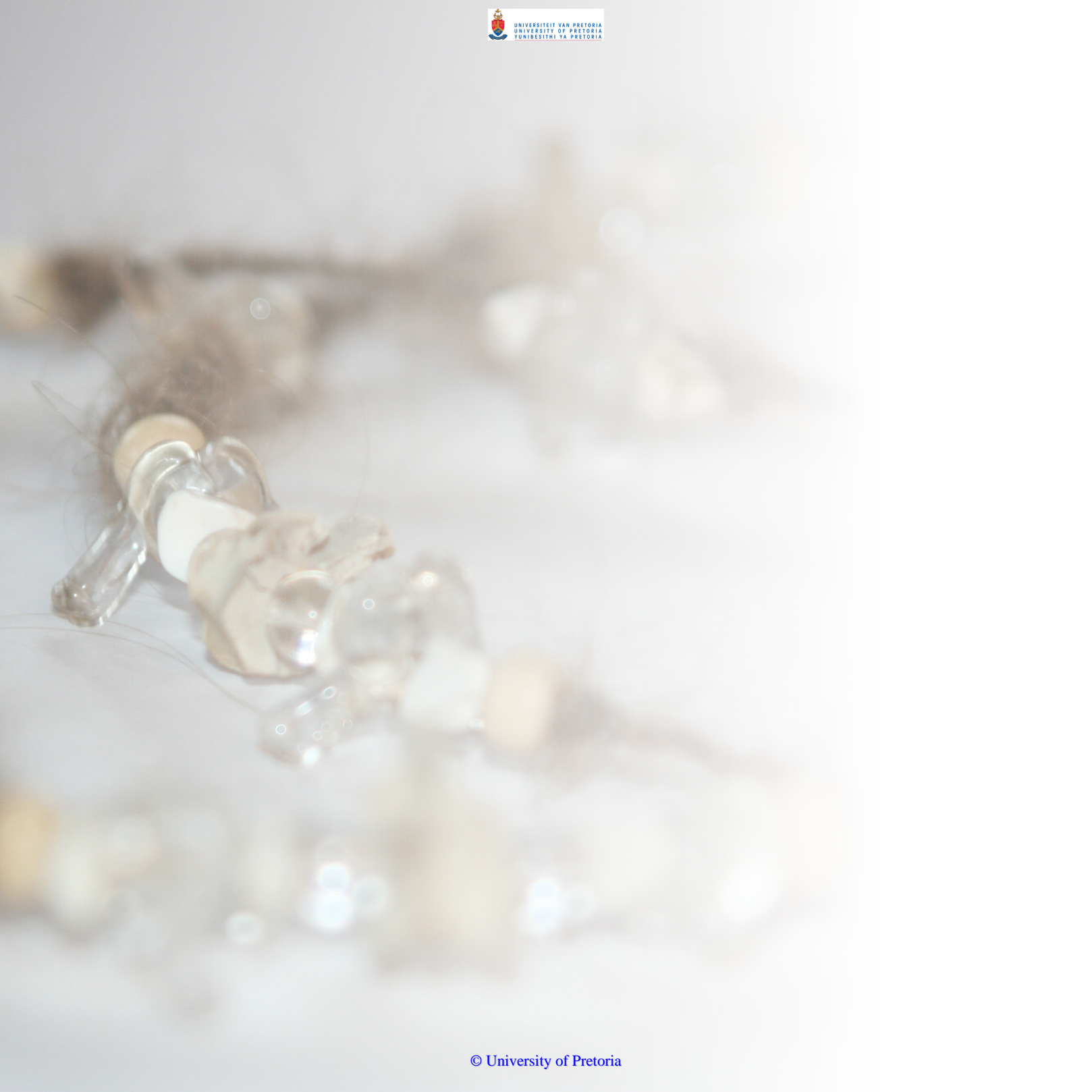


ENIDBORN



ENDBORN

Deléne Human

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ARTS

in the

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	v
Abstract	2
Artist statement	6
Artworks	10
<i>Endborn</i>	10
<i>Alles ist lebend tot</i>	20
<i>Oratio de vitae</i>	30
<i>Scapha</i>	36
Curriculum Vitae	42
Sources consulted	46
Cover page: Figure 1: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015. Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.	
Page i: Figure 2: Deléne Human, <i>Oratio de vitae</i> (detail), 2015. Sculpture, Glass, bone and hair, 810 mm.	
Opposite page: Figure 3: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015. Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.	iv

