



Janet Botes

# WILD & STILL

*expressions of the landscape*



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*expressions of  
the landscape by  
Janet Botes*

5 - 21 June 2014

Janet has been exploring the landscape as her primary theme in a variety of different art mediums during the past few years. Her work comprises of painting, drawing, assemblage work, installation art, land art, and even performance art. The collection of artwork for this exhibition aims to express or achieve a tension between the raw power of the wilderness and tranquillity in a natural landscape. The artworks include still snapshots of wildness in the form of paintings, drawings, digital photographic work, assemblage (sculptural) pieces, and mixed media work.

Wildness, as referred to in this exhibition, represents the sheer power and awe of water - waves crashing onto the beach, a storm raging in the sky. Stillness is encapsulated in the curve of a shell, in the silent beauty of mist, and in the details of an insect's wing. Another inspiration for the work in this exhibition is the silent strength of large mountains. The appeal of spending time in nature is not only to experience wildness, but to experience this stillness, to breathe in the calm and still air of an open landscape.

The artworks are often symbolic or somewhat abstract representations of experiences of nature. Most of the exhibited works involved scratching into the surface as part of the process - symbolic of the way we scratch, penetrate, and scar the surface of the earth through mining, road building, and hydraulic fracturing. Could this uncontrolled destruction be partly due to an inability for people to accept wildness and find stillness within themselves and their environment? The layering and revealing of the different materials and pieces hint at an uncovering and exploration of our own perceptions, experiences and memories of nature and our place within it.

"I see the scratching in the artworks as symbolic for the way that I - and anyone else who seeks to represent or describe the natural world - am literally only scratching the surface and can never fully understand or express nature."

*Even when winter sheds the leaves of every tree  
there is life in the stillness  
when the wind howls around the bare corners of the woods  
there is stillness in the hibernating restfulness  
that will make way to wild growth  
in spring and summer*



*Escape with me outside  
into wide open spaces  
where we can be under the wide blue sky  
and look towards the horizons  
dreaming of possibilities, happiness and laughter  
with no concerns about bills, rent  
or having to build a career.  
Escape with me outside  
into wide open spaces*

*Escape with me into the mountains  
where we can be wild and free  
leave behind our need to be  
more than just ourselves  
without needing to dress well,  
smell good or behave as good girls should  
escape with me into the mountains  
where we can be wild and free*

**PLEASE NOTE:** *this catalogue does not show all the exhibition works - only selected works that best convey the theme and message.*



### **Mountain of Time and Place**

Mixed Media on photographic blocked print  
45 x 29.5cm  
2014

*As part of my art process, or maybe rather my personal process, I spend a lot of time outdoors. I go on regular walks and hikes, and my most treasured experiences are from spending time in the mountains, especially the Hottentots Holland Mountains. Every walk is a different experience and contains emotionally refreshing moments of stillness and introspection.*

*“realise a moment to get into the mountain of time and place where (an) open mind, eyes, hands and heart take you out to climb deep into the rock and cave of what you believe... to reach a beautiful place”*



### **Wees Stil en Weet**

Mixed Media on photographic blocked print  
45 x 29.5cm  
2014

*When translated, the title means ‘Be still and know’, and some Afrikaans-speaking people might recognise it from a hymn or devotional song that I remember from my youth, as I was raised going to church every Sunday. Nowadays my church is in the wild, in moments spent in nature. I feel that a lot of people know where they feel closest and most connected to their god, their faith or their sacred truth, but they rarely make time to follow their heart’s calling. We all have a purpose, something that makes us feel alive and excited, and this artwork, when read, is a call to heed your inner knowing. The text on this artwork has been scratched into the surface by hand, in the same way that I believe our life purpose is etched into our heart/soul.*



### **Poetry of the Landscape**

Mixed Media on wood  
60 x 26 x 2 cm  
2014

*This mountain- and landscape, aim to capture - to a very small extent - the poetry of the landscape, as elusive as this is. I tried to express this through lines, grasses, layers and the rough sand-texture of the daytime mountains.*

*“stay still and listen to the landscape breathe where grasses sway in the breeze and even the mountains whisper their song with the wind”*

### **Wolfberg Cliffs**

Mixed Media on canvas  
79 x 70 x 2 cm  
2014

*Cliffs are generally formed over incredibly long periods of time - hundreds, thousand and millions of years - through erosion, the flow of water, and weather breaking up pieces of rock. Small creatures, including spiders, beetles, and other insects, live in crevices and cracks in the rocks, building their nests sheltered from the wind and rain.*





