

CUTTINGS 1820 – 2020
by Pippa Hetherington in collaboration with
the Keiskamma Art Project

GFI Art Gallery: Solo Exhibition Catalogue

12 August 2020





Pippa Hetherington

Born in Kokstad, KwaZulu-Natal, 1971

Photographer and visual artist since 2000

Master's in Fine Arts, International Center of Photography – Bard College, New York, 2019

Cebo Mvubu

Born in Bodium, Eastern Cape, 1981

Drawing, printmaking for Keiskamma Art Project since 2001

Diploma in Fine Art from Walter Sisulu University, South Africa, 2003

Production Manager at Keiskamma Art Project since 2018

Nosimasile Makubhalo (Nozeti)

Born in Hamburg, Eastern Cape, 1964

Widow raising six children and three grandchildren

Senior artist and designer at Keiskamma Art Project since 2000

ABOUT THE ARTIST

As an independent photojournalist with a human rights focus, South African photographer Pippa Hetherington has spent the last two decades in photography and video documentary. She is co-founder of Behind the Faces, a pan-African women's storytelling project, launched at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, in 2013. Her work has been published in international and national publications. She established an online photographic archive which is available through Africa Media Online. Her solo and group exhibitions include Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Durban (South Africa); London (UK); Dublin (Ireland); and New York City and Washington, DC, (USA). She graduated with an MFA from ICP–Bard, New York, in May 2019.

Keiskamma Art Project

Based in Hamburg, Eastern Cape, the Keiskamma Art Project showcases local culture, heritage and environment through alluring textile works, beadwork and wireworks, all of which aid in the archiving of the Eastern Cape rural collective memory and preservation of oral history. The Project has won a number of awards including the Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Award and the Chairman's Premier Award (2011) which recognizes sustained and extraordinary commitment to the arts in South Africa.

Its major art works are in several national and international collections namely the parliament buildings in Cape Town as well as the permanent collections at the University of South Africa, the University of Witwatersrand and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Museum. The Keiskamma Art Project also provides income and other forms of essential support for many families through its cohesive network of women and youth.



Introduction

As the year 2020 approached, the dominant thoughts pervading my art practice was that of the two-hundred-year bicentenary of the arrival of the 1820 British settlers to South Africa, and what that meant to the indigenous, Xhosa people who resided nearby in what is now the Eastern Cape,

With no farming background, the settlers were allocated land on the southern bank of the Great Fish River. This was the promise from the British government of greener pastures, a new future, and a solution to migrate out of the economically oppressed United Kingdom.

Upon arrival it became apparent that they were part of a cohort of recruits who had been strategically enlisted to act as a buffer between the Xhosa people north of the river and the British-ruled Cape Colony south of it. The soil was arid and difficult to farm, so cattle quickly became the main commodity.

With this colonially constructed border between the Xhosa and the British, came decades of bloody and brutal conflict, collectively known as the Frontier Wars. The British colony implemented laws that deliberately separated people and, in doing so, were able to take possession of land.

Although we have substantial history written about the Frontier wars and the plight of the 1820 settlers, little has been written about the Xhosa history and what is known, has mostly been left to oral storytelling. One of the most well-known stories is that of Nongqawuse, a young prophetess whose prophecies led to millions of cattle being killed in 1856-7. Aware of the tensions between the Xhosa and the colonial forces, she appealed to the tribal elders, imploring them that the spirits had told her the Xhosa people should kill their own cattle and destroy their crops and, as a reward, the spirits would drive the British settlers into the sea.

Now, two hundred years later, a group of us — descendants from Xhosa families surviving above the river border and descendants of 1820 Settler families surviving below the river border—have come together using clothing as a metaphor of wearing our histories that are so demonstrably intertwined.



