

"EHI" WATERBERG, NAMIBIA

Ehi - Sand/Land Rights /Rites

"An artistic exploration of sand sites in the Waterberg, Namibia, as palimpsests of eco-geo-cultural history and identity." Kerstin (Kay) Cowley.

The exhibition explores sand as a signifier of meaning and identity.

In partial fulfillment for the DPhil (Creative Production) BKS 992, University of Pretoria, ZA.

The attached videos support the catalogue as documentation of the exhibition, oration and *The Artist's book of the Waterberg.*

In order to support the audiovisual structure of the exhibition video, the artist's statement also takes the form of spoken poetry/prose:

THE WATERBERG, NAMIBIA

This is the story of Ehi - Sand/Land Rights /Rites

This story is about sand

This story is about land

This story is about the Waterberg

Our Land

Our Mother

Ehi

Sedimentary strata of geology – ecology

Source of life

This story is about palimpsests – the written - erased - rewritten

Deconstructed and reconstructed

Layers of perception

Of memory and history

Of culture and identity

Who are we?

Our Land

Our Mother

Ehi

Kerstin (Kay) Cowley, August 2020



Concept note - The Artist's Workbook of the Waterberg, Namibia 2015-2020

The artist's workbook forms the foundation for the art practice and provides a continuous visual and written exploration of the sand sites in the Waterberg. Inspired by booknesses: construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, it is created from an old Namibian telephone directory, cattle skin, snake skin, sand and materials from the sand sites explored in the Waterberg. These sites are documented in terms of texture rubbings, images, history, ecology, geology and culture. The drawn and painted images were created from photographs I took in the Waterberg. I transcribed the photographs with carbon paper into the book. Collecting this information involved numerous field trips and explorations of the area. The information on the eco-geo cultural history and identity of these sites is hand scribed. Within the metaphor of palimpsests, information is inscribed, erased and re-inscribed in a continuous process. The book was worked on intermittently, and in no apparent order, from 2015-2020.



Also
Ch
up
pink
area
Macro
they
and
latter
the form
delica



Concept note - Sandsites of the Waterberg

The artistic exploration of these sandsites form a palimpsest of eco-geo-cultural history and identity. The workbook, palimpsests and installation explore the ten identified sand sites and their sand, in the Waterberg, from the top of the mountain to the bottom. These are as follows:

1. Fine pale pink sandstone weathered by the sun - Mountain top
2. Course red sandstone from the red fossilised sand chimneys - Mountain top
3. Purple-red loam from the sub-tropical forested slopes
4. Purple-red soil from the old colonial Citrus and Apple Orchard irrigation channels
5. Dry brown sand from the rest camp and restaurant, previously the old German police station
6. Rich black loamy soil from the mountain streams which emerge from the mountain
7. Faded powdery grey sand from the wood-fired bricks of the Mission Station ruins
8. Faded and crumbly pink sand from the sun-dried bricks of the Mission Station ruins
9. Dry granular orange sand from the Graveyard Road
10. Vibrant red and orange sand from the termite hills and the C22 road on the surrounding savannah







20° 25' 5.7" N
13° E

WATERBERG

"water mountain" (Afrikaans)
Name given by Swedish explorer
Charles Total Anderson (1851)

QUEVERUMUE

"narrow gate" (Herero)
= the plateau park between
the "Kleine" (small) and
"Grosse" Waterberg (big)
(German)

OTJOSDONGOMBE

"place of cattle" (Herero)
= watering place for Herero
cattle.

