



SOUTH AFRICAN MAIL
MESSAGES FROM INSIDE

We reject apartheid in all its forms. We pledge to work for the formation of a free and democratic culture in South Africa. We recognize that such a culture can come into being only with the removal of all forms of economic, political, social, and educational oppression, including all discrimination based on race, sex and age.

SOUTH AFRICAN MAIL
MESSAGES FROM INSIDE

WOMEN ARTISTS IN RESISTANCE

CURATED BY JANET GOLDNER
WITH SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS

JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 17, 1990

SOHO 20 GALLERY

469 BROOME STREET • NYC, NEW YORK 10012 • 212 226-4167

South African Mail: Messages From Inside presents approximately 400 unique postcard sized works by over 200 South African women of all races and circumstances. Included are paintings, photographs, drawings, prints, beadwork, collages both flat and dimensional and written statements. The exhibition came about thru the collaboration of American and South African artists. In compliance with the cultural boycott, South African Mail: Messages From Inside seeks to promote the culture of liberation. The exhibition presents the current life circumstances of progressive women in South Africa, and their hopes and dreams for a future South Africa which is democratic and nonracial. All of the contributors have signed the pledge against apartheid which is printed inside the front cover.

In curating this exhibition I traveled to South Africa in November of 1989. I saw cities, rural areas, townships and "homelands." I met many wonderful progressive people, both black and white who deepened my appreciation for the long struggle against the oppression of apartheid by their vision, dedication, sophistication and their gentleness. I was impressed by the concern of South Africans for democracy, that cumbersome system of truly participating in the choices and the institutions which affect one's life. South Africa reminded me in spirit of the late 60's in America except that the South African struggle has been going on for alot longer and at greater risk. I visited South Africa at a time when the political climate was more open than it had been in some time. People could speak more freely. Demonstrations were allowed. But the struggle is far from over. The government has opened up and cracked down again before.

I spent my first half of my visit to South Africa asking people about apartheid. How does it work? What can you do? What can't you do? I spent last part asking people what South Africa will look like after apartheid. If all the apartheid laws were miraculously gone tomorrow, it would mean that South Africa could begin the long process of healing from the scars of many years of oppression.

The press restrictions imposed by the white minority government under the state of emergency make it extremely difficult if not impossible for outsiders to follow developments in South Africa. This exhibition with its approximately 400 unique, postcard-sized artworks presents messages directly from progressive women in South Africa. There is alot they would like us to know about their lives and to know about ours.

I am honored to include a statement by Helen Joseph. I am also honored to include the work by a group of women who are relatives of political prisoners held at maximum security prisons in the Western Cape, including Robben Island. There are expressions from both black and white women about the the futility and cost of apartheid to all the people of South Africa and about the paradoxes and contradictions of this system of institutionalized racism and classism.

