



THE
VIEWING
ROOM
ART GALLERY

Gallery operating hours:

Monday – Closed

Tuesday – 10h00 to 14h00

Wednesday – Closed

Thursday – 10h00 to 14h00

Friday – 10h00 to 14h00

Saturday – 9h00 to 13h00

Sunday – Closed

The Modern Tabernacle

Jolie Graca Solo Exhibition

28 August till 9 October 2021



St. Lorient
Art Gallery

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The Modern Tabernacle

Artist's Statement

Because my body is a temple, "it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."

Galatians 2 vs 20-21

The encompassing of this scripture in my life is currently moving and has moved me into depths I could have never imagined for myself. This series of artworks is about my experience as a follower of Christ. The grappling to understand and to seek him in a relationship and not religion. This scripture by my favorite Apostle Paul, constantly reminds me that God chose to die for me and live in me even while I was still a sinner. That my body has now become a temple where his spirit dwells and teaches and loves in and through me. In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle (Exodus 25) during the time of Moses was a temple where God's spirit rested and ruled. It was a place of worship. It was treated with honor, respect, and reverence. Now in the New Testament, His presence left the Tabernacle/Temple and now He resides in me. And as the chosen dwelling of the Lord, He calls me to value, respect, and honor myself. This is something I'm learning in the journey with him. I have not yet attained it but I am recognizing that it is a process of unlearning all the self-judgment and criticism I indulge in. In the journey of my life, I picked up certain things along the way. I was taught that self-love was a form of vanity. That to find any worth or value I needed to be valuable by what I do and what I have to show. This entailed being good at something or performing my identity in ways, pleased people. So, people-pleasing became a part of my identity.

When I began my walk with Christ, learning that I was loved fully and that there was nothing I did or could do to deserve it - became a struggle for me. I was a performance-based Christian and that's not the kind of relationship Christ was calling me into. And so, He is helping me slowly unlearn being approved, loved, or acknowledged for how I perform but rather start learning how I am valuable to him just because I simply am. In all the artworks I use 3 colours. Red, Purple and Blue. These 3 colours symbolize the veil of the temple. This veil, described first and most fully in descriptions of the tabernacle, was made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen. Generally, this veil separated the holy place from the holy of holies. This place (the holy of holies) was thought to be a replica of heaven in the tabernacle. Hebrews 10:20 tells us that this veil typifies Christ's body. When His body was offered on the cross, the veil in the temple tore from top to bottom. The veil being torn in two speaks of the body of Jesus Christ being broken on our behalf to make access to Him possible. It means that the barrier between us and him has been removed.

Galatians

In this work, I have chosen to use parachutes and fabrics that symbolize the Holy Spirit within me. How like a parachute God's spirit lifts me, opening glimpses of heaven to me while I am still here on earth. How he is a constant helper, leading me towards my true self. Teaching me who Jesus truly is, not who the world has depicted him to be. Teaching me who I am, not what I thought I was or who the world has taught me to be.

The strings of the parachute are attached to a young woman in the painting. This woman wears the parachutes in the same way that she wears Christ's Holy Spirit in her body. The parachute is much larger and surrounds the woman, emphasizing God's presence, his love, and power at work in her life. She wears the Holy Spirit like a beautiful garment and when they see her, they see him too. I wanted the ropes to symbolize Christ's hold on her life, that even though she will have moments of feeling like she is falling from the sky, the parachute is a safeguard keeping her from death. The red fabric symbolizes God's love, how it enfolds her above and around her head. It gives her the ability to be a beacon of light and love to others so that they too might feel Christ's love through her.

She then has become - the Modern Tabernacle.

The woman in the artwork is unaware of the presence of red fabric behind her but in her hand, she holds onto a piece of it. This speaks to the fact that even though I know Jesus loves me, it is the Holy Spirit that is helping me with the revelation of that love. It hasn't been easy for me to accept such a full love knowing I've done nothing to deserve it. And I guess I think that is what is so precious about it. We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). But what I do know is that the love God has revealed to me has transformed my life. What's amazing is - like in the artwork, although I'm holding onto a piece of it, there is so much of it I have yet to experience.



