

About Karla Nixon

Karla Nixon (b. 1990) is a visual artist based in Durban, South Africa, whose practice draws primary impetus from direct material exploration, with paper at its core. She constructs images and objects responding to her surrounding environments-urban, domestic, and natural-by hand-cutting, tearing, sculpting, and reassembling. Her work is grounded in an ongoing investigation of how colour, texture, and fragmentation operate as a language of presence shaping sensorial and emotional encounters.

The work of Nixon embraces tension, transience, and perception: tending to decomposition and reconstruction as critical means through which we operate in the spaces we make and the traces we leave within. Texture becomes a site of intimacy; colour, a catalyst for emotional resonance; and fragments, ways of holding multiplicity without seeking resolution. Thus, she says, "Paper holds a duality that fascinates me-it is fragile and strong, disposable yet archival-and through it I explore how we move through space and what remains after us."

Though paper is central to her practice, Nixon's approach is multidisciplinary in extending into painting, sculpture, mixed media, collage, installation, video, and light. These forms deepen both the conceptual and sensory dimensions of her practice, creating deliberately ambiguous spaces of encounter that invite viewers to dwell in the in-between.

Nixon obtained her Master's degree in Fine Art (Cum Laude) from the Durban University of Technology in 2017, for which her thesis focused on transience in paper art. She later did an artist residency in Bremen, Germany, from 2017 to 2018. She has been widely recognized and selected for the Shanghai Paper Art Biennale in 2023, among others, and is represented both nationally and internationally in notable presentations, such as the Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch in 2024.

Her artworks are held in private collections in South Africa, Lebanon, Australia, Spain, and Holland, as well as public collections, including the Durban Art Gallery, the National Art Bank, and the Leridon Collection. Nixon has also been a finalist in both the Sasol and ABSA art awards.

For more than ten years, she lectured in the Fine Art Department and the Arts Extended Curriculum Program at the Durban University of Technology. She now devotes herself fulltime to her artistic practice.



Karla Nixon, Red, 2022

CV

Education

2017

Masters in Fine Art (cum laude), Durban University of Technology

2013

Bachelor of Technology in Fine Art (cum laude), Durban University of Technology

Solo Exhibitions

2024

One Sunday Afternoon, Tamasa Gallery, Durban, South Africa

2022

Underfoot, Lizamore Fairland Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2021

Crease, State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2019

Just Listed, KZNSA Gallery, Durban, South Africa

2018

Solo Exhibition, Bremischen Bürgerschaft, Bremen, Germany

2016

Once More, ArtSpace Durban, Durban, South Africa

Group Exhibitions

2025

Aerial Seams, THK Gallery, Cape Town (added as requested)

Light + Space III, THK Gallery, Cape Town

Collected Memory, THK Gallery, Cape Town

When Surfaces Speak, La Motte, Franschoek

Affairs of the Art, State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town

Spier Light Art Exhibition, Spier Wine Farm, Stellenbosch

2024

Light + Space II, THK Gallery, Cape Town

'Paper Tale', State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town

'Paperland', A Pick Gallery, Torino, Italy,

Rupert Museum, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, In conversation with their show 'AbstRact: the hidden synchrony'

2023

Shanghai International Paper Art Biennale, Shanghai, China

Art Collaboration Kyoto, Kyoto, Japan, with A Pick Gallery

Estampa Contemporary Art Fair, Madrid, Spain, with A Pick Gallery

'Borrel', Lizamore Gallery, Woordfees, Stellenbosch, Cape Town

RMB Latitude Art Fair, Johannesburg, 1+1, with Lizamore Gallery

(Un)expected Art Fair, Milan, Italy, with A Pick Gallery

Spier Wine Farm, Stellenbosch, Spier Light Art Exhibition

'Time and Tides: Awaits no man', State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town

2022

'Landscapes of Hidden Words', A Pick Gallery, Torino, Italy,
 'Loud Speak', Origin Art, Johannesburg,
 'Transience', KZNSA Gallery, Durban,
 State of the Art, Cape Town, Winter Salon
 'Abstract*d', State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town,
 'Flights of Fancy', THK Gallery, Manor House Boshendal, Norval and Boschendal Collaboration
 THK Gallery, Cape Town
 State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town, Art week

2021

'Commune', KZNSA Gallery, Durban

2020

'Commune', Turbine Art Fair (online), KZNSA Gallery
 'The limitless Mind', Turbine Art Fair (online), Mstudio Community

2019

'Know this place', KZNSA Gallery, Durban
 Creative Block Project Exhibition, KZNSA Gallery, Durban
 'Be Inspired by Phansi', Phansi Museum, Durban
 'The Durban July we make', State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town
 Mbombela Civic Centre, Mpumalanga, National Innibos Craft Award 2019, Finalist
 'Birds', RUST-EN-VREDE Gallery, Cape Town
 'Land' (members exhibition), KZNSA Gallery, Durban, Umhlaba

2018

'#Paper', Art.b Gallery, Bellville, Cape Town
 SA Gallery, Johannesburg, Absa l'atelier exhibition top 100
 ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, Absa l'atelier exhibition top 100
 'The marks we make', State of the Art Gallery, Cape Town
 Daville Baillie Gallery, Johannesburg
 KZNSA Park Gallery, Durban

2017

'Together apart', ArtSpace Durban, Durban
 ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, Absa l'atelier exhibition top 100
 Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, Sasol Signatures, Finalist
 'Enchant. Celebrate. Create. Disrupt', ICC, Durban, Essence Festival

2016

'Artemisia', DF Contemporary, Cape Town
 'Own a Space-July', Loading Bay Gallery, Durban
 'Own a Space-August', Loading Bay Gallery, Durban
 'Transition', Breathing Space, Durban

2015

'Tracksides', Open Plan Studio, Durban,
 'Curate. a. space', curated by Carol Brown, Fringe Art Fair, Arts on Main, Johannesburg
 'Eye Candy', curated by Carol Brown, Hilton Arts Festival, Hilton
 DUT Staff Exhibition, DUT Gallery
 'Anthropology III', curated by Grace Kotze, Breathing Space

2014

'Looking Forward: Our lives in 2034', Durban Art Gallery

2012

'Three Boys and a Girl', The Collective, Durban
 'Black and Blue', The Collective, Durban
 'Science Art/ Art Science', ArtSpace Durban
 ArtSpace Durban, d' Art Exchange and Artists
 ArtSpace Durban, Absa L'atelier Art Competition

2011

'Reuse', Durban University of Technology Art Gallery, Durban

2010

'Amazing Starts', Durban University of Technology Art Gallery, Durban

Public Collections

Durban Art Gallery
National Art Bank
Leridon Collection, Paris

Residencies

2017
Bremer Kunststipendium Residency, Germany (November 2017 - January 2018)

Collections

Durban Art Gallery, Durban, South Africa
National Art Bank, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Awards

2015
Awarded Best Presentation in Faculty (Co presented), DUT Research Day

2012
Deans Merit Award (DUT)
NRF Scholarship

2011
Sam Newton Award (DUT)

Achievements

2013
ArtSpace Durban, Absa L'atelier Art Competition
ABSA Gallery, Johannesburg, Absa L'atelier Art Competition top 100

2012
Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, Sasol Signatures (Finalist)