

The image shows an outdoor art installation titled 'Works in Stone II' by Hannelie Coetzee. It features several large, dark, textured stone sculptures of varying heights and shapes, standing on a grassy bank next to a body of water. The scene is captured in the early morning, with a soft mist or fog rising from the water and the sun low in the sky, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The sculptures are silhouetted against the bright background. The text 'WORKS IN STONE II' is overlaid on the left side of the image, with 'WORKS IN' in green and 'STONE II' in white. Below it, '(WERKE IN KLIP II)' is written in smaller white text. At the bottom, the artist's name 'HANNELIE COETZEE' is written in large, light grey letters. A white bar at the very bottom contains the dates '2010 - 2014' in black text.

**WORKS  
IN**

**STONE II**

(WERKE IN KLIP II)

**HANNELIE COETZEE**

2010 - 2014



**WORKS  
IN  
STONE**  
(WERKE IN KLIP)

2010 - 2014

**HANNELIE  
COETZEE**

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**Introduction**

Hannelie Coetzee's way of blending personal and family history, public space and artwork represents a profound interaction with Johannesburg and its spaces, ultimately enriching the fabric of the city. She is known not only for site specific art, but also for public, graffiti-like works, often based on old family photographs, that she carves with an angle grinder or drills into the plaster of certain city walls and doors.

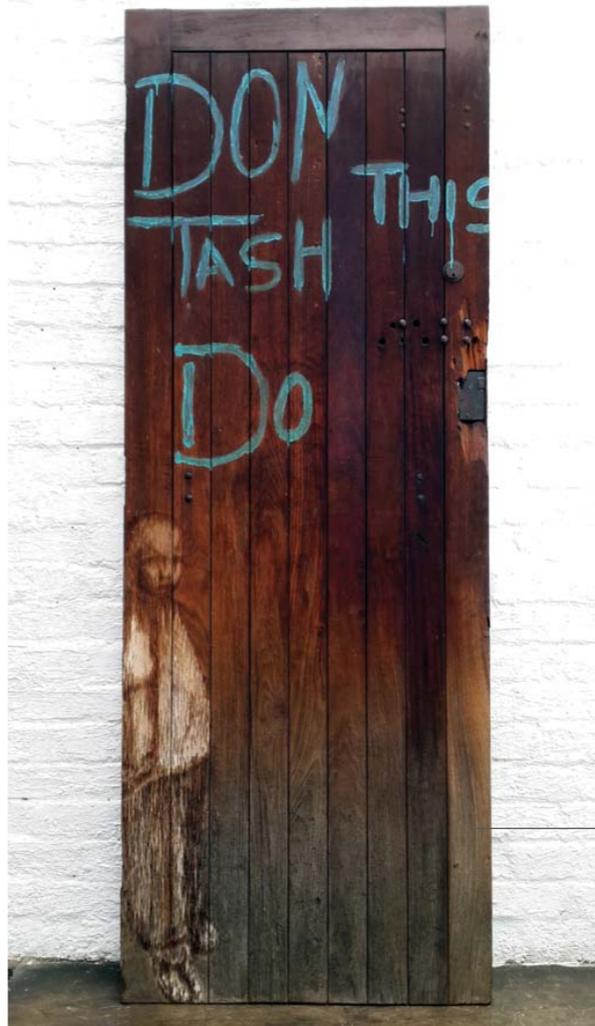
A work such as *Oupa Florie* at the Rissik Street Post Office marks a process of personal archaeology, a delving into family history, and the finalised artwork, carved into the derelict building's plaster in Coetzee's trademark style, is a trace of that process, but also becomes a physical manifestation of the way our personal histories are mapped onto the city.

Her more public works, such as *Hover*, engraved on a blackened piece of wall where informal recyclers burn the plastic off copper wire before selling it on, has gradually been obscured by new layers of smoke on the walls, illustrating the ephemeral nature of the works, how they represent a dialogue with the city more than a way of imposing meaning on its surfaces.

Similarly, a work like *Don Tash This Do*, which deals with child rape, also makes the seemingly immutable walls of the city speak of other hidden aspects of contemporary life.

Coetzee's interventions embrace the interplay of permanence and transience, and make manifest something of the hidden life of the city, in some ways challenging habitual ways of reading the city, and through a sense of investment in its public life, affecting the way in which people live in it.

