

**The dead don't
go until we do**





Introduction

As Rebecca Solnit has argued throughout her political writing, we live in an age where forgetting is everywhere. Contemporary politics operates on short timescales, obscuring the power of people and grassroots movements to effect change, which can take years or even decades. But where forgetting can lead to despair, remembering can lead to hope.

The dead don't go until we do brings together four artists who demonstrate how we stand hand-in-hand with those who came before us. Whilst we are responsible for remembering, previous generations and ancestors are there to help, giving us the strength to celebrate our own lives and those around us. It is a reciprocal relationship, one that makes visible the longer project of emancipation.

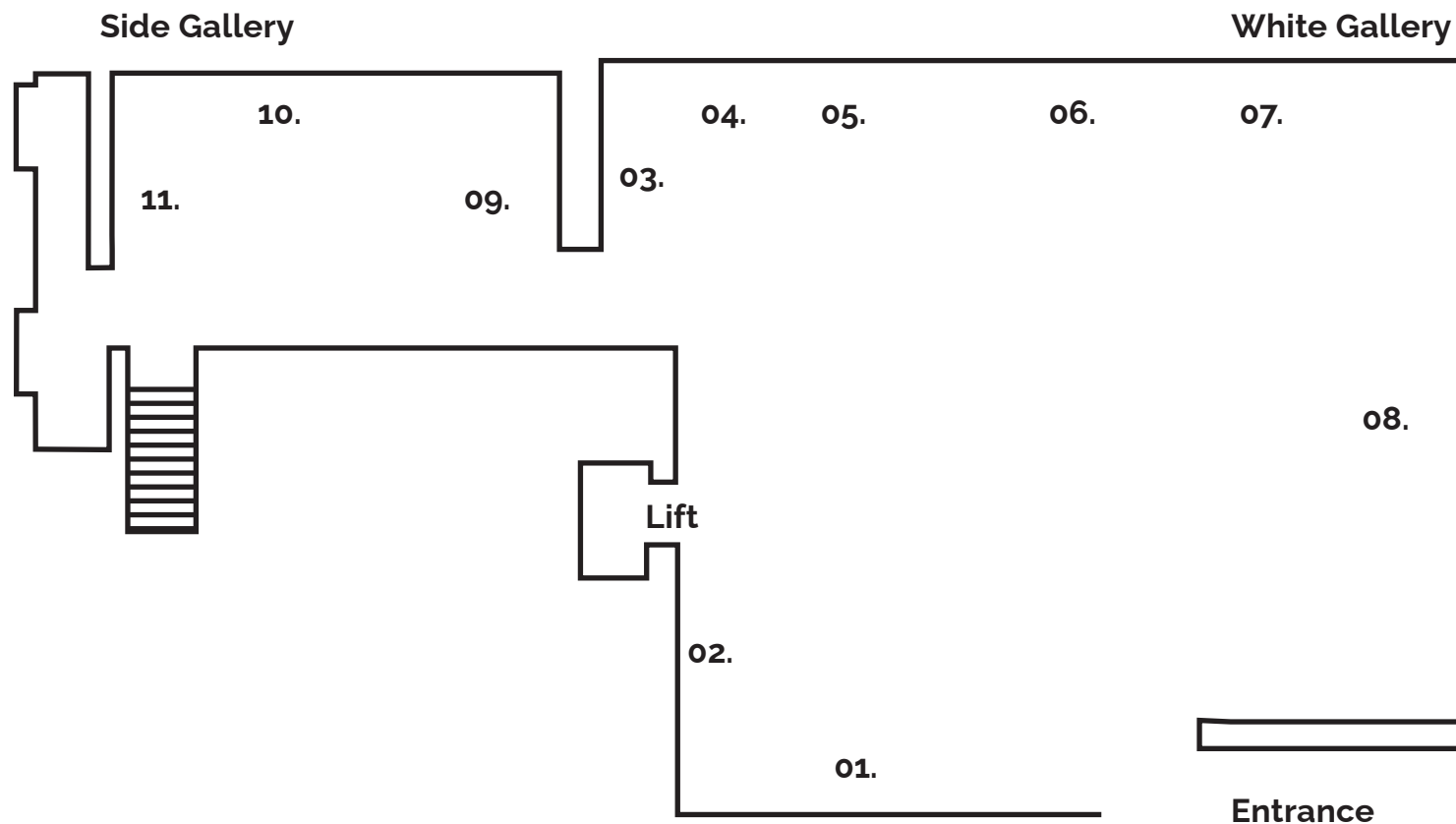
In the background of each of these projects is a sense of nature and an awareness of how traditions and systems of knowledge that root communities have been broken. Without a nation, or stable and dignified place to call home, the stories carried from family to family, and friend to friend, mean everything. Here, landscapes, plants and animals are also called upon to bear witness.

To hold space for those who have gone before, each artist carefully navigates distorted or partial histories. They work to overcome the stereotyping of their communities and the ways they have been portrayed as "other". Rather than seeing erasure or forced displacement as an ending point, they lean into the unknown as a source of possibilities. Running through each exhibition there is literal poetry, driven by the artists' need to find the right words to capture the beauty and vibrancy of everyday existence.

