

ARTIST WALKABOUT

THIS REMEMBERING LAND

Carolyn Parton



I work with paint that has a backstory, and am from the country that has the oldest one on record.

Buried deep in a cave on the coast of South Africa, a 100 000 year old* paint making toolkit in a perlemoen shell was recently discovered. It played a crucial role in telling a pivotal evolutionary story of our human mind, leading archaeologists to reposition the birthplace of the modern human brain from Europe to Africa.

Intrigued that paint making can speak of who we were as a species at a vital stage in our evolution, I explore what our use of paint materials may tell to those in the future about us, in what could possibly be a pivotal stage in ours.

That same primal urge to make paint motivates my process, however my raw materials are those of contemporary painters. I collect spent paint and painting materials from all who use it - be they renowned international artists or unknown local housepainters. I research and explore properties such as the three-dimensionality, weight, memory, flexibility, strength and impact of paint on our immediate natural world, including our health. My work is a visual document of this exploration in an attempt to change the destiny of the materials from landfill to artwork, from the discarded to the collected.

*Right:
Spent paint scraped from tubes, dried and ground into dust.
Paint medium is then added to make reconstituted paint.*



Left: Private letter from artist Jan Andriess writing of his thoughts on paint as matter as well as related environmental issues.

Left: Paint tubes used by Marlene Dumas. Container consisting entirely of paint that dried in one of her mixing containers. Paint removed from lid of housepaint container.

* Approximate age



The chapters

Using cycles of separation and reconnection in reclaiming the paint echoes human ecological, biological and sociological processes for me. The evolution of our species requires cycles of diversification and reconnection for

survival. This work is about those processes since emerging from our common maternal ancestry. The materials include reconstituted paint and paint fragments, spent paint tubes, reject canvas remnants and fabric offcuts. Of personal relevance are 6 women who brought diverse stories to my own cycle of development. The stitching and fabric offcuts are personal reflections of an upbringing within an artisan clothing community.



Fictions from facts (1 and 2)

Embedded within these reclaimed paint strata are spent paint tubes used by Marlene Dumas during her early years in Amsterdam, as well as nail paint used by her daughter Helena as a teenager. These works explore the weight of paint, built up as matter.

Prologue

In the early part of the paint making process, palettes of scraped paint layers are created for drying before grinding to dust. This work documents remnants pulled from these palettes as well as those from my painting palettes. They are embedded in a sheet of paint that explores its strength and flexibility as a freely suspended three-dimensional 'cloth'.



Once upon a hundred thousand winters

Paint has memory. Experiments in this work involved leaving a reclaimed paint sheet exposed outdoors to an entire 'Cape of Storms' winter; making paint casts of discarded paint containers and lids; as well as using artists' paint to create death mask casts of spring flowers growing in South Africa.

Aftermath (abridged)

An underpainting of artists' oils over which reclaimed paint dust has been painted. Embedded as strata in the back of the canvas are reclaimed paint tubes, as seen on the shelf beneath.



Author's notes (1 and 2)

These paint fragments have been collected and worked on in many experiments involving the behaviour of various paint types when reconstituted as a three-dimensional material. Each is a remnant from another work or process.



Bibliography (1 and 2)

The reclaimed paint dust particles often resemble cosmic dust, or semi-precious stone. Embedded in this work is nail paint (see shelf beneath), treasured by Marlene Dumas as a relic of her daughter's teenage years.



Dedication (left)

Out of print (right)

These works incorporate my experimentation with paint that I have created from elements such as a used glass paint palette, art auction catalogues and fabric offcuts. Strips of reject canvases are stacked in the reverse of the canvas.



Abandoned sentences

A glass palette remnant from a prominent South African artist's studio (see shelf beneath), sliced transparencies of old artworks, reclaimed paint dust and paint created from a discarded auction catalogue carry the backstories in this work.



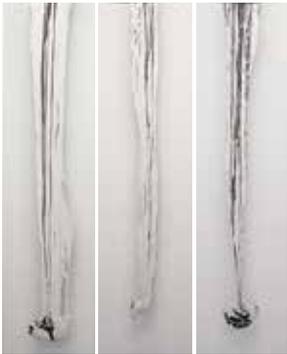
Between the lines (20 years of photography)

Over the space of 20 years, the layers in these heavy slabs consisting entirely of paint (see shelf beneath) slowly accumulated on the infinity curve of a photography studio in Cape Town. Knowing of my research, when photographer Michael Hall removed the wall, he decided to donate this paint for use in my work instead of discard it as landfill.





Slicing open tubes of spent paint to remove the contents highlighted their jewellery-like insides. Reluctant to discard them, I incorporate them in works such as **Allegory** (left), which consists of paint tube tops, and **The reader** (right) consisting of paint tubes opened as if pages in a book or a Rorschach test.



Writer's block 1-3

Not just a thin skin easily poured down a drain, these PVA suspended paint flows show the substantial three-dimensionality of the material, highlighting its properties as both liquid and solid. It is also interesting to note that paint also appears in gaseous state as VOC's in our air.

P.S

The end of an artist's painting process most often culminates in an exhibition. This work incorporates a stack of exhibition printed matter/invitations collected over 17 years, recollecting a time past.



"Each poem, each piece remembers us perfectly The way the earth remembers our bodies ..."

Anne Michaels, *The Winter Vault* (1996)



To be continued

The strata above this canvas consist entirely of paint. As I work with the paint, it constantly evokes thoughts of our interaction with Earth in terms of both land and planet. Land remembers us through the traces of our living. This thought dominated as I painted the figurative landscape incorporating reclaimed paint and fragments from an abandoned painting on a reclaimed reject canvas.

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