

ELFRIEDE DREYER

The Piano

2-30 March 2024 | Ilse Schermers Gallery, Stellenbosch

Artist statement: *The Piano*

My piano is a micro-world. It has been my companion for many decades. Simultaneously being object, process and experience, it forms the subject matter of this body of work.

When the Knysna Great Fire struck in 2017 reducing all my earthly goods to ash and clinker, my piano survived, simply because it was not there. This experience has deepened my bond with the instrument to an even more intimate and profounder level. My piano has become larger-than-life and represents my girlhood years as well as my performing-productive identity as mother and artist. In this sense its presence has been ontogenetic, reflecting my personal development to maturity.

The piano's casket-body becomes a memorial vessel for loss through fire, but also for childhood memories of daily rituals of vigorous mechanical discipline of repetition, practising scales, arpeggios and other technicalities. A polyphony is created as layers of obsessive repetition, production and remembrance pile up.

As a musical instrument, the piano – with its black-and-white notes, inner mechanical structure, hammers and harp – conjures fantasies and imaginative journeys. In

a lyrical play of ebony and ivory, it delivers the tonal sounds of the light and dark of cyclical life and death from its coffin-like, heterotopian body. The pregnant circumference of its wooden cabinet becomes a birthing locus of creative production and performance, bearing and reciting worlds of sound and music. It obediently performs according to existing notation, but simultaneously encourages improvisation and deviation. Performing and producing, it mimics the laboratory of the mothering female body that brings forth new life through biomorphic processes, yet also allows for genetic variation. Likewise, the artist's arduous process of birthing new creations is evoked.

Central imagery in the work is also that of withered angel trumpet flowers, which for me talks about cycles of life and death. In the ritual they become *flor de muertos* dancers.

Conceptually my art has always been concerned with spaces, places and worlds, whether natural, artificial or invented. These rendered spaces, places and worlds are layered; constructed; tainted; and complex. Revealing the intricacies of human action and invention, they recount utopia,¹ dystopia² and heterotopia.³ I work in both physical and digital media, so that my work often becomes intermedial.

¹ Perceived as escape, paradise, ideologically 'good'.

² Collapsing, polluted, nonfunctional, lost.

³ Enclosed. A bubble.



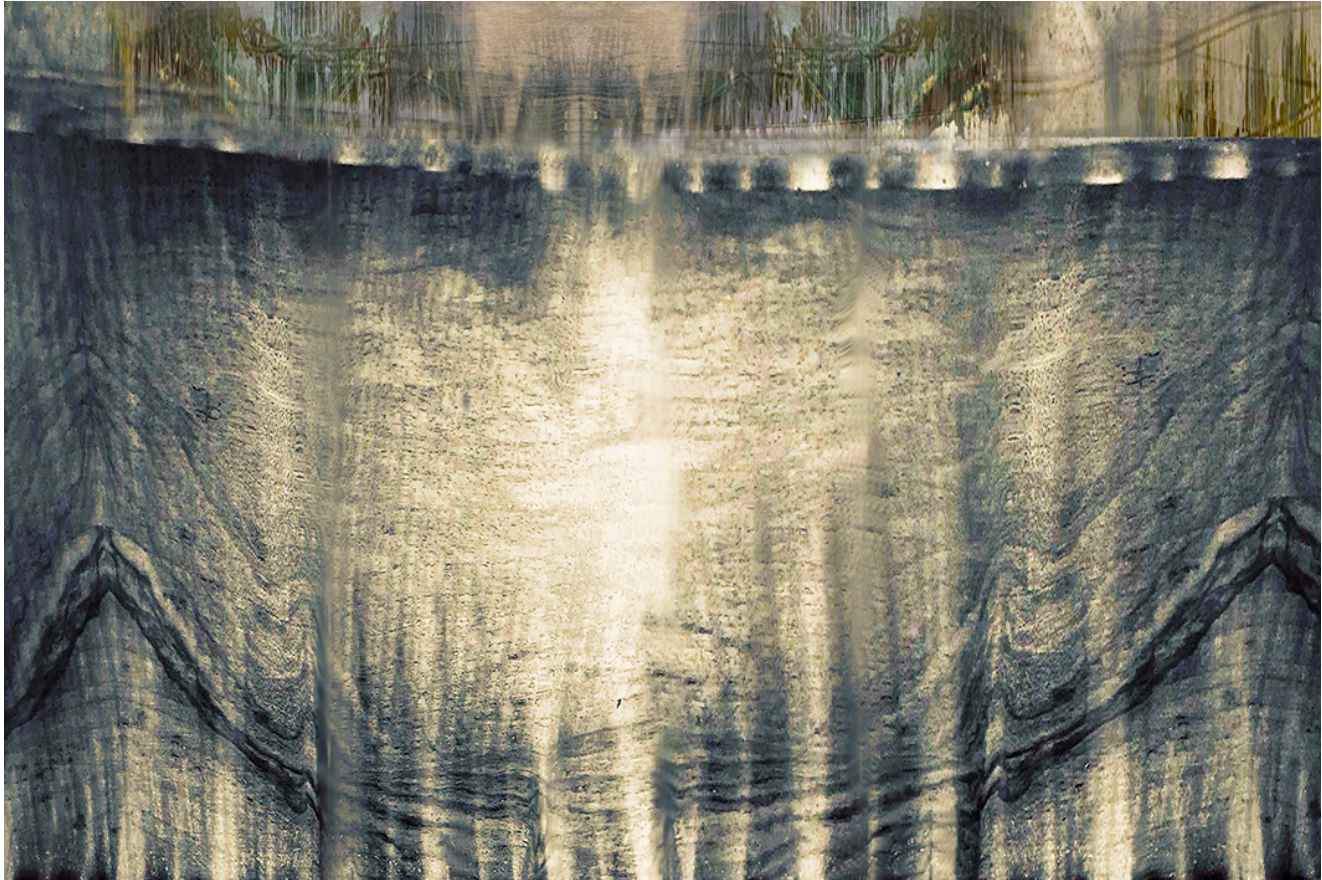
Elfriede Dreyer, *Polyphony 1* (2024).
Archival print on 308gsm Photorag paper, image size 600x700mm. Edition 1/3. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Polyphony 2* (2024).
Archival print on 308gsm Phototag paper, image size 400x600mm. Edition 1/3. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Composition* (2024).
Oil on canvas, 1220x1400mm



