



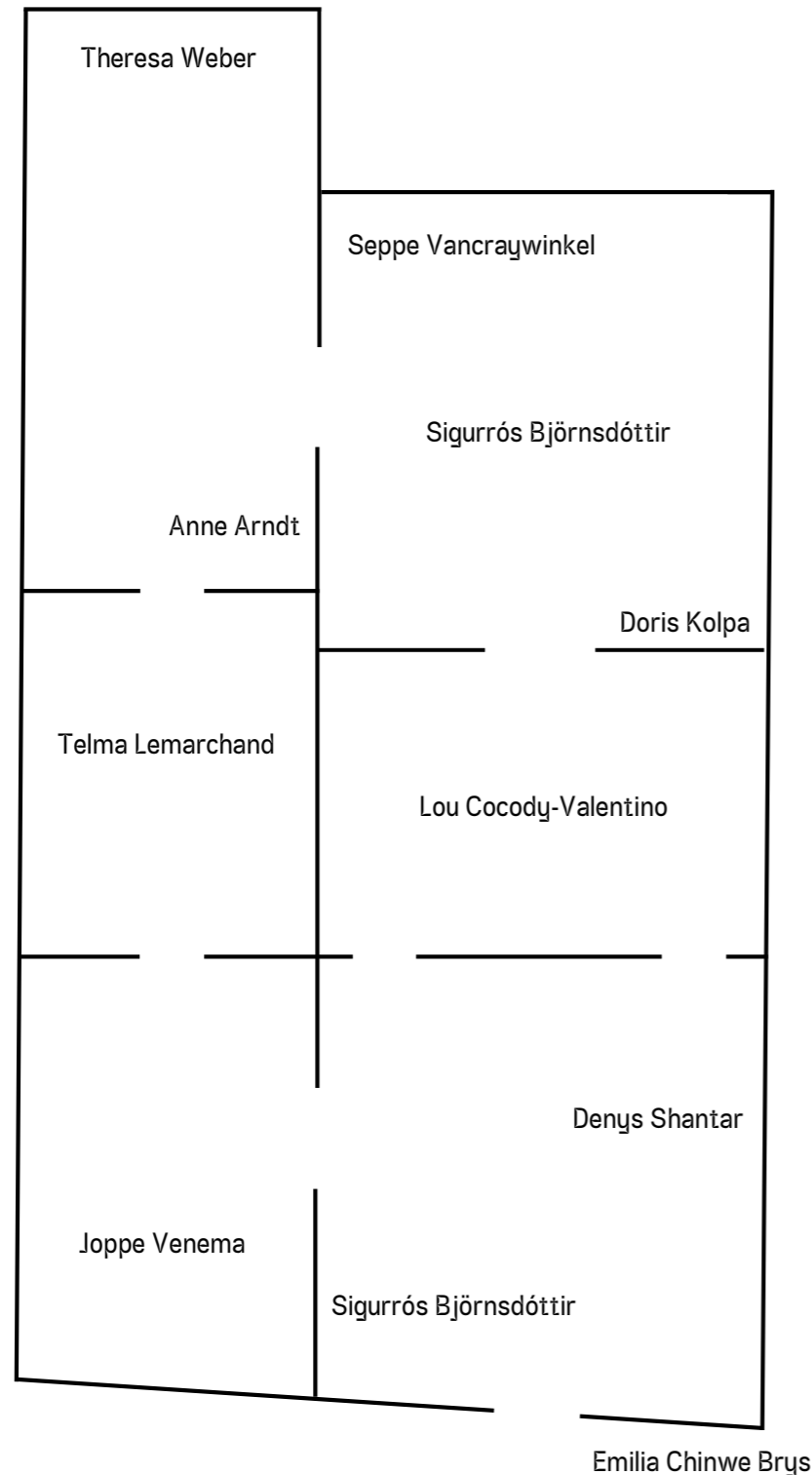
Mother

(Land)

Anne Arndt
Sigurrós Björnsdóttir
Emilia Chinwe Brys
Lou Cocody-Valentino
Doris Kolpa
Telma Lemarchand
Denys Shantar
Seppe Vancraywinkel
Joppe Venema
Theresa Weber

EN
NL

Currents #9



Preface

*Adinda Van Geysselen en
Valentijn Byvanck*

We have reached the ninth edition of *Currents*, a guidance trajectory by Marres and Z33 for promising curators and recently graduated artists from art academies in Flanders, Brussels, Southern Netherlands and North-Rhine-Westphalia. Nine editions, even though each iteration feels like the very first time. And that is exactly the power of this project: *Currents* holds up like a perfect basic recipe; a classic each chef can put their own twist on. That's why the outcome always stays (tastes) fresh, sharp and marvellous. From that point of view, curators Lieneke Hulshof and Fenne Saedt visited no less than fourteen art academy graduation shows and witnessed the work of more than 600 artists. While selecting pieces for *Currents #9*, they were focused on their material qualities: after a long period of having to miss out on physical touch, this group show should shine. This exhibition has to be tactile, eclectic and tangible; a physical show that could never be fully experienced through the digital realm.

The ten selected artists come from different countries and have different frames of reference, backgrounds and cultures, yet the curators found common ground. These artists all created works that refer back to the foundation of a personal identity.

To the participating artists, *Currents #9: Mother(Land)* is an enriching, hands-on experience, because during their education, young artists (still) miss the opportunity to learn what it means to be a professional artist. That is the reason we treat them as artists and not as 'recently graduated'. We listened to their needs and expectations, because we too can learn from this experience.

To honor that aspect, Marres and Z33 created individual and collective coaching sessions. Thanks to our collaboration with FLACC, four artists were given the opportunity to expand on their work for the purpose of this exhibition. Through an open dialogue we strive for mutual trust and durable relations, because *Currents* is not supposed to be a short welcome in our houses. It's not a final stop. From here on, we plan on highlighting these particular artists; that's how we help create professional and durable careers and collaborations in the arts.





Mother

(Landed)

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Whenever people who were raised in a village or a tight-knit community meet someone new, they're often asked:

"Who are your parents?" or "What family do you belong to?"

It is a question about who they are, assuming one's ancestors reveal something about their identity. It's an attempt to place them and to unravel their story.

When we look at our parents and their parents, and the parents who raised them; when we look at the ground they walked on, the places they called home, the work they did and the battles they fought; we encounter stories that will always live on in our minds and hearts. This type of inheritance shows us we cannot be defined by one story, or one identity. Our histories aren't static or complete. They crawl underneath our skin, inform our taste and gaze; these stories are being lived right now.

Curators **Lieneke Hulshof** and **Fenne Saedt** visited fourteen graduate shows in Germany, The Netherlands and Belgium, in order to assemble the participating artists for *Currents #9*. They were struck by how many of these artists give expression to their heritage and family tree. This red thread does not always appear literally, it can be shown through the family homes they grew up in, the religion that shaped their youth, a country of birth that no longer exists or old friends who have become close like family. When our freedom of movement was limited and the door to the outside world was closed, these young artists turned their gaze inwards, and uncovered a whole universe from that small perspective.