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #1

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #2

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #3

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #4

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #5

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #6

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington

Cuttings #7

Fabric

40cm x 140cm

400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #8

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Cuttings #9

Fabric
40cm x 140cm
400gm weight

Sold



Pippa Hetherington

Cuttings #10

Fabric

40cm x 140cm

400gm weight

Sold



The clay pits, illegal cattle trade and ancestry

The clay pits are situated between the Kap and Coombs Rivers near Makhanda (former Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and only a few kilometers south of the Fish River boundary. Historian Noel Mostert writes in *Frontiers*: "the controversial Clay Pits, from which the Xhosa obtained the red ochre for their body ornament was the earliest flashpoint between themselves and the British settlers."

In a thesis written in the 1960's, Rhodes University academic McGeogh writes about the same territory being labelled "Forlorn Hope," no doubt due to the deposits of red clay that was highly prized by the Xhosa.

McGeogh goes on to write: "the broad design of the (settler) scheme was to people the Zuurveld with Europeans in close settlements. This would cover the vulnerable coastal sector of the official Fish River boundary, beyond which lay the land between the Fish and Keiskamma Rivers that was misleadingly dubbed the "neutral belt." The controversy over the clay pits sparked one of the biggest Frontier Wars.

The piece of land my ancestors were given when they arrived in South Africa was situated at the sight of these very same clay pits.

Adding to the tension was another colonial law that prohibited cattle trading between the Xhosa and the British. John Stubbs, my great great great grandfather, in order to survive financially, began trading illegally with the Xhosa. He was killed in a botched trade and his wife, Ann, died of a broken heart a few months later, leaving seven orphans - the youngest, a baby of a few months old, to the oldest, a teenager of seventeen. The children were eventually sent out to different homes, but Thomas, my direct-ancestor (great great grandfather) was sent to work as an apprentice blacksmith in Makhanda at the age of sixteen.

Thomas was a rebel and a beautiful writer. He campaigned against the British government and, after a life of adventure and misadventure, died a pauper. His memoirs were discovered generations later, and now sit in the Cory Library. They have been extensively referred to over the years, notably by Guy Butler, a historian and respected professor of English Literature at Rhodes University, Makhanda.



Pippa Hetherington

Clay #1

Pigmented denim, cotton twill, embroidery

156 cm x 117 cm

R11 700



Pippa Hetherington

Clay #2

Pigmented denim, cotton twill, embroidery

123 cm x 82 cm

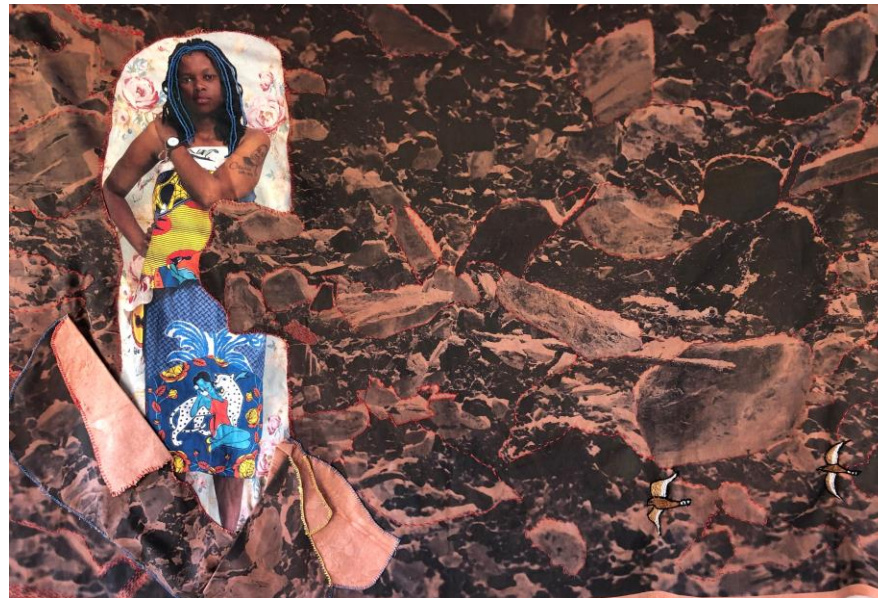
Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Clay #3

