

Chrisél Attewell

Investec Cape Town Art Fair | 2024

catalogue.

**Berman
Contemporary
South African Art**



ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIOGRAPHY

We are surrounded by landscapes and societies that are traumatised. Within these landscapes, there are traces that could tell us more about the many ways in which we are connected to each other, to other species, and to the Earth. Finding such traces in the environments around me, and deciphering their nuanced meanings and histories, is the driving force of my artistic practice.

My work is a response to the natural environments that I explore around me and often includes natural materials, such as clay, glass, wood, and stone. A central part of understanding my work is to consider what these materials communicate. Each material contains information about our interconnectedness with the Earth and involves elements of curiosity, play, transparency, fragility, tension, and balance.

Chrisél Attewell (b. 1994) is a multidisciplinary artist from South Africa. Her work is research-driven and experimental. Inspired by current socio-ecological concerns, Attewell's work explores the nuances in people's connection to the Earth and each other. She works with various mediums, including installation, sculpture, photography, and painting, and prefers natural materials, such as hemp canvas, oil paint, glass, clay and stone.

She received her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Pretoria (2016) and her Masters in Visual Arts from the University of Johannesburg (2023). Her work has been represented locally and internationally in numerous exhibitions, residencies, and art fairs. Attewell was selected as a Sasol New Signatures finalist (2016, 2017) and a Top 100 finalist for the ABSA L'Atelier (2018). Attewell was selected as a 2018 recipient of the Young Female Residency Award, founded by Benon Lutaaya.

Her work was showcased at Contemporary Istanbul (2019, 2022) with Berman Contemporary; her solo exhibition, *Sociogenesis: Resilience Under Fire*, curated by Els van Mourik, was exhibited in 2020 at Berman Contemporary in Johannesburg. Attewell also exhibited at the Investec Cape Town Art Fair (2018, 2021, 2022, 2023) and in 2024 her works were presented in a Solo Booth. Her latest solo exhibitions include *RAIN SHADOWS*, held at the UJ FADA Gallery (2023), and *THE WEATHER REPORT PROMISED RAIN*, held at Berman Contemporary and curated by Els van Mourik (2023). She later showcased in *REIMAGINING: NEW PERSPECTIVES* as well as *THE 2020s: new forms of abstraction – part 1 and 2*, held at Berman Contemporary.

Chrisél Attewell is represented by Berman Contemporary.

Instagram: [@chrisel_attewell](#)

Website: chriselattewell.com

Berman Contemporary South African Art

ARTIST RESUME

Solo exhibitions

- 2023 THE WEATHER REPORT PROMISED RAIN, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2023 RAIN SHADOWS – Masters Exhibition, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2020 SOCIOGENESIS– Resilience Under Fire, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2019 Substratum, Lizamore & Associates Gallery, Johannesburg
- 2018 Architectus Konstruksie, Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), Oudsthoorn, Western Cape
- 2017 Under Construction, Assemblage, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

Group Exhibitions

- 2023 THE 2020s: new forms of abstraction – part 2, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2023 #ARTLadies, ARTSY – online exclusive, Berman Contemporary
- 2023 THE 2020s: new forms of abstraction – part 1, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2022 THE ANNUAL SUMMER SHOW, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2022 WORK IN PROGRESS, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2022 WORKS ON PAPER, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2022 THE ANNUAL SUMMER SHOW, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2021 ARTISTES DE LA TERRE, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2021 THE ANNUAL WINTER SHOW, curator Morgan Kunhardt, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2021 Making and Interpreting Art in 2021, SARChI, curator Dineke van der Walt
- 2021 ANNUAL SUMMER SHOW, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg
- 2020 Learning to Breathe Differently, Berman Contemporary, curator Els van Mourik, Johannesburg
- 2019 #ARTLadies, curator Els van Mourik, Berman Contemporary, Johannesburg

Art Fairs

- 2024 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, Cape Town
- 2023 Art Cologne, Berman Contemporary, Germany
- 2023 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, Cape Town
- 2022 CI - Contemporary Istanbul, Berman Contemporary, Istanbul
- 2022 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Berman Contemporary, Cape Town
- 2020 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Christie's Online, London