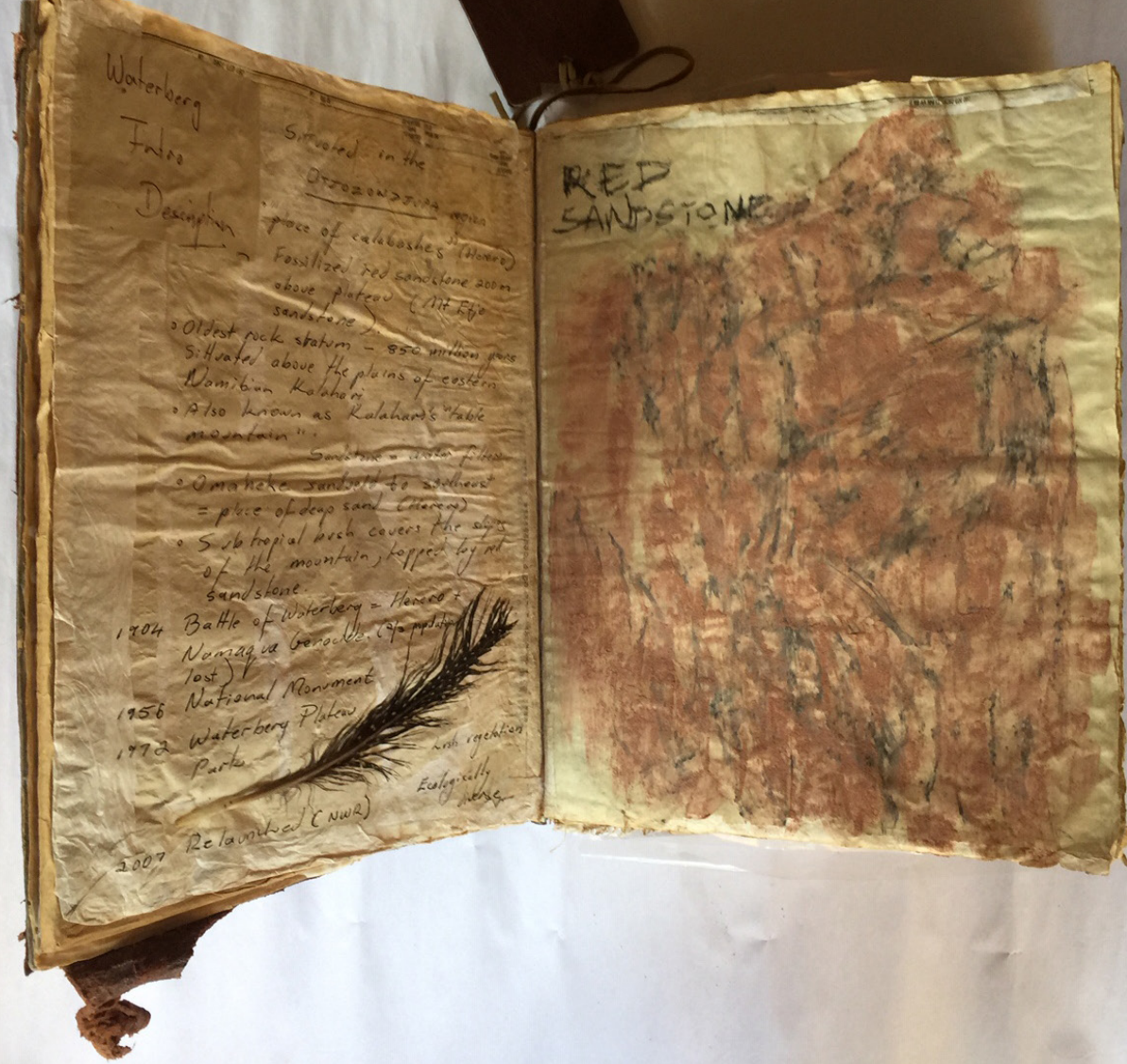
ONDUNDUYORDIWA

"water is coming from the mountain"
(Herero)

Names for
Waterberg

Waterberg - top
Diverf - top
Diverf - top
Diverf - top

Left: Front cover insert created with materials from the top of the mountain. Mountain top sand, bones, and seedpods. Right: Names for the Waterberg.



Waterberg

Intro

Description

- Situated in the
OTZONZOTTA
- piece of calabashes (stone)
 - Fossilized red sandstone 20m above plateau (Mt Ego sandstone)
 - Oldest rock stratum - 850 million years
 - Situated above the plains of eastern Namibian Kalahari
 - Also known as Kalahari's "table mountain"
 - Sandstone = water filter
 - Omaha sandstone to southeast = piece of deep sand (terrace)
 - Subtropical bush covers the slope of the mountain, topped by red sandstone.
- 1704 Battle of Waterberg - Herero + Namaqua genocide (90% population lost)
- 1956 National Monument
- 1972 Waterberg Plateau Park
- 2007 Reliantia (NW2)

RED SANDSTONE

Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer, Actofel Ilovu

Left: Waterberg timeline. Right: Texture rubbing with red sand from the sandstone. Charcoal and sand.



