

## *Perception - Before and After*

### **Gaël Chizungu**

My diptych titled 'Perception – Before and After', (44cm x 50cm) is a multimedia piece on exposed wood, comprising of photos, acrylic paint, collage, Zart Slicks and Posca's. 'Perception' depicts my childhood memories of Africa, whilst living there and my alerted perception of Africa after migrating to Australia. Jean-Michel Basquiat's expressionistic, childlike artwork was the inspiration for this composition. The mark making and use of various mediums creates a complex and evocative piece. Bill Armstrong's out of focus photography also provided inspiration, depicting the vagueness of memories, through his blurred techniques.

The blurred background inspired by Armstrong, is used in both pieces with the black and white images exploring child sacrifice, which was prevalent throughout my childhood. In 'Before' the pictures are out of focus to capture my lack of awareness. Contrary, 'After' is more focused, symbolising my developed attentiveness around child sacrifice once migrating to Australia.

'Before' explores my experience in Africa. The skull at the forefront was inspired by Basquiat's 'untitled', 1982; The expressive mark making and layering of colours I employed into my piece. I transformed a skull which is associated with fear, into a being less discomfoting. I diluted my paint and layered colours, however still ensuring other colours were exposed. The abstract bright colours represent carefreeness and zest. My mark making is expressive as I wanted to capture a child-like atmosphere, however with refined skills. I incorporated mediums such as Posca and Slicks, as these are associated with children, and it added depth and contrast between the background and forefront. This fit into my personal aesthetic of expressionism and wanting to evoke emotions within the viewer.

'After' depicts my altered perception of Africa once migrating to Australia. Masking tape was used to convey me trying to piece together and make sense of my memories. Darker colours are used and the mark making is somewhat more refined to capture me maturing and viewing Africa as dangerous. The isolated figure represents my disconnection to Africa and confusion, what the media was telling me about Africa, did not a line with my perception. I was inspired by Ekua Holmes' collages, hence the incorporation of newspapers and creating headlines about Africa, which were present on the media when I migrated to Australia. The floating shapes in the composition do not fit together, which captures me struggling to make sense of my memories and my conflicting perception of Africa.

I like that the composition requires the viewer to search for the answer rather than it being obvious. My personal aesthetic of childlike art conceals that there may be a more complex meaning behind the piece if the viewer does not just take a superficial glance at it. I am elated with the outcome of my composition. I believe I have effectively depicted the altered perception of Africa and my memories, my composition was primarily inspired by Basquiat, Armstrong and Holmes, which permitted me to create a multifaceted piece, which capture the theme of my childhood memories and altered perception.