

**BERMAN
CONTEMPORARY**
SOUTH
AFRICAN
ART

ARTIST PORTFOLIO
CHRISEL ATTEWELL

ARTIST STATEMENT AND BIO



"I work in multiple mediums, including experimental printmaking, sculpting, painting and installation. My work often explores different ways in which energies, moments, memories and histories can be captured, documented and preserved. The work is very experimental in nature and often takes a performative approach to the process of making. In this, there are initial intentions, but there is an overlapping of uncontrolled processes. These processes ricochet off one another within my different mediums where a shared language emerges from the collective of my work".

Chrisél Attewell was born in 1994 in South Africa. She received her BA Fine Arts degree from the University of Pretoria in 2016. Chrisél was selected as a Sasol New Signatures finalist in 2016 and 2017. In 2017 she was chosen to participate in the Assemblage Peer Mentoring Program and the RMB Talent Unlocked exhibition at the Turbine Art Fair. Hereafter she continued to showcase her work in multiple group shows around South Africa where her work has become part of various national and international collections. In 2018 and 2019 she participated in several group exhibitions in Johannesburg and was selected as a Top 100 finalist for the ABSA L'atelier Art Competition. She had three solo exhibitions: "Architectus Konstruksie" at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), "Under Construction" at Assemblage in Braamfontein, and "Substratum" at Lizamore & Associates in Rosebank. Attewell was selected as a 2018 recipient of the Young Female Residency Award with The Project Space, founded by Benon Lutaaya.

Chrisél currently lives and works in Johannesburg where she has a studio at End Street Studios in August House, Doornfontein. She is represented by Berman Contemporary in Johannesburg.

Website: chriselart.com & bermancontemporary.com

Instagram: [@chrisel_art](https://www.instagram.com/chrisel_art)

ARTIST RESUME

Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 Substratum, Lizamore & Associates Gallery, Johannesburg
- 2018 Architectus Konstruksie, Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees (KKNK), Oudtshoorn, Western Cape
- 2017 Under Construction, Assemblage, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

Group Exhibitions (9/18 full list available on request)

- 2019 Artybollocks!, NOW Gallery, Open Window Institute, curated by Bland&Boring, Pretoria
- 2019 Collecting Contemporary, Lizamore Gallery, Johannesburg
- 2019 Artybollocks!, the Project Space, curated by Bland&Boring, Johannesburg
- 2019 Collecting Contemporary, Lizamore Gallery, KKNK, Oudtshoorn
- 2019 SAFFCA Group Exhibition, Gerhard Sekoto Gallery, Alliance Française, Johannesburg
- 2018 Aftermath, Firststrand Bank Gallery, curated by Olwethu de Vos, Johannesburg
- 2018 Unsettled, ABSA Gallery, curated by Thabo Seshoka, Johannesburg
- 2018 Talking to Deaf Ears, ABSA Gallery, curated by Sarah McGee, Johannesburg
- 2018 Relatively Small, Corner House, curated by Johan Stegmann and Chrisél Attewell, Johannesburg

Collections

- The African Arts Trust Collection
- The ABSA Bank Collection
- The Project Space Collection
- Harrie Siertsema Personal Collection

Commissions

- The Leonardo Building, Sandton. A commission for a 1x1,5m artwork to be placed in the lift of the building.
- Quorum Properties, Johannesburg. A commission of 25 copper sculptures for end of year gifting.

Art Fairs

- 2018 Investec International Cape Town Art Fair, The Project Space, curated by Asha Waja. Cape Town
- 2018 Young Female Residency Award, The Project Space, an initiative by Benon Lutaaya, RMB Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
- 2018 Group showcase with Millennium Gallery, RMB Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg
- 2017 Fresh Produce Exhibition curated by Rolihlahla Mhlanga, Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg

Awards (4/8 full list available on request)

- 2018 ABSA L'atelier, Top 100.
- 2018 Grant received for the solo project from The African Arts Trust as part of the Assemblage Exhibition Programme.
- 2017 Thami Mnye Fine Art Awards, top 100, Coen Scholtz Recreation Centre, Kempton Park
- 2017 Sasol New Signatures, finalist, mentioning in catalogue, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria

