

sunrags, refugee status, migrancy or the risk Jews faced living in Paris at the time.

It also makes no mention of the allegations in Janet Malcolm's book, *Two Lives*, regarding Stein's close friendship with Bernard Fay, a top figure in France's pro-Nazi Vichy government.

Malcolm writes that Fay apparently asked the Vichy chief of state, Philippe Pétain, to protect Stein and Toklas – and their art collection – during the war. She also writes that Stein admired Pétain and translated his anti-Semitic speeches into English.

But this nonlinear play points to something universal. The old 19th century of one size fits all no longer applies. In its place is the recognition of peoples' unique differences and responses. And yet, the desire to be loved, no matter your gender orientation, is a universal drive.

Actors Shirley Johnston and Lynita Crofford are adamant that the subject of *Gertrude Stein and a Companion* is not homosexuality. At its core, it's a play about primary

the women. Stein is the overt sun and Toklas the covert moon and the power behind the throne.

The title is a reference to the macho but marshmallow-hearted writer Hemingway, who was in love with Stein. He was jealous of Toklas's place in Stein's life and her role as gatekeeper. So Hemingway punished Toklas by refusing to use her name.

After 40, many women complain that they become invisible. Men instinctively and unconsciously intuit they are no longer fertile and turn their gaze to those with fresher eggs.

Crofford wasn't going to be held back by this. Recognising that few directors were going to come banging at her door offering parts, she became proactive. She had acted in her own creation, *Violet Online and Love Me Tinder*, about online dating, and more recently played a man in *Taming of the Shrew* at Maynardville.

Johnston's last role was in *Death of a Colonialist* – a play "steeped in realism". Crofford

asked friend and director Marthinus Basson if he could recommend a two-hander as she didn't want to do another one-woman show. He suggested *Gertrude Stein and a Companion*.

She offered the second part to Johnston as a birthday gift. They hadn't acted together for 30 years and Johnston was delighted. They asked Weare if he would direct. "We took quite a chance, as this play is not the kind of work major theatres are doing now," Crofford says.

She enjoys the detail Weare brings to the script and acting. "He knows how to guide you," she says. One of the difficulties for Crofford was the physical aspect of ageing and, in particular, the nonchronical way her character moves between ages.

Johnston's highlight began as a difficulty. The script contains unusual turns of phrase.

Initially, she says, she found it difficult but once she mastered it, she grew to love the style.



Snappy script: Actors Shirley Johnston and Lynita Crofford say at its core the subject of *Gertrude Stein and a Companion* is not homosexuality but rather about primary relationships featuring love and inevitable loss. /Supplied

Johnston admits to wondering who would come and see the play. But Crofford points out that audiences have been very varied – including heterosexuals, couples, singles, religious people and conservatives.

Johnston's husband brought

his rugger-bugger mates, some of whom were profoundly moved and loved the play's historical references. One of Johnston's second-year students "totally understood it" as a play about loss. A very conservative audience member referred to it as a "tender story".

There is talk of taking the duo travelling to the Gay Irish Festival in Dublin if funds can be found.

● *Gertrude Stein and a Companion* is at the Alexander Theatre in Cape Town until October 20

desperately to break with the industrial image that years of subservience to the KVV model had inevitably cultivated.

Sadie worked with viticulturist Rosa Kruger, scouting out and producing wines from some of the least recognised (and least appreciated) old vineyard blocks in the country. He established a model that served as the blueprint and inspiration for the next generation of landless winemakers to build on. Almost all of the important players in small-volume, single-site wine production in the Cape today acknowledge their debt to Sadie.

There is therefore a direct line from Spice Route to Sadie to the Mullineuxs, who began their winemaking careers at Tulbagh Mountain Vineyards before launching their own enterprise in 2007. Their focus was also older vineyard blocks, their cultivars of choice those that were in good supply in the Swartland: syrah and chenin.

A decade later their most famous wines still depend on both, with the top syrah cuvées

retained what he could of the old vines (they supplied all the Porseleinberg fruit from 2010 to 2012) he began a major replanting programme.

Callie Louw, who has been responsible for the vineyards and cellar since the inception, shares with Sadie and the Mullineuxs an aversion to interventionist winemaking. Except for varying the percentage of his crop that is vinified in large oak foudre and concrete eggs, and the ratio of new to old vines, vintage variation means exactly that.

Still, you cannot dismiss the role of the younger vineyards – they now account for about 75% of what goes into the bottle. With the latest release (the 2016) comfortably my best wine in a recent line-up of every vintage produced (and possibly the highest-scoring current release on my website), it's living proof that the Swartland is not only about old vines.

