

the
collector's
room

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition *Johan Thom: Print from the Animal Collection* held in the
Collector's Room at Fried Contemporary
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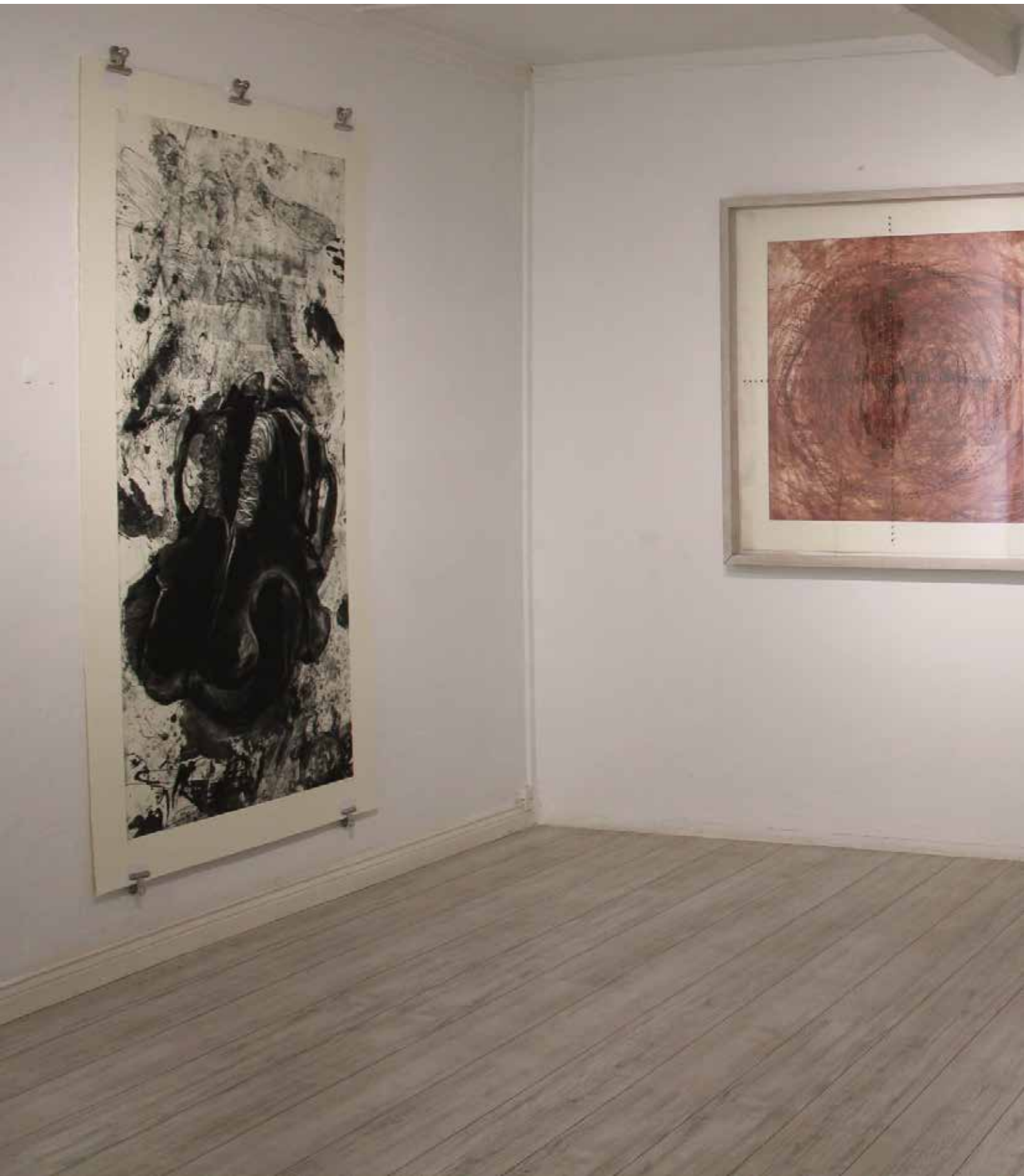
Prints from the Animal Series

Johan Thom

22 October 2015 – 16 January 2016

Signed by the Artist _____

Edition of ____ / 20



Installation view



THE ANIMAL SERIES
by Johan Thom (2013-2014)

This series of individual and collaborative artworks give artistic form to my material encounter with an African Elephant skull through a variety of mediums including drawing, video, photography, etching and sculpture.