Publications

- 2019 Countering Artybollocks – an exhibition curated by Bland&Boring, written by Tracy Murinik, Art Africa, June 2019
- 2018 South African Art Scene: Artist using printmaking to explore Johannesburg's architectural history, interview by Yolisa Njamela, CGTN Africa
- 2018 Khuluma Magazine (Kuluhla's in-flight magazine), Jozi's Lost Pockets, written by Trevor Crighton, October 2018
- 2018 Prestige Digital Magazine, Jo'burg's Rebirth Documented as Art, written by Trevor Crighton, August 2018
- 2018 SA Art Times, Sculpture Fair, September 2018
- 2016 SA Art Times, University of Pretoria Graduate Exhibition, December 2016

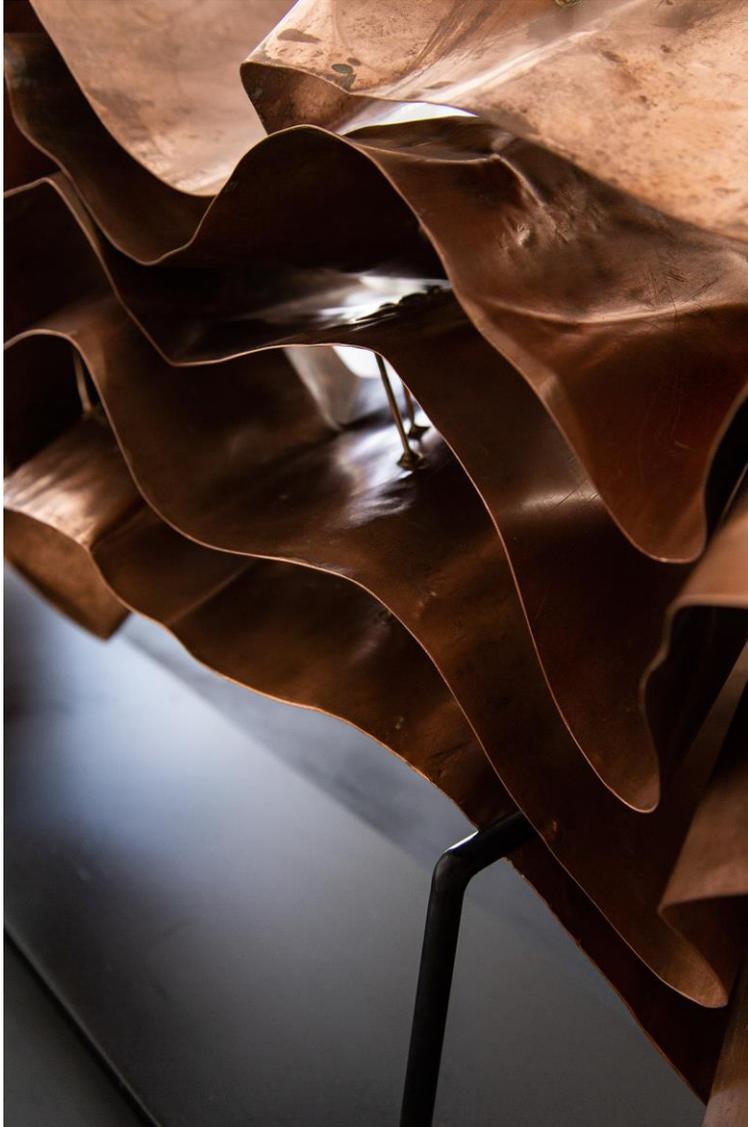
Residencies

- 2020 Southern African Foundation for Contemporary Art (SAFFCA), two-month residency at Saint-Émilion, France
- 2019 Southern African Foundation for Contemporary Art (SAFFCA), one-month residency at Entabeni Farm, Knysna
- 2018 Recipient of the Young Female Residency Award with The Project Space, founded by Benon Lutaaya
- 2017 Artist Career Development Programme developed by Assemblage

Education

- 2013/16 BA(FA) Fine Arts, Summa Cum Laude, University of Pretoria
Dissertation: Making Your Audience Cry: A Neuropsychological Reading of Marina Abramović's 'The Artist is Present'.
- 2008/12 National Senior Certificate, with average 89%, Hoërskool Noordheuwel

SUBSTRATUM
2018 - 2019



Tectonic plate I, 2018
Copper Sculpture
44 x 150 x 45cm

Substratum

- a) An underlying layer or substance, in particular, a layer of rock or soil beneath the surface of the ground.
- b) A foundation or basis of something, an underlying truth.