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	cover page
Figure 2: Deléne Human, <i>Oratio de vitae</i> (detail), 2015.	i
Figure 3: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	iii
Figure 4: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	v
Figure 5: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> (detail), 2015.	3
Figure 6: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I</i> (detail), 2015.	5
Figure 7: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	7
Figure 8: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> , 2015.	9
Figure 9: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> , 2015.	11
Figure 10: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	12
Figure 11: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	13
Figure 12: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	14
Figure 13: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	15
Figure 14: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	17
Figure 15: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I, II and III</i> , 2015.	19
Figure 16: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I</i> , 2015.	21
Figure 17: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I</i> , 2015.	22
Figure 18: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot II</i> (detail), 2015.	23

Figure 19: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot II</i> , 2015.	24
Figure 20: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I</i> (detail), 2015.	25
Figure 21: Deléne Human, <i>Alles ist lebend tot I</i> , 2015.	27
Figure 22: Deléne Human, <i>Oratio de vitae I, II and III</i> , 2015.	29
Figure 23: Deléne Human, <i>Oratio de vitae II</i> (detail), 2015.	31
Figure 24: Deléne Human, <i>Oratio de vitae II</i> (detail), 2015.	33
Figure 25: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> , 2015.	35
Figure 26: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> (detail), 2015.	37
Figure 27: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> , 2015.	39
Figure 28: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> , 2015.	41
Figure 29: Deléne Human, <i>Scapha</i> , (detail), 2015.	45
Figure 30: Deléne Human, <i>Endborn</i> (detail), 2015.	back cover

Opposite page: Figure 4:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.

“Che la morte chiude le porte del tempo e apre quelle dell’eternità
(death closes the gates of time, and opens those of eternity)”
(Koudounaris 2011:16).

Abstract

Since pre-history the human race has relied on archetypes and myths in order to describe the ineffable and inexpressible. Humankind has made use of fictional and mythological narratives in order to clarify and make meaning of that which is otherwise indescribable. Most of these myths express socially and culturally constructed 'truths,' which is the reason they have survived over centuries (McKenzie 2012:55).

This practice-based research study critically investigates the interpretation of the archetype of the resurrection myth in contemporary visual art through the exploration of pre- and early Christian metaphors and iconographies. Symbolic representations of these narratives are investigated in my body of work.

The main premise of this study is to appropriate the theories of Martin Heidegger on finitude, and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical phenomenology, with particular reference to his theory concerning the fusion of horizons. The analysis of the resurrection myth in contemporary visual culture critically deliberates not only the artist's intentions, but also the viewers' participation in this issue. This is achieved by considering culture as a signifying system where meanings are created within a given society.

Gadamer (1989:61) elucidates that in order to reach a fusion of horizons, and thus understanding of an artwork, one has to take into consideration the *Erlebnis* (personal experience) of both the artist and the viewer. When interpreting an artwork, it is therefore essential to grasp the differentiation between the artist's *Sitz-im-Leben* (site-in-the-world) and the viewer's *Being-in-the-world*. Understanding and meaning emanates from overlapping horizons, and a fusion of horizons occurs.



My own phenomenological *Dasein* and *Being-in-the-world* was considered during the production of the body of work, in order to create a hermeneutical circle of understanding. This was achieved through explicit reference to subject matter, medium and the site-specific exhibition space.

Individual and personal situations, my intentions, as well as research findings have made me aware of my *Being-towards-death* and have facilitated in the discovery of a future state of *freedom-towards-death*. In a society where war, criminal violence, injustice, illness, abuse, pain, torment, and natural disasters serve as the reminders of death, meaning and hope seems to evade humankind in search of life. By employing Heidegger's theories on finitude, my artworks are driven by the desire to derive meaning of death, and what happens thereafter. Heidegger (1962:296-311) exerts that it is necessary for humans to embrace their finitude, in order to have meaningful experiences in life and therefore attain *freedom-towards-death*. Through the exploration of various Christian traditions and iconographies, the body of work emphasizes human mortality and the possibility of a resurrected life.

By using found bone as main medium and core subject matter, the fundamental understanding of the symbolism indicates loss and death. However, by combining the rawness of bone with the transparent nature of glass, a mood of transcendental freedom is envisioned.

This research does not only have significance for the contemporary art society, but also for the culture of our time, especially South Africa, where we deal with death on various levels on a daily basis. The inevitability of human death is something we all wish to ignore. On multiple levels however, this study draws the attention back to the harsh reality of human mortality.

