

# Substance of Shadows

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University of Johannesburg Art Gallery

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### **Artist's statement**

Inspired by the Human Shadow Etched in Stone at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima, Japan, this solo exhibition tracks my continued personal fascination with the tenuous nature of memory. The only certainty is change. We try to hold onto memories in the hope of maintaining some coherence and continuity, but our memories are largely inventions and they too change over time. We commemorate our invented pasts in an attempt to fix them in the present. We even impose them on the generations that come

after us, linking them to the past through anniversaries, memorials, pilgrimages and rites of passage, in an attempt to bind their lives to ours. Ultimately, we know more about the grand narratives we create about the past than the past itself. We cannot hold onto the substance of the past. It has been recycled, re-purposed and reinvented. Our memories are poor, distorted, sentimental and superstitious copies.

Since 2014, I have pursued a deep interest in the shadows of people that had been burned onto the ruined city walls by the heat and light of the atomic blasts on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – at the end of World War II. Due to the radiation-induced bleaching of surrounding stone surfaces, what remained were seeming carbon shadows, ghosts of the past, fixed onto ruins in the present. This research led me to the Pelindaba Atomic Research Facility north of Johannesburg, South Africa. There were rumours that the enriched uranium used for these bombs originated there. These rumours enhanced my sense of connection as a South African artist to Hiroshima. I later had a dream, perhaps linked to this, in which I saw myself peeled from my own skin, as if I was discarding a burnt, blackened outer covering. This stimulated my ideas of scratching away a thin black layer from a piece of diaphanous, skin-like carbon ‘paper’ or film – the carbon paper, reminiscent of the darkened forms seemingly left on the walls of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

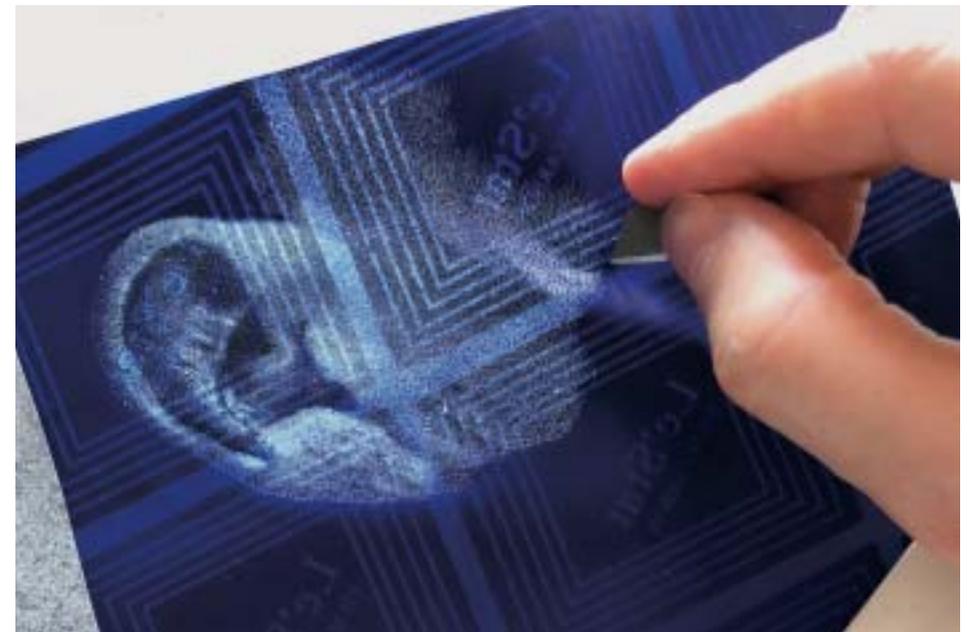
Although some of the works are essentially two-dimensional, they are given a three-dimensional quality, sometimes hanging freely in the gallery or crumpled, torn, pierced and irregularly cropped. Most of the works are never displayed flat and always mounted in a way that allows ambient light to permeate the paper from both sides.

These carbon ‘shadows’ are all metaphors for carbon copies and products of one of life’s greatest narratives – the carbon cycle. Using carbon paper as the medium, I work from dark to light, delicately incising images into the fragile, semi-transparent film. The carbon residue is left to collect below the work as ‘discarded information’ or ‘lost memory’.

I sourced the last roll of the now obsolete black carbon paper ever produced in South Africa and experimented by scratching an image onto the film to see



A commercially available piece of carbon ‘paper’ or film.



Scratching onto carbon ‘paper’ or film with a blade to create an image. The carbon film is left unrecognisable, looking like a delicate fabric or silk. Sometimes the film is pierced or lacerated by the blade. These perforations are left as they are in the final artwork.



if the technique worked, practically, creatively and conceptually. The carbon paper was left unrecognisable, appearing like a delicate piece of fabric.

I was strongly influenced by my parents' frailty which forced me to confront my own mortality. My Lebanese-Catholic, Welsh, French, Belgian-Afrikaans heritage and ancestry informs the creation of the objects displayed in *Substance of Shadows*. There are deeply personal pieces such as the image of my father's inanimate body which, when incised onto the carbon paper, allows viewers and passers-by to see through it, letting them view the present through a 'relic' from the past. My mother's wedding veil is explored using the carbon paper for its formal and evocative conceptual qualities.

A further element to the exhibition is a new video, titled *Rising-falling* (2021) exploring the symbolism, text and narratives of a memorial that still reflects colonial idioms to perpetuate a distorted perspective of history. This extends my interest in how a society remembers its history and how changes in this memory can result in a dismembering of identity. In this video, I publicly project one of my existing video works, *Remember-dismember* (2015) onto the pedestal of an equestrian monument to Boer war hero and first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, General Louis Botha, which stands in the gardens at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. I believe that *Rising-falling* is an anti-monument that both disrupts narratives and temporarily intervenes in the experience of visitors to this site. It presents a different view of masculinity, race and power by directly engaging the way texts and narratives have been imprinted on the landscape.

[Watch Opening event for Substance of Shadows: Walkabout with Michelle Constant and Q&A \(Video 1 hr\)](#)







