

An abstract artwork featuring a dark, textured background with vibrant, swirling lines in shades of yellow, orange, red, and blue. The word "WORKS" is overlaid in the center in a clean, white, sans-serif font. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive, with a focus on color and movement.

WORKS



***Angel of History***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

145 x 50 x 122 cm

ZAR 68 000



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automotive paint on aluminium

145 x 50 x 122 cm

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ZAR 68 000



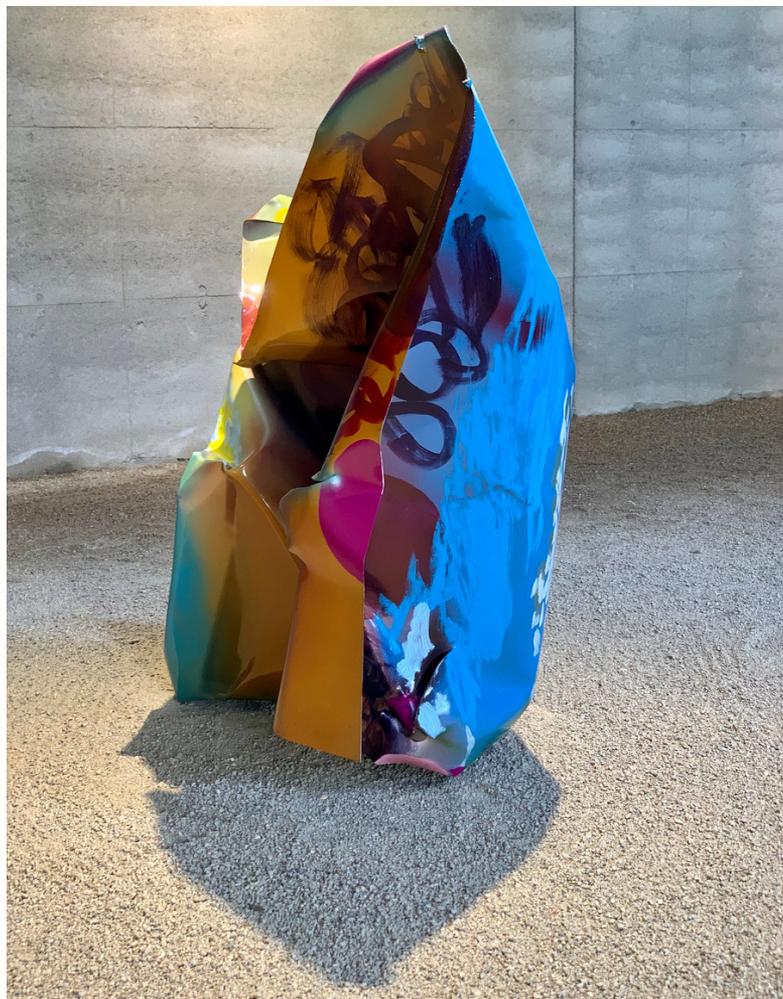
**Seat**

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

110 x 60 x 120 cm

ZAR 68 000



**Seat**

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

110 x 60 x 120 cm

ZAR 68 000



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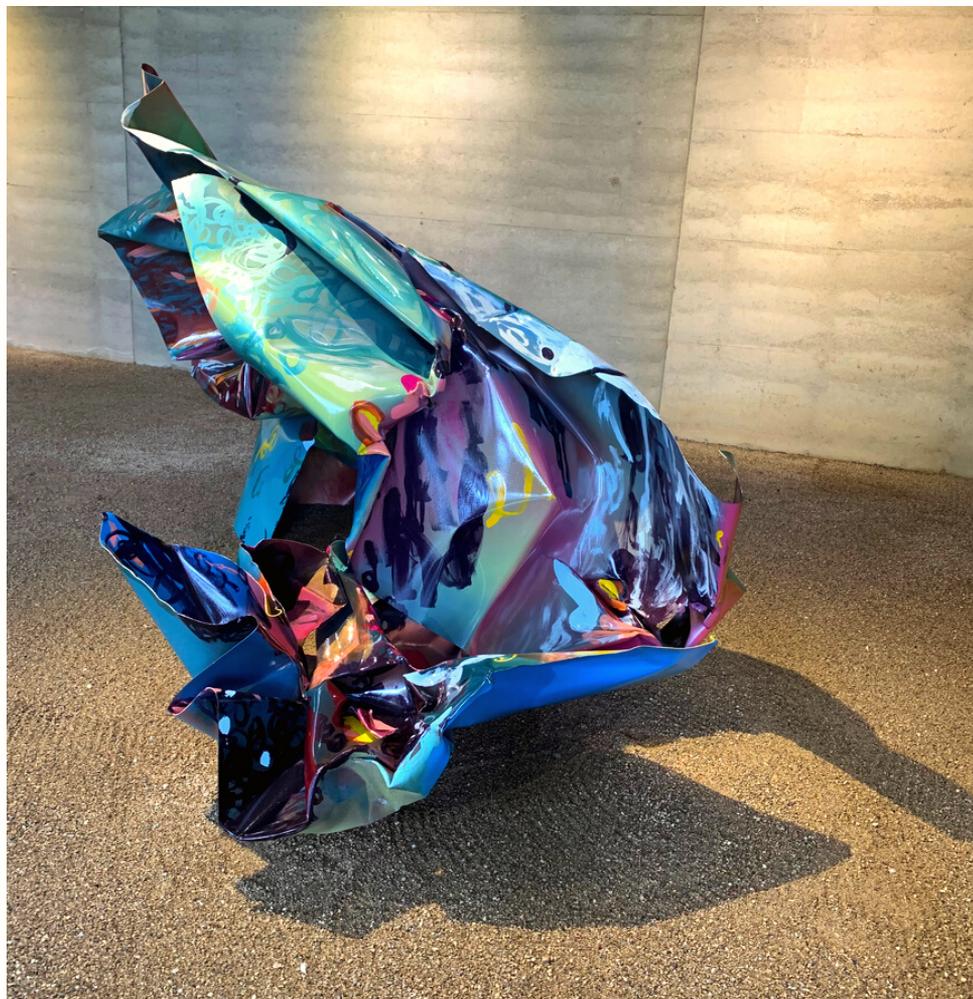
**Arch**

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

170 x 350 x 170 cm

ZAR 255 000



**Arch**

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

170 x 350 x 170 cm

ZAR 255 000

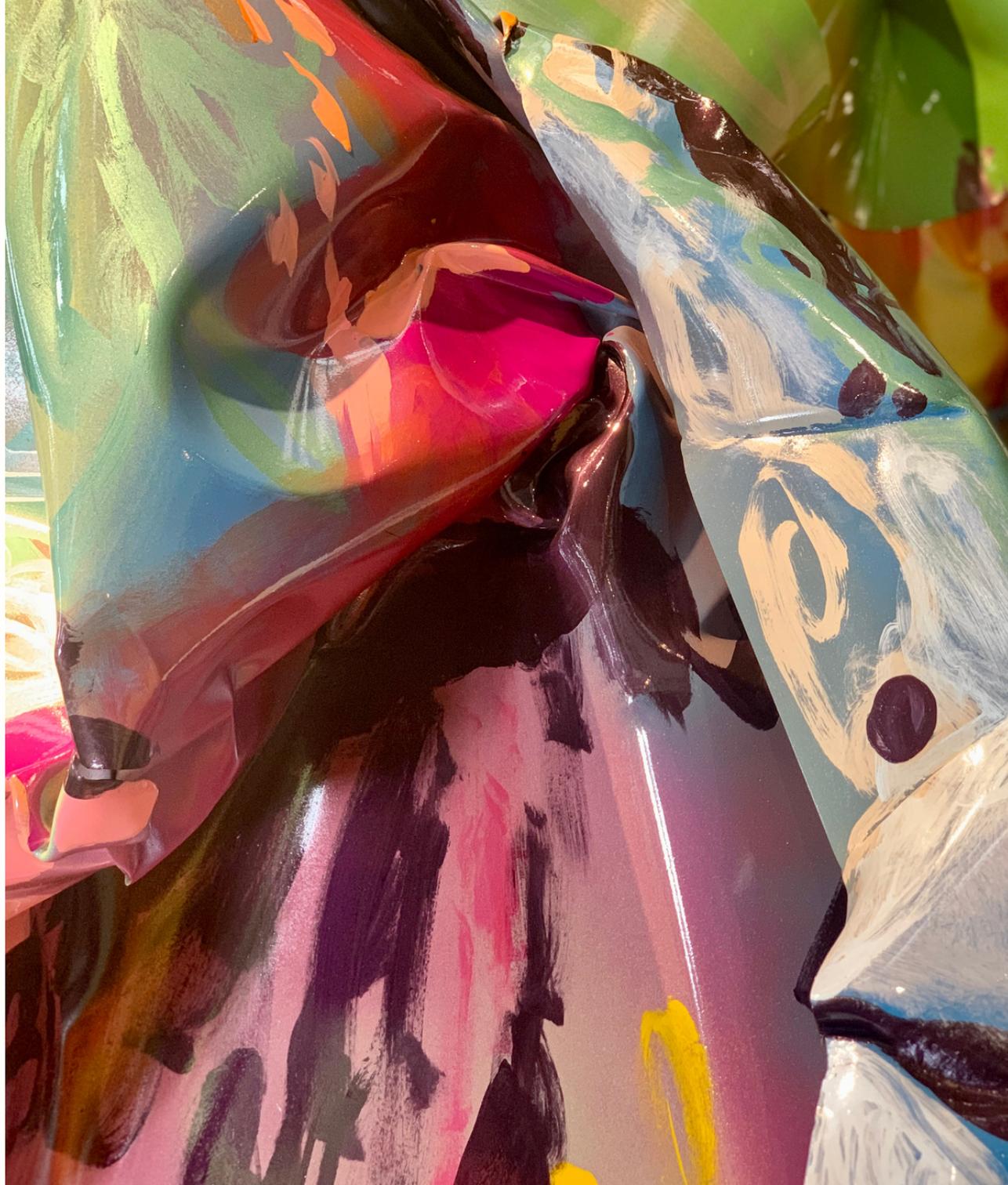
**Arch** (detail)

