



Being a *creative* in the *new* normal

A collaboration initiated by Thea van Schalkwyk

Being a
creative
in the
new **normal**

Eight dynamic creatives share their experiences and activities during lockdown and how they visualize starting afresh – on the proverbial blank canvas.

A collaboration initiated by Thea van Schalkwyk

Index

Introduction	1
Bongi Bengu	2
James Durno	8
Gordon Glyn-Jones	13
Kgomotso le Roux	20
William Lottering	24
Kim Mobey	29
Harris Wiltsher	33
Thea van Schalkwyk	37
A message of appreciation	43
End note – Copyright and Disclaimer	44

Introduction

As we all know, Covid-19 and lockdown imposed a devastating blow to the world.

The arts industry is probably one of the areas impacted the most.

During lockdown I, Thea van Schalkwyk, contemplated how this global crisis affects fellow *creatives*.

I have asked seven extraordinary *creatives* with whom I resonate on so many significant levels to join me in sharing our experiences during this time – *being a creative in the new normal*.

This is an independent initiative and therefore not affiliated to any organisation or institution.

May our stories open minds, doors and opportunities and also start conversations in a quest for new beginnings.

Bongi Bengu



My name is Bongi Bengu.

I was born in Eshowe in Kwa-Zulu Natal, grew up in exile in Switzerland and later completed my schooling in Swaziland.

I later studied Fine Art at Mount Vernon College in Washington DC, finally obtaining my MFA from University of Cape Town in 1997.

I have been practicing as a full-time professional artist ever since and have participated in numerous residencies, workshops and exhibitions both locally and internationally.

For me, Lockdown 2020 has been an interesting learning experience. I have experienced more opportunities than challenges with COVID19. In the one hand, it has been a productive time allowing me to be more focused on my art and daily meditation practice. Furthermore, it has been a time also for opening up new possibilities for collaboration with other creatives and exploring new ways of working. I was due to have a two person exhibition at the Alliance Francaise Pretoria on August 19, 2020 with Zimbabwean activist artist Sikhulile Precious Sibanda, an exhibition entitled Womxn. She was to talk about women disempowerment particularly discrimination against lesbian women in Zimbabwe and I my angle was describing the “masks” we wear.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19, the exhibition had to be cancelled. One of the art pieces, *Golden Orb Mask I*, 2020, mixed media on paper (right) was created for this exhibition.

(Please note the photo was taken with my phone camera as I had no access to a professional photographer.)



Subsequently, I was approached by artist and exhibition curator Jahni Wasserfall to create a mask for the online group exhibition “*maskonmaskoffmaskon*”.

It was great project because it allowed me to transform my mask which I found very oppressive to wear into a work of art.

I really claimed my role as an alchemist - *someone who transforms things for the better*.

Talking about my mask inspired by African mural painting, my COVID- 19 mask is a reminder to reconnect with Mother Earth.

I particularly love the symbol of the flower as it helps me to learn to see the beauty in every situation.

For this work I have used acrylic paint on dustmask.



My art was featured in another online exhibition *Embodying Her Self*, Latitude Art Fair:

<https://latitudesartfair.com/exhibitors/embodying-hir->

This is a special curator's selection featuring my work too: <https://latitudes.online/news/collect-guest-curator-beathur-mgoza-baker-s-weekly-selection>

Lockdown also presented me with opportunity to conceptualise some exhibitions with Naomi Menyoko, as co- owners of MAP Contemporary Art Gallery, proposals for two online exhibitions.

Proposal #1

Is it Okay Exhibition: ***Is it okay*** is a collaborative exhibition/project between Menyoko and myself .The exhibition focuses on finding ways to empower women through self-sustainability. Covid-19 has had a huge impact on upon South African women and all women the world over. Lockdown has resulted in high levels of gender-based violence, with more women locked down at home with their abusers with nowhere to turn to for help.

With this collaboration our objective is to raise awareness on this issue in order to address this social ill. With the victimising of women in our country we can together find solutions through creative collaboration, find empowerment opportunities and networks for the vulnerable women in our society. The exhibition proposes to include not only discussions on the topic of violence against women but also provide counselling for victims.

We sent our proposal to several sponsors locally and internationally.

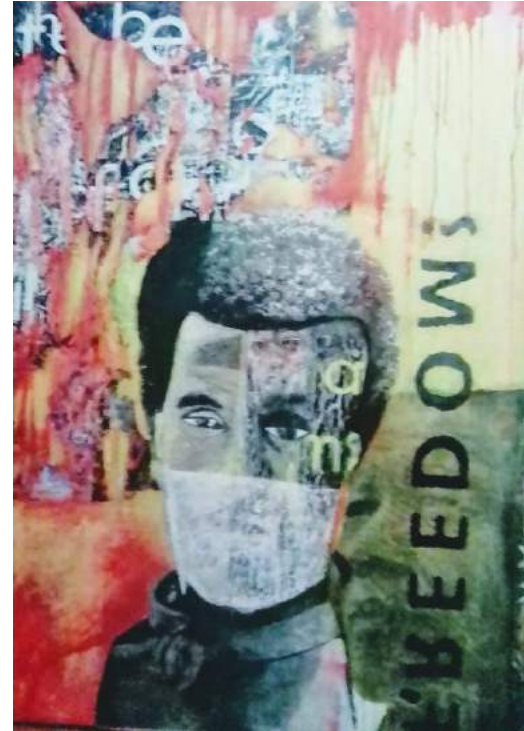
Proposal #2

Shadow People – an exhibition which opens up a dialogue and provides a platform to vocalise such as mental health, depression and the subsequent manner in which we deal with these. It addresses our coping mechanisms during challenging situations. Are we victims or are we empowered by our experiences? How do we access the Light during dark times? The idea is for a group exhibition which also allows a platform for sharing and dialogue

Examples of my some of my other artworks



Mask, mixed media on paper, 87cm x 68cm



Freedom, mixed media on canvas, 120cm x 90cm

To conclude, I would say my experiences of Lockdown 2020 have been more positive than negative. I think to operate as an artist in the “new normal” one has to always be open to new possibilities.