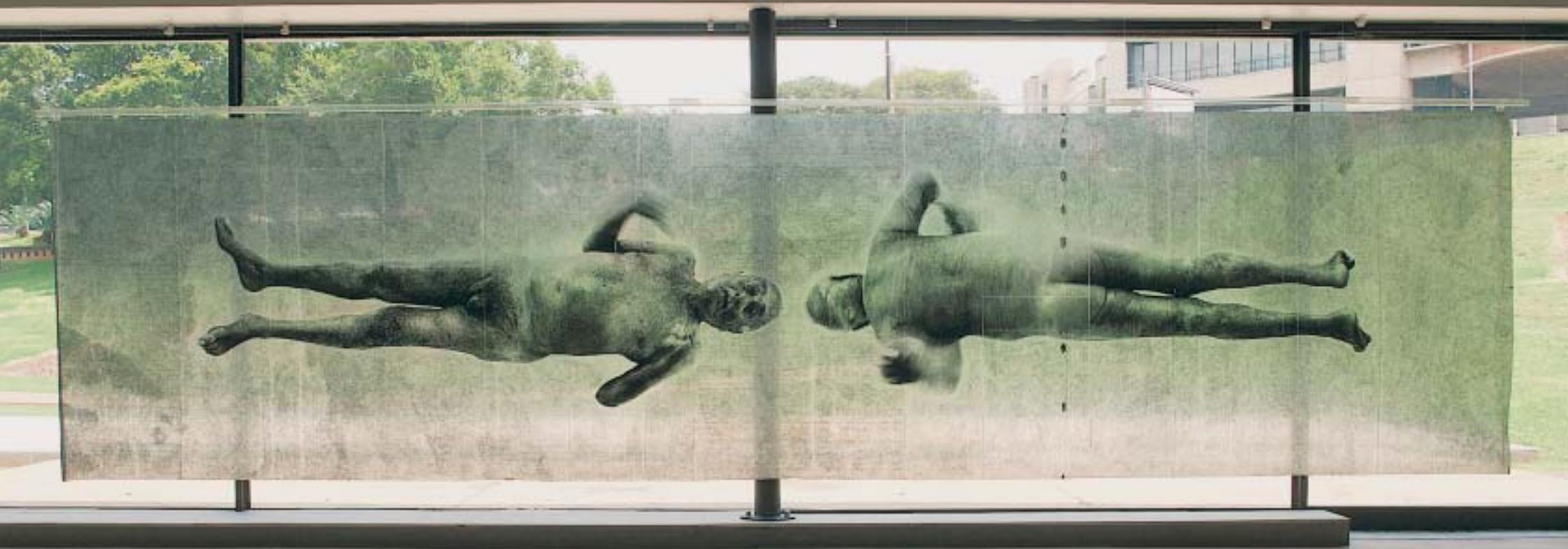


***Self portrait***

2015

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue

110 x 63 cm



***Carbon dad 2017***

2020

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue, perspex rail

110 x 440 cm

I have represented my own body in many of my works in the process of grappling with masculinity, troubling my own culture's gender norms. In *Carbon dad 2017* I chose to represent my father's body. A body that had such

power over me all my life. A body that copied part of his biology into me. A person that attempted to copy his culture, modelling what it meant to be a man in ways with which I did not resonate. A male physical presence that

asserted itself whenever I spoke or moved in ways that were contrary to its expectations. “Stop acting Paul!” A body my father surrendered in the end to my unavoidably feminine care.

At the age of 93, a few months before he died, he reluctantly agreed to pose naked for a photograph. “I think you’re being too arty,” he said as his only resistance to my request for him to risk such vulnerability. I remember explaining to him that I wouldn’t ask him to do anything that I hadn’t done myself. Not much of a comfort I imagine as he knew I was willing to expose myself in ways most men would not dare.

He knew the photograph would become a reference for an artwork, to be copied later by my hand, probably sometime after his death. “Don’t hold your hand like that,” he would say, exasperated. Posing for the camera was an act of sacrificing himself and his dignity to his shrill-voiced, limp-wristed, artist-of-a-son. That sacrifice left me with the burden of responding through the creation of a sacred shroud. Did he agree because he knew it would bind me to a ritual of remembering? I wonder.

As I revealed his image, I thought about the strange intimacy that emerged between us at the end of his life, how I tended to his frequent skin abrasions, cutting his twisted toenails, massaging his feet, helping his frail form to remember a brittle and feeble version of himself. My scratches recreated scars from injuries he received as a footballer in his twenties, a knee replacement in his seventies and a pacemaker operation in his eighties. The act of inscribing millions of overlapping lines to try and define the surface of my father’s wrinkled form became a meditation. Each monotonous but mindful scratch removed more of the carbon film, the way the surface of a relic is abraded with the constant rubbing of devout pilgrim hands. If the

delicate skin-like carbon paper was pierced in the process, I left the tears as they were.

As a child educated in a Catholic school, I was often told that the images imprinted on the Holy Shroud of Turin, (for me, like the Hiroshima shadows), ‘were miraculously burned onto the fabric by an unknown mysterious flash of Divine Light and energy.’ As my father’s shroud took shape – with the exact dimensions of the Turin Shroud and a play of shadow and light – the carbon residue that had been scraped away slowly piled up around it. I reflected on the carbon at the heart of organic chemistry and tried to find the molecules that connected my life to his.

Whilst born in Johannesburg as Emile Joseph Emmanuel, my father’s identity was firmly rooted in his father’s hometown, Qartaba, in Lebanon. He identified first and foremost as a Maronite Catholic Lebanese man. His father, Naieff, had come to South Africa after World War I looking for work. My father returned to live in Qartaba with his parents when he was a boy.

Emile later travelled to Zambia where he met my mother, Joy Erasmus-Mendoza, who had relocated there from Natal. I was born in Kabwe (formerly Broken Hill) in 1969 and we moved to South Africa when I was 4, where I grew up. My parents relationship was fraught with challenges, but they persevered.

It took over a year to create *Carbon dad 2017*, simultaneously interrogating my memories of him silencing me throughout much of my life and honouring him for allowing me to grow close to him at the end of his. For me, *Carbon dad 2017* is a meditation on copies, imperfect copies vainly defying the inevitable impermanence of it all – a failed attempt to recapture a moment, inscribed into the black carbon of transfer paper.

[Watch Cure: The Making of Carbon dad 2017 \(Video 2 min 44 sec\)](#)







***Veil 1954***

2016

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, archival adhesive tapes, pendant, perspex headpiece, carbon residue  
300 x 100 cm

*My mother was my first country, the first  
place I ever lived.*

– Nayyirah Waheed

From 2014 to 2017 I was caregiver to my mother, who suffered from, and eventually died of Alzheimer's Disease at the age of 86. Walking this path with her and my father during her years of declining cognition and witnessing the slow disappearance of her personality was an experience impossible to convey in words. As her memory failed, I was drawn to revisit family photographs, retracing as much of her life as I could.

This work is a replica of her wedding veil, created by scratching away the black carbon layer on delicate carbon paper normally used for simultaneously transferring impressions – much the way a memory is preserved.

Creating *Veil 1954* felt like an attempt to capture both the presence and absence of a personality leaving one realm for another. It is conceived to be suspended both literally and metaphorically ‘between worlds’.

I am fascinated by the history and symbolism of the veil as a marker of aristocratic rank and to differentiate between ‘respectable women’ and those who were ‘publicly available’ in old patriarchal societies. ‘In the third century the bridal veil became incorporated into the Christian wedding ceremony, adapted from the Roman model, while women who became consecrated to the service of God ‘took up the veil’ as a symbol of their marriage to Christ, and a sign of their chastity’<sup>1</sup>. In these societies, the bride is initially concealed from public view and in Catholic weddings, the father of the bride ‘gives away’ his daughter to her husband, who traditionally, is not allowed to see her until she is revealed to him at the altar. I am also drawn to Catholic iconography depicting The Madonna as ‘Our Lady’ – ‘Our Mother’ – honoured under the title: “Mother of the Church”<sup>2</sup>, a veiled figure with her arms slightly outstretched potentially embracing ‘all her children’.