Publications

- 2022 [Works on Paper exhibition at Berman Contemporary allows for viewers to engage with the artists' process of creating, Edward Tsumele, February 2022](#)
- 2021 [The 10 artists participating in The Liminal Space exhibition at Berman Contemporary test artistic limits, Edward Tsumele, August 2021](#)
- 2020 [Whispers of Inspiration, Bernie Hellberg Jr, Signature, May 2020](#)
[RMB Turbines Art Fair's Potential to Challenge Traditional Arbiters of Taste, Nkgopoleng Moloi, Bubblegum Club, July 2019](#)
- 2019 [The Young Female Residency Award: Entrepreneurship and Arts, Art Africa, July 2019](#)

Awards

- 2018 ABSA L'atelier, Top 100.
- 2018 The African Arts Trust Grant, as part of the Assemblage Exhibition Programme.

Collections

- 2023 Ellerman Art Collection
- 2020 Quorum Properties Collection

Commissions

- 2020 The Leonardo Building, Sandton.

Residencies

- 2023 Bodhi Khaya Artist Residency, Overberg, Western Cape
- 2019 Southern African Foundation for Contemporary Art (SAFFCA), residency at Entabeni Farm, Knysna
- 2018 Recipient of the Young Female Residency Award with The Project Space, founded by Benon Lutaaya