Elfriede Dreyer, *Birthing* (2024).
Archival print on 308gsm Photorag paper, image size 400x600mm. Edition 1/3. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *The piano and the angel trumpet 1* (2024).
Oil and Epson ink on canvas, image size 1000x400mm. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *The piano and the angel trumpet 2* (2024).
Oil and Epson ink on canvas, image size 1000x400mm. Framed



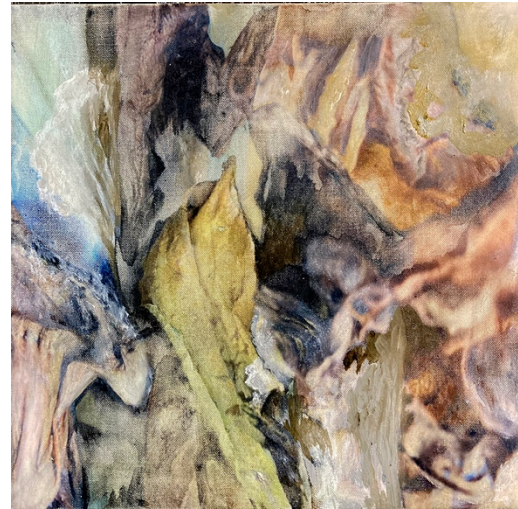
Elfriede Dreyer, *Rhizome* (2022).
Epson ink op Hewlett Packard Gloss 235gsm, image size 840x1190mm. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Productive body* (2024).
Encaustic, ink and oil on wood, 300x500mm. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Danse macabre* (2024).
Archival print on 308gsm Phototrag paper, image size 300x800mm. Edition 1/3. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Ontogenesis 1-4* (2024).
Oil on canvas, image size 400x400mm each. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Transfiguration* (2024).
Mixed media on canvas, 300x300mm. Framed in kiaat



Elfriede Dreyer, *Saving grace of sound* (2024).
Mixed media on wood, 900x350mm. Framed in kiaat



Elfriede Dreyer, *Performance 1 and 2* (2024).
Archival print on 308gsm Photorag paper, image sizes 600x450mm each. Edition 1/3. Framed



Elfriede Dreyer, *Song of the philosopher 1* (2023).
Mixed media on canvas, 1200x1220mm



Elfriede Dreyer, *Song of the philosopher 2* (2023).
Mixed media on canvas, 1200x1220mm

Bio: Elfriede Dreyer

Artist, curator, mentor, Extraordinary Professor of Art at Unisa and NRF rated.

A conceptual, intermedial painter that produces painterly digital works and expressive physical paintings. Several solos (two in France) and group exhibitions. Artworks exhibited at major galleries, museums, universities and art festivals, both locally and internationally; and taken up in the public collections of the University of Pretoria, Unisa, Telkom, the DBSA, FNB and various private collections.

Curated locally and internationally at prestigious institutions.

Academic publications appeared in local and internal academic journals and books.

Often invited to adjudicate at the national competitions such as the Absa l'Atelier, the Sasol New Signatures and the Portrait Award.

Founded the CAP Institute for Contemporary Art Practice in 2015 and Fried Contemporary Gallery in Pretoria in 2005.

Multi-disciplinary qualifications including D Litt et Phil (Art History); MA(Visual Arts); HED; BA(Philosophy, French); Int. Dip. (Interactive Multimedia); Licentiate (Piano).

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