I see *Veil 1954* as a ‘binary counterpoint’ to *Carbon dad 2017*. It outlines all that was left of my mother’s connection to the institution that defined their relationship and is a representation of all that remained of her former self – a

negative space or ‘shadow’, revealed to us only by the actual form of her re-incarnated wedding veil. Unlike *Carbon dad 2017* which representationally depicts my father’s ‘presence’ at the time of his death, *Veil 1954* depicts my mother’s ‘absence’ before hers, as the Alzheimer’s disease had already eradicated most of her identity. In death the invoked veil also becomes a different kind of ‘shroud’ – an adornment of concealment and revelation accompanying her through her final transition.

During the last eleven months of my mother's life, as I scratched daily into the solid black carbon paper, attempting to capture its delicate lacework, it felt as if I was scraping away the veil’s ‘heaviness’ and allowing the light through. Sometimes it felt like I was trying to uncover something that had become obscured, or searching for a form that was no longer there. In order to secure an image with definition I had to remove the very substance that was capable of making copies – mirroring my futile attempts to hold back the inevitable and inescapable darkness.

The process was unpredictable and difficult to control. Sometimes the carbon would flake off in unexpected ways, or the blade would perforate the delicate, membrane-like mantle. If this happened, the tear was left. *Veil 1954* was completed a few days before she died.

[Watch Veil 1954 \(Video 8 min\)](#)

#### References

1. *The Oxford Companion to the Body*, Oxford University Press, 2001
2. Pope Paul VI, Second Vatican Council, 1959









### ***Scholars and executives***

2021

Pair of jackets, hand incised, perforated carbon paper, archival adhesive tapes, perspex armatures, carbon residue

Life size

Clothes are our outer coverings, they determine what we want the world to see of us, either by circumstance or choice, forming the first impressions we make. They are an outer 'skin', which, like the dried remnants of insect exoskeleton or snake scales, are shed, washed, re-worn or replaced. They are intricately involved in our evolution and transformation.

I have always been fascinated how clothes act as signifiers and by how the design of a contemporary men's business suit is a sort of 'paired down' version of a military suit of armour. For me, the business suit – and in particular the jacket – protects the wearer from the commercial and political onslaughts experienced in boardrooms and Offices of State – battlefields of a different sort. I also noticed that a school blazer and a formal men's business suit jacket, both follow the exact same design.

John Harvey in his novel 'Clothes' tells us that, "There are power suits, which warn you that it is in your interest to trust them. Discreetly padded and moulded, they sculpt a power body, strong in the shoulder and mobile at the waist: both the suit, and the implied body, speak determination. They say: you can trust me to run the firm or the nation, because you see I can run my body – govern it and keep it fighting fit. Power suits are sheaths, with the purpose of making the wearer resemble a sword. They offer, if they work, efficiency, success, money." <sup>1</sup>

I scratched the business jacket out of sheets of solid black carbon paper and 'stitched' them together with archival adhesive tapes, following a commercially bought pattern. I wanted to render the solid form of the jacket transparent, to 'see' through its shielding.

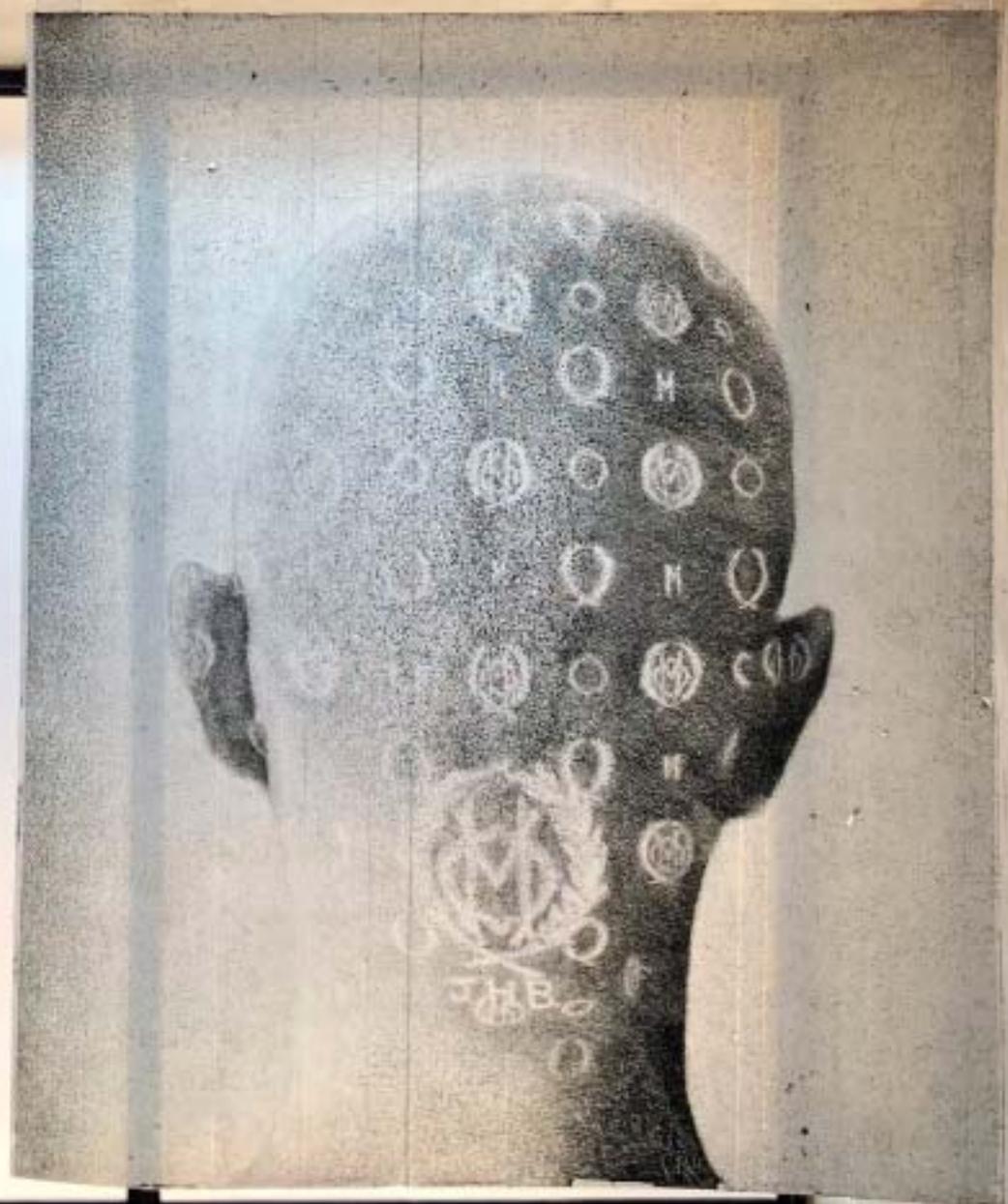


The smaller, blue school blazer I left mostly unscratched, to denote a less marked and unblemished surface. Only the stripes and laurels of the blazer have been scratched out, revealing the commercial branding of the silver 'lining' within.

I envisioned the two jackets relating to each other as Father and Son, with a notable, respectful distance between both absent 'figures'.

1. Harvey, J. 2008. *Clothes*. Acumen Publishing Limited, London, UK.





**Branded**

2017

Diptych, hand incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue  
100 x 250 cm

On the bodies of some Hiroshima survivors, the patterns on the clothing they were wearing, were burnt onto their skin. Unlike the decorations a soldier might wear which commemorate heroic performance, these were imposed 'decorations'.