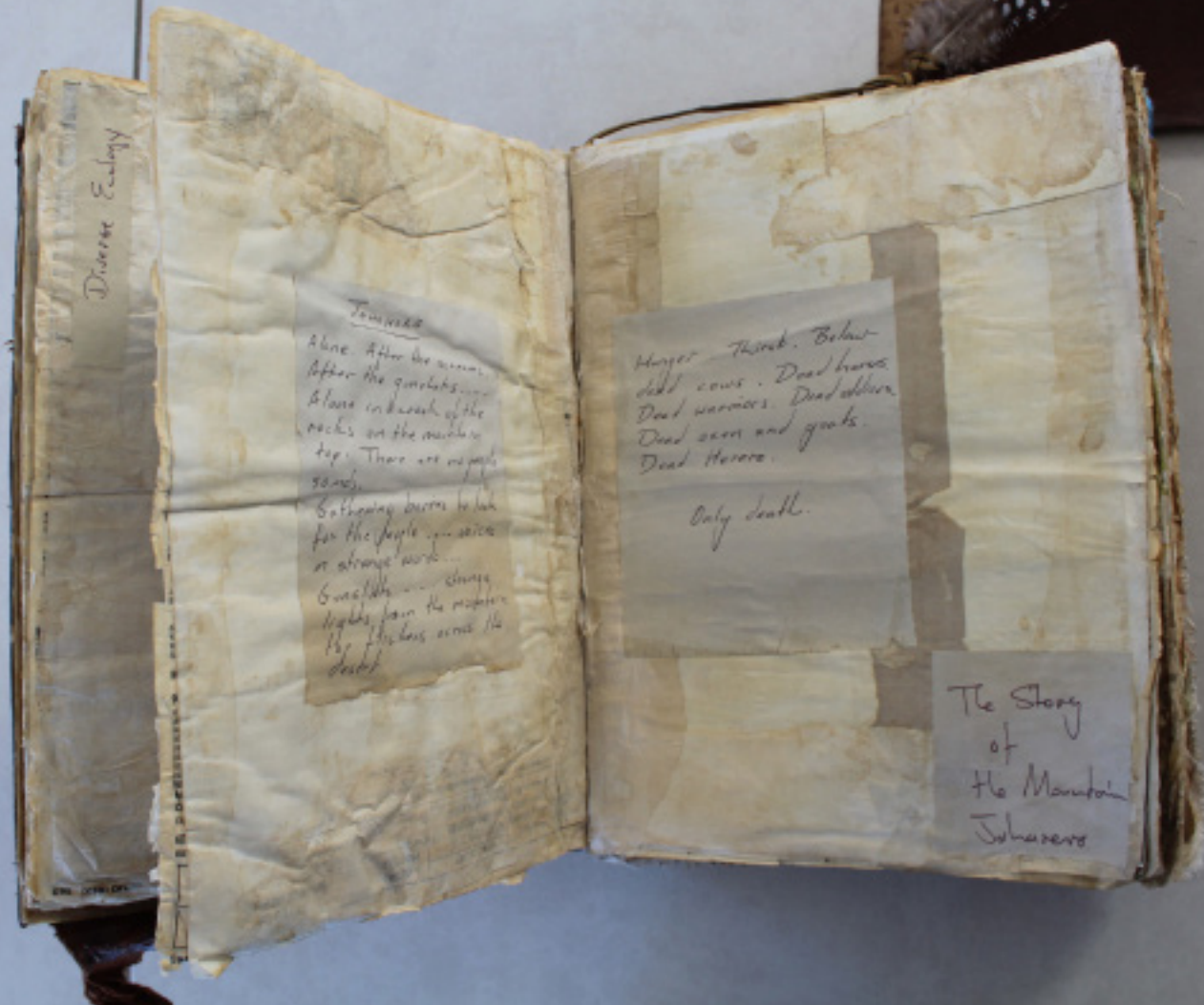
Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer, Actofel Ilovu

The Battle of the Waterberg. Collage.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

The Mountain stream. Snakeskin, leather and bamboo found in this site.



Diverse Ecology

Towivasa

Alone. After the winter.
After the snowfalls...
Alone in breach of the
rocks on the mountain
top. There are no people
singing.
Sitting on the rocks to look
for the people... voice
or strange words...
Gone with... change
lights from the mountain
top. This has across the
desert.