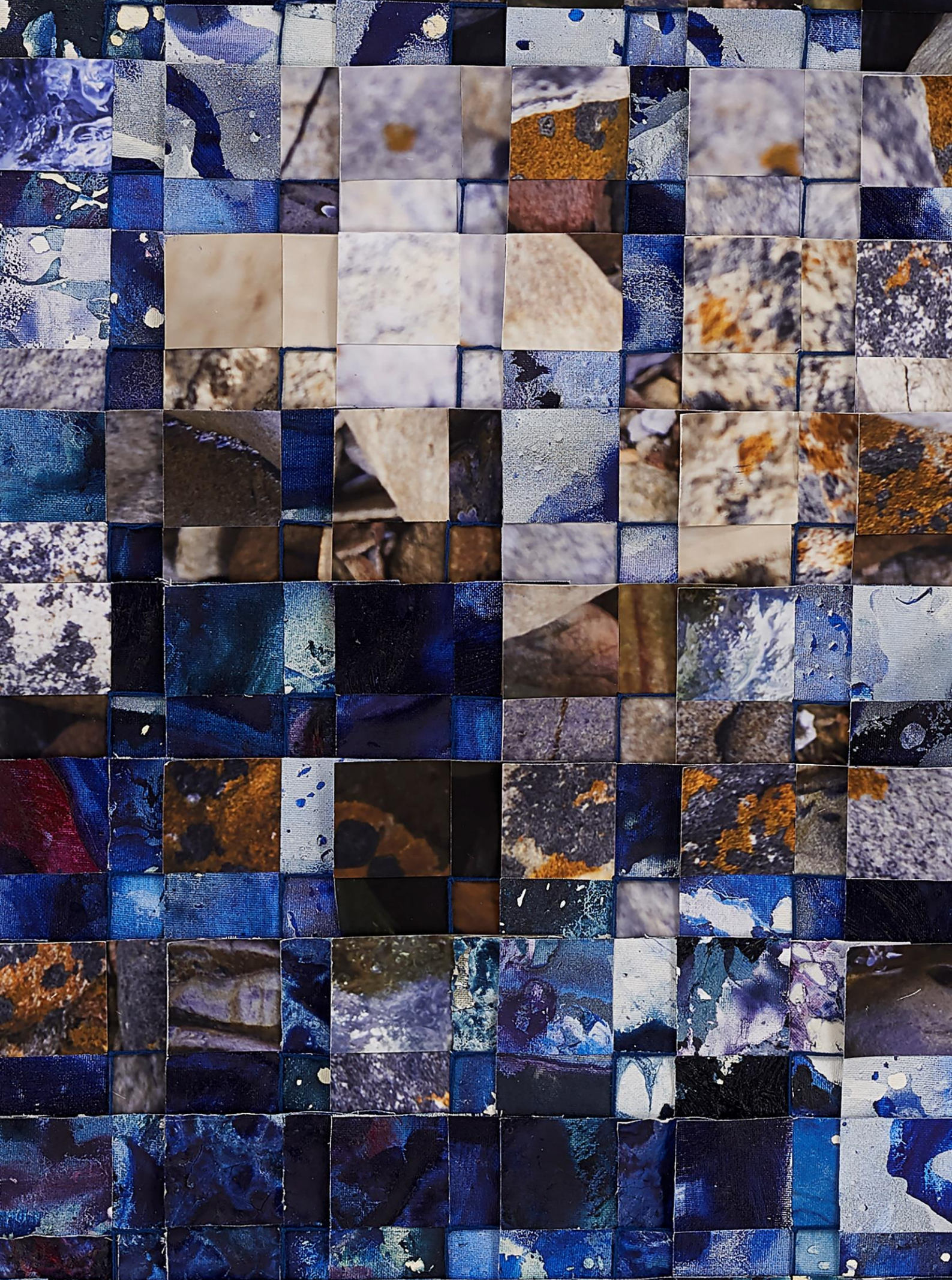
Seminars and Research Papers

- 2023 RAIN SHADOWS by Chrisél Attewell in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts in Visual Art in the Department of Visual Art, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 2022 Artists' Responses to Traces in the Postcolonial Traumatized Landscape. Spring Seminar 2022: Traumatic Landscapes, School of Arts, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, in Association with CITAR (Research Center for Science and Technology of the Arts) and FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology), Porto, Portugal
- 2021 Circular economies in the artistic practices of Otobong Nkanga and Ibrahim Mahama, Making and Interpreting Art in 2021, SARChI Postgraduate Conference in association with UJ, the National Research Foundation and the Department of Science and Innovation

Education

- 2023 MA in Visual Arts, Cum Laude, University of Johannesburg
- 2016 BA(FA) Fine Arts, Summa Cum Laude, University of Pretoria.
- 2012 National Senior Certificate, with average 89%, Hoërskool Noordheuwel

***Detailed portfolio on request**



REFRACTIONS | 2024

REFRACTIONS is a series of works that developed from my first woven works, called SOIL ARMOUR. While the SOIL ARMOUR works are comprised of fragments of hemp and cotton canvas, painted in oil paint, this new series has the addition of photographs printed on archival paper.

The addition of photography and paper to my woven works adds a delicate layer that speaks to the role of technology in my creative process. My paintings are often inspired by photos I take of landscapes around me as I explore and research. Recently, I began using these photographs not only as reference material, but to engage more directly, and politely, with the landscape.

The title of this series of work, REFRACTIONS, refers to the way that waves (including light, sound, and water) bend and alter when moving from one medium into another. Light refracts differently when it moves through the lens of a camera, the moving waters of the ocean, or the leaves of a tree. The cutting up and weaving together of fabric and paper pieces obscure the original photograph, creating a diffused and pixelated effect.

Technology plays an interesting role in the predicted dire ecological futures that the earth faces. The dominant stances on modern technology seem to live in extremes. While some argue that technology will save us from ourselves, others prefer to see it completely abandoned and eradicated, longing for a simpler time before the Great Acceleration. I find myself interested in the more nuanced space that exists between these opposites. I do not hold idealistic hopes of complete restoration for our planet, nor am I resigned to our predicted doomed fate. Rather, I hold out for opportunities of partial healing, and am interested in the ways art can foster such discussions.

Central to such discussions is the need to reconsider how we engage with the landscapes around us. My approach to these explorations embodies the philosophy of Donna Haraway's "polite curiosity". The aim of this is to engage with our surroundings respectfully, by looking, seeing, sensing and listening with intent. In making these works, I engage with cycles of exploring, processing, and reflecting upon my own interactions with the landscapes around me.