It's a question of perception. Does one see the glass as half empty or half full? Whereas in the past we relied heavily on a physical art galleries and art agents to create platforms for us now we find that we have to reclaim that power and create our own new platforms.

New opportunities to showcase art online that reach a far wider audience locally and internationally have manifested. It's opening up a whole exciting New World.

We are currently conceptualising the launch of Bengu House of Art and Healing, which will focus on art exhibitions, art and healing workshops as well as mentorship programmes. Please watch this space....

Please visit these websites:

www.art.co.za/bongibengu and www.singularart.com



In my studio – very hands-on

Please follow me on social media:

Facebook Pages:

Bongi Bengu Alchemy / Bongi Bengu Alchemy Artworks

Instagram: bongibengu

James Durno

My name is James Durno

I am a Visual Communicator.

I work largely in the corporate strategic communications space as a Visual Thinking Partner, using Visual Language as a communications tool. In this context I generally work with, or alongside groups, using a rapid cartoon shorthand to translate and capture content and conversations.

The live outputs are energetic – executed with whole-body movement from the shoulder – and are big, bold, and gestural, generally in excess of 10m of live work generated in a day.

My background is Fine Art, but I thrive at the intersection of creative disciplines. Exciting things happen when the lines between disciplines bend and blur, allowing for creative osmosis – a paradoxical statement, in that I still consider myself a purist at heart.



My work is underpinned by the discipline of drawing. I believe in the principles of art, and the honesty of materials. I have a romantic attachment to easel art and traditional mediums, and yet love to explore, experiment and break rules. I have dipped my toes into a range of creative expressions including theatre performance and theatre crafts, and have also worked as a commercial illustrator and cartoonist since the mid 90's.

Apart from lecturing Life Drawing and Painting in my early to mid-twenties, I have been self-employed for over 30 years. My journey has been one of continuous re-invention – recalibrating, adapting and evolving.

In 2018 I moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town, with my wife and two sons, and built and renovated our new home and studio—a space designed for groups and creative collaboration. We had just moved into our not-quite-completed home & studio, when Covid19 crashed into our lives.

At midnight on 26 March 2020, South Africa went into Hard Lockdown.

All my live work – equating to almost six months of bookings – was cancelled. Businesses went into crisis management mode and most projects were either put on hold or terminated.

Shortly before Lockdown, I had ordered equipment that would enable me to increase my online capacity, but Government shut down all e-commerce...and so, my equipment spent all of the hard lockdown in a warehouse just 1.5 kilometres from my studio.

I am used to navigating uncertainty. It is the air that all entrepreneurs breathe. But this was unprecedented and unforeseeable.

My immediate response was panic, paralysis and a lockdown of headspace.

My work is in the people space. It depends entirely on human interaction and group dynamic – collaboration and co-creation, intuition, sensing and responding. Listening not only to the words said, but reading body language, tone, and mood.

All my work was now thrust into a virtual vacuum without any of the familiar touch points. I felt to some degree like I had lost my peripheral vision. Online sessions felt simultaneously compressed and fragmented. Time seemed to concertina – stretching and contracting.

The dissonance of virtual interactions has been described as an acute awareness of the presence of each other's absence.

Until e-commerce was able to reopen and my equipment could be delivered, my 18 and 21-year-old sons helped me set up a temporary workaround. We mounted my mobile phone as a droid cam in a hands-free holder, suspended over my workstation on a boom mic stand. This allowed me to switch from dedicated webcam to overhead camera for live drawing in events and workshops. My elder son digitally coloured the outputs freeing me to focus more on the translation of content.

Once ecommerce kicked in again, I was finally able to work with a good quality camera mounted overhead and a 20-inch drawing tablet.

At the beginning of lockdown, I was invited to contribute a weekly Visual Summary for a Cross-Country, Cross-Industry Leadership Support Webinar.

It kicked off on 26th March 2020, the day that South Africa entered a hard lockdown, and ran for 10 weeks. In this wonderful space of generosity and reciprocity, I was able to acclimatise in stages to a “New Normal”.

I found that everyone was experiencing degrees of disorientation. Old paradigms and certainties had been shattered overnight. Business leaders suddenly found themselves expected to lead when they could not even see the next step ahead. We had been thrust into a world of uncertainty, paradox, and double binds.

Time has now passed, and once again I find myself evolving. it is almost like I have begun to develop new senses, a compensation for the senses disallowed.

I have followed my instincts and tried to position myself once again squarely at the centre of human experience – people are hungry for human experiences, now more so than ever before.

Although a tablet allows for immediate digital rendering, my sense is that the viewer experience can be one of disconnection, a disembodied drawing spidering across the screen.

I have instead chosen to work live with pen and paper (my old friends) and live stream my hand physically generating the imagery.



Working during a live session in the 'old normal'

My expectation is that the future will be a mix of work in both the physical and virtual environments. I have built a studio that can accommodate groups, and I look forward to interacting with people in a physical environment once more.

The world has opened up and now my work has greater reach than ever before... but I miss people... I miss so much of the "Old Normal"... and I miss the future...