Opposite page: Figure 5:
Deléne Human, *Scapha* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.



Artist statement

Investigating the relationship between the symbols and materials used, the body of work represents my own interpretation of the archetype of the resurrection myth within a contemporary South African context. The careful consideration of medium (bone, concrete and glass) and the manner in which the works are executed and exhibited convey inherent symbolism of life after death.

The title *Endborn* refers to the cycle of continued life. At the end of a mythical cycle, there is always a new beginning: life-death-resurrection. Heidegger (1962:311) believes that through accepting our mortality, we will experience complete “*freedom-towards-death*”. Since pre-historic and early Christian times, this notion has been depicted in the archetype of the resurrection myth. These myths describe and explain the cyclical changes in nature, the resurrection of a hero or god, rationalize the understanding of death and finally contribute towards humans experiencing a meaningful life. The phenomenological development of the process of the production of the body of works created self awareness and a development towards a transcendental *Dasein*. Hence, I have come to better understand my own *Being-towards-death*.

The implementation of impression moulds during the practice-led research process is important. Similar to structures and myths created throughout human history, I created impressions of the actual bones, leaving an essential trace of their appearance and shape behind. As intertextuality and palimpsest emphasize the layering of texts and imprints from various societies, the process of my work also relies on the *Sache selbst* to create a lasting effect from which I could continue to develop the process.



By focusing on the malleability and recycling, hence resurrective qualities of clay, I developed a process through which natural and hand-made objects were used and re-used. Hours were spent wedging clay, creating impressions with bone, firing them in pottery and glass kilns, casting, de-moulding and cleaning the casts. In undergoing this process as the artist, the aim was to literally spend my time creating work through a process that nobody else will see or experience. My focus was to question what will eventually be left behind of “me”, as the artist and an individual, after my own death.

I have come to realize that life, death and life after death, are all equally beyond human control. In contemporary South Africa, especially during a time of insecurity and violence, seen through xenophobic attacks, farm murders, political riots and historical statue demolition, the current society is in desperate need to believe in the possibility of new life, new opportunities and especially hope. The possibility of resurrection through hope and faith is explored in my work. The intense processes in the ceramic and glass kilns, spontaneous cracks, fissures and stains that appear unexpectedly in the sculptures provide a metaphoric language that seems appropriate to speak about situations concerning life, death and resurrection.

Previous page: Figure 6:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 670 x 700 x 380 mm.

Opposite page: Figure 7:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.



Artworks

Endborn

The notion of reaching a spiritual and transcendental state of *Being* is explored in the sculptural work *Endborn*. Comprising an ouroboros and glass and bone installation, this work investigates the continuity of life, the realisation of human finitude and life everlasting.

The symbolic use of the ouroboros (tail-eating snake) sign, dating ca. 5 000 - 3 000 BC, refers to Greek and early Egyptian narratives depicting the endlessness of time (Bochi 1994:58, van der Sluijs & Peratt 2009:3). The snake is used here to represent “space between heaven and earth” and could essentially depict the end of one life as the start of another (van der Sluijs & Peratt 2009:5).

Organic materials were used as a point of departure in the creation of this work. The found bones in my work were used with the intention to celebrate death and the concept of an eternal return or afterlife. The bones furthermore emphasise the bare essence of what all living creatures are. It is a fact (Koudounaris 2011:16), that human bones were since pre- and early Christianity symbols not only of mortality, but instead “the promise of resurrection”. Symbols and signs of bones remind viewers of “the passage of time [which] inevitably brings an end, but also that it brings a new beginning” (Koudounaris 2011:16).

Opposite page: Figure 8:
Deléne Human, *Endborn*, 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.





Opposite page: Figure 9:
Deléne Human, *Endborn*, 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.

Above: Figure 10:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.



Above: Figure 11:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.

Opposite page: Figure 12:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.





The use of ribs bones serve a double function: on the one hand they are used to protect life within, i.e. the belief systems and phenomenological *Dasein* of each individual; on the other hand, they allow for a transcendental transition and *freedom-towards-death*. This work not only explores the cyclical nature of life and timelessness, but also the linear expression of searching and reaching a transcendental state of *Being*. The installation below the ouroboros, consisting mainly of bones is representative of life on earth.

