



SACRED OFFERINGS

Linde Kriel



Cover: **The Cost of Purification**
apple charcoal, pyrolised apples and tins on paper
720 x 2020 mm

Left: **A Collection of Sin** (detail)
photography
1060 x 810 mm

2024

Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, UFS

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The *Queer* Sacrifice

My work is a deeply personal exploration of the intricate and often painful relationship between identity, desire, and religious expectation. Through the use of organic materials such as pyrolysed apples, apple charcoal, and handmade paper, I delve into the themes of sacrifice and purification, both of which are central to the narratives imposed on queer individuals by religious institutions.

At the heart of my practice is the transformation of apples into charcoal, a process that serves as a powerful metaphor for the experiences of queer people within the church. The act of pyrolysis, burning apples to reduce them to their most elemental form, parallels how queer individuals are pressured to strip away their true selves to conform to religious ideals. This process is not just physical but deeply symbolic, reflecting the church's demand that queer people sacrifice their desires, identities, and, ultimately, their authenticity in pursuit of an unattainable purity.

In my body of work the remnants of this transformation, charred apples and the tins used in the process are not merely materials but symbols of the conflict between purity and desire. These works confront the viewer with

the visceral reality of the sacrifices that queer individuals are often forced to make under the weight of religious expectations. The apple, traditionally a symbol of temptation and sin, is re-imagined as both the victim and the vessel of purification, challenging the notion that desire must be eradicated to achieve spiritual purity.

The church's insistence on the sacrifice of queer desires is a recurring theme throughout my body of work. It is evident in the way I manipulate materials, transforming them through processes that echo the church's attempt to reshape and control queer identities. This manipulation is not without consequence; the altered materials retain traces of their original form, much like how the essence of queer identity persists despite attempts at erasure.

I explore these themes in **An Atlas of Sin** and **A Collection of Sin** by juxtaposing traditional techniques with modern technology. Handmade paper, infused with apple charcoal powder, carries the weight of history and tradition. Simultaneously photography reveals intricate patterns that symbolise the resilience and complexity of queer identities.

These works underscore the ongoing tension between the church's rigid demands and the natural fluidity of human desire.

My work is a call to reflect on the cost of these demands, the unspoken sacrifices made in the name of religious conformity. It invites viewers to consider the inherent value of queer desires and identities, which are often condemned as sinful or impure by religious doctrine. By using materials that have undergone intense transformation, I highlight the beauty and

strength that emerge from such pressures, celebrating the resilience of queer existence in the face of societal and religious constraints.

Ultimately, my work challenges viewers to rethink desire, sacrifice, and the queer self. It seeks to honour the complexity of human desire, urge a reconsideration of the narratives imposed by the church, and celebrate the enduring spirit of those who resist being purified out of existence.



A Collection of Sin (detail), photography, 1060 x 810 mm

Through the ritual of burning and transformation, my work explores the tension between desire and sacrifice, confronting the societal and religious pressures that seek to purify the queer self. The apple, a symbol of forbidden sin, becomes a vessel for resilience, revealing how beauty and identity endure even through destruction.

right: studio installation shot



Sinful Sketch II

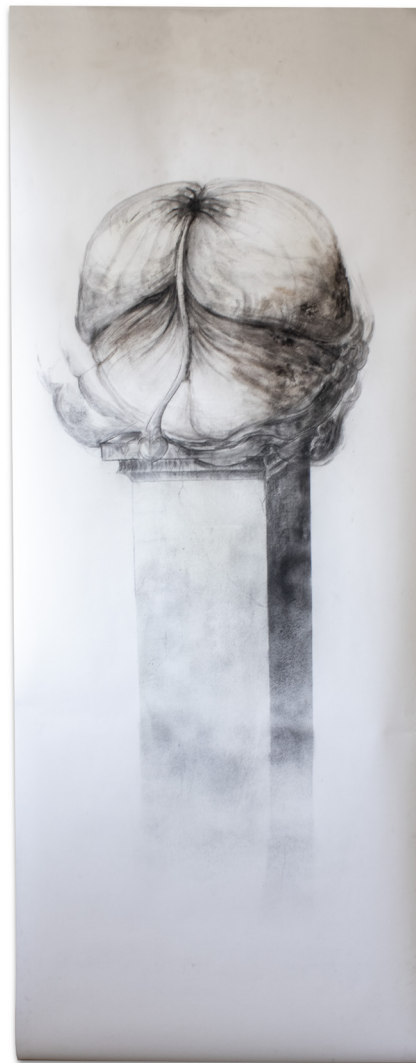
apple charcoal on paper
2650 x 1000 mm

Sinful Sketch I

apple charcoal on paper
2480 x 1500 mm

Sinful Sketch III

apple charcoal on paper
and used objects
2650 x 800 x 850 mm



In my series **The Sinful Sketches**, I delve into the complex and often painful intersection of religion, desire, and identity. These large-scale drawings are created with charcoal made from apples and sticks from an apple tree, embodying both the natural and transformative elements central to my work.

