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Art

Designer Driaan Claassen finds the order in chaos and turns it into art

Seemingly chaotic forms always hold some underlying order in the same way that wind or the waves do, says the sculptor — a faith that manifests in his work

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BY LEANA SCHOEMAN



Artist Driaan Claassen.
Image: *Supplied*

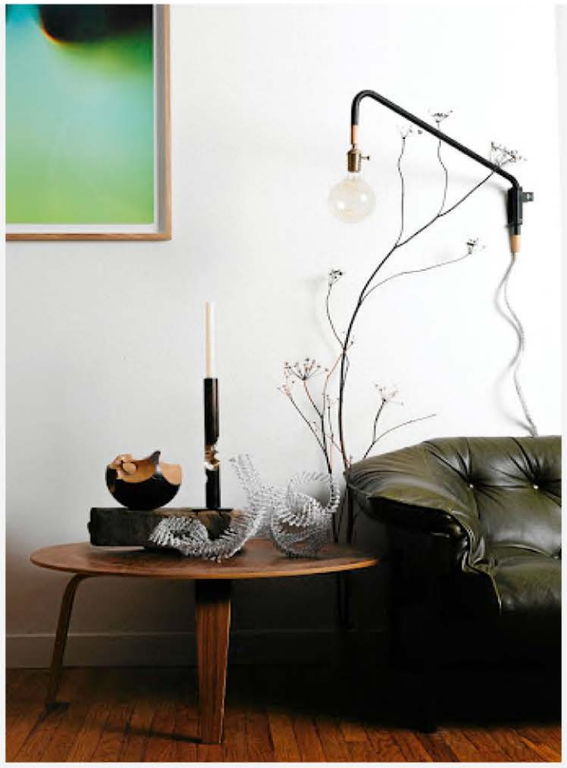
My name is Driaan Claassen, and I'm a designer and artist, among other things.

I work mostly with wood and bronze but I love working in multiple mediums and am always looking to explore new ones. One of the materials I've been working with that has finally come full circle is my sculptural wirework. I've been developing the process for over six years and, for the first time, am feeling comfortable that it will not only become part of my visual language but strengthen it.

I'm curious about the mind and how it works. I also have an interest in the parametric design systems in computers; this led me to realise that simple rules could explain complex patterns. With this outlook, I created seemingly chaotic forms that always hold some underlying order in the same way that wind or the waves do. In all of nature's chaos, there are hidden rules just below the surface.

The strong organic component in my sculptures developed naturally over time. The more I looked for balance in my life, the more the organic forms became apparent and refined in my work. In some of my previous bronze sculptures you will see a lot more chaos and disturbance, but in my current collection the newer pieces are softer and more simplified. The organic shapes can pull the eye into a dance, which is an appropriate analogy to living a successful life. It would be akin to a choreographed performance or song where one moment slips into the next without the stutter one associates with anxiety or fear, but rather gracious, sweeping motions that accompany characteristics like humility and grace.

I'm currently working on bridging the visual gap between my more geometric, grounded work and the free-form pieces that are more organic to establish a visible link that binds them narratively. Once these elements interact with one another, it will open up a new way for me to talk about and engage with my art. I have done a few tests, and I am excited about where the process is going.



Some of Driaan Claassen's work: 'Wooden Sphere 001', 'Candle Holder 004', and 'Beaded Whisp 005'.
Image: *Supplied*



Driaan Claassen works mainly in wood and bronze. Pictured here are 'Wooden Cuboid 009', 'Wooden Cuboid 004', and 'Wooden Cuboid 006'.
Image: *Supplied*

My inspiration comes from a variety of influences. Blockchain technology has exploded, and I am looking at NFTs (Non-fungible tokens*) and what that means for the future of the art industry and individual artists on a collective scale. I started as a 3D artist for architectural and product visualisation before I came into design and sculpture. I see an opportunity to bridge these two worlds and am inspired to delve deeper into things like Unreal Engine [a game development engine] and virtual reality as future tools to create spaces to showcase work or create collectible art.

My typical day, as an artist, is a balance between finding the time to create and filling the role of running a business and marketing my work. I wish I could say it was all just creation, but these days the artist is all things,

including a salesman, a businessman, and a marketing strategist. I am spread relatively thin, but I will always make time to get my hands dirty. It tends to be late at night when I pick up a chisel or start weaving some wire to allow my conscious mind to drift off and the unconscious to take over.

A significant icon in my life has been Carl Jung [the founder of analytic psychology] and his taking seriously the investigation of the subconscious mind and how that plays out within human consciousness. Jung approached his subconscious with the presupposition that it is unknown to him and yet is part of him. The more he engaged with his subconscious, the more he would integrate the unknown aspects of himself, called the shadow. Each integration opened up access to knowledge and gifts that were previously locked away. The idea that there are parts of us that can only become known by turning off the logical mind and slipping into the subconscious stuck with me. My art is subsequently delving into the subconscious, retrieving knowledge and capturing my experience in the form of a sculpture or whatever medium best suits my interpretation of what I encountered.



'Compact Whisp 003' by Driaan Claassen.
Image: *Supplied*



'Wooden Sphere 007' by Driaan Claassen.
Image: *Supplied*

There is no-one particular way to get through a creative slump. I'm inclined to explore different media, which allows me to approach work from various angles. When I examine my work in multiple forms like writing, photography, drawing or sculpture, the likelihood of me getting stuck is significantly reduced. There is also the added benefit of enriching my work with more content and insight to draw on. When I do hit a slump that I can't find a way around, I put the work aside for some time before returning to it. I will eventually pick up that string of ideas and remind myself to be patient, like with all good things in life.

My advice to aspiring young artists in SA is to learn about everything relating to art. Don't just get stuck in the creative process, it can only take you so far. Understand art in relation to our societal culture and its place and power within it. There is value in knowing where you stand and what you can offer with your unique perspective. Be informed and don't be afraid of money and doing business. There's a lot to be said about the fact that art is expensive to produce and, therefore, money is central to the creative process.