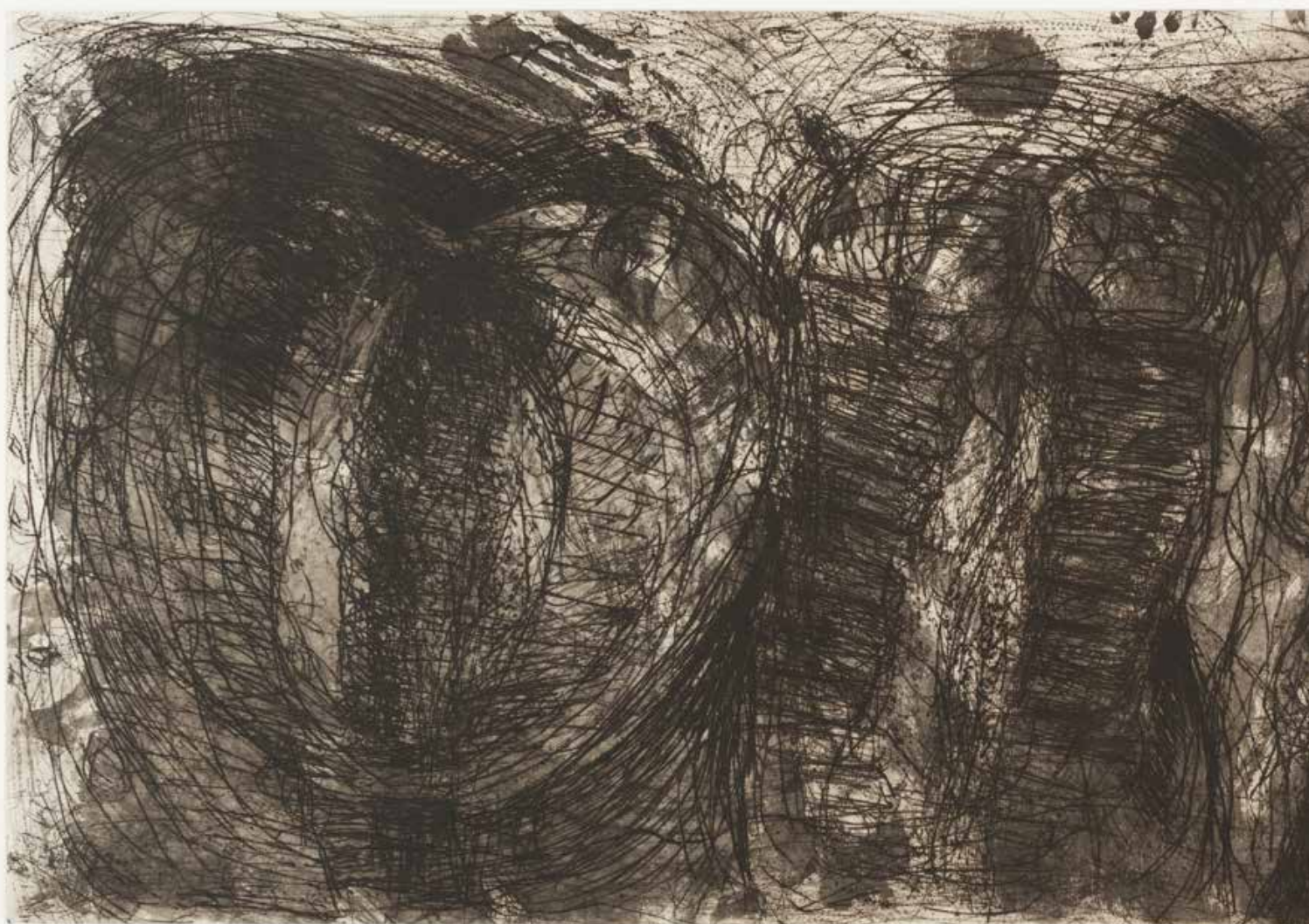
I have long been fascinated by English sculptor Henry Moore's work drawn from his observations of an African elephant skull. In 2013 had the opportunity to study the series of etchings firsthand at the Tate Britain and wanted to rethink the human, artistic encounter with the skull. However, other than Moore I am not interested in a mostly formal exploration of the skull (or any form for that matter). I felt a need to highlight the material particularity of the corporeal encounter with the elephant skull. In simple terms, I wanted to know how my physical body relates to the skull – materially and conceptually.