The dead don't go until we do is not a morose reflection upon death, but a defiant act of recall grounded in joy, solidarity and care. The collective title for these exhibitions is derived from Scottish poet Jackie Kay's poem *Darling*, a tribute to a friend who passed away. The poem begins by talking about how quickly we might forget subtle details of someone's being, but ends by stating:

[...] what I didn't know or couldn't say then
was that she hadn't really gone.
The dead don't go till you do, loved ones.
The dead are still here holding our hands.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas



09. Preparing a meal on the way (from Out of Egypt), 2026
Textile and mixed media on stretcher

10. Out of Egypt, 2024
Textile and mixed media

11. Out of Egypt, 2026
Textile and mixed media on stretcher

01. Wanda Siwak, from the series Siukar Manusia, 2022
Textile and acrylic on stretcher

02. Vera Lacková with daughter, 2026
Textile and mixed media on stretcher

03. Kovaciskri čhajori / The blacksmith's daughter, 2025
Textile and acrylic on stretcher

04. My grandfather, 2026
Textile and mixed media on stretcher

05. Sisters, 2026
Textile and mixed media on stretcher

06. Romani Čhaj peskreja Ryčinoha / Romani girl with a bear, 2025
Textile and mixed media

07. Duj Romnija / Two Roma women, 2025
Textile and acrylic on stretcher

08. Maria's Romani family, 2022
Textile and acrylic

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas *We won't stay silent any longer*

The materials in the colourful textile collages made by artist and activist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas come from various sources, including clothes belonging to her Roma family and friends, as well as traditional dresses donated by Roma communities. Working from historical images, archival photographs and family albums, she aims to redress hundreds of years of persecution and celebrate moments of everyday joy, holding close the strength of both present and past communities.

We won't stay silent any longer includes portraits of activists, friends, family members and anonymous members of the international Roma community. Like many activist-artists working from a marginalised position, Mirga-Tas carefully pieces together history from the fragments that remain, sometimes mixing new ideas with the re-appropriation of prejudiced viewpoints. Looking back as far as the fifteenth century, Mirga-Tas traces how Western European accounts of early encounters with Roma people established stereotypes that have persisted over time, reappearing in new forms with the rise of far-right politics. In the Side Gallery, *Out of Egypt* (part of an extensive series of works) directly confronts this long history by remaking Jacques Callot's seventeenth-century engravings of "Gypsies".

Mirga-Tas aims to "disenchant" representations of Roma people, moving away from exoticised or romanticised portrayals to foreground everyday realities. This is a political act of reclaiming visual history for a people whose image has typically been shaped by non-Roma artists and cultures. At its most extreme, the demonising of Roma people has led to horrors including forced sterilisation and genocide. Mirga-Tas' fabric collages carry a sense of embodied experience through their materiality. They reflect resilience and dignity in the face of these traumas.

Throughout the exhibition there are celebratory signs of Romani culture, including works that focus on blacksmithing and bear training – two historically important professions that carry cultural significance. Throughout we see that work, family and community are entwined in a special bond that helps sustain life. Informed by the Roma people living in Czarna Góra near the Tatra Mountains in Poland, her family, friends, the international community and historic research, Mirga-Tas shares the patterns, rhythms and vibrancy of a living Roma experience.

Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

Image: Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Out of Egypt*, 2024, textile and acrylic on canvas, 300 x 225 cm
© Małgorzata Mirga-Tas. Photo: Bartek Solik. Collection Bonnefanten



Wanda Siwak, from the series *Siukar Manusia*, 2022

This work is part of a series called *Siukar Manusia* ("wonderful people"), celebrating the post-war generation of Roma people and their descendants. The original photos underpinning this series are sourced from family archives, this photo of Wanda Siwak being shared by her nephew Edward Dunka. In Mirga-Tas' remaking, Siwak is shown, in the artist's words, "emerging from darkness... to gain the visibility and dignity she deserves".

Siwak had to hide her daughter from the Nazis, only to be imprisoned herself in a concentration camp. Whilst she survived the war, she would spend the rest of her life searching for her daughter. On her death bed Siwak passed the search to Dunka, who eventually found her daughter's family living in Ukraine. The Nazis murdered between 250,000 and 500,000 Roma people, according to various sources.

Vera Lacková with daughter, 2026

Vera Lacková is a filmmaker and friend of Mirga-Tas. She has worked on various films exploring Roma life. These include *By Thoughts We Are Still There*, which focuses on Roma and Jewish survivors of the holocaust, and *How I Became a Partisan*, exploring her grandfather's role as a partisan fighting against the Nazis in what was then Czechoslovakia. Like Mirga-Tas, her work is dedicated to overcoming long-standing stereotypes of Roma people.

Kovaciskri čhajori / The blacksmith's daughter, 2025

This fabric collage is derived from a stock photograph entitled, "Antique travel photographs of Constantinople (Istanbul): Gypsy camp." This title encapsulates the ignorant labelling of Roma people (see *Out of Egypt* in the Side Gallery). Read another way, as it is by Mirga-Tas, the photo shows how the work of a blacksmith would be supported by their whole family. In the original image we see the blacksmith seated on the left, with a young girl pumping the bellows in the centre and a young woman on the right staring into the distance. Women and children would help burn charcoal, collect scrap metal, fetch water and work metal with hammers. Blacksmithing runs in Mirga-Tas' family and by isolating the figure of the woman under a starry sky – in Mirga-Tas' worldview symbolising a vibrant, connected universe and sense of fate – she removes her from the camp. It speaks to invisible ancestral connections linked to work and community.

My grandfather, 2026

Mirga-Tas' grandfather was a blacksmith, a highly regarded profession among the Roma community and one that often granted them respect and safety among non-Roma communities. This image is based on a photo by the artist's uncle Andrzej. It

shows her grandfather with his youngest daughter, Renata, and first grandson, Marcin – three generations together.

