



**James de Villiers**

# About James de Villiers

James de Villiers is a visual artist based in Kensington, Johannesburg. Born 1954 in Pietermaritzburg, he has resided in Johannesburg since 1980.

He has participated in group shows in South Africa, one group exhibition, “Transmigrations” in both the USA and Mexico and has had several solo exhibitions. Mainly painting in oils, he has artworks in private and corporate collections in South Africa as well as in the USA, England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France, Germany, Austria and elsewhere.

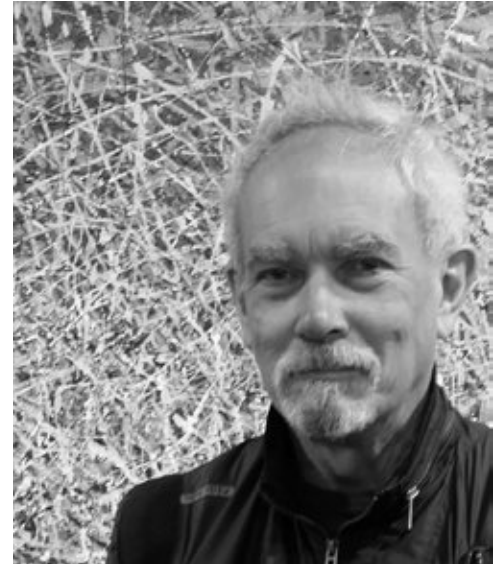
De Villiers has been mainly self-taught but has had periods of study at UNISA and the Bloemfontein Technikon Art School in the 1970s. Most of his technical skills he attributes to learning in the printing, theatre, advertising, graphic design and retail display industries. He also learned a great deal from his mother who was a part time artist, the late Pietermaritzburg artist and teacher Susan Pontin and his friend, sculptor Frank Brandl.

In the 1990s de Villiers organised numerous art exhibitions and functions in the various edgy fringe galleries he ran, starting from the temporary gallery spaces he arranged for the Fringe of the Africanus Biennale in 1995 to the three versions of Gallery111 in the Bez Valley and Kensington suburbs of Johannesburg, a phase which ended in 2004. In between those spaces there were also the Small Spaces Gallery at Carfax, Newtown and the De Villiers Gallery in Fairview both also in Johannesburg.

He subsequently decided to concentrate more on his own art production while still composing soundscapes, editing and producing poetry CDs for various poets and poetry groups and working with experimental musicians with whom he had become involved with while running his galleries.

He worked concurrent to all these art activities as a news graphic artist for a business newspaper from 1996 to September 2014 when he decided to pursue art on a full time basis.

At present, de Villiers is working on both abstract and realist works executed in acrylic and oil as well as hand manipulated silk-screen prints on paper and canvas. He is also working on mixed media drawings.



# Artist Statement

My work is concerned with change, decay, destruction and the passage of time. It also specifically deals with the vulnerability and recovery of nature. At present my paintings, though stylistically different from much of the past realist works, still derive from the same themes. I have found I prefer nowadays to be more energetic and spontaneous. I have also experimented with using pastels, a medium whose unique qualities I only discovered later in my artistic career. So from about 2010 onwards, pastels feature prominently along with powdered pigment and layering with varnish. I also started using acrylics for abstract work as well. I am presently working simultaneously in both abstract and realist modes as I find moving from one mode to the other keeps my attention focused and my vision fresh. Each mode or style of art making enables me to express myself in suitable ways, often sparking off a chain reaction of ideas which produces much synergy.

However, the artwork included in this presentation are only abstracts, mostly recently painted and available for exhibition.

