



SANTA LE ROUX

A Season for Everything 2022

Cover: Santa le Roux, *Haiku* (2022).

Fig 1. Santa le Roux, *Origami Bird* (2022). Opposite.

Fig 2. Santa le Roux, *Senryu* (2022). Overleaf.

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Introduction

A Season for Everything (2022) is a personal retrospective of my experiences from trauma to recovery, from guilt and shame to restoration and revival. My practice-led creative explorations concern Kintsugi-inspired artworks, painting and textiles merged with knitting, stitching and crochet. The repetitive acts of women's crafts are calming and contemplative.

Édouard Claparède's text on affective memory proposes that conceptual art enables one to see oneself objectively (Claparède 1911:363). Jill Bennett states that memories not only serve as representations of traumatic memory but also create a new relationship between the artwork and the viewer, enabling both to impartially assess their emotions (Bennet 2005:248).

Fig 3. Santa le Roux, *Solitude* (2022).



Although acts of destruction are associated with rage and loss of control, the demolition of art can be beneficial. Throughout time, artists have destroyed their work to make political statements (during the early 20th century by the Dadaists, for example); in performance art; or in search of meaning (Rai 2019). Japanese Kintsugi, a 500-year-old tradition, repairs broken ceramics with gold, silver or platinum dust and lacquer, emphasising imperfections rather than concealing them. At a time when perfection, youth and material excess prevail, Kintsugi reminds one of human frailty, optimism in the face of adversity and to embrace life's challenges (Sho 2021). This art form and its underlying philosophy resonates since it serves as a metaphor for self-acceptance - flaws and all - encouraging resilience and self-forgiveness. I propose that traumatic experiences that are processed through art engender opportunities for renewal and growth.

Fig 4. Santa le Roux, *Tanka* (2022).



Background

My parents died unexpectedly, ten months apart, leaving me grieving and guilt-stricken because I could not alleviate their suffering. My only sister, aged 52, was diagnosed with cancer and passed away eight months later.

My husband worked out of town several weekdays, while I remained in our home of 30 years with my three daughters. We were burgled numerous times, so I became hypervigilant. The final robbery was an aggressive home invasion: assailants broke down the security gates and locked us up while they ransacked our home. We sold our beloved property and moved to a security estate. Once we had settled in, we felt safe. I did not consider that the emotional scars would follow me: I experienced anxiety attacks and required chronic medication to function normally. I displayed antisocial behavior, becoming distrustful, judgmental and, in turn, fearful of social judgement.

Fig 5. Santa le Roux, *After the Storm* (2022).

Theme

My focus now is on self-forgiveness and healing, relinquishing anger, grief and guilt. I am grateful for this new season of my life whereby I can create something beautiful and different from the remnants of the past. This installation reflects my desire to heal and my personal journey towards self-acceptance. Sometimes I feel shame and guilt, thinking about how I should have or could have responded to incidents. According to research, these emotions are associated with prior experiences as a participant, witness or transgressor (Rodriguez, Young, Neighbors, Campbell and Lu 2015). Guilt and shame make it difficult to assess one’s culpability and, if not addressed, can result in depression (Gambin and Sharp 2018:385). Studies link shame with poor self-esteem and a fear of judgement (Thompson, Altmann and Davidson 2004). According to Graton and Ric’s (2017) study, guilt is regret over a past action and a desire for reparation. Individuals may be unable to progress beyond past mistakes through feelings of shame or guilt, which, in turn engenders low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, avoidance and impulsive behaviour.

If shame and guilt are not resolved, self-forgiveness is inhibited (Snoek, McGeer, Branddenburg and Kennet 2021).¹

A study by Jie Zhuang differentiates between shame and guilt by discerning their effect on interpersonal behaviours, determining that guilt is likely to motivate reparation, while shame results in avoidance (Zhuang 2014). Several theorists² propose that shame and guilt negatively affect self-evaluation. Guilt and shame are associated with regret, resulting in increased accountability and avoidance.³ Guilt is also associated with remorse and reparation, whereas shame promotes self-isolation.

Carpenter, Isengerg and McDonald (2019) propose that a person prone to shame and guilt is strongly motivated by self-forgiveness. Elevated levels of guilt inhibit self-forgiveness since guilt focuses on self-evaluatory behaviour, whereas an elevated level of shame may inhibit self-evaluation, leading to maladaptive behaviour and poor self-image manifested as fear of peer judgement (Carpenter et al 2019).