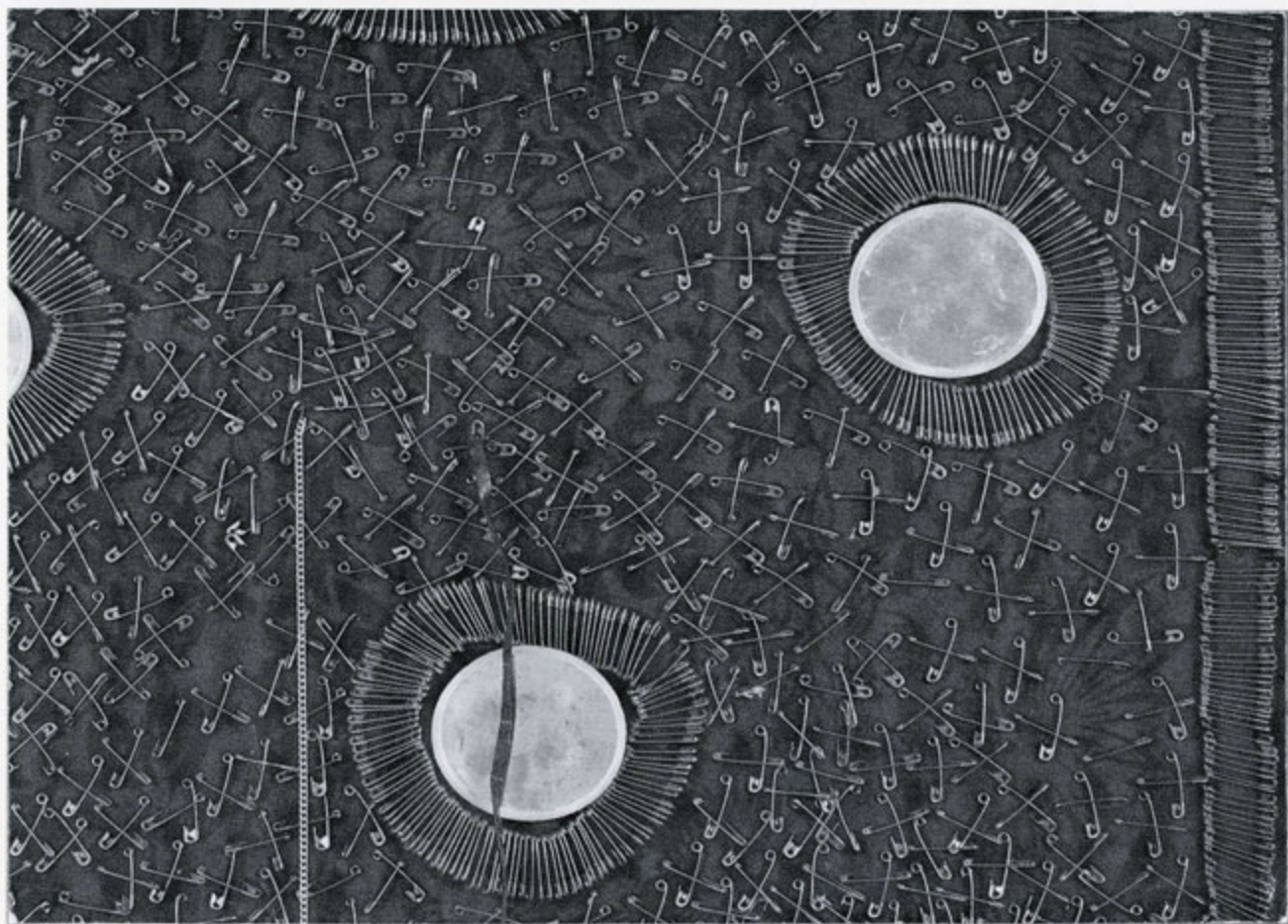
Because of the urgency of the struggle against apartheid, the struggle of women and the development of feminism in South Africa is problematic. The relative privilege of white women is based on the oppression of blacks and specifically domestic workers. Black women are not much in evidence in the art schools due in part to their economic and child rearing responsibilities. As a visitor, it would be possible to be in South Africa and never "see" apartheid. The cities are the domain of whites. Townships are difficult to get to. They are in dips in the landscape and far enough off the road as to make them "invisible." This exhibition is the beginning of an attempt to find out about the lives and aspirations of people who are almost never asked and never heard from. The traditional artwork of the African women includes embroidery, beadwork, and mural painting. Most of this work has been done anonymously. Issues of "high" and "low" art are raised as soon as one begins to consider the art of the women of South Africa.

Between a quarter and a third of the work in this exhibition is by non-white women. A more equitable proportion would be around 80%. This inequity is in itself a reflection of apartheid and its pervasiveness in South Africa. Progressive people go to great lengths to try to circumvent the separations which are imposed by apartheid. The Artists Alliance in Johannesburg and the Visual Artists Group of the Cultural Workers Congress in Cape Town put out the call for entries for South African Mail: Messages From Inside. They organized workshops in progressive schools, black and "colored" townships, and black "homelands" and held regional exhibitions of this show in South Africa. In particular this exhibition could not have happened without Rayda Becker, Shelley Sacks, Helen Sebidi, Penny Siopis, and Sue Williamson.