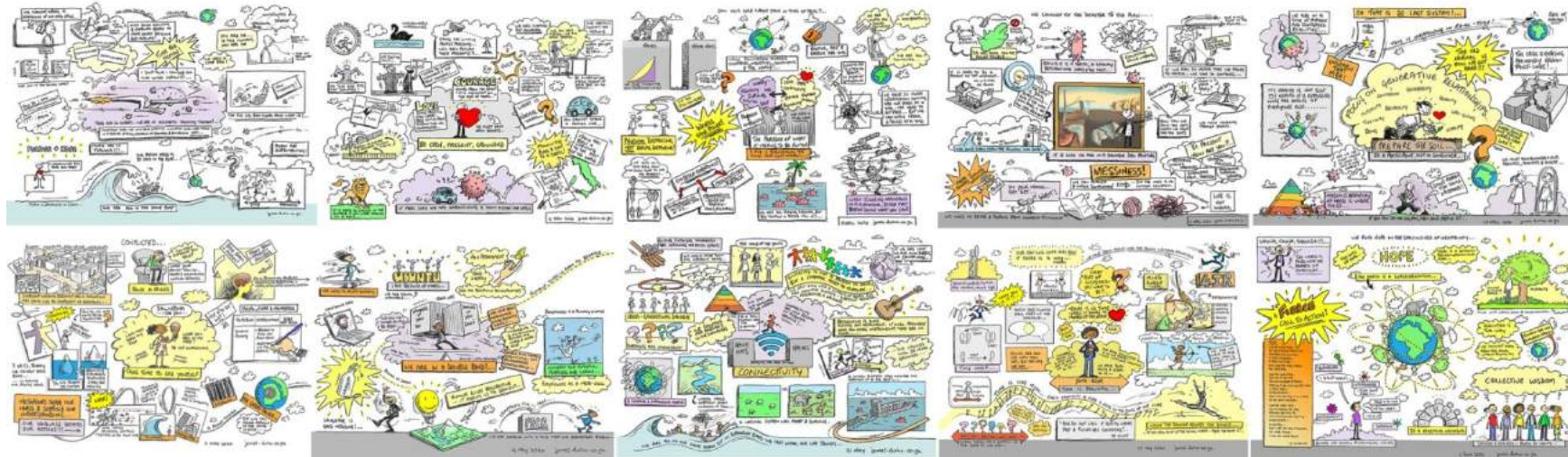
Working during a virtual session in the 'new normal'

The 'old normal'



Live Artwork for a 1 Day Conference. 10m x 1.5m on Fabriano

The 'new normal'



Visual Summaries of weekly cross-industry leadership support webinars – from the beginning of hard lockdown in SA for 10 weeks.

Please visit my website: www.james.durno.co.za

Gordon Glyn-Jones

My name is Gordon Glyn-Jones.

I am a Zimbabwe-born artist based in London. I studied painting at Michaelis and periodically write about art for The South African.com.

I founded a contemporary lifestyle magazine, which led to a career as a culture editor for various magazines in Cape Town and then London, but following my vocation, recently returned to full time fine art practice.

As a way to discover my core subject matter, I committed to drawing every day and sharing the drawings to Instagram [@gordonglynjones](https://www.instagram.com/gordonglynjones) (Over 400 drawings to date). I am returning to painting this year and currently working on a body of work for a solo show in March next year.

Photo credit: Faridanifoto



What on earth just happened?

How many of you can relate to the following sentence?

“Well, just before Covid I was about to... [] but then...”.

I was no different. Early 2020, in the pipeline I had: a curation project, a gallery residency and a creative drawing workshop (presenting to an architectural firm of seventeen employees).

I now have none of these things. As of last week, that firm now has only eight permanent staff, none of whom work in the office anymore (one with a family member who passed away). I'm not reliving this simply out of morbid nostalgia, but rather to take a moment to honour what we've lost: the people, the entire industries, countless livelihoods, the projects and hopes for the future.

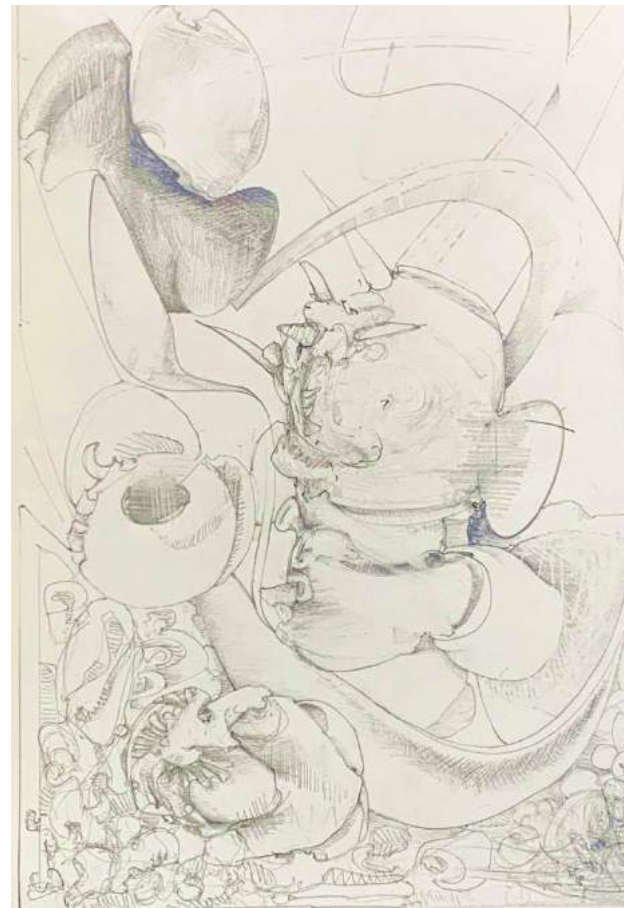


One of my drawing workshops in full flight

I think we've also experienced something else; a deep visceral transformation; a kind of global loss of innocence. Not only was this the first ever truly global event in recorded history, but it was also the first time a single information charge was detonated, and the shockwave affected almost every soul on earth, practically overnight.

And yet, I am excited. Perhaps we have something more than when we began. I truly believe that artists are generators of the intellectual and spiritual richness in society. This means it is our responsibility to work harder than ever to counter the effects of mass-media and also the political binaries and hyper-commercialism.

As artists and communicators, it's crucial that we consider the impact this has on our humanity and spiritual wellbeing. We are now more than ever, subject to the devastating power of the global information network. As a result, we've lost freedom of movement and freedom of choice, but most worryingly, we've also lost freedom of self-determination.



Circus 2020, pencil and ink, 42cm x 30cm

How I responded structurally

As an artist I deeply value getting out into the community, sharing energy and ideas. I live and work by myself from home, and I was concerned that I might simply hibernate or worse. I did my share of Zoom calls, but this always feels like trying to sing opera through a keyhole! Therefore I decided instead to transform my immediate environment to adapt to whatever world we're left with 'after'. I took the following actions:

- My living room has been lined with plastic as a studio and I refurbished a hut in my garden as a second studio for oil painting.
- I transformed a room in my house into a pristine gallery space for solo and group salons.
- Every inch of wall space in my house now illustrates aspects of my aesthetic journey, so it's a completely immersive space to share my creative world.
- I have built two new large drawing boards, which will allow eight people to join my drawing workshops, not four.

