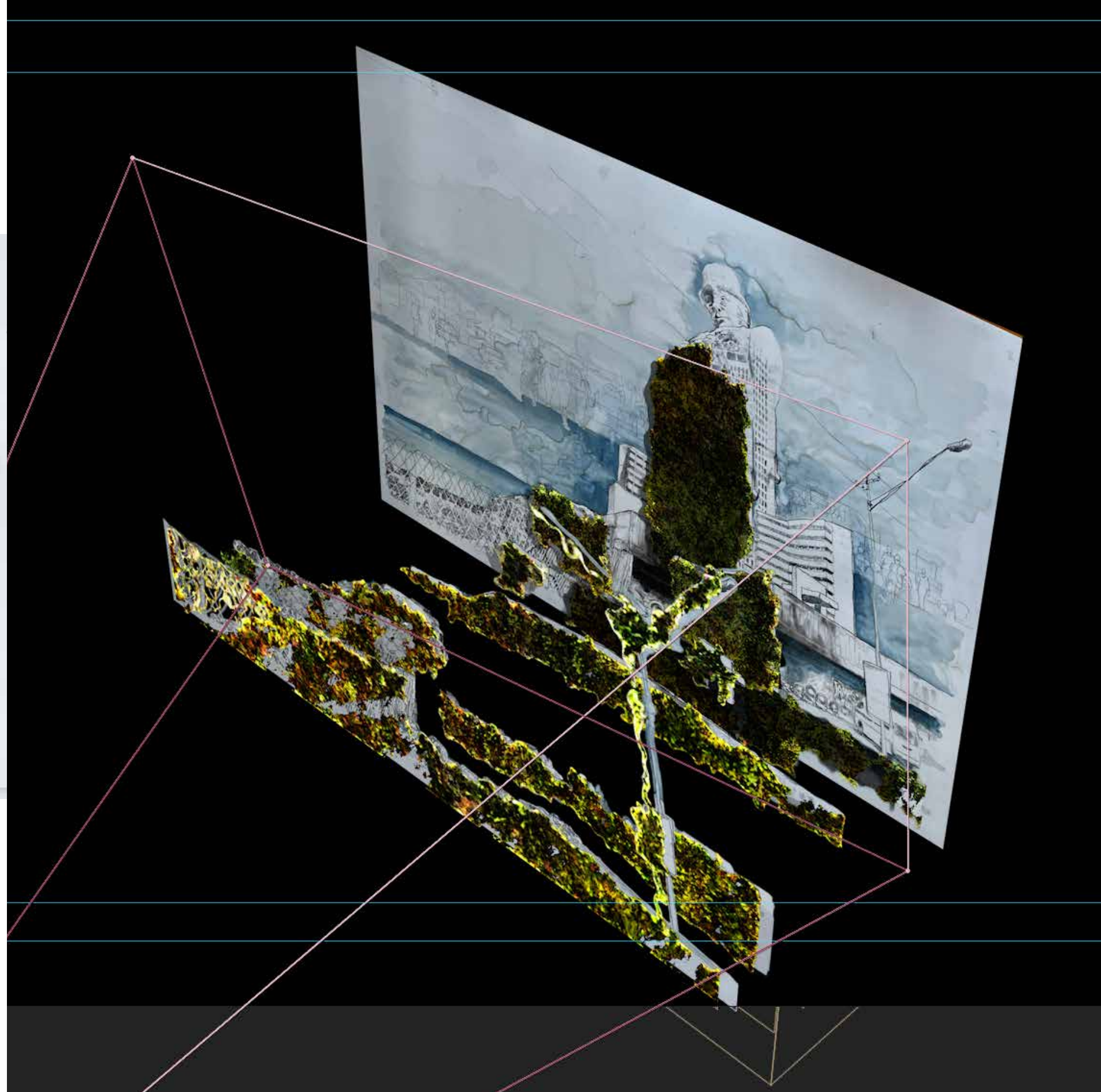




Fig 18. Sue Clark, *Nelson Mandela's ear hare* (2021).