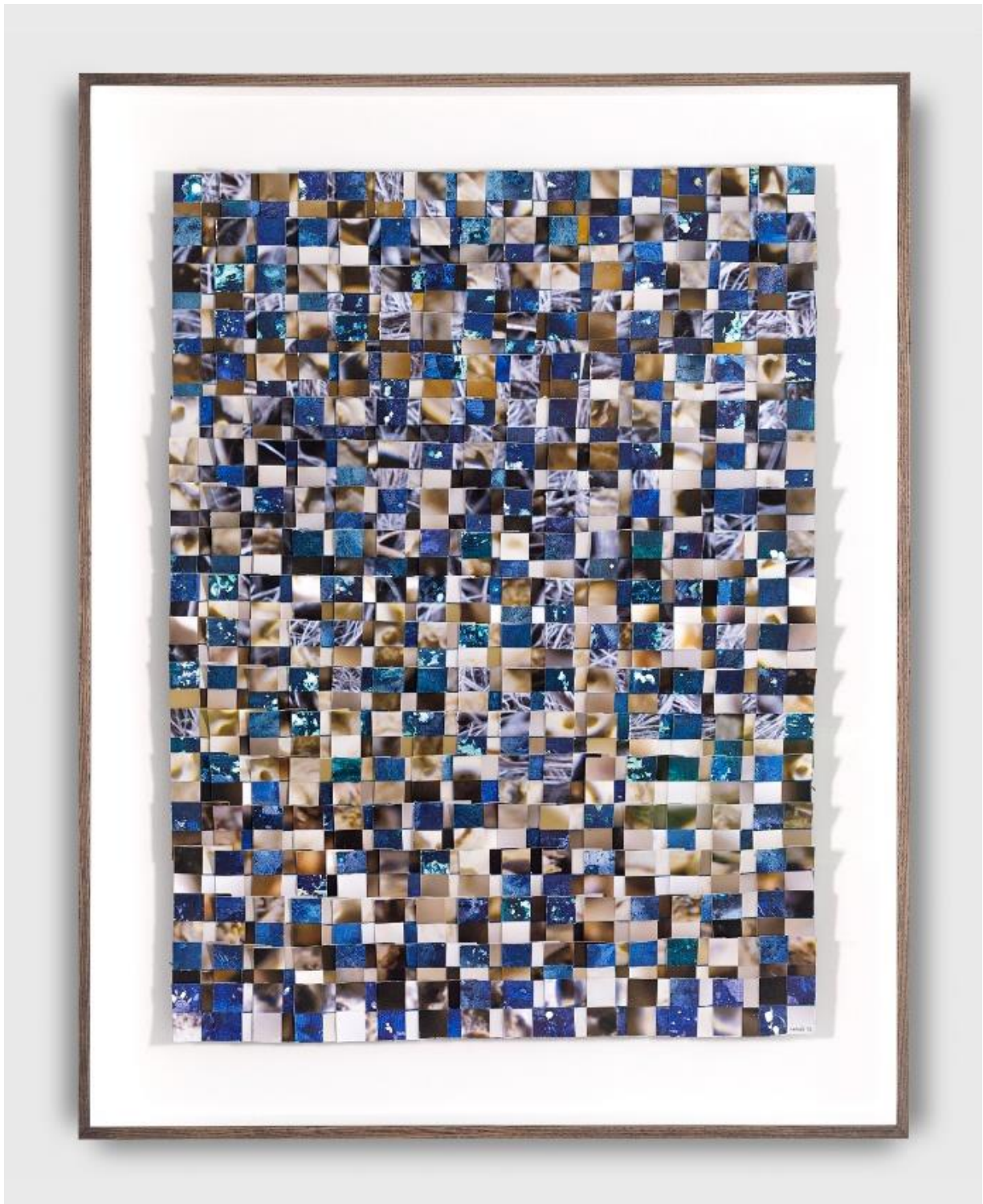




Refractions IV, 2024
Archival inkjet on paper and oil on canvas, woven with bamboo thread
125 x 85 x 5 cm
Framed: 140 x 101 x 5 cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wooden frame with AR anti-reflective glass



Refractions III, 2024
Archival inkjet on paper and oil on canvas, woven with bamboo thread
125 x 85 x 5 cm
Framed 140 x 101 x 5 cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wooden frame with AR anti-reflective glass



