



MICHAELA YOUNGE

Artist Room

17.10.20 - 14.11.20

smac

MICHAELA YOUNGE

Text by Jabulile Dlamini-Qwasha

Things are never as they seem in the worlds of Michaela Younge's imagination.

Through her felt tableaux creations, she reflects intricate scenes where rudiment is contrasted with dreamlike details that create a spectacle around the mundane while emphasising the bizarreness of life. Playing on the balance between perception and reality, Younge's entanglements of the humdrum with unlikely placings challenge the viewer's consciousness to either locate parallelism or dwell in the disorientation.

Her piece titled *The lyrical content of the music was in question, but the new dancers made it work* depicts a clear day on Cape Town's Sea Point promenade. It appears to be windy as the sea is choppy with white foam. A dog licks a fallen ice cream cone, and seagulls fly overhead looking for opportunities for food. As it usually is on a sunny day, the promenade is packed with pedestrians, joggers and, unexpectedly, a clown. All are spectacles to observe in equal measure. In the sky, the notorious plane from a nearby strip club, Mavericks, flies overhead advertising a new intake of dancers. A

phenomenon that Younge says fascinated her as a child who once asked her mother what it meant, feeling illicit despite her mother's straightforward answer.

The locality on some of these textiles also implores the viewer to contemplate the reality of the city of Cape Town— where Michaela Younge was born and raised— being one of the most unequal societies in the world and how these scenarios may not be complete fabrications of the mind. The subtle social commentary presents a tension between reality and perception.

In another image, titled *Fervour and Weakness Go Hand in Hand*, Younge depicts a kitsch television dating show. The presenter stands next to the contestant on the left, and three bachelors sit behind a screen on the other side of the stage platform. There is an aspect of seeing something you should not be privy to, as the camera crew is visible, and a handyman on a ladder is in the centre of the stage. The three bachelors are dull, except that one has been sliced open by the letter 'D' in the background text, and the man on the far right has turned to bone. Allowing the viewer to contemplate the complexities

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of romantic partnerships by pointing to their petrifying nature as well as how unexciting one's options may be in relation to expectation. The setting is reminiscent of the performance of romance that we all tend to become beguiled by.

With each tapestry, Younge acquaints her audience with chaos in varying extremities. One work depicts a burlesque strip show where the venue is unclear but seemingly picks up on the story of Mavericks plane with the dancers. A one-armed woman commands the stage with her routine, accompanied by a dog in a blonde wig. The dark blue floral wallpaper and turquoise curtain lend a feeling of glamour. The wall is plastered with event posters that contradict the painting *The Dessert: Harmony in Red* by Matisse. A monkey sits alone at a bar table drinking a beer, looking out of the scene to the right; a red boot enters the scene. Is this who the monkey is looking at? The floor of the club is littered with green beer bottles, dirt and a pink handbag. A police officer handcuffs a man dressed as a chicken at the bottom of the frame. This scene brings across an understated element of humour that somehow brings stability to a moment of absolute bewilderment.

Following on the theme of 'behind the scenes' as it shows a dressing room, *The director condemned happy people by creating miserable plays*, shows a clown and a trapeze artist getting ready next to two 'showgirls'. A large duck applies their make up with a brush and there is a forgotten and trodden-on red rose on the floor, the remnants of a good show. It is unclear what the dressing room is for, yet each unlikely character does not come across as in conflict with the other.

This body of work by Michaela Younge is of the time in how it counterbalances the mundane with a dazing reality. How it makes the viewer question perception and reality feels well-placed in a year where some of the most unlikely world events have occurred and made us all rethink normalcy and our relationship with routine— and the performance thereof. Her use of irony also places her perspective in a South African context where social dynamics are routinely questioned with a tinge of satire.



Michaela Younge

*'He had worked there for as long as he could
wield a knife but he still dreamed of the circus'*