Janet Goldner
January 1990



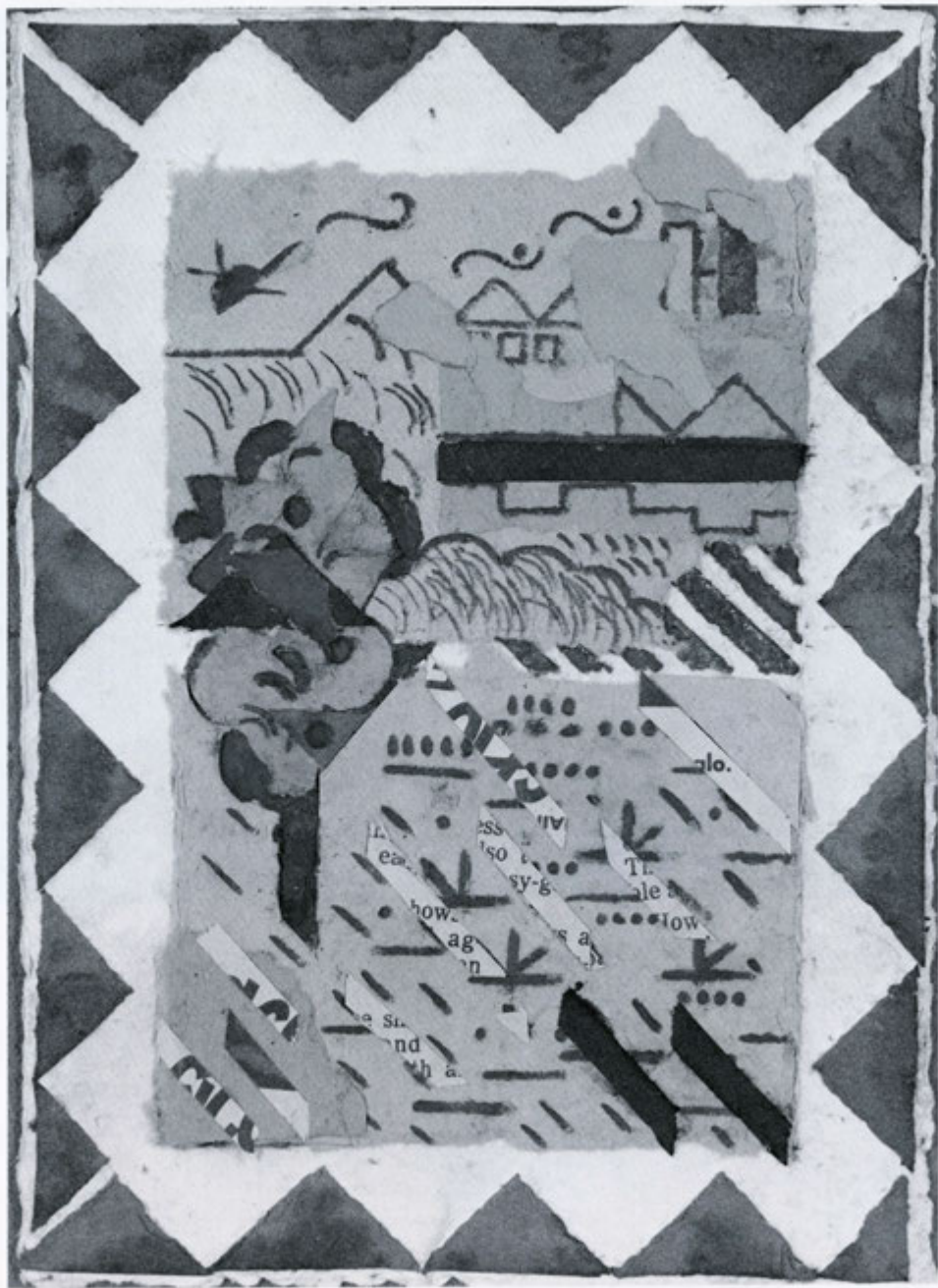
Arlene Amaler-Raviv *Two photographs of a woman who has waited* • collage and photograph on board



Anonymous Tsonga speaker from Gazankulu, Northern Transval • *Nceka-Wrap Around Cloth* • photograph of textile, with safety pins, embroidery • submitted by Rayda Becker