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

170 x 350 x 170 cm

ZAR 255 000



**Arch** (detail)  
2022  
automotive paint on aluminium  
170 x 350 x 170 cm

ZAR 255 000



**Arch** (detail)  
2022  
automotive paint on aluminium  
170 x 350 x 170 cm

ZAR 255 000





***Sharkboy***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

210 x 110 x 180 cm

ZAR 120 000



***Sharkboy***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

210 x 110 x 180 cm

ZAR 120 000



***Sharkboy***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

210 x 110 x 180 cm

ZAR 120 000

***Sharkboy*** (detail)  
2022  
automotive paint on aluminium  
210 x 110 x 180 cm

ZAR 120 000





***Mother***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

390 x 270 x 260 cm

ZAR 450 000



***Mother***

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

390 x 270 x 260 cm

ZAR 450 000

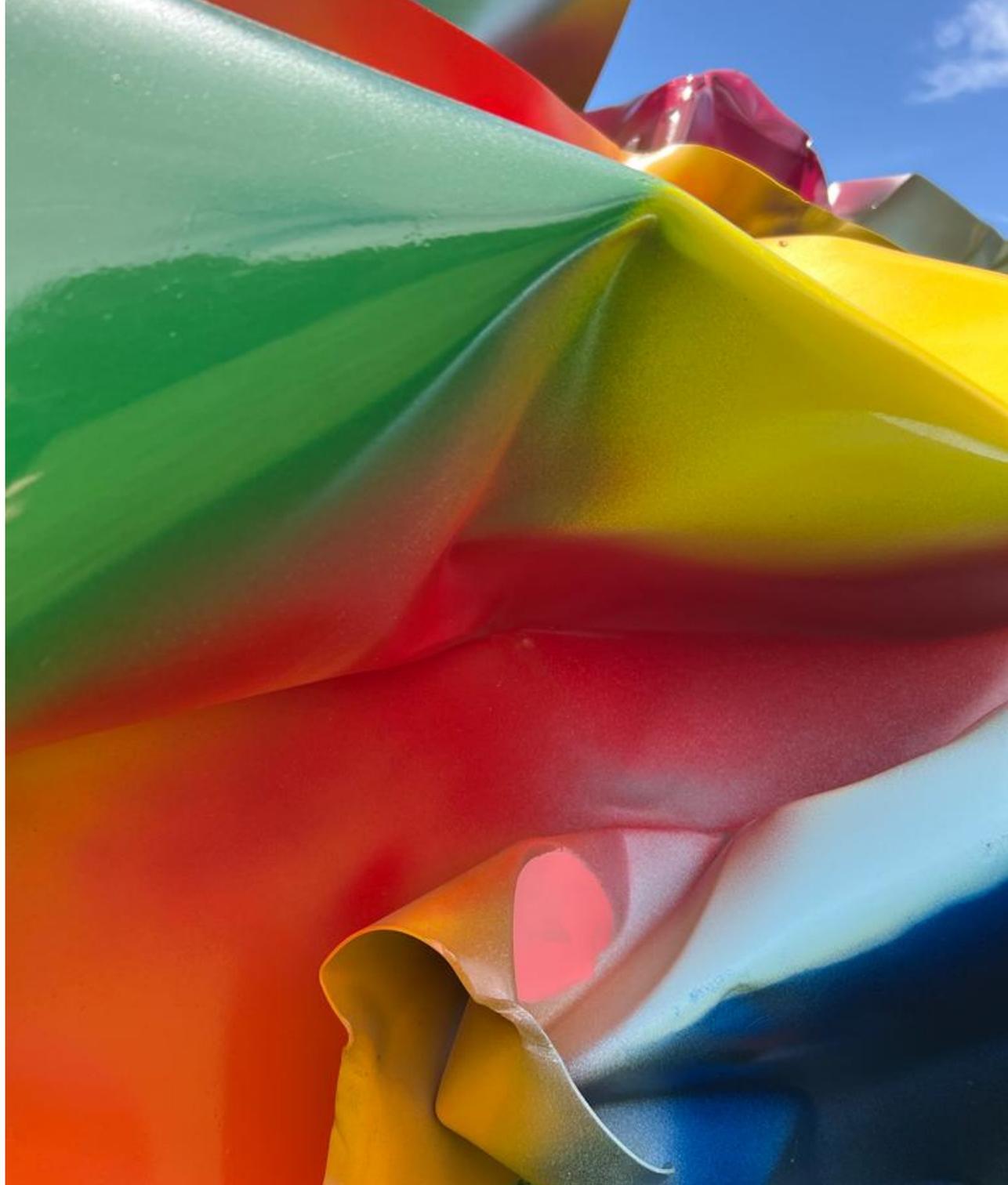
***Mother*** (detail)

