

The Fairest Cape? An account of a Coloured
Roberta Rich

Dates: 1 August - 25 August 2018

In Johannesburg 2016, I visited a building (now a pending demolition site) once known as Auden House in the city district of Braamfontein. Spilling out of a cupboard of broken light fittings and print paraphernalia were piles of framed publication covers published by the South African Institute of Race Relations. Dated from 1944 - 96, these covers presented loaded titles of texts, pamphlets and lectures ranging from *The Church and Race Relations*, *Civil Rights and Present Wrongs*, *Democracy in Multi-Racial Societies*, *Vanishing Lands and Migrant Labour* and *Ras, Beskawing en Vooroedeel*.

'Coloured' communities in southern Africa have long been constructed as fundamentally different to their black brothers and sisters, where white colonial regime meticulously positioned 'Coloured' people to aspire to be like them, but never actually be in their position. Our rich diversity of many slave groups (some may say mixed race), alongside the contributing mechanics of colonisation, is central to understanding why psychologically many 'Coloured' people simultaneously acknowledge and negate its indigenous KhoiKhoi and San lineages.

I returned to South Africa to search for meaning in the one archive I had literally stumbled upon, and to determine the other archive I know exists but was deliberately kept away from us. This exhibition is a selection of works produced while on two research residencies in South Africa, beginning in Johannesburg, and concluding in Cape Town.

This exhibition takes place on the stolen lands of the Woiwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, and I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

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Born 1988, Geelong, Australia, Roberta Joy Rich is an emerging artist who examines notions of "authenticity" with regards to concepts of identity, exploring her 'Coloured' South African and Australian identity and its capacity to 'speak' in varying contexts within her arts practice. In doing so, Rich explores black identity discourse, South African and Australian colonial histories, fetishism of African identity and the complexities of representations of African identity, by drawing from historical, socio-political, media and popular culture.

Often referencing her experiences of "racial interrogation", Rich's work is heavily research based, employing ambiguity, language and satire in her video, installation, print, performance and text projects. Rich completed her MFA at Monash University in 2013, has exhibited in artist run, state and council funded galleries in Melbourne including Blak Dot, FCAC, The Substation, Arts House and interstate in Sydney and Adelaide. In 2016, Rich completed a studio residency at Assemblage in Johannesburg, which would see her exhibiting across Johannesburg at Wits Art Museum, Wits Point of Order, SoMa, Assemblage and the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees festival, South Africa (2017). Since her residency she has been working more recently between Australia and South Africa, and was recently awarded the 2017 Freedman Foundation Travelling Scholarship for Emerging Artists that supported her residencies at TwilSharp Studios in Johannesburg and at Greatmore Studios in Cape Town.

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Performance and discussion

Wednesday 22nd Aug, 6:30pm
Roberta Rich, Naomi Velaphi and Sista Zai Zanda

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List of works (left to right)

*The Fairest Cape? An Account of the Coloured™
people I*
2018
Digital print on Acrylic, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350

We Come of Age
2018
Digital print on Acrylic, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350

*The Fairest Cape? An Account of the Coloured™
people I*
2018
Digital print on Acrylic, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350

Censored
2018
Digital print on Acrylic, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350

*Our Time, African Faces, African Unionism &
Democracy*
2018
Digital print on Acrylics, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm each
\$1500

*Vanishing Lands: A well maintained terrace in
Clifton Street, District 6*
2018
Digital print on Acrylics, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350

Vanishing Lands, Migrant Labour
2018
Digital print on Acrylics, with pine shelf
Edition 1/1 + AP
14 x 23 cm
\$350