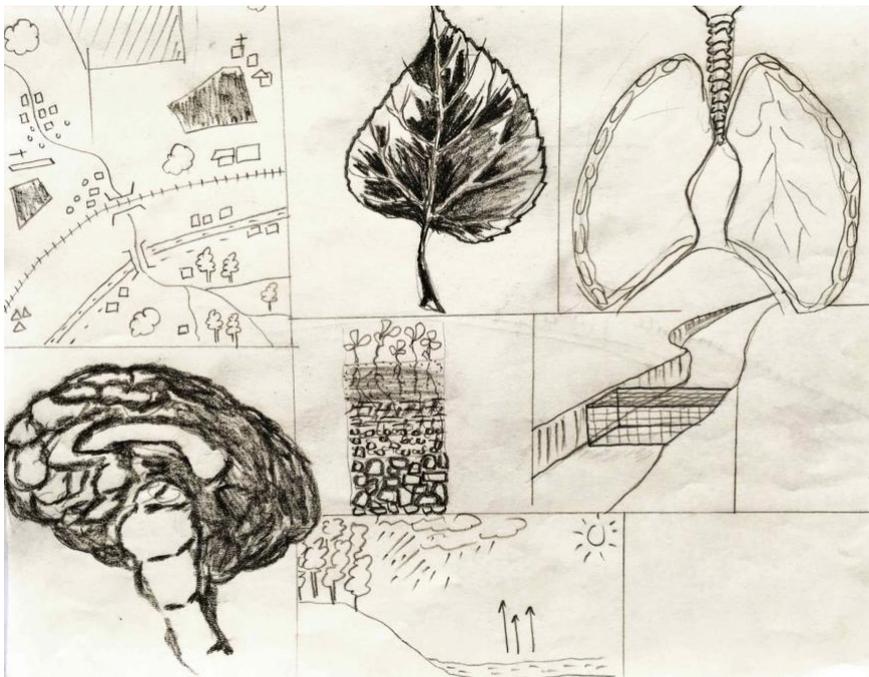




Site Visit, 2020 © Jackie Karuti

Jackie Karuti constructs her practice in the in-between space of stillness and movement. It is within these moments of stillness that we can begin to think about how to move, how fast we will travel, where we will go and whether we choose to journey individually, collectively or a combination of both. Often assembling numerous drawings, objects and sometimes her body, she moves through complex conceptual territory, but never quite reveals the final destination. She allows others to join her movement in the tools she provides, but does not force you to utilize them.



Detail of a Failed Exam, 2018 © Jackie Karuti

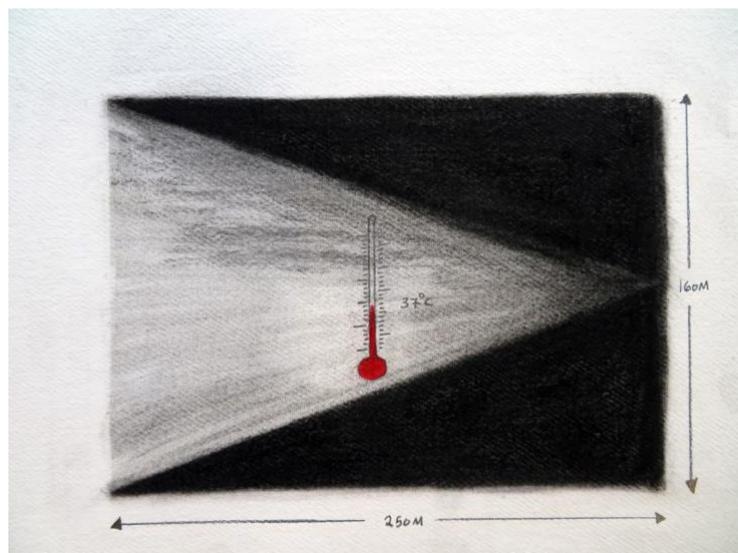
In one of her preparatory drawings, 'Detail of a Failed Exam' (2018), Karuti draws on imagery used in books to illustrate science or geography questions and the meticulous yet playful experiments and observations undertaken to arrive at the answers. In his text, *In the Den of the Alchemist*, Souleymane Bachir Diagne believes that the space where these discoveries take place should be inclusive, proposing that "a laboratory should not be the territory of a king [...] By definition, a laboratory is a network that is endlessly open, like science itself; and like science itself, it is meant to survive the exit of any scientist." ¹

Through the Library Card, we can position ourselves to seek knowledge such as the answer to *How Clouds Are Formed*, Karuti's ongoing exploratory work. These lines of enquiry act as entry points for bodies of work that intersect over time and medium. Along the journey, she provides a number of working tools, the Library Card, the Blueprint, the Machine and the Map.

The Library Card helps us navigate the silences of the archive, drawing on thinkers from the African continent in order to centralize sources of information that have the capacity to contest existing truths and reinstate entries that may have been forcibly removed.

The Blueprint offers the possibility of what could be, a plan to manifest a structure or space where it currently doesn't exist. Blueprints allow us to place ourselves or our existing spaces within imagined terrains.

How Clouds Are Formed begins with a set of measurements (250m x 160m), which relate to the area occupied by a machine, in this case, a projector, and where the projected image falls. These mathematically impossible measurements also relate to real cloud formations and a piece of land, which offers multiple ways of addressing the format that site visits and movements can take.



