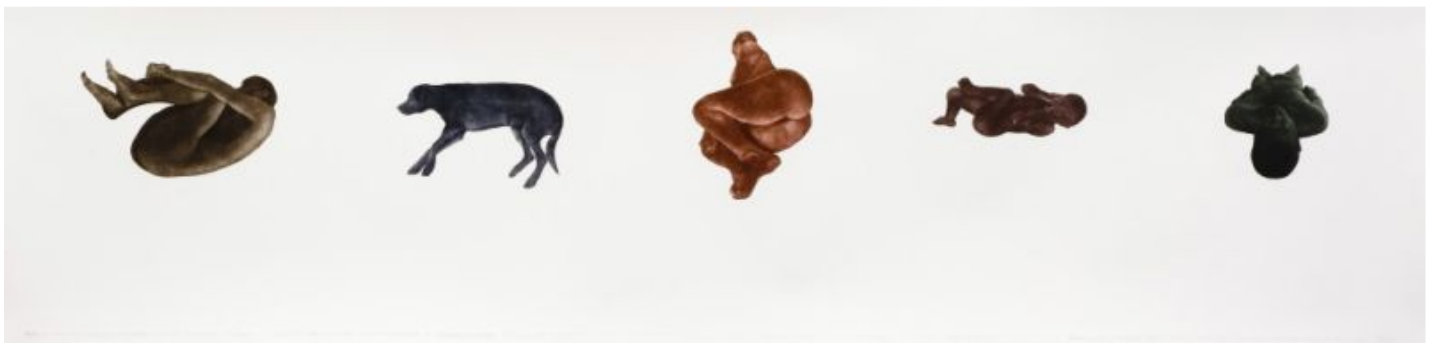




# SABC ART

---

## Christine Dixie: Still water, deep ground



Christine DIXIE (1966 - )

*Hide: to withhold or withdraw from sight*

2000

Lightbox installation: Mezzotint, punctured holes & silkscreen

15,

Sheet size: 62,8 x 247,7cm

It has been a big year for artist Christine Dixie, a printmaker who also expresses herself through films, elaborate installations and other media. Arising out of archival imagery and in-depth research, her work is a response to the visual strategies deployed in frontier landscape representation and the narrative constructions of gender.

Dixie's exhibition *The Astronomer, the Princess and the Order of Things* is currently on show at Graham Contemporary, Hyde Park Corner, Johannesburg.

Her work has also been seen on several other exhibitions this year, including *Harbouring Fanon* at Graham Contemporary; *Blueprint for the DisOrder of Things* at Wits Art Museum; and *@Bathurst Street, Makhanda* at the gallery of the the SARChI Chair in SA Art and Visual Culture at the University of Johannesburg. The manifestation of colonial history that haunts the Eastern Cape town of Makhanda, where she lives, compels the artist's preoccupation with Europe's legacy in Africa.

Her multi-media installation, *To Be King*, also showed at the Iwalewahaus in Bayreuth, Germany earlier this year. Informed by *'Las Meninas'*, the first chapter of Michel Foucault's book *The Order of Things* (1966), this installation situates itself as a destabilising narrative in which the king is 'dethroned', and highlights the fragility of the established and dominant order.

Speaking about her current exhibition, Dixie says, 'When my daughter was five years old, the same age as Princess Margaret Theresa in the painting *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez, I became obsessed with the painting. Indeed it was because my daughter was the same age, and with her long, blond hair bore a passing resemblance to the princess, that this compulsion began.'

*The Astronomer, the Princess and The Order of Things* is her latest response to this painting in an ongoing project that began ten years ago. *Blueprint for the DisOrder of Things* (2022) features the princess as a conduit for both creativity and disorder. Started during the first hard lockdown in 2020, it is a body of work driven by the emotional, social, and political changes that have come about as a result of Covid-19.

*The Astronomer* (2022) consists of collages and cyanotypes, with each of the characters that appear in the painting *Las Meninas* having been given an alternative identity – part fiction and partly drawn from historical references. These two bodies of work make up this latest exhibition.

The SABC is proud to house one of Dixie's mesmeric and disquieting works in its Art Collection. This mezzotint, *Hide*, is part of a broader installation of the same name in which Dixie explores the divisions and boundaries between interior and geographic states. *Hide* shows five figures – portraits of the artist, her husband, infant, pet dog and a – floating in space.

Each is surrounded by tiny pinpricks. When framed and installed in a lightbox, these become star-like points of light, setting each figure in an animal-hide frame. Below, the artist has printed the multiple definitions of the word 'hide': to withhold or withdraw from sight; to conceal; to screen; to suppress; not to confess; to lie concealed in a hiding place, the skin of an animal, a portion of land in Saxon times. 'Although these figures now float in space, they remain bound and tethered to a hide, conceptual grounding,' reads the commentary on her website.

As Gerhard Schoeman wrote in 2001: 'Dixie's work is rooted in both the concrete and fantastical experience of the South African landscape – inner and outer – placing her work within a tradition of landscape art that is particular to the Eastern Cape.'

Dixie will be doing a final walkabout of *The Astronomer, the Princess and The Order of Things* on Saturday 29 October at 12pm, so there is still a chance to see this exhibition and experience it through her eyes.

## BIOGRAPHY

Christine Dixie was born in Cape Town in 1966. She works primarily in etching and printmaking, and has produced numerous large-scale installations. She began her studies at the University of the Witwatersrand and went on to complete her MFA at the University of Cape Town in 1993. She is currently based in Makhanda, where she is a senior lecturer in Rhodes University's Fine Art Department. In 2020 she was artist in residence at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Dixie's work has been on numerous national and international group exhibitions, including *Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor*, at the Smithsonian Museum of African Art in 2013 and *So Close, So Far* at Kaunas In Art International Contemporary Art Festival in Lithuania in 2018. – Alexandra Dodd

## Contact:

**Koulla Xinisteris**

**Curator**

koulla.xinisteris@gmail.com  
kxarts@sabc.co.za  
082 574 5568