1 See also Gambin & Sharp (2018); Stuewig, Tangney, Kendall, Folk, Meyer & Dearing (2014).
2 See also Howell, Turowski & Buro (2012), Thompson, Altmann & Davidson (2004).
3 See also Howell, Turowski & Buro (2012), Thompson, Altmann & Davidson (2004).

A sense of shame can influence an individual's mental health, and the ability to recover and function (Tracy and Robins 2006)⁴. Maladaptive guilt manifests as an exaggerated sense of responsibility over an action and a fear of hurting other people (Gambin and Sharp 2018).

Self-forgiveness and resilience are the motivations underpinning *A Season for Everything*. If forgiveness can replace anger with compassion, then surely self-forgiveness is based on the same principle? I believe that self-forgiveness is as important as forgiving another. Resilience is the ability to endure adversity, remaining cognitively and emotionally flexible (Roghanchi, Mohamad, Mey, Momeni and Golmohamadian 2013). It is a key element in promoting change and hope (Kim, Kim, Choe and Kim 2018). This exhibition concerns my shift from self-condemnation to self-compassion and forgiveness in the face of my prior responses.

⁴ See also de Hooge, Breugelman & Zeelenberg (2008).

Fig 6. Santa le Roux, *Never | Forever* (2022).





Artists who influenced my work

Japanese artist Tomomi Kamoshita (鴨下知美) uses traditional Kintsugi techniques to combine her own ceramic pieces with found objects recovered on the shoreline. These broken pieces are either the result of careless littering or tsunami waves, more frequent due to global warming. Her philosophy is: “the wave can take away a great deal from us, but it is also true that we greatly benefit from it” (Mitchell 2016).



Fig 8. Tomomi Kamoshita (鴨下知美), *Gift From The Waves* (2015-2016).

Fig 7. Santa le Roux, *Kintsugi Moon* (2022).

British sculptor Bille Bond is inspired by Kintsugi. Her work questions the tension between repair and destruction, fragility and human resilience. The gold cracks represent human struggles and imperfections, including depression, traumatic experience and healing (Bond 2015).

French-Algerian artist Kader Attia's interest in 'repair' refers to psychiatric disorders, medical science, and anthropology (Attia 2013). Archival photographs of WWI soldiers with deformed, injured faces inspired his wooden sculptures. Attia's installation entitled *The Repair: From Occident to Extra-Occidental* (2012) affirms his notion that a person cannot return to one's original state prior to traumatic experience or war.



Fig 9. Billie Bond, *The Look of Resilience* (2015).



Fig 10. Kader Attia, *Act 3: Science / Repair Analysis* (2013).

He makes injuries visible, a form of evolutionary repair that reflects the aftermath. Attia expresses the psychological injuries caused by war, migration and colonisation in his work, *Reason's Oxymorons* (2015) proposing that cultural translations of mental illnesses are universal, requiring the same 'repair' (Elias and Attia 2018). In a 2012 installation entitled *Repair, from West to Extra Western Cultures* the wooden sculptures have been carved from photographs of WWI soldiers whose injuries are transformed into sculptures that evidence the disfigurement caused by military conflict. This work is an example of how an artwork reinterprets memory while offering physical and cultural repair (Attia 2015:2).



Fig 11. Kader Attia, *Act 4: Nature / Mimesis as Resistance* (2013).

Please click on the URL to see the video:

<https://universes.art/en/nafas/articles/2013/kader-attia-kw/photos/19>

The Australian lyrebird can perfectly replicate bird sounds. With human encroachment, the birds hear new 'human' sounds which they incorporate into their songs. These include car alarms, camera shutters and the sound of a chain saw firing up. It is the only creature that incorporates the sounds of the destruction of its habitat in its song.

A Season for Everything

My practice-led works are inspired by the restorative repairs of Kintsugi. I begin by creating an artwork, breaking it, and then repairing it as a metaphor for my life experiences and current mindset because the fault lines are part of the piece's history and must be accentuated (Lomas, Etcoff, Van Gordon and Shonin 2017:1731).