Fig 19: Sue Clark, *PreTshwane's portal to the underworld* (2021).  
Screengrab of animation process.

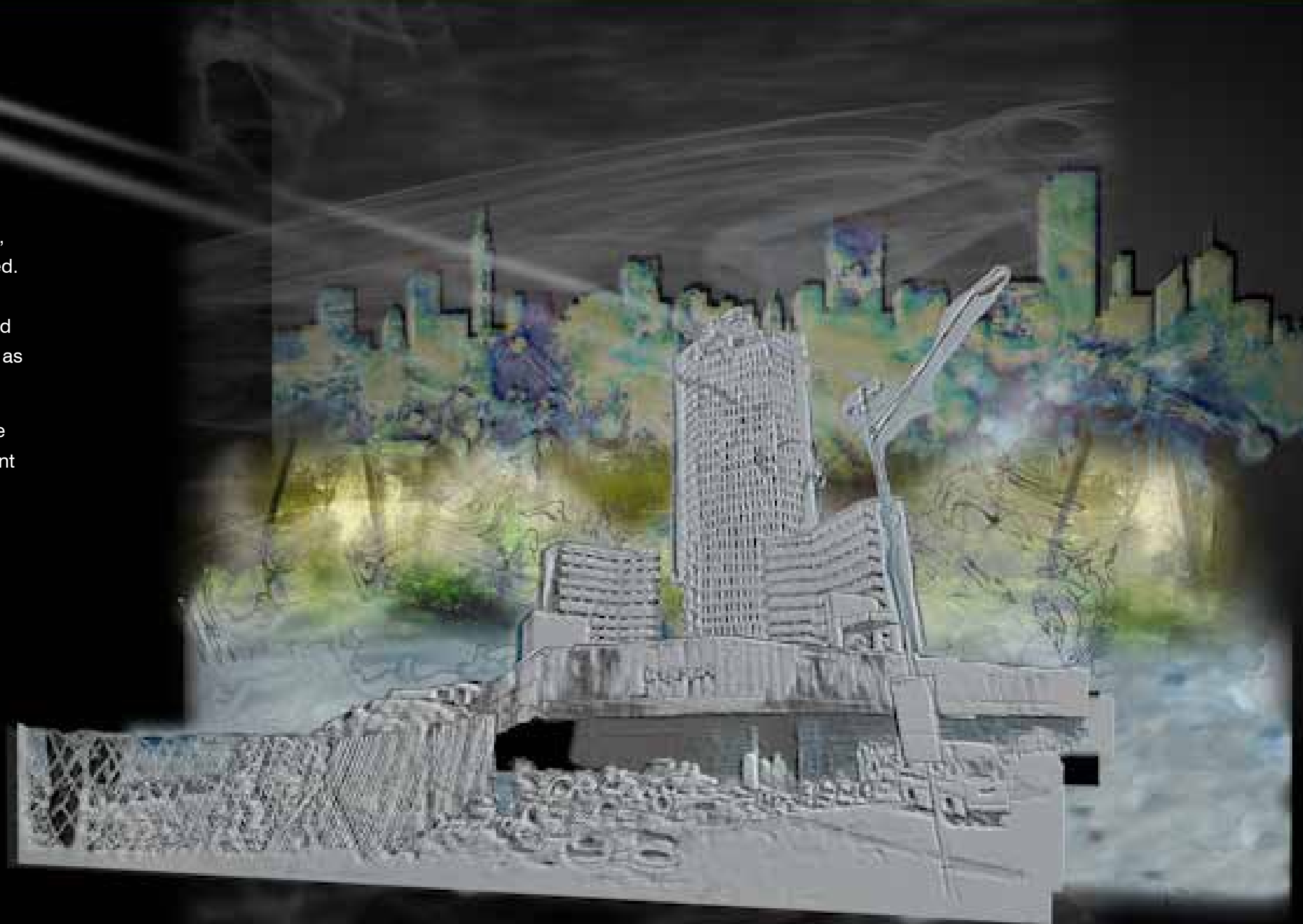
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Fig 20. Sue Clark, *PreTshwane's portal to the underworld* (2021).  
Animation experiment still.