Pigmented denim, cotton twill, embroidery
84 cm x 123 cm

R9 100



Pippa Hetherington
Clay #4

Pigmented denim,
cotton twill, embroidery
82 cm x 124 cm

R9 100



Pippa Hetherington
Clay #5

Pigmented denim,
cotton twill, embroidery
156 cm x 117 cm

R11 700



The Female Voice

Thomas writes in his reminiscences that, while he and his brother were out retrieving stolen cattle, they were met by their younger brother with the news of their mother's death

" That meeting – ah that meeting – was to inform us that our mother had died – one of the most loving Christian good mothers that ever left England. It fell on us like a dream. I was obliged to wash and dress the baby [8-month old, youngest of the siblings] and wash the clothes. I must pass over the next few months,"

indicating her death to be a burning part of his memories, too heartrending to even write about.

But what of her voice? And what of the voices of so many other 1820 settler females and their descendants? And what of the voices of the female Xhosa and their descendants?

History is so often told by men that it makes it difficult to uncover the deep stories of femininity.



Pippa Hetherington
Stitch #1

Fabric
200 cm x 200 cm

R13 650



Pippa Hetherington
Stitch #2

Fabric
200 cm x 198 cm

R13 650



Pippa Hetherington
Stitch #3

Fabric
175 cm x 192 cm

R13 650



Threads intertwined

In *Cuttings 1820 – 2020*, we have pigmented some of the fabric with ochre from the very clay pits in our shared story. Through working together on garments and artworks, we bring to the fore the voice of women in a post-colonial context while not forgetting the effects of the past on our present-day collective and personal histories.

As we know, history is told in linear ways, by the oppressor or the oppressed. And there is always a victor. As artists we don't see any victors, just an entwining of thread that is impossible to disentangle. Below the surface of told history is always the layer of complexity, a mesh.

There is a quote by Carrie Mae Weems in the jacket cover of her book, *The Hampton Project*, that reads, "I'm interested in the tangled web of history, in the rough edges, and the bumpy surface, the mess just beneath the veneer of order."

Bringing sewing and embroidery into the pieces is perhaps a way of stitching fragmented intuition and life experiences into a whole. Using photography and including the image of a negative is a way of entwining the immeasurable realms that photography can take you to. The fact that a photograph is supposedly a memory may not be the case, it can also tell a story about the future, and once that story is revealed it becomes a memory. It is not a death of a moment, but rather holds a telling of something to come.



