

# GRETTA LOUW @ GLIMMER SHRINE

b.1981 | Dundee, South Africa



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***Digital embroidery/painting is a new concept for Hong Kong's audience. Can you explain to us how did you come up with the practice?***

It was an incremental process. I began my career making a lot of digital artwork and installation but over the years I felt a longing for more sensual materiality and began to incorporate textile and needlework techniques that I learned as a child. Supplementing the hand embroidery techniques, I developed new ways of using the digital embroidery machine - it was like learning to play an instrument. Now that I've been working in this way for a number of years, the embroidered paintings and the hybrid digital/physical paintings just feel like expanded drawing and painting practices. The world has become so hybrid, with the digital and the analogue being so intertwined, that it feels natural to work in this way - moving between technological and traditional methodologies.

***In your work, there are lots of hybrid species. How did you create them? From your imagination or stories of the past? Do you have any specific species that you are particular interested in?***

I incorporate artificial intelligence and neural networks into my creative practice, which bring a sense of the uncanny into the work at times - shapes, creatures, forms that are familiar but unidentifiable because they are algorithmic extrapolations of things that actually exist in the world. This process is in many ways a metaphor for the relationship between the biosphere (living systems, ecologies) and the techno sphere (web of technological systems) in the 21st century.

For the last several years I have been particularly interested in oceans and the creatures that inhabit them... These are worlds that are as alien from ours as outer space and there are real creatures there that can look just as strange as those conjured by artificial intelligence algorithms. Oceans are the cradle of all life on earth; almost all living species today share evolutionary ancestors with jellyfish. More recently, I've also been becoming increasingly interested in fungi as a visual and conceptual metaphor for organic networks and interconnectedness.

***Tell us about the colour in your work. Do you choose the colour on purpose, or do they come with instinct? Looking at your work, the light and shadow also shifts, creating an almost lively illusion. Can you tell us about the relationship between the use of material and your concept?***

It's both instinct and a choice, I think! I am attracted to a range of colours and to particular interplays within a palette, and I want to create something that has a sense of the sublime beauty of nature without being naturalistic. I am influenced by digital culture and internet aesthetics on the one hand (hence why I make use of readily recognisable neural network aesthetics that point to certain milestones in the evolution of algorithmic intelligence) but also very deeply, on the other hand, but the natural world - sunsets, the colourful theatre of the sky, a fascination with underwater worlds, mushrooms and underground mycelium networks. These seemingly disparate inspirations are actually heavily intertwined in our post-internet age. I am always thinking about how to envisage the interconnectedness of everything, not only digital networks but also organic and non-human networks, in an embodied, visceral, and earth-bound manner that can hopefully echo the transcendent awe of living on this planet.

***Your work came with interesting titles. How do you name your work? Are they developed from an instinct or developed through time? Can you talk about the one that interests you the most?***

Writing has always been part of my practice, though a much less visible one. Initially I was writing more journalistically but as I allowed myself to get more experimental, I gradually found that what I was developing was a way of writing poetry. Now I maintain detailed and ongoing notes on words, phrases, and ideas that catch my attention or imagination as I encounter them. These notes eventually get moulded into longer poetic texts that might become of a public reading or a piece of narrative sound art, or they might get broken down into pieces and used as titles for my embroidered works and paintings. The title "I have more in common with Medusa" than I'd care to admit, for example, may seem like a fairly long title, perhaps, but it is actually shorthand for an enormous amount of research that highlights the strange and tangled relationship between humans and the proliferation of Medusozoa (jellyfish) in our warming oceans. And Medusa, the beautiful and terrifying Gorgo of Greek mythology, is a figure that sits at the nexus of feminine rage, monstrosity, the patriarchal demonisation of female power, desire, and seduction. My titles are like the tips of icebergs extruding into the visible realm but attached under the surface to a maelstrom of ideas, readings, contradictions, and impulses. I hope that they give viewers clues about the work, but more importantly, open up thought realms parallel to, around, and within the work that people can explore and fill in for themselves.