The fabric was cyanotype printed with ghostly, imagined hybrid gods for PreTshwane, dyed with beetroot, turmeric, green tea and then stitched. Existing statues, buildings, fauna, flora, and figures become hybridised new gods, springing from the earth as shoots from a rhizome.

I have animated images to stimulate the viewer, encouraging engagement with the detail. Limited to the eight seconds maximum of the Artivive application, the transformation and layering of time is much clearer, effectively conveying elaborate concepts.











## Conclusion

The artworks for *Gods of PreTshwane* (2021) traces a personal journey of discovery in my hometown. It challenges the patriarchal, Westernised memorials and apartheid architecture of PreTshwane. Collective memory and forgetting is juxtaposed with the city's backdrop of simultaneous growth and decay. I imagine a future that includes female contributions, care, healing, community, tolerance, and a renewed connection to the natural world in ways that transcend physical artefacts. I aim to encourage the curiosity of residents and, in a broader context, encourage engagement with our immediate community and environment.

Previous:

Fig.21. Sue Clark, *Kruger Park entangled* (2021).  
Detail of the back of artwork.

Fig.22. Sue Clark, *Kruger Park entangled* (2021).  
Detail .

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Fig 23. Sue Clark, *Waiting for new gods* (2021). Detail .



Fig 24. Sue Clark, Waiting for new gods (2021). Detail.

