

The background of the poster is a textured, brownish-grey fabric. A large, light blue, semi-circular shape is cut out from the center, revealing a piece of aged, yellowish-brown paper. This paper has several small, dark, fibrous inclusions and some faint blue markings. The text is overlaid on the right side of the poster.

PIERRE VERMEULEN
Of itself

27 . 10 . 18

24 . 11 . 18

smac

PIERRE VERMEULEN

Of itself

Pierre Vermeulen's latest body of work, entitled *Of itself*, sees his continued exploration around the nature of presence, cyclicism and the prospects for humankind in an automated future. Created for his second solo exhibition at SMAC Gallery, Vermeulen introduces a new series of oxidised impressions on gold leaf imitate, paintings on raw linen and hemp, and a large-scale work spanning six aluminium panels. Unequivocally nonrepresentational, Vermeulen's compositions make use of abstraction in observing the human condition – questioning certain proclivities, such as the increasing occupancy of technology, within our current social structures.

The work finds its strength in harnessing the philosophy of Stanley Kubrick's '2001: A Space Odyssey', becoming a deeply serious, richly textured, enigmatic and meditative spectacle. Like Kubrick's masterpiece, *Of itself* is an uncanny arrangement of speculative fiction, where Vermeulen's signature use of imitation gold leaf speaks of a certain vision – a dimensionless source of light, a sun rising over the horizon of a future planet, an opening into new territory.

Employing a combination of unorthodox and traditional processes to create his experimental works, Vermeulen takes direction from the materiality and performative quality of these chosen mediums, using his own body, sweat and hair as a vehicle for expression. Post-humanist in its execution – both in theory and artistic practice – *Of itself* considers notions of consciousness, the 'self', becoming, and the dissolution of boundaries – attempting to detach itself from a restrictively human perspective, and pose the question: 'where are we going?'

Vermeulen's unique method involves manipulating the oxidation process of the imitation gold leaf imitate, creating impressions of his perspiring figure by carefully controlling the delicate surface from corroding, until the exact moment of impression. A premeditated composition is often altered by an unexpected hand or thigh – a form of improvisation within limits. In preparation for the creation of his work, Vermeulen enters a sauna and consciously places the body in an extreme environment of high temperature – where the body regulates temperature independently, and produces sweat – a chemical composition of water and trace minerals – as a result.

Vermeulen is interested in how this process relates to an understanding of consciousness – the internal/external world is observed by means of the sauna's location within the building, the body's location in the sauna, the sweat located inside the body, the sweat located outside the body. The self-regulating body thus allows the artist an alternative understanding of consciousness. Through this process of filtering the 'self' – of discarding and imprinting, and also preserving the 'self' – Vermeulen has transcended the boundaries of the body and emphasised the ideological and aesthetic fragmentation of his practice, bringing a physical, 'human' element to a portrayal of life in the future.

Vermeulen's use of gold speaks of a constructed utopian world – a bizarre cosmological phenomena and strange landscape of unusual colours – where the human element of sweat and hair perhaps threaten to destroy this civilization. Here,

Vermeulen has placed his work in a specific time, reflective of a specific time – and asked about the role of humanity in the fast-approaching future.

Vermeulen has also incorporated colour, meticulously crafted 'hair orchids' and dried orchids embalmed in shellac into this body of work – combining floral, geometric and biomorphic forms to create a vocabulary of complex and coded meanings. For Vermeulen, these cast-off objects included in his processes become what he considers a proto-thought – a primitive extension of the 'self', a "discarded part of yourself transferred into an artwork".

In choosing to work with materials cast-off from the human body and dried orchids – once living, organic cells now existing within the mineral world of dead material objects – Vermeulen has presented a space where boundaries begin to breakdown, where we are confronted with a world both before and after the subsistence of linguistic binaries – 'self'/other and subject/object. This world, in Vermeulen's vision, echoes and emulates, flashes and conceals, promises to reveal great secrets of the universe before reneging once more.