2022

automotive paint on aluminium

390 x 270 x 260 cm

ZAR 450 000





***Makuleke***

2021

automotive and oil paint on  
previously used canvas

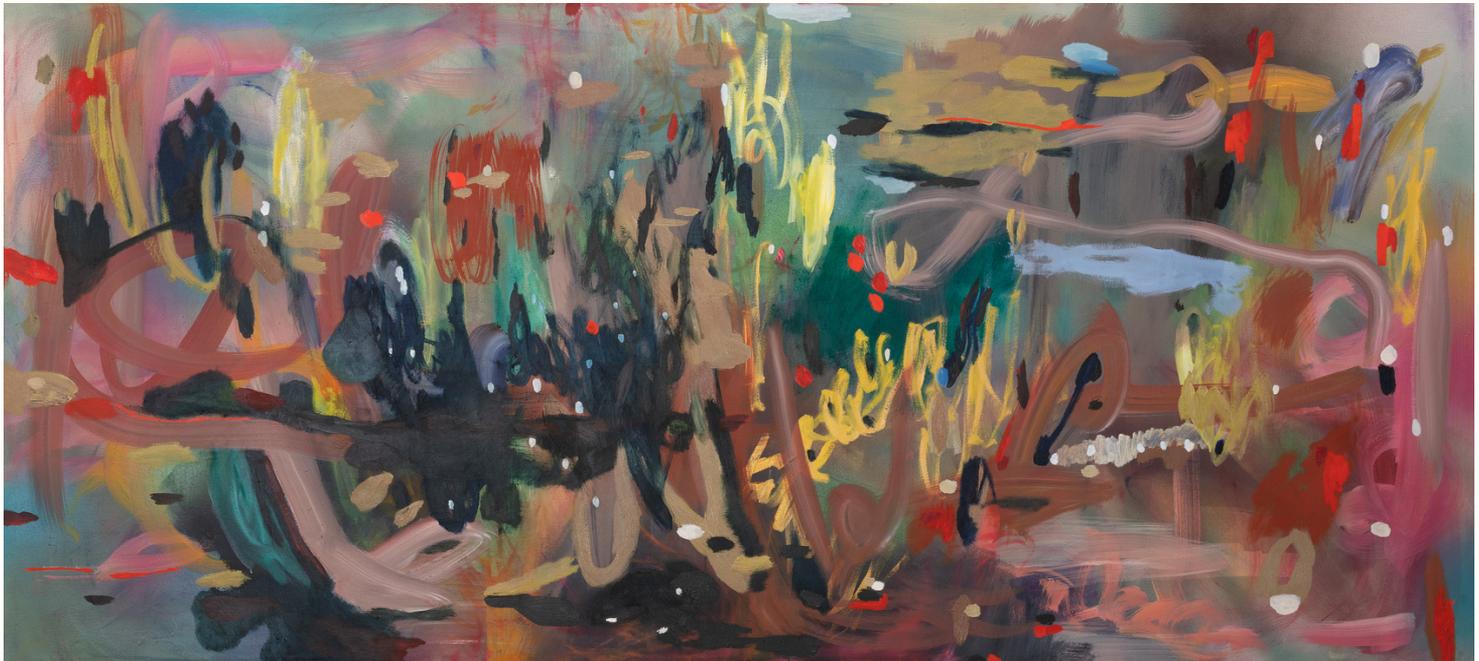
160 x 220 x 7 cm

ZAR 120 000



**Makuleke** (detail), 2021, automotive and oil paint on previously used canvas, 160 x 220 x 7 cm

ZAR 120 000



***Johannesburg***

2021

automotive and oil paint on  
previously used canvas

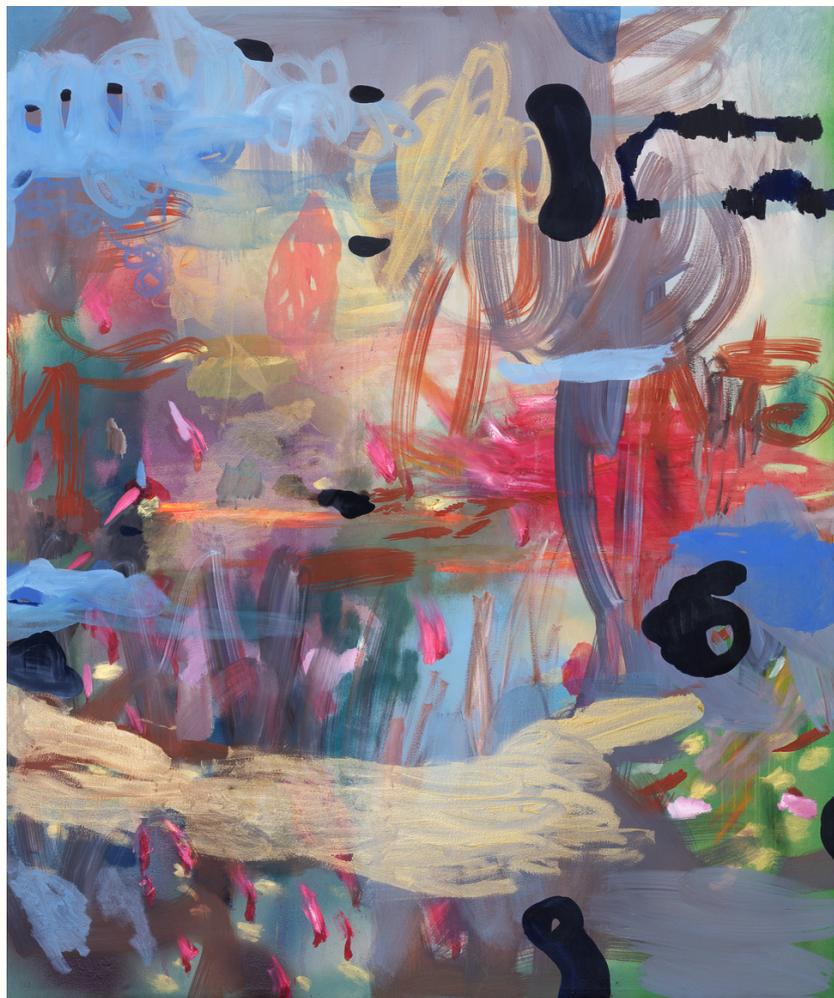
100 x 220 x 7 cm

ZAR 120 000



***Johannesburg*** (detail) 2021, automotive and oil paint on previously used canvas, 100 x 220 x 7 cm

ZAR 120 000



***Marievale***

2021

automotive and oil paint on  
previously used canvas

160 x 130 x 7 cm

ZAR 80 000



**Marievale** (detail) 2021, automotive and oil paint on previously used canvas, 160 x 130 x 7 cm

ZAR 80 000



***Tswalu***

2021

automotive and oil paint on  
previously used canvas

160 x 130 x 7 cm

ZAR 80 000



***Tswalu***, (detail) 2021, automotive and oil paint on previously used canvas, 160 x 130 x 7 cm

ZAR 80 000

An abstract painting with a rich, textured background. The colors are a mix of deep purples, blues, greens, and oranges, with prominent white and light grey brushstrokes. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushwork and a sense of movement. The word "TEXT" is centered in the middle of the image in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

TEXT

## Tipping the tip of my finger, my tongue

**David Andrew**

What does it mean when an artist paints but does not necessarily make paintings, sculpts but does not make sculptures? Even the understanding that there is a space of merged disciplines does not adequately engage the fluid shifts from two to three-dimensional work that I encounter in Hedwig Barry's most recent body of work. Perhaps this is because while the objectness of these works is undoubtedly present, it is what they do that is more pressing for Barry as she materialises work that, while initially abstract in a familiar latter twentieth century manner, germinates from a deep-seated affinity for connecting specific internal and external presences.