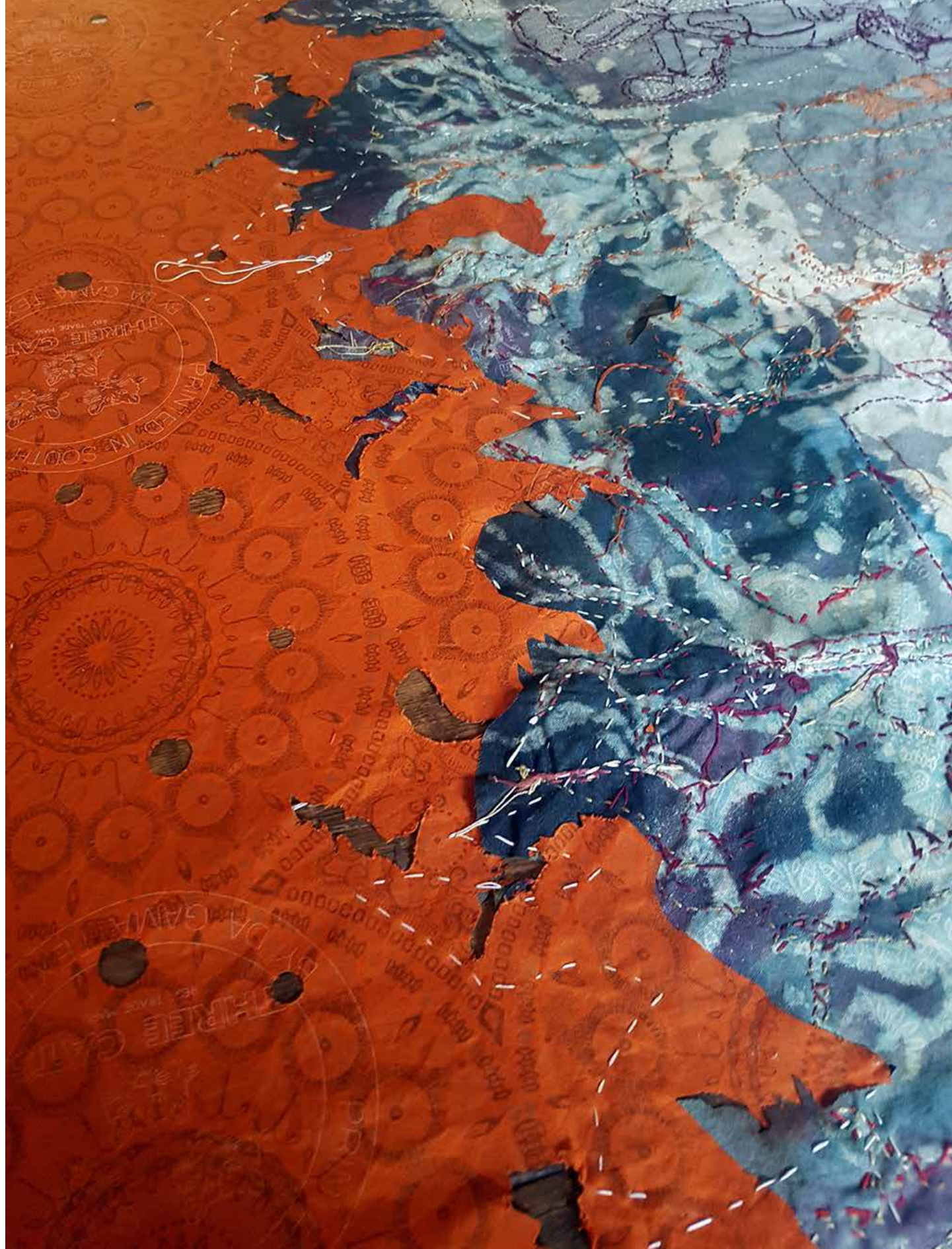
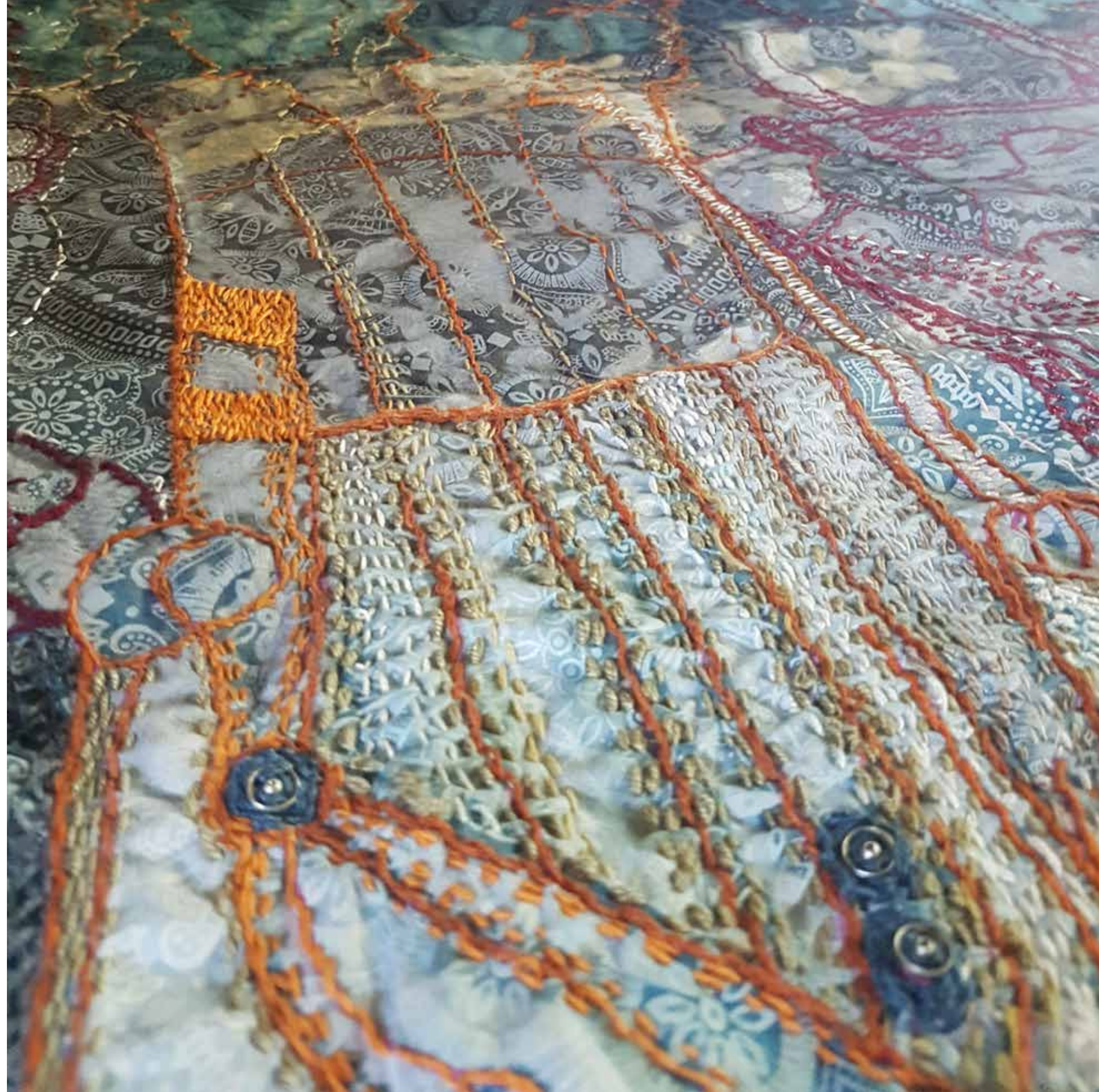


