

Linde Kriel

Artist name: Linde Van der Linde · he/him · Johannesburg, South Africa

Artist Statement

My work begins with material. Paper, water, ink, fire, soil and the human body are the places where I think, and the processes I put them through become a way of asking how a person is shaped, marked, broken down and made again.

At the centre of my practice is hand papermaking. To make a sheet of paper, fibre must first be beaten until it loses its original form, suspended in water, and then gathered again on a mould. Nothing is wasted; what was there before is carried into what comes next. I grew up within a Christian tradition in which water was the element of baptism, of being cleansed and received into belonging. As a pansexual man and a Christian, I have experienced how the same rituals that promise belonging can also exclude. Working at the vat, I return to water not as a means of purification, but as a means of holding: a space where something can come apart without being lost.

Printmaking carries this thinking into pressure and impression. A print only exists because something has been pressed into a surface, and I read that pressure alongside the social and religious pressures placed on queer bodies, and the marks they leave behind. In painting, I return again and again to the figure – often submerged, blindfolded, crowned, or caught in moments of rest and exhaustion – to explore vulnerability, tenderness and the private rituals through which we survive.

Grief and memory run through much of the work. I make paper from my own earlier artworks, embed family photographs and identity documents into handmade sheets, and work under my mother's maiden name, Van der Linde, in honour of my late grandparents. These acts are ways of keeping close what would otherwise be lost, and of insisting that personal and inherited histories deserve to be held with care.

My practice is practice-led research: the studio is where questions are tested and where understanding emerges, alongside theory drawn from phenomenology, new materialism and queer thought. I am interested in slowness, in processes that cannot be hurried, and in the idea that making can be a form of witness. Ultimately, I hope the work offers viewers a space to sit with what is difficult – grief, exclusion, longing – and to recognise that what has been broken down can still be gathered into something whole.