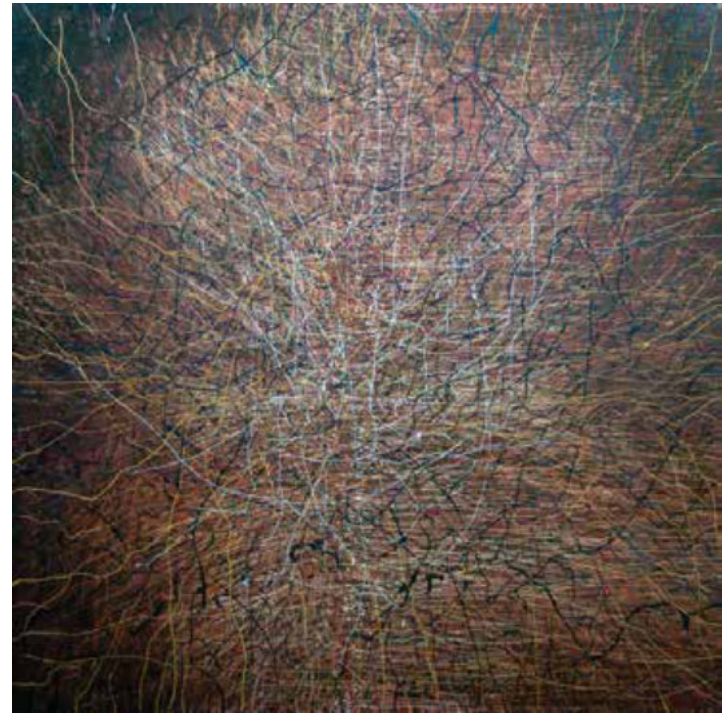
A large part of my work comes directly from the study of Gericault's "The Raft of the Medusa" and the experience of working in my garden, cutting and trimming vegetation. I was studying the Gericault painting and found the original plans for the actual raft online and built a scale model. I was fascinated by the grid, and the way a grid was used as a life support mechanism and what that raft can represent conceptually. It led me to think of birds' nests and at that time I happened to be doing a lot of trimming in the garden, ending up with piles of twigs and branches.

The chaotic grid patterns that the branches formed, the idea of man shaping nature to conform to aesthetic ideals, the wastage and the whole question of ecology soon began to inform my art making. The grids also reminded me of maps and the chaos of the layering of history on the landscape through wars and disasters. My study of World War 1 trench maps and comparisons with present day terrain is used extensively in a number of interpretive works.

My abiding interest in science, namely particle physics and the Large Hadron Collider situated at CERN in Switzerland, has been lately brought to bear on my inspiration for highly energetic and complex artworks. Many of the ideas behind my present work are derived from a fascination with energy fields and particles and how the microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm. These ideas have been further intergrated with the branches and grid concepts.

My major influences include William Blake, Gerhard Richter, Anselm Kiefer, Christian Boltanski, Marc Rothko, Brice Marden, Turner, Constable and many others too numerous to mention. After a lifetime of creativity one's references increase daily. One of my favourite art commentators/critics is Lucy R Lippard whose book, *Overlay*, has had a profound influence on how I approach art.

In short, my main themes are derived from a study of military, art and social history, an interest in archaeology, science and music.



Above: Natural Networks. Oil on canvas. 180 x 180 cm

Left: The Antihydrogen Trap. Oil on canvas. 152 x 122 cm.

Below: Particle Accelerator #1. Oil on canvas. 2m x 3m.