Fig 25. Sue Clark, Waiting for new gods (2021). Detail.







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Fig 26. Sue Clark, *Waiting for new gods* (2021). Detail.



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# Curriculum Vitae

## Professional Education

- B.A.S. UCT, 1987
- B Arch UCT, 1991
- RIBA Part III – Bartlett University London.1994
- UNISA, Bachelor of Visual arts and Multimedia, Current 3rd year

## Professional experience

- 2004-2021: Equilibrium Studio, Pretoria/ Tshwane. Director
- 1998-2010: University of Pretoria: Final Year Engineer Presentations: External Examiner
- 2000-2005: B.A.S. degree portfolio review external examiner, TUKS
- 1999-2003: AUB Projects, Johannesburg. Architect
- 2002-2003: B.A.S. degree portfolio review external examiner, WITS
- 1996-1998: Stauch Vorster Architects, Pretoria. Architect
- 1992-1995: Footprints Design, Covent Garden, London  
Design Director, Creative Cartography Company
- 1995: Chris Pook Design, Jakarta, Indonesia: Architect/Interior Design
- 1996 Apprentice Batik Artist – Nia Vlam & Isomoyo Studio, Jogjakarta, Indonesia
- 1988 &1992: Architect in training and architect with Allan Konya, UK
- 1987: Architectural Assistant Niek Maritz, Windhoek, Namibia
- 1986 Architectural Assistant Jaime Parlade, Madrid and Marbella, Spain
- 1984: Desert Ecological Research Unit. Namib Desert, Namibia, Technical Assistant

## Awards

- 2002 Steel Awards: Daimler Chrysler Extensions and Equilibrium Studio
- 2002 ISES Design Competition for Sustainable Design: First Prize
- 2004 Steel Awards: Chatsworth Youth Centre
- 2004 Steel institute Bursary: Glenn Murcutt Masterclass, Australia
- 2005 Statue of Freedom International Competition: First Prize
- 2006 Carrol Boyes Metal Competition: Flame. Finalist
- 2007 Carrol Boyes Metal Competition: Fruit Bowl. Finalist
- 2008 Carrol Boyes Metal Competition: Frame. Second Prize
- 2021 Still Life: A Modern take on a Classic Subject: First Prize
- 2021 Sasol new signatures shortlist
- 2021 UNISA Artwalk shortlist

## Exhibitions

- Jan 2021, Johan Van Heerden Art Gallery, Still Life: A Modern take on a Classic Subject Group Exhibition
- April 2021, Johan Van Heerden Art Gallery, Rabbit’s Foot Group Exhibition
- July 2021, Johan Van Heerden Art Gallery, Connectivity Group Exhibition
- 2021 Sasol new signatures exhibition. Pretoria Art Museum
- 2021 UNISA BVA Graduate Exhibition BA VMA
- 

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