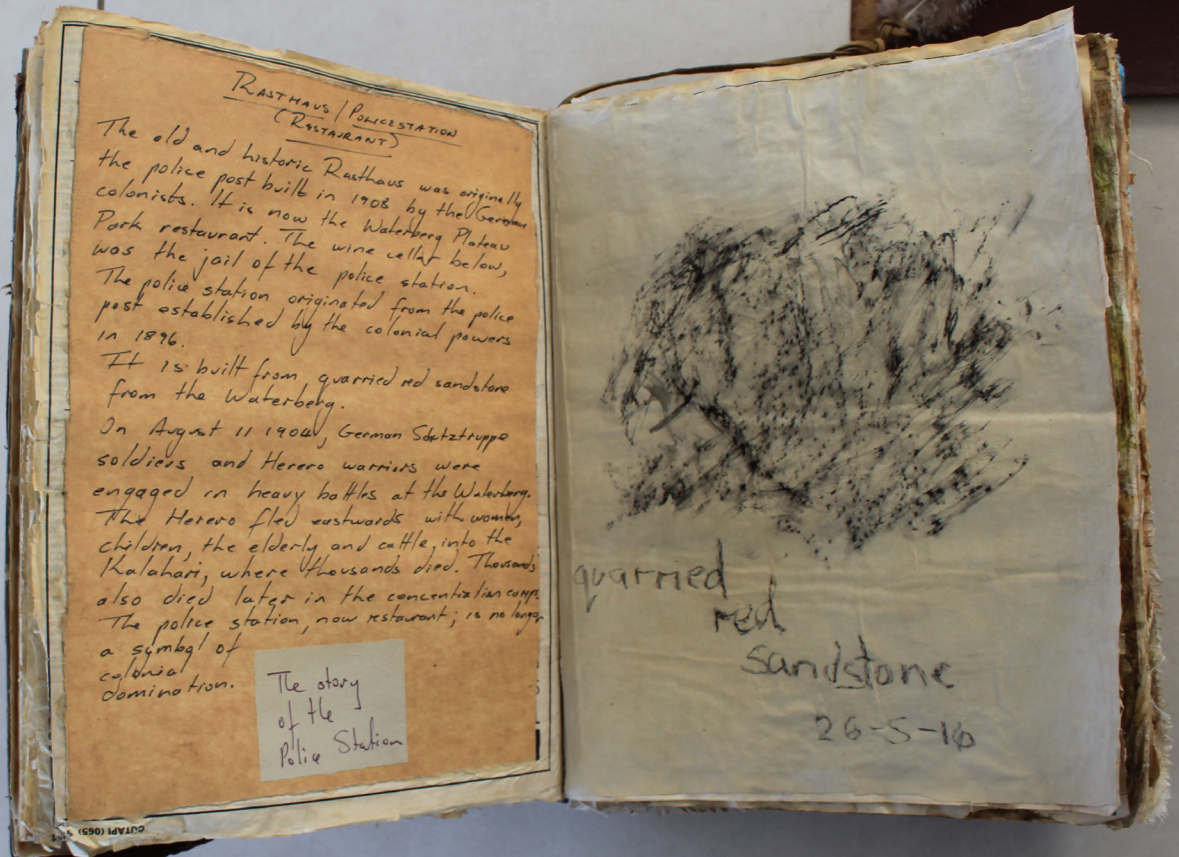
Hunger - Think, Below
dead cows. Dead horses
Dead warriors. Dead children
Dead men and goats.
Dead Herero.

Only death.

