

WHITNEY MCVEIGH

ARCHAEOLOGY OF MEMORY

SMAC ART GALLERY | Cape Town
24 March 2011 – 22 May 2011

NIROX PROJECTS | Arts on Main, Johannesburg
26 March 2011 – 14 April 2011



Head I, Archaeology of Memory Series|2010|Acrylic Monoprint|150 x 150 cm

Citi Private Bank



British artist Whitney McVeigh has completed a residency at The Nirox Foundation in Gauteng in 2010 and will be exhibiting a new body of work under the title of *Archaeology of Memory*, running concurrently at SMAC Art Gallery Cape Town from 24 March to 22 May 2011 and at Nirox Projects, Arts on Main in Johannesburg from 26 March 2011 to 17 April 2011.

McVeigh's direct and immediate engagement with the environment at Nirox, which is situated in the Cradle of Humankind, a Unesco World Heritage site in the Magaliesberg, has produced a body of work which reveals the artist's recognition and accurate capturing of the spirit and mysticism of this land.

The mainly large, monochromatic heads floating in space resulted from her profound experience with the landscape. McVeigh's work produced at Nirox drew an interesting response from the local audience. There is a connection and resonance with Africans in particular. The suggestion of ancestry in the floating, timeless and primal black heads evokes an instinctive reaction. Africans have a strong sense of their pre-history and the culture of ritual ancestor-worship and linked spiritual practice is pervasive. The paintings contain elements reminiscent of that produced by the extraordinary naïve Venda sculptors who are now widely recognised as important in art-historical terms due to the spiritual depth and mystery of their work.

McVeigh works in a variety of media and she is best known for her abstracted figurative works on paper, in acrylic ink. She also produces monoprints by folding, crumpling and pressing paper together. The works vary in degrees of abstraction and fluidity, depending on the moment of production, which is immediate and instinctive but measured at the same time.

McVeigh's process is intuitive, yet deliberate. She absorbs and engages until a moment of impulsive creativity – revealing elements of Action Painting and Neo-Expressionism, but is reined in by a finely tuned sense of when to stop. The result is a delicate, semi or completely abstracted form or figure, which captivates the viewer and allows for individual responses to the work.

Whitney McVeigh was born in the USA, but lives and works in London. She has travelled and exhibited widely and has recently been receiving critical attention, in particular after her solo exhibition at London's A Foundation and after being prominently featured in the BBC documentary "Where is Modern Art Now", presented by historian Gus Casely-Hayford in 2010.



Archaeology of Memory is proudly presented by SMAC Art Gallery in Cape Town in conjunction with the Nirox Foundation in Johannesburg. Citibank is the proud sponsor of the catalogue that accompanies the exhibitions and documents this intriguing body of work with text by Gus Casely-Hayford and Sean O' Toole.

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