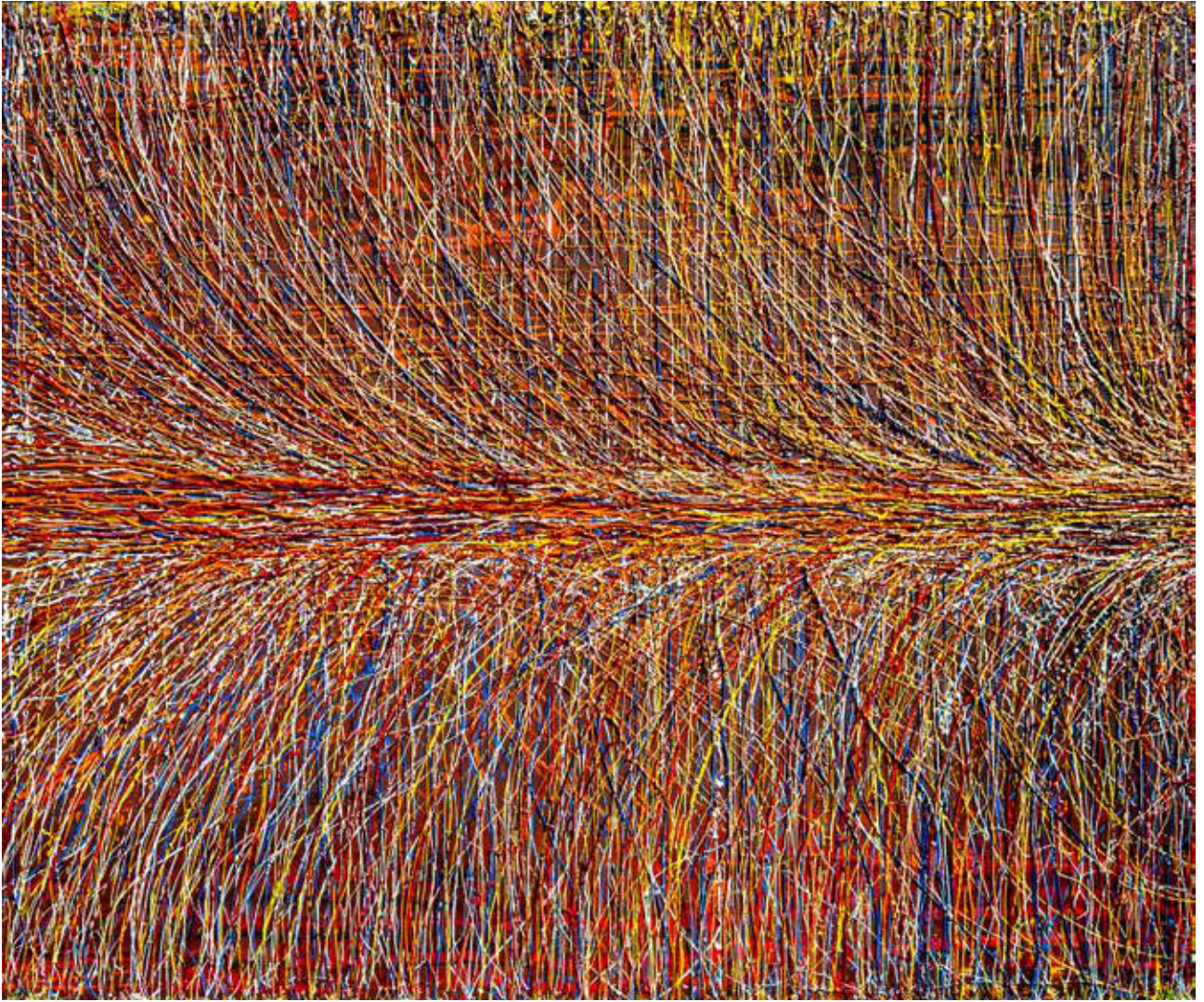
*Laniakeal. Oil on canvas. 61 x 91cm.*



*Leaves and Branches. Acrylic on canvas. 120 x 150 cm*



*Winter Wind. Acrylic on canvas. 120 x 150 cm*



*Particle Accelerator #2. Oil on canvas. 150 x 180cm. SOLD*



*Horizon Line. Oil on canvas. 120 x 150 cm*



*Garden. Oil on canvas. 120 x 150 cm*



*A view of Nest. Oil on canvas. 2m x 3m. Sold. Gallery on 6th. Parkhurst, Johannesburg.*