In Romani culture, and as reflected by the poem of Mirga-Tas' uncle Jan Mirga, the forge represents a source of great creativity. Blacksmiths are alchemists, poets and artists, who transform matter to bring new things into the world.

**The Blacksmith, 2025
A poem by the artist's uncle Jan Mirga**

At dawn, bellows awaken the old forge,
forcing air from leather lungs.
The bellows smile as the blacksmith's hammer
strikes iron, creating new tools.

From raw ingot
new molds are forged in fire.
Under the master's strong hands
hoe, axe, and horseshoe quicken into life.

Day upon day, the Roma smith hammers out
his misery,
hardened by life over the years,
at some nameless place on the edge
of the forest, far away from people
where only the moon listens to his songs.

And when lady gloom rises in him,
he drowns her in pálinka*
and dances in circles, like a falcon
rising into the sky.

*A traditional fruit brandy that represents hospitality, welcome and respect

Sisters, 2026

This shows the daughters – Zenka, Basia and Hania – of one of the artist's great uncles. In the original photograph the sisters are sitting on a horse and cart on a bright sunny day. Often placing her subjects in large natural landscapes against cosmic imagery, Mirga-Tas reframes them against abstract planetary forms.

Romani Čhaj peskreja Ryčinoha / Romani girl with a bear, 2025

Bears are a big part of Romani culture. This includes the tradition of taming bears that began centuries ago by Roma people who created dancing bear ceremonies to ward off evil spirits. So entwined is this history with the community that one group of Roma are called the *Ursari*, meaning "bear handlers". Bears often lived with Roma communities and could be treated like children. They are seen as special beings that cross between human and non-human worlds, and as great protectors. They are also frequently sighted in the Tatra mountains near Mirga-Tas' home.

This image comes from a photograph of a female bear trainer with her bears. It was taken in Berlin in the 1920s as part of a project to document individuals: becoming part of an archive the Nazis would later use to deport people.

***The Bear, 2025*
A poem by the artist's uncle Jan Mirga**

No matter where they are found,
their lives follow the call of freedom,
all of them seeking only one thing,
to be no different from bears.

Powerful and wild,
deep in unspoiled nature, the bears
In forest caves and grottos
live the life of beasts.

In the eternal cycle of life
they embody the ancient saying,
of all wild creatures
the bears are peerless kings.

Full of admiration
for their mythical strength and prowess
we humankind always
wish them near to us.

In faraway India and in nearby Podhale,
let us proclaim a new beginning.
Let the bears be
the link between man and nature.

Duj Romnija / Two Roma women, 2025

Carrying out research in the archives of the National Portrait Gallery, London, Mirga-Tas found a photograph of two Russian Roma women. It was simply labelled, "Russian Gypsies (Arles)". The photograph was taken in 1909 by Lady Ottoline Morrell, an English aristocrat, arts patron and socialite who moved in intellectual circles. The photo was taken on her travels to France.

Maria's Romani family, 2022

Mirga-Tas met Maria Dimitri along with other Roma women while working on a project for Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden. Always interested in making portraits of women who have found ways to strengthen and advance themselves, Mirga-Tas was inspired by the resilience of these women. She also saw this as an opportunity to explore the Swedish-Roma experience, aided by Dimitri's family photo album. Transforming a faded black-and-white photograph into a colourful tapestry, the work becomes a joyful celebration of a special family occasion.

Being without a nation state, international networks and friendships are important to Roma communities. It was at the first World Roma Congress in London in 1971 that the term "Roma" was officially adopted.



Kovaciskri čhajori / The blacksmith's daughter, 2025
Textile, acrylic, mixed media on wooden stretcher 95 x 110 cm / 37 3/8 x 43 1/4 in
Courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw and Karma International, Zurich. Photo: Marcin Tas © Małgorzata Mirga-Tas

Preparing a meal on the way (from Out of Egypt), 2026

Out of Egypt, 2024

Out of Egypt, 2026

This series of works confronts some of the foundational stereotypes imposed on Roma people in Europe – the labelling of them as nomads, beggars, thieves and outcasts, wrongly believed to have come from Egypt. These works respond to Lorraine artist Jacques Callot's series of etchings called *The Gypsies* or *Life of the Egyptians* (1621-1631), which created a lot of interest in the early seventeenth century. Callot's titles and the engraved texts on the original images span romanticised ideas (*"bohemians on the march"*), dehumanising phrases (*"poor beggars"*) and implications of criminality (*"You who take pleasure in their words, watch out for your coins"*). His works have an elegant style that was admired, while showing "Gypsies" as being dirty, ragged and miserable. They were part of an early ethnographic framework that negatively constructed the idea of Roma people as "outsiders" and that was supported by legislation. In England, for example, the "Egyptians Act of 1530" proclaimed that those calling themselves Gypsies were not to be trusted, and that if they did not leave the country within 16 days they would face imprisonment.