2020

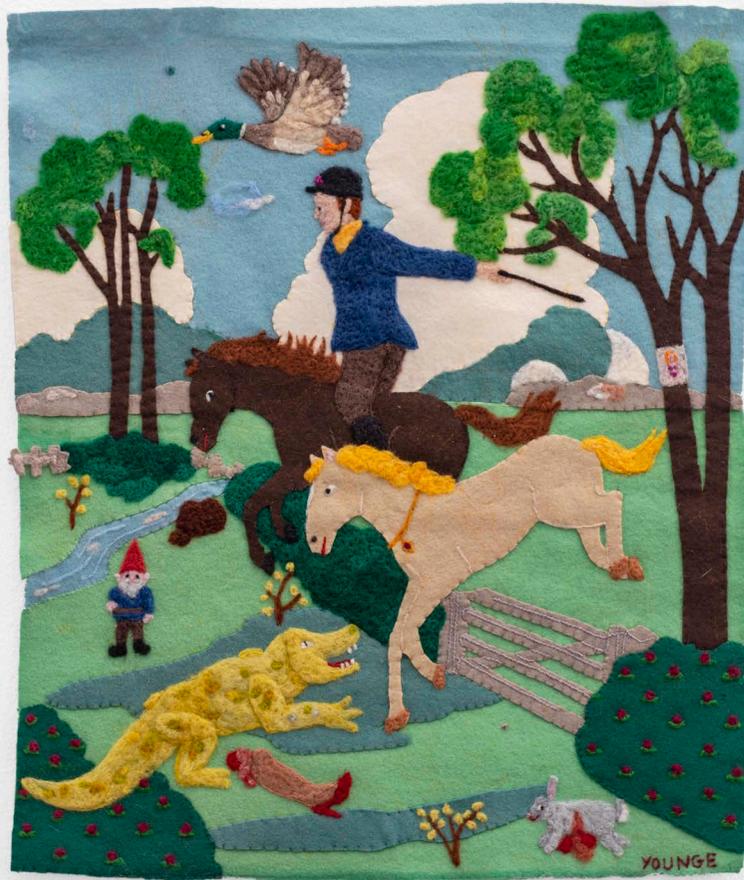
Merino Wool on Felt
70 x 83.5 cm



Michaela Younge
*There was a rumour that Chris Tarrant
was not a real millionaire*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
50.5 x 66 cm



Michaela Younge
The lyrical content of the music was in question, but the new dancers made it work
(Detail)
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
70 x 90 cm



Michaela Younge
*'This is a quick horse. This is a
horse that runs very fast'*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
46.5 x 39.5 cm



Michaela Younge
Snake Amongst Birds
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
50 x 53.5 cm





Michaela Younge
*'He no longer did fire-breathing, but his
breath had a lingering smell of paraffin,
that no amount of gin could conceal'*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
68 x 60.5 cm



Michaela Younge
Fervour and Weakness Go Hand in Hand
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
61.5 x 80.5 cm



Michaela Younge

*Although the water cooler had been broken
for over a year it remained in place
to give the office a professional edge*

2020

Merino Wool on Felt
54 x 62.5 cm



Michaela Younge
*The director condemned happy people
by creating miserable plays*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
54.5 x 63.5 cm



Michaela Younge
*The director condemned happy people
by creating miserable plays*
(Detail)
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
54.5 x 63.5 cm



Michaela Younge
A Golden Age for Glory Holes
2020
Merino Wool on Found Tapestry
51 x 51 cm



Michaela Younge
*After a car crashed into the nativity scene,
Mary went missing (I)*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
53 x 25 cm



Michaela Young
*After a car crashed into the nativity scene,
Mary went missing (II)*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
53 x 25 cm



Michaela Younge
*After a car crashed into the nativity scene,
Mary went missing (III)*
2020
Merino Wool on Felt
53 x 25 cm



Michaela Young | Artist Room | 2020 | Installation View

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Michaela Younge was born in 1993 in Cape Town, South Africa, where she currently lives and works.

The artist graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art in 2015, receiving distinctions in both her theoretical and practical studies. She currently works from her Cape Town base, where she creates wool tableaux.

In 2019, Younge presented her solo exhibition, *Nothing Bad* at SMITH, in Cape Town, South Africa. Younge has participated in numerous group exhibitions and presentations, including SMITH's presentation at Investec Cape Town Art Fair in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2019; *Rendezvous*, and *Close Encounters*, both at SMITH in Cape Town, South Africa; *Salad; Folly*; and *Out of Nowhere*, all at SMITH, in Cape Town in 2017.

The subjects in Younge's work shift from experiences to dreamlike narratives that unfold on multiple planes. Although there is an aspect of narrative that comes through in Younge's work, this originates more from the way in which she sees things, rather than a deep-rooted nostalgia for story time as a child. Instead, story-telling becomes a way of making sense of the world we inhabit. Michaela is particularly interested in the involvement of anthropomorphic figures within the narratives of mythology and children's stories. Her interest in the anthropomorphic relates to our underlying psychology, where we often enact societal norms, bypassing instinctual desire and childlike play.