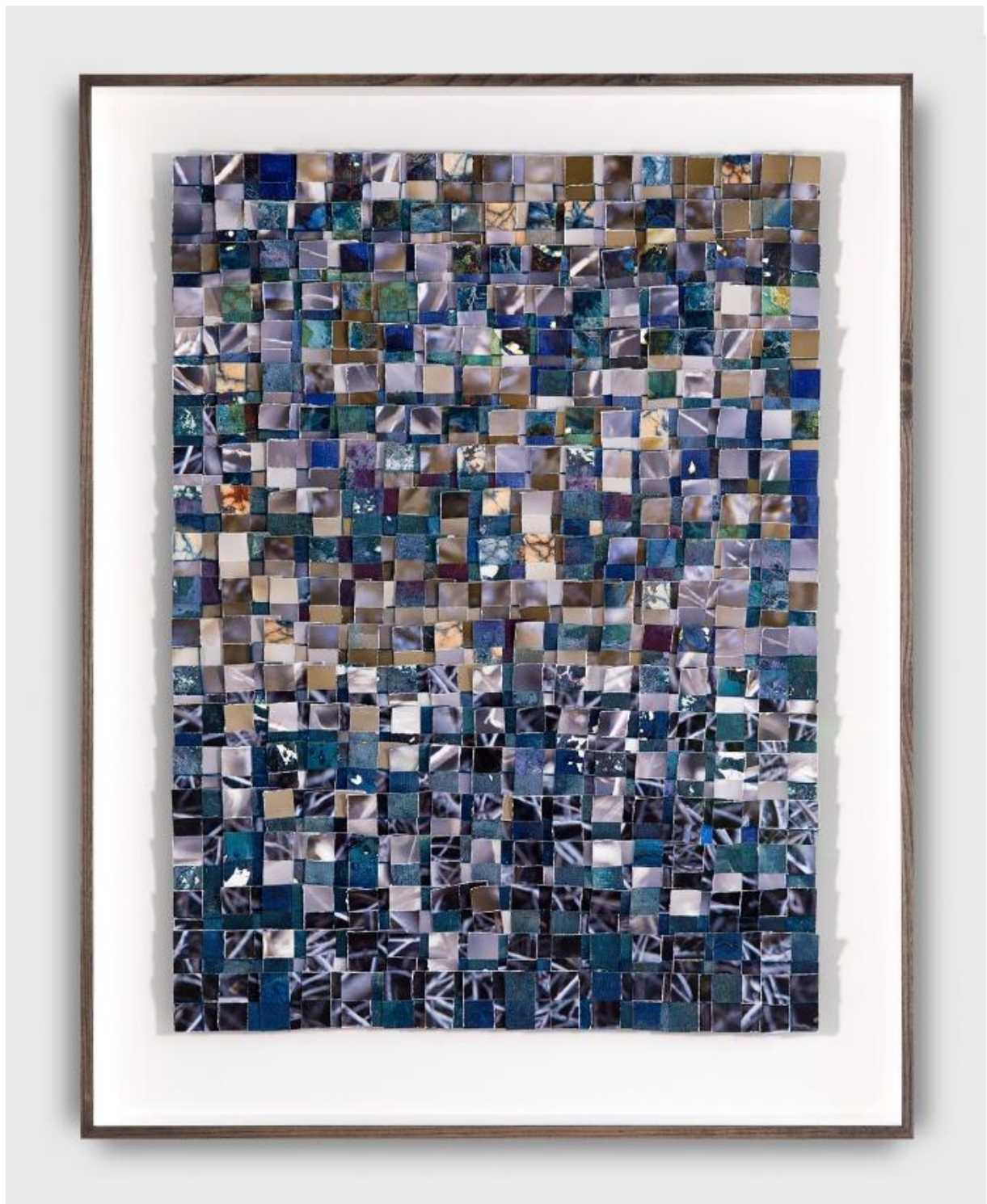
Refractions: Shell and Bone, 2023

Archival inject on paper and oil on canvas, woven with bamboo thread

76.5 x 56.5 x 2cm

Framed: 93 x 72.5 x 5.5 cm

Framed in an Ash-Ebony wooden frame with AR anti-reflective glass



Refractions: Smoke and Water, 2023
Archival inject on paper and oil on canvas, woven with bamboo thread.
76.5 x 56.5 x 2cm
Framed: 93 x 72.5 x 5.5cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wooden frame with AR anti-reflective glass



SALT TO THE EARTH | 2024

Rise up,
Salt of the earth,
Swell and grow.