*Words - Graham Wood*



## Don Tash This Do

Listening to Hannelie where she had found the door, her trade to get it and the story behind the little boy deeply touched me giving an insight view in a world so far unknown to me. It reminds me how lucky I was to grow up without worries and fears. The door of our house was a passage to a world of new encounters with friendly people. Not once have I seen my family's door as a means to give us shelter and safety. It reminds me how different the boy has learned to view the world leaving me with the question whether he will ever be able to approach this world without fear, to step outside excited by the encounters he will make.

*Julia Magnus*

Title: "Don Tash This Do" 2013  
Medium: Engraved found wooden door  
Dimension: 2030mm X 760mm X 50mm

## Traditional Medicinal Portrait Series

“In April 2014 I arrived at the Nirox Sculpture Park to install my work for the upcoming Winter Sculpture show and I came across Hannelie Coetzee in the process of making her ‘Traditional Medicinal Portrait Series’. I watched from a distance and was struck by her process. Power tool in hand I saw Coetzee standing before her large slabs of stone and repetitively, meticulously drilling, as if she were working with fabric rather than rock and thread rather than masonry bits. In that moment I felt as if I were witnessing an unintentional performance by Coetzee. Two worlds, that of hard manual labour usually associated with men and traditional handicraft and embroidery usually associated with women’s work came together, it was both fluid and poetic. Days later once my installation was complete I found myself approaching Coetzee’s now installed artworks in the landscape, I walked up to them from behind and so my first encounter with the marks was up close, I enjoyed the texture and pattern while running my fingers across the surface, on leaving the site I looked back and realised for the first time that the marks made an image and that there were faces embedded in the stone. This made me smile as I realised Coetzee had successfully embedded her intricate process into her work, it is a layered experience and it reveals different aspects of itself at different times, what one gets out of it very much depends on how one approaches it.”

Bronwyn Lace



Title: *'Traditional Medicinal Portrait Series', 2014*  
Medium: Engraved stone  
Location: Nirox Foundation, Gauteng, South Africa

## 2. Traditional Medicinal Portrait Series

Title: *Knowledge Holder of South African Medicinal plants (Jakalas version)*  
Medium: Engraved Stone  
Edition/Unique  
Dimensions: 1 100mm X 770 X 220



Title: *Portrait of an Inyanga (diviner)*  
Medium: Engraved Stone  
Edition/Unique  
Dimensions: 1 800mm X 600 X 400



Title: *Portrait of a Knowledge Holder of South African Medicinal plants*  
Medium: Engraved Stone  
Edition/Unique  
Dimensions: 1 200mm X 600 X 300



Title: *Portrait of an igqiha lethlathi (forest diviner)*  
Medium: Engraved Stone  
Edition/Unique  
Dimension: 1 200mm X 600 X 250

Title: *Portrait of a Xhosa Elder*  
Medium: Engraved Stone  
Edition/Unique  
Dimension: 1 350mm X 650 X 300

## The precarious balance of history

- written by Dilip Menon, Mellon Chair in Indian Studies, University of Witwatersrand

For the 2014 Winter Show of sculpture at the Nirox Sculpture Park, located in the Cradle of Humankind, Hannelie Coetzee did something that she had been doing with stone for a few years; in a different way.

She assembled the photographs of traditional knowledge holders, pixelated them and reproduced them on a grid used for cross-stitch patterns. This was wall papered onto rocks recovered from a nearby village and the pattern was drilled on to the rock surface (stained a smoky black with floor polish so that it looked as if it had recovered from a bush fire).

Some of the indentations were coloured with calamine (used as a skin remedy locally) and some naturally extruded a yellow-ochre colour arising from the composition of the rock. In the flat expanse of the land with occasional water bodies and the slanting winter light, the faces acquired an ethereal glow. At times, the strong sunlight forced one to peer closely to see the ghostly faces. A group of four near a tree looked like shards from a distant explosion; like a miniature Stonehenge; or artefacts of ancestors from another time. There was something solid yet fragile: spiritual yet material; contemporary and ancient all held in balance.

An earlier exhibition at Nirox titled *Buigkrag* (“the strength it takes to bend something as far as it can go”) had played with the theme of balance and of the seamless segueing of time from the ancient to the modern.

