

THE VILLA

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Johannesburg 2018

Instagram: @the_villa_the_villa

VILLA #1

Givan Lotz, Lucy Jane Turpin, Michele Mathison, Rodan Kane Hart, Michael MacGarry, Jacob Van Schalkwyk, Marc Edwards, Jonathan Freemantle, Sarah Grace, Dokter & Misses, Brett Rubin, Io Makandal, Jake Singer, David Brits.

We artists are always looking for interesting spaces to make work. We particularly need spaces that are sympathetic to the special alchemy that happens when we are in the heat of production. We need space to breathe. Good things grow out of such spaces. I'm always on the lookout for these spaces and about a year and a half ago I found one such space. Four Seasons Mansion on Melville Street in Hyde Park had been acquired by a friend of mine, a property developer who had bought the place to knock it down and build a sexy cluster of apartments. The existing property had been abandoned and left empty for about a year. I suggested an exchange, I move in the mansion and leave an artwork behind. Initially it was just this - a simple exchange for a short period of time. I get a 6 bedroom mansion with pool house, ball room, tennis courts, swimming pools and vast overgrown garden, the developer gets an eccentric caretaker of sorts and artwork. Perfect. The property market conspired to extend my time The Villa - with a slow down in sales delaying the demolition I had a total of about 18 months in this mini paradise.

I invited fellow artists to take up residence during my time there. Givan Lotz took the master bedroom, with ensuite bathroom and marble bath. Io Makandal took residence in a room halfway back to its maker. She made a magical post apocalyptic dreamscape. Lucy Jane Turpin moved throughout the mansion, making her beautiful paintings on any floorspace she could find. I spent most of my time at The Villa making a body of work that was exhibited at Gallery MOMO under the title 'The Oldest Mountain'. Throughout my time there I was gleefully aware that at any time the bulldozers would arrive and the building would be no more. It gave a kind of excitement and temporal sparkle to the experience.

As the end drew near I felt strongly that we had to go out with a bang. I invited some of my favourite artists - all of them mates, and among the best artists I know - to come and take up residence at The Villa, installing work throughout the building, outhouses and gardens. FNB JHB Art Fair was in town and we planned a grand dinner to celebrate the show. We may have had some anarchy in mind when we planned the dinner on Saturday night of JHB Art Fair. The Glory and Anikesh Ramani catered and throughout a 5 course dinner served to about 80 guests in marvelous chaos we had an exhibition. The kind of exhibition I've always loved most. No tarted up pomposity, but rather a wild and free experience. A merry gang of talented artists showing spontaneously made artworks in a deserted mansion, a glitch in the matrix, a firework in the sky.

The dust settled after the event and eventually as the bulldozers did rumble in I began reflecting on my time at The Villa. In the DNA of the whole experience were the green shoots of something really magical. There should be more of these places. And so THE VILLA was born. A moveable feast. A changeable gypsy gang taking up residence in such spaces across the globe. Plans are in motion for The Villa to emerge in a Scottish Castle, a beach house in Malibu, and a shepherd's cottage underneath an ancient mountain. Watch this space. **Jonathan Freemantle (artist and THE VILLA founder)**

"The Villa gave me three months of time and space to commit the perfect crime. Within the span of a week, a sunny upstairs master bedroom decayed into a swampy dislocation. The outside garden seeped in as my insides continued to spill out." **Givan Lotz (artist)**

"THE VILLA. Vacant vagabond & the vaporous vamp. The silent meanderings of paint, the notably quiet space of being and spectating. The veil-less presence of camaraderie in the villa and painting with Jonathan Freemantle has left behind memories with absolute vehemence." **Lucy Jane Turpin (artist)**

"The Villa exhibition was exceptional, as it presented a studio space in which some of the most talented young South African artists could not only exhibit their work, but also produce it for exhibition. Experimental spaces away from the 'white cube' experience allow for a messy experiential viewing among the ghosts of a disappearing past. The tangible nature of the transience of the space relived the artists of the concerns that present themselves when creating work in formal spaces. Taking over entire rooms and awkward nooks in a house set for destruction allowed the artists to expand their practice and wreak havoc on the prolific found objects.