Text courtesy of SMITH Gallery



MICHAELA YOUNGE

CURRICULUM VITAE

smac

MICHAELA YOUNGE

CV

BIOGRAPHY

Born 1993, Cape Town, South Africa.

Lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.

EDUCATION

2015 Bachelors of Fine Art (BA), University of Cape Town, South Africa.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

2020 *Artist Room*, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

2019 *Its Low Tide and I'm Scraping the Rocks*, SMITH Studio, 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, London.

Nothing Bad, SMITH Studio, Cape Town, South Africa.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS & PRESENTATIONS

2020 *Gather*, SMAC Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair (SMITH Studio), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

2019 FNB Art Joburg (SMITH Studio), Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair, (SMITH Studio), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

2018 FNB Joburg Art Fair (SMITH Studio), Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair, (SMITH Studio), Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town, South Africa.

2017 Art Africa Fair, Cape Town, South Africa.

MEDIA & PUBLICATIONS

Terblanche, J. (2020) *Pink's Not Dead*. APARTMENT Mag, (2), pp. 69 – 72; pp. 80.

Kingdom, C. (2020) *Michaela Younge and the South African Double Consciousness*. [online] Varsity. Available at: <http://varsitynewspaper.co.za/2020/05/13/michaela-younge-and-the-south-african-double-consciousness/> (May, 3, 2020).

Schoeman, L. (2020) *Fables on Felt*. Sunday Times Home SA, pp 17.

Zonneveld, R. (2020) *This Cape Town artist makes tapestries that feel like fever dreams*. [online] i-D. Available at: https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/939d83/michaela-younge-tapestry-artist-interview-cape-town-south-africa (February, 20, 2020).

Braaf, A. (2019) *Michaela Younge - The Unpredictably of Humanoid Figures and Antithetic Narratives*. [online] Hakopike. Available at: <https://www.hakopike.com/home/michaela-younge> (October, 20, 2019).

Terblanche, J. (2019) *The Title is Extra!* ARTAFRICA Mag, (17), pp. 110 – 111.

Ong, J. (2019). *Michaela Younge on her surreal and incredibly intricate felt tapestries*. [online] Its Nice That. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/michaela-younge-felt-tapestries-art-130819> (August, 13, 2019)

Leiman, L. (2019). *Wonderfully beastly: In conversation with Michaela Younge*. ARTMAZE Mag, (13), pp. 48 – 61.

Thesen Law, M. (2019). *Parallel Worlds, Partial Bodies: Michaela Younge's 'Nothing Bad'*. [online] ArtThrob. Available at: <https://artthrob.co.za/2019/06/10/parallel-worlds-partial-bodies-michaela-younge-nothing-bad/> (June, 10, 2019).

40 Young Creatives Under 30. [online] BAYEZA 18. Available at: <https://10and5.com/2018/06/30/michaela-younge/> (August, 16, 2018).

Elizabeth, M. (2019). *'Close Encounters' // A group show exploring the multiplicity of intimacy by SMITH Gallery*. [online] Bubblegum Club. Available at: <https://bubblegumclub.co.za/art-and-culture/close-encounters-a-group-show-exploring-the-multiplicity-of-intimacy-by-smith-gallery/> (June 12, 2018).

Flint, J. (2017). *Phantom Bride*. The Lake, (18). pp. 46 – 51

Stone, B. (2017). *Artist Michaela Younge's NSFW felt tableaux*. [online] Its Nice

That. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/artist-michaela-younge-nswf-felt-tableaux-200617> (June, 20, 2017).

Tymbios, M. (2017) *Out of Nowhere – A group exhibition*. [online] ARTAFRICAMAGAZINE. Available at: <https://artafricamagazine.org/out-of-nowhere-a-group-exhibition/> (June, 14, 2017)

Von Geusau, K. (2017). *ThREe's COMpAnY*. [online] NATAAL. Available at: <http://nataal.com/threes-company/> (April, 10, 2017).

Adjective.online. *Opening: Folly (Group show) & Stephen Allwright Inclusions* (January, 2017).

Leiman, L. (2016) *All things beastly and other tales*. [online] Between 10 and 5. Available at: <https://10and5.com/2016/12/13/michaela-younge-all-things-beastly-and-other-tales/> (December, 13, 2016).

COLLECTIONS

Hong Gyu Shin, New York.

Kilbourn Collection, Cape Town, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Yellowwoods Collection, Cape Town, South Africa

The University of Cape Town Collection, Cape Town, South Africa.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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