The Story
of
the Mountain
Jaharero

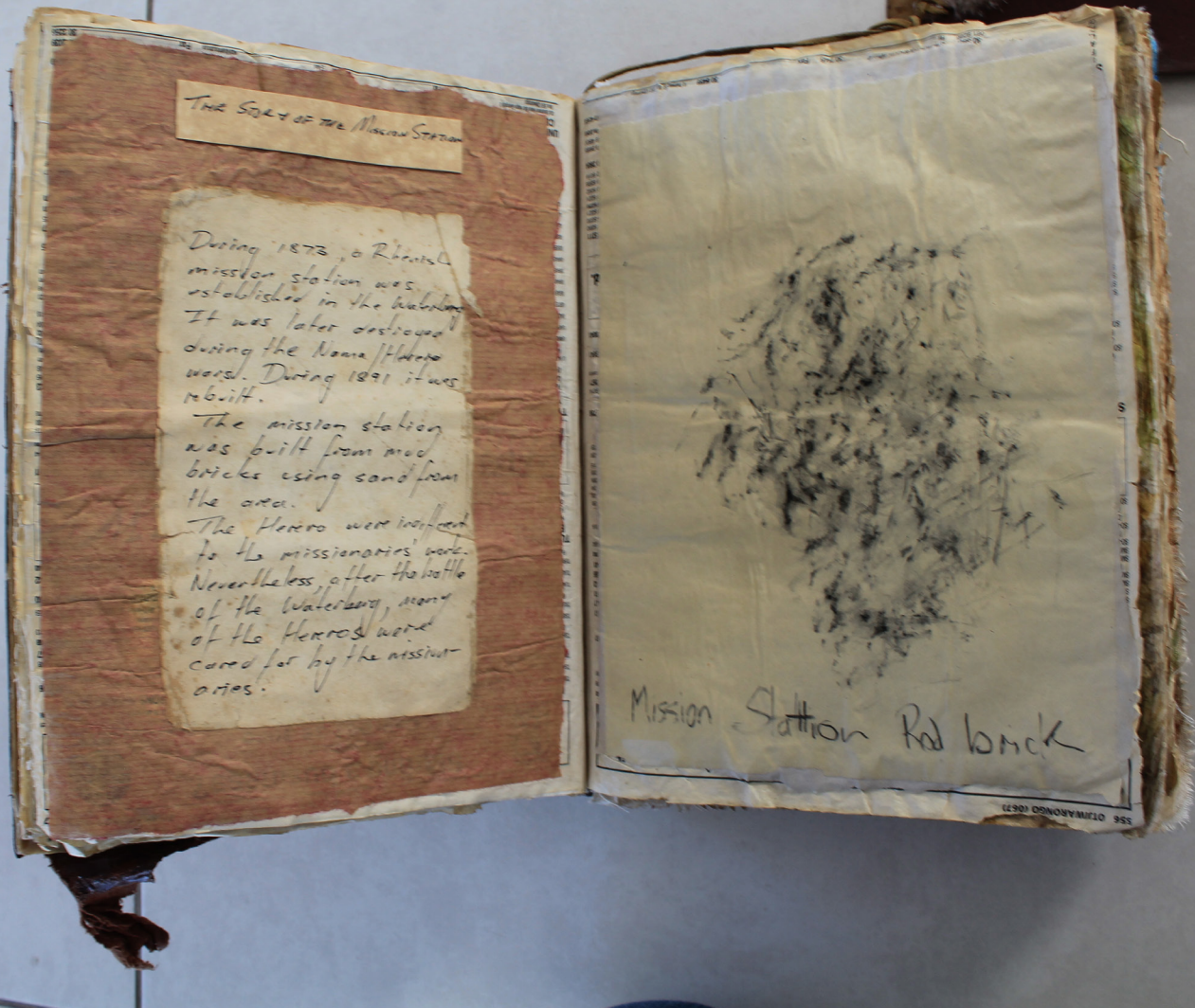
Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

The fictionalised story of the mountain by Jaharero.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Left: The story of the police station restaurant Right: Texture rubbing of quarried red sandstone.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Left: The story of the Mission station. Right: Texture rubbing Mission station quarried red brick.



The Stream on Mountain
Summit

Waterbury is a giant aquifer.
This is evidenced by the
springs emerging in the
subtropical valleys. Rain-
water falls on the plateau,
and is absorbed by the porous
Ely sandstone chert, and
runs down the vertical
fractures. When it reaches the
impervious shale of the
Chimney gorge, it courses as a
contact spring, maintained
by dense vegetation.

Mountain
Stream

— 7

Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilvov

Left: The story of the mountain stream. Right: Artist's impression, accrylic paint.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer, Actofel Ilovu

Left: The story of the Mission station ruins. Right: Artist's impression, acrylic paint and mission brick sand.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

The untold story-history forgotten - unwritten - erased.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Left: The story of the termite hill continued. Right: Termite hill with termite hill sand.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Left – The Genocide Monster, collage. Right – woman and child victims, rust and copper wire.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

The top of the Waterberg. Left: Copper wire. Right: Accrylic paint.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

New Africa. Collage and red sand from the top of the Waterberg.

THE STORY
OF THE
FIRST DAY

On the first day, the ancestors were called from the trunk of the omumborombonga tree, by Njambi Karunga. From the sacred tree they stepped, one by one: M'kurub and Kamangarvha, the first Herero tate and mama, the first Boro-Dunora tate and mama, the first Ovambo tate and mama, the first Nany tate and mama, of every tribe on earth. Njambi Karunga also called the first tate and mama of cattle, of leopards, of lions and leopards, of wildbeest and baboons. Every first tate and mama, of every living thing, stepped from the omumborombonga tree, on the first day.

The first day was darker than night. There was no mugga any stars. The ancestors, held on to each other, and the omumborombonga tree to avoid getting lost. Then the first tate of the Boro-Dunora made a fire. The first tates and mamas of all the animals ran away, except for the tate and mama of cattle, which were not scared. They were brave and loyal.

