

BRETT MURRAY | *Limbo*



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Limbo

8 October – 1 November 2021



28 NATURE: MOON

MOON

Our planet's only natural satellite waxes and wanes in its cycle, marking a cyclical rhythm that suggests birth (the emerging crescent), life (the full moon), death (the new moon), and rebirth (the return of the waxing crescent). The lunar cycle thus represents continuous regeneration and immortality.

As the moon does not generate its own light but merely reflects the glory of the sun, it is thought of as passive and, in patriarchal cultures, feminine. Its waxing or "growth" to fullness is linked to both agrarian fertility and impregnation, further extending the moon's life associations. The female menstrual cycle corresponds so closely to the twenty-eight-day lunar cycle that it is called menses, Latin for "months."

The crescent moon, with its two sharp points, evokes cattle horns, a sign of power and male virility. (This masculine association only reinforces the moon's fertility symbolism.) Egyptian portrayals of Isis, for instance, feature the goddess wearing a headdress comprised of a sun nestled between crescent moon horns. In Christian iconography the Virgin Mary is often depicted standing on a supine crescent moon. (See *Bill Horn/Antlers*.)

That the moon "appears" and "disappears" contributes to its association with fickleness and instability—in contrast to the steadfast sun. The inconstancy of the moon was believed to cause mental instability in humans, which is reflected in pejoratives such as lunatic and moonstruck.



FIGURES

The red bronze rabbit's "moon gazing" pose alludes to the Japanese folklore of a rabbit living on the moon, making rice-cake (mochi) in China, rabbit droppings are known euphemistically as "moon gas." (Jap. *tsuki no*...

A still from Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, "Turn of Mind" scene. (Left) The moon is "the eye of the night," looking a crack in its right eye leads to partial blindness and a dimension of its mythic (and human) identity.





LIMBO

During lockdown, at the onset of the pandemic, I set up a studio at home. Although historically most of my work metaphorically throws satirical stones at perceived ills in society, I have recently worked out that the process of making is, in itself, therapeutic. I am a slow learner. I just needed to keep busy.

Whereas before, my animal sculptures might symbolically mock predators, policemen, politicians, oligarchs, sycophants, the corrupted and the like, during lockdown I felt impelled to look closer to home for my subject matter. My interests had been shifting from perpetrators to people and I have been wanting to transition from an accusatory position to one that is more compassionate and empathetic. Not exclusively though ... I remain a stone thrower at heart.

I have been researching the small Japanese Netsuke kimono fasteners for a while. Deliciously refined and pared down, decorative mini-sculptures carved in stone, wood or ivory – sometimes cast into metals and mostly of animals. In my enquiries I came across the Japanese tradition of placing a to-scale wooden sculpture of a rabbit looking heavenwards outside houses and businesses as charms that might bring prosperity, good luck and fertility.

This seemed like a good place to kick off my lockdown therapy, so I started by making small symbolic portraits of the four of us at home as animals – my partner, myself and our two young boys. Sanell [Aggenbach] loves rabbits. Lo is wise beyond his age and is represented as an owl. Kai is a mischievous monkey. All three looking to the heavens for guidance or as witnesses to an impending calamity. I hold my hands, looking down anxiously, as a monkey – and a father. In hope and in fear.

These first four seemed to resonate so I extended the series, describing the intimacy and anxiety of isolation and of social separation that has been a universally shared experience and somehow paradoxically binds humanity together. Hopefully.

