



PRESS RELEASE

Stanislaw Trzebinski's upcoming solo is an otherworldly homage to East Africa's ocean

For his first solo show with Southern Guild, Stanislaw Trzebinski creates an immersive collection of functional bronze sculpture inspired by his lifelong fascination with the ocean. *In the Absence of Light* will evoke the mystical, suspended experience of a diver beneath the waves, encountering the still and otherworldly depths teeming with life.

Stanislaw grew up in Nairobi, Kenya in a richly creative household filled with paintings by his late father – accomplished artist Tonio Trzebinski – artworks by close friends such as neighbour Peter Beard, countless books on art and design, and visceral interiors created by his fashion-designer mother Anna Trzebinski. Though they lived in the city, the pull of the ocean was ever-present. His father was an avid surfer and fisherman, and weekends were spent together free-diving, fishing and camping in Kenya's outdoors – inspiring a reverence for nature that has stayed with the artist ever since.

“As a toddler and a small boy I was obsessed with fish. I even dragged my dad’s catch into my cot one day and had a nap with it,” he remembers. “On the East African coast I waded through rock pools at low tide on the exposed reefs off Mombasa, catching reef fish with nets and on a hand line for my home aquarium while my father surfed.”

Our indifference towards nature is the biggest threat to humans, he says. “We know so little about our oceans, yet we are destroying them at such a fast rate. We don’t even know what we’re losing.” It is that sense of the unknown, the unexplored parts of the ocean and as-yet undiscovered life forms, that Stanislaw’s sculptures beckon to. Light is a recurring theme in the collection and many of the pieces include small LED lights that create the effect of bioluminescence.

In the Absence of Light continues the exploration of Stanislaw’s *Extra Terrestrial* series from 2018, enigmatic sculptural works that appear ancient and weathered even as they sprout new tendrils of life. Reminiscent of diverse organic forms such as coral, fungi and stalactites, the pieces seem to have grown biologically. Like many of his other works, they are emblazoned with the snaky, winding marks of Turing patterns, which model organic patterning in nature such as stripes and spots. Stanislaw’s new exhibition will launch a series of tables, an imposing installation of standing chandeliers (some as tall as 3.6 metres) that people can weave their way through, and suspended “sea heart” lights, among other functional sculptural works.

The guiding thread of his work to date has been an exploration of the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world and draws on his intensive exposure to wildlife, cultural diversity and artistic engagement. Although he started his career as a photographer, Stanislaw was gradually drawn most strongly to sculpture and on the strength of his portfolio briefly attended the Pratt Institute in New York in 2011. There he came to the realisation that his creativity was intimately connected to Africa, its nature and people. He moved to Cape Town in 2012, to apprentice in sculpture and bronze casting at Bronze Age Foundry, and now works out of his own dramatic loft studio in Woodstock.

Stanislaw has chosen to donate a percentage of the sales from this exhibition to Local Ocean Conservation, a Kenyan not-for-profit organisation that works to protect the country's marine environment through ocean conservation, education and outreach programmes. It focuses on the protection, rescue and rehabilitation of turtles on Kenya's southern coast and in the Watamu Marine National Park and Reserve, where Stanislaw fished, snorkelled and kite-surfed as a child.

***In the Absence of Light* runs from 26 July to 13 September 2019**

For hi-res images, interview requests and any media enquiries, please email Kelly Berman at kelly@theguildgroup.co.za

About Southern Guild

Southern Guild has spearheaded the high-end design category in Africa, propelling its artist-designers to make spirited, challenging and complex work. Since being founded in 2008 as the sole gallery representing locally made limited-edition design, Southern Guild has birthed a new category for artists and designers in South Africa. Founders Trevyn and Julian McGowan are embedded in the South African cultural landscape and play integral roles in guiding, advising and mentoring designers.

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