Traces of the Intangible
~ sun, shell and soil

22-05-2025 – 06-07-2025 | KERSGALLERY

KERSGALLERY is proud to present *Traces of the Intangible ~ sun, shell and soil*, a group exhibition featuring works by artists AYO, Taqwa Ali and Lotte Wieringa, in collaboration with guest-curator Jonas van Kappel.

Rooted in the exploration of organic material, movement and memory, *Traces of the Intangible* revolves around the flowing revivals and sensory possibilities that emerge from them, both within and beyond our physical reality. Intuitive yet complex layers of colour and matter are infused with elemental traces and textures – of sun, shell, or soil, slowly materialised onto canvas or into sculptural form.

These are not mere motifs, but vessels of memory: manifestations of motion or carriers of cultural and relational knowledge and heritage, of ancestral presence or nostalgia. As such, the works on view touch on both meditative and political dimensions - on land and ownership, on belonging, perception and the fragile relationship between nature and the human body and mind.

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Bodily and recurring gestures underlie these artists' practices: carving sand, handling flowers, collecting cowrie shells and listening to them, dancing and watching sunsets are reimagined as quiet rituals, slowly bending time and giving rise to subtle transformations. By embracing unpredictability and processes of becoming, all three artists invite us to trace the ambiguous ways in which memories, lived experiences or displaced objects and bodies reverberate in the here and now. Thus, *Traces of the Intangible* reflects how sensory or cultural memory nestles in material – be it sand, shell or rays of sun.

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AYO

AYO's constellation of work includes two mouth-blown glass sculptures: *That which chases away sorrow*, inspired by 19th-century botanical studies and the symbolism of the Nepenthes plant. Its protecting qualities fuel her current interest in shells, both as natural objects and carriers of memory and stories. AYO's latest sculptures, *Conchophilia*, are cut in wood and cast in ceramic; some rest on a glass plate, some are scattered around the space. Growing up in East Africa, AYO visited the coastal areas of Mombasa and observed how locals incorporated the cowrie shell in clothing and ceremonies. Her personal recollection prompted an exploration into the historical complexity of their provenance. As early as the 14th century, cowrie shells served as currency on the coastlines of Africa and were known for their protective power.

Reimagining obsolete Indigenous objects is central to AYO's practice. By listening to its origin and material, shaped by wind, water and time, AYO reinterprets the cowrie shell as a vessel for knowledge and sound. Subtle shades of brown, honey and purple enhance its anthropomorphic qualities –

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an ear, a limb – as if traces of Indigenous heritage light up from the depths of crystal-clear waters.



AYO, *Conchophilia* (2025), wood, 58 x 40 x 20 cm

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Taqwa Ali

In Taqwa Ali's organically shaped paintings, material leads meaning. She merges the personal and political through themes of memory, displacement and reconnection. Natural materials, such as soil, clay, Arabic gum and dust, guide her movements across the canvas, resulting in layered, textured surfaces. Central to her practice is the Hibiscus flower – sent from her homeland Sudan by her mother – that she dries and transforms into pigment. Once exploited during colonialism, the Hibiscus has become a Sudanese symbol of freedom, healing, and cultural identity, and here it serves as a vehicle for an intimate mother-daughter dialogue as well.

Her latest series, *Making way for water*: *in your sand*, reflects the innocent yet ritualistic child's play of preparing sand to welcome water. The works pose a quiet but firm provocation: is this an offering, an intervention, or an exchange? Different shades of purple and blue-green arise depending on how the flower ferments and the water flows through grains of sand, leaving traces that quietly question our sense of control over shared ground and what it takes to truly stay in touch.

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Taqwa Ali, *Making way for water: in your sand* (2025), fermented Hibiscus water, Hibiscus pulp, soil dust and Arabic gum on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

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Lotte Wieringa

Inspired by the elemental force of the sun, Lotte Wieringa captures the very moment of creation before it solidifies into form – imagine the dance of sun' rays shortly before their heat touches and warms our skin. This poetic sensibility lies at the heart of her practice and invites a way of sensing the world that precedes thought. In her mark-making, Wieringa employs electronic music and the body, its sensory energy and spontaneous movement, as foundational tools of her painting practice.

Her process, as with the work *(kissed) sun*, quite literally unfolds like a dance that translates itself onto canvas; a way of world-building out of energy and movement. Layers are gradually built up from intuitive, embodied gestures. Canvases exude an aura of the spiritual, based on the colours, rhythms and visceral experience of sunrises and sunsets. Yet Wieringa's practice is not an escape from reality. If anything, it gently disrupts it – offering instead a space to imagine the invisible traces of movement underlying each moment, the subtle vibrations of the body, and the sun as both energetic source and filled with the spirit of life.

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Lotte Wieringa, *(kissed) sun*, olieverf op doek, 180 x 140 cm

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