

Doris Bloom



2



3

Permutation Fugue

By Bronwyn Law-Viljoen

Each voice takes the pattern, states the theme, and introduces a permutation ...

I

In the three movements of this body of work by Doris Bloom, a point of departure is the figure in the landscape: diminutive, walking—stumbling perhaps—into the picture plane, walking away, that is, from the viewer. The figure is a tangle of lines, dwarfed at the base of a mountain.

Captain Frederick Wells saw a flash of light on the wall of the shaft ...

Cullinan. From the famous diamond—a stone of extraordinary size and quality—emanates the glorious mythologies of the colonial project. At the very centre of the enormous uncut diamond is a tiny black spot. Nine major stones are cut from the Great Star of Africa (and ninety-six minor stones). The fifth major stone, cut into a heart or pear shape, is set into a brooch for Queen Mary, which she wears singly or as the centrepiece of a stomacher, the bejewelled triangle that forms the bodice of her gown. In 1911, a durbar, the celebration of the crowning

of the emperor or empress of India—who is in fact the English king or queen—is held in Delhi. King George V and Queen Mary attend. The stomacher is the centrepiece of Mary's ensemble.

II

In the second movement, several permutations of the figure: a cruciform shape—a suspending of the body across the landscape. And, like synecdoche, the head, beginning only as the shape of a head, an oval blot across the centre of the landscape. A net—or fence—is cross-hatched, stretched across the top of the picture plane. Underneath it is the mountain.

Each block was surrounded by two barbed-wire fences, along which sentries on raised platforms looked out across the camp ...

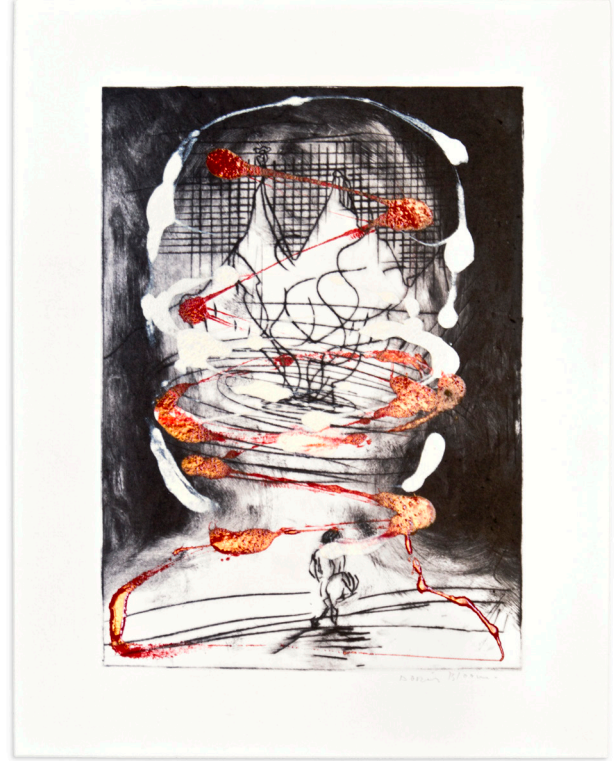
In 1941, the first Italian prisoners of war—captured in Libya and Abyssinia—land in South Africa and are transported to Zonderwater in Cullinan, a facility built to hold 120 000 people. Red-brick city of men. Some of these prisoners paint large murals on the walls of the recreation club of Premier Mine. Almost three hundred Italians are buried in the cemetery at Cullinan. The commandant of Zonderwater is Colonel Hendrik Prinsloo,

interned himself at the age of twelve in a British concentration camp during the Anglo-Boer War. In 1947 he represents South Africa at the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs.

III

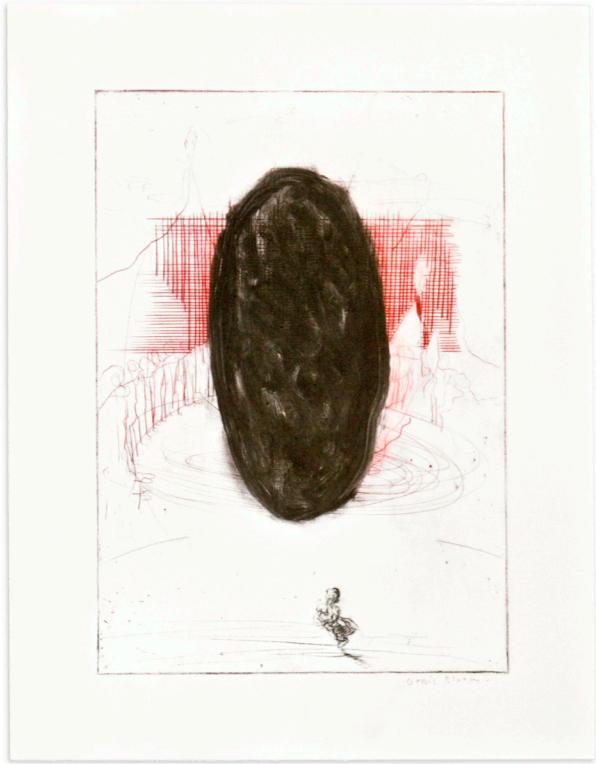
Finally, in the third movement: the shaft or pit, at the bottom of which is the figure, still just a network of black lines. The walls of the shaft, like the spatters of shiny paint in the first movement of prints, are bright red.