***How do you see the relationship between you, a female artist, and your work?***

I see my work as a continuation of three distinct legacies; one that was coded female (needlework, textiles, embroidery) and therefore largely relegated to lower rungs on the creative hierarchy, one that has an obscured feminist history (computing, digital technology), and one from which women have historically been excluded (art). I definitely think about what it means to be a woman making this work and working in this field. But also the content of my work is so much larger in scale - epic really - looking at evolutionary and geological timescales, that there's another level upon which I don't even think about what it means to be a human making this work (regardless of gender), and instead think more about being an inhabitant of these planetary techno-organic systems. An earthling.

**數碼刺繡/繪畫對香港的觀眾來說是一個新概念。你能向我們解釋一下，你是如何想出這種做法的？**

這是一個逐漸建立的過程。由我的職業生涯開始，我就做了很多數字藝術作品和裝置。但近年來，我開始渴望並探索更多的感性物質，於是便開始加入我小時候學到的紡織和針線技術。而為了進一步改良手工刺繡技術，我找到了數碼刺繡這種新型方法——這過程對我而言就像學習演奏一種樂器般。現在我已經以這種方式工作了好幾年，刺繡畫和數碼/物理混合畫就像一個不斷擴大的創作手法。同時，世界已經變得如此融合化，讓數位和類比能互相交織，因此我以這種方式工作時也感覺很自然——在科技和傳統兩種方法之間摸索。

**你的作品中有很多混合物種。你是如何創造它們的？是來自你的想象力或過去的故事嗎？你是否對某個物種特別感興趣？**

我將人工智能和神經網絡兩種概念加入到我的創作之中，從而繪製出這些混合物種。這有時會為作品帶來一種不可思議的感覺——在對實際存在的事物進行演算推斷後，便會產生一些雖然熟悉，卻又無法被識別的形狀、生物和型態。這個過程在多方面隱喻了 21 世紀生物圈（生命系統、生態）和科技圈（科技系統網絡）之間的關係。

過去幾年，我對海洋和海洋生物特別感興趣.....他們的世界與我們的外太空一樣陌生，而這些生物本身也能像那些由人工智能演算出來的生物一樣奇怪。海洋是地球上所有生命的搖籃，今天幾乎所有的生物物種都與水母有著共同的進化祖先。最近，我對真菌類也越來越好奇，因為它無論從視覺上和概念上，都似乎隱喻著有機網絡和世界的聯繫性。

**你是刻意地，還是直覺地選擇作品裏所用的顏色？除此之外，作品中的光影變換營造出了一個生動的錯覺。你能告訴我們材料和概念之間的關係嗎？**

我認為這既是直覺，也是一種選擇！我被一系列的顏色和調色板中的特殊配搭所吸引，我想創造一種既能感受到自然崇高之美又具備非自然主義的事物。一方面，我受到數碼文化和互聯網美學的影響（因此我使用易於識別的神經網絡美學，這些美學指向了 AI 發展的某些里程碑）。另一方面，我也深受自然世界的影響——對日落、色彩繽紛的天空、對海底世界、蘑菇和地下菌絲體網絡的迷戀。這些看似不同的靈感，實際上與我們的後互聯網時代緊密交織在一起。我一直在思考如何以一種具體的、由內而發的、與地球關係密切的方式來設想，將一切事物相互聯繫，不僅是數字網絡，還包括有機與非人類網絡，對生活在這個星球上的生物展現超然的敬畏。

**你的作品總是有有趣的名字。能說說你是如何命名的嗎？是直覺，還是經過深思熟慮的？談談你最感興趣的一個吧！**

寫作一直都屬於我創作的一部分——一個不明顯的部分。最初我主要進行敘述形式的寫作，但隨著我允許自己變得更具實驗性，我逐漸發現我正在培養出一種寫詩的形式。現在，我對遇到而且吸引到我注意的單詞、短語和想法，都會進行詳細和持續的記錄。這些「筆記」最終會被塑造成更長的詩詞，成為公眾讀物或敘事式的聲音裝置；它們也可能會被分解成碎片，成為我刺繡作品和繪畫的標題。以《我與美杜莎比想象中更像》為例，它看起來是一個相當長的標題，但實際上是大量研究的簡寫，強調了人類和在暖化的海洋中增生的水母 (Medusozoa) 之間奇怪且糾結的關係。美杜莎——希臘神話中美麗而可怕的戈爾戈，是一個位於女性憤怒、畸形、父權制對女性力量的妖魔化、慾望和誘惑之交匯點的人物。我的標題就像冰山一角，把龐大的信息濃縮到一個可見的領域，但在表面之下附帶著思想、閱讀、矛盾和衝動的漩渦。我希望這些標題能為觀眾提供關於作品的線索，又或者更重要地打開與作品平行的、圍繞在作品內部的思想領域，供給人們自己進一步探索和填補。

