

Jo Roets - art ambassador of the National Osteoporosis Foundation of South Africa

MURG

Since childhood, I've had a deep love for bones. Perhaps it was the excitement of looking for them and finding them. I am not sure why this enchantment with bones is so strong in me. Maybe it's because they are reminders of our mortality - the impermanence of life and a return to earth after death.

This connection with bones was strengthened during art school when I learnt about Egyptian mummies and the Capuchin crypts decorated with the bones and mummified remains of monks. I was also fascinated with prehistoric bone carvings, especially the idea that part of the animal's departed soul remains with the bones forever.

My initial thought for this solo was focused on fossilized bones. But art-making is an organic process, and plans can easily move in a different direction. A gut feeling surfaced and the phrase "Ek voel dit in die murg van my bene" became a mantra in the back of my mind. From this, the work for this exhibition grew. The saying "I feel it in my bones" comes from the ability to predict the weather based on the ache of healed fractured bones. Both the English and Afrikaans phrases have a similar meaning except for one distinctive difference: the word "marrow" is included in the Afrikaans version, giving it a deeper, more intense meaning. It goes to the very core of the bone where the marrow is found. Just as bone marrow is vital to the survival of all sentient beings, so too is our gut to the survival of the human spirit.

This collection is not concerned with scientific correctness; instead, it is a metaphorical search for the gut feeling, to which the work gives a visual form. My process raised questions like - Seeing that we have captured DNA images, what would our gut feeling look like if we could capture it visually? And would everyone's gut-DNA look the same, or would some be more intricate than others? Why do some of us trust our gut and why are some oblivious to this powerful tool? Is it because following one's gut is not always a comfortable experience? How much of this power do we give over to a higher power rather than honouring our own intuition?

The work examines the parallel between gut feelings and the marrow within bones. The very process of creating the works



Joe Roets. National Osteoporosis Foundation of South Africa's (NOFSA's) art ambassador

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for MURG was an exercise in trusting the process and following my own gut. I had to put the saying "I feel it in my bones" to the test and into practice. My search led me to understand the role of bones in the body and then drawing parallels between these functions and the benefits of following one's gut. Quite unexpectedly, I found the parallel I was searching for when I saw the outline of the gut (intestine) mimicked within a section view of a single trabecula (See *The Source & Discovering The Source*). Human survival depends on our ability to look for patterns and connections. I was fascinated to discover the connection between how trabeculae partitions function as a support, just in the same way as our gut feelings support our decision-making.

You will find cracks and engravings in some of the works. While these cracks add visual interest they also refer to the ancient language of Oracle bones where cracks were created by subjecting bones to intense heat to be interpreted as predictions. Likewise, the gold leaf found on particular work is not purely decorative. It relates to Kintsugi, the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with gold. Its inclusion is a subtle reminder of the purity and value of our incorruptible gut feeling associated with this precious metal.

Solo Exhibition

Rust & Vrede Gallery, Durbanville, South Africa

2022

The MURG collection

Cataloguing bones and marrow and how they relate to our gut feeling



The Source, 43x53x3.5 cm



The Search, 43x53x3.5 cm



The search (detail)
43x53x3.5 cm



Mantra
43x53x3.5 cm



Murg
43x53x3.5 cm



Spinal Enchantment #1 (close-up 4)
28.5x56x3.5 cm



Spinal Enchantment #1
28.5x56x3.5 cm



Spinal Enchantment #2
28.5x56x3.5 cm



Ancient Whispers,
28.5x56x3.5 cm