Artworks made from clay, stitched with thread and brought to life by layers of paint are the perfect match for these stories, because the physical material enables these artists to give shape to their abstract, invisible and intimate histories.

Lieneke Hulshof &
Fenne Saedt



Afropea

Emilia Chinwe Brys

Having been raised in Belgium by her Nigerian mother and her Belgian father, **Emilia Chinwe Brys** became aware of the ways in which racism seeps through Western society and she notices that the self image of Afro-Europeans is often cloudy.

Growing up, Brys mainly saw herself represented in traditional media aimed at the Afro-American experience, and didn't encounter any representation of Black people in Europe. The democratization of the internet and the rise of social media changed this and played a huge role in developing her identity. Brys thinks that counts for a whole generation of Afro-Europeans because the internet provides them with a virtual community that they miss out in real life. One of her friends shared a story that is a prime example of this: she was adopted by a white family living in a small Flemish village. The first conversation she ever struck up with another Black person, took place through social media. In addition to that, the internet is filled with information on traditional customs from the Black community, like hair care, tattoos, reciting stories, designing textiles; traditions many of her contemporaries didn't inherit during their European upbringing. Through her photography project, Brys aims to show how traditional stories and customs are communicated online and find a new shape and forms. That is why she portrays Black people with objects from the contemporary, digital society, in exactly the way her and her friends would like to see themselves represented.

Emilia Chinwe Brys received her Master's degree in Photography at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp.

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Emilia Chieme Boys

In what way(s) is your practice connected to the theme of this exhibition?

My work delves into identity, community and the ways in which today's Afro-Europeans feel connected to society. In this day and age we often feel like an outsider in Europe, even though we do belong here. The younger generation of Afro-Europeans was raised in the digital era, which enabled us to find a home online as well.



Who are the people in this photo, where was it taken and why is this image important to you?

This is my mother and my sister in my grandmother's house in Nigeria. This photo is meaningful to me because they are the two most important people in my life, and because they represent the different positions of Afro-Europeans. My mother was the first member of her family who came to Europe, but my sister still has to discover what the future holds for her as an Afro-European.





Emilia Chieme Boys



Why is photography the most natural medium to capture your stories?

I'm very interested in what makes it different to grow up as an Afro-European in this era and age in comparison to the generation that came before us. The rise of social media played a big role in shaping my identity and I think that's very common among my peers.

A medium like Instagram can connect people and offer a virtual community for people who don't have one in real life, especially for Afro-Europeans. Social media enables us to receive and share countless images, that is the reality in which I was raised. That's why it feels very natural to me to tell my story through a visual medium.



51° 30' NB, 4° 46' OL

Motherland (close up)

Denys Shantar

Denys Shantar moved last year to Belgium to start his master in costume design. This marked the third migration within three generations of his family. Born in the newly formed Ukraine, he comes from a family all raised in the Soviet Union under communist regime. He immigrated to Switzerland with his mother, finding himself trapped between Western and Eastern culture. The search for identity became an important part of his life as well as for his artistic practice. During his master he focused on two simple, but at the same time complex questions: Who am I and where do I come from?

Three topics crystallized out, while taking a deep dive in to his memories and feelings: the history of Eastern Europe, Queer culture and the church. The topics interact with each other, but at the end the artist builds the touching point for all three of them.

Shantar designed six costumes that were inspired by three women: his mother, grandmother and great aunt, and three places that mark his childhood: his school, the church and home. The result is a contemporary translation of artifacts, reimagining secondhand clothing and fabrics that he brings to life in two video performances.

In this installation he takes a bigger focus on his embroidered textiles. He refers to them as flags, because *Motherland* is a fictional, non-physical place, and these are its banners. The flags relate to global or social events that are directly connected to his identity.

Denys Shantar graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp in 2021 and has further developed his graduation project during his residence at FLACC.

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Danyy Shanfar

Your graduation project is titled *Motherland*, what does this title represent for you?

I chose *Motherland* by using the translation of the Russian word "Rodina-mat'". At that moment, I didn't realize the translation was not completely correct, because "Rodina" doesn't mean "land", but "home", or more precisely: "the place where you were born". The personification of "Rodina-mat'", meaning the place where you were born, grew into a very important nationalistic symbol in the Soviet Union and was depicted in monuments. The most striking ones are the Rodina-mat' statues in Kyiv (Ukraine) and Volgograd (Russia): two sculptures of women (the mother) ready for battle with their heads held high and a sword in their right hands.

Due to my upbringing in Switzerland, I was raised multilingual. I realized that in German we actually don't use the term Mutterland (motherland), but Vaterland (fatherland). I often ask myself: Where is my motherland? My Rodina-mat'? Both my parents were born in the Soviet Union, I was born in Ukraine, six years after the fall of communism. Me and my mother migrated to Switzerland, and I now live in Belgium. When I visualize my motherland, it is a fictional place. It's the summers in Ukraine in the early 2000's. It's the farm of my Swiss grandmother, when I was a kid and she still had cows grazing the land. It's our living room in Antwerp, where I drink wine with my new friends. Motherland is not a physical place, it's a concept, an idea that exists in my mind.