With a desire to recover something from this visual history, Mirga-Tas reads the details of Callot's images in a different way. She turns them into reflections on homemaking processes, or what Roma scholar Ethel Brooks has termed the process of "keeping the body and soul together". That is the way that hard work, community bonds and love mutually support one another. Through Mirga-Tas' eyes we are presented with images of dignified people who draw strength from their family and community. Scholars have argued that Romani culture is inherently resistant to modern capitalist processes – a non-violent, anti-imperialist society in which labour supports families and community wellbeing. Mirga-Tas wants to make it clear that while Roma people have often had to flee persecution, the majority do not live or choose a "nomadic life". The Bergitka Roma – of which she is part – have been settled since the eighteenth century.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas (b. 1978, Zakopane, lives and works in Czarna Góra, Poland) has presented solo exhibitions at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway (2025); Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland (2025); Kunstmuseum Bregenz, Austria (2025); Tate St. Ives, Cornwall, UK (2024); Bonnefonten Museum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2024); Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden (2023); National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2023). Mirga-Tas was the official Polish representative at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, the first Roma artist to represent any country. Her work is held in permanent collections of Tate, London; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, Switzerland; Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg, Sweden among others.



Romani Čhaj peskreja Rychinoha / Romani girl with a bear, 2025
Textile, mixed media 320 x 240 cm / 126 x 94 1/2 in. Courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw and Karma International, Zurich.
Photo: Photo: Marcin Tas © Małgorzata Mirga-Tas

Amol K Patil *Who is invited to the city?*

Amol K Patil's practice is situated around the social struggles in Mumbai. It is guided by his grandfather, a *powada*¹ poet and singer, and his father, who wrote, produced and acted in social theatre. His father passed away when Patil was young and his grandfather when he was in his twenties – leading him on a journey to understand their creative works. Inspired by their bold, creative resistance to repressive social orders, he now tells the stories of those fighting systems that assign people to work in subterranean darkness (the sewers, mines and underbelly of the city). Through sculptures, poetry, drawings and video, and installations such as *Who is invited to the city?*, he continues an artistic lineage that shares the struggles of those in dire poverty.

Patil's film – which gives its name to the installation – is about the historic movement of people from villages to cities in India. It is a tale of the desperate search for light, illumination and a true wakeful state, partly derived from the mythological Hindu story of Hanuman. Hanuman was a monkey god who became so hungry he mistook the sun for a fruit and tried to eat it, which caused him suffering.

In the 1900s, many of those living in rural areas of India were struck by drought, struggling to pay taxes and on the verge of losing their lands. This led many to believe in the promise of prosperity in the city and influenced them to sell their lands with the dream of being able to earn enough to one day buy them back. Many, however, found themselves cast into darkness. This includes Patil's grandfather, who sold lands gifted to him by a British officer in recognition of his theatrical performances, only to become a street sweeper. Like many jobs historically undertaken by the *Dalit* (the Indian caste system is a hierarchical system that divides people into groups, the *Dalit* being the lowest caste), this can involve filthy and dangerous working conditions and can lead to dramatically reduced life expectancy (a 2015 study found that a sweeper's life expectancy was between 40 and 55 years of age²).

¹ *Powada* refers to a traditional form of folk ballad used by the Maratha caste – who were rural peasants, shepherds or ironworkers – to speak of heroic deeds. Over time this tradition organically merged with protest movements and Patil's grandfather appropriated its forms to criticise British colonial rule and the caste system.

² A report by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation is cited in: Yadavar, Swagata (2017) "Sanitation Workers Clean Our Cities, But They Are Denied Even Minimum Wage", IndiaSpend: Data Journalism (<https://www.indiaspend.com/sanitation-workers-clean-our-cities-but-they-are-denied-even-minimum-wage-72329> accessed 13/01/ 2026)

Patil grew up near the chawls of Mumbai (formerly Bombay). These are tenements built for Indian workers by the British government under the Bombay Development Department (BDD, set up in 1920). Here, families of 10 would live in spaces as little as 10 by 12 feet. These small spaces necessitated shared bathrooms, left people with no privacy and restricted air flow.

Cities in Patil's eyes are built on bodies – their brutal logic engrained through the experiences they are made to endure as they clean, fix and keep in motion the wheels of an unfair society that allows others to have dignified lives. The drawings in the space are based on research into the history of the BDD and imagine what it would be like to look back into these spaces through the cracks and peeling paint. Rather than finding prosperity, many workers found themselves trapped with no means of return to their former lives. Many came to see the city as a horrendous, corrupting and repressive force – as captured in the work of *Dalit* poets like Namdeo Dhasal. Dhasal (quoted in the blue captions in Patil's film) was an activist and founder of the Dalit Panthers who – inspired by the black liberation movement in the United States – fought against the caste system. He was known for his explosive, raw poetry and volatile personality, shaped by a desperate cycle of poverty. Patil isolates passages that have more subtle resonance; when Dhasal writes, "There are neither flowers, Nor leaves; Neither trees, Nor birds", he is commenting on how even the force of nature can no longer reach those lost to the city. (Later in the same poem he writes, "You are allowing your downtrodden life to swim, in the hell-water of self-alienation. What more can even the trees do now. Except scratch the armpits of bygone times?")

For Patil, the power of the land is tied to traditions that are broken by the city, debasing some people whilst holding together the contradictions of profound wealth and poverty. However, unlike Dhasal, Patil retains a sense of hope. For him, poetry is a tool that allows ideas about freedom to be passed from generation to generation. He works from the basis that those in dire circumstances have been able to create artistic modes of resistance and protest that keep alternative possibilities alive. Patil's father created socialist theatre designed to capture the lives of those in poverty and Patil's poem on the balcony is inspired by it. It draws attention to everyday hardships and their strain upon the body.

Who is invited to the city? contributes to what might be read as an alternative portrait of Mumbai. A rapidly changing city, the *chawls* are now being demolished. Patil's work relates to ongoing inequalities, championing the role of art in giving voice to communities who are often rendered invisible.