Breathe in the rhythms,
The crashing, breaking,
Roaring flow
Of water against stone

Dig your greedy fingers
into the sizzling sand
Through the layers of shell and bone,
And breathe out the dense grey.

Savour the slowly rising,
creeping waters
That tentatively lick and taste.

Is it enough?
Or will water,
eventually,
swallow all stone?

Rise, rise,
Can you sense it?
taste it.

The heavy salt that pulls down,
Down,
Down,
And sink our stomachs
To the pit of the earth.

By Chrisél Attewell



Salt of the Earth I, 2023
Oil and Clay on Canvas
184 x 141cm
Framed: 186.5 x 143.5 x 6.5cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wrap around frame



Salt of the Earth II, 2023
Oil and Clay on Canvas
183 x 140cm
Framed: 186.5 x 143.5 x 6.5cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wrap around frame



Salt of the Earth IV, 2023
Oil and Clay on Canvas
183 x 144 cm
Framed: 187 x 146 x 6.5 cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wrap around frame



Salt of the Earth V, 2023
Oil and Clay on Canvas
140 x 230 cm
Framed: 148 x 232 x 6.5 cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wrap around frame





Salt of the Earth VI, 2024
Oil and clay on canvas
140 x 300 x 6 cm
Framed: 141 x 304 x 6.5 cm
Framed in an Ash-Ebony wrap around frame

SEEING STONES | 2023

The title "Seeing Stones", phonetically reference both the words "sea" and "see". Within the broader context of the "Salt of the Earth" body of work, these sculptures engage with the shifting tides of our climate and oceans. The continuous rise of ocean levels is slowly but steadily submerging stones and encroaching on landmass. In these sculptures, water is imagined as glass. As water, over time, engulf the stones on the shore in its ever-swelling embrace, the glass is blown over the stone, expanding as it attempts to swallow it.

On another level, to "see" is to bear witness, to notice the subtle shifts and changes. The title "Seeing Stone" also reference a mystical crystal ball, a portal through which one might seek glimpses of the future. Climate anxiety carries significant weight, especially among younger generations. Considering the environmental challenges that the next generation will inhabit, leaves me with a heavy sinking feeling. In making these works, I imagine alternative futures and surrealistic landscapes, contemplating the stories embedded in water and stone.



Seeing Stone I, 2023
Glass and stone
14 x 20 x 22cm



Seeing Stone II, 2023
Glass and stone
23 x 21 x 21cm



Seeing Stone III, 2023
Glass and stone
15 x 17.5 x 20cm



Sunken Stone, 2023
Glass and stone
14 x 17 x 17 cm



Seeing Stone VII, 2023
Glass and stone
22 x 25 x 25 cm



Seeing Stone V, 2023
Glass and stone
20 x 21 x 20 cm



Seeing Stone III, 2023
Glass and stone
15 x 17.5 x 20cm



Seeing Stone IV, 2023
Glass and stone
25.5 x 22 x 23 cm



Seeing Stone X, 2023
Glass and Stone
18 x 25 x 25 cm

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**FOR MORE AVAILBLE WORKS BY CHRISÉL ATTEWELL, PLEASE CLICK
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Berman Contemporary South African Art

Berman Contemporary is a South African contemporary art gallery founded in 2018 by Candice Berman and rooted in Johannesburg. The gallery represents artists from South Africa who engage with the narrative of the country and focus on a visual art language in the African context.

Berman Contemporary has an exhibition programme which offers an art experience that celebrates the innovative and expressive lens of contemporary art by bringing together emerging and established talents from around the country. The exhibition programme represents a generation of creatives from the southern hemisphere who are standing up and expressing their voices by embracing their narratives and ancestral practices, all the while cherishing their values and belonging.

Berman Contemporary offers the artists an ongoing mentorship programme to support their artistic development and growth within the international art ecosystem. Emerging from this programme, we collaborate on developing new ways of working together, and together we shape ideas on how to present their work in a unique and interactive way. This ongoing support is a process of discovery and playfulness through continuous, generative engagement, which acts as a catalyst for interconnectedness with a wide range of art collectors and other talented forces.

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