Marlon Arnold *The End Is Where We Start From* • watercolor and gouache on paper



Lynda Moross Ballen *Untitled* • handmade paper collage



Gail Behmann *Gnomes At The Bottom Of The Garden* • happy snap photograph





Bongi Dhlomo For COSAW (Congress of South African Women) • linocut



S.M. Kriel *Nobody Is Innocent* • gouache on paper

BREAKING THE SILENCE

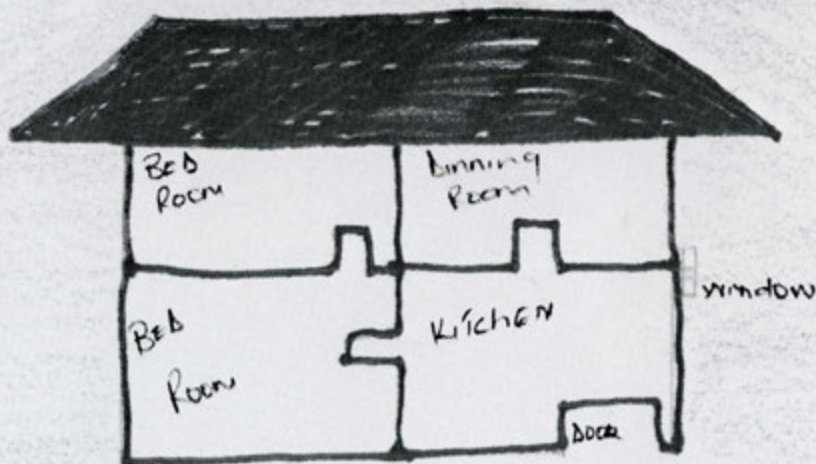


WOMEN SAY OUR MEN MUST STOP BEATING US

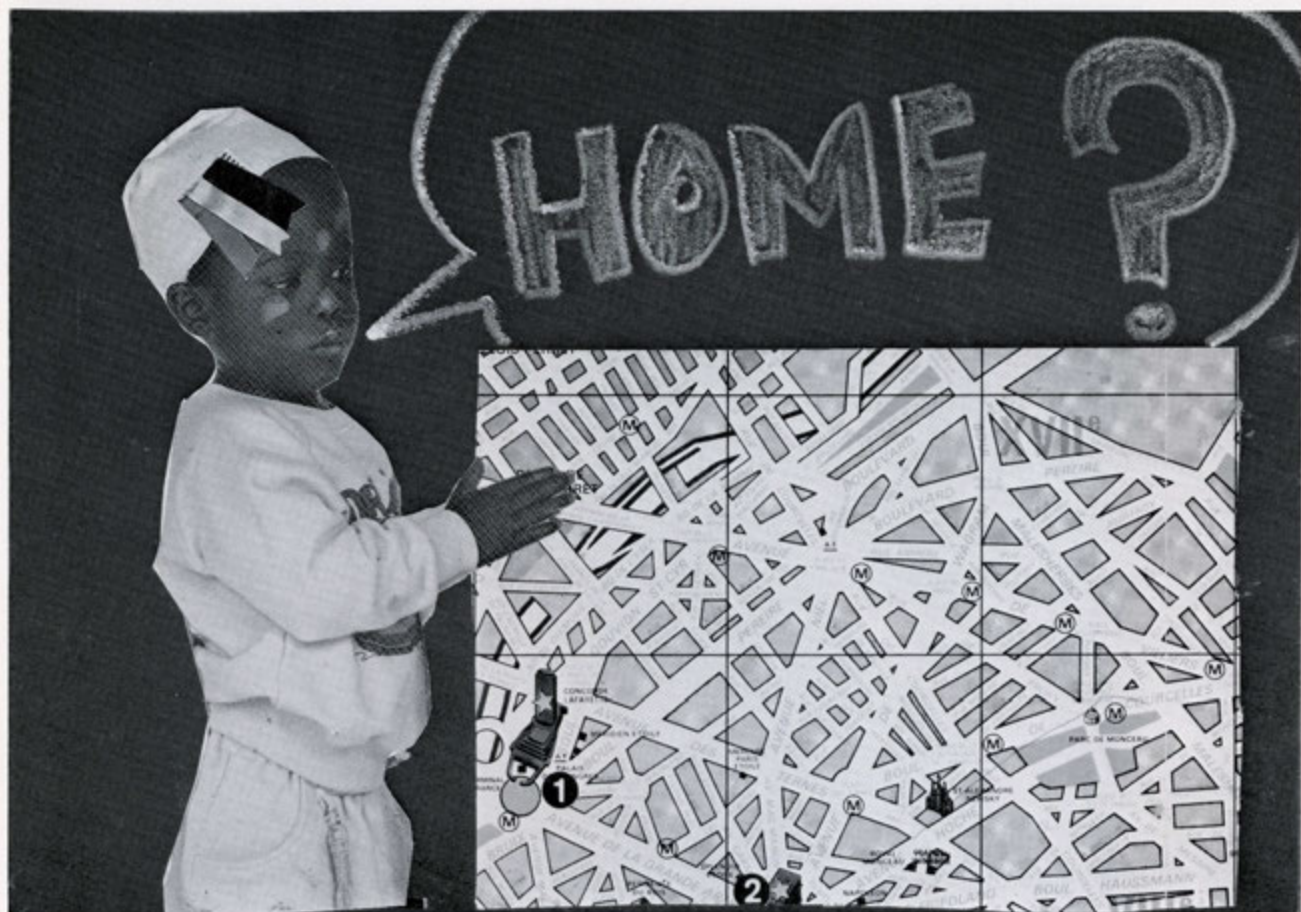


Martha Ndhlela *Mpho-Mphonyana* • collage and painting

28-12-89



I am Octavia Nkosi in Soweto no 1842^A
Zola II this is my mother's house we stay
here all of us we are 10 in this box of
Machise and we suppose to pay R72.00
for the RENT we got the bad STREET
The toilet most of them are broken
they don't want to fix them





