



LOLA FROST
GOING SOUTH

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4–30 June 2015 | Somerset House East Wing



The Leverhulme Trust



Capturing the uncapturable

The so-called 'rise' of the global South is perhaps one of the defining features of international politics since the breakdown of the Berlin Wall. If the latter was and continues to be associated with the end of the Cold War, the former is by no means accrued with any specific meaning. We might even argue that the eventness of the event assumed to capture the rise of the South is in itself questionable at most and at the very least perhaps associated with a precarious discursive construction. The South has this tendency to escape meaning, to confound, and at the same time to invite a desire to discursively capture, somehow to contain its varied multiplicity and diversity.

To think of the South in global terms is already to give this term a particular meaning, to locate it in relation to another space. However, it is more than this, for to describe the South in such terms is already to render it different from the North. Rendered in global terms, the South is an arena that is steeped in a particular history where modernity and coloniality collide, where the Enlightenment pretences of the European North come up face to face with a history replete with the violence of domination and subjugation. To refer to the South is already to conjure up this problematic terrain, to show up civilizational discourses that persist to the present day, where the North confers to itself the legislating power to decide the trajectory of the world while doing so armed with the certainty that can only derive from a forgetting of the past.

This historic sense of the South has a powerful spectral presence in any developmental discourse that views the North as presenting a model to be replicated. Yet despite this legacy, strewn as it is with southern casualties, the association of the South with a certain 'lack' persists in knowledge systems that view the North as source of knowledge and moral agency. What Gayatri Spivak refers to as 'epistemological violence' is all too evident in representational practices that assume, once again, in late modernity, the capture of the South in terms that can only have meaning outside the South.

Lola Frost's work manages to somehow capture what I am referring to as the South's spectral presence. The achievement here is not borne of a direct photographic image of the multiplicity of the South's landscapes, but in what remains outside the image, not so easily fathomable. There is no symbolic representation that might be said to provide coherence and recognisability. In place of a political economy of certainty, where 'emergence' is conceived in terms recognisable by the practitioners and defenders of a neoliberal global order, what we find here is what Julia Kristeva would understand as the pre-discursive or the semiotic, where word is not so easily translated to deed and indeed where word has not yet emerged. In Frost's work, we see much that appears as the 'fold', or what might be described as such. What captures the viewer's imagination is that the fold appears interminable, with no specific directionality in past and present, though both temporalities are all too present.

It is exactly in this co-presence of past and present that Lola Frost's work on the South eludes the epistemic violence so reminiscent of discourses that seek to capture the South in terms such as 'rise' or 'emergence'. The folds we see in her work are more semiotic than symbolic, directed not at an outside that might be the South, where the northern gaze is so often, and so violently directed. Rather, the folds might be understood in Deleuzian terms, as directed very much inwards, towards the self as artist and viewer. This is the critical turn, we might say, of Frost's achievement here, her perhaps unintended and unstated desire to capture the uncapturable, except that the uncapturable is not so much the South, but the viewer and artist herself, located as she is, and as we all are, in the South.

Vivienne Jabri

Department of War Studies,
King's College London
April 2015

Aesthetics, Politics, Ethics and Art

Nietzsche insisted that music conveys a form of knowledge beyond words. Art does the same, and, like music, speaks to people who do not share the same tongues. The great mystery is how music and art speak to us and what it is we hear and see. Music and art communicate by conveying emotions and ideas that combine to create an experience that can live beyond the moment and influence how we think about ourselves and the world. Nietzsche further noted that producers of music, art, literature, philosophy, and we might add, more prosaic statements, cannot control what they produce. Their creations speak beyond their intentions. This is true for great works of art and ill-considered, off-the-cuff remarks that go viral.

The problem of creation, communication, and response is further complicated by recognition that artists themselves may not fully know what they intend or succeed in conveying. Not all works of art are produced with any particular message in mind, and those that are have no certainty of being received as intended. Some, like Lola Frost's paintings, are deliberately designed to provoke diverse responses. Viewer responses will depend on their background, education, personality, mood of the moment, and their willingness to engage works of art. The process of creation and response, and the feedback responses can provide to the artist, can trigger a new round of creation and response, making this recursive process endlessly fascinating and utterly unpredictable. At its best, it encourages and sustains creativity among artists and their audiences.