– Brett Murray, June 2021



Hold
bronze
Edition of 6
58 x 30 x 46 cm
(22³/₄ x 11³/₄ x 18 in)



Loom
bronze
Edition of 6
55 x 25 x 32 cm
(21⁵/₈ x 9³/₄ x 12¹/₂ in)



Limbo
marble and gold leaf
Edition of 3
50 x 83 x 3.7 cm
(19 5/8 x 32 5/8 x 1 3/8 in)



Witness
bronze
Edition of 6
35 x 18 x 18.9 cm
(13 3/4 x 7 x 7 3/8 in)



Shield
bronze
Edition of 6
55 x 45 x 35 cm
(21 ⁵/₈ x 17 ⁵/₈ x 13 ³/₄ in)



Omen
bronze
Edition of 6
25 x 18 x 28 cm
(9³/₄ x 7 x 11 in)







Citizen
bronze
Edition of 6
63 x 58 x 46 cm
(24³/₄ x 22³/₄ x 18 in)



Wait
bronze
Edition of 6
25 x 27 x 42 cm
(9³/₄ x 10⁵/₈ x 16¹/₂ in)



Premonition
bronze
Edition of 6
40 x 16.5 x 19 cm
(15⁵/₈ x 6³/₈ x 7³/₈ in)





RIGHT AND PAGE 15 (DETAIL)

Tether

bronze

Edition of 6

66 x 53 x 35 cm

(26 x 20³/₄ x 13³/₄ in)





Refuge
Carrara marble
Edition of 5
43 x 30.2 x 60 cm
(16 7/8 x 11 7/8 x 23 1/2 in)





Pause
bronze
Edition of 6
41 x 21 x 27 cm
(16 1/8 x 8 1/4 x 10 5/8 in)



Limbo
bronze
Edition of 6
50 x 25 x 32 cm
(19 5/8 x 9 3/4 x 12 1/2 in)



Bide
bronze
Edition of 6
30 x 41 x 45 cm
(11³/₄ x 16¹/₈ x 17⁵/₈ in)



Protect
bronze
Edition of 6
40 x 25 x 30 cm
(15⁵/₈ x 9³/₄ x 11³/₄ in)



RIGHT AND PAGE 22 (DETAIL)

Bond

bronze

Edition of 6

58 x 30 x 52 cm

(22³/₄ x 11³/₄ x 20³/₈ in)



WHO
ARE THE
ADULTS?

Who?

Marble and gold leaf

Edition of 3

50 x 83 x 3.7 cm

(19 ⁵/₈ x 32 ⁵/₈ x 1 ³/₈ in)





BRETT MURRAY

b. 1961, South Africa

With children you start to wrestle with the contradictions of a macro and a micro vision. The larger global picture ... climate change ... violence ... wars ... the rise of right-wing fascism ... identity politics and an embedded uncertainty ... these are now experienced through the lens of a parent ... in granular detail. Things shift from the bravado of an angry young man shouting at the world ... to that of a protector. Public vs private. Your concerns are the same ... but the impact is more intimate. It's about The Family.

This exhibition was born out of ideas of privacy, protection, sanctuary and concealment. An earlier sculpture entitled Solace is basically a portrait of Sanell (my wife) and me seeking comfort with each other, embracing as the world unravels while trying to bring up our children. Tether, Shield and Hold from this series are about being a parent and parenting ... and our relationships with our children. This might have resulted in a Cardies-like sentimentality ... but I am hoping that these sculptures resonate with others empathetically. But at this stage of my life I really don't care! The politics of the day is still never far away though. The need to hunker down is a direct response to the unfolding local and global dramas. Hopefully I describe two conjoined tales ... reflecting what is happening both out there ... and in here ... simultaneously.

Brett Murray studied at the University of Cape Town where he was awarded his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1988 with distinction. The title of his dissertation was *A Group of Satirical Sculptures Examining Social and Political Paradoxes in the South African Context*.

As an undergraduate, he won Irma Stern Scholarships in both 1981 and 1982. He won the Simon Garson Prize for the Most Promising Student in 1982 and was awarded the Michaelis Prize in 1983. As a postgraduate student he received a Human Sciences Research Council bursary, a University of Cape Town Research Scholarship, the Jules Kramer Grant and an Irma Stern Scholarship.

Murray has exhibited extensively in South Africa and abroad. From 1991 to 1994 he established the sculpture department at the University of Stellenbosch, where he curated the show *Thirty Sculptors from the Western Cape* in 1992. In 1995 he curated, with Kevin Brand, Scurvy, at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. That year he co-curated *Junge Kunst Aus Zud Afrika* for the Hänel Gallery in Frankfurt, Germany.