# James de Villiers CV

2018 July: Silkscreen prints exhibited at Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg with White River Gallery

2018 July: Group show at White River Gallery, Mpumumlanga, titled "Na die Maal" (After the Meal)

2018 May onwards: paintings exhibited at StateoftheART Gallery, Cape Town

2018 April onwards. Group exhibition at The Art of Silver Gallery in Cullinan

2017 11 Feb-12 March "Untitled" group exhibition at the Moor Gallery Franschhoek

2017 Jan 7- Feb 5 "Genre" group exhibition at the Moor Gallery Franschhoek

2016 "Ephemeral Pleasures" group exhibition at the Moor Gallery Franschhoek

2016 August- Oct: "Muse Montage" group exhibition at Eclectica Design and Art

2016 July. A pastel painting titled "After the Battle" accepted by the Delville Wood Memorial Museum in the Somme, France

2016 July 7-23 Group exhibition Scapes: Rhythms of an environment at Stateof theART Gallery, Cape Town

2016 June: Ongoing group exhibition at Halifax Art Gallery in Parkhurst, Johannesburg

2016 May 5: Optical Diversions, a group exhibition at Eclectica Design and Art Gallery, Cape Town

2016 January: Executed a commission to do a series of skies for a client of The Gavin Project.

2015 Exhibited paintings at Gavin Project, Arts on Main, Maboneng, Johannesburg.

2015 September. Rogue Art 1 group exhibition at Carfax, Johannesburg

2015 July. Studio exhibition at Carfax to open my studio,

2013 October. Solo exhibition: "Decay Transfigured" at Gallery on 6th in Parkhurst, Johannesburg.

2013 Group show at Gallery on 6th in Parkhurst, Johannesburg.

2011 Exhibited in group show "Altered Pieces" at the Thompson Gallery

2010 March: Solo exhibition "Earth & Sky" at Right on the Rim at Arts on Main in Johannesburg.

2009 Participated in GTZ International Photographic workshop and exhibition,  
"Diversity, the impulse for development".

2009 "War and Hate" group exhibition at Right on the Rim, Arts on Main, Johannesburg



2006 "Nature Morte" a solo exhibition at the Gordart gallery in Melville, Johannesburg

2005 March 11 - 18: Solo exhibition "Earth & Sky" at the Gerard Sekoto Gallery, Alliance Francaise, Johannesburg

2005 January 16 - February 9: Exhibition "Forty Hand painted Pictures" at Gordart Gallery

2004 Exhibited on group show at Gordart Gallery, Melville "For the Record/Off the Record". Organised and performed in "Mayday Experimental music evening" at Gordart.

2004 Exhibited in Christmas Miniature show Gordart Gallery

1999 Participated in group exhibition touring South Africa, Mexico and USA, "Transmigrations 1999"

1998 Participated in group show, "Buttons" at the Civic Gallery, Johannesburg

1997 Participated as an artist in Jahn Beukes' "Group Spiral" multimedia music production

1996 "Landscapes" at Gallery Palette, Pretoria Art Gallery with Pieter Swanepoel

1995 "Curators Choice" group exhibition, Market Gallery, Johannesburg

1994 "Biting The Ballot", Market Gallery, Johannesburg

1994 Group Show at the ICA, Johannesburg

1993 Solo exhibition at the Long Gallery, SA Association of Art (AVA) Gallery, Cape Town

1993 Johannesburg Corporate Art, a group show at the Artists Co-Operative, Midrand

1993 Group Show, Newtown Galleries , Johannesburg

1993 Alternative Photographic Print Workshop, University Witwatersrand and the ICA with Bob Cnoops

1993 "Drawing with light", group show, ICA, Johannesburg

1993 Group Show, Anti-Gravity Gallery, Rosebank, Johannesburg

1992 Usable Art, group exhibition Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Johannesburg

1992 Exhibition/demonstration at the annual South African Art Historians Conference, UNISA, Pretoria

1992 101 Miniatures, group exhibition ICA, Johannesburg

1992 "Made in August" group exhibition at the Newtown Galleries, Johannesburg

1991 Kempton Park (now known as Ekuhurleni) Art Competition, overall and category winner.

1985 First Solo exhibition at the Market Gallery, Johannesburg

# Contact information

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Flood. Oil on canvas. 150 x 120 cm

