



TEARS ARE ONLY WATER

Nhlanhla Nhlapo

2 – 30 May, 2026

GALLERY 2

Tears are Only Water

A solo exhibition by Nhlanhla Nhlapo

Biography

Nhlanhla Nhlapo (b. 1988) grew up in Frankfort in the Free State. He moved to Pretoria to pursue his passion for art, where he studied Fine Arts at Tshwane University of Technology in 2015.

Nhlapo's practice examines Dutch masters' techniques and 17th century Dutch landscape painting as a point of departure, situating it in the South African landscape and his hometown of Frankfurt in particular and populating it with images from his family albums.

From 2013 – 2018, Nhlapo participated in various group exhibitions at amongst others, the Pretoria Arts Association (group show 2015 curated by Johan Conradie, Lizamore and Associates Gallery in Johannesburg, and Franschhoek's Is Art Gallery, Knysna Fine Arts. Turbine Art Fair 2016-18, Hermanus Fine Arts Festival 2016, and a two-man show with Helena Hugo 2016 at Trent Gallery. From 2017-19, Nhlapo was a mentee in the Johannes Stegman Mentorship program, where he was mentored by Jaco van Schalkwyk.

Nhlapo presented a mini solo-show at the Woordfees Festival in 2018 where he was nominated as one of three artists for special mention in the Visual Arts Programme. In 2018 on residency, he collaborated with Louis Jansen van Vuuren from France. Nhlapo completed numerous portrait commissions for both private collectors and companies. He has most recently been commissioned by Unisa to make an Academic Portrait of Chairperson Mr Simelane. Over the years his work has been collected locally and internationally, specifically in France, the United States, California and Germany.

In 2023 he participated at the RMB Latitudes Art Fair with Gallery 2, and in 2025 participated again with The First Light with Hope Gallery.