Creation and response is rarely, if ever, random. Artists work in, or respond to, traditions in their respective fields and their cultures at large. Listeners, viewers, and readers do the same. Genre was invented to provide "rules" for creators to communicate with consumers and for consumers to understand them. Artists can produce works that conform to a genre or violate it, all or in part. Consumers aware of the relevant genre and its conventions will connect to a work in a way those unfamiliar

with them cannot. Familiarity with other works in the genre, or in rebellion against it, provide a frame of reference for interpretation. So too do the physical features of performance or display. The medium used to create a work of art, how, if at all, it is framed, where it is displayed, and what else may be next to it or nearby, tell a lot to viewers. Most artists like to make these choices but often they are beyond their control. In this instance, the artist is displaying multiple works that speak to each other and encourage viewers to form a more holistic impression which in turn is likely to influence how they respond to any individual painting. Viewers are further primed by a catalog with two written introductions to the art on display.

Like so much great art, that of Lola Frost is accessible on many different levels. It possesses an immediacy that attracts the eye and provokes emotional responses and reflection. Its creator is steeped in an artistic tradition going back to Romanticism and German Idealism, where art was closely associated with philosophy and ethics. Novalis, Hölderlin, Schelling and Hegel turned to aesthetics in the hope that it could serve as an effective bridge between the worlds of spirit and matter and thus overcome Kantian dualism. Following Kant, they considered artistic genius the truest route to knowledge because it opens up and provides access to realms inaccessible to philosophy and science.

Kant's turn to literature occurred within his broader engagement with problem of judgment, specifically ethical judgment. He describes art as an expression of the "free play" inherent in our nature. For Kant, as for Aristotle, art is education in the most fundamental sense, and something only accessible to ethical beings. Kant was nevertheless committed to renegotiating the relationship of the truths generated by art and science. This required the liberation of the imagination from any rules governing particular art forms. To reveal truths about the world art must go beyond mimesis to *poiesēs*, the act of creation itself. Despite their many differences, Hölderlin, Hegel and Nietzsche follow Kant in their recognition of the force of art in human affairs. They do not envisage writing, style, performance, pictorial images and rhythm as *recherché* academic concerns, but as fundamental concerns of philosophy. Art and music exist beyond the world of concepts, although they can be informed by them and shape them in turn. They speak to us directly and can lead us to new understandings of the world rather than serving to express known realities.

Romanticism made artistic creation the vehicle of self-discovery, and the artist the model human being. In 1788, Friedrich Schiller published "Die Götter Griechenlands" [The Gods of Greece], which quickly become one of his most influential poems. It contrasted the allegedly happy, harmonious and beautiful world of the Greeks with the somber, materialist and anti-creative spirit of the present day. In this poem and other writings Schiller propounded the idea of self-realization through the aesthetic; life and form must come together in the beauty of the living form [*lebende Gestalt*]. "If man is ever to solve the problem of politics in practice," he wrote, "he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom." In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel made a similar plea: "One has tried for so long to apply mathematics to music and painting; now try it the other way around." For both writers, and German idealists more generally, the relationship of the subject to the world is better mediated by feelings than concepts.

Lola Frost paints in this tradition. She is deeply engaged in politics, which she regards as a vehicle for and restraint on ethical and creative life. She understands the strong connection between creativity and ethics, and believes, like many of us, that works of art have the potential to make us more responsive and committed to ethical life. Commitments to ethics have important political implications. Her art teaches no ethical principles or political positions, but aspires by the experience it provides to make us reflect upon and interrogate our own principles and positions – and broader understandings of ourselves and the world.

Richard Ned Lebow

Department of War Studies,
King's College London
April 2015

Artist's Statement

Going South

The phrase 'going south' has at times been colloquially figured in the North, as going down under, down on, cashing out, markets headed south, towards a worse position.... off the map. This *Going South* exhibition challenges such stereotypes and inaugurates a project which references landscapes from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and Chile. This exhibition consists of a set of paintings whose metaphors speak to a radiant and subversive nether world.