Pippa Hetherington
Nicky Stubbs

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400

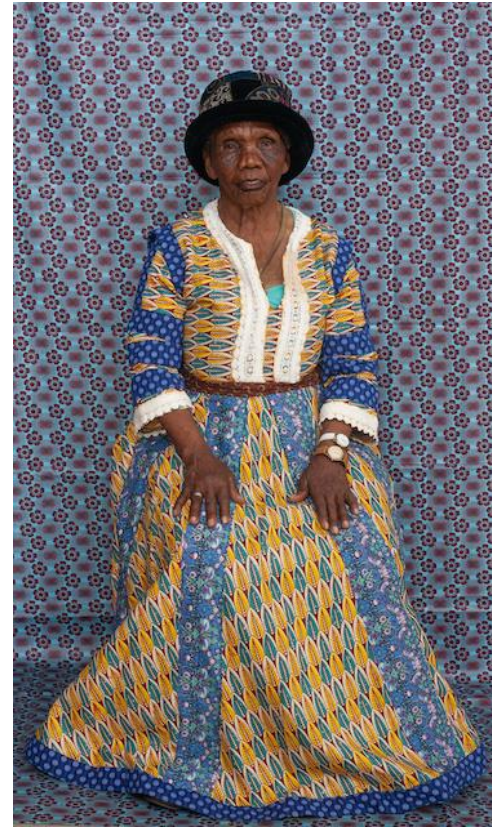


Pippa Hetherington
Nothandile Paliso

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Susan Paliso

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Lungiswa Madondile

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Anelisa Nyongo

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Jenny Mason

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Nomthandazo Manjezi

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Duniswa Nxadi

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Nomfundo Makhubalo

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Nomonde Mthandande

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Aviwe Myataza

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Lukhanyiso Cuko

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Liz Kruger

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Sophia van der Schijff

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Nozeti Makhubalo

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



Pippa Hetherington
Sino Makhubalo

Archival Inkjet on
Hahnemühle, A2
Unframed

Limited edition of 20

R10 400



The conversation

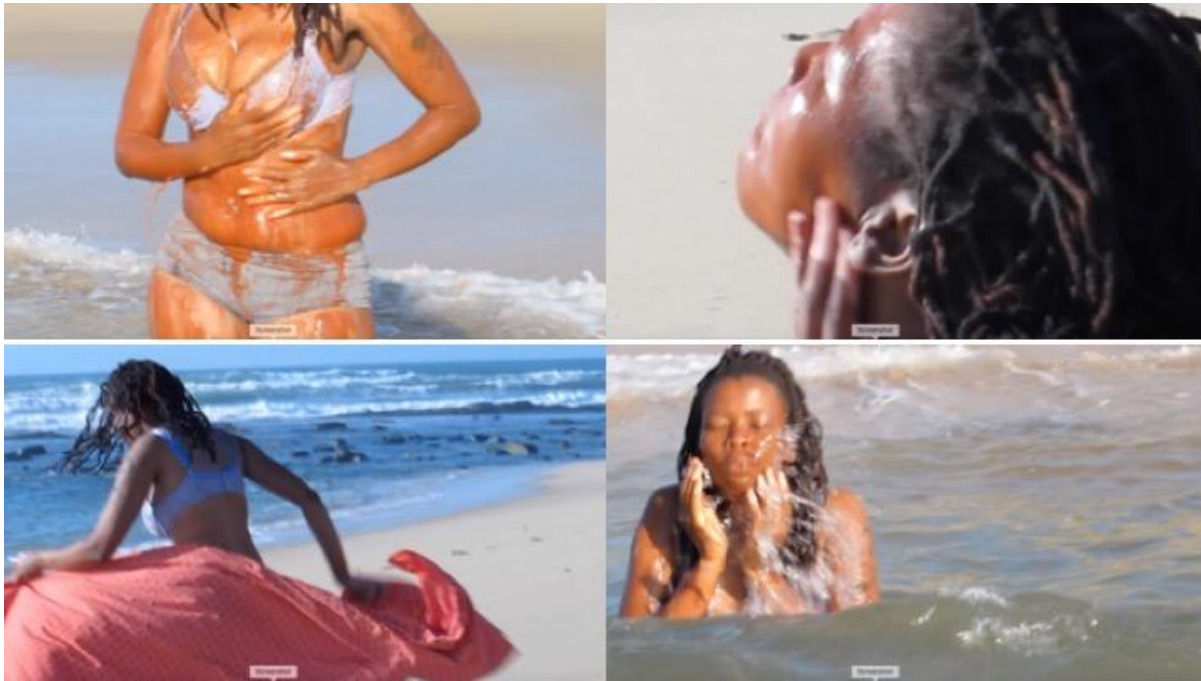
An initial workshop with Nozeti Makhubalo from the Keiskamma Art Project in September 2019, brought into view our known histories and our shared histories. In discussion, our mission came to be how we could collectively make work that brought our histories, no matter how polar, into one whole instead of separate narratives.

In making our first dress together it felt as though we were carrying our histories into our current time. Nozeti said of that experience:

"it brings me hope of moving forward, especially after where I'm from. It makes a bit of a moving. I was a bit dark, sad, but when we started the project it sparkled me. It makes me proud of my sad history in a way and now at the end we are ending up in one, sharing exchanging our way of doing things, it brings unity. When I think of Xhosa history, I am thinking of what we have lost - a lot of love, the love for each other, because as time goes on, and things pass on, we find that we actually love each other. I feel sad to have lost the love, the fights there was hatred, but now we treat each other with love. We lost the love, but slowly finding it again. The togetherness brings us closer, we were meant to be together and not to fight."