During the course of a 2013-14 I created a body of artworks that investigate, document and give aesthetic shape to my personal encounter with an African elephant skull. This body of work is collectively known as 'The Animal series' and it includes drawings, photographs, videos, sculptures and etchings. Throughout this project the material encounter is key: that means that throughout the production of the Animal Series I am interested in tracing the exact material manner in which I physically encounter and make sense of the elephant skull. In this regard the series of works is marked by the attempt to render in artistic form a complex set of material relationships that include those that exist between human and animal, animate and inanimate material, memory and loss, touch and sight, flesh and bone.

For the project I have also collaborated with a number of South African artists including Diane Victor, Willem Boshoff, David Koloane, Guy du Toit and Bevan de Wet. Each of these artists have, by way of their particular artistic approach helped to expand the repertoire of possible artistic,



Johan Thom & Diane Victor
Swimming/ Drowning,
Body print by Johan Thom and etching by Diane Victor
200 x 95cm
2013



Johan Thom & David Koloane
Ear,
Etching by Johan Thom with dry- point by David Koloane
200 x 95cm
2013

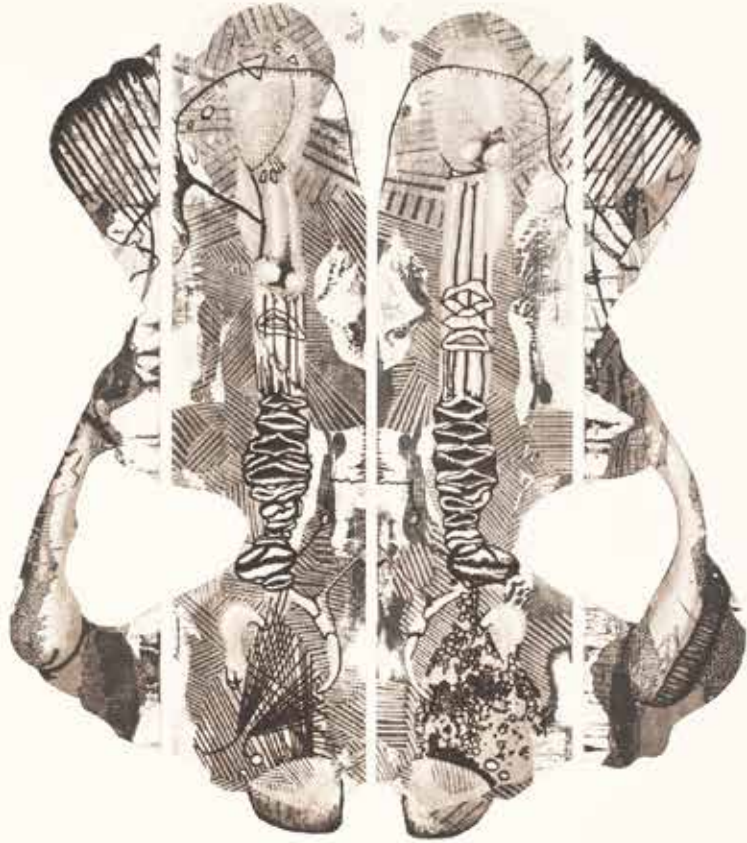
conceptual and socio-cultural implications of the encounter with the skull.