● For all the tasting notes visit <https://winewizard.co.za/article/554>

HALF ART

A multitude of paradoxes to celebrate the universe

We need to "post-truth" politics. Facts matter, reasonable argument matters; appeals to bigotry and false emotion by demagogues set us on the path to totalitarianism.

Post-truthism is not a new phenomenon. What Harry Truman said of Richard Nixon – "He can lie out of both sides of his mouth at the same time" – applies to a lesser or greater degree to politicians throughout history. But if two falsities can be uttered by the same person, then two truths can also be affirmed simultaneously.

Walt Whitman, as earnest a poet as ever put pen to paper, declared this prerogative for writers and artists: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes."

Whitman's defence of his

incongruities is that humans are infinitely complex beings, paradoxical universes unto themselves. This should be celebrated, no less than the complexities of quantum physics or diverse societies.

It is no concession to post-truthism to say that two apparently contradictory statements can both be true; often enough, this can be explained when we understand the context of each statement.

I couldn't help thinking about Whitman when I visited *9 More Weeks*, an exhibition at Stevenson Gallery in Johannesburg (which runs until October 19) accompanying a book by the same title compiled by Sinazo Chiya.

A sequel to *9 Weeks*, published in 2016, *9 More Weeks* follows a similar format to its predecessor as Chiya conducts interviews with nine artists in the Stevenson stable.



CHRIS THURMAN

Each artist has contributed one work to the exhibition. Chiya has selected an excerpt from the interview to post alongside it. This establishes a series of dialogues: between the art work and the brief conceptual provocation, as well as between the extract and the longer piece of text in the book, which in turn is based on a conversation between curator and artist. Pleasing contradictions emerge.

Consider this opening salvo, from Simphiwe Ndzube: "I'm really not interested in meaning. Meaning prejudices objects." It

might seem to be the credo of an out-and-out formalist, interested only in how the aesthetic elements of his work relate to each other. But it's clear from his interview with Chiya that Ndzube is invested in the domain of ideas and in the intellectual traditions in which his work might be located.

Moreover, he is modest about his position in these traditions. He is more interested in what he can learn from others than in the polemical or pedagogical value of his art. Hence the assertion that follows his ostensible rejection of "meaning": "From well-known philosophers to our completely sidelined grandmothers and grandfathers *ekasi*, there is all of this vast knowledge. For me as a young person to say I already know the answers would be a disservice to myself."

Ndzube's emphasis on the inherent qualities of the subjects

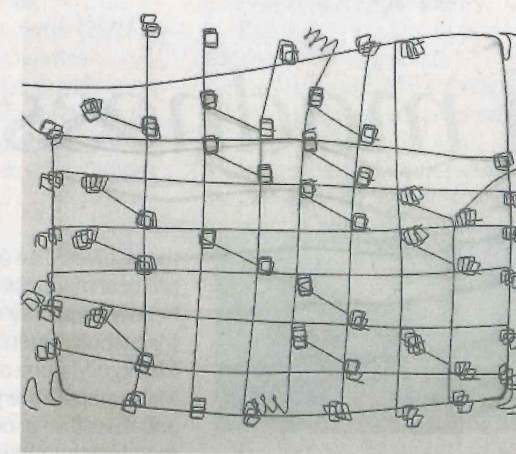


Dreamlike: Portia Zvavahera's *Tavingwa Nezvehusiku*, left, and Bronwyn Katz's beautiful abstract are part of a unique exhibition which runs until October 19. / Supplied

he portrays and the means he uses to portray them, rather than on the interpretive layers that might be added by either the artist or the viewer, is echoed in Bronwyn Katz's

claim: "I use my material in an abstract way, but it has its own history ... The beauty of abstraction is that I'm not giving you things to talk about. Materials can be enough ... I

believe in the history. How it was made. Who made it." Katz disavows a connection between the sociopolitical world beyond line, shape, pattern and colour but in the same breath she



insists that the substances used to produce abstract works are inscribed with the sociopolitical, with history, with real people.

Zander Blom, by contrast, admits that he no longer believes in "the transcending power of abstraction".

Lacking "rules" for composition, he has turned inwards. "I'm delving deeper into my own weird brain." Blom's work is nevertheless signposted by an external frame of reference: 20th-century art history. In his interview, he cites Picasso, Cézanne, Mondrian, Pollock and others who have informed his method.

Then there is the irony in Portia Zvavahera's complaint that while travelling in India "I stopped dreaming for the whole month." Yet her painting *Tavingwa Nezvehusiku*, was inspired by that trip and is decidedly "dreamlike". Art is the result of such contradictions.