“Substratum” implies that the viewer might learn about the underlying truth of something, a truth that the artist observes in her milieu and daily life, which manifests itself in the artist’s work. Through diverse media such as painting, printmaking, bronze and even construction materials, Attewell presents a world of surfaces constructed in her controlled-accidental environments.

In Attewell’s work, there are initial intentions, but there is an overlapping of uncontrolled processes. These processes ricochet off one another within her different mediums where a shared language emerges from the collection of her work. The translation from textures in her paintings, to the forms in her sculptures and shapes in her prints, all contribute to this collective understanding. The mark-making within them is what joins them.

The paintings are evidence of Attewell’s rationale that paint can reveal something to you if you allow it to. They are simultaneously reminiscent of galaxies, microorganisms, topographical imagery and similar shapes that the artist notices in her everyday existence. Attewell’s use of contour lining and the extended sculptural aspects of her canvasses make the exhibition about the landscape, while also defying this by being inspired by surface texture and not by the conventional scenery.

Surface and what lies beneath becomes the main focus of the show. Through *Substratum*, Attewell presents a body of work that shows what underlies her truth; the desire to look closer, to uncover what truly is and to challenge perception. Her continuous interest in the unnoticed, the fleeting, the overlooked or the invisible under-layer, and what is unearthed when one looks beneath the surface, are echoed in *Substratum*.



Juxtapose II, 2018
Oil on canvas
121 x 91cm



August Potholes III, 2018
Rock and Bronze castings
33 x 39 x 20cm

UNDER CONSTRUCTION
2017



The sum of its parts III, 2017
Copper

Under Construction is a project that takes shape in the form of experimental printmaking, sculpture, and installation. In this exhibition, Chrisél, a fairly new resident of the city of Johannesburg, moves through the socially constructed spaces of the city. She investigates her relationship with the city as a young female artist.

With new development, and the decay of the old, the city is in a constant state of flux, its boundaries are forever mutating. Once bounded and shaped, this socially constructed space, in turn, also influences social relations. The city is socially produced and is socially reproducing.

Chrisél uses the medium of printmaking to create an archive of her exploration of the city. Her copper plates are transformed by the forces applied to them on construction sites – spaces that show the changing nature of the city. Almost as innocent bystanders, the plates capture the energy, memory and history of the city in a specific time and place.

The materiality of the work and the process of making is an important part of the exhibition. Traditionally, printmaking is a very controlled medium of image-making and reproduction. In her work, Chrisél allows for a more spontaneous and haphazard method of mark-making which could never be perfectly reproduced. Further intervention into the copper and paper happens in some of the pieces as Chrisél transforms them to occupy three-dimensional space.

Chrisél uses installation as the embodiment of the in-flux-spaces of Johannesburg. The featured installation pieces include casted paper sculptures and altered materials found at the sites she frequents in her explorations. She embraces the masculine materiality and space associated with construction-sites and reforms them with her own female view, subtly referencing the gender politics of urban space.



The sum of its parts I, 2018
Engraved Concrete Rocks and Sculpted
Paper Installation
200 x 300cm

Nomad, 2018
Modified Found Object
200 x 300cm

ARCHITECTUS KONSTRUKSIE
2017



Architectus Konstruksie, 2018

Architectus Konstruksie is an experimental and ongoing project by Chrisél Attewell. *Architectus Konstruksie* is a body of work that plays on the notion of construction, the documentation of the creation of the city, and the capturing of moments, memories and history. The body of work mainly focusses on drypoint etching prints and sculptures created from the copper plates used to create these prints.