The work can also be understood as an exploration of the non-hierarchical existence between object and subject. Perhaps best articulated by Julia Kristeva, the 'abject' refers to the human reaction to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of distinction between subject and object, or between the 'self' and the other. *Of itself* is concerned, at its core, with the "thingness of things" – the idea that one doesn't need to become something, one is something, just as an object is simply of itself. Vermeulen's choice in materials is a gentle nudge towards this abject and the spontaneity of things. Not overtly defilement, the sweat prints disturb our understanding of subject, object, abject –

dissolving boundaries, locating identity within a space of impermanence, and clearing the ground to see certain absurdities simply as they appear.

Situated on this fragile border between dimensions, *Of itself* invites us to meditate in the space – at once presenting a considered acceptance of the ever-changing nature of life, engaging with the impermanence of the present 'self', and questioning human elements in a technology-based future. Yet, Vermeulen's large-scale gold leaf imitate canvasses – both in how they become a source of light and how the concentrated minerals eat away at the gold, revealing a rich verdigris – are not representations of something, they are something. Existing, and growing, and pulsing, and dying – flashing light from its surfaces, and leaping again from world to world.

A seriousness and transcendence to the work, like '2001: A Space Odyssey', *Of itself* comes as an optimistic statement about a humanity which is seen to be born and reborn, yet is darkly apocalyptic in its foreboding of the approach of a technology that lies far beyond our horizon – a technology of parapsychical forces, deeming humanity inept. It is a body of work that seeks to understand the next great evolutionary step of humankind, from birth to metamorphosis – perhaps the last choice between life and death.



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, pink with mirror pool

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, azure blue form

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

50 x 58 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, peach form

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

95 x 82 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, violet and green with mirror pool

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

104.5 x 90 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, blue and orange with mirror pool