Honouring the management meme: *"It's the most adaptable that survives the best"*, my vision is to continue to build a community around me, but from within my own immersive art space, one small group at a time. Let me know if you would like to visit?



A view from within my studio

How has it transformed my art?

It feels like heresy to say this, but for me, this was a time of creative revelation and growth. It felt like a forced sabbatical, a time to really focus and calibrate the process. It was a gift.

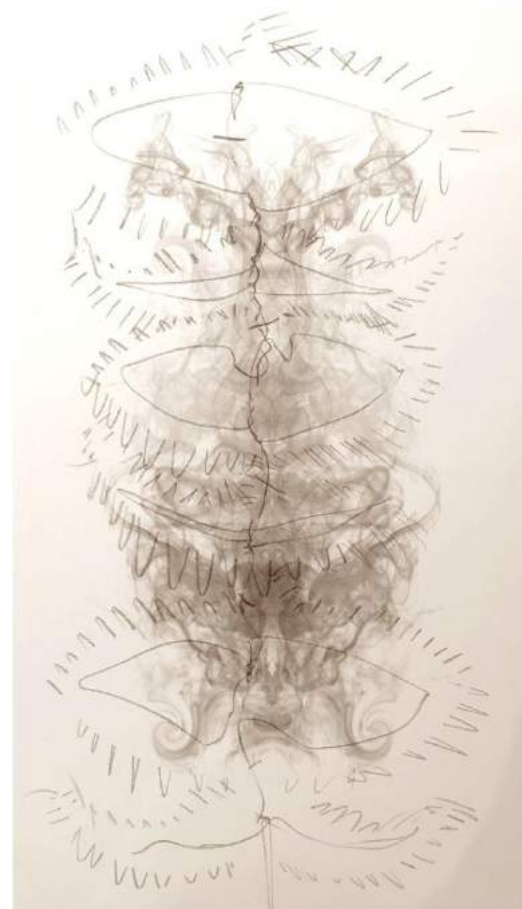
In the last two years I have shared over 400 daily drawings on my Instagram [@gordonglynjones](https://www.instagram.com/gordonglynjones). One of the tasks I set during Covid-19, was to choose just ten works from those that formally and thematically represent the seeds of my future visual identity.

My work can be described succinctly as: '*Visual folk tales of the future*' or '*Visual prophecies*'. Broadly speaking, my points of departure are the fine art traditions of surrealism and futurism.

However, the work also draws on other traditions such as folk illustration, sci-fi illustration, and flat graphic works from for example, countries like Japan and China.

I believe many of us are now more concerned about what the future holds, so it has added an edge of authenticity and urgency to my work.

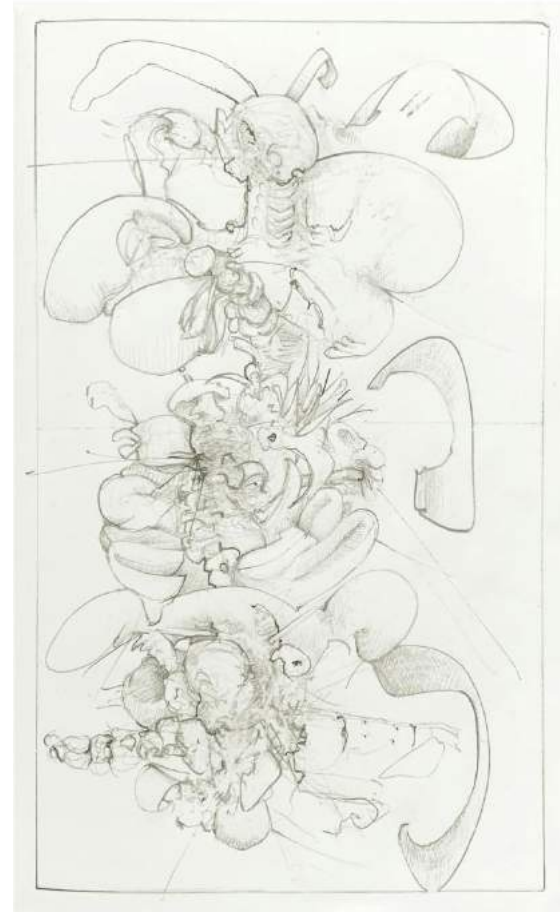
Covid allowed me to crystallise these things and for this, I'm very grateful!



Kite 2020, pencil and ink, 60cm x 35cm



Whey! 2020, pencil and ink, 20cm x 25cm



Troisbewoki 2 2020, ink and pencil, 10cm x 15cm

What possibilities for the art world?

Conversationally, I heard these concerns in art practitioner circles:

- Arts budgets will be cut.
- People will have less money to spend on art.
- Many artists with second jobs will be out of work.

However, we artists are used to finding creative ways to survive!

Many believe this is an opportunity to transform the world into a more equitable place. Artists invariably lead social change and help new communities form.

I think ultimately it comes down to keeping an open mind. So for example, recently I was with a friend mourning the drop in my art sales. However, she countered:

“No, think about it Gordon, there’ll be more people at home who want their environments to be beautiful? They’ll spend less on commuting, and have more available for art!”

It was a perspective I simply had not thought of.

So, in conclusion, what I learned from this is:

- Stay creative and be a leader in inventing the ‘new normal’.
- Be brave. Communicate with others about your challenges, they will help!
- Embrace the role of artists as social catalysts; we are vital right now!

Be well, be Creative!

Join my salons or drawing workshops:

contact@gordonglyn-jones.com

Please visit my website:

www.gordonglyn-jones.com

Kgomotso le Roux



My name is Kgomotso le Roux.

I'm an ethnomusicologist and creative industries project manager born from a family of artists and educators.

