Beyond the clash of

contraries and

contrarians

OF STEVENSON GALLERY

familiar territory.

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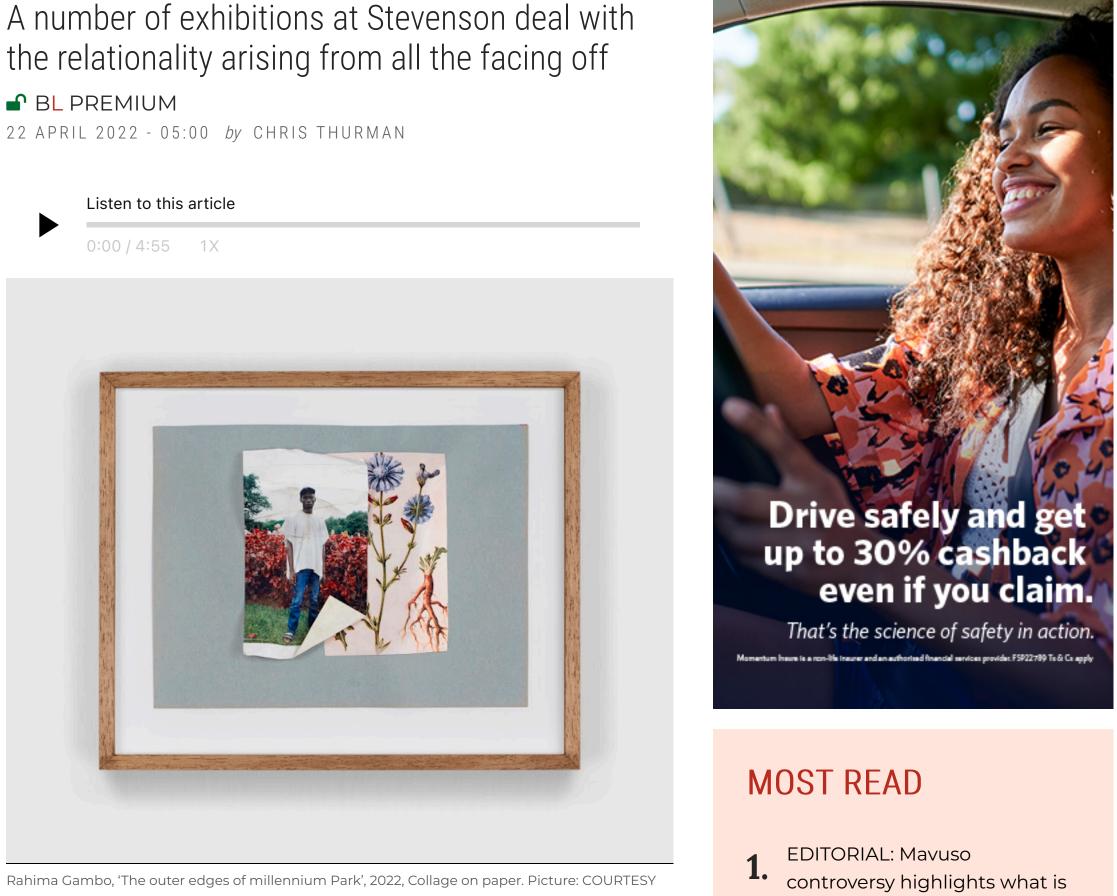
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varying (you might say contrary) ideas, theories and arguments.