A neo-dadaist experience, the Villa offered a space for artists' freedom of expression that can only be found in an experimental arena. Evident in the paintball guns employed by Dokter & Misses' performative destruction of a pokey dirty bathroom, or the inclusion of newly collapsed ceilings in Io Makandal's installation, the space harbored a sense of danger and exploration that enhanced the modes of creative production. Newcomers to the space were encouraged to explore an exhibition where magnificent paintings were hung in narrow closets (Lucy Jane Turpin), or an unusable bathtub full of pins (Givan Lotz), hidden in the maze of rooms upstairs, juxtaposed against kitsch gold fixtures that hung from the last remnants of their previous pipes, or bizarre tiles that only the 1980s would have entertained as elegant, it was like a game of hide and seek, to determine what was intended to be viewed as art, and what was accidental. African masks in abandoned fish tanks, or the strange arrangement of pseudo-psychology books strewn on shelves, it was the viewer who made sense of what they saw.

Most evident from the villa exhibition was the dichotomy between the hedonistic expression and the serious nature of the application of hard-won artistic craft. It is difficult to curate an exhibition of the best young artists in the best of spaces, so working with the challenges of an unpredictable space was navigated with an adventurous elegance that created something completely new, bordering on theatre. In the light of day, the dissipated magic of the night-time opening was palpable, and felt like that movement you see from the corner of your eye, that you can't quite focus on when you seek it."

Nicola Kritzinger (academic and art critic)

"The Villa encapsulated everything I am motivated by in creating art and affective moments, which reflect on our society and the state of the world we operate in: a bunch of artists come together in an abandoned mansion that once was a home, to feast, make merry and create alternative worlds and narratives that present curious views into the possibility of what was and what could be. The Villa as a concept for me, is a pioneering space on the edge of restriction, where we are fierce and free on the frontier of where we're heading to next in the best, most honest, humorous and loving way. My contribution was an immersive installation in one of the dilapidating rooms that responded to the site and the idea of entropy as a central point of enquiry." **Io Makandal (artist)**

"It was a space that encouraged my imagination to run free. Something wild, magical about the overgrown garden with its dilapidated mansion. Inspired by mythology and nature it gave me the freedom to explore my ideas with a childlike abandon." **Sarah Grace (artist)**

"Living in Johannesburg has for me required a continuous process of finding unexpected and unconventional ways to disrupt the monotonous humdrum that the city can occasionally exude. The Villa exhibition, curated by my dear friend Jonathan Freemantle in September 2018, was one such magical instance where all the ideal ingredients combined to formulate an unforgettable show and opening party. Spring time in Joburg arrives with stardust and jacaranda petals in the crisp air. A selection of beautifully considered works installed in the abandoned, soon to be demolished mansion, felt like a palette cleanse to the often formulaic ways art is presented, but more so the evening felt almost ceremonial, as the space glittered for one last pirouette. A perfect setting for memory to outlast the physical space."

Brett Rubin (artist)

***all photos by Brett Rubin**

**an exhibition and dinner
at a deserted mansion in Hyde Park.**

THE VILLA

Saturday 8 September 7pm—late
5 course tasting menu by Glory Supper Club
R350/head. Booking essential. BYOB

THE VILLA

Sunday 9 September 11:30am—6pm
Food on sale. BYOB and picnic blankets.

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PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Jonathan Freemantle
Givan Lötz
Michele Mathison
Rodan Kane Hart
Michael MacGarry
Lucy Jane Turpin
Jacob van Schalkwyk
Marc Edwards
Sarah Grace
Dokter and Misses
Brett Rubin
Io Makandal
Jake Singer
David Brits