Being a creative in the new normal feels like a calling that keeps on giving meaning to life and leads to many moments where you are simply grateful to be alive.

Some would wonder how different it is for a female artist, independent music service professional, sponsor and music publisher to strive for success during the Coronavirus pandemic context we are in.

It helps to be based in Johannesburg where connectivity allows us to trade on online international markets. However, losing between 25% and 50% of my projected live performance income linked to face to face access to approximately 4000 audience members on average was difficult to deal with.

Steadily growing the database of thousands of people in a targeted way has assisted in maximizing the time available to generate an income through qualitative leads. I've been running this current business for over 4 years now. For the first time, I have experienced cancellations and indefinite postponement of work that was to take place in South Africa. My peers have lost out on international collaborations that would have required physical travel.

The kind of revenue I lost was corporate event bookings and low textile merchandise sales. I am usually able to plan a year ahead for my work-related activities. Now I am driven by the need to create work for the 17 people that are impacted by the loss of that income. This would include artists, venues and other independent arts service professionals. Our business activities have been moved online. There is greater flexibility to work from home, although we had been operating that way for over 4 years with an agile organizational structure that is project based. We agreed with clients to postpone but not cancel work until a future date.

I spent lots of time fundraising with many rejections received. I'm really interested in developing innovative ideas with my fellow artists that don't require face to face interaction. I got to a point where I used my savings to a point of depletion but now, I can happily say that there is cash flow and it's starting to look healthy for the next few months. I thought of selling equipment and assets to bolster cash flow. I'm so glad I didn't have to do that. We have to plan for 5 years in advance in order to avoid gap months increase reserves for those rainy days where nothing is generated.

In the face of this, clients want to pay less although the cost of living has almost doubled in these past few months. Support from family and friends have really been great. I think that in order to develop as artists, we need to create strategies that will enable us to have an international career in what we have been called to do.

We need to find ways to collaborate using what we have to develop new quality products that would be useful to our target clients.

Having an agreement based on common goals and objectives will allow us to create a workable plan that will hopefully lead to a great return on investment.

As a creative who works in an organization, if I were to share our strengths, we are agile and recruit talent based on the project at hand, the team members' qualifications, experience and availability. We are well connected locally and internationally. Our understanding of the arts and experience are our key strength because this has allowed us to diversify income and receive work even during a time when too many people aren't.

Some of our weaknesses as an organization are that because we don't employ anyone, when big orders are received, it's difficult to secure the human capital on time to fulfil the order. When our suppliers or associates are loaded with work from other clients, this puts us at risk of producing substandard work. I suppose it's true what they say, what is a blessing can turn around and be a curse if you don't plan adequately to mitigate those associated risks.

During this pandemic, one of our weaknesses is working very long hours and being fearful of the future where we

wish we could just have a sneak peek into what it will look like so that we can leapfrog to an advantageous position.

My company hasn't received COVID-19 relief. If my business qualified, the kind of government support that would be useful to me is funding specifically to enable our company to have a sustainable international clientele for our products and services. Low interest loans or bridging finance would assist our country to encourage an economy to emerge that does not create a dependency on grant income.

The post COVID-19 future is anyone's guess. It would probably involve a hybrid business model that looks at growth online and offline. I'm not sure exactly what that will look like but am fortunate to be involved in research projects as we see what other practitioners are doing locally and internationally to see what works and in which context.

Together, we can rebuild at a quicker rate than alone.



Aluta Continua

Please visit these websites:

www.khwelafactory.co.za

www.iksafrica.com

<https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.org.za/>

William Lottering

My name is William Lottering. Thanks for inviting me to be part of this conversation and to share what I have been doing. I am an artist and writer and also an art and project consultant.

I have been living in Canada since 1991. I wanted to live near New York and Chicago for artistic reasons, and be close to Europe. This location has served me well, as I have traveled extensively and experienced the international art world first-hand in the past twenty-five years.

At the time of our emigration from South Africa, I was an announcer and producer at RSG, where I was creating radio programs, radio dramas and stories, music programs, read news, etc. Although broadcasting was an exciting, creative medium, I kept working on my art practice too, exhibiting my work frequently. Before that, I lectured at the University of Pretoria. After arriving in Canada, I returned to the visual arts and art education, where I had a long and happy career. Currently, I work full-time in my art studio and write. I also speak about art, give workshops, teach classes and promote the arts in general.

In March 2020, I was getting ready to travel to South Africa, which I visited every year.

I would have spent the month of May there before returning to Canada. In January 2020, I had a booked exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum for 2021 and would have spent the visit preparing for the exhibition. I had already created many works specifically for this show. I also intended to visit a publisher regarding the upcoming publication of my novel.

When the Coronavirus crisis struck and lockdown procedures world-wide became the new norm, I had to re-think and re-organize. Many of my projects were affected. For example, my life-drawing class, taught in the town of Newmarket's public gallery, now seemed redundant. So were the master painting classes in my own studio. The Pretoria Art Museum exhibition also had to be cancelled until further notice. Doing physical research in the Art Gallery of Ontario and other institutions was jeopardized and traveling outside of the country – which I depended on as an academic – was suddenly out of the question. In 2020, I was planning another trip to the Netherlands, where I needed to do some research.

Apart from my work, my mother passed away during the lockdown. As I live in Canada, I was not allowed into South Africa at the time and as result, had to see my mother passing away online.

I have done some re-organizing during lockdown.

Making the most of (a lot of) time, I renovated my website www.williamlottering.com. It needed an update and is now again representative of the scope of my art practice.

When my mother fell ill in March, I was already working on a family history book titled *Soetkoekies and Wrestling* which I then continued with more deliberation. I finished and printed the 200 page work in June. This was just for my family – a private source of information.

Writing seemed to be the way to keep working for me, as I have written much in the course of my career, both academically and creatively. In March, I finished a radio drama called *Vrydag 13e* (Friday 13th) translated it into English and then later reworked it into a stage play. Parallel to this, I am working on notes for a second drama.