They stayed with M'kurub and Kamangarvha. It was still hard to see, even with the fire and Njambi Karunga sent light. The ancestors saw each other for the first time, as well as the animals that stayed: cows, goats and all the animals that live with people.

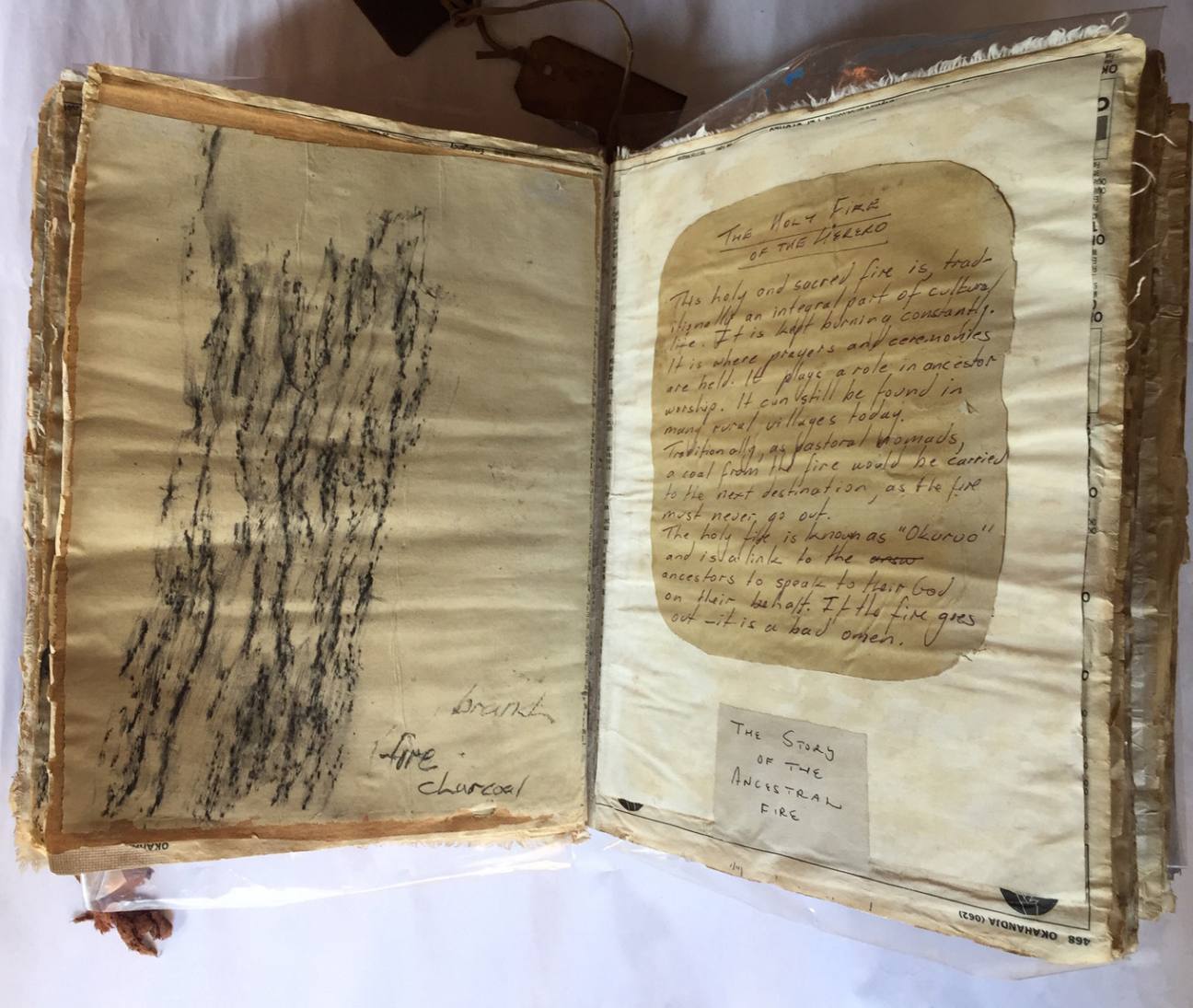
of cattle - they give milk, meat and skins. Milk is given to the ancestors - to give thanks for giving life and choosing cattle. Some milk is given to them at the holy fire in remembrance.

Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Left: Texture rubbing Omumborombongo tree. Left: drawing of the tree.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Left: texture rubbing. Right: The story of the ancestral fire: the holy fire of the Herero.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Illovu

Drawings of the Omumborombongo tree, bark, leaves and seedpods.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Left: The Story of the Omumborombongo Tree. Right: Insert sand, bark, leaves and seedpods from the campsite and tree.