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

150 x 120 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, red form

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

58 x 50 cm

Orchid monolith series



Pierre Vermeulen

Dried orchid box no.1

2018

Orchids, Shellac, Cotton on Aluminium and Perspex

106 x 96 x 13.5 cm

Proto-thoughts series



Pierre Vermeulen

Dried orchid box no.2, yellow

2018

Orchids, Shellac, Cotton on Aluminium and Perspex

53 x 48 x 8.5 cm

Proto-thoughts series



Pierre Vermeulen

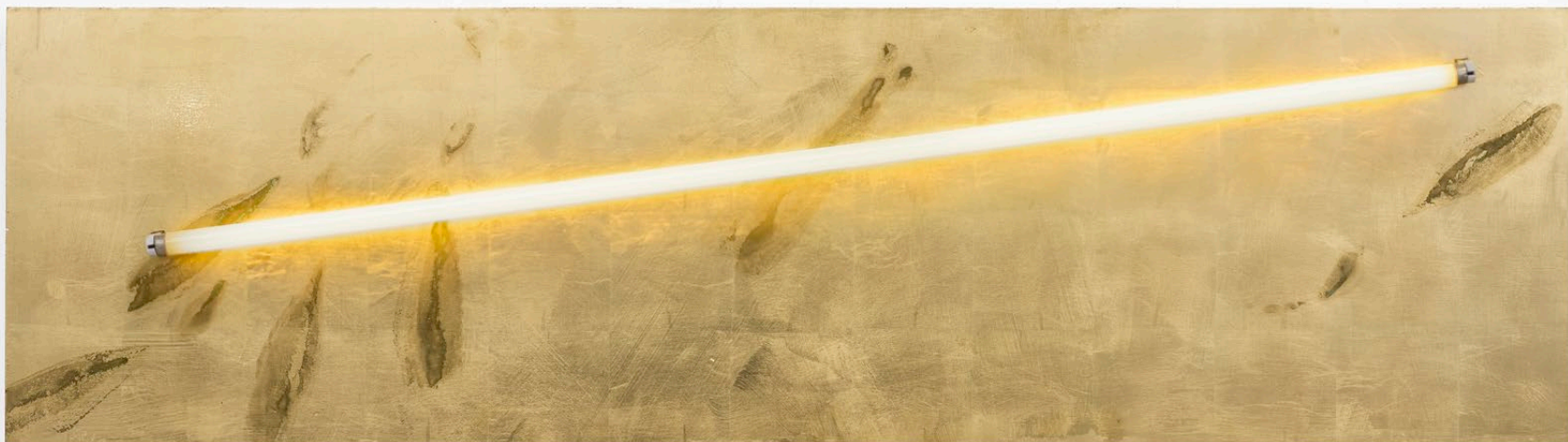
Dried orchid box no.3, mirror

2018

Orchids, Shellac, Cotton on Aluminium and Perspex

53 x 48 x 8.5 cm

Proto-thoughts series



Pierre Vermeulen

Sweat print, light panel no. 1

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Light Bulb on Aluminium

50 x 180 cm

Sweat print series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print in space, blue layer

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

150 x 201 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

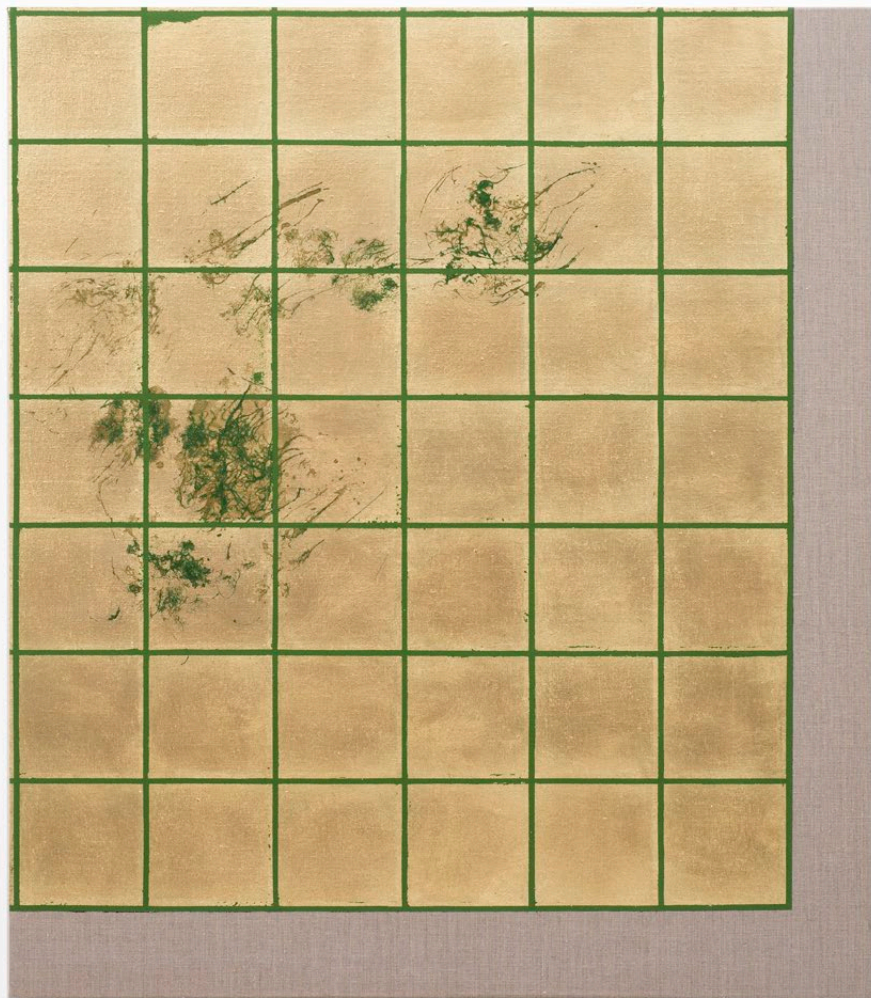
Hair orchid sweat print, linen

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate and Shellac on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, green grid