**Where Earth meets Ocean**

Watercolour on Farbrano

88 x 76cm

2014

*This watercolour painting represents the initial spark behind the theme of the exhibition - depicting the meeting place of the land and the ocean, of earth and water. The rocky coasts of our country are some of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring places for me - I catch my breath at the sheer power and violence of the water and waves crashing towards the shore and against the rocks. But at the same time the ocean can be calm and serene, evoking a sense of peace and belonging to me.*



### It also Rains on Dead Trees

Mixed Media on wood  
42 x 19.5cm  
2014

The force of a storm can wreak havoc, and rain showers bring abundance even when it falls on the sands of a half desert region. After a veld fire has ravaged the earth, a bout of rain onto the dead trees, stumps, and remnants of a forest can create new life from the ashes. It also rains on dead trees, which symbolises that there's always hope for new life. Even when we feel that there is no hope in our own life, there are always opportunities and blessings waiting for us around some corner.

### Tanglewood (detail)

Mixed Media on wood  
98 x 31 cm  
2014

Inspired by a land art piece I created in Upington in 2013, this artwork signifies the way that animals build shelters and nests from twigs and pieces of wood, creating intricate formations that are able to provide protection and warmth. Instead of using a contained, nest-like rectangle or circle, I used an elongated format to reflect the expansive landscape of the area where the land art was created.

### Mapping Out

Mixed Media on wood  
50 x 40 cm  
2014

Mixed media, collage, drawing, and painting techniques were employed to create this artwork depicting a land mass or map. Instead of roads, however, a few details of the landscape itself is shown on this map - signifying how every landscape is made up of all its disparate pieces - each ecology containing several elements and living organisms that contributes to the whole. The road sign is added as a symbol to remind us that we should slow down when driving through the land, and notice the details and nuances around us.





***In Every Drop of Water Lies the History of the World***

*Limited edition archival print on Somerset Velvet*

*80 x 55 cm*

*Editions: 5*

*2014*

*In every drop of water lies a memory  
of something lasted from yesterday  
In every drop of the ocean  
lies some wisdom  
lies a world to discover  
if you really listen*

*In every drop of water there's a whisper  
of knowledge and secrets long forgotten  
or maybe even something known  
that can help you today  
to discover yourself*

*In every drop of water lies moments  
that may have happened many years ago  
when wars were fought over land  
and freedom was just a dream to hold onto*

*In every drop of water lies the history of the world  
The ocean an encyclopaedia  
if you just really listen.*



**Forces of Soil**

Limited edition  
archival print on  
Somerset Velvet  
150 x 100 cm  
Editions: 5  
2014

*This artwork is inspired by the power of the geomorphic forces of the earth - the landforms and the processes that shape them, such as shifting tectonic plates and lava/pressure under the earth's core that creates mountains by forcefully pushing land upwards. Water also plays a huge role in the formation of caves, canyons, other geographical structures, and in creating sedimentary stones. Even though the rocks and the mountains look still and immovable to us today, they have been created and sculpted over eons through breaking, magnetic pulling, splintering, earthquakes and forces so powerful we usually fear it rather than admire it.*



**Organic Matters**  
Charcoal and  
watercolour on  
Fabriano  
95.5 x 65 cm  
2014

**Charcoal section:** In this drawing I have combined organic matter such as a shell, bone, seaweed, flowers and leaves as a semi-stylized still life together with a seagull and rock formations seen in the Cederberg. The 'rough' mark-making seeks to convey the wild and uncontrolled nature of the landscape, something we usually try to tame or understand better by compartmentalising, studying or extracting certain elements of it.

**Watercolour strip:** Illustrating small fragments or organic bits found in nature, it supports the 'organic matter' in the top section of the work, but also forms an opposition or juxtaposition because of the contrast in colour, detail, boldness and technique used. This is where the wildness of the charcoal drawing is reduced to something more detailed, structured and less intimidating to the human eye.