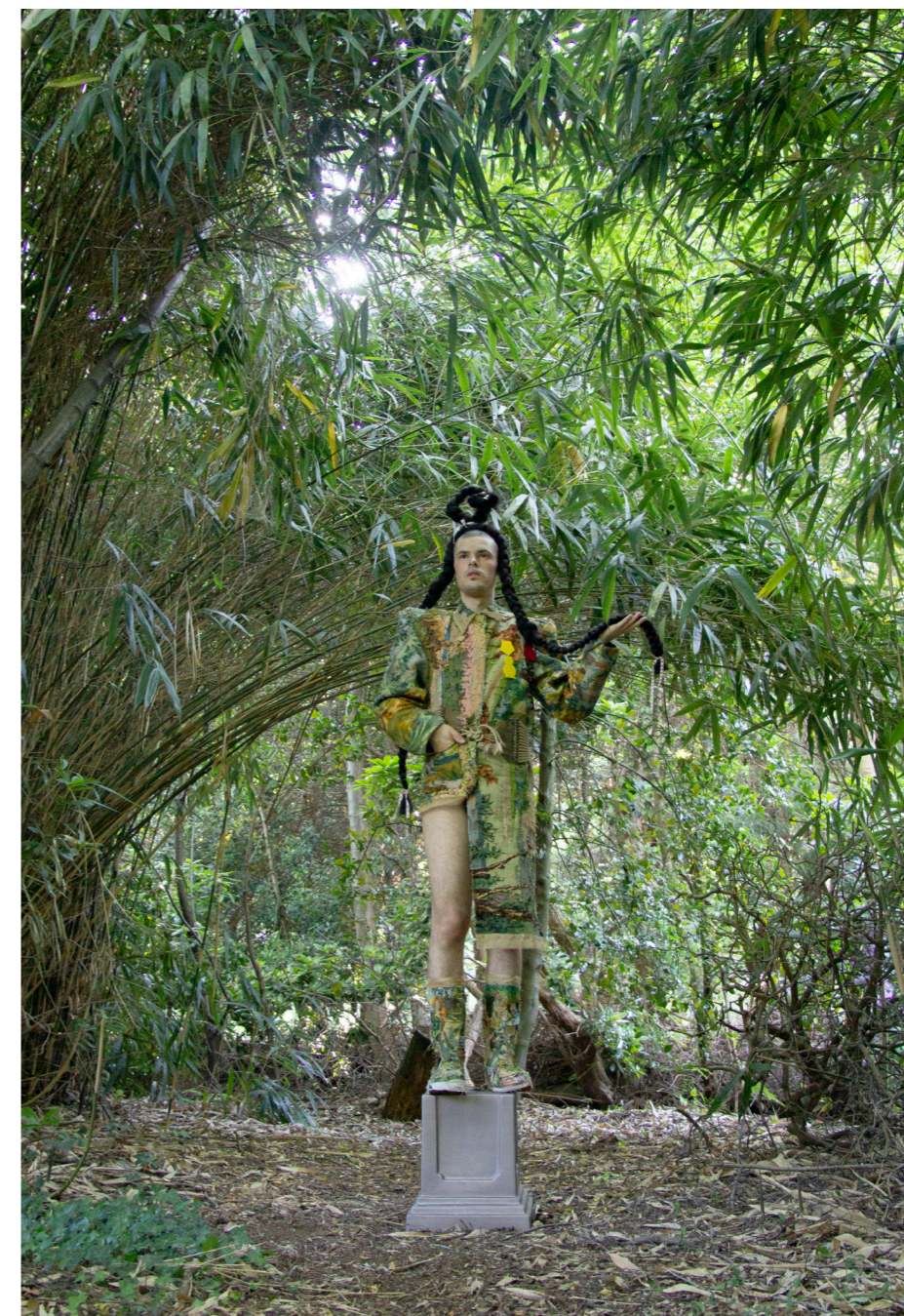
Could you tell us something about the photo you've shared with us? What do we see, why is this image important to you?

This is a childhood photo of me in a traditional Swiss shirt that by now embarrasses me a little bit. I was around six years old then and was trying to integrate into Swiss society and adjust to my new Swiss family. I did that by wearing this traditional shirt to formal events and parties. My mother told me she hated the shirt, but she couldn't keep me from wearing it. I now wish she had.





Denys Sharfara



51° 30' NB, 4° 46' OL

What does the difference between telling a story in imagery or in words mean to you?

I like to share stories and I love it when people take the time to listen to me. Art is comparable to that. Imagery allows you to tell a story, but people will have to take the time to follow your story. The biggest difference is that visual arts leave room for interpretation. In an artwork there is no such thing as a beginning or ending to the story.



Stories

Sigurros Björnsdóttir

The Icelandic artist **Sigurros Björnsdóttir** graduated with ceramic and concrete sculptures. She is interested in family stories, traditions and language. In an attempt to capture these fascinations, Björnsdóttir has photographed all kinds of details from everyday life that catch her eye, for many years. During her graduation year, she began to merge her collection of photographs with her massive sculptures, and in turn, her images became the fuel for writing fictional short stories.

Stories consists of sculptures that were inspired by experiences, by things Sigurros has seen, read or heard; from the weather forecast, myths and traditions to strange encounters. Each sculpture is connected to a story she has written, and there are clues to be found in these stories that refer to the objects, framed photos or drawings that are attached to or engraved in the surface of the sculptures.

These texts turn Björnsdóttir's sculptures into entities, they provide them with their own histories and futures. In turn, the sculptures function as a visualisation of the stories. In that way, the sculptures and the texts complement each other. They bring each other to life, like a three dimensional, fictional family album.

Sigurros Björnsdóttir graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp in 2021 and has further developed her graduation project during her residence at FLACC.

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Sigurvör Björnsdóttir

How is your practice connected to the theme of this exhibition?

The stories and photographs I integrate in my sculptures, usually come from my personal archive. It's a family album in a way: a collection of histories and stories about the place I'm from and the places I've visited. These images and stories are often the source or the starting point of my process.

Capturing memories with the camera is something you've been doing for years, which story does this image tell?

It's a trail marker I saw while hiking in Iceland some time ago. It was very foggy and windy, so we had a difficult time finding the trail markers to lead the way, and we thought we were lost. Finally, we found one and yes! we are on the right track. We stopped and had a shot of whiskey to celebrate. Then we saw how pissed off the trail marker was and we continued into the fog.





Sigurriey Björnsdóttir



Are imagery and language inextricably linked according to you?

I work with both, I write stories and create artworks that belong together. Those stories create a narrative that is either influenced by my own history or a fictional given. It's often a combination of the two.

51° 30' NB, 4° 46' OL

Archipel

Lou Cocody-Valentino

Re-used textiles are the main materials in **Lou Cocody-Valentino's** installation. The title *Archipel*, or island group, refers to her childhood that she spent on the Caribbean island Martinique. By screen-printing, she leaves traces of the island's landscape and the people who helped shape her identity on the re-used textiles. Cocody-Valentino prints colours and shapes that left a long lasting impression on her, and illustrates the culture shock she experienced when leaving the Caribbean for Europe.

The textiles Cocody-Valentino reapplies carry traces from a former life, and add histories to the installation. These fabrics are often gifted to her by friends and family members. She also uses the pillow cases and sheets from the home she grew up in. After dyeing the textiles with natural pigments, she ties and sews them together. Thread is the pencil she draws with. The seemingly abstract compositions represent the personal histories of the artist and her family members. *Archipel* shows us that personal artefacts that seem ordinary at first glance, can carry a personal story.

Lou Cocody-Valentino graduated from La Cambre in Brussels in 2021, and has further developed her graduation project during her residence at FLACC.

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Low Cocody-Valentino

Could you tell us something about your installation *Archipel*?

My work deals with memories of landscapes, family members, places and people. It's about how weird it is to have been raised on an island, a place that is disconnected from the rest of the world, and about how those years have shaped me. It's about fabrics that have been with me for such a long time, that they have become a witness to my life.

Archipel is about trees, rocks, colours, mountains, textures and shapes all the things that I was so close to growing up that they are now completely intertwined with my identity.

Who is the man in the photo you shared with us? What do we see and why is this image of importance to you?