The Sinful Sketches are reminiscent of ancient scrolls, inviting viewers into a sacred space for reflection. Each drawing depicts still life compositions of apples, a symbol of the forbidden fruit, morphed to be reminiscent of male genitalia. This transformation speaks to the forbidden nature of queer desires within the context of religious doctrine. The apples,

placed on plinths, symbolise the value and importance of these desires, yet their precarious positioning, either falling off or appearing too heavy for the plinths, suggests the constant struggle and imbalance experienced by queer individuals under the weight of religious expectations.

Through **The Sinful Sketches**, I aim to create a dialogue around the expectations of sacrifice imposed on queer individuals by religious institutions. The large scale of the drawings and the reverent manner in which they are displayed further enhance the feeling of a sacred space, inviting viewers to confront and reflect on these deeply ingrained societal and religious norms.



Sinful Sketch II (detail), apple charcoal on paper, 2650 x 1000 mm



Sinful Sketch I (detail), apple charcoal on paper, 2480 x 1500 mm



Sinful Sketch I (detail), apple charcoal on paper, 2480 x 1500 mm



Sinful Sketch III (detail), apple charcoal on paper and used objects, 2650 x 800 x 850 mm

In **The Cost of Purification**, I delve into the intricate and often unspoken sacrifices that queer individuals are expected to make within the confines of religious dogma. This work is deeply personal and evocative, created using pyrolised apples, charcoal derived from apples and sticks from an apple tree, and the very tins that held the apples during their transformation.

The medium itself is central to the narrative I aim to convey. The pyrolised apples and the tins, with remnants still clinging to them, symbolise the transformation and the remnants of the self that linger despite attempts at erasure. The drawings, done with charcoal made from the same apples and sticks, weave a story of both creation and destruction, echoing the cycle of purification and sacrifice.

Exhibited on the floor, the piece recalls the form of a scroll, inviting viewers to engage with it on a more intimate level. This choice is deliberate, as it encourages a physical interaction that mirrors the internal journey many queer individuals undergo. The scroll-like form also hints at the notion of sacred texts and the rewriting of narratives that challenge traditional religious expectations.



right: **The Cost of Purification**, apple charcoal, pyrolised apples and tins on paper, 720 x 2020 mm



The Cost of Purification, apple charcoal, pyrolised apples and tins on paper, 720 x 2020 mm



Unspoken Sacrifice, pyrolised apples and cloth, 550 x 1450 x 450 mm

In **Unspoken Sacrifice**, I explore the profound and often painful intersection between personal identity and societal expectations, particularly as they pertain to queer individuals within the context of the church. This sculptural still life, rendered in the medium of pyrolised apples and cloth, serves as a poignant commentary on the sacrificial demands placed upon queer people by religious institutions.

The apples in this piece, referencing the forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden, are transformed and stripped through the process of pyrolysis. This transformation symbolises the intense pressure and stripping away of one's

authentic self that many queer individuals experience within religious settings. The charred, altered apples rest upon a cloth reminiscent of an altar, evoking the idea of sacrifice and purification.

This work is an altar to the unspoken sacrifices demanded by the church, sacrifices of desire, identity, and self. The sculptural elements stand as a testament to the resilience and endurance of those who navigate these complex and often painful expectations. **Unspoken Sacrifice** invites viewers to reflect on the cost of these demands and to consider the inherent value and sanctity of every individual's true self.



left: **Unspoken Sacrifice** (detail)

Unspoken Sacrifice, pyrolised apples
and cloth, 550 x 1450 x 450 mm

Self Tithe is a deeply personal work that reinterprets a familiar object from my childhood, the offering boxes found in the churches I grew up in. These boxes, locked and secretive, were designed to receive envelopes and money as offerings for the church, representing acts of devotion and sacrifice. In this piece, I explore the parallel between these traditional offerings and the sacrifices expected of queer individuals within religious contexts.

The offering boxes in this work is charred to the point of near destruction, its once-solid form now blackened and crumbling. The act of charring serves a dual purpose: it is a method of preservation, but also a means of destruction. This tension reflects the paradoxical demands placed on queer people by religious institutions, the expectation to preserve their faith by sacrificing their desires, even as this process ultimately leads to the disintegration of the self.



Self Tithe, tins and handmade paper and pyrolised remnants, 230 x 1800 x 2020 mm

right: **An Atlas of Sin**, handmade paper with apple charcoal, 1060 x 810 mm





Re-imagining the still life genre, I replace the traditional apples with circles made from finely ground apple charcoal. These circles challenge the viewer's perception: are they truly apples if they no longer resemble them, despite being created from them? This question mirrors the complex identities and experiences of queer people, often obscured or denied by societal and religious norms.