I began to experiment with creating images of my own body emblazoned with 'shadows' – both in the form of an imposed inherited system of uniform (eg. a school blazer) and contemporary consumer brands influenced by consumer marketing. I became aware of how many of the brands people choose to wear, for added perceived value and status, are based on the plant and animal motifs of the heraldry that was used to decorate the victorious, eg. the laurel leaves of the Olympic Games and throughout history in war.

On a research visit to the Johannesburg crematorium, I confronted the unadorned body. I witnessed an autopsy conducted on an old man, stripped of any identifying markers, systematically reduced to nothing more than an impersonal piece of meat, neatly sectioned for forensic investigation. It was a visceral, sobering and profound experience. I then began to compare the status of an unadorned body with that of the body adorned with the brands (carbon shadows of a sort) of consumer society.





***Rough collar***

2018

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue,  
perspex display case, wooden plinth

45 x 40 x 40 cm

Created in the hearts of stars, the element of carbon continues, unlike any other element, to be re-purposed into new forms.

In 2016 I had a dream, in which I saw my skin being peeled away from my body, as if I was discarding a burnt and charred membrane. This stimulated the idea of scratching away at the thin black film of carbon covering a piece of diaphanous, skin-like carbon paper.





To create *Rough collar* I spent three months scratching away at the black carbon paper to create 7,6 metres of delicate lace pattern. The lace pattern was emblazoned with mantling borrowed from the Union of South Africa's 1932 'embellished' coat of arms. I then hand-stitched this lace into a 16th Century European ruff collar. The collar is presented as either rising out of, or disintegrating into, the carbon residue – the element that gives it substance.

The resulting work is a rarefied object created out of the throw-away medium of carbon paper. It speaks to me of the generations whose symbols continue to be a weight around our necks, signalling identity, perpetuating difference. Even as they are increasingly less valid, these symbols continue to exert an influence into our democratic and digital age. They imprint our image of ourselves with inheritance – carbon copies in the cycle of life.







***Collars in formation***

2021

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, archival adhesive tapes, perspex scaffolding, carbon residue

120 x 7 cm (diameter)

*Collars in formation* is a column of detachable collars, each scratched out of black carbon paper. Each collar is subtly different, with a slightly distinctive cut or a variation in stitching. Some of the collars have been fastened with buttons sourced from my late father's possessions, while others are clasped with genuine collar or cuff studs sourced from other private collections.

While researching the designs for these collars, one pattern I was drawn to was the rounded 'Club' style that had its birthplace in the esteemed crucible of British leaders, Eton College.



Adam Lehman, in his article 'Style Defined: Club Collar', wrote: "Back in the late 19th Century – much like today, actually – Eton College was *the* school of young British up-and-comers. From royalty to celebrity, the sharpest young men of the Western world yearned to call Eton's campus home. As such, those that got in felt distinguished and somewhat above the fray and wanted the world to know." <sup>1</sup>

While making this work, I was struck by how limited choices of clothing might confine and define our self-expression. By choosing a specific collar from this selection, would the individuality of the wearer be accepted by his peers – each of them in turn – similarly collared? Or would his choice be regarded as inappropriate? How does a desire to belong, coexist with a desire to be free?

1. Lehman, A. 2016. *Style Defined: Club Collar*. (Online). *He Spoke Style*. LLC

***Ex Unitate Vires***

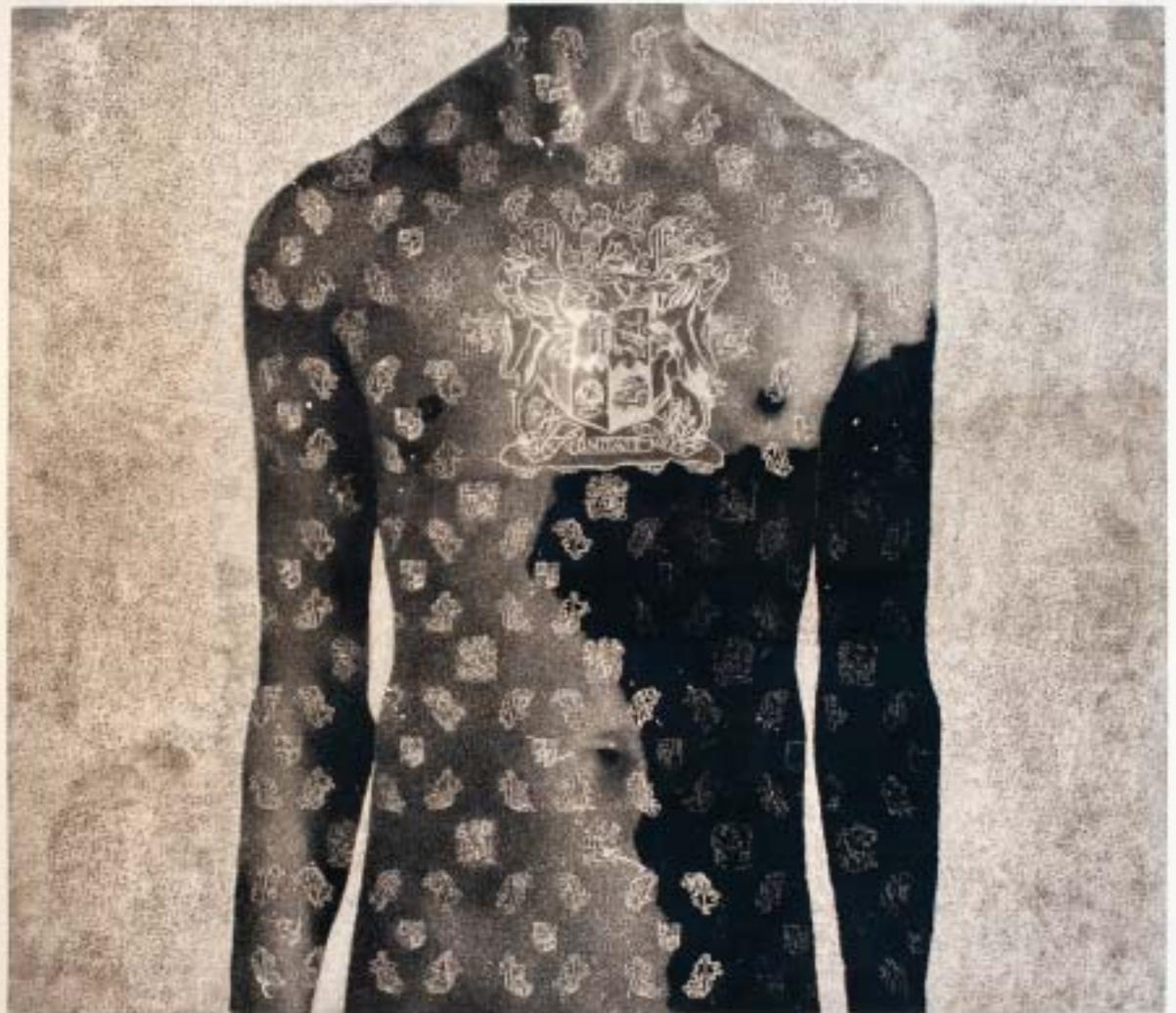
2020

Hand incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue  
63 x 73 cm

The following commentary is by Ellen Schattschneider.