In 1999, Murray co-founded, with the artists and cultural practitioners, Lisa Brice, Kevin Brand, Bruce Gordon, Andrew Putter, Sue Williamson, Robert Weinek and Lizza Littlewort, Public Eye, a not for profit company that manages and initiates art projects in the public arena with the aim of developing a greater profile for public art in Cape Town. They have initiated projects on Robben Island, worked with the city's health officials on AIDS awareness campaigns and initiated outdoor sculpture projects including The Spier Sculpture Biennale. Murray curated Homeport in 2001, which saw 15 artists create

site-specific text-based works in Cape Town's V&A Waterfront precinct.

Murray was included on the Cuban Biennial of 1994, and subsequently his works were exhibited at the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Germany. He was included on the group show, 'Springtime in Chile', at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, Chile. He was also part of the travelling show 'Liberated Voices, Contemporary Art from South Africa', which opened at the Museum for African Art in New York in 1998. His work formed part of the shows 'Min(d) fields' at the Kunsthaus in Baselland, Switzerland, in 2004, and 'The Geopolitics of Animation' at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo in Seville, Spain, in 2007. He won the Cape Town Urban Art competition in 1998, which resulted in the public work 'Africa', a 3.5 metre bronze sculpture, being erected in Cape Town's city centre.

Murray was selected as the Standard Bank Young Artist of the year in 2002. He won, with Stefaans Samcuia, the commission to produce an 8 x 30 meter wall sculpture for the foyer of the Cape Town International Convention Centre in 2003. In 2007, he completed Specimens, a large wall sculpture for the University of Cape Town's medical school campus. In 2011, he produced the public artwork Seeds for The University of Bloemfontein and in 2013 he was commissioned to produce the seven-meter bronze *Citizen* for the Auto & General Park in Johannesburg.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021** *Limbo*, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK (Upcoming – October 2021)
Hide, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2019** *Hide*, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2017** *Again Again*, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2015** *Again Again*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2012** *Hail to The Thief II*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2010** *Hail to The Thief*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2009** *Crocodile Tears II*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2007** *Crocodile Tears*, The Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2006** *Sleep Sleep*, The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA and João Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2003** *Us and Them*, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
- 2002** Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award exhibition, *White Like Me* National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa
 King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth, South Africa
 Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
 Durban Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa
 Johannes Stegman Art Gallery, Bloemfontein, South Africa
 South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
 Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2001** *Hero*, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape

Town, South Africa

- 2000** *I love Africa*, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town, SA and The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1997** *Own*, Hänel Gallery, Cape Town, SA and The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1996** *Brett Murray: New Sculptures*, Gallery Frank Hänel, Frankfurt, Germany
White Boy Sings the Blues, Rembrandt van Rijn Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1989** *Satirical Sculptures*, Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020** *Summer 2020*, Everard Read, London, UK
Masterpiece Online, Everard Read London
STILL, Everard Read Galleries, online exhibition
Us, Everard Read Galleries, online exhibition
Staring Straight to the Future, Everard Read Galleries, online exhibition
- 2019** *Southern Aspect – A Group Exhibition*, Everard Read, London, UK
CONTEXT Art Miami, Everard Read, Florida, USA
- 2017** *Bronze, Steel & Stone*, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2016** *Bronze, Steel and Stone*, Everard Read, London, UK
Opening Exhibition, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2015** 56th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, South African Pavilion, Italy
Slow Violence, Stellenbosch University Art Gallery, South Africa