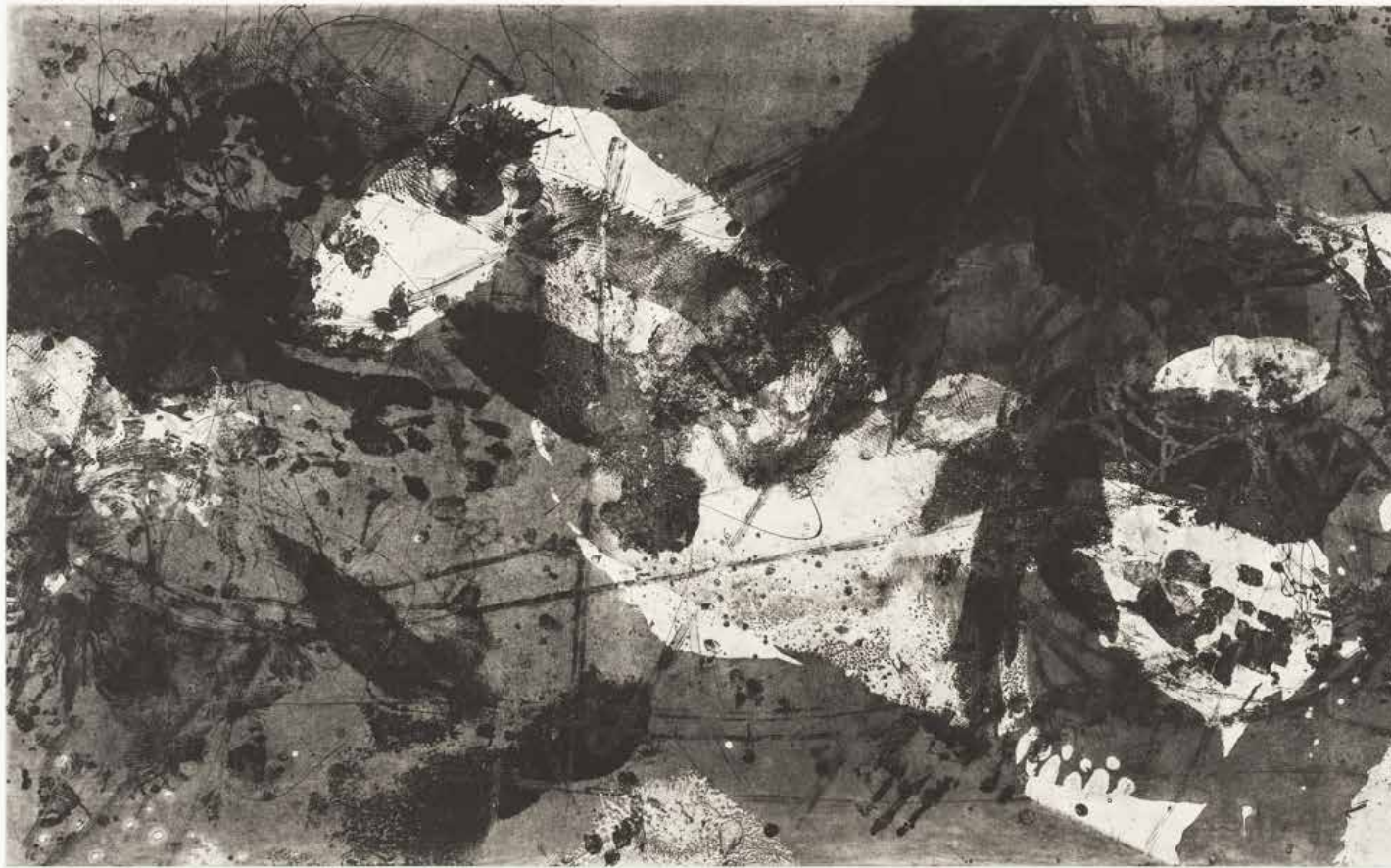
.....Collaborative large-scale etchings
Five large-scale etchings produced as part of The Animal Series (2013 – 2014) Johan Thom with Diane Victor, Willem Boshoff, David Koloane, Bevan De Wet

For this leg of the project Johan Thom collaborated with a number of artists to produce works that address the encounter with the elephant skull and each other. Thom prepared the etching plates specifically keeping in mind the work of the collaborating partner. Once the plates were prepared the artists were invited to come spend some time viewing, drawing and photographing the elephant skull at the Nirox Foundation. For example in the case of the work of Willem Boshoff Thom prepared scratched the copper etching plate with the elephant skull, spinning it atop the mirror like, yellow surface for a number of hours. In turn Boshoff overlaid the printed image with a target such as may be found on a hunting rifle. However in keeping with his linguistic approach to artistic practice Boshoff used a number of small, black three dimensional plastic letters to construct the shape. For the Diane Victor's print Thom made a full body print by covering himself in condensed milk and crawling across the plate. At this point Victor responded in her signature realist style, drawing the skull in immaculate detail atop the ghostly human figure.