My father and I lived apart for most of my life, he still lives in Martinique. Some years, I see only get to see him for an afternoon. Yet we are close and share many passions. I think the most important one is our endless love for the ocean. Whenever we're together, it's the place where we spend most of our time, where we connect. We swim as far as we can, show each other anything that catches our eye, and dive deep into the coral reefs. After hours of swimming, my father always spends the last minutes in the water floating on the surface. He's peaceful. When I took this photo, his belly looked like a huge rock formation sticking out from the sea. He was aligning perfectly, and unknowingly, with a mountain chain in the background that we, the islanders, call La Femme Couchée (The Laying Lady) because of its likeness to a woman's silhouette. To me, this photo encompasses our connection to and love for our birth place, for our island.





Low Cocody Valentino

You also write poetry that you don't show as explicitly as your visual work, are images more important to your practice than words?

Yes, I work with image and text. I often connect my textiles to one of my poems. For now, the physical artworks are more important to me. I think that's because I can completely lose myself in creating those textiles. My hands guide me through my process, and I get to play with textures and materials to find the right compositions. I sew, rip apart, print, overlay, in an endless cycle.

50° 51' NB, 4° 21' OL



When the curtain falls

Doris Kolpa

Together with her single mother, **Doris Kolpa** spent her childhood in a working class neighborhood in Rotterdam. The area has now been gentrified. Her younger years took place in a world that remains closed for many. A world that is partly characterised through the tears in the walls of the house she grew up in. On her way to school, Kolpa was greeted by homeless people, and at school she witnessed her classmates fighting, kids who would spend their weekends on the schoolyard. For her graduation project, Kolpa decided to translate the environment she grew up in into paint.

This decision resulted in a series of snapshot paintings, portraying a breakfast conversation in her elderly home, cramped bathrooms and toilets, socks inside sandals and cluttered kitchens. It's not relevant whether Kolpa paints herself and her family members. First and foremost, she wants to portray a specific time and mood. The people in the paintings don't engage in any special activity, these are non-moments full of boredom and emptiness, scenes that usually aren't worth capturing. But it is exactly thanks to their banal everydayness that these paintings hit home and that everyone can relate to the world that Kolpa recreates.

Doris Kolpa graduated from the Sint Joost School of Art and Design in 2021.

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Doriz Kolpa

You depict interiors with people in your paintings. Are these self portraits? Or is that not important?

While I paint, I relate to my surroundings. That is my way of referring to my 'motherland'. I depict everyday scenes, moments that I've seen or lived. By keeping my subject matter small, close and banal, I hope to create something universal everyone can relate to.

I'm often asked whether it's me, in the paintings. And I mostly answer that it's not, because I don't want it to be me. Or: it shouldn't be about that. Even though the figures in my pieces do look like me, they should represent everyone and anyone.

Could you tell us something about the private photo you've shared with us? What do we see, and why is this image important to you?

It's a photo of a detail of my elderly home. We (my sister, my mother and I) lived in a top floor apartment and we didn't leave the house very often. Surrounded by the protection and warmth of those firm but decaying walls, we lived by our own imaginative rules.

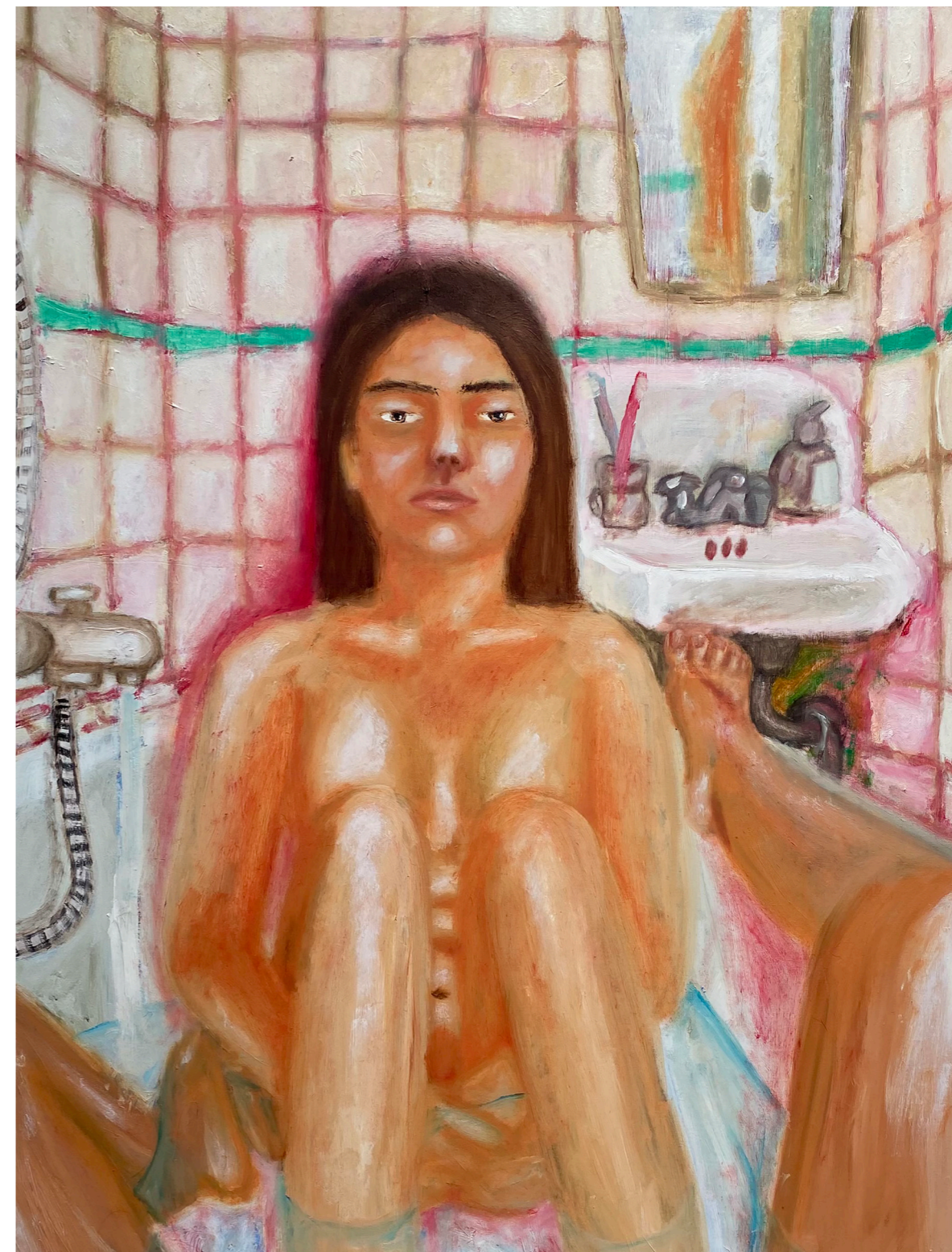
My mother would let my sister and I paint all over the walls and the floor. We were allowed to cut into the curtains or draw on the wallpaper. We turned water spots from leakages into ornaments. That particular idea of not hiding any mistakes or flaws appears in a lot of my work. Bridging the gap between home and the outside world was confusing at times. Maybe that's one of the reasons I started painting, to keep that private world I was raised in alive.