- 2014** Cape Town Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, South Africa
 Design Days Dubai, Southern Guild, UAE
- 2013** *C-16: A Group Exhibition*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
My Joburg, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France
 Art Basel Hong Kong, Goodman Gallery, China
 Collectable South African Design, Collective.1 Design Fair, New York, USA
Cloud 9, Dean Projects, Kuwait City, Kuwait
 Design Days Dubai, Southern Guild, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Editions, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
et.al, Nirox Projects, Johannesburg, South Africa
Heavy Metal, Southern Guild, Cape Town, South Africa
The Armory Show, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA
Art Palm Beach, Dean Projects, Florida, USA
The Loom of the Land, Michael Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Summer Show, Casa Labia Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2012** *Art Miami*, Dean Projects, USA
 Art Basel Miami, Goodman Gallery, USA
Spring Show, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Sensing the Subject, A selection of Piet Viljoen's art collection, The New Church. Curated by Penny Siopis, Cape Town, South Africa
The Art of Banking: celebrating through collections, Standard Bank, Johannesburg, South Africa

- FIAC, Paris, France
 Johannesburg Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, South Africa
Our Fathers, AVA Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Recollect, Southern Guild, The Woodstock Foundry, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2011** *Impressions From South Africa, 1965 to Now*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Thinking Around, Tokara, Stellenbosch, South Africa
 Art Basel Miami, Goodman Gallery, USA
A Natural Selection: 1991–2011, The AVA Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
 Southern Guild 2011, Johannesburg Art Fair, South Africa
Persona, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town, South Africa
 The Johannesburg Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, South Africa
Editions, Goodman Gallery Projects, Arts On Main, Johannesburg, South Africa
The Armory Show, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA
- 2010** Art Basel Miami, Goodman Gallery, USA
The Lie of the Land: Representations of the South African Landscape, Iziko Michaelis Collection, Cape Town, South Africa
Divisions: Aspects of South African Art 1948–2010, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
In Other Words, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Halakasha, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Winter Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Twenty – South African Sculpture of the Last Two Decades, Nirox Sculpture Park,