In *Ex Unitate Vires*, Paul Emmanuel continues his nuanced exploration of the contradictions and vulnerabilities of masculinity. The headless torso has phallic attributes, a logic reinforced by the male lion and the upstanding springbok and gemsbok antelopes, consistent with the emphasis in classical heraldry on masculine prowess. Yet the absence of a head at the top and the cut-off of the figure just above the groin might suggest the risk of castration or of diminished virility and strength (the “Vires” of the title.) It may be that the absent head is refracted in the abdominal region of the torso as a miniature face: the navel or belly button could be read as an eye, embedded in a face in profile facing to the right. If so, it may be significant that this solitary “eye” is formed by the enduring trace of the umbilical cord that bound this male being to his mother: the seat of knowledge of the world is inextricably bound up with the feminine principle.

As it happens, the oldest device in the upper left quadrant of the shield or escutcheon, held aloft by the standing horned antelopes, is the Maiden or Lady of Hope grasping an anchor, a symbol of the Cape Colony dating back to 1715. (The older term, the Cape of Storms, had been replaced with the more attractive phrase, “Cape of Good





Hope,” with the expectation of drawing more settlers to the region.) The anchor is an ancient Christian symbol of hope, dating back to the Roman era of persecution and hidden worship; it evokes both the crucifix, and, it is sometimes said, the female-coded crescent moon, implying the sanctuary of a nurturing safe harbor in a storm-tossed world. Emmanuel may well find it appropriate that at the heart of this hyper-masculine device, long associated with martial violence, conquest, and domination, are found evocations of the divine feminine.

Indeed, the overall composition of the work shares some features with the Chinese taijitu or ‘yin-yang’ symbol, the two interlocking spirals that evoke the dynamic, unified duality of existence, including the interdependent and interpenetrating aspects of maleness and femaleness, each opposite force present in the heart of the other.

At the conclusion of *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Paul Fussell characterizes his work of literary and cultural criticism as excavating “our buried lives.” Emmanuel, in his own registers, is committed to comparable works of excavation, in which his own body, or the bodies of those he loves, figure as canvas, multilayered landscape. In *Ex Unitate Vires*, he carefully excavates his own bodily image, refracted on the delicate shroud-like surface of carbon paper. In so doing he reveals, tattooed over the body’s heart, the now defunct national signifier of state-sponsored masculinity, the Coat of Arms. Digging deeper, he takes us traveling into a realm where the old certainties, predicated on the triumph of patriarchal, heteronormative whiteness over its antitheses, dissolve and fluidly recombine. Out of a mythic “unity” that long denied sexual, gender and racial diversities, a newer and deeper unity is being unearthed from our buried lives, and, at long last, is ready to be born on the turbulent surface of the national body.

#### References

Paul Fussell, 1975. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford University Press.



INITIATE

15



***Homeland military epaulette 1989-94***

2020

Hand incised, perforated blue carbon paper

29,7 x 21 cm

(Private Collection)

On the bodies of some Hiroshima survivors, the patterns on the clothing they were wearing, were burnt onto their skin. Unlike the decorations a soldier might wear which commemorate heroic performance, these were imposed 'decorations'.

I experimented with creating images of my own body emblazoned with 'shadows' – both in the form of an imposed inherited system of uniform (eg. a school blazer) and contemporary consumer brands influenced by consumer marketing. My awareness grew of how many of the brands people choose to wear, for added perceived value and status, are based on the plant and animal motifs of the heraldry that was used to decorate the victorious, eg. the laurel leaves of the Olympic Games and throughout history in war.







***Rising-falling***

2021

High definition video, stereo soundtrack

3 minutes 45 seconds (looped)

The video titled *Rising-falling* extends my interest in how a society remembers its history, and how changes in this memory can result in a dismembering of identity. In this video, I publicly project one of my existing video works, *Remember-dismember* (2015) onto the pedestal of an equestrian monument to General Louis Botha.

This monument, created by South African sculptor Coert Steynberg and unveiled in 1946, consists of an equestrian statue of Louis Botha. Botha was a Boer war hero during the South African War (between Boer and British). He became the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (a British Dominion) during WWI, sent troops to annex German South West Africa (now

Namibia), and was a co-signatory of the Treaty of Versailles. What makes the valourisation of his image important in my work is that he was Prime Minister at a time when black WWI servicemen (fighting alongside Britain in order to gain its support to overturn the 1913 Land Act), were denied recognition or valourisation of any sort. The monument currently occupies centre stage in the gardens at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. The Union Buildings are the seat of political and administrative power in the country.



In *Remember-dismember* (2015), I enrobe and disrobe myself with nine 'uniforms' worn by soldiers, diplomats and businessmen, symbolically tracing the role of white men in South Africa from the Union involved in WWI through the militarised apartheid state of mid-century to today's neo-liberal capitalist democracy. As my skin is made visible, the names of men lost in various wars South Africa has participated in – are revealed and then concealed again – as I dress. This video was projected onto the front and the sides of the monument pedestal. The soft, vulnerable images of my skin and body, imprinted with lists of men lost in war was juxtaposed with the hard, unyielding surfaces of the monument and its text, literally carved in stone. A performance of these projections was filmed (on the same day/night shoot) from sunset and sunrise. Time-lapse footage of these projections onto the monument outlined against the sky, was captured and stitched together into one video work.

*Rising-falling* (2021) asks us to question the status and symbolism of a monument like this in contemporary South Africa and by association, the prominence of other equestrian monuments to colonial war heroes throughout the previously colonised world.

[Watch \*Remember-dismember\* \(2015\) online \(3 min 45 sec\).](#)

### **Synopsis**

*Rising-falling* depicts altered visions of the Louis Botha monument in situ at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, South Africa. With a running time of no longer than four minutes, it is created to have neither 'beginning' nor 'end' – looping continuously – mapping the cycle of day and night.

We view night time images depicting projections of *Remember-dismember* on the stone facades of the monument. These video projections show a person enrobing and disrobing uniforms worn by men throughout South Africa's history. Each closely cropped image, reveals and conceals parts of my body impressed with the names of men who have fallen in conflicts from South

Africa's past. Only a dark silhouette of the equestrian figure on the monument pedestal is visible. We hear an evocative mixture of ruffling fabrics, clinking metallic medals, twisting buttons and belts. Momentarily, the sky increases in brightness and suddenly the sun rises in the east. The intensity of the projection on the monument fades and the sounds of tousling ties and crumpling shirts melt into the daytime hustle and bustle of people on the street, the traffic, the birds. We track the sun across the sky in a time lapse as the shadows shift across the sculpture, until it sets on the western side of the edifice. As darkness returns, *Remember-dismember* grows in intensity again and the cloaking and unclinking of my body continues ...

