

CCAC Interview with Joanne Patterson on 01/10/2020 via email - transcript

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UK: United Kingdom
BFA: Bachelors of Fine Arts
UCT: University of Cape Town
MFA: Masters of Fine Arts

START OF INTERVIEW

FLC: Please tell us a bit about where you grew up and how you became an artist?

JP: I grew up in Zimbabwe and this is where I became an artist, while still in school. I went on to the UK where I started my BFA. I completed my BFA at UCT in South Africa, then I went to New York, where I completed an MFA in Sculpture.

FLC: Can you tell us more about how, when and why Pangolin was made?

JP: I made *Pangolin* while I was living in Johannesburg and working out of a garage. I had finished my BFA and was working and showing my work in The Everard Read Gallery. I wanted to make a totemic piece about this hugely shy animal. An animal that is legally protected in Zimbabwe. I often make art based on material and memory and this was one such piece. I was in a pet store in Johannesburg and found these cow hooves. I immediately thought of animal scales when I saw the hooves and thought they would be perfectly suited to make the Pangolin out of. And Zimbabwe being my country of birth

and my attachment and fondness for this place I thought the Pangolin so revered and legally protected here was an ideal animal to place on top of a pedestal made out of clay pots, which themselves symbolise the red anthills dotted over the Zimbabwe grasslands.

FLC: Could you tell us more about the totemic nature of this artwork?

JP: I think I just explained this a bit in the last answer. The pangolin back when I made the piece was not so much an endangered animal as it is today, however, it was and still is a very symbolic animal in Zimbabwe. Now it is an animal terribly threatened with extinction due to the demand on its scales, which are ground down for medicinal use. It is also a very vulnerable animal as it is small, non aggressive and easy to trap. It is also a very shy animal so I feel that it needs to be seen, its importance needs to be emphasised and exposed therefore placing it on a totemic pedestal is important and just.

FLC: Can you tell us why the Pangolin is a revered animal in Zimbabwe?

JP: The pangolin is a rare, shy, nocturnal animal. It is hardly ever seen. It is considered by many in Zimbabwe to bring good luck if seen and if one walks across your path you will have the same amount of years of good luck as steps the pangolin takes to cross your path. They are seriously protected in Zimbabwe and illegally killing pangolins carries the most serious prison sentence of any illegal animal killing.

FLC: To which historical and current day themes would you say this artwork(s) speaks to?

JP: I think I have covered this question in my previous answers about the pangolin and Zimbabwe and the pangolin and illegal killing for its scales.

FLC: Could you tell us why this artwork was donated to the Constitutional Court Trust?

JP: From what I can remember the Constitutional Court Trust was looking for new work to add to its collection back in 1998 and they visited The Everard Read Gallery and saw the piece, so Mark Read bought it from me and then donated it. And I am very grateful for that today.

FLC: How do you feel about having your work part of the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC) today? Additionally, what does the CCAC represent to you?

JP: As I said previously, I am very grateful and I feel very proud to be in such a prestigious collection along with many great artists. The CCAC appears to me to be a very important collection and has a real responsibility in educating people about the importance of art in a social, geographical and political context in South Africa and in the world today.

FLC: How do you see art as being connected to justice or human rights in South Africa, or more universally?

JP: This is a big question. In short art can be easily accessible to all and due to its visual nature, it can be seen and interpreted by many. Therefore, this allows the artist to express issues of injustice and human rights violations through the art. However, this may not always be the case as in some countries even artists struggle to get past the strict freedom of expression laws although the struggle

in itself can highlight the injustices. So I guess what I am saying is that art is very much a part of justice and human rights in any country as a tool of expression and change.

FLC: Do you have any recommendations on the preservation and presentation of the artwork?

JP: I think the amazing team at the CCAC has this covered. I am just so happy the piece is being shown to the public again at this most critical time for pangolins.

FLC: Is there anything you would like to add to be recorded in this interview?

JP: I think I have covered all I can at this time. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

END OF INTERVIEW