Going South is the concluding event of my Leverhulme Artist's Residency at King's College London. Throughout this residency I have engaged with students and scholars in the Department of War Studies on the productive possibilities of aesthetic risk as a riposte to the ubiquity of risk management values in contemporary life and war. In these collaborative talks I have explored how the productively risky practice of creative aesthetic free play, for audiences and artists, invites critical reflection. Such 'free play' I have argued is provoked by the risky and multiple interactions between sense, cognition, perception, affect, emotion and our cultural expectations and unconscious discursive social constructions that constitute our aesthetic experience of art.

I have come to understand that the life affirming possibilities of creative aesthetic free play for both artists and viewers are the performance of a particular kind of ethicality. These insights have enabled me to argue for the distinctiveness and social value of aesthetic experience in art and also why such experience is necessarily performative, indirect and not available to unambiguous representation. Seen from this perspective, my painting practice mobilises 'free play' by deploying a metaphorical and dynamic 'grammar' that is not only creatively risky to realise, but opens up, for example, oppositional moments of: self-disaggregation and agency; unconscious drive and formal articulation; visual dilation and spatial precision. Such dynamic oppositions stack up and fold in on one another, delivering a sense of the unspeakable nature of aesthetic experience.

This Going South project engages a trajectory from Romantic aesthetics to Deleuzian becomings, all of which offer versions of the unspeakable and slippery nature of aesthetic experience. This exhibition folds photographic events that occurred in the Southern landscapes into an internal or psychically oriented painting practice, one that signposts this aesthetic tradition through its titles and methods. Yet what is most surprising and delightful for me, is how these paintings open up precarious, subversive and political spaces in which viewers are invited to take the risk of creative interpretation, perhaps finding themselves down 'where the Iguanas play' and attuning to a different world order.

Thanks to the Leverhulme Trust and to all those members of King's College London who have made this residency and exhibition possible.

