About Alexia Smit

Alexia Smit (b. 1983, Durban, South Africa) is a painter and scholar who lives and works in Cape Town.

Smit is a self-taught painter whose practice emerges from a long engagement with cinematic and media cultures. Formally trained in film theory — with a PhD in Film and Television Studies from the University of Glasgow — her turn to painting in her thirties opened a tactile, affective route into questions she had long explored intellectually: the visual construction of femininity, the spectacle of the female body, and the emotional charge of mediated images.

Working primarily in oil paint, Smit works urgently and intuitively on the canvas. Her gestural, emotive surfaces draw from the visual archives that are often cast as frivolous or excessive: reality television, social media reels, soap operas, erotica, melodrama. Working with such fields, she reclaims them as serious aesthetic and affective terrains, anchoring her practice in feminist theory and critical looking.

Her new body of work shifts attention to imagery of women wrestlers from WWE and other sporting archives. She explores the power, weight, and force of athletic women's bodies while attending to their vulnerability and the particularities of performance. Using a process as physical as the subjects themselves, Smit's paintings wrestle with the caught-in-between space between empowerment and objectification, aggression and tenderness, spectacle and selfhood.

Smit has participated in numerous group exhibitions around South Africa and abroad, and her works are placed in various private collections, such as the Beryl Gallery Collection in Cape Town. Her scholarship and artistry often intersect in public talks that she delivers about painting as a form of creative research and critical investigation.

She participates in ongoing training with the Critical Discussion Group under Dr. Julia Teale, and she maintains long-term studiowork at Untitled Africa under Douglas Gimberg.

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CV

Selected Exhibitions

2025
What I Talk About When I Talk About Collecting, Beryl Gallery x Oude Leeskamer, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Got Junk Vol. 5, The Fourth, via Artsy, International
Art During Chaos, Ladies Drawing Club, Online Exhibition, United Kingdom/Georgia

2024
Just a Little Slice Please, RK Contemporary, Riebeek Kasteel, South Africa
Got Junk 4th Edition, The Fourth, via Artsy, International
Blurring the Lines, The Fourth, via Artsy, International

2023
The Still Life of Others, Marvol Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Got Junk, Goldfingers, The Fourth, Online Exhibition, South Africa

2022
S*paces Between Us*, Alliance Française du Cap, Cape Town, South Africa

Collections

Beryl Gallery Collection, Cape Town

Press

Stehr, Michaela. “Artists We Love: A Q&A with Alexia Smit.” VISI, 2022.

Public Engagements / Presentations

2025 – Thinking with Paint, hosted by the SA–UK SARChI Bilateral Research Chair in Digital Media Sociology and the Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town
2024 – Painting as a Creative Research Practice, presented at CILECT: International Association of Film and Television Schools Conference
2023 – Landscapes of Desire, Tuesday Seminar, Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town

Education

PhD, Film and Television Studies, University of Glasgow, 2010
MA, Film Studies, University of Cape Town, 2007
BA Hons, Film & Media Production, University of Cape Town, 2005

Training

Critical Discussion Group under Dr Julia Teale, 2024–present
Painting studiowork at Untitled Africa under Douglas Gimberg, 2019–present