Shelley Sacks *The Old Tortoise Woman Is Watching From the Hills* • color xerox of painting



Helen Sebidi *Come Back* • pastel on paper

AFRICAN WOMEN

I am proud about my way of living. My Custom way of living helped me to ^{have} self confidence. I am able to do everything for myself. I used wood for making ^{five} I carried them on my head from the veld.

I helped my parents to plough ^{with} by a span of oxen, not these tractors of today. I hoed, with my mates and later go for harvesting in winter. By this time we slept in the huts in the field. I enjoyed the life very much. Money was unknown or not acquainted. We bought everything with meales and the korn we ploughed ourselves.

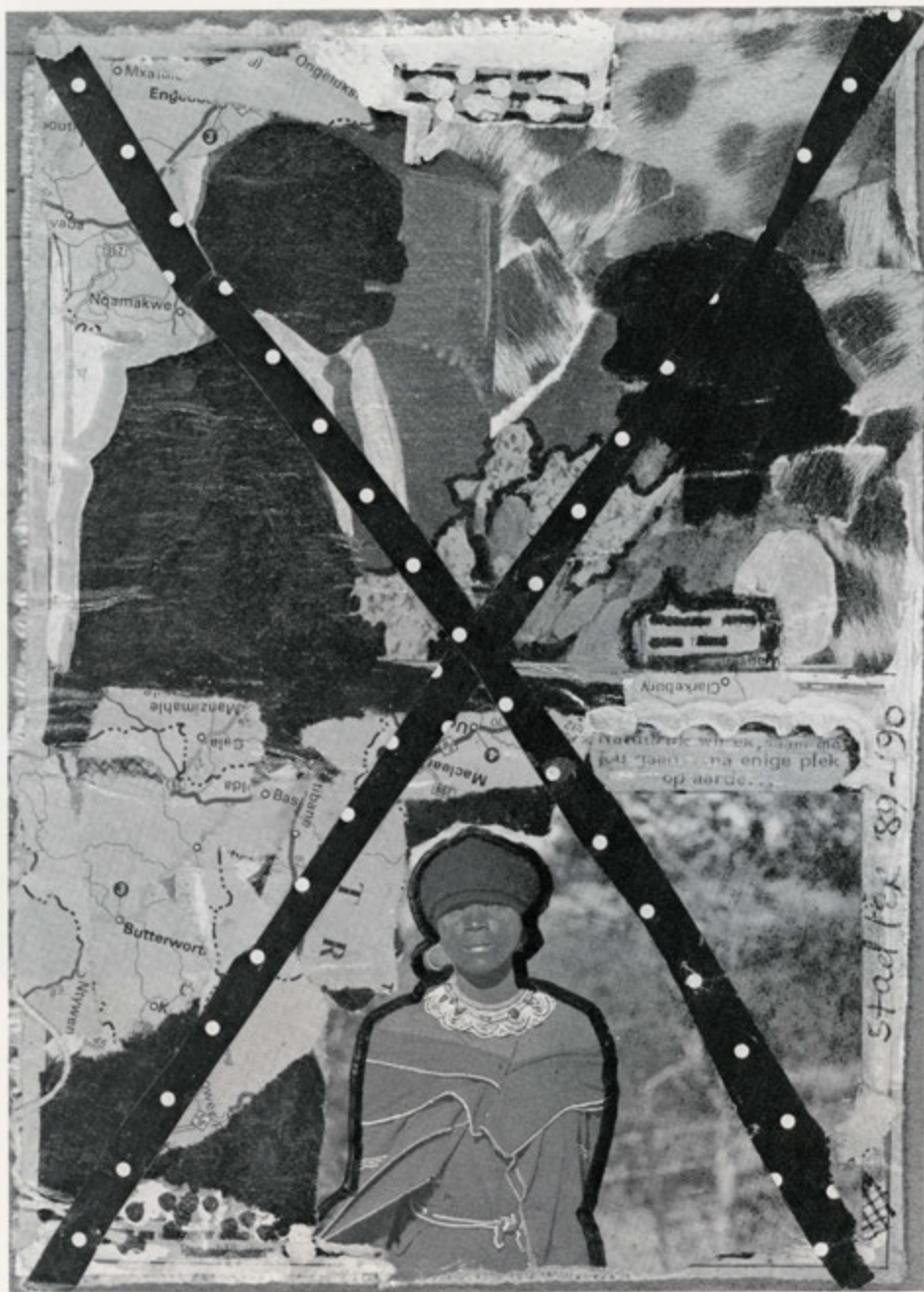
I was happy to smear the floor with dung. The mud houses are very warm at all times; unlike these cold and hot cement houses.