Glass is one of the few natural substances that can be re-purposed indefinitely. The transparency and the strenuous process of high temperatures the glass has withstood (to be slumped, blown and annealed) evoke emotions of liberty and a lack of restriction. The inherent qualities of fragility, transparency, fluidity and coagulation to transience could metaphorically represent the fragile possibility of life everlasting, as well as the transparent and spiritual possibility of reaching *freedom-towards-death* (Heidegger 1962:311).

Opposite page: Figure 13:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.

Pages 17-18: Figure 14:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.







Above: Figure 15:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I, II and III*, 2015.
Installation, Concrete and bone, ca 600 x 700 x 400 mm each.

Alles ist lebend tot

The concept for *Alles ist lebend tot* derives from the early Christian ritual of ossilegium. Ossilegium is a burial custom from around the first to third centuries AD, mostly practiced by Jews in Jerusalem. For approximately a year after the death and burial of a person in a simple grave, the family would mourn the loved one. However, the ritual predicated that after a year, the bones would be excavated (as the flesh would by now have been putrefied) and re-buried in an ossuary made of stone, wood or clay (Aviam & Syon 2002:151; Fine 2001:1). This process is indicative of the early Christian belief that flesh binds humans to this earth, but that bones are a symbol of the possibility of a new, thus resurrected life. In contrast to the early Christian ossuaries, which served as *memento mori* (reminders of death) (Koudounaris 2011:15), my ossuaries aim to serve as *memento vitae* (reminders of life) and especially life after death.

The use of concrete refers to Gothic architecture. Since the medieval Gothic era, concrete together with the inherent qualities of glass - fragility, transparency, fluidity and coagulation - has metaphorically represented transience and the human experience of reaching a transcendental deity (Johnson 2003:148, 149).

By using clay as a mould in the production process of *Alles ist lebend tot*, I accolade the original clay ossuaries. The typical use of geometric shapes in the negative spaces have been contrasted to the organic shapes of bones and been given a porous appearance. Further parallels are drawn to the early Christian ritual. Instead of placing bones inside the ossuaries, my bone boxes are constructed of bones (real bones and concrete casts).

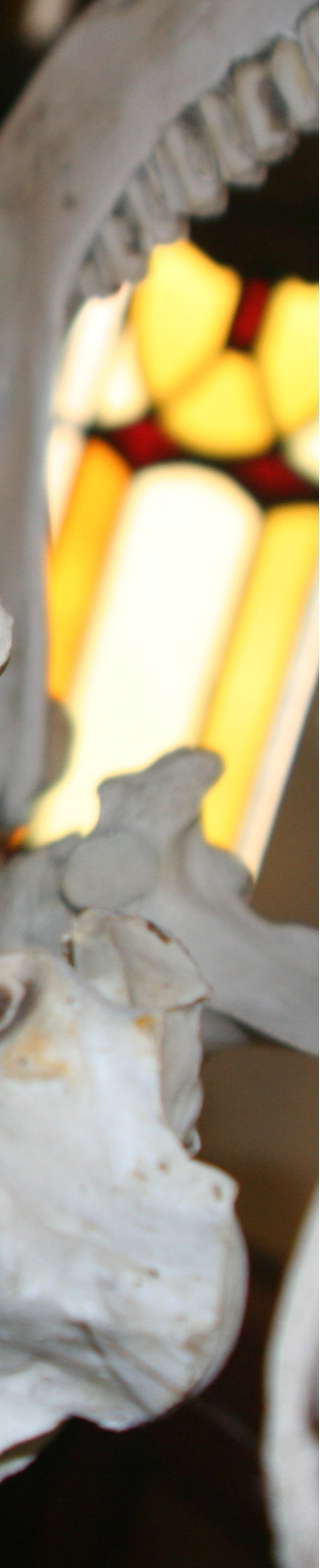




Opposite page: Figure 16:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I*, 2015.
Installation, Concrete, 545 x 700 x 520 mm.

Above: Figure 17:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I*, 2015.
Installation, Concrete, 545 x 700 x 520 mm.





Opposite page: Figure 18:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot II* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Bone, 670 x 700 x 380 mm.

Above: Figure 19:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot II*, 2015.
Installation, Bone, 670 x 700 x 380 mm.