### **Conclusion**

*Rising-falling* explores the symbolism, text and narratives of a monument that continues to use colonial idioms to transmit a distorted perspective of history. In my works, even though the text is a temporary imprint on my naked skin rather than carved in stone, and even though it includes names that have been excluded in past narratives, it is still a white male body that bears the names of the lost men in an attempt to grapple with history. How vulnerable is a white male willing to be in acts of remembering and dismembering? To what degree can my works disrupt the texts and narratives of memorials and play any significant role in the rising and falling of identities in the current political landscape and the popular imagination of South Africans? I want to show that I am willing to literally put skin in the game, but to do that I have to continually ask another question: What are my own assumptions about how the privileged white male body can become a valid site of political struggle in the 21st century?

I believe that *Rising-falling* is an anti-monument that both disrupts narratives and temporarily intervenes in the experience of visitors to this site. It presents a different view of masculinity, race and power by directly engaging the way texts and narratives have been imprinted on the landscape.

[Watch \*Rising-falling\* \(2021\) online. \(3 min. 45 sec\) \(looped\)](#)



# Altered Carbon: Dramas of Detachment. Reflections on Paul Emmanuel's *Substance of Shadows* – Mark Auslander

All of us are subject to a double inheritance, bequeathed from our parents and previous generations. We are heirs to a genetic code, embedded in the carbon-based sugars that comprise DNA, dictating, amidst inevitable transcription errors, the biological blueprint of each new organism. We are equally heirs to the configurations of culture, even as culture itself, in the very process of being reproduced, is subject to subtle transformations over time (Paul 2015).

These dramas of biogenetic and cultural reproduction inform Paul Emmanuel's *Substance of Shadows*. Painstakingly scraped away on sheets of carbon paper, a now nearly archaic material meant to reproduce written words on a blank page, each work enigmatically retraces a person or object, inevitably punctuated by the imprecisions of the transcription process. Carbon, out of which we emerge and unto which we shall return, highlights that which we share with our antecedents and differentiates us from them.

Both *Veil 1954* and *Carbon dad 2017* take us into the shadowlands of mourning, that strange country where we are challenged, slowly, to detach from the most painful features of our grief while re-attaching to other objects of our love (Klein 1940). Emmanuel ceaselessly labored by hand to rework the blackened surface of both works, scraping away minute traces of carbon to emulate the lace of his mother's wedding veil and to simulate wrinkles all over his aged father's naked body, redolent of a relief map of his dad's beloved, mountainous homeland of Lebanon. Having intimately embodied so many

aspects of his parents, the artist, paradoxically, is granted a measure of distance moving forward.

## The Fatherland's Long Shadows

Other works, in turn, ask us to ponder the after-burns of militarized masculinity in South African political consciousness. *Rough collar* recalls the ruff collar that was the uniform of the Dutch financial and mercantile elite, evocative of the enormous power of Capital that forged the colonial system from Batavia to Surinam to the Cape. It is equally evocative of the iron 'rough collars' within which millions of enslaved people were bound. Now, in a dance with its carbon residue, it becomes difficult to disentangle who precisely is the Master, who the Slave. *Rough collar* is a haunting miniature monument to (ultimately fragile) masculine claims to domination, now confined in the closest of quarters. None can escape the shadows of the master-slave dialectic, even as our mortal remains, all made of carbon, return to the dust from which we were born.

Dramas of reproduced militarized masculine attachment and detachment play out on a larger canvas in the video installation *Rising-falling*. Each day, the arc of the sun casts shadows over the mounted Boer War hero Louis Botha and relief images of him as warrior and lawgiver. Each night, we glimpse on the pedestal shadowy, projected images of the artist's body taking on and off the regimented armor of normative masculinity, a military uniform, giving us glimpses from the rear of the vulnerable male body, as naked as the day it was born.

*Ex unitate vires* also navigates the contradictory traces of successive white male-dominated South African regimes. Following the South African War, the ostensible “Union” of South Africa in 1910, adopted this motto (initially translated as, “From Union, Strength”) referencing the formal integration of the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking polities of the region. This “Unitate” masked a fundamental disunion, as the black majority was disenfranchised and stripped of land. Appropriately, Emmanuel’s torso is figured as an archaic national map: the shoulders, chest, right arm and right side of the torso are covered in white, and a lesser portion, primarily the left arm and left midriff, remain black.

The erect torso recalls generations of South African soldiers, of different races, sent into battle in Europe, southwest Africa, and in the townships on behalf of this national project. The work equally renders visible systematic violence perpetrated by apartheid-era security forces on actual bodies (primarily, but not only, black) in the name of the principles of Unity and (masculine) Strength.

Having said that, the work also subtly evokes the post 2000 national motto: *! ke e: /xarra //ke* (/Xam: Unity Through Diversity). The indigenous Khoisan phrase, as noble as it is, remains in a sense unknowably embedded in an ancient landscape that long proceeded the imposition of European demarcations. Radiating out from the formally designed Coat of Arms over the torso’s heart, the constituent floral elements of the seal gradually dissolve, like blossoms blowing across the landscape, growing ever fainter as they reach the most blackened (perhaps indigenous) expanses of the body’s extremities.

It may be that the springbok, gemsbok, and lion, confined for nearly a century within the baroque confines of the Coat of Arms’ heraldic conventions, are themselves breaking free and leaping across an unconstrained landscape.

Perhaps that is what is being recovered through Emmanuel’s nearly magical form of automatic writing on these fragile sheets of carbon, the foundational element of organic life. These works reproduce both the burdens passed on from the past as well as the miraculous possibilities of rupture, detachment and re-fashioning of the self. We glimpse a return of that which was long effaced by colonial schemas of representation and signification, apprehending the resurgence and springing forth of other ways of knowing, which our bodies still retain sensible access to, against all odds, across the layered sheafs of time.

#### References

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- Paul, Robert (2015). *Mixed Messages: Cultural and Genetic Inheritance in the Constitution of Human Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Mark Auslander**, PhD, Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Boston University, USA). He has undertaken ethnographic and historical research in Zambia, South Africa, and the American South. He is the author of the book *The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family* (University of Georgia Press, 2011) and other works on history, race, enslavement, political consciousness, ritual performance, museums and art. His curatorial experience includes exhibitions on slavery, liberation and memory in university settings; contemporary African and diasporic art; and explorations of heroin and homelessness. *Altered Carbon Dramas of Detachment: Reflections on Paul Emmanuel’s Substance of Shadows* was first published on The Moving Cube, University of Johannesburg, South Africa in 2021.