Why is paint on canvas the right material to depict your stories?

Albert Camus wrote that expression begins where language ends and I love that idea. But perhaps immortalizing moments in paint is even more important. I sometimes feel detached from my surroundings, as if I'm deeply hidden in the depths of my body and everything around me is a temporary, vague backdrop. When I paint, I manage to get closer to my surroundings, I'm able to connect to the moment and can slow down time. That's when I give attention to each leaf, every beam of light, each facial expression without having to worry I'll lose them. Painting frees me from my own physicality and helps me cease the moment.



Within The Bubble of Surroundings

Seppie Vancraywinkel

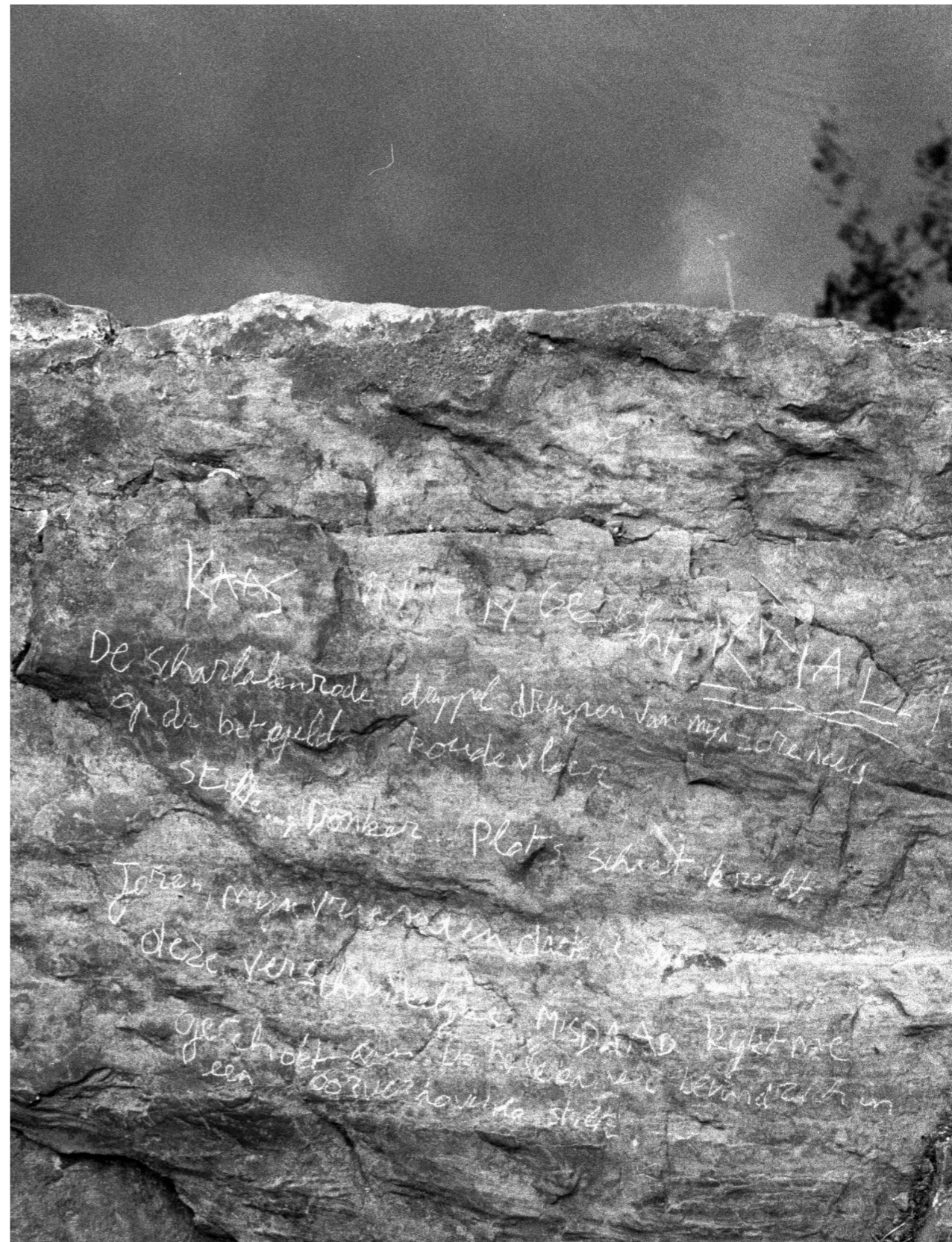
The formative years of **Seppie Vancraywinkel** were spent in the small Flemish town of Hoegaarden. He grew up in this picturesque, rural area full of vast meadows, always surrounded by his friends. They are close up until this day. From an early age, photography became a big part of his life and Vancraywinkel left the town in order to study the medium in Brussels.

The countryside and inherent playfulness and dreaminess of Vancraywinkel and his friends are the main subject of his work. The vulnerable, close connection they share is the red thread that runs through his graduation work. In his analogue black and white images, they explore the local landscape.

Vancraywinkel wants the viewer to engage with the photos. That's why he puts his images high up on the wall, hidden behind blankets or he twists them in an angle; forcing the viewer to move in order to see his intimate imagery. They have to be as playful and resourceful as the young men in the photographs.

Seppie Vancraywinkel graduated from the LUCA School of Arts in 2021 and has further developed his graduation project during his residence at FLACC.

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Seppie Vaneraywinkel

For the past years, you've photographed your group of friends with an analogue camera. Why was that important to you?

I take photos of my best friends, but I could call them my relatives because it feels like I've known them forever. They're like family to me, and I'm convinced it will stay that way for the rest of our lives. In my work, I want to show the intimacy and tenderness of our friendship and welcome the viewer into our world.

Could you tell us something about the private photo you've shared with us? What do we see, and why is this image important to you?

When this photo was taken, my friends and I were on our way home after a pretty intense three day theatre festival. We decided to take a break in a deserted area. We were sitting on some rocks, chatting, reminiscing and would jump into the water. In the photo, you see the poem that my friend carved into one of those rocks.

This is the first time I'm sharing this poem with others. It's personal and intimate because it opens a new door into our world, to the eyes of outsiders. The meaning behind this poem is connected to what I do in my work: cherishing our time together and finding a way to materialize it. That's how memories live on.





Seppie Vaneraywinkel



Why is photography the best medium for sharing your story?

I prefer photography because I'm looking for honesty and purity in my work. That wouldn't be possible if I would hide behind my words. I capture the moment with my camera, exactly the way it is, without staging anything. I make that moment more serene, giving the viewer room for their own interpretation.

50° 51' NB, 4° 21' OL



Coded

Theresa Weber

Family history and the countries her relatives migrated to, play a huge role in the art practice of **Theresa Weber**: from Jamaica to England, and from Canada to Greece. This variety of backgrounds is represented in her work, through references of Greek mythology and the African diaspora to the Caribbean. Weber also refers to the places where she encountered these visual languages, like the ethnographic museums in Germany, the country where she was born.