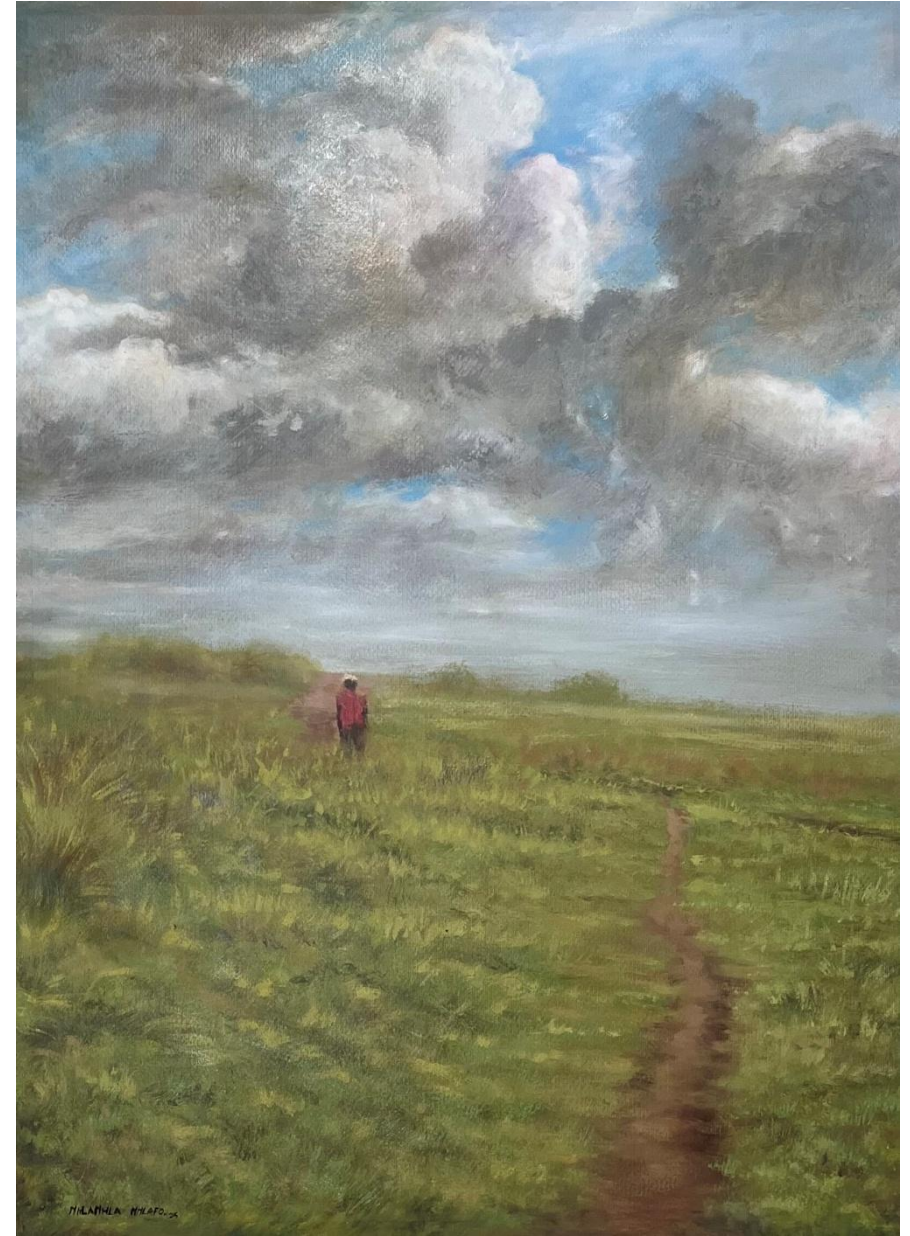
Statement

Nhlapo explores the Politics of the 'Self'- an exploration of his personal history in an African and global context. The artist draws inspiration from landscape paintings, portraits and photographs from his family photo albums and the immediate surroundings of his hometown Frankfort in the Free State.

The imagery deals with concepts of nostalgia, community, survival and decolonization. Portrait, interior, exterior and landscape juxtapose to underline the fugitive nature of time. The skilled and compassionate portrayal of the people and places he draws and paints, in diffused and subtle colour harmonies, create a mood of introspection, but also confronts the viewer with serious issues around land expropriation and the trauma and transformation of a community in Post-Apartheid South Africa.



Footpath, Oil on canvas sheet, 70.2 x 50.2cm, 2025



Walking Alone, Oil on canvas sheet, 70.2 x 50.2cm, 2025



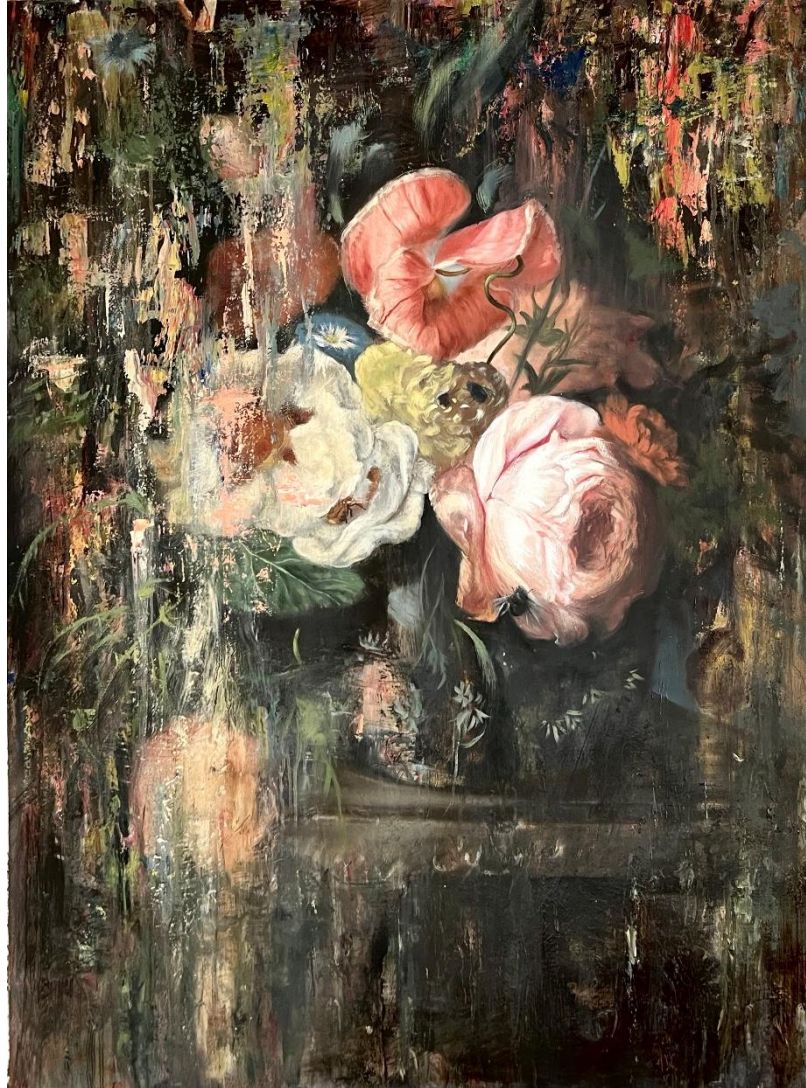
Hunting Dog, Oil on canvas sheet, 70.2 x 50.2cm, 2026