"[People like my father and grandfather] would keep moving from one village to another, passing messages through their art form. In the last few years, I am just like them. I am taking all the conversations about my community and moving from one place to another. Sometimes, performing for a hundred days for new people who do not have any idea about caste politics. My job is to share and pass on the messages."

— Amol K Patil, *NO NIIN Magazine*, 2025.

Sound: *The captions in yellow are narrated by the artist, who speaks in English with a Mumbai accent. The captions in blue are not narrated. The only other sound is that of insects chirping at night.*



Image: *The Shadow of Lustre*, 2025. Bronze sculpture, cotton cloths, light bulb, and video projection.
Photo Credit: Röda Sten Konsthall

Amol K Patil (b.1987; Bombay, lives and works in Bombay and Amsterdam) has exhibited at Röda Sten Konsthall, Göteborg, Sweden (2025); De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, Netherland (2024); Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India (2022–2023); documenta 15, Kassel, Germany (2022); Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2022); Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama, Japan (2020); The Show Room, London (2018); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2017); Dakar Biennale, Dakar, Senegal (2016); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2015); Para Site, Hong Kong (2014); Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France (2013).

Kang Seung Lee *Erasure held like a fierce lantern*

Kang Seung Lee's work transforms loss and invisibility into a strategy for recollection. Often beginning with archival research, his drawings, watercolours, embroideries and installations create conversations with overlooked, deceased artists and with sites where communities, including queer communities, have historically gathered. Lee has extended his research to Edinburgh, featuring new works based on photographs of significant queer sites across the city. *Erasure held like a fierce lantern* layers global and local queer histories to represent forms of existence that exceed identity politics.

From early in his practice Lee has been concerned with the under-representation of marginalised communities. Growing up in South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s, his work has also been shaped by the collective mourning that followed the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. Against this backdrop, Lee finds ways to celebrate how creative communities carve out new modes of being for future generations. By recreating photographs by hand, he began critically amending visual records to make them more inclusive, while also commenting on the historical erasure of queer people by mainstream histories. Over time, this approach has evolved from institutional critique into his use of erasure as a means of testing the limits of representation.

Lee has, for example, redrawn recognised photographs by earlier generations of queer artists, including Alvin Baltrop (1948-2004), Peter Hujar (1934-1987), and Tseng Kwong Chi (1950-1990), and transformed their subjects into gaseous clouds. These forms suggest how Lee contemplates loss: composed of particles, people never fully disappear but instead emanate outward, continuing to circulate in the world alongside the living.

The title of this installation is drawn from *The Rewilding*, a poem by Californian poet Meredith Stricker. The poem describes the demilitarised zone between South and North Korea and resonates with Lee's desire to resist identity politics that predefine fixed positions or knowable characteristics. Stricker writes of a "...climate paying no attention to us...", a sentiment echoed in the plants and stones Lee incorporates as witnesses to longer timescales and non-human agency.

another history than our own another spreadsheet than human
another profit another prophecy, chromosomal and intricate

nowhere is abstract unless we are abstracted
erasure held like a fierce lantern

Lee's practice also removes images from constant media circulation, from the spaces where they may become racialised or dehumanised in service of political agendas. His work creates a meditative visual space in which we might encounter people



Installation view, *Untitled (Constellation)*, the 60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia : Stranieri Ovunque - *Foreigners Everywhere*. Photo by Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles; Gallery Hyundai, Seoul; Alexander Gray Associates, New York

differently, through gaps and absences. Here the nebulous energies of those who have gone before are released from history's narrow forms of representation.

Untitled, 2026

The central installation was designed for the Round Room. It consists of an oak platform covered with an embroidered piece of sambe cloth, traditionally worn by mourners and the deceased in Korean funereal rites. Made from organic hemp, the fabric symbolises the return to a state of nature.

Lee is interested in non-human beings that have existed longer than any of us, including plants that can remain dormant for long periods before flowering. As witnesses to the world around them, these forms resonate with queer histories, which Lee notes are "continually erased, rewritten and reasserted".

The Lothian Health Services Archive and Talbot Rice Gallery supported Lee's research into Edinburgh's queer history, the gallery photographing former queer sites and collecting organic materials from them. Lee's watercolours and graphite images on lacquered mulberry paper are based on visits to the following sites:

- Regent Road near Calton Hill: a long serving cruising site for the queer community.
- Princes Street Gardens: a space of overlapping histories, including demonstrations in the 1980s against the Thatcher government's Clause 28 (which prohibited the promotion or acceptance of homosexuality, including in schools); Scotland's first Pride march in 1995, starting from the Mound; a holocaust memorial (which includes queer communities); and the bandstand where Lark in the Park was held in 1988, a festival for LBGTQ+ celebration and protest.
- *The Life Tribute AIDS Memorial* in Dean Village.
- Bristo Square, the site of the world's first International Gay Conference in 1974 and the first gay demonstration.
- The University of Edinburgh's Catholic Chaplaincy: where – with the support of Father Anthony Ross – the Cobweb cafe was used in 1972 for the first gay and lesbian rights organisation called the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG).
- 60 Broughton Street: which was home to Scotland's first gay and lesbian centre, opened by SMG in 1975 and running for over 30 years before evolving into other forms.

(With thanks to City of Edinburgh Council and the Living Memory Association for the valuable information provided by their *Remember When* project)

A pencil drawing on lacquered mulberry paper is derived from an image of people marching to commemorate lives lost to HIV/AIDS. Their banner reads, "REMEMBER THEIR NAMES". This image is currently being used by Tramway, Glasgow, to promote their exhibition of the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt later in 2026 (12 to 27 September), part of the world's largest community art project.