Under the gently sagging wires of electricity pylons, Hannelie had arranged dolomite rocks dry stacked on top of each other in a serried series. They

appeared to be like worshippers gathering on a Sunday beneath the force of the electricity to which they seemed to aspire. What held them up; held them together? Were the rocks drawn into order by the electricity flowing overhead like filings by a magnet or was it the force generated by the lines of delicately balanced rocks that gently pulled the wires down? There was a seeming solidity here in the landscape that *Familie Portret* (2011) had sought to destabilise on the sands of Plettenberg Bay. Again, rocks dry stacked on each other, but falling regularly to the rhythms of the tides. Balance again, as also its impossibility, or rather transience.

We have no greater symbol of solidity and endurance than rocks (the eponymous Peter, the rock on which the Church is founded). Yet at the same time, what does it mean for a rock to become the means with which to render a sense of precarious balance.

What is the series to which rocks belong; are they at the extreme end of the spectrum of hardness? How does one arrive at hardness as the terminus of a longing for eternity? It is precisely this enigma of arrival that Hannelie lays bare.

It begins with a photograph, that most documentary and insubstantial of representations, subject to the imperfections of light, motion and attitude. The photograph then transitions to the artifice of another medium, that of cloth and the possibility of rendering design through regularity and the movement of coloured threads and needle.



Title: “*Buigkrag*” Bending something as far as it can go (2012) Nirox Permanent Collection, Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng South Africa  
Medium: Site Specific Environmental Art  
Dimension: 100 m X 50 m X 2m high

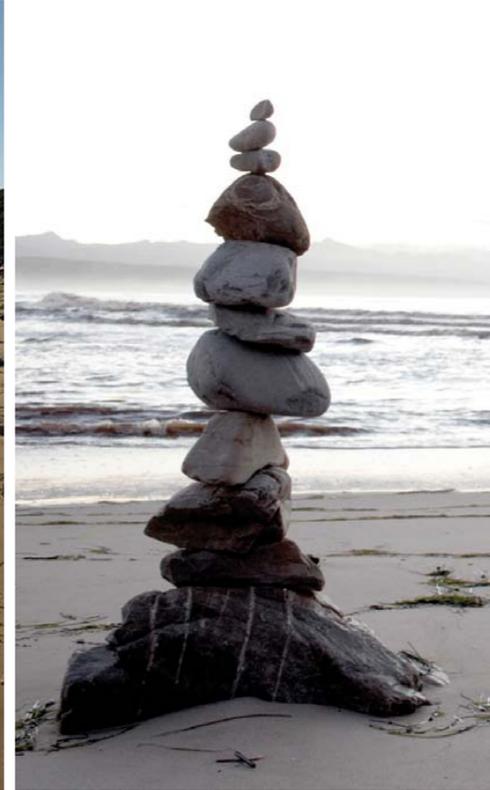
Site relevance: It’s a comment society’s dependency on electricity. All the stone are drystacked slanted towards the pylons running through the landscape.

#### 4. Familie Portret



Title: "Familie Portret" Family Portrait, (2011) Site Specific Land Art Festival, Plettenberg Bay South Africa  
Medium: Site Specific Environmental Art  
Dimension: 100 m X 200 m X 2m high

Site relevance: 13 Drystack stone figures stacked in the high tide line of Lookout beach. Restacked every day in high tide to think of the ebb and flow of my family



In between is the logarithm of a computer programme that disaggregates the image into its pixels and rearranges it into a cross-stitch pattern; each pixel being rendered as a tiny square. Then the printout allows for a grid through which a drill can indent the rock laying out the lineaments of a face. A seeming progression towards permanence and hardness; only if one discounts the spectrality of the face, the uncertain balance of the rock and we are back in the terrain of the photograph and its constructed transience.



## 5. Oupa Florie



Title: *Oupa Florie*, Rissik Street Post Office, 2012  
Medium: Engraved and stained wall  
Dimension: 2X3 meters  
Location: Post Office, Rissik Street, Johannesburg

## 4. Hover

We have seen this earlier in Hannelie's renditions of *Oupa Florie* at the Rissik Street Post Office and *Trapsuutjies* ('stepping lightly') on Kruger Street, angle ground into a streaked surface. Are these renditions permanently scratched on to a hard enduring surface or do they aspire to the feel of photographs, which the action of time has faded?