Lola Frost
April 2015

1

Streaming

Oil on linen
117 x 150 cm
2014



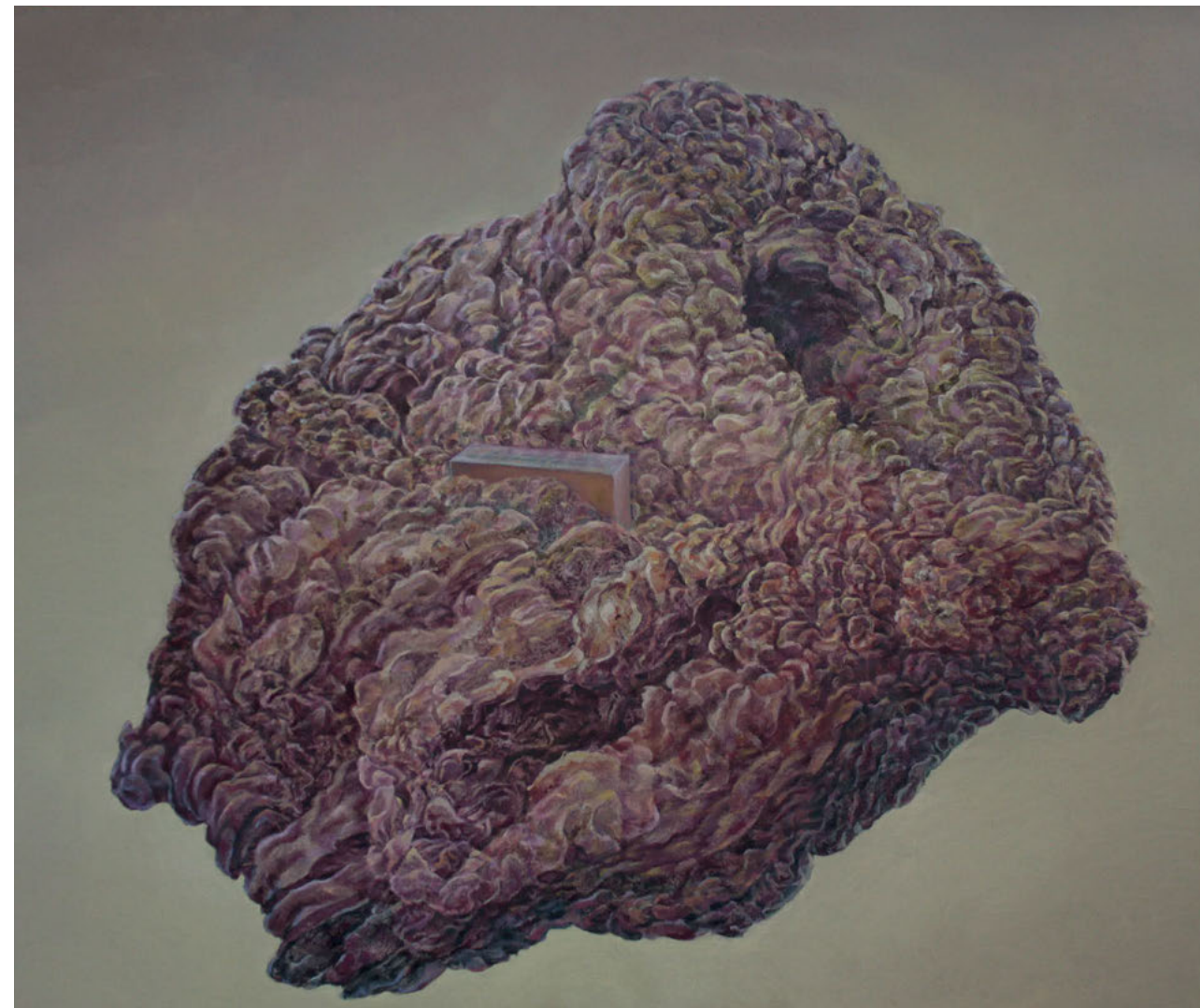
2

Off the map

Oil on linen

94 x 78 cm

2015



3

Going South

Oil on linen

94 x 78 cm

2015



4

The Edge of the Skirt of the World

Oil on linen
104 x 130 cm
2014



5

Taking Risks

Oil on linen
117 x 124 cm
2014



6

The Opening

Oil on linen

73 x 77 cm

2015



7

Ruckenfigure

Oil on linen

64 x 71 cm

2013



8

The Dance
Oil on linen
110 x 124 cm
2013



9

Down South

Oil on linen

85 x 71 cm

2015



10

Down Under

Oil on linen

80 x 48 cm

2014



11

From Here to There

Oil on linen

66 x 60 cm

2015



12

Wild Being

Oil on linen
101 x 70 cm
2015



13

Over the Edge

Oil on linen

92 x 63 cm

2015



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CURRICULUM VITAE Dr Lola Frost

Personal Information

Nationality South African and British
Date of birth 13 March 1950

Qualifications

PhD Visual Arts, Goldsmiths College,
University of London, United Kingdom, 2007

MFA Painting, Rhodes University, South Africa,
1985

BA Graphic Art, University of Stellenbosch,
South Africa, 1971

Teaching Posts

Visiting lecturer, Historical Context of Art
and Design, Working Men's College, London,
2007 – 2012

Part time Art Theory Senior Lecturer, Fine Art
Department, Technikon Natal, 1995 – 2002

Art History and Art Theory lecturer, Fine Art
Department, Technikon Natal, 1990 – 1995

Drawing Tutor, Architecture Department,
University of Natal, 1987 – 1989

Art History Lecturer, Fine Art Department,
Rhodes University, 1986

Exhibitions

Solo

Going South. Somerset House East Wing,
King's College London, 2015

Taking Risks. Somerset House East Wing,
King's College London, 2014

Coming Alive. Frameless Gallery, London, 2013

PhD Degree Show. Goldsmiths College, Visual Art
Department, University of London, 2007

Keynes College Art Gallery. University of Kent at
Canterbury. 2000

NSA Gallery. Durban, 1996

Rhodes University Art School Gallery.
Grahamstown, 1996

Technikon Natal Art Gallery. Durban, 1993

Thompson Gallery. Johannesburg, 1993

Natal Society of the Arts. Durban, 1987

1820 Settlers Museum. Grahamstown, 1981

Group

LGBT Art Trail. Keynes College, University of Kent at Canterbury. 2015

1910–2010: *From Pierneef to Gugulective*. Iziko South African National Gallery. Cape Town, 2010

Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. London, 1997

Cape Town Triennale. Cape Town, 1991

Sud del Mundo. Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1990

Collections

Durban Art Gallery
Johannesburg Art Gallery
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg
King George V Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth
Newcastle Carnegie Art Gallery, Kwa-Zulu Natal
Rhodes University Alumni Collection
University of Stellenbosch Collection
University of Natal Collection

Commissions

Portrait of Archbishop Hurley: Vice Chancellor of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1995

Portrait of Tex Harris: US Consul, 1992

Publications

'Compassion as Risk' in *The Politics of Compassion*. eds. Michael Ure and Mervyn Frost, Routledge, London, 2014.

