

Robert Hamblin Artist

[images@roberthamblin.com](mailto:images@roberthamblin.com)



Robert Hamblin (1969) is an artist, father and a gender activist born in Johannesburg South Africa. He lives and works in Cape Town. Hamblin's paintings and photographic works have been exhibited in South Africa and internationally. The artist has received critical acclaim for his work that contribute to debates around body politics in a post-apartheid regime era.

Hamblin's work is concerned with issues of queer masculinity as a transgender person. He transitioned from queer female in apartheid era South Africa to transgender male after the fall of the apartheid government. His perspectives of coming into white maleness in such a critical time is visited in his work.

He has no tertiary education other than his experiences in Apartheid era as a photojournalist, his subsequent work in South African theatre as a publicity photographer and thereafter twenty years of mentorship with 1952 Académie Ranson abstract painter Nel Erasmus.

Erasmus continually encouraged him to abandon photography in favour of the freedom of paint. This persuasion took twenty years only materialising in 2020.

During the twenty years he produced several bodies of fine art photography. His last body of photographic work was a seven year project with black transgender sex workers and culminated in a large solo exhibition at The Iziko South African National Gallery in Cape Town.

In the three following years he dedicated himself to writing a commissioned memoir to be published this year in June.

"Writing a memoir is a very exposing exercise. One is confronted with the tenuous nature of memory and truth and forced to choose a single story line in one's life that will feel succinct to a reader. This is a jarring process that made me long for the dualities that are able to exist in visual art practice. I landed in a cul de sac with my photography practice though. I found myself in the year of isolation - Covid 19."

In South Africa's first major lockdown he started painting with inks belonging to his first grader daughter and experimenting with the effects of bleach on different kinds of inks. All of them had varying degrees of resilience to the oxidation and separation which the bleach imposes between the pigments and solubles of the inks.

"Every work started out as a drawing of myself. I tried to be compassionate in my attempts to understand my socially contested body. But the first year of work all seemed like I was just walking on a dangerously thin line with paper. I would create and destroy works until the paper could only barely hold the argument between the bleach and the ink. After completing the first body portrait that mirrored me in life like size, I picked it up and hung it over my arms to carry to a room where I could seal and light fix it. I looked down and saw the new fragility of the previously stiff and resistant Fabriano paper. The bodily interpretation of myself lay inside of this thin paper, the head slumped backwards over my wrist. The paper became another body that I needed to put down carefully so that it would not be damaged. I had created a system that compromised the paper and this facsimile of myself. I was deeply moved by what was in my arms. For the first time in my life it felt like the questions about my body and its meaning within the systems we live in as humans, had synchronised with my art practice.

## Career

1. Author 2021 - Publication of Robert. Queer & Crooked Memoir

2. Represented Fine Artist 1998 - 2021

3. Current Representation

- Francesca de Medici - Rome
- Various associations - South Africa

4. Transgender Advocacy 2016 - 2020

Iranti Org 2016 - 2021

- Chairperson

- Deputy Chairperson
- Board of Directors 2

#### Gender Dynamix Org 2007-2010

- Deputy Director
- Advocacy Manager
- Media Liaison
- Co - Founder

#### 5. Commercial photographer 1991 - 2010

- Various magazine and television clientele

#### 6. Newspaper editorial photographer

- Beeld Newspaper 1987 -1988
- Transvaler Newspaper 1988 -1989
- Rapport Newspaper 1989 -1991

#### 7. Matriculated

- Hoërskool Alberton 1986

#### 8. Freelance darkroom assistant and photographer

#### Exhibitions

##### 2021 Ink Paintings

- Solo Legacy of Men - 99 Loop Gallery, Cape Town, October 2021
- Group Three Individuals - Dawid Ras Gallery, Johannesburg, August 2021
- Group Winter Exhibition - 99 Loop Gallery, Cape Town, July 2021
- Solo Queer Cartographies - Nel Gallery, Johannesburg, June 2021

##### 2017 Photography, installation & performance

- Solo interseXion - Lizamore & Associates Johannesburg
- Solo interseXion - University of Free State Bloemfontein
- Solo interseXion - Iziko South African National Art Gallery Cape Town
- Solo The Colony - Art Museum of University of Stellenbosch

##### 2011 – 2016 Photography, installation & performance

- Group interseXion - The District Six Museum Homecoming Centre
- Group Break the Spell - Gallery University of Stellenbosch Cape Town
- Group Break the Spell - Oude Libertas Gallery Stellenbosch
- Group Daughter Language - Investec Cape Town Art Fair Erdmann Contemporary
- Solo Daughter Language - Lizamore & Associates Johannesburg
- Solo Threshold - International Young Photographers Festival South Korea

- Solo The Colony - University of Johannesburg Gallery
- Group Do It! International Michaelis Galleries Cape Town
- Group Dreams to Reality - Erdmann Contemporary Cape Town
- Group Performing Wo/Man - University of Johannesburg Art Gallery
- Group Beyond the Beach - Casa Labia Gallery Cape Town
- Group Nomad Bodies - Belgium, Antwerp University College of Artesis, Royal Academy of Fine Arts
- Solo “..When You’re Feeling Like a Lady..” - National arts festival Klein Karoo, South Africa
- Solo “..When You’re Feeling Like a Lady..” - Centre African Studies Gallery, African Gender Institute University of Cape Town
- Launch “..When You’re Feeling Like a Lady..” SWEAT\* Org (\*sex worker education advocacy task force)
- Group Threshold - FNB Johannesburg Art Fair Lizamore & Associates
- Solo The Colony - Aardklop National arts festival, South Africa  
1991 – 2010 Photography
- Group Swallow Your Pride - Blank Projects Gallery Cape Town
- Group Legacy of Men - National Art Gallery Johannesburg
- Film Festival Father - Out in Africa Film Festival
- Film Festival Father - Hamburg LGBT Film Festival
- Solo The Binary Farm - National arts festival Klein Karoo, South Africa
- Solo The Binary Farm - Aardklop National arts festival, South Africa
- Group Face to Face, The Binary Farm - University of Johannesburg Art Gallery
- Solo Fellowship The Inner Room - Houston Centre Photography, Texas USA
- Solo The Inner Room - University of Johannesburg Art Gallery
- Group Time Shift - Lizamore & Associates Johannesburg
- Solo The Post Xtian - Open Window Art Academy Pretoria, South Africa
- Solo The Post Xtian - National arts festival Klein Karoo South Africa
- Solo Millennium Man - Aardklop National arts festival, South Africa
- Solo Millennium Man - Klein Karoo National Arts Festival
- In a Different Light - Sandra Prinsloo Studios

## Awards & Collections

### Awards

- Houston Centre for Photography Fellowship - The Inner Room
- Kanna Award nomination SA Klein Karoo National Arts Festival - “when you feeling like a lady

### Collections

- University of Johannesburg
- Rand Merchant Bank,
- Sasol Corporate Collection
- Private Collectors