GUNS & RAIN

Animals are Good to Think With

Group Exhibition | 13 March 2019 | Johannesburg

Ann Gollifer, Tawanda Takura, Vernon Reed, Rosemarie Marriott

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About ‘Animals are Good to Think With’

In 1962, French structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, in his work on totemism, coined the famous - now even clichéd - phrase that “animals are good to think with”. He argued that animals were not simply good to eat; nor were they simply objects of identification or symbolism (a place to see and project ourselves), but part of a structure of human thinking that was common across all societies, and a mode of establishing boundaries and social difference.

In *World Views 1826*, **Ann Gollifer (Botswana)** reflects on European colonial expansion in the early 19th century by appropriating and re-working a series of 1826 book lithographs of exotic places that were contested in the struggle for Empire, from Honolulu to Bethlehem, Assam to China. Here, animals are symbols for the rise of early nationalisms. The British Lion and French cockerel are ‘totems’ for those waxing powers. Bethlehem is the most geopolitically complex, first occupied by the Roman and Byzantine empires and “ the hardest of the 11 pages to map”, says Gollifer. “The Christian donkey is covered by Ottoman flowers, that are then trodden underfoot by the British Lion who gives way to the Palestinian Humming Bird and the Israeli Hoopoe, and all surround the tiny figure of seated woman, holding a child.” *Rule Britannia 2019* similarly comments on the European acquisitive gaze of ‘The Other’.

Tawanda Takura’s (Zimbabwe) animalesque sculpture-masks, created from found objects, explore 'the animal within', emotions ranging from vulnerability to aggression, from tame to wild. Primarily made from discarded shoes, they also comment on the use and abuse of power, and a crisis of leadership both in his own country and globally. The sculptures take on additional layers of meaning through the fact that the shoes have been used and worn by multiple people. If and when they function as masks, the works take on yet further meaning: the masquerades we undertake in daily life, the things that we hide or expose about ourselves; the fact that “we can become strangers in our own skin”.

Photojournalist **Vernon Reed's (South Africa)** photographic series of a taxidermy workshop in northern South Africa poses questions about life and death, control and dominance, in the human capture and re-presentation of nature. The large scale of the taxidermy enterprise proffers a curious and excessive Noah's Ark, with animals frozen in their 'natural' lifelike states of passivity or aggression. The presence of what appears to be an albino Springbok reflects hunters' preoccupation with colour variants within species, raising questions about social and genetic engineering. The springbok also seems to embody the gendered nature of the aesthetics of taxidermy practices, reminding us of the passive female muse.