Here the objectness remains but there is something of her unique work that confounds readings that easily assimilate it into a series of modernist frameworks reaching back from the 1950s to the present. The immediate recognition of something akin to John Chamberlain's work, for instance, is tempting, and of genealogical import, but then the impulses for gestation seem altogether different. This is the space she often occupies in her most recent body of work produced in and around her residency at the NIROX Sculpture Park.

Barry has said of her works on paper that there always needs to feel that there is a risk – the drawing must be at risk of being a complete failure. She goes on to liken drawing to writing and the reworking and refining of a surface as akin to drafting. The writing and rewriting of surfaces until they are saying what you want them to say is not unlike the compulsive surfacing that permeates much of her practice in her earlier *Groundless* series from 2019.

The current body of work retains much of this sensibility. Whereas the earlier works elicited the in-between, permeable surface of the mulch covered earth giving way under foot and through time, the present body of work exists in a meso-space of sorts; a space of solid merging with the give of something more porous and transient, the immaterial. It is this space of the middle, the intermediate, that acts as the generative, heady reverberation that is so present in each of the works and then more collectively in their accumulative presence.

Both the two and three-dimensional works continue this predilection for surface. Not as a necessarily formal concern but as a form of imperative in evincing states of being. Whereas the work from 2019 invariably consisted of multiple skeins of wet and dry media, the more recent work moves back and forth between openness and a thickness of matter. This is in part owed to the sprayed surfaces that are present in and on all the surfaces, both two and three dimensional, for the show.

