

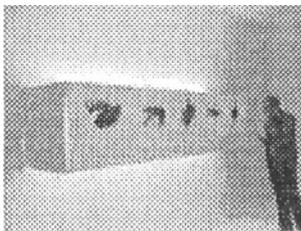
Christine Dixie  
Installation view

Christine Dixie – ‘Hide’ at Millennium II by  
Kathryn Smith

Two boys stand sentry at the east end of the Millennium, one holding a gun, the other a golden lamb. It's almost hard to believe they're etchings. More naturalist than realist, they form a compelling presence in the white room. Such is the control over the medium that Christine Dixie manages to exert.

Opposite, the walls of the west room are empty save for a paper lightbox, printed with finely worked coloured etchings. Pin-pricked areas delineate beds, hands and other objects that seem at once to "hold" and counterbalance the etched elements.

This show plays on the semantics of "hide" in a carefully considered, laboured and quite intense way. The two most obvious references of the word are the skin of an animal and the attempt to make oneself inconspicuous, preferably invisible. A third meaning that dates back to Saxon times refers to a portion of land.



Christine Dixie  
Withhold or Withdraw  
from Sight Lightbox  
installation

Dixie, who lives and works in Grahamstown and Nieu Bethesda, has an incommensurable relationship to the landscape of the Eastern Cape. For as long as I've known her work, it has been continually informed by this fraught area, using personal stories and experience to evoke and reconstitute other memories that are both personal and political. In a text written for the exhibition, Rhodes University art historian Gerhard Schoeman refers to "territorial membranes that divide inside and outside in socle-historical and psycho-geographical terms".



Christine Dixie A  
Portion of Land in  
Saxon Times

The exhibition uses relationships between landscape, land and the body to speak of trauma, dispossession, hard times and "ownership". An installation occupying the middle space features stretched sheepskins on upright frames, with a section delineating an area of land shaved into each. These irregular but geometric shapes appear below as wooden boxes that contain the wool removed from the skin above. One immediately makes the association with coffins. The shapes, as broken outlines filled with maize meal, make an appearance on the floor of each room in the gallery, becoming progressively patterned with the soles of shoes as the exhibition draws to a close.



Christine Dixie  
A Portion of Land in  
Saxon Times (detail)

The backs of the sheepskins narrate tales of sheep theft, farming, land ownership and conflict. Dixie's laboured works seem to speak to the efforts of her forebears to create a life and heritage for generations to come. A series of Linnaeus-style botanical etchings coupled with objects, roots and reptiles petrified - or preserved<sup>9</sup> - in a resin-like substance speak to simultaneous desires of acculturation and base matter. Her labour not only acknowledges them, but also the memory of the dispossessed that bore the larger cost of her family's good fortune.

The text that accompanies the exhibition speaks in a florid and overly

academic way about processes of sublimation and desublimation. To crudely paraphrase this text, Schoeman would have us accept that all of Dixie's preoccupations with land and its objects are a substitute for "the mother", representing both a negation and desire for "the father". Dixie's exhibition, entered and exited alongside a work called *Premises* which features a combination of woven and fur-covered shapes based on the insignia of security and policing forces, has more to do with trying to find a language that both memorialises and celebrates a personal history that is endemic of the broader political and social history of colonised nations.

Until March 2 at Millennium II

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Hours: Tues - Fri 11am - 6pm, Sat 12pm - 5pm

Opening March 7 at the US Art Gallery, Stellenbosch