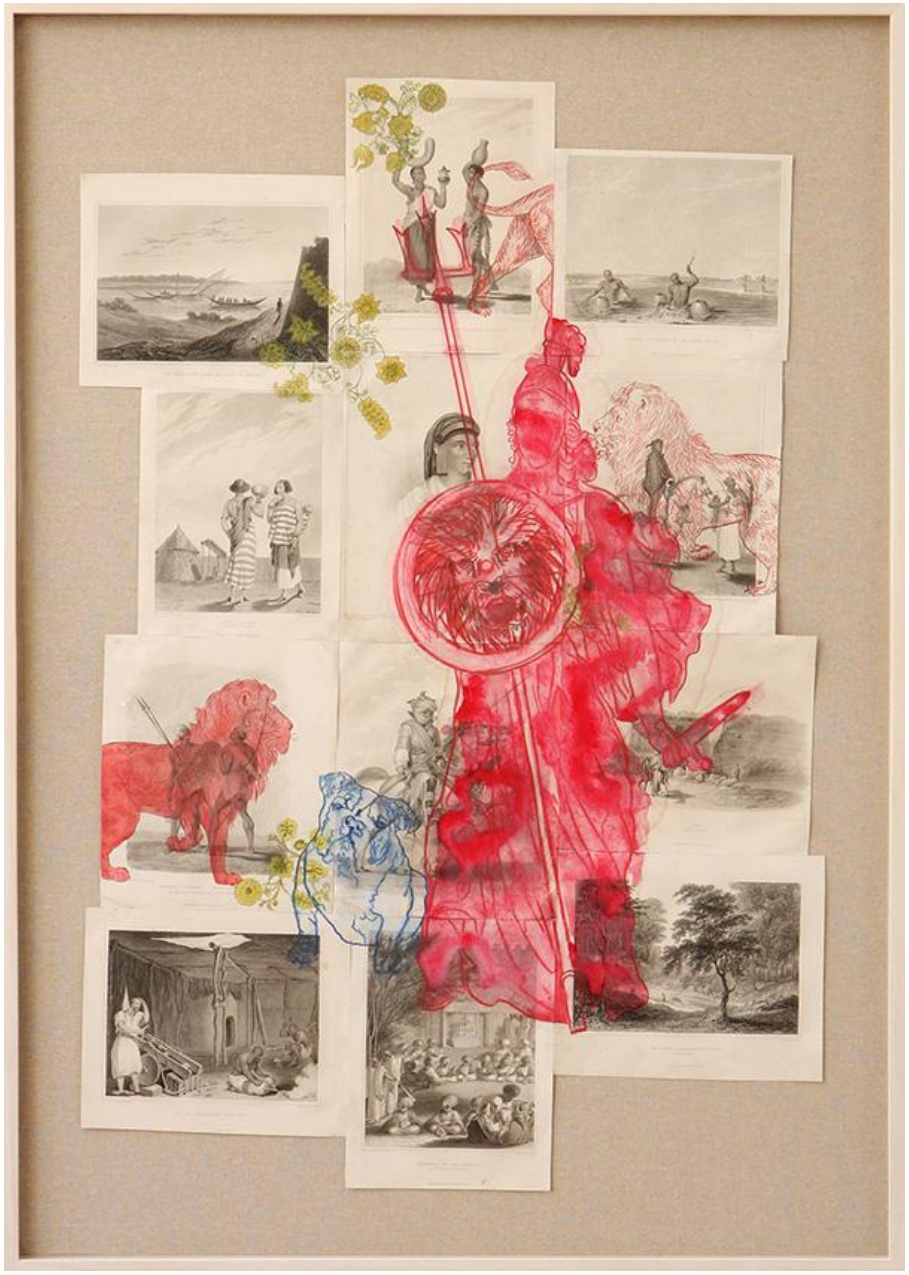
Interested in the protection and loss of innocence, **Rosemarie Marriott's (South Africa)** sculptural installation highlights the tradition of anthropomorphised beasts found in nursery rhymes and fairytales around the world, used to satirise and warn us of human follies. Some rhymes are alleged to have their historical origins in the very adult world of politics - for example, the "Three Blind Mice" may refer to Protestant loyalists who were accused of plotting against Queen Mary I of England and later burned at the stake. Marriott's unusual combination of materials includes porcelain, clay, tanned antelope skin and animal bones and claws, offering a tactile, sophisticated and disturbing commentary on childhood and psychology.

Ann Gollifer
World Views 1826 (2019)

11 random pages of lithographs from a dismembered 19th century book “Svenska Värld Vyer” by I H Strómer, lithographer for Th. Hos Gjöthström and Magnusson. Joined and overdrawn in watercolour and ink.

76 x 94cm (unframed)
93.5 x 106,5cm (framed)

Ann Gollifer
World Views 1826 (2019)
(detail)



Ann Gollifer
Rule Britannia 2019 (2019)

12 random pages from Major Dixon Denham's "Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa", 1826.
Steel engravings after drawings by Major Denham and Captain Clapperton, by Finden, for John Murray London 1826

Joined and overdrawn in watercolour pencil
96 x 64 cm (unframed)
111 x 79cm (framed)

Tawanda Takura
Scapegoat System, 2016
Old shoes and string
73 x 24 x 51cm

Tawanda Takura
Scapegoat System
(Detail)

Tawanda Takura
Hymn for the unjust, 2018
Old shoes and string
37 x 32 x 44cm

Tawanda Takura
Hymn for the unjust, 2018
Old shoes and string
37 x 32 x 44cm

Tawanda Takura
Gate Keeper, 2019
Old shoes and string
25 x 7 x 35cm

Tawanda Takura
Gate Keeper
(Detail)

Vernon Reed
Hippo and Giraffe trophies, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Vernon Reed
Bubble wrap #1, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Vernon Reed
Spotted Hyena with price tag, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Vernon Reed
Albino Springbok, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Vernon Reed
Antelope wall mounts, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Vernon Reed
Moulds and Discarded Wallmounts, 2018
Digital Printing on Tecco Photo Matte 230GSM
42 x 29.7cm (paper size), 39.5 x 27.2cm (image size)
Edition of 5 plus 1 AP

Rosemarie Marriott
Tablo (tableau - 'silent and motionless group of persons etc…'), 2015
Ceramic installation
Dimensions variable; approx 250 x 110 cm
Photo courtesy Lizamore Gallery

Rosemarie Marriott
Tablo (tableau - 'silent and motionless group of persons etc…'), 2015
Ceramic installation
(Detail)

Rosemarie Marriott
Tablo (tableau - 'silent and motionless group of persons etc…'), 2015
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Rosemarie Marriott
Tablo (tableau - 'silent and motionless group of persons etc…'), 2015
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