The lack of solid walls, floor and open spaces in the roof constructed of rib bones, hopes to draw attention to something more than just the bones. Traditionally, the lids of ossuaries were flat, gabled or rounded (Fine 2001:2). The use of rib bones as roofs of the ossuaries, in *Alles ist lebend tot*, implies a shared purpose. On the one hand, ribs contain and protect important organs necessary for continued life. On the other hand, the concrete ribs protect the implied soul or *Being*. The space within appears to escape the confines of the box through the use of light and shadows. This description refers back to ‘ribs’ used in Gothic architecture to emphasize concepts of lightness and freedom of restrictions.

As the bones are sturdy and ‘contain’ light and space, the physical and spiritual aspects of life are linked and imply that the bones are left behind when one transcends mortal existence. It is important to understand that “bone houses of centuries past were sacred sites, and many incorporated chapels of worship, making them places not of fear, but of eschatological hope” (Koudounaris 2011:15). It is thus possible to conclude that death is not only a natural and biological necessity, but also a spiritual one.

Opposite page: Figure 20:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Concrete, 545 x 700 x 520 mm.

Pages 27-28: Figure 21:
Deléne Human, *Alles ist lebend tot I*, 2015.
Installation, Concrete, 545 x 700 x 520 mm.







Above: Figure 22:
Deléne Human, *Oratio de vitae I, II and III*, 2015.
Sculpture:, Bone, glass and hair, ca 810 mm each.

Oratio de vitae

Rosary beads are traditionally used during Roman Catholic prayer. Believers employ this praying ritual to express their hope for salvation, which essentially will grant them access to life everlasting.

The rosary beads in *Oratio de vitae* consisting of glass and bone beads and strings of my own woven and plated human hair, form complete circles. The bone and glass are used for their inherent symbolism, seen throughout this body of work. The incorporation of my own hair can be interpreted in various ways.

Firstly, hair, similar to bone, will outlive the person to whom it belongs. For years and centuries to come, hair will continue to exist and thus serve as a reminder of the *Being* of its owner.

Secondly, my choice of medium draws inspiration from the Victorian use of mourning jewellery. During the late 17th and early 18th century England, mourning jewellery made out of hair became a common phenomenon (Holm 2004:139). The reason for creating these pieces of jewellery was to serve as *memento mori*, using the hair of the deceased to create broaches and bracelets, so that they could be remembered for years to come (Holm 2004:139). A duality is created in the use of hair: On the one hand hair is already considered to be a dead material. Additionally, it needs to be removed (cut or shaven) from the body of a person. Yet, as soon as it has been cut, it will no longer be able to grow; On the other hand, the hair will 'outlive' the person to whom it belongs. Holm (2004:140) describes that "the material medium of remembrance marks the act of remembrance as the very moment when its natural status was transformed into a cultural status, and when the present presence of the body is anticipated as a future absence".