- Gauteng, South Africa
1910 to 2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Spier Contemporary, Cape Town City Hall, South Africa
- 2009** *The Marks We Make*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Strengths and Convictions: The life and times of the South African Peace Prize Laureates, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Dada South? Exploring Dada legacies in South African art 1960 to the present, The South African National Gallery, Curated by Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith, Cape Town, South Africa
Registration, Joao Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Forward March, Spier, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Words!, AVA, Cape Town, South Africa
Life Less Ordinary, Djanogly Art Gallery, Lakeside Arts Centre, University Park, Nottingham, UK
The Other Mainstream II, Selections from the Collection of Mikki and Stanley Weithorn Arizona State University Art Museum
Johannesburg Art Fair, The Goodman Gallery, South Africa
Nirox Foundation Outdoor Sculpture, Gauteng, South Africa
- 2008** Johannesburg Art Fair, The Goodman Gallery, South Africa
- 2007** *Lift Off II*, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, South Africa
Cape 07 Biennale, Cape Town, South Africa
Turbulence, HANGAR-7, Salzburg, Austria
The Geopolitics of Animation, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Seville, Spain
- 2006** Art Basel Miami, The Goodman Gallery, Miami, USA
- 2005** Art Basel, The Goodman Gallery booth, Basel, Switzerland
Dorp Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Imprints, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
- 2004** *Post Pop*, Moja Modern, Johannesburg, South Africa
Min(e)dfields, Kunsthaus Basseland, Switzerland
Identity, Fortis Circus Theatre, Scheveningen, Holland
A Decade of Democracy, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2003** *Literally and Figuratively: Text and Image in South African Contemporary Art*, Michael Stevenson Contemporary, Cape Town, South Africa
Absolutely/Perhaps, Simon Mee Fine Arts, London, UK
Mettle and Paint, Mettle Headquarters, Johannesburg, South Africa
Retreks, Video projections, Fotografins Haus, Stockholm, Sweden
Space Repurposed, Red Bull Music Academy, Cape Town, South Africa
Art City, Cell-C, Johannesburg, SA
'Picnic', Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2002** *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, The University of Arizona Museum of Art, curated by Frank Herreman. Tucson, Arizona, USA
I.D./Ology, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
Con/Text, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
Broadcast Quality: The Art of Big Brother, SABC TV, South Africa
- 2001** *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, The Iris & B.Gerald Cantor Centre for Visual Arts at Stanford University, California, USA. Curated by Frank Herrema
World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam, Holland
Body: Rest and Motion, Oudtshoorn Festival, South Africa
- 2000** *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*, The Austin Museum of Art, curated by Frank Herreman, Austin, Texas, USA
Cast, Bronze Age Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Retreks: How the other half ..., Animated Video Projection, Johannesburg, South Africa
Collaboration, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, CapeTown, South Africa
Returning The Gaze, Cape Town One City Festival, South Africa
- 1999** *Visit*, Natal Society of the Arts, Durban, South Africa
Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa, Museum for African Art, New York, USA
New Worlds: Contemporary Art from Australia, Canada and South Africa, Canada House, London, UK (Toured: Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Canada; Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.)
- 1997** Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, re-launch, South Africa
Fin de Siecle, Lyon, France
Cologne Art Fair, Germany: Gallery Frank Hänel booth
30 Minutes, Robben Island Museum, Cape Town, South Africa
District Six Public Sculpture Project, Cape Town, South Africa
Smokkel, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale
- Fringe, South Africa
- 1996** *Vita Art Now*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
New Sculptures, Gallery Frank Hänel, Frankfurt, Germany
Anima-L: Der Mensch im Tier – Das tier im Mensch, Eislingen Kunstverein, Germany
Cologne Art Fair, Germany: Gallery Frank Hänel
Groundswell, Mermaid Theatre, London, UK
- 1995** *The Laager*, Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa
Scurvy, The Castle, Cape Town, South Africa
The Scurvy Show, Newtown Galleries, Johannesburg, South Africa
Venice Bienalle, Malcome Payne's installation, Italy
Spring time in Chile, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile
Junge Kunst Aus Zud Afrika, Galerie Frank Haenel, Frankfurt, Germany
Panoramas of Passage: Changing Landscapes – South Africa, Albany Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa
Frankfurt Art Fair, Gallery Haenel, Germany
Art Cologne, Gallery Haenel, Germany
- 1994** *Banquet*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
5th Cuban Biennale, Wilfredo Lam Museum, Havana, Cuba
Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Aachen, Germany
Contemporary Art from South Africa, Deutsche Aerospace Gallery, Otobrun, Germany
Exit, Metlife Association Of Art, Cape Town, South Africa
Staff Exhibition, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 1993** *Vita Art Now*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
Volkskas Competition, Metlife Association Of Arts, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa
Aids, Metlife Association of Arts, Cape Town, South Africa
Limits Of Liberty, Wits Theatre, Weekly Mail Anti-Censorship Axhibition, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1992** Volkskas Competition, Metlife Association Of Arts, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, South Africa
Staff Exhibition, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
Other Visibility, Newtown Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Curator of 40 Sculptors From The Western Cape, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- 1991** *Passages and Transitions*, Newtown Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
B and B with Barend De Wet, Association of Art, Cape Town, South Africa
- 1990** *Vita Art Now*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
- 1988** *Art and Militarism*, Michaelis Gallery, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- 1986** *About Time, Towards a Peoples Culture Cultural Festival*, University of Cape Town. Banned by the Apartheid State, South Africa
Art For Peace, Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, South Africa
- 1985** Group Show for the opening of 'Gallant House' club and art center, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1984** *Aches and Pains*, Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- ## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
- Iziko, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
Durban Art Gallery, South Africa
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
University of Cape Town, South Africa
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa
University of Bloemfontein, South Africa
Sandton Municipality, Johannesburg, South Africa
DirectAxis Collection, Cape Town, South Africa
BHP Billiton Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
MTN Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
Sasol Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
South African Breweries, Johannesburg, South Africa
South African Broadcasting Corporation, Johannesburg, South Africa
The South African Reserve Bank, Johannesburg, South Africa
Vodacom Collection, Cape Town, South Africa
Nando's Art Collection, Johannesburg, South Africa
Sindika Dokolo African Collection of Contemporary Art, Luanda, Angola
Red Bull, Salzburg, Austria
Collection of Mikki and Stanley Weithorn, USA
The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, USA
The New Church Museum, Cape Town, South Africa



