



4 x 4

***Githan Coopoo
Asemahle Ntlonti
Natalie Paneng
Guy Simpson***



**EIGEN + ART Lab
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Text by Lisa Schütz

Hello Nice¹

Welcome to 4 x 4, the group show at EIGEN + ART Lab presenting four artistic positions from South Africa. Through their art, they bring to you their views of life. Take your time. At first, they may seem soothing. Though the second, the third or the fourth view could also be uncomfortable. But it will be fun, too, promise. Or not promise, too much of a word for today's world as Githan Coopoo will tell you, but you'll see. Come closer, have a look, as focused as you stare on your phone scrolling over all the squares in all those IG feeds. Instead, feed yourself with some nice art. Do something 4 yourself. In the end, it may maybe help you in your relationships, whether with yourself or the others or the world or your phone – for better or for

First, there is Guy Simpson, say hi to Guy. His canvases look like a puzzle. You remember this 4x4 frame puzzle, whether it was with pictures or numbers; you have to slide as long as the whole image is correct or the numbers are in the right order. So, as I said, take your time. Maybe you will not come to the whole image which, as a child, you've learned will be there after sliding the tiles correctly; or you've learned that from tinder. But let's go back to Guy. His canvases seem quite, at ease, but are they? Fact is, they do not lead seamlessly into one another like a regular puzzle piece fits to its counterpart; instead, there are ruptures. But then inside: an insight into a totally normal life. Aren't they confusing? Then turn to his drawing: it's fragile, delicate, ordered, and real. It's from the real world, is it? Or is it more an adaption, like these cartoon drawings? However: it's art within art, it's a "whatiftheworld"².

Second, there is Asemahle Nlonti, say hi to Asemahle. Look at her work: there are different colours on the canvases. They appear like different feelings. But attention, do not touch! So you have to look closer, investigate, like Asemahle herself, through her art, is investigating herself, her home and her country with all these colours and materials her home offers her. Are they what they look like or are they what you are told they are? If the second is true, you don't need to look anymore, but if the first applies, you should look, closely, and again and again and again. It will not hurt you. Asemahle creates art that soothes, that is playful, that is soft, although the subjects from the real world are heavy; but not so her art. It's hovering like her scarf on this heavy metal.

Third, there is Githan Coopoo, say hello to Githan. He says hello to you too, or rather he is talking to you through his vases. But no, not really talking, that would be too kind. More screaming, right into your face. "Id better get going" – so wonderfully ambiguous as we all are today. You've already learned not to promise. Promise me not to promise? "Sorry but i cant". Wow, this is a "rejection in bloom"³. But there are no flowers in this vases. They are not really vases if a vase is for the purpose of holding flowers, but they are vases if a vase could only be decorative, even funny and absurde, and also – fragile. But don't be sad, things could be repaired, couldn't they? And even so, did somebody say something hurtful? No, not say, not really, but mean. The philosopher Wittgenstein has already told us back then, language is just a game. But he has also told us that there is said a lot through the unsaid, through that what is meant.⁴ These days, producers like Östlund or White are telling us this, or rather showing us. Maybe we should put a lotus in the vase.⁵

Fourth, there is Natalie Paneng, she greets you nicely and invites you to her virtual worlds, her awkward worlds, her blooming fantasy. "Is this the real world? Is this just fantasy? [...] No escape from reality. Open your eyes, look up to the skies and see"⁶. She knows how the real world works, how people look at you, even stare at you. So she decided to go behind the camera and from now on being stared at by a camera lens rather than an eye lens. Now she is in full bloom, creating new worlds freely adapted from real stories – or the other way round? Who knows as there is not to know. What is to know is that there isn't the one solution to how to live your life and how to be who you are. Who are you? Who are they? These 4 artists try to find that out through their art. Maybe they would call it "the beautiful struggle"⁷. One thing is for sure: they are many. Many different lives as x means multiply. 4 your owns sake.

"lets keep in touch" – they mean it. thnx 4 visiting⁸

xx

4x 4

¹ Blog by Natalie Paneng: <http://helloniice.blogspot.com/>

² Instagram feed by Guy Simpson @guysimpson_: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CSzQNzuKHOI/?hl=de>

³ Instagram feed by Githan Coopoo @githancoopoo: https://www.instagram.com/p/CmV_obqKcT7/?hl=de ⁴ See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, Oxford 1953.

⁵ Referring to "The White Lotus", the television series by Mike White for HBO.⁶ Lyrics from Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen from 1975, <https://www.songtexte.com/songtext/freddie-mercury/bohemian-rhapsody-23982857.html>

⁷ Ta-Nehisi Coates: The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008, spottet on the Instagram feed by Asemahle Nlonti @asemahlenlonti: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BMFFc17jud4/>

⁸ Blog by Natalie Paneng: <http://helloniice.blogspot.com/>



Exhibition video: <https://vimeo.com/793419467>