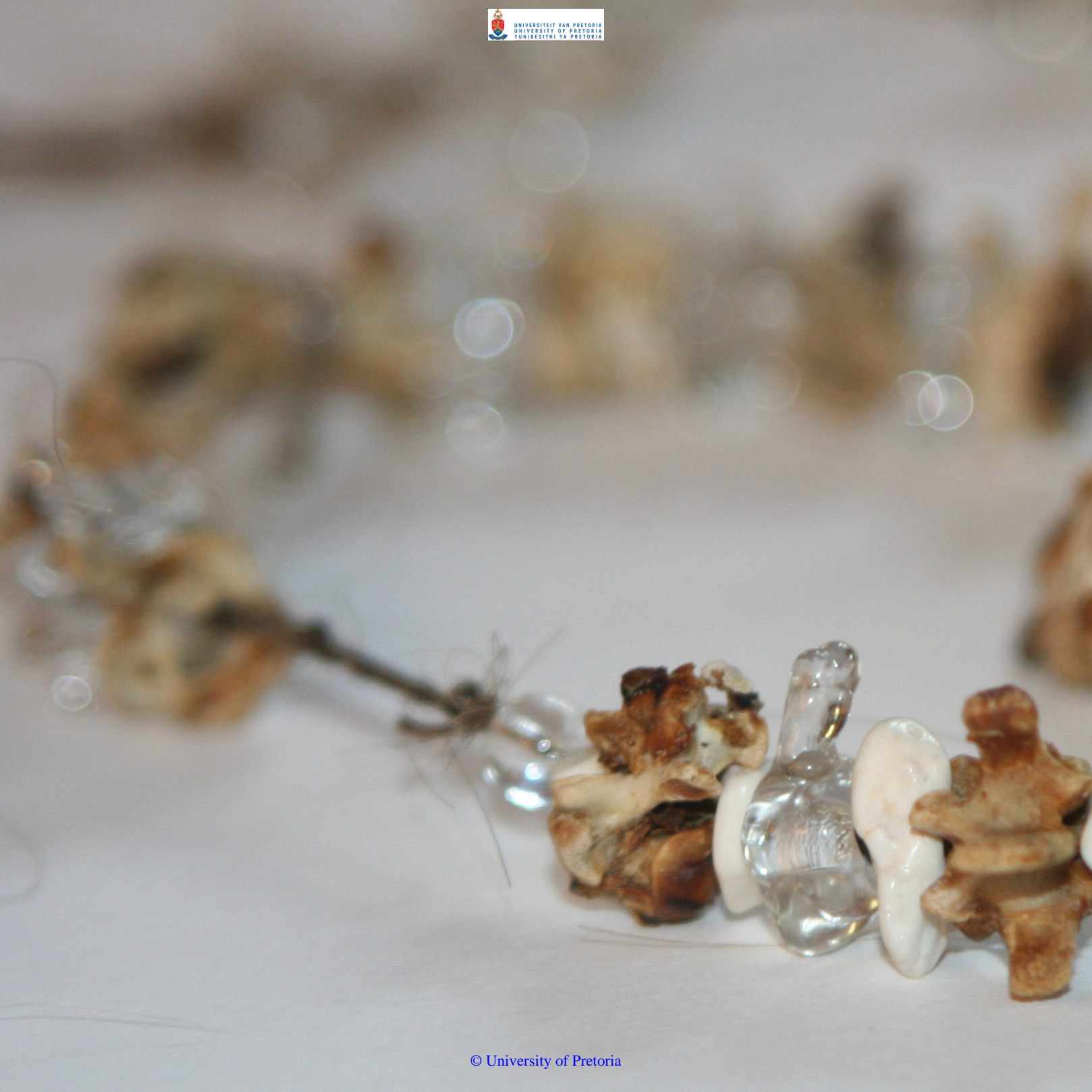


The significance of using beads in *Oratio de vitae* is emphasized. The word ‘bead’ has its origin in the Old English *bede* (prayer). Rosary beads were originally “*aides-memoires* for the illiterate, but are used today throughout the modern world in rituals of religious observance” (Coetsee 2015:25). Contextualising the use of beads in a South African reading, “beadwork styles and their meanings are passed down from one generation to the next, as an extension of oral traditions and the shaping of traditional value systems” (Rankin-Smith & Charlton 2002:108). Traditional objects are precious and preserved because “their use and purpose throw light on past ways of life and the traditions of a former culture” (Sellschop, Goldblatt & Hemp 2002:13). Thus contemporary South African society still relies on history to make meaning of certain situations, traditions and lifestyles.

This could possibly be a result of “the intellectual connection to historic eras or events that have a personal or symbolic meaning to the craftsman and are passed on to those who see and appreciate the object” (Sellschop *et al* 2002:22). This is essentially true for *Oratio de vitae*. Various horizons are fused. Not only are there historical Western references in the use of rosary beads, but also traditional African implications of beadwork .

Opposite page: Figure 23:
Deléne Human, *Oratio de vitae II* (detail), 2015.
Sulpture, Bone, glass and hair, ca 810 mm.

Pages 33-34: Figure 24:
Deléne Human, *Oratio de vitae II* (detail), 2015.
Sulpture, Bone, glass and hair, ca 810 mm.







Above: Figure 25:
Deléne Human, *Scapha*, 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.


Scapha

Scapha (lifeboat) comprises a vertebrae structure of bone and curved glass, indicating the shape of a boat or vessel. Concurrently, this work also resembles the backbone of a fish.

Conceptually this sculptural installation is derived from pagan and Greek mythologies concerning the boat of Charon carrying the dead to the other side of the shore, from life to afterlife. However, where Greek mythology mostly creates negative connotations of death, this work aims to create positive emotions towards life everlasting. *Scapha* aims to explore “an opportunity to affirm life by embracing death” (Koudounaris 2011:16).

The boat, which could also be read as a fish symbol, carries inherent references to both early and contemporary Christian belief systems. The fish, which is a symbol of the Christian faith, denotes the hope that many Christians foster in terms of a resurrection. The boat and fish combined, however, also refer to the Old Testament Jonah narrative.