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, violet scape

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, pink grid

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print, green scape

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Acrylic and Shellac on Belgian Linen

105.5 x 90 cm

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

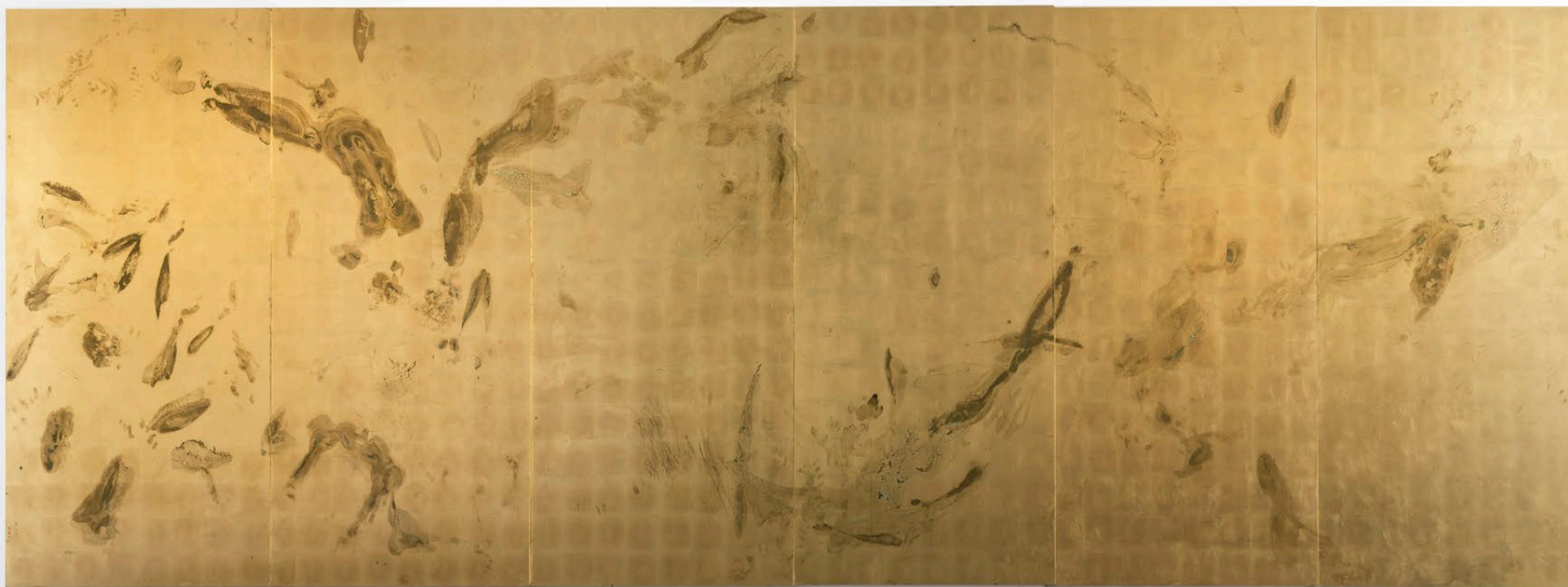
Hair orchid sweat print, hemp

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate and Shellac on Hemp

105.5 x 180 cm (105.5 x 90 cm each)

Orchids in space series



Pierre Vermeulen

Sweat print no. 20, 6 metre movement

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate and Shellac on Aluminium

210 x 630 cm (210 x 105 cm each)

Sweat print series



Pierre Vermeulen
Hair orchid sweat print drawing I
2018
Charcoal on Belgian Linen
56 x 46 cm
Thought shape series



Pierre Vermeulen

Hair orchid sweat print drawing II

2018

Charcoal on Belgian Linen

56 x 46 cm

Thought shape series



Pierre Vermeulen

Macro hair orchid sweat print, blue layer

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Stone Paper

66 x 65.5 cm

Thought shape series



Pierre Vermeulen

Macro hair orchid sweat print, pink layer

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Shellac and Acrylic on Stone Paper