Nimpa Sing *For the Mothers and Children of Africa* (detail) • collage



Penny Slops Official Souvenir • collage on board



Jenny Stadler *Untitled* • mixed media collage on canvas



This photograph of Nyame Goniwe and the two of Ntse grave of her husband, Matthew, were taken on a trip to Cradock in the Eastern Cape in October, 1989. I made the trip to visit Nyame and learn about his life and the situation in Cradock, a traditional area of resistance. Matthew Goniwe was an activist of charisma and great personal power who was killed by unknown persons in June 1985. Nyame herself is an important figure in the community, a head of a social development institute.

Sue Williamson



Ellen Xaba *I was born 1941, Rorkes Drift* • tempera on paper

ARTISTS

Hettie Abrie
Sophia Ainslie
Sukiman Allie
Jenny Altshuler
Arlene Amaler-Raviv
Ilona Anderson
Trudy Anderson
Anonymous
(submitted by Rayda Becker)
Lauryn Arnott
Marion Arnold
Franka Balic
Lynda Moross Ballen
Myrna Baskin
Gail Behrmann
Deborah Bell
Ethel Beyi
Audrey Berman
Esme Berman
Valerie Bester
Giovanna Biallo
Elza Botha
Lien Botha
Candi Breitz
Cisu Brice
Sonja Britz
Greta Burger
Joanne Cachalia
Gillian Vetvet Calvini
Jillian Carman
Mary Carman
Liz Castle
Juliah Charlton
Cheryl
Krishnavgni Chetty
Pauline Claasen
Nadya Cohen
Robyn Yael Cohen
Lita Conradie
Dina Cormick

Crowley House
Anene Cusins
Minnin Daniels
Mary-Jane Darrol
Angeline Davids
Tracey Helena Davis
Shelmerdene de Gersigny
Bongi Dhlomo
Kathy Dennehy
Lindy De Waal
Juleiga Dutoit
Louisa Eriksen-Miller
Christine M Elias
Elize
Pricilla Erasmus
Khanya Price Evans
Gill Evill
Nadine Fels
Gertrude Fester
Bronwen Findlay
Shelia Flynn
Loy Forrest
Laura Fraser
Lola Frost
Natasha Fuller
Yumna Galvaan
Sally Gaule
Ingrid Gaushon
Femma Gavin
Penny Geerds
Sbongile Giqwa
Manya Giffel
Linda Givon
Diana Graham
Josie Grindrod
Karen Harber
Tobela Hashe
Wendy Hay
Doreen Hemp
Bridget Hilton-Barber