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Jonathan Freemantle





Givan Lotz



Givan Lotz



Brett Rubin



Givan Lotz



Rodan Kane Hart



Lucy Jane Turpin





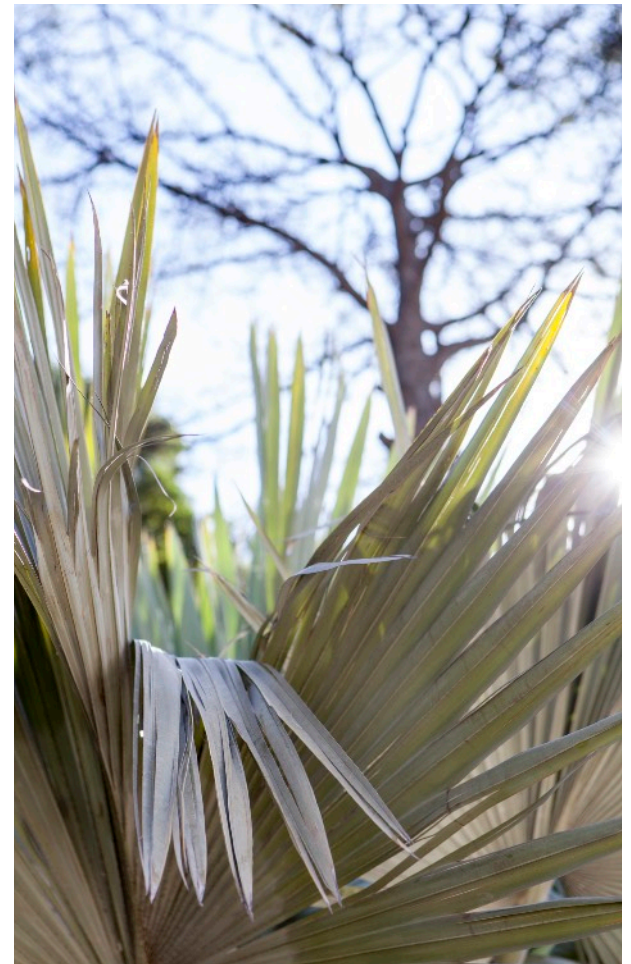
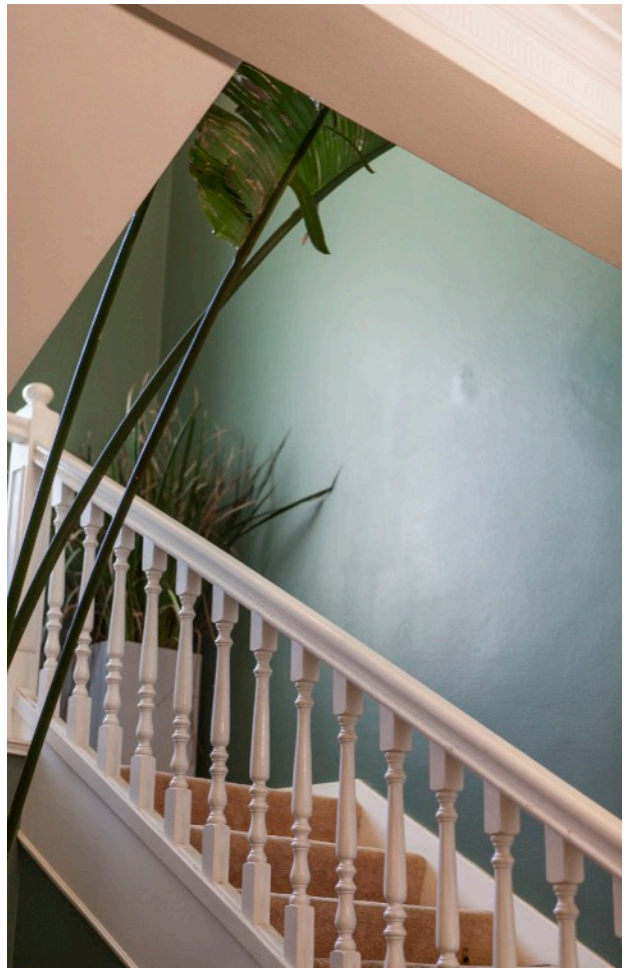