Using resin and silicone, Weber creates collagenous painting with hair pieces, fake nails, pearls, prints and drawings. In those details, the viewers get to read stories on Weber's family, via photos and drawings, and via references to the Babylonian god Ishtar, the Lion of Judea or the Greek goddess of fertility Artemis of Ephesus. With her work, Weber shows that identities are always ambiguous. They stem from a biographical world map that attests to all the places our ancestors called home.

Theresa Weber graduated at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 2021 with Ellen Gallagher and is now pursuing a Masters in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London.

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Theruya Weber

You reference terms als 'home', 'country' and 'mother' in your work. What interests you about these terms?

My practice is related to complex questions regarding identity, cultural traditions and customs, the interactions between different cultures, rituals, repetition and time. Next to that, I am focused on the individual and the collective. The terms 'home', 'country' and 'mother' are strongly connected to these questions. In my work I strive to create a wider understanding of the concept of nationality and therefore also of identity. One's motherland can also be a self created network of people, and doesn't have to be limited to one geographical location.

Could you tell us something about the photo you've shared with us? Who are the people in this picture?

The two people in the photo are my parents. They represent my hybrid upbringing and also my wider understanding of the concept of nationality.



51° 14' NB, 06° 47' OL



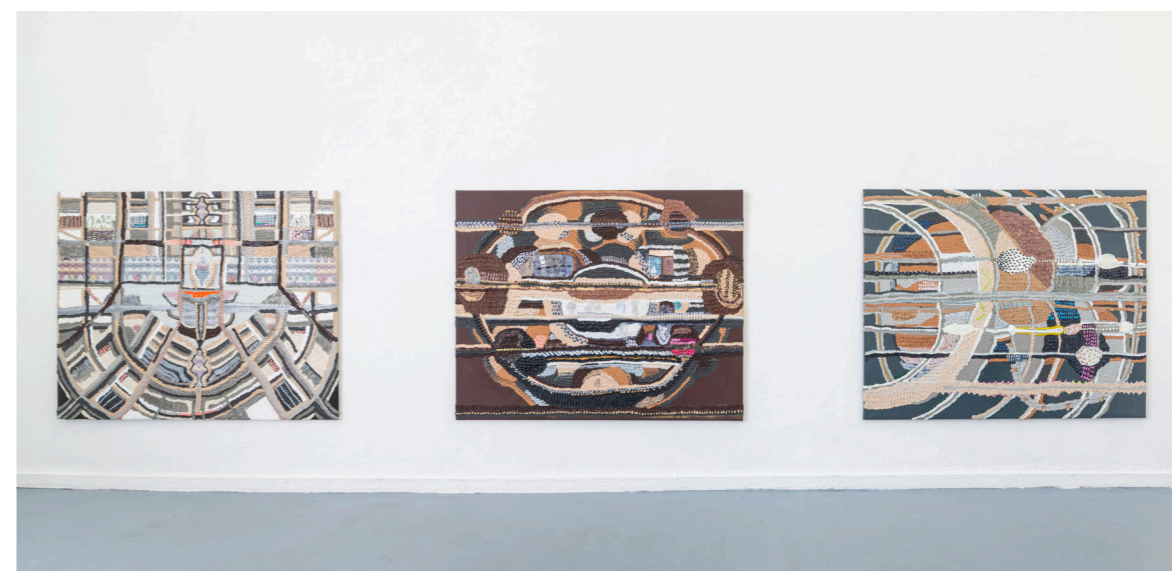
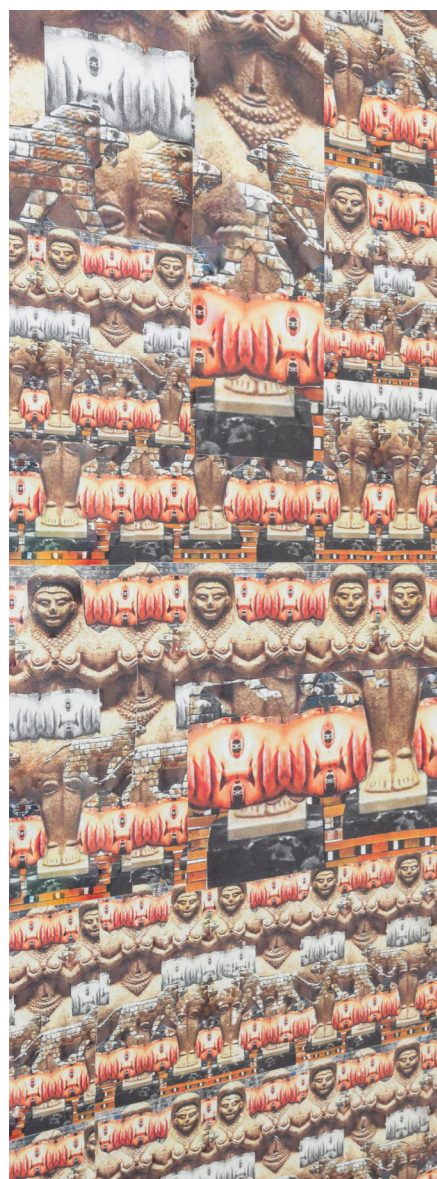


Theruya Weber

You've created a physical art work instead of telling or writing a story. Why are the visual arts your way of sharing your own history?

The materials I use to express myself are very important and carry a specific meaning. I arrange my work according to the type of material, objects and bodily traces like nails and fingerprints in order to create images that deal with the concept of identity. My paintings and sculptures are visualisations of my own emotions and inner feelings, but there is also a rigid side to my work that shines through in the many diagrams, patterns and floor plans. That side is more systematic and it refers to the political and structural systems that are also part of our identities.

I use fake nails because they carry very different meanings in different cultures. They are seen as unfeminist in Europe, because women supposedly wear them to abide by patriarchal beauty ideals. But in the Caribbean they represent emancipation. In that context, fake nails represent the conquering of physical labour and suppression. I think it's interesting that such a simple object, can carry such divergent feminist ideas.



