

# state of dis-ease

EXHIBITION  
2019

## PARUSHA NAIDOO

Parusha is an artist and accidental plant-based chef who encourages people to think creatively and critically about food, especially regarding the popularly held beliefs around food and nutrition. This series of photographs is called *Original Eating Utensils* and was first exhibited at the Food Cultures and Politics Festival at the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, South Africa. The festival was created by the Food Cultures & Politics Project which focuses on human relationships to food. Their work aims to understand what food means to various groups and how its preparation can be ritualised; how food is represented 'understood in changing cultural configurations and social exchanges; and social and ideological struggles around the meanings, control over and access to food. By focusing primarily on food cultures and politics in South Africa, this project seeks to strengthen analysis of food, society and culture in the global South and the global North.

## CHLOË HUGO-HAMMAN

Artist, Chloë Hugo-Hammam, brings us a series of fabric installations titled, *A Womxn's Dis-ease*. The series picks-apart, layers, sutures and sews. It is an unfinished, radically vulnerable, fragmented, always-in-process, personal narrative of chronic illness, that works towards depathologising what the Western medical-industrial complex refers to as 'mental illness.' It is a layered palimpsest that labours towards crafting communities of care, through the reframing of 'disease' as dis-ease within the neoliberal, white supremacist, imperial-capitalist, cisheteropatriarchy. "Care is prescribed by a largely Western medical framework, which is very much about responding only to the display of specific symptoms. If you don't display the symptom, you won't get diagnosed. And then there is the whole thing of language, because if you can't articulate what your experience is using specific words, then you also can't get diagnosed...and often, as a womxn, you aren't really heard or taken seriously".

## REBECCA HODES

Rebecca is a medical historian and Director of the AIDS in Society Research Unit at UCT. These images form part of a project titled Pharmatrash: a contemporary history of democracy's detritus. Much of the focus of health advocacy and research in contemporary South Africa has been on public access to medicines. Comparably little attention has been trained on their discard and disposal. This study, about the social life of medical waste, explores what happens to pharmaceutical products after they have been prescribed, purchased and consumed

1. Beach detritus on the Eastern Cape's Wild Coast includes the rubber ring of a condom.
2. An informal dump-site next to Dimbaza, where the packaging of codeine-containing anxiolytics, broad-spectrum antibiotics, anti-fungal ointments were found.

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## TSOKU MAELA

'Mental illness in black communities is often misunderstood, misdiagnosed or completely ignored', says Tsoku Maela. His photographic series, *Abstract Peaces*, is a visual diary of a subject at different stages of their depression and anxiety. "Depression isn't all doom and gloom; it's an opportunity to face oneself and this is a result of going to places you hate the most about yourself and finding beauty".

1. 'A brief reminder of solitude'

2. 'A nest for a dream'

*When the world pushes you to the edge  
take a leap into the unknown.*

*This is where dreams learn to fly.*

## THEMBELA 'NYMLESS' NGAYI

Cape Town based photographer and founder of Organized Crime, Thembela 'Nymless' Ngayi, tackles the topic of depression in young black males, with his latest series of portraits titled, *The Great African Horror Story*. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) has said that the rates of depression amongst men in South Africa are at an all-time high. The number of men calling into their helpline is climbing alarming – up to 97 calls a day – and reports of men not only killing themselves, but taking their families with them, litter the daily newspapers. Research suggests that men are less likely to seek treatment for depression, a serious illness which can be successfully treated. Their data also shows that men die by suicide at four times the rate of women.

## MOTLATSI KHOSI

The predominant imagery within Motlatsi's works are the use of floating drips enveloping the figures. Liquid represents the primordial ooze from which we evolved from, the 60% of water that our bodies are made from. It represents the contained aspects of our psyche and sexuality that are repressed and which through her works have escaped and are leaking into consciousness. For her, mental health becomes the balancing of these forces ensuring that what needs to be given freedom to flow. Like medieval medicinal practices that understood health in terms of the humors, blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm; she has represented them through her works as accessible bright splashes, maybe too accessible perhaps? Her works draw you in with their playful nature. In previous works she would hide erotic imagery through pastels and bright pinks. Now her works have almost settled in her neurotic self-portraits. Here we see images of head oozing with emotions. They represent the self at the brink of a nervous breakdown which oddly remind her of ecstasy. These works aim to break down the shields we put up in order to show the world how 'well put together' we are. These 'lies' only further alienate us from each other as well as from ourselves. "I want to make mental health fun, complex and, most importantly, accessible". She hopes that through her works we can see that there is more to who we are than our diagnosis and that we all struggle with mental health in our own way. "Though some of us need more than others there are many who would deny themselves that help in fear. I hope that people will look directly at the void within us all, that many choose to ignore less it stares right back at them. It's actually not that scary, with a little therapy sessions, of course. I hope to show them that if they smile at the void it will smile back"