## Summary of works

- 1) **Branded** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue. Perspex display case. 100 x 250 cm
- 2) **Rough collar** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon thread, carbon residue. Perspex and wood display case.  
45 x 40 x 40 cm (excluding display case)
- 3) **Homeland military epaulette 1987 – 94** . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue. Framed. 50 x 20 cm
- 4) **Ex unitate vires** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue. 63 x 73 cm
- 5) **Carbon dad 2017** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue. Perspex rail. 110 x 440 cm
- 6) **Veil 1954** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon thread, carbon residue. 300 x 100 cm
- 7) **Scholars and executives** . . . . . 2 x hand incised, perforated carbon paper jackets, carbon thread, 2 x perspex armatures, carbon residue. Life-size
- 8) **Rising-falling** . . . . . HD video, 3 mins, 45 sec (looped), stereo soundtrack. Size variable
- 9) **Self portrait** . . . . . Hand-incised, perforated carbon paper, carbon residue. Perspex display case. 110 x 63 cm
- 10) **Collars in formation** . . . . . 12 x hand-incised, perforated carbon paper collars, carbon residue. Perspex display stand. 80 x 70 x 20 cm

## Independent writings on *Substance of shadows*

- Pamela Allara . . . . . *Shrouds on the Somme's Body in Paul Emmanuel*, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa, March 2020, ISBN 978-0-620-87116-7
- Pamela Allara and Mark Auslander . . . . . [Between Men and Monuments: The Art of Paul Emmanuel in Art Beyond Quarantine Blog, March 2020](#)
- Pamela Allara . . . . . [Carbon dad 2017: Paul Emmanuel in Art Beyond Quarantine Blog, April 2020](#)
- Mark Auslander . . . . . [Veil 1954: Paul Emmanuel in Art Beyond Quarantine Blog, April 2020](#)
- Pamela Allara, Mark Auslander  
and Ellen Schasttschneider . . . . . [Ex Unitate Vires: Paul Emmanuel in Art Beyond Quarantine Blog, July 2020](#)
- Elizabeth Delmont (Review) . . . . . [Paul Emmanuel Substance of Shadows at University of Johannesburg Art Gallery Until 2nd October](#)
- Thango Ntwasa (Review) . . . . . [Artist Questions Our Place in the World – Using Fashion as the Canvas](#)

## About the authors

[Professor Ellen Schasttschneider](#) PHD, is a sociocultural anthropologist and Associate Professor at Brandeis University, Massachusetts, USA, specialising in psychoanalytic, phenomenological and practice approaches to culture and society.

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[Associate Professor emerita Pamela Allara](#) PHD, Brandeis University, Massachusetts, USA, is an art historian, curator and critic. She is currently a Visiting Researcher in the African studies Centre at Boston University.

[Elizabeth Delmont](#) taught in the Art History Department of the University of the Witwatersrand for 20 years and headed up an inter-disciplinary Post-Graduate division in the Wits School of Arts from 2002 to 2005.

[Thango Ntwasa](#) is a journalist for TimesLive Online, The Sunday Times newspaper, Johannesburg, South Africa

## Contact

Paul Emmanuel . . . . . [studio@paulemanuel.net](mailto:studio@paulemanuel.net)

## Biography

Born in 1969 in Kabwe, Zambia, Emmanuel graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in 1993. In 1997 The Ampersand Foundation made him the first recipient of the Ampersand Fellowship with a three-month residency in New York. In 2002 he was awarded first prize for *Air on the Skin* in the Sasol Wax in Art Competition, Sasolburg, South Africa.

Emmanuel employs various mediums to reveal layered visions concerned with his identity living in post-apartheid South Africa.

In 2004 Phase 1 of his series of counter-memorials *The Lost Men*, was launched on the Grahamstown National Arts Festival main visual arts programme. In 2007 Phase 2 of this project took place in Maputo, Mozambique.

In 2008 his touring solo museum exhibition *Transitions* premiered at The Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg featuring his critically acclaimed short, non-narrative film *3SAI: A Rite of Passage*. The film won the 2009 jury prize at Edinburgh's 4th Africa-In-Motion International Film Festival, UK and the 2010 Best Experimental Film Award on the 5th Sardinia International Film Festival, Italy. *Transitions* debuted its 2010 international tour at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA.

Emmanuel was selected as the 2011 Featured Artist with his solo exhibition *Transitions Multiples* for the FNB Joburg Art Fair, South Africa and in 2012 he was granted the Institut Français Visas Pour la Création research residency, Paris, France.

In July 2014 *The Lost Men France* was temporarily installed adjacent to the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, Northern France as an intervention in the Somme Circuit of Remembrance and as an official event of the World War One Centenary.

In June 2015, the remains of this anti-monument were installed at Freedom Park Museum, Pretoria, South Africa in an exhibition titled *Remnants* which toured to Boston University's 808 Gallery, Massachusetts, USA in January 2016 and The Reservoir at Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa in May 2017.

*Men and Monuments* opened at Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa in March 2020 with the launch of the monograph titled *Paul Emmanuel* (Wits Art Museum), edited by Professor Karen von Veh and with writings by Professor emerita Annette Becker (University of Paris-Nanterre, France), Professor Karen von Veh (University of Johannesburg, South Africa) and Associate Professor emerita Pamela Allara (Brandeis University, Massachusetts, USA).

In 2021 Emmanuel was selected for the Johannesburg Institute for Advance Study Writing Fellowship and in September *Substance of Shadows* opened at the University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa.

In 2022 he was selected as a Fulbright Foreign Student Grantee (2022-24) to complete a Master of Fine Arts degree program at The Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, USA.

## Solo exhibitions and public installations

- 2021 *Substance of Shadows*, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2021 *Rising-falling*, General Louis Botha Monument, Union Buildings, Pretoria, South Africa
- 2020 *Men and Monuments*, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2018 *Impermanence*, Fried Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa
- 2017 *Remnants*, The Reservoir, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa
- 2016 *Remnants*, Gallery 808, Boston University, Massachusetts, USA
- 2015 *Remnants*, Freedom Park Museum, Pretoria, South Africa
- 2014 *The Lost Men France*, Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, Picardy, France
- 2011 *Transitions Multiples*, Gallery AOP, Featured Artist, FNB Joburg Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2011 *Transitions Multiples*, Goya Contemporary Gallery, Baltimore, USA
- 2011 *Transitions*, Rosenberg Gallery, Brown Centre, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, USA
- 2011 *Transitions*, Sylt Foundation, Rantum, Sylt Island, Germany
- 2010 *Transitions*, Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA
- 2009 *Transitions*, Spier Old Wine Cellar Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2009 *Transitions*, Albany Museum, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa
- 2009 *The Lost Men*, Sylt Foundation, Rantum, Sylt Island, Germany
- 2009 *Transitions*, KZNSA Gallery (KwaZulu-Natal Society of Arts), Durban, South Africa
- 2009 *Transitions*, William Humphreys Art Gallery, Kimberley, South Africa
- 2009 *Transitions*, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa
- 2008 *Transitions*, Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2007 *The Lost Men Mozambique*, Catembe Ferry Jetty, Maputo, Mozambique
- 2006 *After-image*, Hollard Villa Arcadia, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2005 *After-image*, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2005 *After-image*, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa
- 2004 *After-image*, University of Stellenbosch Art Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2004 *The Lost Men Grahamstown*, Monument Hill, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa
- 2003 *Air on the Skin*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2000 *Pages from Cathexis*, Open Window Contemporary Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa

## Selected group exhibitions and film screenings ('c' indicates catalogue)

- 2022 **Reviewing the Past**, Carol Schlosberg Alumni Gallery, Montserrat College of Art, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
- 2021-22 **Cartographies of Becoming**, Sylt Foundation, Sylt Island, Germany
- 2020 **Cure**, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2019 **The Ampersand Foundation 21 Year Exhibition**, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (c)
- 2019 **Digital Africa**, Biennale de Casablanca project space, Casablanca, Morocco
- 2019 **Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts Opening Exhibition**, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2018 **Material Gains: Contemporary Art from the Spier Collection**, Stellenbosch University Museum, Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa
- 2018 **I Am Because You Are: A Search for Ubuntu With Permission to Dream** (touring), Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg and National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa
- 2017 **Rethinking Kakotopia**, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2017 **Booknesses: Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection**, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (c)
- 2017 **The Art of Reading: From William Ketrledge to Wikipedia**, Meermann Museum, House of the Book, The Hague, The Netherlands (c)
- 2016 **In Plain Sight: Social Life in South Africa and Romania Before and After 1989**, ApARTE Gallery of George Enescu University of Arts, Iasi, Romania (c)
- 2016 **International Printmaking Alliance Exhibition**, Taimiao art Gallery, Imperial Ancestral Temple, Beijing, China (c)
- 2016 **Rites of Passage: Between Light and Shadow**, Irma Stern Museum, Cape Town, South Africa (c)
- 2015 **Between Democracies 1989 – 2014: Memory and Commemoration**, (touring), Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa and Dom umenia/kunsthalle, Bratislava, Slovakia (c)
- 2015 **Permanent War: The Age of Global Conflict**, Barbara and Steven Grossman Gallery, Mrs. E. Ross Anderson Auditorium, The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, USA (c)
- 2015 **Battleground**, Standard Bank Gallery, Albany History Museum, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa (c)
- 2015 **Representations of Otherness and Resistance**, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa (c)
- 2014 **Doing Hair: Art and Hair in Africa**, Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (c)
- 2014 **Twenty: Contemporary Art from South Africa**, (touring) Turchin Center for the Visual Arts, Appalachian State University, North Carolina, USA, Pretoria Art Museum, South Africa, FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2013 **My Joburg**, (touring), La Maison Rouge Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris, France (c) & Staatliche Kunstmmlungen, Dresden, Germany (c)
- 2013 **France – South Africa Seasons 2012-2013: "Touch Me"**, Le Cube, Issy-Les-Moulineaux, Paris, France
- 2012 **At Home with the Ludskis: Midnight Mass Edition #7**, 10th London Short Film Festival, Rio Cinema, London, UK
- 2012 **Not My War**, Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town, South Africa (c)
- 2012 **Dak'Art: 10th Biennale of Contemporary African Art**, National Museum, Dakar, Senegal (c)
- 2011 **9th In-the-Palace International Short Film Festival**, Balchik, Bulgaria (c)
- 2010 **Black Box**, Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Illinois, USA
- 2010 **5th Sardinai Film Festival**, Sassari, Sardinia, Italy
- 2010 **19th Séquence Court-Métrage International Film Festival**, Toulouse, France
- 2010 **39th International Film Festival**, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 2009 **4th Africa-in-Motion International Film Festival**, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Filmhouse Cinema, Edinburgh, UK (c)
- 2009 **Antimatter Media Art**, Open Space Arts Centre, Victoria, Canada (c)
- 2006 **Navigating the Bookscape: Artists Books and the Digital Interface**, (touring), Aardklop National Arts Festival, Potchefstroom, FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg, South Africa (c)
- 2004-07 **Waldsee 1944**, (touring), Collegium Hungaricum, Berlin, Germany; 2B Galleria, Budapest, Hungary; Hebrew Union College Museum, New York, USA; Florida Holocaust Museum, USA; Hibel Museum, FAU Jupiter, Florida, USA; Ben Uri Gallery, London, UK; Alper JCC, Miami, Florida, USA (c)
- 2003 **The Ampersand Foundation** (2nd exhibition), Warren Siebrits Modern and Contemporary Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (c)
- 2002 **The Sasol Wax in Art Competition**, Sasolburg, South Africa (c)
- 2001 **The Bag Factory Show**, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1999 **Postcards from South Africa**, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
- 1998 **South African Printmaking**, Stockholm, Sweden (c)
- 1996 **Artists' Books in the Ginsberg Collection**, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
- 1995 **The First Four Years**, Civic Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1994 **Open Bite – A New Look at Intaglio Printmaking**, Civic Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

## Awards, fellowships and scholarships

2022-24	FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP	Fulbright Foreign Student Program, Master of Fine Arts degree, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, USA
2021	WRITING FELLOWSHIP	Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
2010	BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM	5th Sardinia International Film Festival, Sassari, Italy
2009	BEST SHORT FILM	4th Africa-in-Motion Short Film Competition, Africa-in-Motion International Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, UK
2002	FIRST PRIZE	SASOL Wax In Art Competition, Johannesburg, South Africa
1997	THE AMPERSAND FELLOWSHIP	The Ampersand Foundation, New York, USA
1997	VISITING ARTIST AND INTERNSHIP	Center for Book Arts, New York, USA Alma on Dobbin, New York, USA

## Residencies

2012	VISAS POUR LA CREATION, Institut Français, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
2009	KUNST:RAUM SYLT QUELLE FOUNDATION, Rantum, Sylt, Germany

## Public and corporate collections

- Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, Wits Art Museum (South Africa)
- US Department of State – Art in Embassies Programme (multinational)
- National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution (USA)
- Ellerman House Collection (South Africa)
- Rand Merchant Bank Collection (South Africa)
- Kunst:raum Sylt Quelle Foundation (Germany)
- William Humphreys Art Gallery (South Africa)
- First National Bank (South Africa)
- Spier Contemporary Collection (South Africa)
- Hollard Insurance Company Limited (South Africa)
- Johannesburg Securities Exchange (South Africa)
- Johannesburg Art Gallery (South Africa)
- Gauteng Provincial Legislature (South Africa)
- Vodacom Limited (South Africa)
- MTN Limited (South Africa)
- Oliewenhuis Art Museum (South Africa)
- US Museum Stellenbosch (South Africa)

## Public and corporate collections (continued)

- Pretoria Art Museum (South Africa)
- University of South Africa permanent collection (South Africa)
- Standard Bank (South Africa)
- SASOL Limited Corporate Collection (South Africa)
- South African Broadcasting Corporation Limited (South Africa)
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Chamalieres (France)

## Artist monographs, solo catalogues and other publications

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| 2020 | PAUL EMMANUEL Edited by Professor Karen Von Veh. Texts by Professor emerita Annette Becker, Professor Karen Von Veh, Associate Professor emerita Pamela Allara. Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, South Africa (ISBN 978-0-620-87116-7) |
| 2018 | IMPERMANENCE Text by Johan Thom. Fried Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa   |
| 2016 | PAUL EMMANUEL: REMNANTS. Text by Pamela Allara. Boston University Art Galleries, Massachusetts, USA  |
| 2011 | TRANSITIONS MULTIPLES Text by Art Source South Africa. Goya Contemporary, Goya-Girl Press and Art Source South Africa, Baltimore, Maryland, USA  |
| 2011 | TRANSITIONS MULTIPLES Text by Gallery AOP. Gallery AOP and Art Source South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa   |
| 2008 | PAUL EMMANUEL: TRANSITIONS Text by Art Source South Africa. National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA  |
| 2008 | TRANSITIONS. Texts by André Croucamp and Robyn Sassen. Art Source South Africa. Johannesburg, South Africa. (ISBN 978-0-620-41945-1)   |
| 2004 | AFTER-IMAGE. Text by Julia Charlton. Paul Emmanuel. Johannesburg, South Africa. (ISBN 0-620-32295-0)   |

