

## ANN MARAIS ARTIST STATEMENT 2 FOR PHOTOGRAPH 01, THE CHESS SET

### ENTITLED *THE DOMESTICATED v THE WILD – who would win?*

Using the game of chess as metaphor, I pose the question what would become of the other animals if humans were wiped out (through disease, war etc – the world is an uneasy place right now.). On the domestic front how would cows survive without being milked? How would domestic pets survive without being fed, vaccinated?

Wild animals need no human assistance. During Covid hard lockdown a seminal event occurred: penguins were photographed walking down the main street in Simonstown - a seaside suburb in Cape Town, South Africa. Wild animals quickly claimed many urban spaces. Would domesticated animals become feral without human control? What animals would survive?

In this work, wild animals are rendered as imaginary and thus represent all species.

Rabbits represent all domestic animals and are anthropomorphised as is common practice to dress up domesticated pets - pet dogs wear winter coats; elephants wear religious regalia.

It is impossible to detect a bishop, knight, pawn, king or queen with the wild animals for obvious reasons, except where they are placed on the chessboard. The 'castles' have been re-imagined as termite hills.

With the domesticated animals, rabbit hutches become 'castles'; knights become 'boxers'; bishops wear bishops robes; the king and queen wear medals, sashes, rings and toenail varnish for the queen. The rabbit 'pawns' wear collars, symbolic of human control over their lives.

There are no black and white squares on this chess board. There are bushveld grass khaki-coloured squares for the wild: grey squares symbolise the tarmac of urban roads for a domesticated landscape.

Importantly, in the middle of the board there are no squares as colours merge into a "no man's land" in indeterminate fashion where wild would interact with domesticated. Flecks of red portend there would be blood.

Cape Town  
2022

Photo credit: Des Hammond, Cape Town