

# Vulnerable Bodies

ANNELIZE MULDER

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Logan Art Gallery  
Wembley Rd & Jacaranda Avenue  
Logan Central Queensland Australia



**V**ulnerable Bodies considers the multi-faceted experience of human migration. Some people migrate due to necessity whilst others move by choice in pursuit of a better life. The works in this exhibition reflect my personal experience with migration as a South African immigrant. Although my family and I chose to move to Australia to escape the crime and uncertainty in South Africa, leaving everything we have ever known was difficult. Memories of the past and reminders that we are migrants still surface and unearth feelings that are often complex to articulate.



*Pursuit* (2018), Installation View, Logan Art Gallery

The act of processing migration can awaken memories that are often intrusive and without narrative, especially when migrants leave behind a difficult past. In these moments I feel exposed and vulnerable. In *Vulnerable Bodies*, I consider the body as a container of memory to explore its fragility and bring to the surface the often-unspoken challenges migrants face.

'Barefootedness' has significant connotations to historical, religious, and social practices throughout the ages. In some cultures, there is a tradition of removing one's shoes before entering a temple or church as a sign of respect and humility. Historically, slaves were denied shoes as a sign of their low social status. Similarly, prisoners were also forbidden to wear shoes: a practice that is ongoing in some parts of Africa and Asia. Conversely being without shoes is sometimes associated with childhood innocence and play. The benefits of walking barefoot to the body and mind have also seen a resurgence in wellness circles. In my exhibition, I associate bare feet with the daunting experience of navigating unknown places, cultural nuances, and starting life in a new country.

The concept and exhibition proposal for *Vulnerable Bodies* was developed in late-2018. I could never have imagined that my exhibition, that considers human vulnerability, would coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic. The past months of lock-down expanded my perspective on this body of work and the unpredictable nature of life. The possible fragility of my health and uncertainty of this new world I now find myself in has shifted my thinking. Although these sculptures were created with migration in mind, I ask the audience to also consider these works in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to reflect on vulnerabilities in their own lives.

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*Pursuit* (2018), Polyurethane, pigment, acrylic paint, cotton, electric component, PVC pipes  
300 x 80 x 80 cm Installation View, Logan Art Gallery

*Pursuit* rotates slowly, the legs move unpredictable as the feet tangle and sway. The rotating feet produce a low rumbling and scraping sound.



*These Dry Bones* (2018), Plaster, wood, discarded hotel sheets cm  
Installation View, Logan Art Gallery

Discarded hotel bedsheets are used in this piece. A hotel is an impermanent dwelling and ties to not feeling at home, much like the initial moments in a new country. The title refers to the Biblical prophecy in Ezekiel where dry bones are brought back to life. Stacked like a cairn, this work is in commemoration of a journey, restoration and hope.



*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (2018), Wood, cotton, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mealie meal, cotton thread. Dimension variable. Installation View, Logan Art Gallery.

The single chair placed opposite to the wall has a pile of 'mealie meal' on the seat. This fine ground corn is a staple food in South Africa and many other African countries. The maize is cooked with water. It is a versatile food that can be consumed on its own or as a side dish. It is sold in speciality shops in Australia and we still consider it a staple in our pantry.



*Best-laid Plans* (2019), Cotton, wire polyurethane, pigment, acrylic paint 768 x 300 cm  
Installation View, Logan Art Gallery.

*Best-laid Plans* is made from 77meters of cotton fabric. The sculpture can fold and all components transported in a suitcase.

The words to an Afrikaans lullaby is embroidered on the fabric. Originally composed by Johannes Brahms. The lyrics wishes peaceful and blissful sleep. Before immigrating, sound sleep and assurance of safety was not a reality for me. After immigrating the weight of our decision felt overwhelming. The lullaby is contrary to how I felt while waiting to fall asleep.



*Deliverance* (2018 - 2020), Bronze, fabric, wood, embroidery thread, samp (dried corn kernels) 20 x 25 x 360 cm. Installation View, Logan Art Gallery.



*Vulnerable Bodies installation view (2020)*



*Vulnerable Bodies installation view (2020)*

Thank you to my family, friends, supervisors and mentors for supporting me in my work. A special thank you to my husband Coenraad, for working hard alongside me to create, troubleshoot, and install my sculptures.