Jonathan Freemantle













David Brits



Michele Mathison

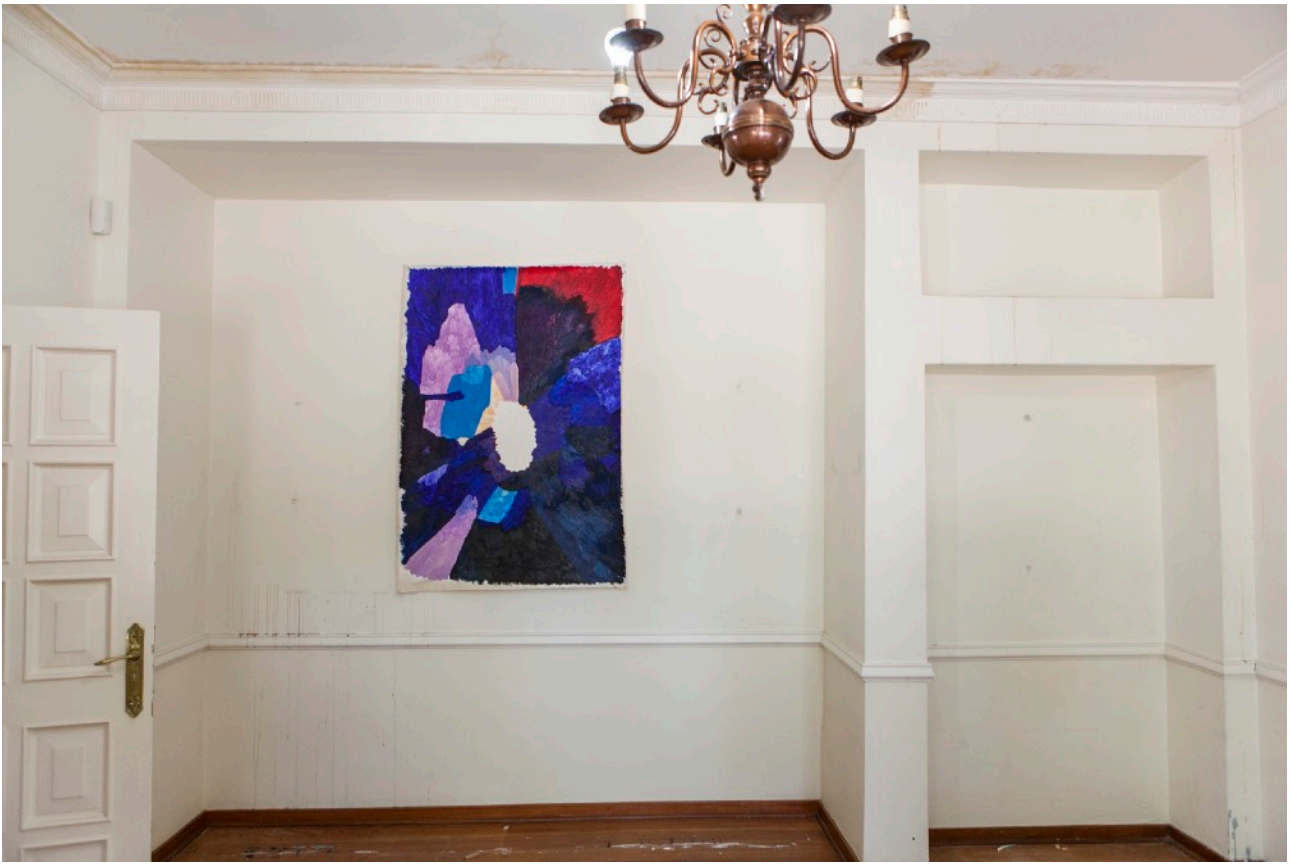


Marc Edwards



Lucy Jane Turpin

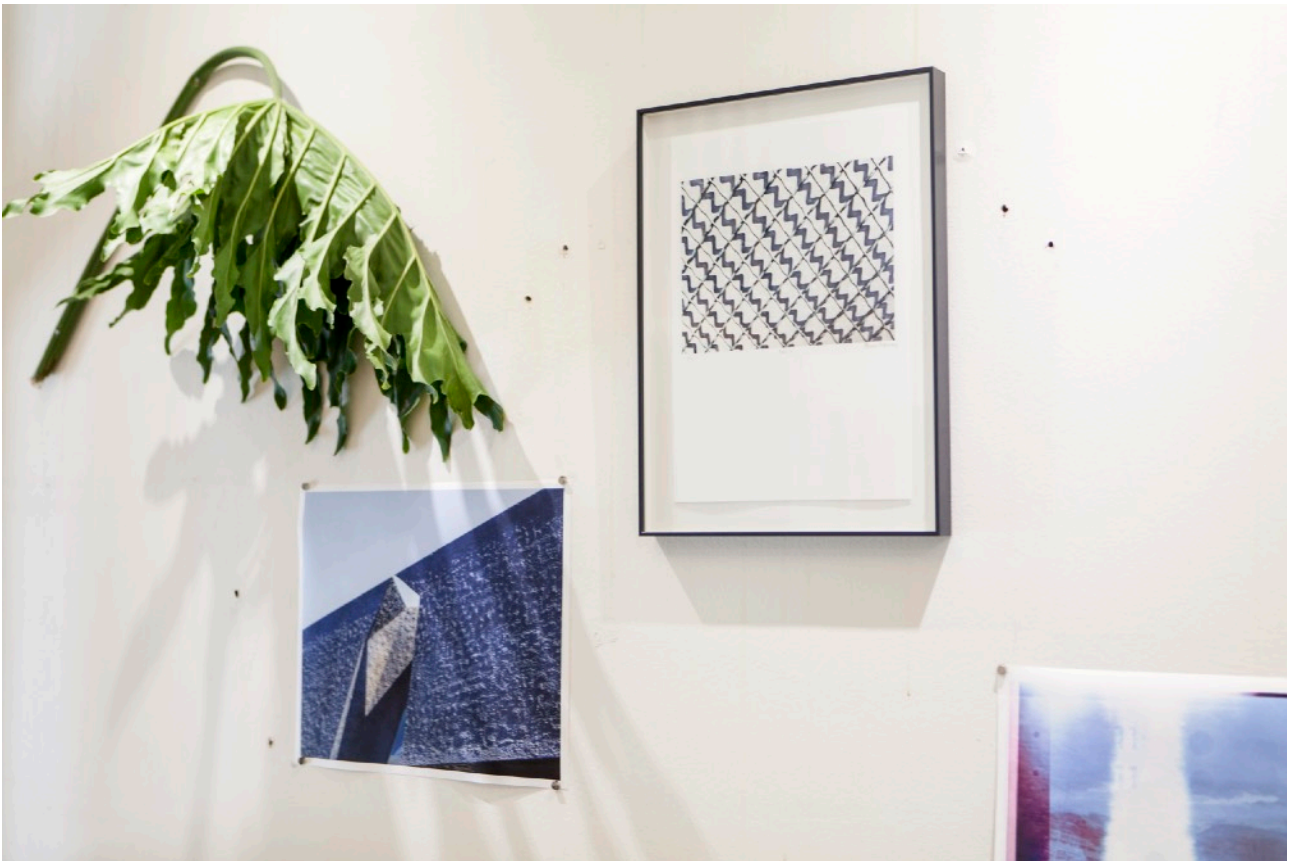