As we moved deeper into making the artworks, I began photographing the disputed territory of where the Frontier Wars took place. Using the negative image like a memory repository of the landscape, we meditated on what the land means to us. The landscapes engendered feelings of being haunted and replenished; and impossible to extricate ourselves from.

Combining our responses to the landscapes, we circled back to clothing and the history of dress in the Eastern Cape.



Pippa Hetherington
Sea.Clay.Memory
 Film, 4 minutes, audio

R10 000



Pippa Hetherington
Reparation
 Film, 4 minutes, no audio

R10 000



Dress

As part of the research process we visited the King Williams Town Museum in the Eastern Cape, about an hour and a half's drive from Hamburg. The museum holds impressive political and historical content and significant information about clothing, both from the British colonial era as well as traditional Xhosa wears. We were struck by the exhibits being separated. Even in a museum/exhibition space, the histories are told separately. Nozeti said:

“when I look at the history about European clothing, (it) makes me very sad because it was so cruel. We were the people who were making clothes from skins and iBayi and using the ochre to dye it. We were walking bare skinned and smearing ochre as adornment and sun block, but the British changed that, and we feel like we lost our humanity and dignity and our humanity of who we are.”

To work through the feeling of loss, we adopted sewing as an artistic technique and as an action of reparation. Nomfundo Makhubalo (translated by Nozeti) said:

“although the history is painful, when we sew we feel better, because of the combination and the collaboration of other cultures and other cultures together, bringing into one.”

Inspired by London-born Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare's (CBE) use of Dutch wax-printed cotton in assemblages and sculptures, the dresses are made from cloth that was introduced into parts of Africa by European colonialists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which have now been adopted as various African cultural identities such as German Blue Print (shweshwe) and Dutch wax-printed cotton. The dresses indicate how these fabrics represent tangled post-colonial complexities and identity.



Pippa Hetherington
Paper #2
 Paper, clay, thread
 A5, Framed

Sold



Pippa Hetherington
Paper #3
 Paper, clay, thread
 A5, Framed

R3000



Pippa Hetherington
Paper #1
 Paper, clay, thread
 A5, Framed

Sold



Pippa Hetherington

Spliced #1

Pigmented denim, cotton twill,
embroidery

297 x 420mm

Framed

R7500



Pippa Hetherington

Spliced #2

Pigmented denim, cotton twill,
embroidery

297 x 420mm

Framed

R7500



Pippa Hetherington

Blueprint Nguni

Cyanotype on cotton,
embroidery, clay pigment

216 x 280 mm

Framed

Sold



Upon reflection Nothandile Bopani (translated by Nozeti) added:

"I feel although we have lost so much, and even though these different fabrics were introduced to us, we have ended up loving them, although today they are so expensive compared to our traditional material, we are enjoying them amongst our communities now."

The discussion was further enriched through the fabrics we, as artists, cut and sewed together. We purposefully did not refine the sewing, instead exposing flaws and unfinished seams. This was a gesture to indicate our unfinished exchange.

There is still much to resolve, and by creating these artworks we are not suggesting that the conversation has come to a close but rather, as a stepping-stone, opening up for more dialogue that will be both comfortable and uncomfortable. It is our hope that Cuttings 1820 – 2020 sparks deep self-reflection about personal and shared histories, not just in the Eastern Cape, but in the world as a whole.

Pippa Hetherington, July 2020





GFI ART GALLERY

GUTSCHE FAMILY INVESTMENTS



30 Park Drive, St Georges Park
Port Elizabeth, 6001



- Tel: 041 586 3973
- Email: info@gfiartgallery.com
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GFIArtGallerySA>
- Website: <http://www.gfiartgallery.com/>
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