How Clouds are Formed (Weather Instruments), 2019 © Jackie Karuti

¹ Chimurenga Chronic. 2019. [online] Available at: <<https://chimurengachronic.co.za/in-the-den-of-the-alchemist/>> [Accessed 30 June 2020].

The Machine is a mechanism that operates on exact configurations, which cannot be altered, but can replicate. Its functionality is explored in two films. In *How Clouds Are Formed: The Engineer (2019)* we see an engineer explaining that a faulty projector requires a new lens. In *How Clouds Are Formed: The Chemist (2019)* a similar lens is then used by a chemist, looking through a microscope to witness the actual forming of clouds in a brief moment of alchemy. Therefore, the Machine provides the potential to act as a site of constructive repair, presenting an opportunity to craft new tools to address ageing or defective components within existing structures.

The Map, with its index and scales, provide us with the information to find a specific place, in relation to other places of interest that may help the navigation process. They do not give us a start position, allowing our bodies to choose where we begin our journey. Similarly, Karuti's practice provides the audience with a choice of active or passive participation. By choosing to actively engage with her practice, someone gains better insight and is able to impart into her practice. Karuti's thinking with this work echoes Tim Ingold's essays on lines and movement, where the doer achieves something which is being achieved in them. The human being.² Her works multiply when read by different people from their own perspective and experience. Through this, her bodies of work continue to develop from one another, speaking to their past and futures, whilst providing audiences with the reference points on how they intersect through her digital workspace.

Through *How Clouds are Formed*, we can explore the multitude of interconnecting factors of cause and effect; from cloud-controlling factors to weather and climate engineering and simulation. However, the final answers are not the goal. The tangible and the imagined, between stillness and movement, the work constructs an aesthetic that speaks to the future. As José Esteban Muñoz reflects,

*“The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity [...] Turning to the aesthetic in the case of queerness is nothing like an escape from the social realm, insofar as queer aesthetics map future social relations. Queerness is also performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.”*³

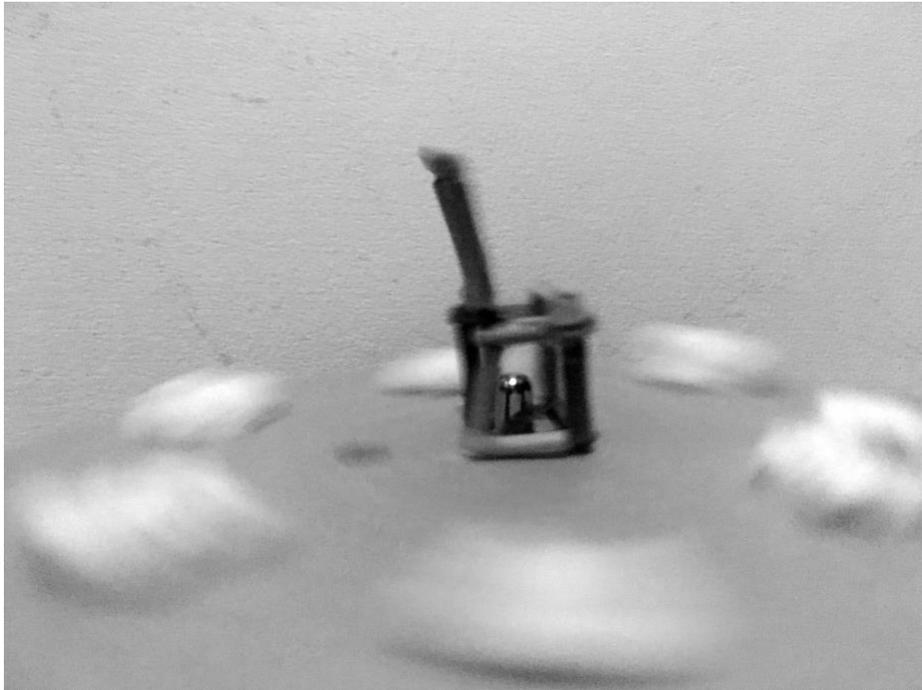
By engaging within a space of stillness and movement, we are able to reflect on how, where and who we choose to restructure or rebuild the structures that bind us. Reflecting Karuti's positionality, this act of transformation alters within the respective landscape, yet remains recognisable. This inherent duality aptly reflects Tina Camp's reading of still-moving-images;

² Ingold, T., 2015. *The Life Of Lines*. [ebook] New York: Routledge, p.146. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54889e73e4b0a2c1f9891289/t/5af4a70d1ae6cf71faf2f675/1525982990561/tim-ingold-the-life-of-lines_world+without+objects.pdf> [Accessed 27 June 2020].

³ Muñoz, J., Chambers-Letson, J., Ochieng' Nyongó, T. and Pellegrini, A., 2019. *Cruising Utopia*. New York: New York University Press, p.1.

*“Images that hover between still and moving images; animated still images, slowed or stilled images in motion or visual renderings that blur the distinctions between these multiple genres; images that require the labor of feeling with or through them.”*⁴

Through her selected tools, we bear witness to Karuti’s unfolding, the intimate and vast sites she occupies and the ones she is in the process of constructing.



How Clouds Are Formed (Turbulence), 2019 © Jackie Karuti

This text was written by Wanja Kimani and Jackie Karuti, on the occasion of the Henrike Grohs Art Award 2020. Karuti was announced as the main prize winner on 30 July 2020.

www.henrikegrohsartaward.africa

⁴ Campt, T., 2018. *Still-Moving-Images*. [online] Fotomuseum. Available at: https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/154951_still_moving_images [Accessed 30 June 2020].