The paper itself is handmade from natural fibers, embodying a connection to tradition and the tactile qualities of artisanal craftsmanship. When viewed with light illuminating from behind, the unique and abstract patterns created by the apple powder are revealed, highlighting the intricate beauty and individuality within each piece.

The creation process itself is integral to the piece. I painstakingly ground charcoal made from apples, a task that mirrors the intense pressure and transformation experienced by queer individuals within religious contexts. This act of grinding the apples into a fine powder is a metaphor for the crushing weight of societal expectations and the erasure of one's true self.

left: **An Atlas of Sin** (detail), handmade paper with apple charcoal, 1060 x 810 mm



Apples to Ashes, photograph of handmade paper with apple charcoal, 550 x 360 mm (each)



In my artwork **Apples to Ashes**, I delve into the complex and often painful intersection between religious doctrine and queer identity.

The creation process itself is integral to the piece. I painstakingly ground charcoal made from apples, a task that mirrors the intense pressure and transformation experienced by queer individuals within religious contexts. This act of grinding the apples into a fine powder is a metaphor for the crushing weight of societal expectations and the erasure of one's true self.

As the apple charcoal powder interacts with the handmade paper, it takes on a life of its own, forming unique and unpredictable patterns. These emergent forms symbolise the resilience and inherent beauty of queer identities, even when subjected to immense pressure. The patterns are organic and fluid, defying rigid structures and highlighting the natural diversity of human experiences.

left: **Apples to Ashes** (details), photograph of handmade paper with apple charcoal, 550 x 360 mm



In *A Collection of Sin*, I explore the tension between desire and sacrifice, using the language of photography to question the expectations placed upon queer individuals by the church. The work is a reinvention of the traditional still life, where apples, symbolic of the forbidden fruit, are presented in various stages of pyrolysis. This process, which transforms the apples through burning, serves as a metaphor for the intense and often painful process of self-sacrifice that is demanded.

The choice of photography as a medium is deliberate. The images, resembling stock photos, play with the concept of authenticity. Just as a photograph of an apple is not a real apple, the idealised expectations of purity and sacrifice imposed by religious institutions are often disconnected from the realities of queer existence. The artificiality of the photos challenges the viewer to question what is real

and what is constructed, both in the imagery and in the narratives that society imposes on us.

Through this work, I seek to confront the complexities of identity and the ways in which we are shaped, or even distorted, by the pressures to conform. *A Collection of Sin* invites a deeper reflection on the nature of sacrifice, asking whether the demands placed upon us are truly just, or simply another layer of artifice imposed by those who do not understand the fullness of our lives and desires.

Left: *A Collection of Sin*, photography, 1060 x 810 mm



A Collection of Sin (detail), photography, 1060 x 810 mm



Vessels of Ash is a photographic triptych that examines the vessels used in the ritual of pyrolyzing apples, a symbolic act of sacrifice and purification. Each tin, scarred and stained, holds remnants of what was once whole, embodying both transformation and the traces left behind. These images explore the resilience of the self against erasure, as the tins become reliquaries for memory and endurance. By documenting these vessels, I invite viewers to reflect on the unyielding nature of the self and the remnants that resist obliteration, even within the fires of sacrifice.



Vessels of Ash (detail), photograph, 550 x 360 mm (each)



Artist Bio

Award-winning multimedia artist Linde Kriel was born in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng, South Africa. While growing up, he moved around all over South Africa. This constant movement has influenced his approach to life and his art.

In 2020 he began his BA in Fine Arts at the University of the Free State. Now in 2024, he is a fourth-year student focusing on drawing, installation and paper making. He is the co-founder of the **Makwande Art Collective** and the **Makwande Art Prints**, which helps students to sell their fine art prints. In 2024 he curated a group exhibition **Embodied Reflections** in Mpumalanga.

He uses his work as a tool to investigate social issues in society, themes such as gender identity, sexuality and religion.

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Exhibitions

UFS Student Exhibition 2024 Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, Bloemfontein	UFS Student Exhibition 2023 Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, Bloemfontein
30 years of Democracy and Reflection 2024 Pop-up exhibition, CUT Campus, etc.	Turbine Art Fair Paper 2023 Cape Town & Johannesburg
Embodied Reflections 2024 The Living Gallery @LAKE UMUZI, Secunda	Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2022 Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein
Turbine Art Fair Paper 2024 Black Brick Hotel, Cape Town	Sasol New Signature 2022 Pretoria Art Museum
Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2023 Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein	UFS Student Exhibition 2022 Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, Bloemfontein
Sasol New Signature 2023 Pretoria Art Museum	UFS Student Exhibition 2021 Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, Bloemfontein

Achievements

Sasol New Signatures 2022 Finalist
Sasol New Signature 2022 Merit Award Winner
Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2022 Finalist
Sasol New Signatures 2023 Finalist
Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2023 Finalist
Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2023 Runner Up Winner
Phatsoane Henney New Breed 2023 Digital Category Winner