I equate this idea of beauty from brokenness and self-forgiveness in the act of accepting past trauma and 'putting myself back together'. My artworks extend the ethos of Kintsugi to include painting, stitching, knitting and crochet. Kintsugi has its origins based on two Japanese philosophies. The first is "wabi-sabi" and the second is "mushin" (Avril 2008). These philosophies allude to self-forgiveness and making amends for past mistakes. Wabi can refer to the simplicity found in both nature and in human endeavour and the defects arising from creation. Sabi refers to the beauty that comes with time, as life experiences cause wear to an object's appearance and durability (Anapur 2022).



Fig 12. Santa le Roux, *Solitude* (2022).



Fig 13. Santa le Roux, *History of Tomorrow* (2022).



Fig 14. Santa le Roux, *Wabi* (2022).



Wabi and sabi concern seeing beauty in the humble and imperfect (Richman-Abdou 2019). While there is no precise English translation, 'wabi' can mean poverty, isolation, and humility, while 'sabi' alludes to decaying and withering (Avril 2008). Together they refer to the beauty in imperfection and wear. The philosophy of wabi-sabi can be summarised as "nothing lasts, nothing is complete, and nothing is perfect" (Travelerl 2021). The philosophy of wabi-sabi applies to self-forgiveness by emphasising the nascent beauty arising from past misdeeds or negativity. The shame and guilt associated with a past event should be seen as historically significant in forging the individual in the present. The philosophy of mushin, would apply to accepting the "now" in self-forgiveness, since it focuses entirely on the present moment.

Fig 15 Santa le Roux, *The Embrace* (2022).



Fig 16. Santa le Roux, *Gently* (2022).



Fig 17. Santa le Roux, *Sabi* (2022).



Conclusion

Through a variety of techniques and media, I explore how to insert elements of my traumatic past into artworks concerning my journey into the future. The practice-led making process enables reflection on my past life and hopeful optimism for what may lie ahead. Inspired by Kintsugi, I find beauty in past scars while focusing on the here-and-now as part of my personal journey.

Fig 18. Santa le Roux, *New Dawn* (2022).

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All photography by Santa le Roux, with the exception of figures 8, 9, 10 and 11.

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Biography

Santa le Roux was born in Vryburg, North West Province in 1963 and raised in the small town of Sasolburg. She subsequently studied Computer Programming at the Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, pursuing a career in finance. Upon retirement, the family relocated to the Cape Winelands and she was free to pursue her love of art, working as a fulltime artist and obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Visual and Multimedia Arts at Unisa in 2021. Le Roux is currently completing the Honours component of the Bachelor of Arts in Visual and Multimedia Arts.

Le Roux's art practice is inspired by personal experience and a sense of compassion and mindfulness for others. She hopes that viewers will relate to her work, identifying their own experiences and arriving at personal interpretations. Her art eschews realistic interpretation, focusing instead on depicting spontaneous emotional responses. Within her contemplative works, viewers can discover their own unique subjectivities.

Le Roux's interests include the intricacies of jewellery design and as an extension of the home, creating beautifully designed interiors.

About the artist

Santa le Roux's work addresses personal existentialist concerns within a South African context. Her experimental art practice involves objects found in the home. These are reconfigured and reconstituted using women's crafts to comment on her experience.

A concern with the state of the planet led to research on Japanese artists working in the aftermath of typhoons, whereby the artists recover shards of ceramics washed ashore. The fragile porcelain slivers are carefully joined together, creating fragile new works with an entirely different meaning and purpose.



After several robberies in the family home, Le Roux created ceramic plates and bowls. She smashed them in response to the violation of her family's safe space over 30 years. As in the aftermath of a violent storm, she began to compulsively mend the fragments through stitching, knitting and crochet. Inspired by the Japanese art form Kintsugi which validates past experience by repairs to ceramics using gold and silver, her artworks signify a hopeful future. These artworks include intimate self-portraits as tranquil pieces of self-reflection.

Exhibitions

2022

Student Art Exhibition, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

Annual Rotary Art Auction, La Borie Wine Farm and Venue, Paarl.

2021

Unisa Third Year Visual Arts Exhibition (online).

2020

Student Art Exhibition, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

2019

Student Art Exhibition, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

2018

Group Exhibition, Flambé Art Studio, Franschhoek.

Student Art Exhibition, Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

2017

Group Exhibition, Flambé Art Studio, Franschhoek.

Student Art Exhibiton, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

2016

Student Art Exhibition, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

2015

Student Art Exhibition, Stables Art Studio, Natte Valleij Wine Farm, Stellenbosch.

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