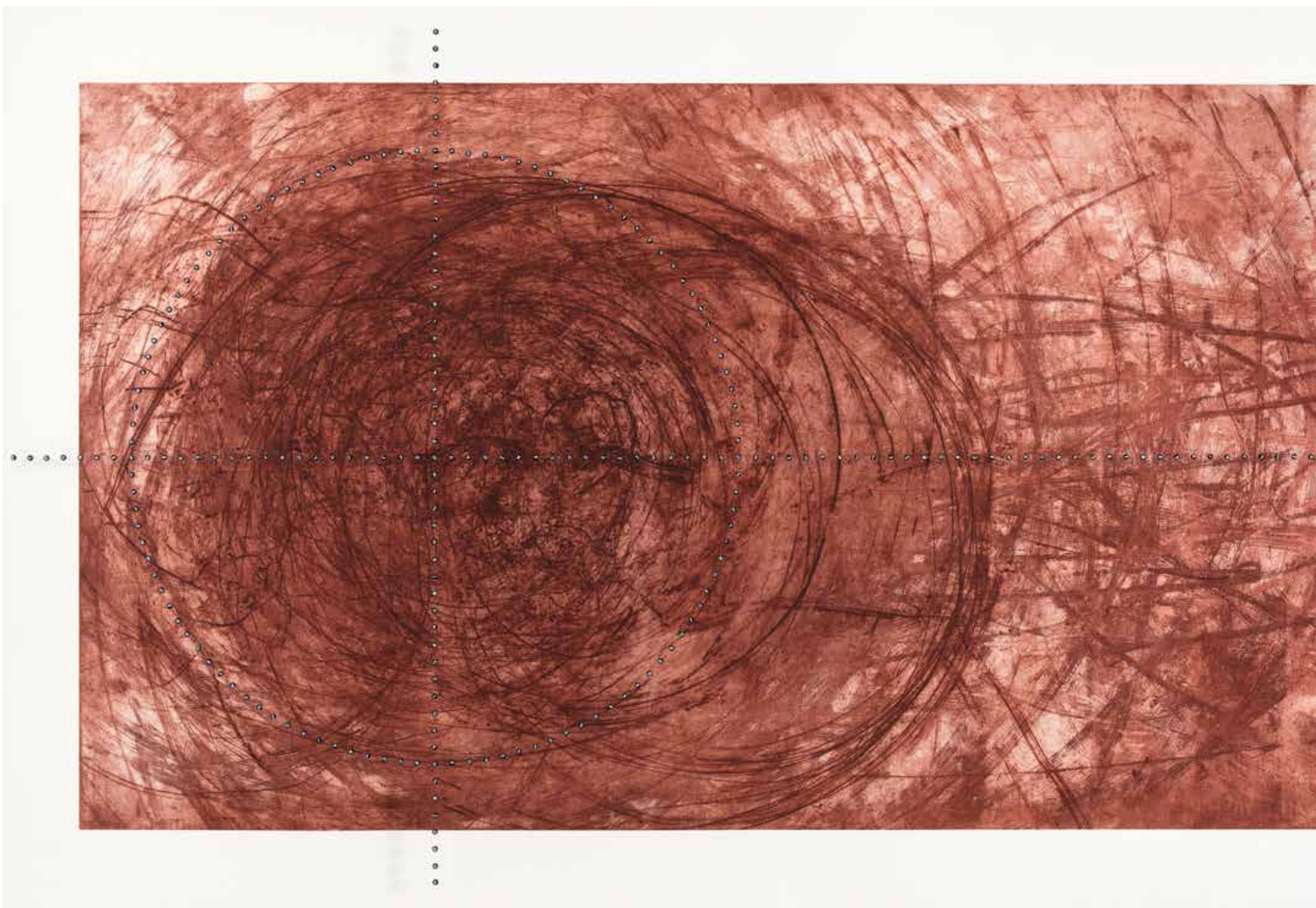
Johan Thom & Bevan De Wet
Skull,
Embossed body print in white by Johan Thom with etching by Bevan De Wet
200 x 95cm
2013