Ash rubbings

Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Artist's drawing of the Waterberg, colour pencils.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Left: Sand Key: selected sand sites of the Waterberg. Right: Sand inserts from the different sandsites.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilvo

Death in the Omaheke. Left: white thorn, copper and brass wire. Right: cattleskin and Kalahari sand.



Concept note - Palimpsests, 2015-2016

The three artworks shown here are palimpsests made with sand collected from the Waterberg. These palimpsests explore the geology and sand mapping of the Waterberg through the different types of sand found from the top to the bottom of the mountain. These geological palimpsests are created as scrolls with the sand and bamboo found in the area. Sand is used as a signifier of meaning and identity. The palimpsests become illuminated when held up to the light.



Geological palimpsest 2 indicating the geological layers of the Waterberg.

Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

The geological layers are, from the mountain top, moving downwards:
sun-bleached pink sand stone; red sandstone chimneys; purple loam from the tropical woodlands; purple-red soil from the old colonial citrus and apple orchards; rich black loamy soil from the mountain streams which emerge from the mountain; pink and grey brick sand from the mission station ruins; dry granular orange sand from the graveyard road; and vibrant red sand from the termite hills on the surrounding savannah plains



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Geological Palimpsest 1 - front lighting.

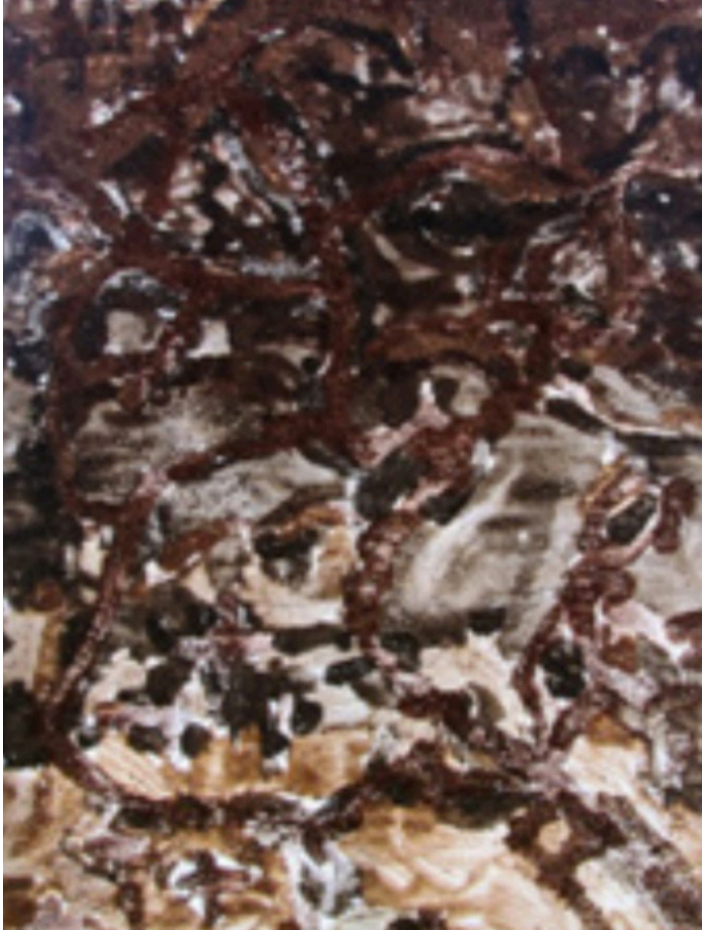


Geological Palimpsest 1 - illuminated.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Sand map of the Waterberg.



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Sand map of the Waterberg - illuminated.

Concept Note -Performative Installation, 2020

“Ehi” Waterberg, Namibia Ehi - Sand/Land Rights/Rites.

The 3x3x3 meter installation continues to explore sand as a signifier for meaning and identity, with specific focus on the ten sand sites of the Waterberg, Namibia. It comprises ten rows of sand people in tiers, created from the ten sand sites identified from the mountain top down towards the savannah plains. The structure of the installation is based on that of the Waterberg as a geological aquifer in the desert.

The artwork has a performative component of poetry and traditional chants pertaining to the concept of land, ownership and identity. Here, a palimpsest of sound and image is created through the poems and chants 'overlaid' together with the material component of the sand sites of the Waterberg. This is evidenced in the video of the exhibition. An unexpected outcome of the photographic and video documentation was that the sand people take on the appearance of three dimensional animated San paintings of figures.