It is as if Barry has found ways with paint and canvas – and aluminium – to manifest the physicality of the matter in between: the in-between of the invisible becoming visible. It is as if the thick air suffusing the threshold of airconditioned interior and the breathtaking first step onto the pavement is made material. This results in a formal play of sensuous surfaces teasing the senses. What is foregrounded, pushed back, held in an intermediate space, juxtaposed in ways that invite and perplex?

Returning to my reading of Barry's surfaces as a conviction of surface being the harbinger of emotional import, I am reminded of David Joselit's writing on surface as depth, where flatness takes on a psychological inflection. The depth Hedwig goes back to again and again is that of the rubble-like, the collapsed and the aftermath of these states as grounds for generativity. Here there is an interest in rubble accumulating as history, things falling apart, being discarded, coming

together – and still insisting on an evocation that is beautiful, but not pretty.

This is best understood in her commentary on the series of *Crumples* where she is palpably close to the force that turns pristine flatness (the aluminium sheets) into crumpled surfaces occupying a continuum of extremes – the unpredictable riotousness of both the velvet-like softness and the torn edges of that which is discarded, detritus-like. It is in this space where she is able to manifest the elusive tipping point – the intimate sensation of that which is at the tip of one's fingers, one's tongue. It is this mercurial moment of destructive force transforming into something altogether different and uncannily close – something about love, hope, desire and transcendence – that is at the heart of this body of work. As such, it carries a political force that presents itself in different registers as one experiences the relational proximities in each of the spaces we are invited to enter, whether it be the open-air gallery, the Coolroom studio, or the park itself.