66 x 65.5 cm

Thought shape series



Pierre Vermeulen

Macro hair orchid sweat print, aluminium scape

2018

Sweat, Gold Leaf Imitate, Aluminium Leaf and Shellac on Stone Paper

75.5 x 65 cm

Thought shape series

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Pierre Vermeulen was born in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in 1992. He currently lives and works in Cape Town as a multimedia and installation artist. After obtaining a BA in Fine Arts from the University of Stellenbosch in 2015, Vermeulen has been included in major collections such as the newly opened Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) in Cape Town, South Africa.

In 2017, SMAC presented Vermeulen's first solo exhibition in Cape Town. The artist also created a site-specific installation at the Association for the Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery, titled *Sweat Prints*, in June 2017.

Selected group exhibitions include *Pentimenti* – a Woordfees exhibition based on the work of Louis Jansen Van Vuuren at the Sasol Art Museum in Stellenbosch in 2013; *Portretteer/Portraiture* at Oude Libertas gallery, Stellenbosch in 2015; *Restore* at GUS, Stellenbosch, in 2016; *Folly* at SMITH in Cape Town in 2017. Vermeulen's work was included in SMAC Gallery's presentation at the Cape Town Art Fair, FNB Joburg Art Fair and the 12 Edition of Contemporary Istanbul, all in 2017.

Notably in 2016, Vermeulen's *Untitled Sweat Print 1* was commissioned by the Zeitz Collection – a major six-panel work created for site-specific hanging in Gordon house, London. His work forms part of other prominent collections such as The Royal Portfolio Collection, housed at the Silo Hotel, in Cape Town, South Africa and the M&C Saatchi Abel Collection, in South Africa. Vermeulen was selected as a finalist in the Sasol New Signatures Award, both in 2015 and 2016.

In 2018, Vermeulen presented his second solo exhibition, entitled *Of itself* at SMAC Gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa. Later this year, Vermeulen will present a large-scale triptych as a part of *Forward? FORWARD! Forward...*, an exhibition at the Stellenbosch University Museum celebrating the University Centenary.



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Pierre Vermeulen

CURRICULUM VITAE

PIERRE VERMEULEN

C.V

BIOGRAPHY

Born 1992, Cape Town, South Africa.
Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

EDUCATION

2015 Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (BA), University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

AWARDS

2015 Sasol New Signatures Award (Finalist), Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, South Africa.

2016 Sasol New Signatures Award (Finalist), Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, South Africa.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

2018 *Of itself*, SMAC Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa.

[upcoming] ARTISSIMA, (SMAC Gallery), OVAL Lingotto Fiere, Turin, Italy

2017 *Pierre Vermeulen*, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

Sweat Prints, Association for Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

2018 FNB Joburg Art Fair, Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Back to the Future III - Abstract Art in South Africa: Past & Present, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair (SMAC Gallery), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

2017 Cape Town Art Fair (SMAC Gallery), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

Folly, SMITH Studio, Cape Town, South Africa.

Contemporary Istanbul 12th Edition (SMAC Gallery), Cultural Arena, Istanbul, Turkey.

2016 *X: Part III*, Smac Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.
Restore, Gus Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Sasol New Signatures, Finalist Exhibition, Pretoria Arts Museum, Pretoria, South Africa.

2015 *Portretteer/Portrait*, Oude Libertas Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

2013 *Pentimenti- a Woordfees Exhibition based on the work of Louis Jansen Van Vuuren*, Sasol Art Museum, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

COLLECTIONS

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) Collection, Cape Town, South Africa.

Saatchi & Abel Collection, Cape Town, South Africa.

The Royal Portfolio Collecton, Cape Town, South Africa.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact SMAC Gallery for more information regarding the availability of the works included in this portfolio, or for any other queries.

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