Disappearing into the Landscape's Matters and Conflicts, Oil on stretched canvas, 178.5 x 179cm, 2026





Abstraction, Oil on prepared paper, 76.2 x 57cm, 2026



Daily Conflicts and Torments of the Past, Oil on paper with collage, 123.5 x 99.5cm, 2026







Broken But Strong, Oil on canvas sheet, 70.2 x 50.2cm, 2026



Lerato Holding her Child's Toys, Oil on canvas, 80 x 80cm, 2024



Rotten Apple, Dump Cane and Abandoned Associate Flag, Oil on canvas, 80 x 80cm, 2026





Study of Father and Son, Acrylic washes on paper, 21 x 29.5cm, 2025



A Thinking Boy, Acrylic washes on paper, 21 x 29.5cm, 2025



Grandmother and Granddaughter, Oil on oil paper, 21 x 16.5cm, 2026



A Maid and a Boss' Son, Oil on oil paper, 16.5 x 21cm, 2026



Landscape Study, Oil on canvas paper, 14.5 x 20cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #30, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 89.1 cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #25, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 29.7cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #26, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 29.7cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #27, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 29.7cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #28, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 29.7cm, 2025



Free State Landscape #29, Ink on paper, 41.8 x 29.7cm, 2025





A Colony Symbolized by its Monument, Oil and collage on prepared paper, 120 x 100cm, 2025