I completed an Afrikaans novel in 2019. During the lockdown, I finalized negotiations with a publisher and proceeded to the publishing stage. The novel is titled *Emigrant Immigrant* and is projected to be in South African bookstores in December 2020. I used one of my own paintings for the front cover page (right).



Land of the Displaced, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 40"

As I am writing this, I am sitting safely in a cottage in the Laurentian mountains in Quebec, where I have started writing another novel.

I am now thinking of compiling an online exhibition, as I have seen some artists have done in the past months. However, I am convinced that there must be another way to communicate our work. Perhaps we are at a stage where art has to be reborn into something new. I am contemplating the pros and cons about this form of presentation and watching carefully to see where society will be going with us artists.

On a personal note, I created a nice back yard fountain in a corner my garden. It provided me with lots of personal satisfaction.

Below is a synopsis of the developments in my life and career during Covid-19.

My prospects for 2020 were to teaching life drawing in my hometown, teaching a master painting class in my studio, working on an exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum – well on the way, but stalled, writing a family history – finished, writing a drama – working on two, finished one, to publish an Afrikaans novel – in process

and will be on the shelf in December 2020, to start writing a new novel – started while in Quebec, and to travel to Amsterdam and South Africa.

I had to cancel traveling to the Netherlands and South Africa – my mother passed away, the exhibition at Pretoria Art Museum, master classes in painting, and my life drawing classes and any projects with groups.

New possibilities are to expand my virtual presence, organize virtual exhibitions, investigate new art forms, find interaction with other disciplines and focus more on writing.

I also share examples of some of my recent artworks.

Please visit my website:

www.williamlottering.com.



Untitled 2020, mixed media on canvas, 18" x 50"



A Traveler at Night 2020
acrylic on canvas, 30" x 40"



The Journey 2020
acrylic on canvas, 50" x 24"



The Journey 2020
mixed media on canvas and paper, 60" x 48"



Work in progress in my studio



Fountain 2020, concrete and wood, 108" h x 60" wide

Kim Mobey

My name is Kim Mobey.

I am a portrait artist, sculptor and educator.

I began deliberately making art and portraits in particular at age six and sold my first sculpture through a commercial gallery in my early teens.

I am deeply drawn to stories of humanity and our global human diaspora over the millennia.

I make art that reflects our shared human heritage and looks toward our future as a species, informed by modern aesthetic sensibilities and forms.

I offer internships at my studio, contribute as much as possible to art-centred social development projects and work to support fellow creatives through research and my own studio output.



A montage of my work

Lockdown has been a brutal time for artists and creatives. Cultural activities around the world have been shut down to protect our most vulnerable family members. South Africa's very stringent lockdown dealt a devastating blow to my studio and many other artists. Shipping, buying supplies and even selling locally became illegal over the busiest season and much of my studio's income vanished overnight, with many collectors postponing commissions and purchases as a part of ensuring their own financial stability.

I had just come back from a short international tour and had plans to leave for a 3 month residency in The Hague in May of 2020. Print sales also promised a generous and predictable new form of income for the studio. Needless to say all the investment of time and money vanished once it became clear that the pandemic was spreading. There was no time to make up for the sudden loss of seasonal income as art shipping was illegal. With no clear end in sight there was no hope of making up the losses through international sales so I had to innovate completely new, lockdown-proof approaches which took time to implement but which are finally finding their feet.

As far as challenges are concerned, there are so many documented cases of corruption around the various grants that were touted as the panacea to the economic fallout of both the lockdown and the broader global economic downturn. This included the Solidarity fund being handed out as loans instead of donations. There is still no clarity on how private donors would be repaid or if the banks get to keep all Solidarity loan repayments. I was fortunate enough to be accepted for a grant from the Skukuma Relief fund at the beginning of the lockdown.

This allowed me to pay my sister, who was working as my studio manager at the time. The respite was brief, however, and with almost no incoming funds I was forced into the brutal and humiliating process of applying for credit extensions from the South African banking system to cover overheads and her income. This has possibly been the most harrowing and traumatic part of the lockdown for us and we have been forced to spend a huge proportion of our time on bureaucracy and paperwork and, ultimately, in my sister / studio manager having to apply for other jobs, leaving me to run all of the logistics, marketing, admin and production and sales alone again. All while trying to complete new artworks.

For everyone in the creative industries though, the sudden absence of traditional gatekeepers allows new voices to be heard at last. This bodes well for a flush of new, fresh art that flies in the face of what has been mainstream for the last century.

BLM came to prominence at long last during lockdown and has fundamentally changed my artistic practice. As a white person, everything I say about BLM has the potential to be harmful, traumatic and uninformed. My work therefore is now primarily to understand and accept the lessons that will show me the way forward. Works I produce at this time are works of exploration and finding my own ignorance in the face of centuries worth of accumulated imbalance.

I have to believe change is possible because that is my fundamental understanding of the universe. I primarily paint portraits of people of colour, but whereas before I was as a white artist trying to show the world a new perspective on the human diaspora, Africa and our shared history, now I am a student and I have a lot to learn. I have no idea what this is going to do to my art and to my psyche but I am always hopeful that good change will happen.

Fortunately BLM will march on regardless of whether I personally succeed or fail.

New possibilities are dawning for the business of art too. As a move to greater independence and becoming “lockdown-proof” I have created and implemented a strategy for international printmaking that is beginning to show sales and significant promise for my fellow visual artists.

Provenance Key Prints is an open source strategy for protecting fine art prints made remotely.

It isn't proprietary software and it cannot be interfered with by outside parties, making it accessible to all visual artists with access to a computer and the internet.

Each individual print contains a completely unique digital key embedded in the image. This key is recorded in the individual artist's studio as a part of their Catalogue Raisonné. The image is then sent to a highly reputable printmaker anywhere in the world. I recommend sourcing printers based on their current client list and involvement with reputable art institutions.

This once-off image is printed only once, assuring each artwork is both unique and perfectly documented. Any duplication is easily traced to the original buyer and printmaker, leaving the onus on the collector to protect their investment and on the printer to protect their reputation.