Underpinning this body of work is a further integration of convictions that are pronounced in their presence. It is no coincidence that one of the *Crumple* series, the largest, has the working title of Mother. The powers of fecundity, beauty, resilience and playfulness, in the face of compressive destruction, are deeply embedded in the surfaces encountered in this body of work. Dylan Thomas' "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower" comes to mind as an impulse for the generative contradictions that abound in the show – there is the intermingling of touch that carries that which is both of a form of violence and intimate at the same time.

It is this intimacy that exists in concurrent time with the violence that is present in the moment of initial conception of the work. This is a moment of extreme force where control is absent – and yet out of this crushing emerges the conception. In all of this the thinking through of care by doing, the showing of repair by doing, is present.

And this allows the work to be less about a violent precarity and rather that of an intimate stroking that is also present in her much earlier film work where painterly, poetic surfaces accumulate, coalesce and dissolve.

The predominance of a form of public sculpture in steel or metal that eases into a surface solution that is unitary in its single colour is unapologetically disabused in this body of work. Barry works surfaces alternately with spray and brush to arrive at resolution that never closes possibility. In doing this, I am encouraged to hesitate before I declare that which I am viewing as "resolved" in a conventional sense. Rather I am invited to be with these works in a more fluid state of irresolution and contingency. The brushed smears and sprayed floods deliberately test comfortable notions of the unitary public sculpture and invite an altogether more challenging engagement and reciprocity.

*David Andrew is an artist and Associate Professor of Fine Art at Wits University.*

An abstract painting featuring a large, dark, curved shape on the left side, resembling a boot or a stylized form. The background is composed of various textured brushstrokes in warm tones like gold, orange, and brown, with some cooler tones like blue and grey. The overall style is expressive and gestural.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Hedwig Barry** (b.1969, Bloemfontein) is a Johannesburg-based artist working at the intersection of drawing, painting and sculpture. A long career as a producer, director and educator across artistic disciplines has led her to a dedicated studio practice that is rich, confident and prolific. Probing the metaphors of “grounding” and “groundlessness,” Barry’s work explores the politics of love, desire, care and repair. She situates her practice at the interface of the personal and the public, the emotional and the intellectual, and the bodies, grounds, materials, desires and gestures which give meaning to these relationships.

Her work is in numerous private collections, and she has been commissioned to create work for BMW and Spier Wine Estate in South Africa. In 2020 she completed her Masters in Fine Arts at Wits University and continues to develop her research in the field of feminist new materialism and abstraction.



An abstract painting with a textured, canvas-like surface. The background is a mix of muted green and grey. Overlaid on this are several bold, expressive brushstrokes. A large, vibrant red stroke dominates the right side, with a smaller red stroke on the left. Black strokes are scattered throughout, particularly in the center and lower right. A thick, horizontal yellow stroke is prominent in the middle-right area, with a small white circular mark on it. The overall composition is dynamic and layered.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FORMS Gallery and the artist would like to thank the NIROX Foundation for hosting not only this exhibition, but also Hedwig's residency at the NIROX Sculpture Park from December 2021 to February 2022.

Thank you to Arman Nisch for his generous support of Hedwig's practice. Thank you as well to Hulamin for providing Hedwig with the aluminium sheets used to make the Crumples, to Sonja Formanek for the canvases, and to Spier for their sponsorship of wine for the opening event.

Thank you to writers Chloë Reid and David Andrew for their beautiful texts, to Liz Whitter and Alexi Portokallis for photographing the works, and to Sean O'Toole for his podcast interview with Hedwig.

Finally, thank you to the extended production team: Maria Mwase, Dorah Pilane, Beatrice Mwenda, Storm Makings, LeRoy Croft, Admire Ndlovu, Yusuf Essop, Tammy du Toit, Ephraim Molale, Eliya Banda, Andrew Mabvuto, Michael Mlaula, John Nkhoma, George Banda, Given Ditire, Katie Coetzee, Evans Molautsi, Tebogo Molautsi, Themba Ndlovu, Maya Barry, Ruby Barry, and Julian Bester.

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