*Free State Landscape #31, Ink on paper,
20 x 30cm, 2024*



*Free State Landscape #32, Ink on paper,
20 x 30cm, 2024*



*Free State Landscape #33, Ink on paper,
20 x 30cm, 2024*



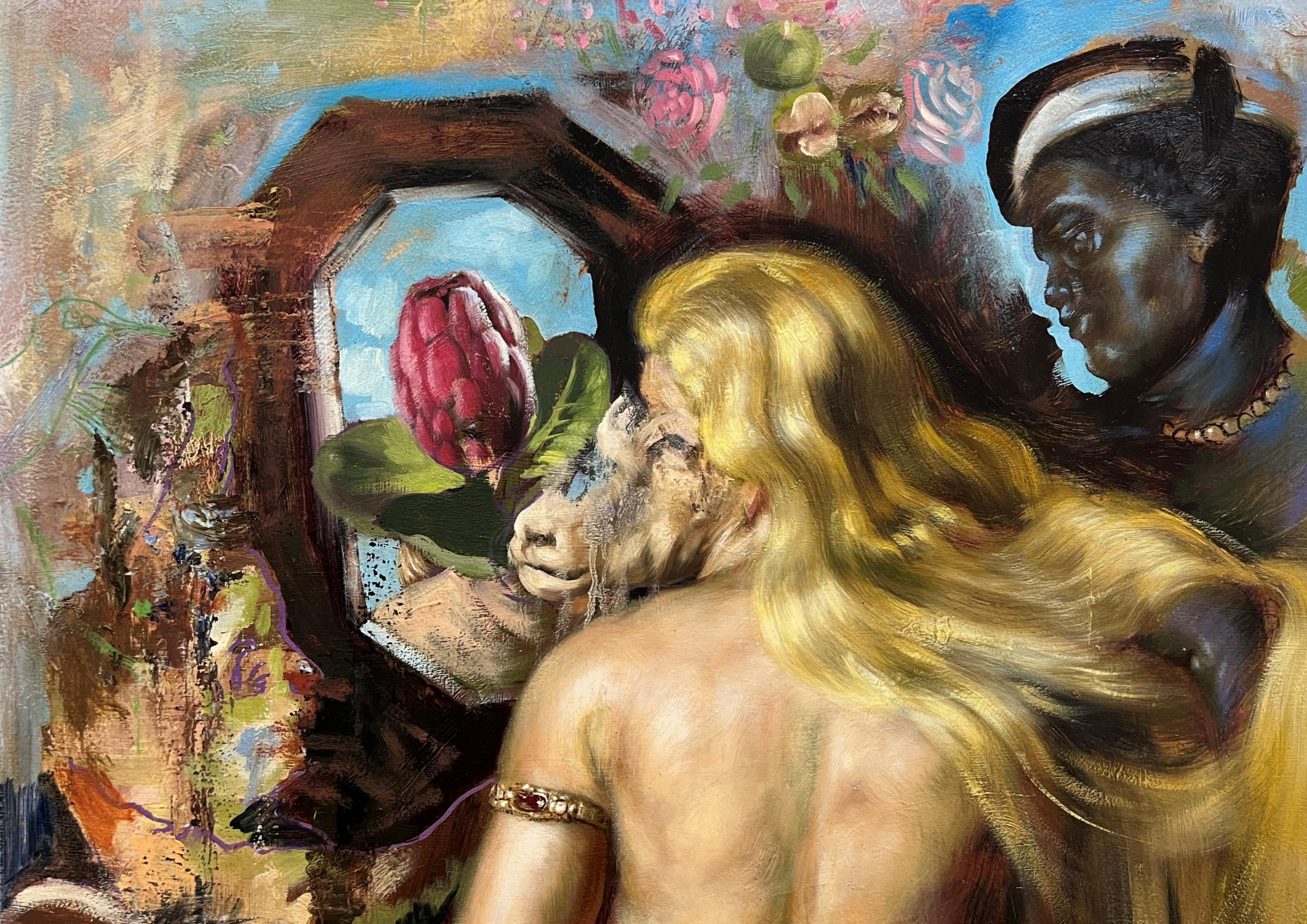
Barren Landscape, Charcoal on paper, 70.5 x 100cm, 2024



Artist's Mother Holding a Plate, Oil on canvas, 60 x 50cm, 2026



Gold and Beauty, Oil on prepared paper, 120.5 x 159.3cm, 2026





Dumping Site, Oil on canvas, 51 x 25cm, 2026



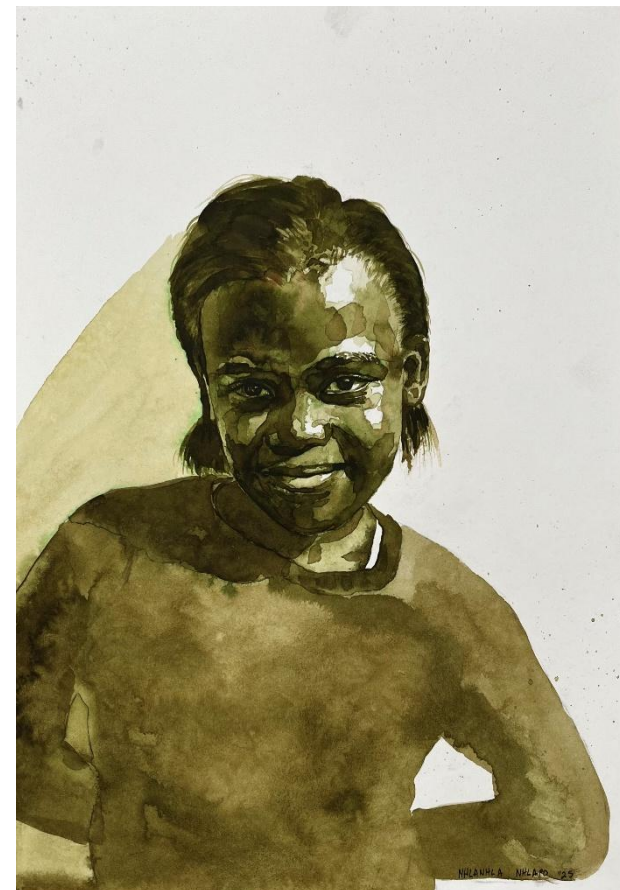
'Cry the Beloved Country', Oil on canvas, 80 x 80cm, 2026



A Boy, Ink on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, 2025



Portrait of a Boy, Ink on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, 2025