The best part is that the print can be made by a reputable Giclee printmaker anywhere in the world and collected or sent directly to collectors without any concerns over international shipping, customs, delays, damage or the possibility of future lockdowns.

Please visit my website:

www.kimmobey.com



Harris Wiltsher

My name is Harris Wiltsher.

A Bronx, New York native and a product of Jamaican and African-American heritage, my artistic endeavors span from being a Bronx Recognizes Its Own (BRIO) recipient, visiting artist, lecturer, independent curator, J. William Fulbright Scholar (South Africa, 1994), program administrator for a public art program, professor and gallery director at Florida A & M University, a leading historically black university located in Tallahassee, Florida, USA.



Opening reception at my solo exhibition, 2018

My art career was cultivated at the High School of Art & Design in New York City with training in cartooning and illustration. This was an interesting time during the budding art form called hip-hop during the late 1970s to the mid 1980's. My creative energy throughout my early life was in music – I played clarinet for six years, art and in dance – as I was a part of a group discovered to play a role in the seminal hip-hop movie *Beat Street* produced by Harry Belafonte.

Fast forward. COVID-19 has provided me an opportunity to rethink how I can connect with my students – despite the health challenges it has caused and the unfortunate and untimely deaths of so many people around the world. At my university in March, we were required to switch from face-to-face instruction to remote education within two weeks time! No one was prepared for this but for the sake of our love for education it was essential. The university switched to a new platform called CANVAS and training in the summer was intense. Those new technologies better equipped me to engage with my students with my true upbeat personality and have them be very productive. Employing online interactive sites like Kahoot! (www.kahoot.com) gives me the flexibility to add a measure of competition and fun to the remote instruction experience.



Students from my Design and Printmaking classes

Another challenge this year was an exhibition that I curated entitled “*VOICES: A Collection of SIX Decades of Art*”. This exhibition celebrated a number of artists spanning over the sixty years existence at Florida A&M University’s Visual Arts Program. There were 38 participating artists and the exhibition opened prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in February.

The opening reception was a success but the disappointment arose from the cancellation of an alumni reunion, reception and facilities tour scheduled in April for alumni.



Logo created by FAMU art alumni Jaymee Smith

In life there will always be challenges but the year of COVID-19 has also been quite rewarding professionally as I have continued exhibiting monthly in various juried exhibitions around the United States (ten exhibitions so far), won several awards, captured another technology grant for the art program and sold some artwork which is a practicing artist’s goal. Though my production has been somewhat hampered, my knowledge and fervor for social media marketing and developing avenues for my work to be experienced has grown.



Dancing Crown 2020, serigraph, 30” x 22”

My presence on social media is improving as I have received very positive feedback on my instructional print-making videos on Instagram.

As I continue to work on the **Crowns** series, currently highlighting the aesthetic of patterned head wraps and the varying shades of people of color, is a collection of serigraphs on black Rives BFK paper – as seen in the image of an artwork, *Dancing Crown*, I have shared in the previous page.

The **Concerns** series focuses on the political/social climate in the United States caused by polarizing leadership and the subsequent and continued fallout between Black and White America.

Please visit these websites:

<https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/harris-wiltsher>
www.harriswiltsher.com (currently under reconstruction)

Please follow me on social media:

Facebook Page: Harris Wiltsher Fine Art
 Instagram: harriswiltsher.art



Divided Patriots 2019, serigraph, 22" x 30"

Thea van Schalkwyk

My name is Thea van Schalkwyk.

I was born and raised in a creative environment which became the foundation of my art studies and teaching.

I started my career as an art teacher and then became involved in a reputable and respected family art-based business in which we promoted and supported artists.

Since I've started my own business, I have focused on managing art projects and programmes on private, corporate and educational levels – in South Africa and abroad.

I have also self-published ebooks for educational support.

I recently started working on my own art again.



*Photographed at the Pretoria Art Museum
for an article for The South African.*

Credit: Rupert de Beer and artist Bongji Bengu

Traditionally – ‘in the previous normal’ – I was an art gallery manager, exhibition curator and consultant and also a teacher.

I sourced art for clients both locally and abroad, consolidated collections, sold art as part of business rescue and for private clients who experienced financial problems. I also did valuations of collections and art from deceased estates and for those who are just a little curious about the value of a particular piece.

I taught art at South African high school and international school level – even guest taught abroad. I also guest lectured at university level.

Prior to lockdown, I have had constructive meetings towards delivering bespoke services and programmes to groups and individuals. I was also preparing for what I view ‘*my life’s work*’ – a critical programme for unemployed youth in the Cape.

I was happy and grateful for the progress unfolding. Yet, when lockdown started, every single area of my working landscape became quiet.

I turned this situation into a period of positive thinking. ‘Quiet’ and ‘nothingness’ are not necessarily negatives – they offer voids inviting new energy.



*Reflecting on past project highlights
to imagine future opportunities*

(photographed in front of the South African Parliament)

I engaged in a conversation with myself 'in the previous normal' – contemplating the role of both an art consultant and educator as my known key branding. Perhaps these would develop further and merge and may now also be evolving into serving a wider social reach.

Perhaps rebranding myself as a creative thinker and learner coupled with accompanying investigation and supportive problem-solving would be the new model rather than to “advise” and “teach”.

For me, lockdown felt like an unexpected and unplanned sabbatical. From being a businesswoman always on the move, I have become an observer of the world around me. Clients and those in my network had to deal with their challenges. I remained in contact with some of them via Skype and by sending regular communiqués – with no formal branding – just me staying in touch. I also sent a free art activity booklet for all to do while they stayed at home. I took one step back and gave them their space.

Covid-19 and lockdown have traumatised and psychologically displaced people. Thoughts of uncertainty and fear cloud minds. My father passed on in a retirement centre during this time – grieving and finding closure have become abstract.

I re-evaluated every single individual and group in my network in terms of possible future value I could add to their lives.

With both my LinkedIn and Facebook pages I reduced my contacts drastically to only the most important ones and am gradually rebuilding these platforms, visualising meaningful new connections and mutual-beneficially collaborations.

I spent parts of my days reading on a variety of topics and viewing documentaries – some of which would most probably have some influence on and impact my new future.