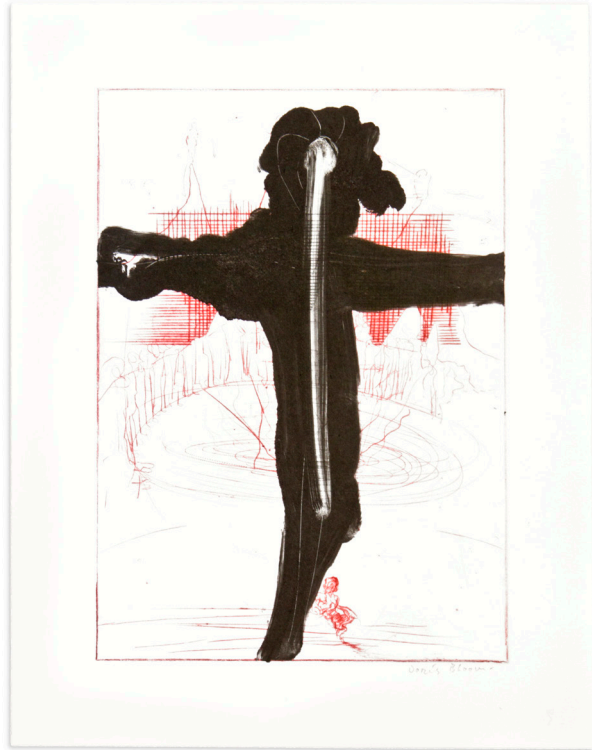
Red is a colour of emotion, but also of blood, butchering, eating, war, rubies, ochre, tuberculosis ...
The Cullinan Diamond Mine is located on a pipe of diamond-bearing kimberlite. At its edges, looming iron grey, are 165 metric tons of tailings deposits. New research has shown that tremolite-actinolite and chrysotile asbestos are present in the tailings of diamond mines and that diamond mine workers, long thought to be safe from such afflictions, are at risk of contracting asbestos-related lung diseases. In the bright red alveolar and bronchial walls of the lungs, asbestosis presents as tiny serpentine strands of fibre.



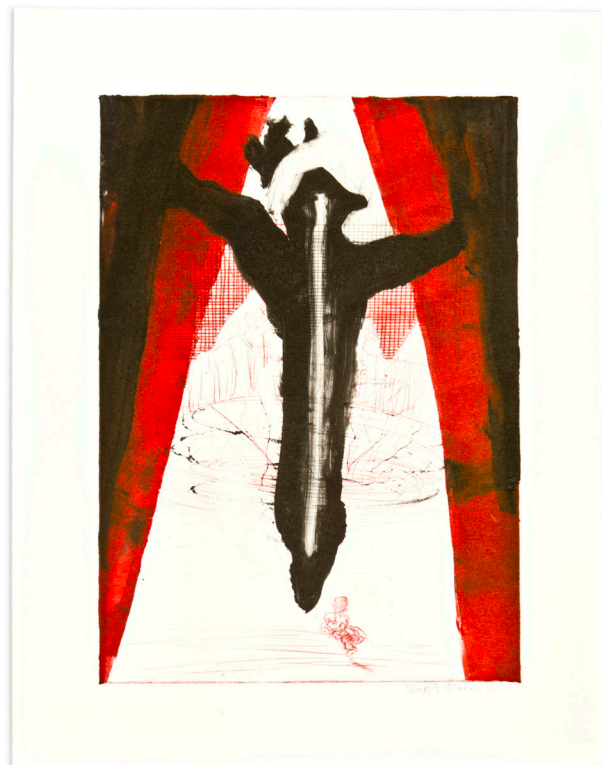














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Doris Bloom, Map - Cullinan, Gauteng, South Africa

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