Die DDR hat's nie gegeben

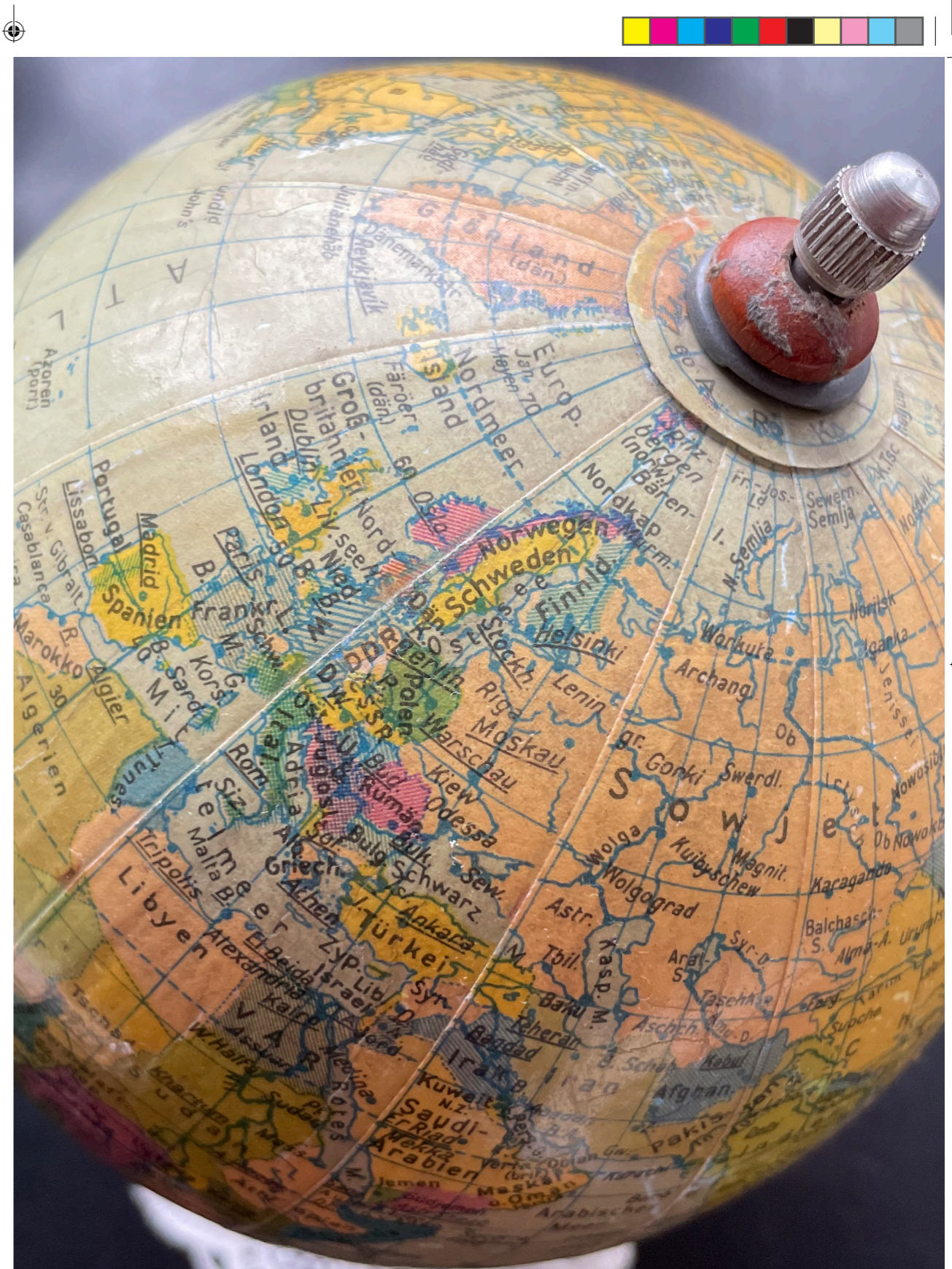
Anne Arndt

The country where **Anne Arndt** was born no longer exists, since over thirty years. She belongs to the last generation of GDR children, and that fact informs her identity heavily. Arndt graduated with her project *Die DDR hat's nie gegeben* (The GDR never existed), in which she uncovers what the loss of a motherland means to her identity, and what it means for the new society that arises from the ashes of a fallen country. In today's Germany, she experiences a major gap in the historiography, as if the GDR never existed.

In her video performance *Re-Branding a Nation*, we see an original GDR flag from 1971 that Arndt bought on eBay. She spends more than an hour unraveling the seam of the GDR symbol, and uncovers the national flag of contemporary Germany. With these images, Arndt raises the question whether Germany reunited after the fall of the GDR or if West Germany took over East Germany. Through her videos and installations, she tries to complete Germany's collective memory with memories, artefacts and interpretations of the forgotten country where she and many Germans were born.

Anne Arndt graduated from The Academy of Media Arts Cologne and is currently pursuing a Master's in Artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague.

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Anne Sundt

You were born in the former GDR and that inspired your work. Could you tell us more about the ideas behind your graduation project?

The country I grew up in, the GDR, no longer exists. When I was nineteen I moved from the East of Germany to the West and I became an 'Ossi', while the wall of course had been destroyed a long time before my move. That was the moment I realized that even after the reunification there was still a large gap in Germany and that the 'East German identity' that I apparently still carried with me, was looked down upon.

By focusing on phenomenons from the GDR in my graduation project, I was able to look at my East German identity and the history and collective trauma connected to it, with new eyes. My shame about who I was evolved into the idea that the East German identity also has value. On a personal and an artistic level.



Could you tell us something about the photo of the little globe you've shared with us? Why is this image important to you?

This globe used to belong to my grandparents. It's very small and fragile. Right now, it's on my desk and it reminds me of the good times I've shared with my grandparents. At the same time, it's a material witness of our (family) history. The country where my grandparents started all over again after the war ended, is still present on this globe. It's where my mother was raised and then left. It's the country where I was born and now, I belong to the last generation that carries memories of this country, of life in the GDR. These particular borders have disappeared on the globes that are being produced today.

You've translated this history into an art work, but you could have also written or told a story instead. Why do you share your history through visual arts?

By translating a story into an artwork, you all of a sudden have access to many different perspectives. I like that you can use a wide frame of references while creating an art work. Telling stories in a visual way is part of how I deal with the world around me. It is a key for me to that world and to communication.



50° 57' NB, 6° 58' OL

Anne Sundt



LA DAME AU CHAPEAU

Telma Lemarchand

In one of **Telma Lemarchand's** performative video's, we see how three men shave each other's face on a stage; her brother (18) is shaving his father (63) while her father is shaving his father (97). This action is magnified in a theatrical way and brings these men together in an intimate, physical closeness they are no longer accustomed to. At the same time, their caring hands could easily end up hurting the other. Lemarchand references the Oedipus complex by showing us that competitiveness is always lurking in the background between a loving father and his son.

In three of her short video works, we see Lemarchand applying makeup on the faces of her brother, father and grandfather in a homely setting. The artist copies her own morning ritual and puts exactly the same makeup on the faces of her male family members. While she's doing that, Telma speaks with them about their relation to gender. This ritual is a way of placing her face onto the faces of her male family members and to try to connect with them in a specific way. In the same way that shaving is passed down from father to son.

Telma Lemarchand graduated from La Cambre in Brussels in 2021.

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Telma Lemarchand

Do you feel the theme of the exhibition is related to your work?

My work is closely connected to the theme because I always work with people from my close surroundings. My family, the people who are close to me, influence my performances when I put them in front of my camera; my performances are made for and by them.