Hildagard D. Hlubi
Lee Hobbs
Michelle Hobson
Anne Holliday
Barbi Horowitz
Karen Hurt
Ilan
Innocentia
Marlese Jacobs
Cora Jardine
Michelle Jersky
Patricia Jessup
Sue Jobson
V.N. Jordan
Helen Joseph
M. Kapitza-Meyer
Loren Kaplan
Kefilwe
Deborah Kersch
Zandigile Magibisela Khayelisha
Amanda Khoza
Glory Khumala
Gillian King
Sue Kramer
Isolde Krams
S.M. Kriel
Terry Kurgan
Michele Laaks
E. Lamkwana
Loryn
Annette Loubser
Lucinda
Nomzamo Mabuto
Virginia MacKenny
Miora Maconachie
Bonita Maffei
Masabata Magabatha
Pax Magwaza
Halda Makwape
Margaret Makhoana

Nise Malange
Nandipha Martin
Lillian Mcontsi
Elizabeth Mpholefole Mashiane
Marjorie Mbokoma
Magdeline B. Mdingi
Hilda Mdkwape
Nadia Meer
Shamim Meer
Ilse Meershoek
Marianne Meiser
Nocawe Mhayi
Berenice Michelow
Elske Miles
Kathy Mnguni
Ellen Mnguri
W. Motsette Moeketsi
Toniah Mokgopa
Theodora Mokomele
Lekalakala Molai
Popi Sebidi Monama
Yuyo Mtshobile
Sybille Nagel
Sanna Naidoo
Natalie
Matilda Ndhlela
Sandile Ngayi
Ann Ngesi
Mmakaane Winnie Sebidi
Ngobeni
Yandiswa Ngxiki
Octavia Nkosi
Jacqui Nolte
Notemba
Irene Nyanza
Nandumiso Nyamza
Ons Plek Workshop
Susannah Owen
Andiswa Petersn
Hendrika Pieterse

Faith Loy Plant
Bhunga Pondo
Pricilla
Jane Quin
Willemina Ramalepa
Elizabeth Rankin
F.E. Rankin-Smith
Michelle Raubenheimer
Tal Raviv
Natasha Rightford
Nina Romm
Catherine Ross
Tasia Rosser
Ruth Russell
Milene Rust
Georgia Saad
Shelly Sacks
Sbongile N. Swa Siqwa
Debbie Schlotfeldt
Jenny Schreiner
Helen Sebidi
Mary K. Sehade
Maryiki Sehode
Joy Tseke Sello
Gaby Shapiro
Rosie Shapiro
Yvonne Shapiro
Blessing Shayi
Louisa Sherman
America Sibanyoni
Nimpa Sing
Ann Siopis
Penny Siopis
Grace Smith
Lyn Smuts
Gillian Solomon
Janet Solomon
Anthusa Sotirades
Speak

Gay Spiller
Jenny Stadler
Rukeya Stamea
Anne Stanwix
Aiyshi Stemmet
Stacey Stent
Ashley Stewart
Mariam Stomsmet
Mari Strauss
Irene Tardrew
Rosalee Nyadzani Telela
Nkhanuoa Thulo Mabel Thapeli
Loryn Thomas
Jane Thompson
Alexis Touyz
Jill Trappler
Rose Tsolo
Susan Puleng Tsolo
Mrs Belina Twala
Joyce Twala
Yvonne Van der Heul
Cally Van Der Merwe
Kim Van Deventer
Maggie Van Wezel
Anna Varney
Tanya Ventor
Diane Victor
Annie Vorster
Margaret Vorster
Carolyn Widd
V.C. Wilkinson
Sue Williamson
Ellen Xaba
Gladys Xaba
Linna Xakekile
Anne Liss Youle
Anna Zieminski
Natalie Zimmerman
Zelda Zuur



Josie Grindrod *11th Hour For Omo Saplers* • color xerox collage

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This exhibition is part of the Women's Caucus for Art, 1990 Conference, "Shifting Power", taking place in New York City, February 12-15.

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