"The prints in this body of work is created on metal sheets that I work on at different construction sites in and around the city of Johannesburg. Having limited control over the creating process, I place the plates in certain areas on the sites for specific periods of time to allow the plates to spontaneously capture and document the activities of the sites. The transformed plate becomes a memory of the construction of the city in that specific time and place. Through observing the goal-directed movements, scratches and damage of the plate transferred to a print, I aim to utilize the mirror neuron system of the viewer to allow for an empathetic engagement with the work."



Mimesis II, 2017
Copper
300 x 200cm



Contour II detail, 2017
Etching on Fabriano Paper
70 x 54cm



Mimesis II, 2017
Copper
300 x 200cm

INTERROGATING THE SURFACE
2016 - ONGOING



Echoing Murmers, 2016
Oil on Canvas
140 x 190cm

“Interrogating the surface is a body of work in which I deal with the experience of catharsis through the analysis of the painted surface. The painting process allows for a direct and intimate relationship between artist and artwork. In my painting process, the layers of paint serve as an outlet of emotion. In an attempt to make sense of the emotions felt at the time, I map and analyse the expressive marks through cutting into the surface of the paint. Through doing this, I am not only interrogating the surface of the paint, but I am also interrogating the surface of the mind – as the marks applied to the surface of the canvass, become a memory of the state of the mind of the artist when they painted the work.”

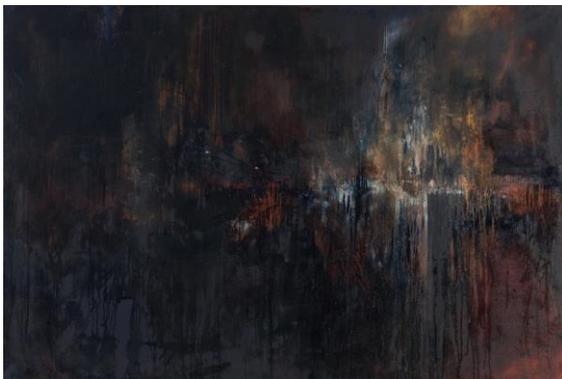
“Drawing from theorists like human physiologist Prof V. Gallese, art historian D. Freedberg, and neurologist Dr V. S. Ramachandran, this body of work explores how the mirror neuron system and embodied simulation constitute the empathetic engagement that a viewer has with a work of art. The theory of mirror neurons can explain how the effect that art has on its viewer, has a precise and material location in the brain.”

“I find this empathetic engagement manifesting in myself when I am walking through the city of Johannesburg. I draw inspiration from the textures and colours found in the decay of structures, in the cryptic messages from torn and faded posters and graffiti and in the constant flux of the city. I am fascinated by the layers of hidden histories and secrets that the city holds in the walls of deteriorating buildings, on the concrete floors, and underneath the many bridges where people leave their mark on a daily basis. In this fluent urban context, renewal and erosion are concurrent themes in my artistic practice.”

“In this body of work, I aim to convey this embodied feeling that I get from these layered surfaces to the viewer. My process involves both creation and destruction. Many of the paintings are comprised of multiple layers of paint to recall fragments of my memory surrounding the urban environment of my daily routines. The building up and scraping down process used in the painting is intended to represent the constant cycle of construction and demolition of the city.”



Cluster I, 2016
Oil on Canvas
121 x 91cm



Henize 206, 2016
Oil on Canvas
140 x 190cm

Berman Contemporary is rooted in the growing understanding of the cultural richness and diversity of South African contemporary art. The gallery's collection centres on a vibrant group of artists living and working in South Africa.

Through studio visits, the gallery establishes connections to artists from all walks of life whose unique artistic processes celebrate their historical and cultural heritage and give voice to their complex societal realities, evoking an active and interpretative experience for the viewer.

Berman Contemporary was established to promote the work created by these local artists. The gallery further aims to establish a synergistic network between South African artists and their global contemporaries, many of whom evidently want to engage with the current South African art scene – not only as observers, but as active analysts, experimenters and contributors within this context and with this specific audience in mind.

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