Portrait of a Girl, Ink on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, 2025





Portrait of a Boy #2, Ink on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, 2025



Father and Sons Friend, Ink on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, 2025



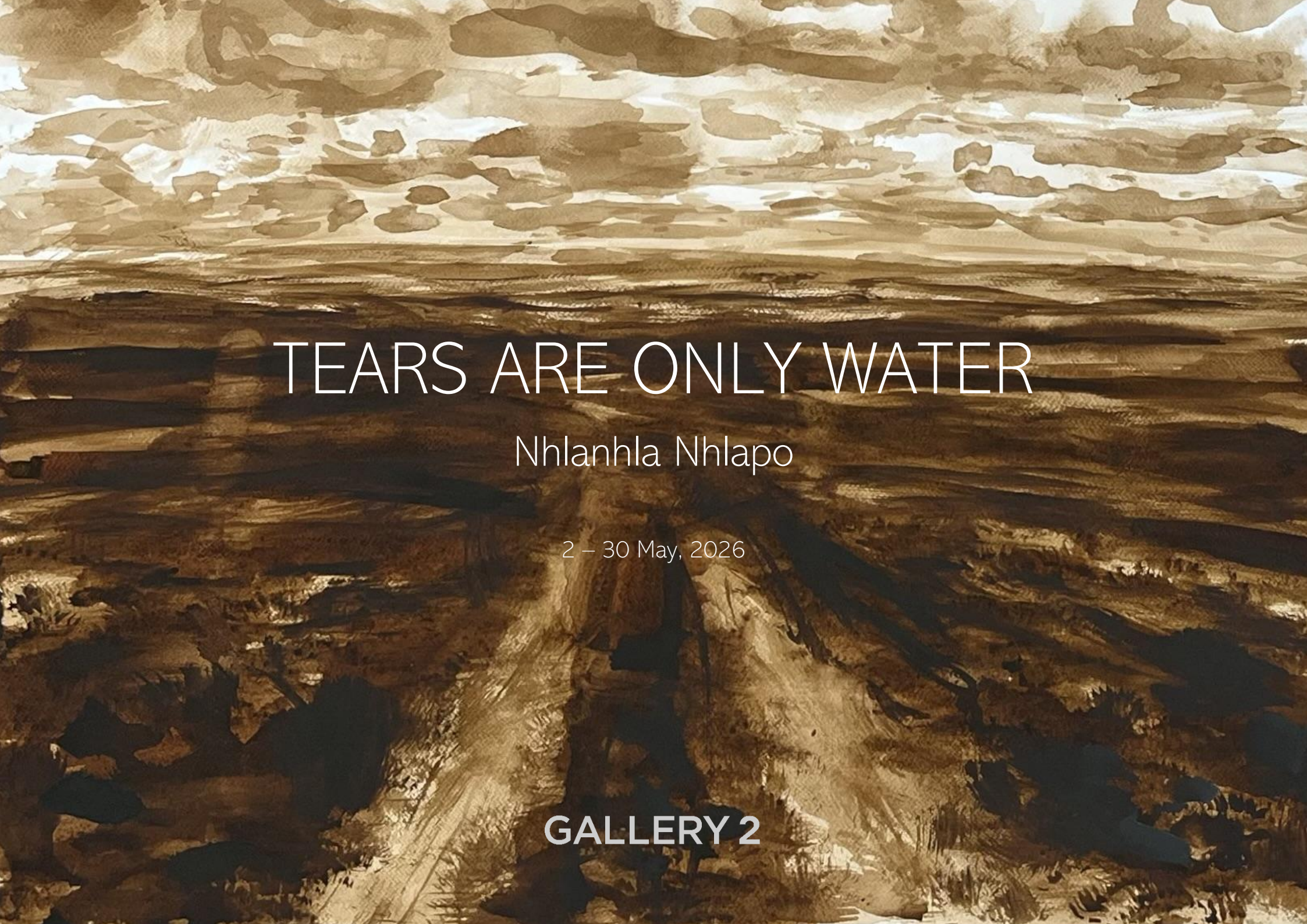
Friends, Ink on paper, 29.7 x 42cm, 2025



An Ardent Desire to a Foreign Ceremony, Oil on paper, 50.2 x 70.2cm, 2026



Free State Landscape, Ink on paper, 105 x 75cm, 2025



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