

IN BLACK AND WHITE

# Poignancy of sombre lucidity in grey palette

**The Black and White show**  
 At Absolut Art Gallery, Stellenbosch  
 Until August 29  
 REVIEW: Marisha Flowers for  
 Corrigan & Co

BLACK and white, with all its elegance and allure, never fails to convey the core concept behind an image or artwork, which can often take on a different meaning when obscured by the vibrancy and loudness of colour.

Some of the most important moments have been captured in black and white, transcending the world of art and photography even, implanting themselves across the history books with ease.

Take Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, photographed in 1936, capturing the texture of the Great Depression. The iconic image depicts a destitute Florence Owen Thompson and her children, and documents the plight of migrants during a time of economic hardship, war and starvation.

Lange's historic image would not have the same poignancy if not for the sombre lucidity it exudes in a palette of grey.

At Absolut Art Gallery in Stellenbosch, gallerist Gerrit Dyman jr recognises this appeal and pays homage to a colourless world with a black and white show this month.

The featured artists include the king of landscapes and sombre appeal JH Pierneef, and art world darlings William Kentridge and Marlene Dumas, as well as less-known artists like Andre Stead, Ben Eagle and the appropriately named Paul Painting.

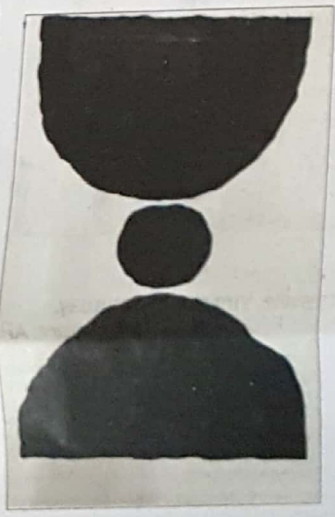
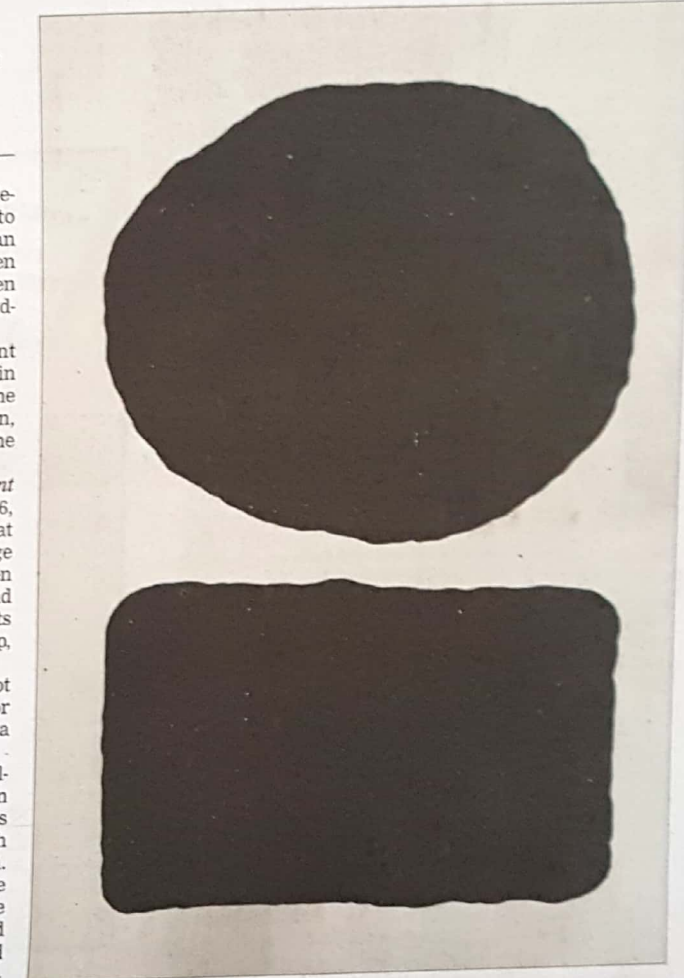
"I have always enjoyed the refreshing simplicity that black and white offers", says Dyman.

Dyman has woven together a selection of works that speak of triumph in trying times, quiet resilience and equanimity.

Kentridge's *Atlas under Procession* conveys a more conventional take on strength and composure, reminding us of *Atlas, God of the Titans*, who personified endurance and was condemned to carry the heavens upon his shoulders after his defeat.

Zander Blom's abstract linen *Untitled*, diseased with insidious black protrusions, depicts the darkness that creeps up on us during moments of temporary weakness.

With the vote of no confidence making its umpteenth round on our radar this year, citizens and politicians are all too familiar with the



notion of having courage under fire. Andrew Barlow's *Triumph and Surrender* depict this binary



**IMPRESSIVELY SMOOTH:** Marlene Dumas's *Tripoli Baby*, adorned with pink spot colour bow ties, once again stirring up the idea of triumph and surrender, domination and servitude.

Opening up multiple cans of worms on a nation's resilience, vulnerability

sister works *Composition in Black and White I and II*.

At first glance, these works convey little more than their names suggest, as they are amorphous floating lumps. Eagle however achieves one of the simplest laws in nature; balance.

Heavy and intimidating, are the unlikely adjectives that come to mind when you view sculptures of female figures in period costume by Nicola Roos. There is a sort of clarity and in-your-face directness about Roos's work that relates back to Eagle's ominous floating lumps and Stead's impressively smooth *Modernist Venus*.

Another impressively smooth artwork is Dumas's *Tripoli Baby*, adorned with pink spot colour bow ties, once again stirring up the idea of triumph and surrender, domination and servitude. Yin and Yang.

Dyman's apparently obvious yet lucid theme opens up multiple cans of worms, commenting on race relations, political upheaval and the resilience and vulnerability of a nation.

**OMINOUS FLOATING LUMPS:** Ben Eagle Compositions in *Black & White I and II*. Graphic designer turned artist Ben Eagle does a fantastic job of recycling the yin and yang and portraying duality and harmony in his two sister works.

explicitly, with two charcoal drawings of wrestlers battling each other tirelessly. One an image of victory, the other an ode to defeat.

Perhaps the most notable of symbols pertaining to duality and the dichotomy of nature could be the *Taijitu*, known as Yin Yang. In Eastern philosophy, the Yin Yang concept describes how all things exist as inseparable and contradictory opposites.

Graphic designer turned artist Eagle does a fantastic job of recycling the yin yang and portraying duality and harmony in his two