And all of these in this "elusive metropolis": a city that is work-in-progress with its sedimented histories of mining, migration and miscegenation. A city held in balance between cosmopolitanism and xenophobia; the burden of history and the lightness of hope. Hannelie's work occupies these paradoxes and interstices.

The portrait of her *Oumagrootjie*, a cameo in black and white mosaic in Fordsburg, that seemingly black- Indian and African-space, but once a space where white was also present, then only present, and now not present. Or the mosaic *Ouma Miemie en Tant Vya* of two women and two children at the crossing of Berea and Commissioner, walking as they had decades earlier, but now in a landscape of urban decay.

*Hover*, at the crossing of Albertina Sisulu and Berea on a wall burnt by the fires built by recyclers lighting fires to melt wires to reclaim the copper, mining metal from the surface of a city. The artwork has been rendered part of the organic imprint of labour and the frenetic creativity of ragged trousered illustrators on the city. Tagging, graffiti and a layering of smoke have rendered the engraving almost invisible.

Photographs: faded and then restored. Stone drilled into and making visible faces from the past. Walls ground and serrated to yield images that appear to be fading away even as we look. Mosaics that blur as we get closer and it is only keeping a distance that clarifies. Stones-solid and substantial- which, being shakily balanced, defy their own sense of entity. There is something about the precarious balance of history in contemporary South Africa that Hannelie's work exemplifies. The narratives of the city speak about fluidity, porosity and instability. Kentridge and Marx's *Firewalker* has become a metaphor for Johannesburg: seemingly disconnected shards that come together as an image in the viewer's eye. And, it is through the sovereign, apodictic act of holding fragments together in balance that Hannelie, as artist and citizen, makes sense in the present.

View a video by Reney Warrington on the process of *Oupa Florie* here: <http://www.hanneliecoetsee.com/oupa-florie>

## 6. Trapsuutjies



Title: "Trapsuutjies" ("Stepping/Tredding lightly")  
engraved for Peace day 2012  
Medium: Engraving on city wall  
Dimension: 3m high X 1 m wide  
Location: Kruger Street, Johannesburg