### **Fynbos Forest Moment**

Watercolour, charcoal,  
acrylic & conté on paper  
58.5 x 41.5 cm  
2014



*This abstract botanical artwork on paper is inspired by hikes in the Southern Peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope and the Helderberg region to the East of Cape Town. The region is known for its natural shrubland vegetation and wide variety of Fynbos species, whose seeds are mostly spread by birds and the wind. The round shape in the artwork symbolises the seed, while the small leaves are representative of the small and fine leaves of most Fynbos plants, with colours ranging from green to brown and many shades in between. While Fynbos does not create a forest, as they are shrubs, on mountain walks in the South-Western Cape you are surrounded by Fynbos in the same way that you are surrounded by trees in a forest. To read more about Fynbos go to [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fynbos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fynbos).*



### **Eye of the Storm**

Charcoal, watercolour &  
conté on Fabriano  
72 x 53 cm  
2014

*A storm rages within each of us, and it's our own responsibility to find our eye of the storm, our peace within the chaos, our safe place - a nesting space where we can grow as individuals as well as together.*

*Storms are part of the rhythms of nature, to be respected and admired, even though we fear it. Our own inherent wildness within ourselves - our shadow side or dark child - should also be respected and accepted, and in this acceptance we can better understand it and manage it in a way that supports our own happiness and growth.*



### **A Glimpse**

*Found rodent bones, wood sheet, thread & photographic prints on art paper  
57 x 28 cm (mounted size)  
2014*

*The bones were found between rocks assumed to be used as a feeding site for a bird of prey. The photographs, depicting teeth and bones, have been taken through a microscope. This work carries on from a series of works created in 2013 called 'Look Upon'.*

*"We as humans display, explore and examine the natural world, trying to understand it, sometimes taking advantage of it, and also ultimately conserving and protecting it, or pieces of it. There is a beauty to be seen, appreciated and respected in everything that surrounds us. When we realise this, and experience it constantly, it might awaken the need and desire to protect living creatures so that museums don't end up being the only place where we can view creatures, plants and 'specimens' from nature."*



### **Memoirs**

Natural and found materials, and collage on art paper  
20.5 x 14.5 cm  
2014

*These small collections from the landscape and remnants of human-made items capture moments or memories from being outside - whether walking in the street or walking in the mountain.*



### **Pieces (of Human and Nature)**

Installation  
Variable dimension(s)  
2014

*The installation, along with the sculptures exhibited with it, aims to capture a juxtaposition of the human need to make things lasting, permanent and unchanging, in contrast or opposition to the flux and transience in nature where the rhythms, seasons and cycles of growth and decay seem fleeting, even though it is as timeless as the mountains. It does this through the use of organic as well as inorganic materials - natural vs. synthetic, man-made.*



### **Of Bird and Beast** (detail)

Bone, wood, paint, wire and tequila bottle tops  
37 x 15 x 16 cm  
2014

The bones used for this assemblage piece are from a mammal, but used together creates an avian shape. The natural/organic materials used with the human-made/inorganic items, such as the tequila bottle tops, paint and wire, symbolises the relationship between humans and animals, as well as humans and the landscape.

### **Brain of a Small Tree**

Found wood, pva & varnish  
26 x 12 x 7 cm  
2014

This small sculpture seeks only to accentuate the beautiful shapes that we can see in nature, if we only take the time to notice them. This particular piece of wood not only resembles the shape of a brain, but also leads me to appreciate the actual intelligence behind design in the natural environment - from each piece of wood, branch, and leaf, to the intricate patterns on an insect's wing or the spiral arrangement of a sunflower's seeds.



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**Safe** (detail)

Bone, paint, wood, wire  
62 x 50 x 15 cm  
2014

*This two-piece assemblage piece is made of bone and wood, covered with paint and varnish. The creature created from the pieces of bone are placed under the stylized two-legged tree for 'safety' - alluding to our common habit of 'knocking on wood', and also the use of trees for shelter for both humankind, animals and insects.*



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**Fragile** (detail)

Plaster of Paris, wood, pva, screws, wire  
41 x 19 x 18 cm  
2014

*Nature is resilient and powerful, but the balance of ecosystems can be easily disrupted when the interconnectivity of all living creatures and processes are not respected. When even one species of insect or fungus is eradicated completely, other animals, plants or natural processes of growth and decay that relied upon the species can no longer function or exist, which creates a chain reaction with devastating results. Our actions as inhabitants and custodians of the earth have an unthinkable large impact on the earth - within the palms of our hands we hold the power to change our way of living and co-existing.*



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