Jolie Graca

Galatians

2021

Oil and Acrylic on canvas

Unframed

139 x 168 cm

ZAR 88,340.00 (incl VAT)

Endurance: The Harvest is in the Storm

Model - Vuyisile Mgwadleka

At the beginning of my walk with God, he's showed me many miracles. Miracles from smaller prayers like 'Lord please give me more time to finish this assignment I beg you. I know I procrastinated but please Jesus, I played myself!' - and the lecturer would move the due date, or she'd be absent. I remember probably one of the greatest miracles I ever encountered was a bigger prayer for him to heal me from the grief of my mom's passing. It took years I'm not going to lie but eventually, he replaced that pain with peace. So now when I think of her I feel the warmth.

But then I started growing in Christ. His Spirit led me to the desire of reading the Bible more, finding understanding and healing in sermons, releasing my anxiety through worship, and again finding peace in his presence - while the storms were raging outside my life. I grew, and he no longer considered me a baby Christian, he saw me as a mature Christian who has learned the fundamentals - and then we went deeper. The storms were stronger, but in the process of being a student, I've been seeing that the trials have made me stronger.

This artwork then is best explained by scripture in the book of James 1 verses 2-4, where he greets us in his letter and straight-up says:

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." (James 1:2-4 NLT)

How do I get the opportunity to exercise my faith if I never have storms? That's when I realised that that's where the harvest is. That's where I got to know a little bit more about myself, what I can handle, how faithful God is to not only be there with me through the storm but meet me with a smile on the other side, saying "see? I've got you. In you, I have placed courage - you've just gotten an opportunity to see it for yourself."

This artwork I think is best described in the book of Mark, where the disciples are in a raging storm and Jesus is so relaxed that he is taking a nap.

In the book of Mark 4 verses 38 - 41, Mark writes:

"Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The disciples were terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!" (Mark 4:38-41 NLT)

In this scenario, I'm one of the disciples, seemly shocked in the storm in my life and wondering at times why God doesn't stop the storm, or how he can seem to be so silent in a time where I feel like I'm in desperate need to exit the waters. I realise later after the storm ends that this is the place that I learned endurance.



Jolie Graca

*Endurance: The Harvest is in
the Storm*

2021

Oil on Canvas

Unframed

152 x 91 cm

ZAR 38,670.00

How it Feels to be loved by God

Model - Teboho Twaie

In this artwork, the title says it all. I used to always think radical Christians loved saying "Jesus Loves You!" till I became that radical Christian. In the moments where I've felt the presence of God, I had felt his love too. It's those moments where the tears flow uncontrollably and I don't have enough tissues to fathom how much I'm crying. In the pink fabric, I wanted to show how gentle God's love is. How it is an experience that is utterly consuming from within. I'm still learning how to accept his love and forgiveness and I won't lie, it's a struggle sometimes to believe that even in my mess he loves me completely.

Jeremiah 1 verse 5 is the scripture that explains this artwork best.

When God himself says:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

I feel this scripture for me has new meaning in each season of my life. How God knew me fully before I even knew myself and knew all the faults I would make along the way - the faults I still make. And still wanted to be a part of my life, still wanted to create a purpose deep inside of me that he's equipping me for.

Still gave his life - to save mine.

I cannot fathom how unconditional that love is.



Jolie Graca

How it feels to be loved by God
2021

Acrylic on canvas

Unframed

107 x 107 cm

ZAR 17,670.00

Demon – Slayer

This artwork is about a time in my life, at the beginning of my relationship with Christ. I would have nightmares of demons and once saw one outside my door. As you can imagine this was terrifying. A friend of mine suggested I pray Psalms 91. And I'm telling you, the fear I had led me to open my Bible and reading that Psalm every night before bed. Looking back now I see that God used what was meant for my harm-for good. It led me to start reading the Bible and seeing the power of God within it. Psalm 91 gave me freedom from the fear of demons, making me realise that God can fight for me. That I have authority over demons and that's all because of Jesus leading me to believe what is written in that prayer. Therefore, allowing me to experience a miracle of now walking in a place of fearlessness towards them through prayer and rebuking in the name of Jesus.