Lucy Jane Turpin



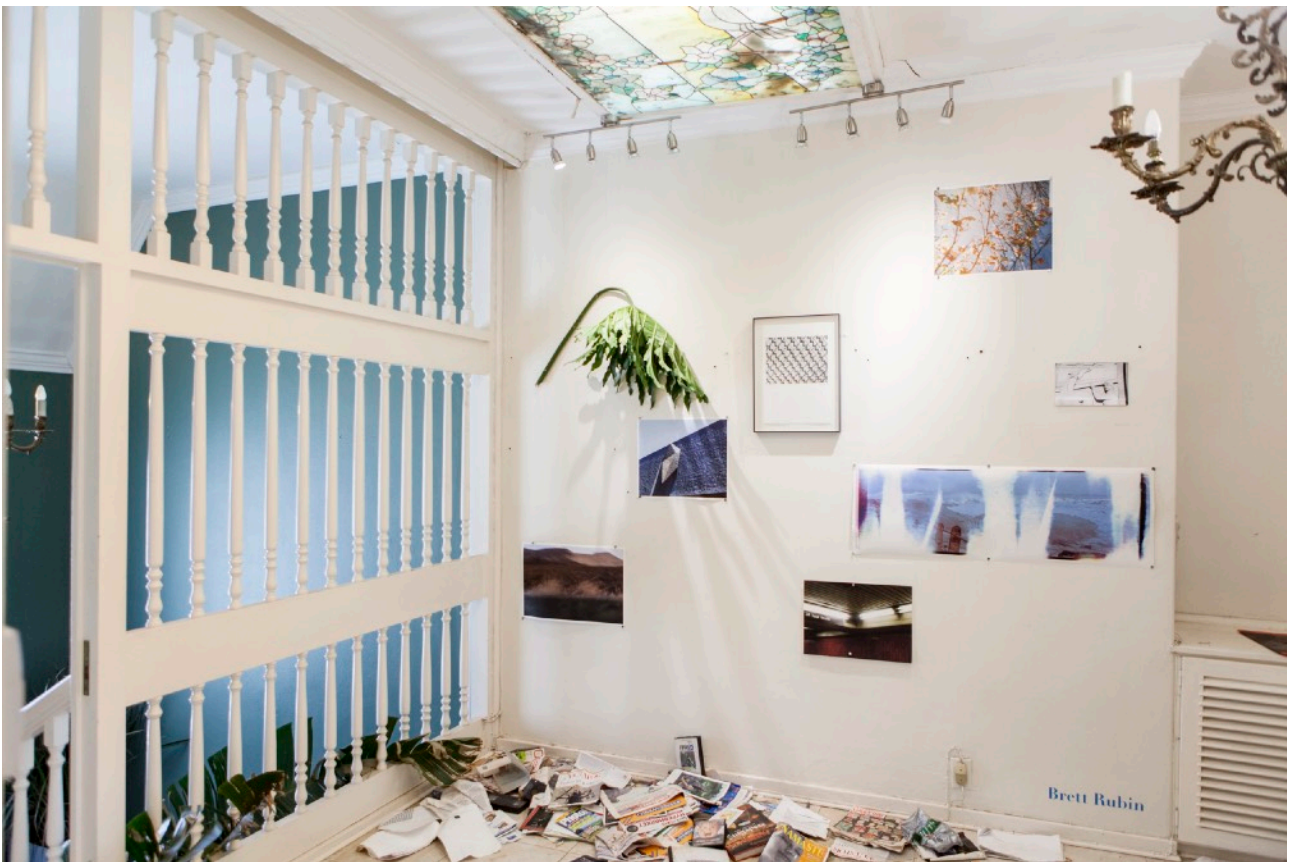
Lucy Jane Turpin



Lucy Jane Turpin



Brett Rubin



Brett Rubin