Perhaps new dynamics in thinking would transpire towards building a new world.

Ideas would possibly morph into previously unthinkable opportunities – at first on small, manageable and attainable scale.

I view this collaborative project with seven extraordinary creatives as an example for this – the start of new dialogues and narratives.

I have completed my book '**Can Art Change Lives?**'.

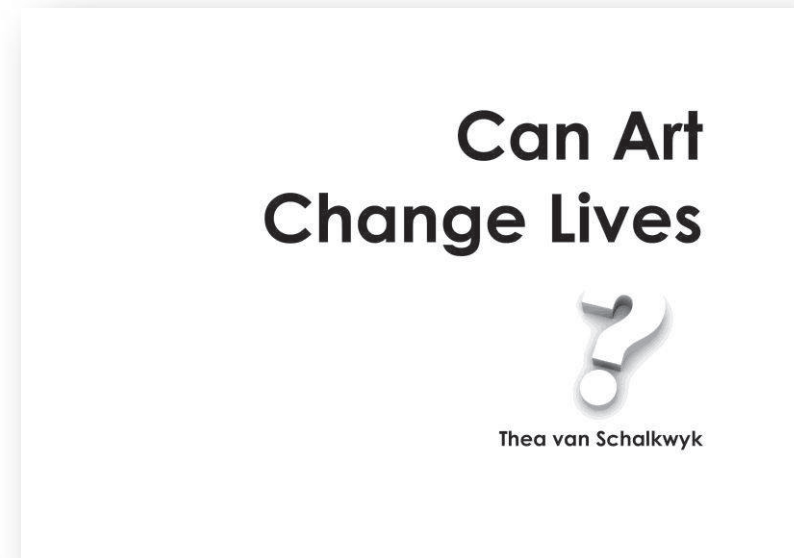
I am rewriting certain parts lead by new insightful research. My experience and skills may now become even more needs-meeting in an almost **humanitarian** format.

Here is a short excerpt from my book:

Much has been written about related thoughts and variances. As much has been debated. Yet I find that after numerous articles I have read, documentaries I have viewed, perceptions I have contemplated and informal conversations I have encouraged, it has all been too philosophical. These still do not offer practical, real-life outcomes and significant value.

Art and creativity play different roles on different levels in people's lives on all levels of society. Interest in and importance and priority of these vary. For some art in all its forms is an integral part of life. Others may see it as something almost arbitrary, yet they 'use' it almost daily.

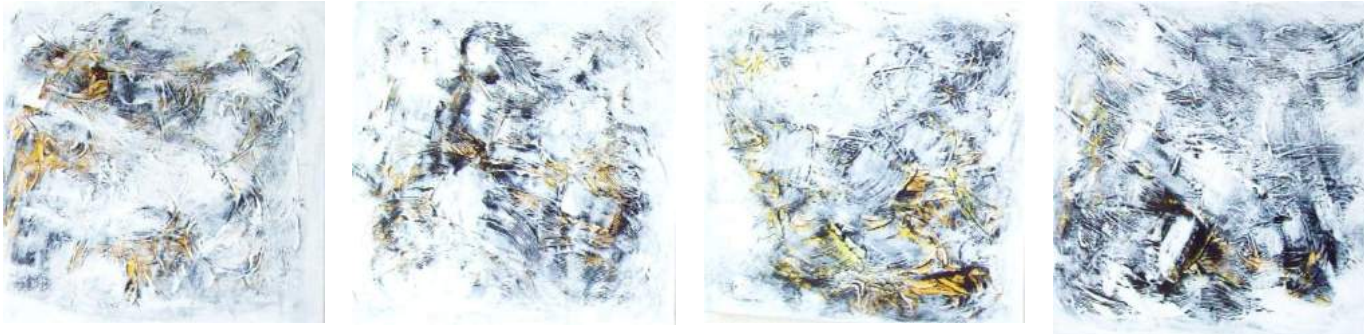
A small percentage of the world's population is privileged enough to be able to acquire works of art and support arts-related platforms in their purest form. For them it is almost a given, something they simply cannot live without. What about the rest of the world population? How can art be meaningful to them? Where do we start?



I share images of some of my artworks.



Visual Meditation – Fire Water Earth Air, mixed media on canvas, 3 x 50cm x 50cm



New Genesis, mixed media on canvas, 4 x 30cm x 30cm



Fairy Land, mixed media on canvas, 100cm x 100cm

May conversations 'interrupted' by lockdown resume and new ones begin? In a changing world, I wish to offer more art-centred solutions.

I visualize a new world wherein art can change lives!

Please visit my LinkedIn profile:

[linkedin.com/in/thea-van-schalkwyk-52677372](https://www.linkedin.com/in/thea-van-schalkwyk-52677372)

(Full bio available here)

Please read these articles:

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/art-artists/five-ways-art-can-impact-lives/>

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/art-artists/conversation-with-an-art-consultant-on-the-sa-art-market/>

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/art-centred-solutions-for-unemployed-youth-in-south-africa/>

A message of appreciation

I wish to extend a heartfelt and sincere thank you to the seven fellow *creatives* who have shared their stories. I am well aware that you may be facing challenges or uncertainty amid this abnormal time. Your enthusiasm, tremendous efforts and openness will always be remembered.

May this project be the beginning of an ongoing forward-thinking conversation between us?

Please stay safe and continue to produce your wonderful art!

End note – Copyright and Disclaimer

This ebook is disseminated for free. It may under no circumstances whatsoever be promoted for sales purposes.

This is an independent initiative and therefore not affiliated to any organisation or institution.

Some of the issues shared in terms of freedom of expression may not reflect the views and opinions of the initiator/author.

This document, or any part thereof, including specialized programmes, services and products as advertised, may under no circumstances be reproduced or presented in any other format and by another party other than the collaborators or without written permission from the initiator/author and collaborators.

The initiator/author and contributors trust your integrity.

© Contributors 2020 – Texts, Images, IP and services. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

© Thea van Schalkwyk 2020 – Concept, IP and services ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.