Lee's installation also includes silver casts of letters from the American Sign Language alphabet, referencing the work of painter Martin Wong (1946-1999). A Chinese-American artist, Wong celebrated his queer identity and incorporated American Sign Language as a coded language within his paintings, spelling out titles or evoking lines of poetry. Wooden burrs – growths formed as trees respond to viral or fungal infection or external trauma – also appear in the work. Lee understands all of this prized material as "a constellation that holds intergenerational memory and speaks to the resilience of queer genealogy". Presented across the space without strict hierarchy, the elements form another constellation, one without fixed beginnings or endings, but an ongoing circulation of energies.

Untitled (Sea-Sperlonga, 1968, Peter Hujar) [wallpaper], 2026
Untitled (Turbulent Surface-Sperlonga, 1978, Peter Hujar), 2025
Untitled (Wave, Sperlonga, ca. 1963, Peter Hujar), 2025
Untitled (Sea-Sperlonga, 1968, Peter Hujar), 2025
Untitled (The Piers, 1975-1986, Alvin Baltrop 2), 2025
Untitled (The Piers, 1975-1986, Alvin Baltrop 3), 2025

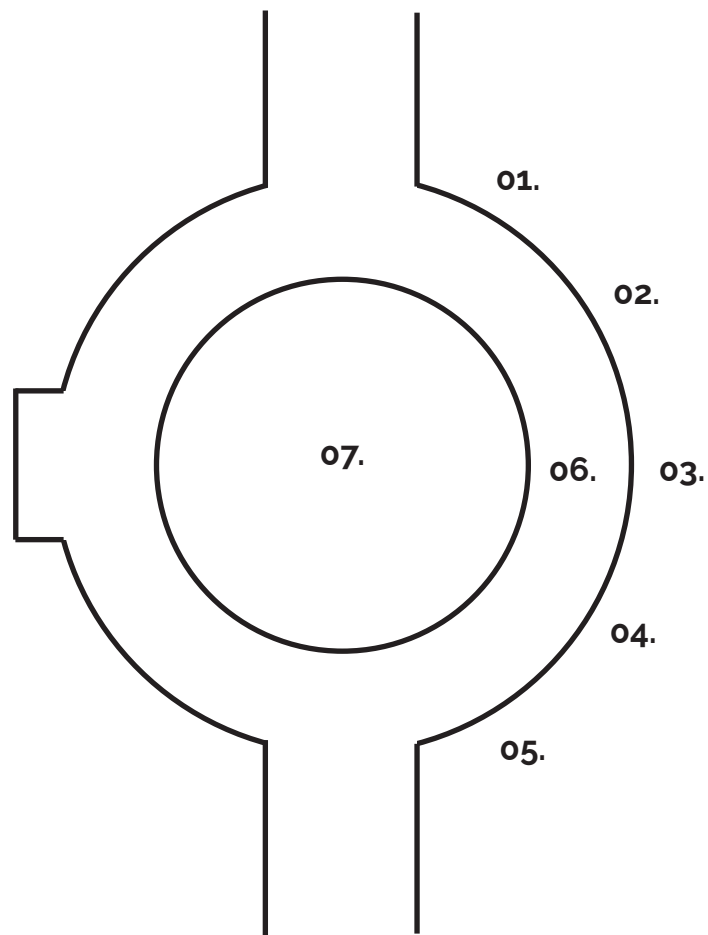
The wallpaper in the space provides a backdrop that echoes Lee's interest in fluid states of being. Water functions here as an amorphous substance that connects all things. The graphite drawings are precise recreations after Peter Hujar's photographs of Sperlonga and the Tyrrhenian Sea, and after Alvin Baltrop's photographs of the Hudson River piers in New York.

Both Hujar and Baltrop are widely recognised for their black-and-white portraits of queer life and subcultures. Hujar often visited Sperlonga in Italy and photographed the undulating sea as an alternative to his usual portraiture – its shifting surface concealing unseen hidden forces. Baltrop, an African-American photographer largely unrecognised during his lifetime, captured the danger and vitality of queer social spaces on New York's Hudson Piers.

"We decay in the ground, become fertilizer; but, scientifically, we are still here... Nothing is completely lost."

— Kang Seung Lee, *BOMD Magazine*, 2024.

Round Room



Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles; Gallery Hyundai, Seoul; Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Kang Seung Lee (b. 1978, Seoul, South Korea. Lives and works in Los Angeles) has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo), Brazil (2024); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (2023); Vincent Price Art Museum, East Los Angeles College, Monterey Park, CA (2023); among others. Group exhibitions include 60th Venice Biennale, Italy (2024); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2023); de Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2023); documenta 15, Kassel, Germany (2022); New Museum Triennial, New York, NY (2021). Lee's work is in the collections of the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo), Brazil; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Kang Seung Lee

01. Untitled (The Piers, 1975-1986, Alvin Baltrop 3), 2025
Graphite on paper, wood frame, 41 x 41 cm

02. Untitled (Sea-Sperlonga 1968, Peter Hujar), 2025
Graphite on paper, wood frame, 41 x 41 cm

03. Untitled (Wave, Sperlonga, ca. 1963, Peter Hujar), 2025
Graphite on paper, wood frame, 41 x 41 cm

04. Untitled (Turbulent Surface- Sperlonga, 1978, Peter Hujar), 2025
Graphite on paper, wood frame, 41 x 41 cm

05. Untitled (The Piers, 1975-1986, Alvin Baltrop 2), 2025
Graphite on paper, wood frame, 41 x 41 cm

06. Untitled (Sea-Sperlonga, 1968, Peter Hujar) [wallpaper], 2026

07. Untitled
Works on platform and walls:
Antique 24K gold thread, sambe, watercolour on paper, graphite on paper, nails, graphite on lacquered mulberry paper, acrylic on shell button, cast silver, cast bronze, wild olive burr wood, silver wire, maple burr wood, dried plants, seeds and pebbles from Edinburgh, oak veneered wooden platform, brass castors.