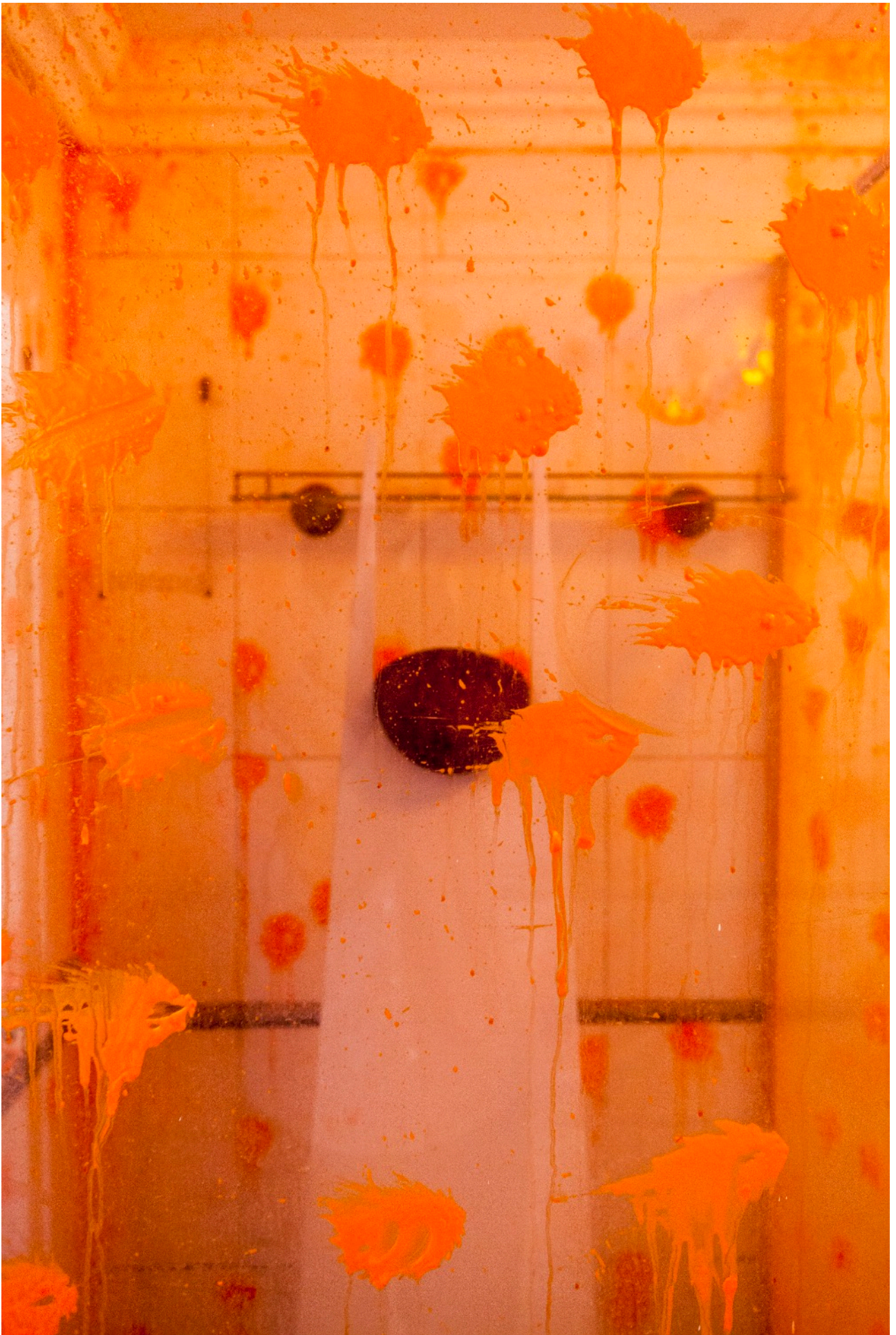
Jonathan Freemantle



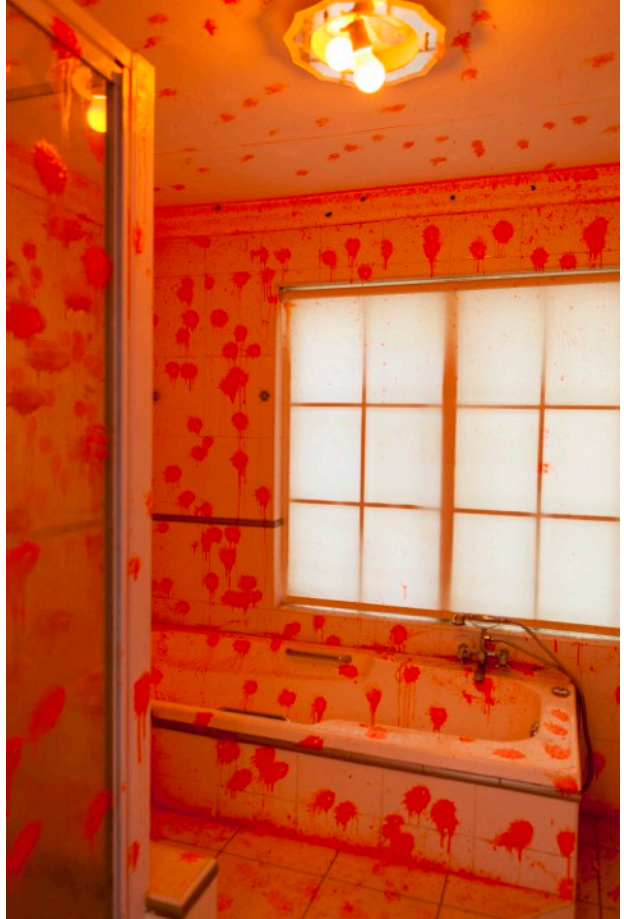
Jacob van Schalkwyk



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Dokter & Misses







Michael MacGarry



Michael MacGarry



Sarah Grace





Givan Lotz



Jonathan Freemantle



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