Could you tell us something about the photo you've shared. What do we see, and why is this picture important to you?

It's a photo of my father, brother and grandfather. They compare their hands that each show traces of time passed. The image shows different hands that have been through very different things, but are also very similar. To me, the photo represents the idea of one body that is alive in three different eras.





Telma Lemarchand



You choose to create artworks instead of writing or telling a story. Why are visual arts the right way for you to share your personal history?

The artistic experience has always been valuable to me and that is why I prefer visual arts. I think that bringing people together and creating common ground is one of the most important purposes of art. To me, 'showing' is still the best way to achieve that.

50° 51' NB, 4° 21' OL





Retain, Restrain, Refrain

Joppe Venema

The grandfather of **Joppe Venema** worked as an archeological cartographer in the Dutch province of Drenthe, where Venema himself was also born. Since Venema has never met his grandfather, digging through his archive became the way to unravel his grandfather's life.

One of the areas where Venema's grandfather worked, was one of the very few Dutch swamps that has not yet been drained, and that made him decide to film the Bargerveen for his graduation work. In the final edit, he combines the maps his grandfather made with his own audio of a fictional diary that his grandfather could have written during his research in the peatland.

In *Retain, Restrain, Refrain*, the archives of his grandfather and the area where Venema is from, form the foundation for a science fiction story in which a letter is the common thread. This letter is addressed to 'The Simulator'; someone who is in a simulated journey to Mars. The letter is written by an anonymous author who found a journal that once belonged to the grandfather of 'The Simulator', a Dutch archeological cartographer. Venema intertwines fictional, factual and personal information to create a new story. He translates these storylines into a site specific video-installation that resembles an extra-terrestrial landscape consisting of volcanic sculptures and lava rocks.

Joppe Venema graduated from Sint Lucas Antwerpen in 2021 and is currently an artist in residence at De Ateliers in Amsterdam.

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Joppe Venema

Among other subjects, your work deals with the landscape of the province of Drenthe, the area where you were born. Did you find any answers to your questions regarding your family history during your research?

At the beginning of the pandemic, my practice started to turn inwards, and became more introspective. I wanted to engage with my background through my grandfathers professional work as a cartographer.

The identity of the landscape on which I was raised became important during my research and connected to my own identity. This swampy area is not only a critical ecosystem but it also serves as a fitting metaphor in thinking about interconnectivity and de-acceleration. I wanted to portray this landscape through sharing the folk stories revolving around its history. I even discovered that my last name Venema literally means: descendant of the swamp.



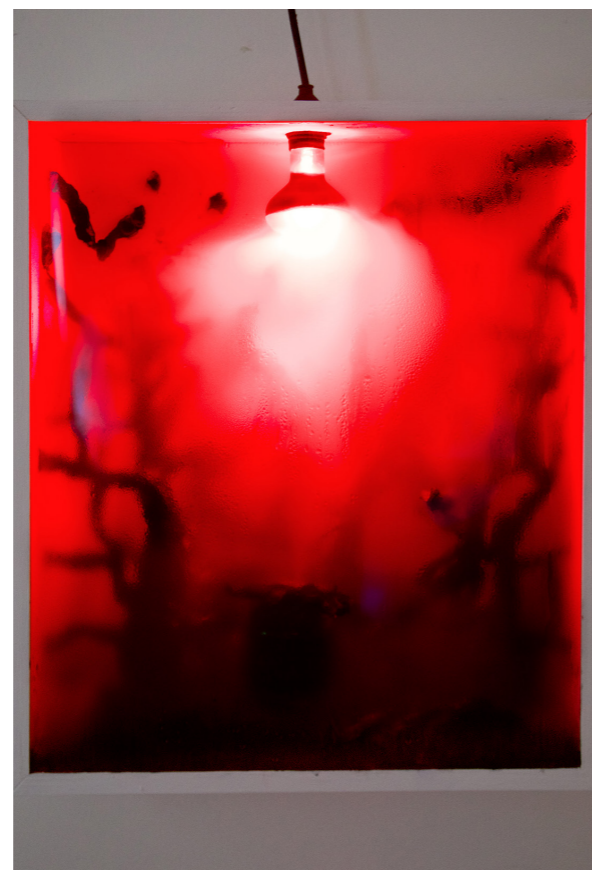
We can recognize a map on the private photo you shared with us. Why is this image important to you?

It's one of the maps my grandfather drew. I used this photo in my film. This particular map shows the archeological site of an abbey in the village. This image has significance for me because it's a perfect example of the type of work he did. It shows he was an extremely capable cartographer because this particular archeological site is difficult to depict, especially since the abbey covers the complete surface of the village.





Joppe Verema



Why did you apply visual arts to uncover something about your own history?

Visual arts is an interesting medium because it allows me to integrate different stories into one installation or video piece. This entanglement broadens up the theme, in this case my own personal history. That was the point of departure for *Retain, Restrain, Refrain*, but by fictionalising it and connecting that history to different narratives, my story became more universal. Next to my own story, there are many topics that interests me, that's why I always try to merge them together, in an associative way.

51° 30' NB, 4° 46' OL



Designing Mother (Land)

Esmée Dros

An interesting fact of the concept of *Currents* is that the curators were looking at a group of recently graduates in a specific geographic region: a big hypothetical circle around the area of Marres in Maastricht and Z33 in Hasselt. All the artists studied in Flanders, Brussels, North-Rhine-Westphalia or Southern Netherlands. This edition does not only deal with the region where these artists followed their education, but their graduation pieces are closely intertwined with their personal histories. The combination of that fixed location and the intimate, meandering stories of the artists, formed the starting point for the design of this booklet. Just like the participating artists, **Esmée Dros** is recently graduated and still in search of ways to have her design serve the story the publication carries, and create a visual bridge between the content and its visual appearance.

In designing this booklet, Dros has combined the geographical place where the artists studied with their personal journeys. Each of the artists has sent her a photograph of a memory that is connected to their graduation works.

She has quite literally woven these memories into the stories these artists share in their interviews, and in their art works. These layers offer an intimate peek into the background of the artist. That's why these personal photographs aren't entirely visible, but have been printed on the inside of the pages.

The coordinates and positioning of the images in the publication refer to the places where these artists completed their education. Every city has its own grid. The chronology of this booklet is based on the layout of the exhibition, so that this leaflet doubles as a map, guiding the visitors through the *Mother(land)*.

Esmée Dros received her Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from ArtEZ Arnhem in 2021.



Colofon

Currents is an annual group exhibition of work by recently graduated artists from art schools in Flanders, Brussels, North Rhine-Westphalia and the south of the Netherlands. The exhibition is embedded in a coaching trajectory in which training, network and professionalization are key.

Marres, House for Contemporary Culture in Maastricht and Z33 - House for Contemporary Art, Design & Architecture in Hasselt, work together on this project and alternate annually as exhibition venues.



Currents#9: Mother(Land)

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Gemeente Maastricht

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Marres



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