The installation of *Scapha* allows for the work to be suspended from the floor, thus conceptually obscuring the link to an earthly anchor. An illusion of transcending from this world into the next is created. The contrast of bone (earthly bound) and glass (divine and transcendental) are implemented to emphasize the essential elements (*Sachen selbst*) of the materials. The fragility and vulnerability of the glass, is supported by a bone structure, indicating structures, i.e. archetypes, circulating human existence to essentially understand death and have faith in a resurrected life. These archetypes refer to the incorporation of ancient and contemporary myths, to create currently valid myths and culturally constructed ‘truths’ in society, such as the archetype of the resurrection myth.

The ephemeral and enigmatic moods created aim to stimulate a sense of consecrated and transcendental lives lived. As Gadamer (1989:150) infers “a work of art always has something sacred about it”. In conclusion, my work could be considered to portray the sacred and inexpressible within all humans.

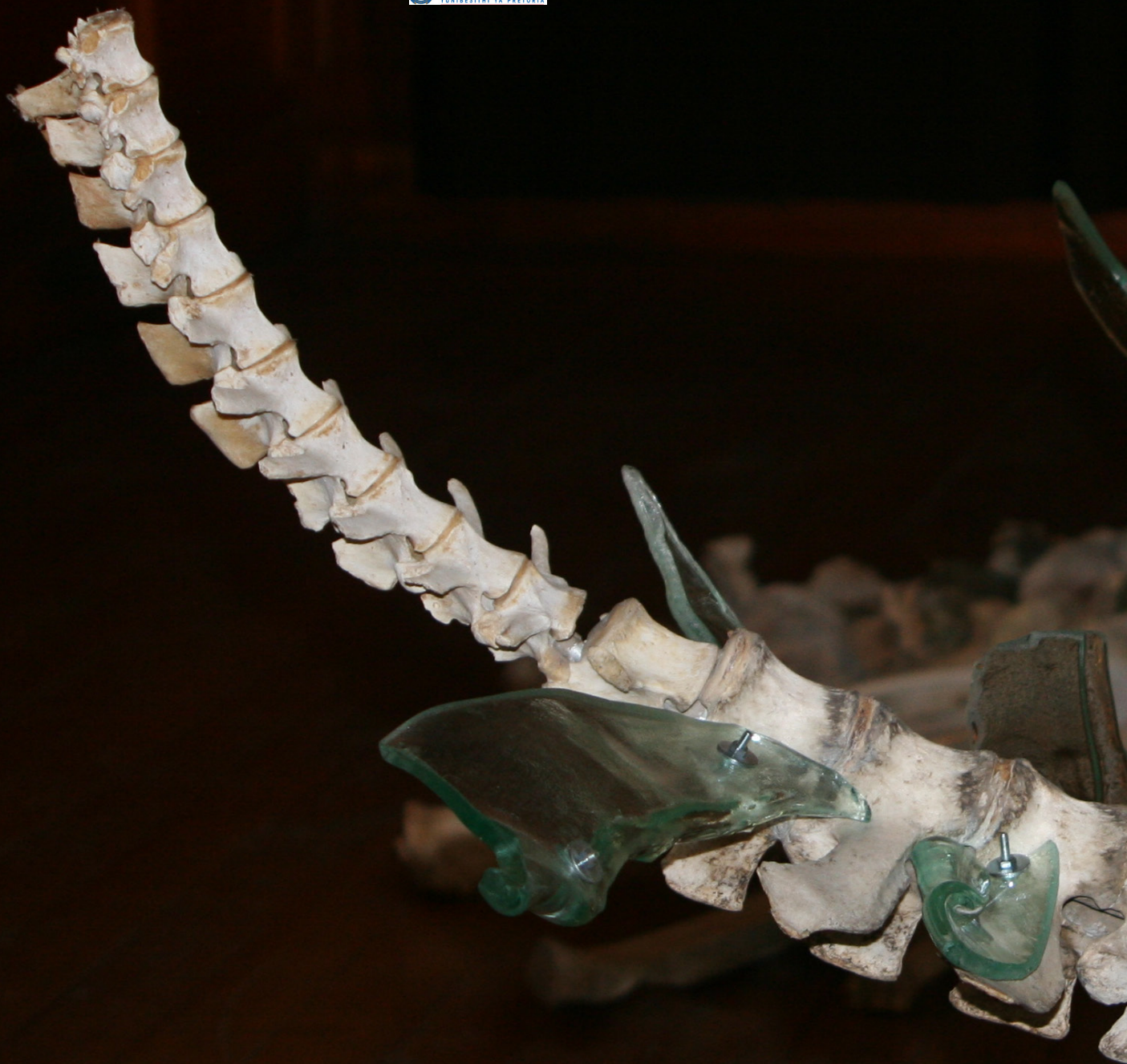
Opposite page: Figures 26:
Deléne Human, *Scapha* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.

