

ART FIRST, LONDON  
AT THE 2016 TURBINE ART FAIR  
JOHANNESBURG  
14 - 17 JULY

We are delighted to present the work of two Johannesburg based artists: Richard Penn, and photographer Graeme Williams at this edition of TAF. Both artists conduct a form of 'survey':

**GRAEME WILLIAMS** documents the city of Johannesburg, or the abandoned structures within a swiftly changing South African landscape, and also the generation of 'born frees' eligible and free to vote in the 2014 elections.

In 2013 **Williams** was awarded the prestigious **Ernst Cole Photography Award** for his series *A City Refracted*, a photographic essay based on post apartheid Johannesburg. Now published as a book, it toured as an exhibition from the Irma Sterne Museum, Cape Town to the Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg. Previously, between 1989 and 1994 he covered South Africa's transition to democracy for Reuters and other news organizations, but since then, he has produced a distinctive and contemporary body of work in the form of pertinent photographic essays.

Of the 2012-15 series *A City Refracted* Williams writes: "Since the mining town's formation, Johannesburg's inner city has served as the first stop for new arrivals. Always vibrant and in a constant state of flux, the past two decades have prompted white people to vacate the inner city, while the area has become home to new immigrants from all over Africa. Certain districts and blocks of flats are now dominated by Nigerians, Ghanaians and Somalis....the new occupants have adapted the structures to their way of life and culture. The city's increasing social polarizations have resulted in me being an outsider in a neighbourhood less than 10 minutes drive from my home. I have engaged with the subject from the viewpoint of a foreigner and so of necessity, I had to hire a bodyguard in order to pursue my photographic work freely."



Williams – *ACR01, Johannesburg inner city, South Africa*  
2013, digital print on archival paper, 42.5x60cm  
Edition of 7

From the series – *A City Refracted*, 2012 - 2015

*Marking Time* is focused on unfinished, abandoned, re-imagined and re-invented structures within a swiftly changing South African landscape. These, suggests Williams, reflect the 'state of the nation'. He conveys the reality of a society in a state of impermanence and incompleteness. Using a square format and bleached light, the tonal images such as shared electricity supply poles, football pitches, old farm entrances are familiar, or not, depending on who is looking.

*As the Grass Grows* is a collection of portraits of the first generation born after the end of apartheid – eligible and free to vote in the 2014 elections. Nicknamed 'Born Frees' their life stories convey the paradox of the aspirations of young South Africans as

they come fact to face with soaring unemployment and a shockingly imploded school education system - revealed as being the worst out of 148 countries surveyed in a World Economic Forum report. Williams establishes a direct and level relationship with his subjects, briefly entering their world to record it for posterity, for us, and equally, for them.

*Graeme Williams's photographs featured in the 2011 Figures and Fictions exhibition at the **Victoria and Albert Museum**, **Apartheid and After** at **The Huis Marseille** in Amsterdam (2014), and a series of images was showcased in *The World Atlas of Street Photography* published by Yale University Press and Thames and Hudson in 2014. In 2015 ART FIRST, London exhibited works from Williams's photographic essays, 'Marking Time' and 'As the Grass Grows'. His work is held in a number of permanent collections including Cape Town University, Duke University, the Finnish School of Photography in Helsinki, the South African National Gallery and the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution.*

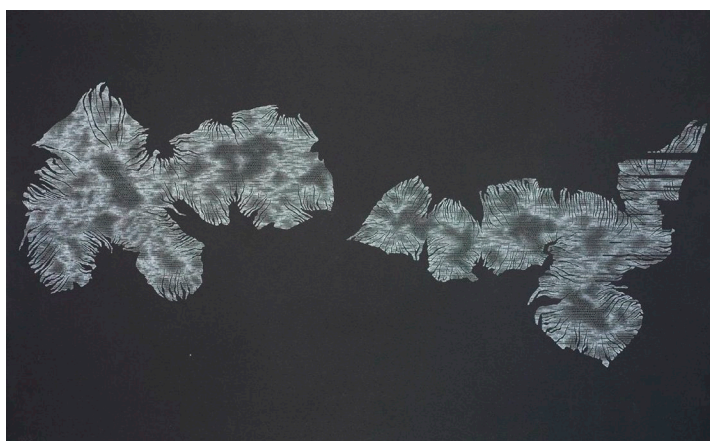
**RICHARD PENN** surveys the evidence of telescopes exploring the cosmos, and of microscopes examining the minuscule, from which he gleans an array of surface textures and patterns of extraordinary complexity.

His meticulous drawings in ink and watercolour, and his richly worked etchings and monotypes provide a glimpse of new worlds, of new possibilities and new life. There is an illusive and elusive quality to the imagery in the interruption of forms by what seem to be scanning errors and gaps in information. This serves to emphasise the actual and the representational scope of the endeavour.

Scientific discoveries in every field yield fresh readings of micro/macro realities that have been invisible before now. The new material is compelling and while big data provides an analysis of its own, the imaginative response by artists generates exciting new visual thinking. Penn's fascination with the investigation and the narratives of other worlds and other realities - the quantum realities of atoms and energies are often conflated in his works - provides the impetus for much of his practice. *Surface Detail* is a beguiling description of his mark-making where every surface is given astounding textural variety, drawing the viewer in, to orientate or to be willingly lost in the rhythms and energies of his art.



Penn – *Survey XIV*, 2016, ink on paper, 33x33cm



*Globe Bird Nightstalker*, 2015, ink on paper, 68x122cm

*Richard Penn completed his Masters Degree n Fine Arts from the University of the Witwatersrand in 2008. He has been a finalist in the ABSA Atelier, Kempton Park Art Competition and was awarded first prize in the Sasol New Signatures Art Competition 2004. He was awarded an Ampersand Fellowship Residency in New York in 2014 and his major solo exhibition 'Surface Detail' took place at the **Origins Centre Museum**, in September 2015, achieving great critical acclaim.*