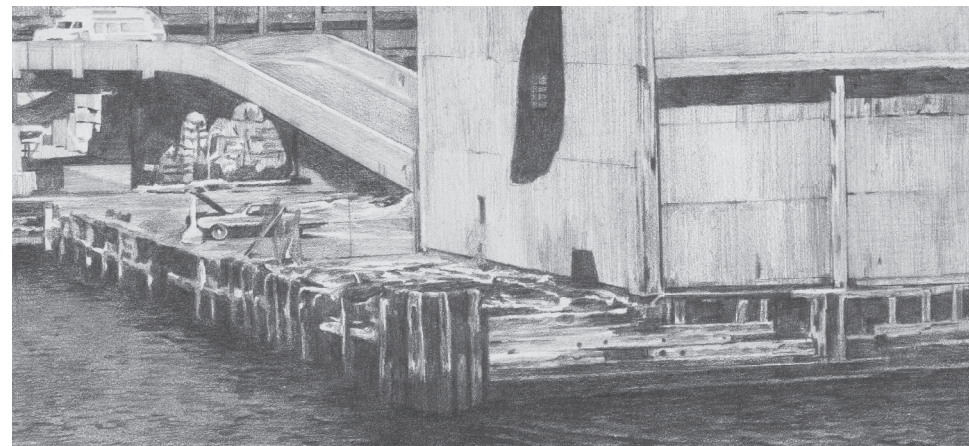


Image: Untitled (The Piers, 1975-1986, Alvin Baltrop 3)
Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles; Gallery Hyundai, Seoul; Alexander Gray Associates, New York

MADEYOULOOK

Mafolofolo

MADEYOULOOK is an interdisciplinary, research driven artistic collaboration between Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho. Together they explore de-colonial relationships to the land, seeking new forms of knowledge connected to black everyday practice. This exhibition includes *Mafolofolo*, a sound piece and environment linked to research on the Koni people (Bakoni), excerpts from the duo's publication *Menagano* and a reading space curated by the artists.

***Mafolofolo*, (2022 – ongoing)**

Mafolofolo is the name of a former settlement founded in South Africa in late 1873 by the Koni people, before they were displaced again in 1876. MADEYOULOOK spent five years researching the places they once inhabited, including the extensive earthworks that they left behind. These structures, made by a people who experienced multiple cycles of land dispossession and reclamation, date back to the sixteenth century (although it is speculated that some of the stone-wall remains are much older). These circular forms and rock engravings resemble cells or atoms. Dotted across 150km of arid landscape, they have preserved soil deposits and enabled a unique ecological system to thrive. Today they appear like a gift carrying the knowledge of a different way of being within the land.

The memory of these places is retained through oral histories. MADEYOULOOK carefully share some of the recordings they made on site, including interviews with Joseph Mothupi, a descendent of the Bakoni. However, they are careful not to try to make these spaces seem transparent or hyper visual, repeating colonial ways of understanding. They therefore ask that we sit with *Mafolofolo* and listen to it: to the bird calls and the storms. Their handwritten fieldnotes provide other information about the landscapes we are being asked to imagine, but reinforce the sense that this is a tactical and partial understanding – rather than being exhaustive or authoritative. They decline to translate the various African dialects that appear in the work – which includes protest songs written about the lands – and ask us to instead have an embodied relationship with the words.

Further context:

uMbuso Nkosi's essay *Land as Being* for MADEYOULOOK's presentation at the Venice Biennale provides a useful historical context for their work. Writing about the situation in South Africa he states that, "by 1913, the dispossession of land was already complete, since only 3% of the land was left for black people to socially reproduce themselves. This also meant that the land had lost its name, since it now carried the forced names of the settlers. This land without a name, south of Africa, indicates a cardinal point on the map, and reflects the struggle for a home." He describes private



Image: *Mafolofolo* installation at Hotel Hessenland, documenta fifteen (2022).
Photographs by Frank Sperling, Courtesy of MADEYOULOOK

ownership as something imported by settler colonists, stating that people previously didn't imagine that a person could own the land and "identifies dispossession as the snatching of the entire being of life – of all life linked to the land, from birth to death; linkages of all species and spirits that have made a home in this land to return to it, in death and birth."³

Menagano

In this exhibition, *Menagano*, a text running around the Georgian Gallery Balcony, questions historical modes of landscape art. It opens with the question, "What does it mean to develop a black landscape aesthetic and how might it be different from what we have come to understand or know as the aesthetics of landscape?" In the Georgian Gallery, previously host to the University's Torrie Collection including Dutch landscapes, this could be read against the European landscape tradition. Arising with early-modern Christian societies, this way of looking at land positions the viewer as the sovereign surveyor of a cleared or idealised space. These works speak to ideas of nationhood, ownership and the individual self. It is a perspective that makes everything submissive to the viewer's gaze, including nature itself. Against this tradition, MADEYOULOOK ask questions that try to find alternative positions. "If surveying is an act of making hyper-visible in order to take ownership, is there a place for a black landscape aesthetic concerned with keeping secrets and withholding, to tend and to safeguard?" And, "Could we be informed by the way we name plants based on our close relationships with their character?" Asked within a space that was also the University's former Natural History Museum, once dedicated to the categorisation of species, these questions probe other ways of understanding the world. These questions also reflect ideas within *Mafofolo*: "But also how did Bakoni make images of the land from a bird's eye view? Did they borrow the eyes of the ancestors?"