Aesthetics and Politics. Global Society, Vol.24, No3, Routledge, London. July 2010.

Negativity in Painting, PhD thesis, Senate House Library, University of London. London 2007
Jeremy Wafer Artist's Book. David Krut Publishing. Johannesburg 2001.

Checking one another's credentials in Grey Areas: Representation, Identity and Politics in Contemporary South Africa. eds. Brenda Atkinson and Candice Breitz, Chalkham Hill Press. Johannesburg, 1999.

Papers and Public Lectures

Going South: traversal and attunement in painting. Spaces of Attunement: Life, Matter and the Dance of Encounters. Cardiff University. 30 March 2015.

The Sublime South: feminist identities and aesthetic reflexivity in contemporary South African art. ISA Presidential Panel: Global IR and regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Feminist IR Today. New Orleans. 19 February 2015.

Risk, Sexuality and Politics: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Marysia Zalewski, Department of War Studies, King's College London. 11 February 2015.

Labial Politics: risk, sexuality and politics in art. LGBT Art trail, Keynes College, University of Kent at Canterbury. 9 February 2015.

Underrating Risks? Piano performance by Gareth Owen of Schubert's Sonata in a minor D784 and

Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Ned Lebow, Department of Music, King's College London. 3 December 2014.

Drones, Ethics, Aesthetics and Risk. Artist in Residence and panel discussion for Technological Innovation and Challenges to International Law. Safra Lecture Theatre, King's College London. 24 November 2014.

Cybernetic Risk and Aesthetic Free Play: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Prof Thomas Rid. Department of War Studies, King's College London. 3 November 2014.

Aesthetic Risk and Security Risks: Leverhulme Artist in Residence collaboration with Dr Claudia Aradau. Somerset House East Wing, King's College London. 22 October 2014.

Whose Sublime: Aesthetics and the International. What does the aesthetic want from us and IR? BISA Art & Politics Working Group Workshop. Warwick University. 1 September 2014.

Aesthetic Free Play and Becoming. Toward New Global Imaginaries: Feminist Thinking on Creativity and Imagination as Social Resources. ISA Conference, Montreal, Canada, March 2011 and also at the Critical Political Theory Conference, Essex University, June 2011.

Free Play and Becoming. Lecture at the Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town, South Africa. 2011.

The Political Life of Art. Symposium: Aesthetics and Politics, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, June 2010.

Compassion and Politics. Joint paper at workshop on Compassion and Politics. Monash University, Prato, Italy. 2009.

Aesthetics and Politics. Workshop for Aesthetics and International Relations: Exploring the Frontiers of Visual and Cultural Politics. Birmingham University, UK. 2009.

Art's Double Politics. Visual and Performing Arts Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2009.

Art and the Political. 'Challenge' Workshop, Luberon, France, 2008.

Residencies

Leverhulme Artist in Residence, War Studies, King's College London, September 2014 to June 2015.

Dr Lola Frost



Leverhulme Kings College London Artist in Residence 2014–15

Dr Lola Frost, artist/scholar lives in London. Her career as an artist spanning 30 years has included exhibiting in South Africa and in the UK. Her work is included in several major public collections in her native South Africa. Initially this work registered the impact of civil unrest, apartheid, race and gender. Since relocating to the UK in 2002, her feminist painting practice might be characterised as risky and sublime. Her academic career as a senior lecturer in South Africa and part-time tutor in London has involved the teaching of art history and art theory. Since the completion of her PhD at Goldsmiths College in 2007 she has expanded her engagement with the field of aesthetics, writing on aesthetics, politics, ethics and aesthetic risk in art.

For more information please go to **www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/warstudies/people/lolafrost/index.aspx**

www.lolafrost.net

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Design by Susen Vural Design
www.susenvural.com

Print by Kube Print
www.kubeprint.co.uk