**作為女性藝術家，你是如何看待自身與作品的關係呢？**

我視我的作品為三個不同文化的延續：一種是被標籤為「女性」，而因此在很大程度上被歸入了下層創意階層的事物（針線活、紡織品、刺繡）；一種是被模糊化的女權主義歷史（計算機、數碼技術）；以及一種在長久以來把女性（及她們的藝術）排除在外的文化。我當然會思考，作為一個女人，在這個領域做這些工作意味著什麼。但我的作品內容在規模上要大得多——甚至能以史詩來形容。它們從進化論和地層學的時間性作為尺度，是更上層樓，我甚至不考慮作為一個人類，做這些工作意味著什麼（不論性別），考慮成為這些宇宙體系中居民，一個地球的生命。

## GRETTA LOUW

b. 1981, Dundee, South Africa

Gretta Louw is a South African-born Australian artist, writer, and curator. Her practice investigates the tensions between sensuality and efficiency; craft and automation; constant digital connectedness and corporeal dislocation: in short, the technosphere and the biosphere.

Louw graduated from the University of Western Australia in 2002, subsequently living in Japan and New Zealand, before moving to Germany in 2007. Her work has been exhibited widely in public institutions and galleries such as the Wro Media Art Biennale 2021 (Poland); Honor Fraser Gallery (US); Kunstmuseum Solothurn (Switzerland); Münchner Stadtmuseum (Germany); National Portrait Gallery (Australia); Furtherfield (UK); bitforms (US); and LABoral (Spain). She has received awards including one from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes in Germany, 2022; an Australia Council Career Development Grant, 2019; a Visual Art Prize from the Cultural Department of the City of Munich, 2019; the Bahnwärter Stipendium from the City of Esslingen am Neckar, 2017; and the Heinrich Vetter Preis of the City of Mannheim, 2014; amongst others.

Louw has curated thematic exhibitions at museums including the Villa Merkel (Germany); Furtherfield Gallery (UK); and Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery (US) and contributed essays to numerous catalogues and publications. Her artwork and curatorial projects have been covered by press outlets including Hyperallergic, Kunstforum, Motherboard, AQNB Magazine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and others. She currently lives and works in Germany.

## 格塔羅爾

1981 年出生於丹地·南非

格塔羅爾是在南非出生的澳洲裔藝術家、作家和策展人。她的創作研究了各種對立的關係：感性與效率、人手工藝與自動化、科技帶來的連通性與物理上人與人之間的疏離。簡而言之，她陶醉於探討這密不可分的技術圈和生物圈。

格塔羅爾於 2002 年畢業於西澳大學，隨後在日本和新西蘭生活，並於 2007 年移居德國。她的作品曾在公共機構和畫廊廣泛展出，例如 Wro Media Art Biennale 2021 (波蘭)、Honor Fraser Gallery (美國)、Kunstmuseum Solothurn (瑞士)、Münchner Stadtmuseum (德國)、國家肖像畫廊 (澳洲)、Furtherfield (英國)、bitforms (美國) 和 LABoral (西班牙)。她獲得的獎項包括德國 Kulturstiftung des Bundes 2022、澳大利亞理事會職業發展補助金 2019、慕尼黑市文化部的視覺藝術獎 2019、慕尼黑市的 Bahnwärter Stipendium Esslingen am Neckar 2017 和曼海姆市的 Heinrich Vetter Preis 2014 等。

博物館展覽也是格塔羅爾常參與的項目。她曾在默克爾別墅 (德國)、Furtherfield 畫廊 (英國) 和 Paul W. Zuccaire 畫廊 (美國) 等博物館策劃主題展覽，並為眾多目錄和出版物撰寫文章。她的藝術作品和策展項目被媒體廣泛報導，包括 Hyperallergic、Kunstforum、Motherboard、AQNB 雜誌、Süddeutsche Zeitung 等。她目前在德國生活和工作。