It is also an artwork that reminded me of David's story. How so often we hear about how he slays Goliath but don't know what happened before that or what happened after. I feel this artwork embodies the faith he had in God in his time in the wilderness as he was running away from the very King he helped - Saul whose soldiers were too afraid to kill Goliath. David didn't win the battle with Goliath because he was stronger or because he had armor. He won the battle because of his faith in God which encourages me. I have used half a dress to symbolizes the veil in the tabernacle being torn in two. The other half of this veil is seen in the artwork *Endurance: The Harvest is in the Storm*.

In this work I chose to depict a bow and arrow as my weapon of choice - which is also a sword. I have clothed myself in the belt of truth and body armor which Paul explains in Ephesians 6 verses 12-14 where he states:

" For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness." (Ephesians 6:12-14 NLT)



Jolie Graca

Demon Slayer

2021

Oil and Acrylic on canvas

Unframed

152 x 99 cm

ZAR 38,670.00

Dying to the Law

In my journey with Christ, I could honestly say the Apostle Paul stood out to me most with his teachings. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 or 14 are traditionally attributed to Paul. His faith inspires me incredibly as he really suffered a lot in his life but still proclaimed Joy saying that "for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." -Philippians 4:11-13

He wore his purpose like a treasured robe even to the end of his life. How can someone walk into his life as a killer of Jesus followers and walk out dying for Jesus? Only God's power can do such. And that power that raised Jesus from the dead also lives in us when we give our lives to Christ.

This artwork is about dying to the law and sanctification. Sanctification is the outworking of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Growing up in the church it was clear to me that I needed to follow the commandments in order to be fully loved by God. That it was my good works that pleased God and my bad works that caused his anger towards me. That I needed to find a way to stop sinning. And the more I couldn't, the more guilt I felt. It was hopeless really, until I actually read the Bible for myself. I came to realise that the truth is I couldn't overcome any sin in my life without Jesus and all my efforts were useless without his spirit working in and through me. As I started reading the Bible and learning the truth that, "oh! We are all sinners, not just me", and there is no point I will get to somewhere in my adulthood where I would have finally finished sinning - like I thought to myself. Jesus died for our sins - I honestly thought that he was just doing us a favor and that because he did this I now have to repay him by living in guilt for the rest of my life as I struggle to quit addictions, in trying not to be prideful or lying and all the other sins. If I don't figure out how to stop - I thought "well I'm on my way to hell basically". I know - hectic. So when the Holy Spirit started revealing the Bible to me and giving me knowledge and understanding, I started seeing that Jesus dying on the cross was him literally giving up his life and emptying himself so that I could become full. He rose again making resurrection possible so I will live again after I die. It also made it possible for me to be cleansed from my sins if I repent. So when I believed in him he gave me his spirit, a helper to help me through this life thing.

This freed me. It gave me perspective to see if He is in me spiritually, that means he knows exactly how I feel all the time and sees my heart. He understands me more than I understand myself. I started trusting him because I know he knows exactly how it feels to be rejected, to be lonely, frustrated, tempted, poor, and ridiculed for his beliefs. In Hebrews 4 verse 15, it says "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."

So Paul says that my main requirement isn't the commandments. My main requirement as a believer is to get to know Jesus so that in him he can help me follow the commandments. Roman's 3 verse 20, says that the law reveals sin but cannot fix it. So I asked myself what's the point of the law? The answer was - to reveal what is good and what is evil. If we didn't have the law, I think there would probably be a sport in the Olympics where people would basically slaughter each other for a medal and we would all cheer for the person who killed the most people - watching on our TV screens. We probably wouldn't consider anything to be evil.

In the artwork, I show a target with arrows shot through it. The shooting is done by me in the artwork Demon Slayer. I am shooting at a paper written: "the law" to remind myself that I have been called out of a world of trying to prove my worth and my value by what I do or possess. I am deeply loved by God for who I am and not what I do. The artwork has holes that are missing the target and some arrows as well, to show that this is a work in progress, dying to the law is not something I fully comprehend yet. But it is something the Holy Spirit is helping me understand slowly but surely.

So in finality, Paul says I can't do both. I can't want to live to keep the God's commands by myself and think that will make me Holy. I need to die to the commandments and find my life in knowing Christ. In Galatians 3 verse 1, Paul basically says to go back to the law after embracing faith is "stupid".



Jolie Graca

Dying to the Law

2021

Oil on Canvas

Unframed

75 x 75 cm

ZAR 7,070.00