MADEYOULOOK ask in *Menagano*, "What do we need to unlearn?" While *Mafofolo* challenges us to be within an artwork without complete translation or transliteration. As a place of recovery, it holds open an uncertain space in which other kinds of knowledge, or being, might be permitted. It opens a dialogue with a people who understood what it meant to be with the land.

³ uMbosho Nkosi, "Land as Being", 2024. In *Quiet Ground*, South African Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale

"South Africa's relationship to the land, the skies and the oceans is a fraught one. The soil has been integral to the stories we have told of history, inheritance and faith, a people becoming and a people destroyed. We cannot speak of things of the natural world without the entanglement of human histories of violence. But also of repair, and of returning home."

"... when the land is taken from a people of the land, their spirits go with it."

— MADEYOULOOK, "unfinished business", in *Quiet Ground* (see footnote 3).

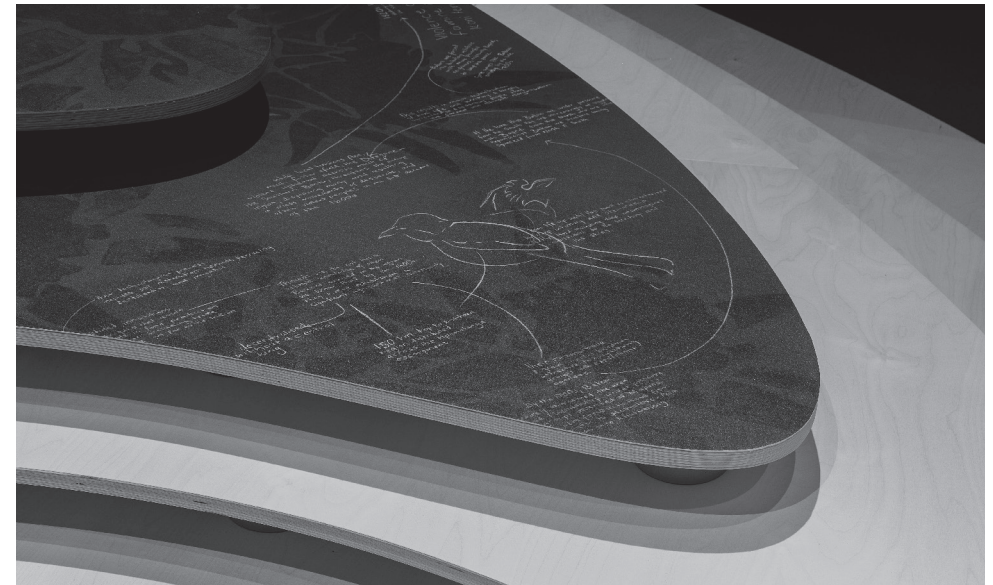


Image: *Mafofolo* installation at Hotel Hessenland, documenta fifteen (2022). Photographs by Frank Sperling. Courtesy of MADEYOULOOK

MADEYOULOOK is a Johannesburg based interdisciplinary artist collaborative between Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho. MADEYOULOOK has exhibited, published and hosted programmes in various forms, including as lumbung artists at documenta fifteen, with Njelele, Zimbabwe, Frac Pays de la Loire, France and KAdE, Netherlands, Primary, UK and various initiatives in South Africa. They are 2022 Fellows of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program. They have also been nominated for the Vera List Centre Prize for Art and Politics at the New School, NY in 2017 and the MTN New Contemporaries prize in 2012.

Events

Talbot Rice Gallery invites audiences of all ages and backgrounds to connect with contemporary art. All our events are free and can be booked via our website.

Little Creative Mornings

A family friendly session where children aged 5+ can explore our exhibitions and get creative with their own hands on activity.

Academic Tours

These informal events invite a specialist from the University of Edinburgh to take a selective route around an exhibition that expands key themes through their research interests.

British Sign Language (BSL) Tours

Join us for a deaf-led tour in British Sign Language. Explore the exhibitions, exchange and share your ideas.

Sensory Friendly Mornings

We welcome children and adults with sensory needs to enjoy the galleries with adjusted lighting and sounds within the exhibition.

Activity Books

Activity Books for young people aged 5+ are available at the front desk and online.



Scan to check out
what's on and
book a free
ticket

Thanks

The dead don't go until we do would not have been possible without lives and works of previous generations. Our thanks to the artists who shared their incredible artworks and the stories of their friends, families, communities and research into those who went before. Thank you Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, Amol K Patil, Kang Seung Lee and MADEYOULOOK.

Thanks to all the galleries who supported these exhibitions: Frith Street Gallery, London, and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles. With special thanks to Ali MacGilp, Director at Frith Street Gallery, for all her work in supporting the selection and loan of works by Małgorzata Mirga-Tas.

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Thanks to our colleagues at Edinburgh College of Art who champion the gallery and its programme, particularly Professor Juan Cruz and Dr Francine Shields.

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