## 7. Hover

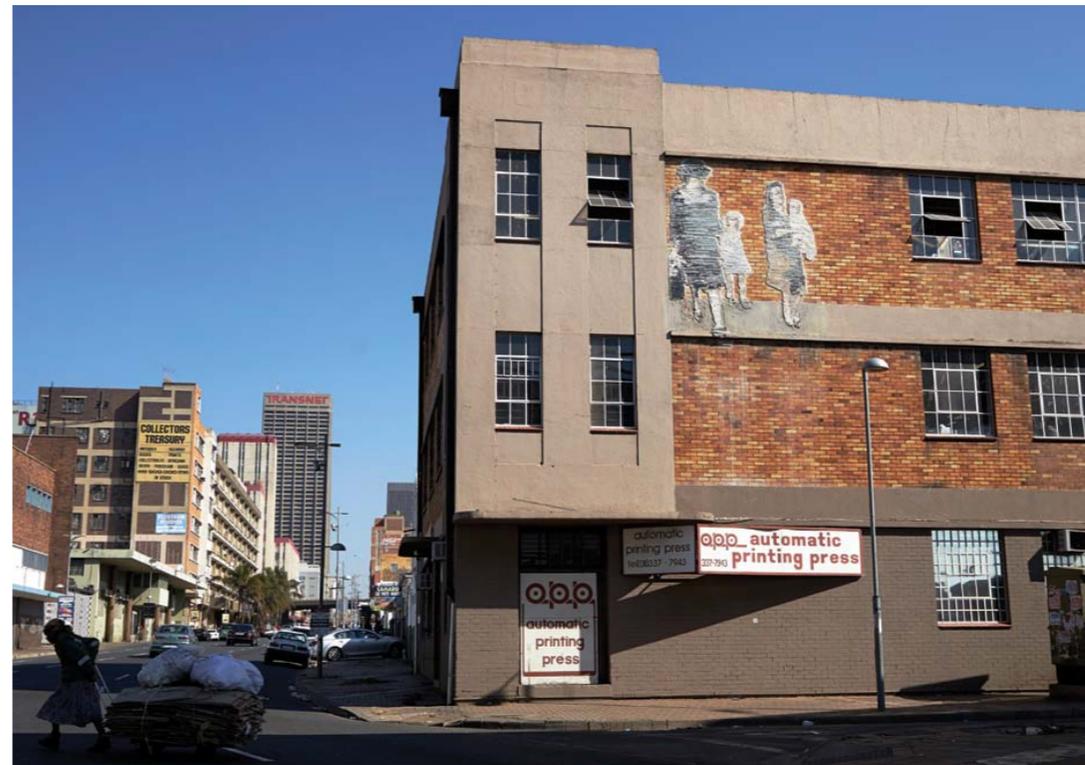


Title: Hover  
Medium: Engraved City Wall  
Dimension: 3X 1 meter  
Location: Cnr Albertina Sisulu and Berea roads, Johannesburg

## 8. Oumagrootjie



Title: *Oumagrootjie*, (Great Grandmother) Fordsburg, Johannesburg 2010  
Medium: Manufactured from discarded granite and marble various South African quarries and factories  
Dimension: 1800mm wide X 2900mm high. Site relevance: My great grandmother queued for food in Fordsburg due to abject poverty caused by the South African War 1899 - 1901



Title: *Ouma Mienie en Tant Vya*, Commissioner Straat streetshots, 1940's, Johannesburg 2012  
Medium: Manufactured from discarded granite and marble various South African quarries and factories  
Dimension: 3600 mm wide X 4500 mm high. Site relevance: My maternal grandmother's favorite shopping street when she worked as a seamstress in the 1940's

## 9. Ouma Mienie en Tant Vya



## Artist's Biography

The way Hannelie Coetzee looks at light, and the way she approaches an urban wall as a vignette for a photograph, was certainly influenced by the fact that she studied photography and worked as a professional photographer for more than twenty years.

Her shift towards working in stone, mosaic and sculpture was in fact a natural one.

She simply loved a) photography and b) stone. First she photographed stone in any possible form – corbel houses, scars in the landscape, the Swartberg Pass. From there she collected stone, she stacked stone and she visited quarries where she found a vast collection of discarded processed stone about to be dumped in landfills. *Oumagrootjie*, a stone mosaic installed in Fordsburg, was born – she combined the stone, a photograph of her great gran and the 2008 recession.

That was followed by a series of urban art works, either made out of dry stacked stone or stone mosaics. She worked site specifically with gritty, burnt Joburg city walls, so it was no surprise that she started grinding and drilling into these walls, but still using a photographic image as pattern. Building free standing sculptures was simply the next step.

These first public artworks Coetzee made dealt with her own family history, her Afrikaner heritage and her own sense of belonging in Joburg. Whilst installing/grinding/drilling these works, she ended up taking out her earphones and interacting with inquisitive passers-by who either live or work in the area. She realised she had to listen to them, incorporate their stories and possibly even address some of the social and environmental issues in the area – she is after all making an artwork that the passers-by would have to live with.

She started grappling with the idea of functional sculptures - an object that both comments on its surroundings and relevant issues, but also contributes to the solutions by cleaning water, being a bridge or catching the morning dew. For these large-scale, kick ass projects she needed partners in crime – she started talking to scientists, city planners, architects, etc. She also finished the SECP (Social Entrepreneurship Certificate Program) at GIBS in 2013.

This cemented her future vision. Collaboration would broaden the scope of the projects, give it more credibility and widen the revenue streams that could be tapped. The collaborators would in turn get a visual tool that could explain their sometimes not so accessible work to a wider audience.

Coetzee divides her time between researching new projects, completing personal and commissioned artworks, photographic commissions, local and international residencies and her continual need to explore, to scratch the surface.

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# WORKS IN STONE II

(WERKE IN KLIP)



## List of Artworks

1. Don Tash This Do 2013
2. A series of portraits of acclaimed Traditional Health Practitioners from South Africa 2014
3. Buigkrag 2012
4. Familie Portret 2011
5. Oupa Florie 2012
6. Trapsuutjies 2012
7. Hover 2012
8. Oumagrootjie 2010
9. Ouma Miemie 2012

The artist gratefully acknowledges thoughts and writing from Dilip Menon, Julia Magnus, Graham Wood, Bronwyn Lace, Annemart Swanepoel (design) and Reney Warrington (bio writing, editing and photography).

Hannelie Coetzee – Works in Stone II

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