"Without contraries is no progression," wrote William Blake —

one of the more famous proverbs in his book *The Marriage of*

Heaven and Hell, a fusion of poetry, philosophy, politics and

mysticism published in the wake of the French Revolution. It

has become an aphorism that can be recruited to bolster

Mix in bits of Nietzsche and Hegel, and you get a "clash of

civilisations" model in which West and East — or Europe and

each other until some kind of cultural synthesis emerges. For

those interested in religion and psychology, Blake's epigraph

followed by the assertion that, "attraction and repulsion,

reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human

supports the dualistic notion that each of us has two sides: it is

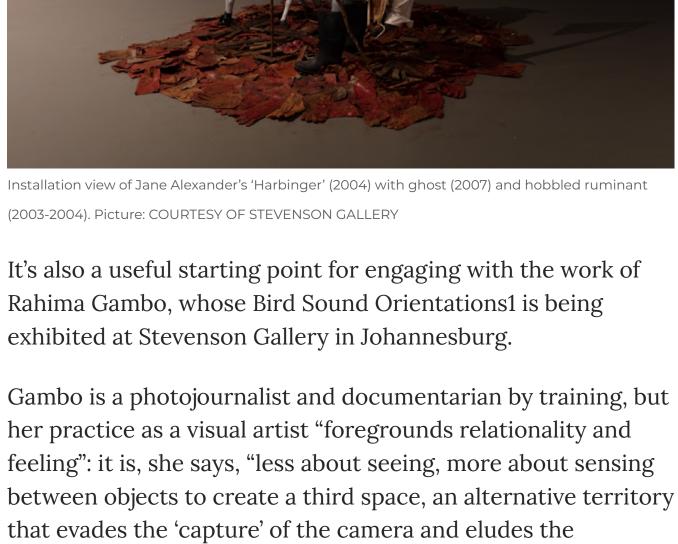
Africa, or Global North and Global South — face off against

existence." This is all very well, but it can also seem rather simplistic, reducing the human experience to Manichean binaries of good and evil. Blake's poetry complicates these terms. Moreover, Blake and his Romantic contemporaries searched, in their different ways, for something beyond such a limited view of the individual — something that (despite the egocentrism of much Romantic poetry) transcends the self.

Call it relationality: the principle that a person only exists in

could be rephrased, "I am because you are". Now we're in more

relation to other people, beings, entities or energies. This



Viewers of the videos, photographs, mixed media collages and

installations comprising Bird Sound Oientations1 may find that

they wish for a little more linearity. Gambo's photos and short

films of students playing choreographed games in the Nigerian

city of Maiduguri, like her reappropriation of materials from

Nigerian schoolbooks and urban planning manuals, give us

only hints or clues as points of reference — it's up to us to

make the connections or identify the "third space".

enclosure of linear, fixed narratives".



Town, where the latest in the gallery's "series of idiosyncratic two-person exhibitions", Juxtapositions, places Shine Shivan's works on paper in dialogue with Jane Alexander's sculptural installations. Shivan portrays gods and mortals from the Vedic tradition, their large eyes and smiling faces at odds with gestures and other details in the images that indicate the ever-present threat of violence. This disjunction is brought to the fore when the portraits are placed alongside Alexander's troubling

therianthropes: creatures whose forms lure us into seeing

antlers of a buck or other animalistic qualities.

them as human though they have the head of a wild dog, the

Such an otherworldly opposition, in turn, may be contrasted

with the footage of sunny, silent Amsterdam that Dutch artist

Kadir van Lohuizen captured while travelling through locked-

down streets in 2020. It depicts what he considers an

Blakean contraries — and their revelatory possibilities — are

also central to the pairings displayed at Stevenson in Cape

Amsterdam that now only exists in archival material such as Ed van der Elsken's 1983 film *My Amsterdam*. Van Lohuizen is the first artist exhibited in Stevenson's AMS series, which will connect its SA galleries with its expanding footprint in the Dutch art scene. Watch this space for further progressive contraries. • Bird Sound Orientations1 is at Stevenson Johannesburg until

May 6. Juxtapositions and AMS are at Stevenson Cape Town

until April 30.

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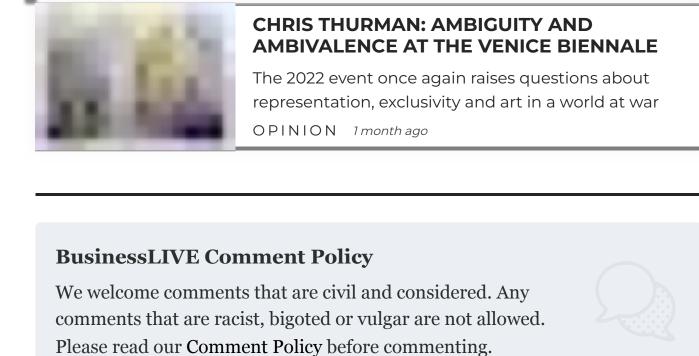
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