Pages 39-40: Figure 27:
Deléne Human, *Scapha*, 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.

Page 41: Figure 28:
Deléne Human, *Scapha*, 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.

Page 45: Figure 29:
Deléne Human, *Scapha*, (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 500 x 1560 x 800 mm.

Back cover: Figure 30:
Deléne Human, *Endborn* (detail), 2015.
Installation, Glass and bone, 4500 x 2200 x 2100 mm.







CURRICULUM VITAE

Name and surname: Deléne Human
Date and place of birth: 26 March 1988, Pretoria
Residence: Pretoria, South Africa

Education:

2006: Matriculated at the Deutsche Schule Pretoria.

Tertiary Education:

2010: BA (Fine Arts) degree Cum Laude at the University of Pretoria.
2011: PGCE (FET) Cum Laude at the University of Pretoria.
2012: Sculpture II (non-diploma purposes) at the Tshwane University of Technology.

Awards and scientific recognition:

Nominated for the *Young African Researcher Award*, The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, December 2014.

Recipient of Post-Graduate Bursary in 2014 from the University of Pretoria.
Recipient of Post-Graduate Bursary in 2013 from the University of Pretoria.
Academic Honorary colours in 2011 at the University of Pretoria.
Achievement Bursary in 2010 at the University of Pretoria .
Bursary in 2010 at the University of Pretoria .
Bursary of achievement in 2008 at the University of Pretoria Visual Arts .
Eduardo Villa Bursary in 2008 at the University of Pretoria .
UNISA Bursary from the Deutsche Schule Pretoria for 2007.

Selected group exhibitions:

The Industrial Karoo- Fear and Loss, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, curated by Katie B du Toit, March - April 2015.

The Chinese year of the Ram (Wei), group exhibition, February 2015, 34 Long Street, Pretoria.

On the table, student and staff exhibition, Tshwane University of Technology, curated by R. Le Roux, 21 – 31 October 2014.

Johannesburg Art Fringe, Johannesburg, 2014.

The Industrial Karoo- Fear and Loss, Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein, curated by Katie B du Toit, July/ August 2014.

Turbine art Fair, Gallery2, Turbine Art Fair Johannesburg, 17-20 July 2014..

SHIFTS, University of Pretoria, Post-graduate research seminar exhibition, 2014.

Between the shadow and the light, R 5 travelling exhibition, 2014-2017, USA.

Chosen to participate in group exhibition in May 2014 at the consulate in Khartoum, Sudan in celebration of 20 years democracy in South Africa.

Alice in Wonderland, 34 Long Street, Pretoria, curated by Gordon Froud, 2013.

Dptych, Johannesburg Art Fringe through Assemblage, Johannesburg, 2013.

Tom Waits for No Man, travelling exhibition, curated by Gordon Froud, 2013.

Women of the World, Fient Art Gallery, Pretoria, 2013.

Consecration, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, 2010.

Thami Mnyele Fine Arts Awards, Ekurhuleni, Kempton Park, 2009.

God's Washing Line, Universiteitsoord, Pretoria, 2008.

Life through a lens, Pretoria Art Association, Pretoria, 2008.

Curator of exhibitions:

Arts and Culture festival, student exhibition, University of Pretoria, curated by D. Human and K. Schneider, 20 – 24 October 2014.

CuSi 2014, Bronze exhibition of work by students from the TUT, UP and UJ, in association with the Cool Capital initiative. Exhibition was held at Art Lovers 1932 Art Gallery, 4 - 17 September 2014. Curated by D. Human.

SMALL THINGS, 3rd year Art Education Students, University of Pretoria: Exhibition was held at Art Lovers 1932 Art Gallery, 19 June – 02 July 2014. Curated by D. Human.

Residencies:

R 5- A VISUAL ARTS SEMINAR AND STUDIO IN SOUTH AFRICA, 31 May - 15 June 2013, held by the Calvin College and Nagel Institute, USA.

Publications:

Human, D. 2013. *Diane Victor: No Country for Old Women – Consecrating the Forgotten*, Art Review, published in The South African Art Times, May 2013:10-11.



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