THIS LAND

The land you bear witness to
is no ordinary soil
this soil got soul
It is the dried blood of those children
lost to the night

... the dust
in the dustbin of history
which was forced into our eyes
as inheritance

This land
is the debris of destroyed homesteads
of a people crushed
of cattle confiscated
It is the fossil remain of all that
and more

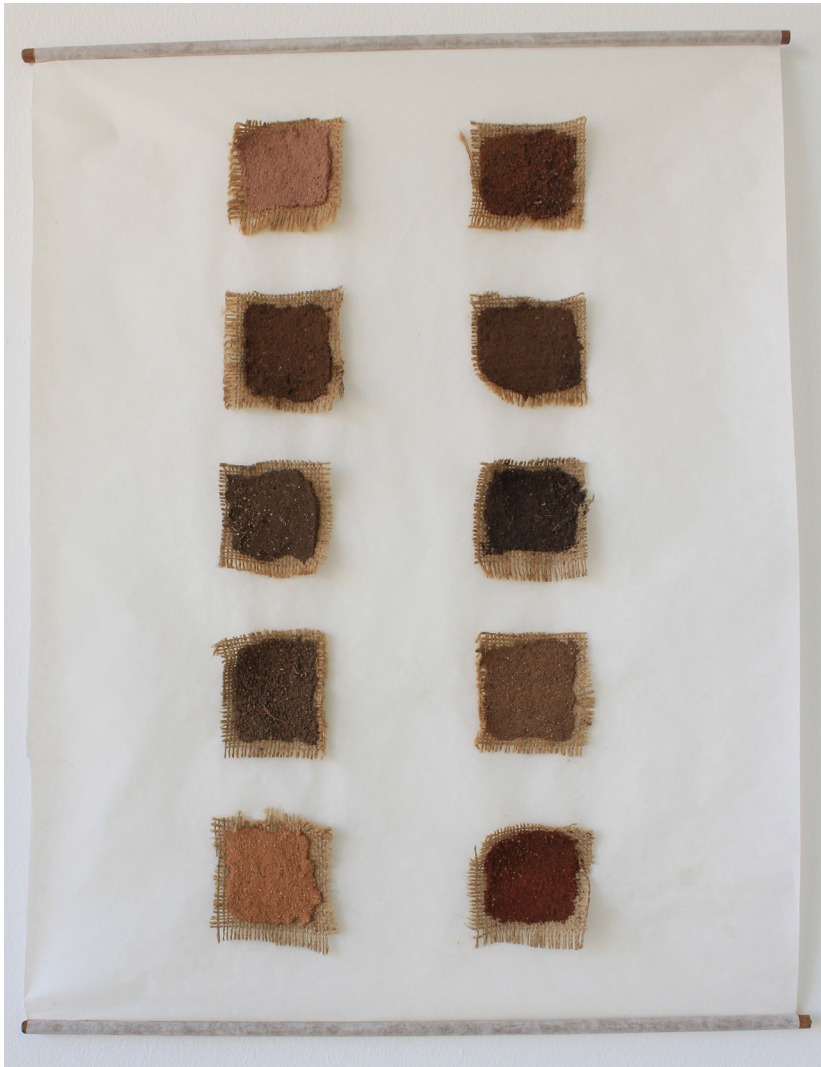
The ghost in the room
dressed all in white
It is the murmur of marauded memories
Now suffering from acute amnesia
Under the new demon-crafted arrangement

This land is the trees whose lies underground
the mountains vomiting smoke every morning
Along a star can bear witness
The land is the Black Sunlight on our faces
The Millennial Melanin that cloth our being

Prince Kamazem, Marenza I



Prince Kama Zeng, Madeng I



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer, Actofel Ilovu

Sand key for the installation. Based on the Artist's workbook.



Above: sand figure from the Mountain stream.

The following pages show illustrations and components of the installation, "Ehi".



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu



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Photographer: Actofel Ilovu



Artwork by: Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Photographer: Actofel Ilovu

Credits

Artists

Kerstin (Kay) Cowley
Betty Tuauoovisiua Katuuu

Curator

Elize Huyssteen

Photographer/Cataloguer

Actofel Illovu

Poet

Prince Kamaazengi Marenga

Chant Singer

Gotti Riruako

Videographer

Dewayne Goagoseb

Location

Waterberg, Namibia

Gallery

Project room

Sponsors

University of Namibia

National Arts Council of Namibia

