

## THANIA PETERSEN BIOGRAPHY

Thania Petersen is a South African multi-disciplinary artist whose discourse focuses on photographic self-portraits, installations, multi-sensory based performance, and video. Throughout her work, Petersen adopts a breath and diversity of theatrical personas – a mythological Queen, a botanical Goddess, and various reflections of her childhood growing up as a girl in a secular Muslim society – to reflect on universal themes of personal and historical identities. Her reference points include the history of African colonial imperialism, contemporary westernized consumer culture, her deeply rooted Cape Malay heritage, as well as the legend and myths of Sufi Islamic religious ceremonies.

A direct descendant of Tuan Guru, an Indonesian Prince in the late 1700's brought to South Africa by the Dutch as a political exile, Petersen's series 'I am Royal' addressed her personal family heritage by reconstructing herself in various guises. Thereby the artist invokes references to „what remain from our ancestors rituals and history in our lives today“. In her latest video work 'Sawt' (2019), the artist investigates the relationship between land, nation and identity through an interplay of images and sound.

„I try so hard not to talk about colonialism, because as long as we talk about it, we are somehow enslaved by it. It is important to seek ways of moving forward. My main concern now is to try to create a narrative that is not dictated by Europe or colonialism and to try to always concentrate on the strengths and resilience.“

Thania Petersen was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1980. She studied at Central Saint Martin's College of Art in London, UK from 2003-2004. Between 2004-2005, she trained in both Zimbabwe and in South Korea with renowned Korean ceramist Hwang Yea Sook and subsequently participated in the South Korean Ceramic Biennale in 2005. From 2000-2007, Petersen was resident painter of props and costumes for the London-based Yaa Asantewa Arts Group at the Notting Hill Gate Carnival. Since then, her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions in Europe and South Africa. She lives and works in Cape Town, ZA.

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