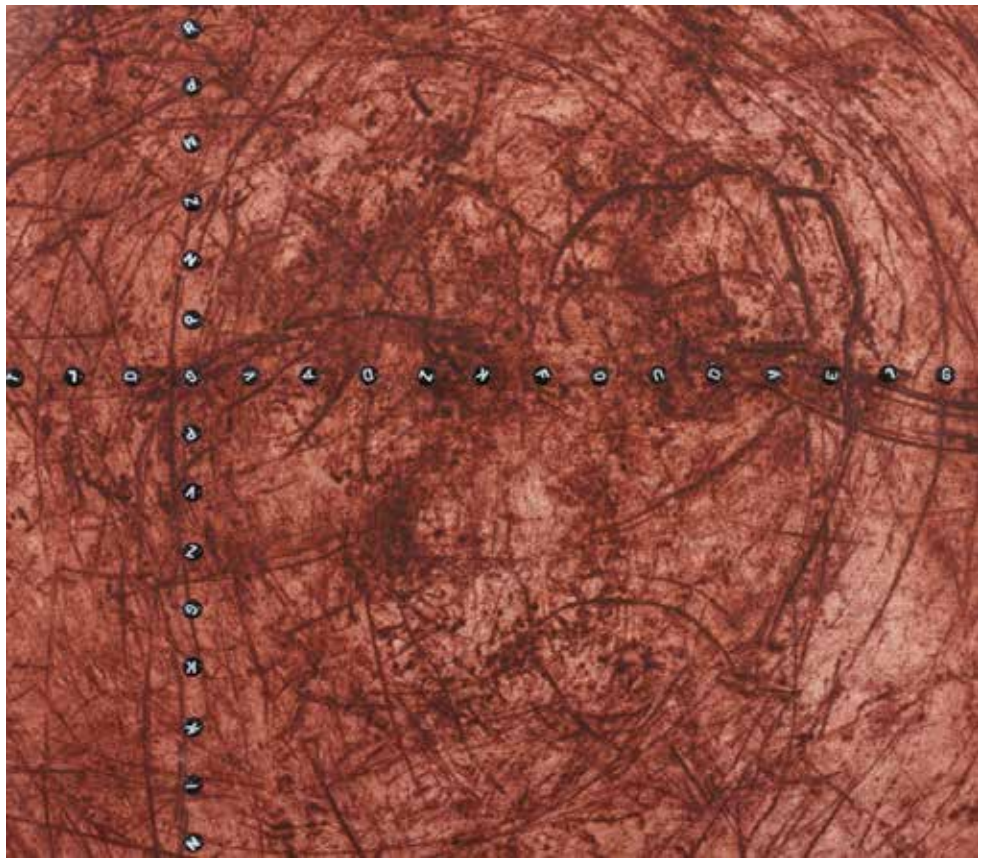
Johan Thom
Animal,
Body print, etching and drypoint by Johan Thom
200 x 95cm
2013





Johan Thom & Willem Boshoff
Elephant Peepsite

Etching by Johan Thom using elephant skull with lines made up of alphabet beads on extruded acrylic super
220 x 127.5cm
2014





Johan Thom, 2016

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Johan Thom was born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1976. He is currently living and working in Pretoria as a visual artist and a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the Department of Visual Art, University of Pretoria. Thom works across a variety of media including sculpture; video; performance; drawing; printmaking and photography.

From a broader focus on the body in his earlier work Thom's interest have gradually shifted to a more specific exploration of the material relationship between the body and found objects. For example in 'The Animal Series' (2013) Thom explores his body's relationship to an African elephant skull. In other artworks he engages with pencils, fishing gut, soil, gold, broken glass and oil amongst others. More recently Thom created a series of sculptural works in builders foam drawn from a cast of a 19th century French ceramic of Faustus and exhibited as a solo exhibition 'The devil made me do it' at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg 2015.

Solo exhibitions include The Goodman Gallery (2015), Nirox Project space (2014), Iwalewa Haus (2010), the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2008) and the Bag Factory (2008), amongst others. His works have also been included in group exhibitions at the Venice Biennale (2003), the Canary Islands Biennale (2006), and at the Palazzo delle Papesse (2008). He is an active presence in the art research community and has participated in conferences and workshops at the University of Pretoria (2013/14 & 15) Documenta 13 (2012), the University of Cambridge (2009), GradCam in Dublin (2010), the Finnish Academy of Fine Art (2010), the Slade School of Fine Art (2010, 2011, 2012), 'Real Presence' at the Venice Biennale (2005), the University of Bayreuth (2010) and elsewhere.

In 2014 Thom completed a PhD in Fine Art at the Slade School of Fine Art (UCL) on a Commonwealth scholarship.

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