

## Natasha Norman | Kala Pani - the crossing

“This is my song of love to the sea and to the journey, the Odyssey that my seafaring people have not yet transcribed.” -Khal Torabully, 1992.

So many of us are born from the taboo of a crossing. Somewhere through the sickness of a vehicle constantly in motion, pass the phases of the moon that mark the time since departure and the loss of all vision in the blackest of storms we let go the fastness of our heraldry, our caste, our religion and collect what shipwrecked identity was left to us on the shores of a new life. Whatever generation from the original traveller, we are shaped by the memories that survived and the creativity and inventiveness of Torabully’s ‘coral imaginary’.

*Kala Pani - the crossing* is an imagined landscape of the passage between two identities. The title takes its name from the Hindu taboo of ‘crossing black waters’ that threatened the loss of caste and religion as a result of oceanic migration. It is easy to view this historical taboo as simply superstitious from our moment in history, but its warning is true in many ways that have become the cornerstone of vibrant, inventive creole culture.

The works in this exhibition pay homage to indistinct moments of loss and beauty in the letting go of cultural restraints. Fear, joy, heartache and wonder are also here in this moment of passage, often the courageous first step into an imagined future. My interest in cultural restraints has been long standing but became particularly clear after the birth of my son. Born of a Catholic, English peerage and a Hindu Tamil Indentured heritage, my child is a striking example of the creole.

Much of my thinking on this topic is shaped by Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s 2003 text, *Creolization and Creativity* in which he describes creativity as far removed from the lone genius of the Romantic tradition and creolization as ‘perhaps the most dynamic and genuinely creative’ cultural identity. An identity that is continuously redefining itself for which he uses the analogy of the sea voyage to describe creole identity as ‘rebuilding the ship at sea’ (Eriksen 2003). The Mauritian poet, Khal Torabully has also been profoundly influential. I identify with his term, ‘coral imaginary’ to describe creole identity in his research on coolitude (from the colonial term ‘Coolies’ given to indentured labourers from East Asia). Torabully adopts the symbolism of coral, a living and layered structure connected to currents, rather than the metaphorical rhizome favoured by influential post-structuralist theorists Deleuze and Guattari, to describe post-colonial creole identity. (Torabully 2012)

Many of the titles in the exhibition are inspired by lines from Torabully’s poetry and tales by Rudyard Kipling whose annual visits to Cape Town are remembered in the preservation of Kipling House in Woolsack drive. Kipling was also a creation of colonial British rule but in a very different way to the decedents of the indentured labour system. His inclusion is perhaps a moment of reflection on my own ancestral crossings that arrived in cabin class or steerage and not bound as a labourer. Regardless of class, caste, history or religion this exhibition is a landscape of passage. A star haul from the ocean of change that we are all going through. Here, in this imagined space outside the clockworks of time, is the sea.

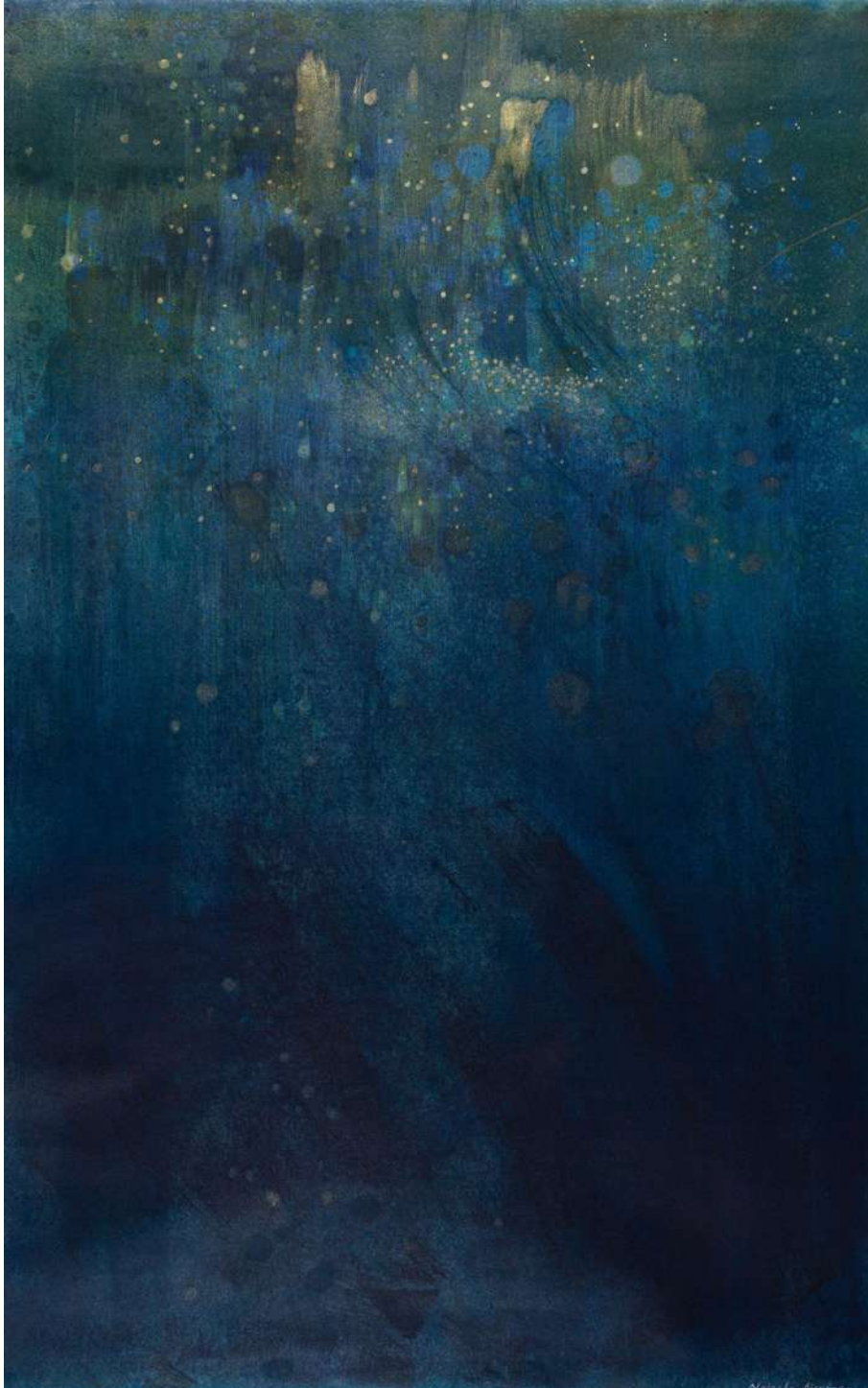
## Sources:

Khal Torabully, 2012. 'When the Indies meet the imaginations of the world' in Gesine Müller & Ottmar Ette (ed.) *Worldwide. Archipelagos of globalization*. Archipelagos de la globalización. A Transarea Symposium, Madrid - Frankfurt am Main, Iberoamericana, Vervuert, 2012, p70.

Khal Torabully, 1992. *Cale d'Étoiles - Coolitude*, Réunion, Editions Azalées. *Cargo Hold of Stars - Coolitude* translated from the French by Nancy Naomi Carlson, 2021. Seagull Books: London, p108.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 2003. 'Creolization and Creativity' in *Global Networks* 3. 3 (2003) 223-237. Blackwell and Global Networks Publishing.

# 99 LOOP



*Cargo Haul of Stars, 2024*  
Monotype prints on washi  
97 x 60 cm  
Framed: 102 x 67 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with light mount)  
ZAR 26,000

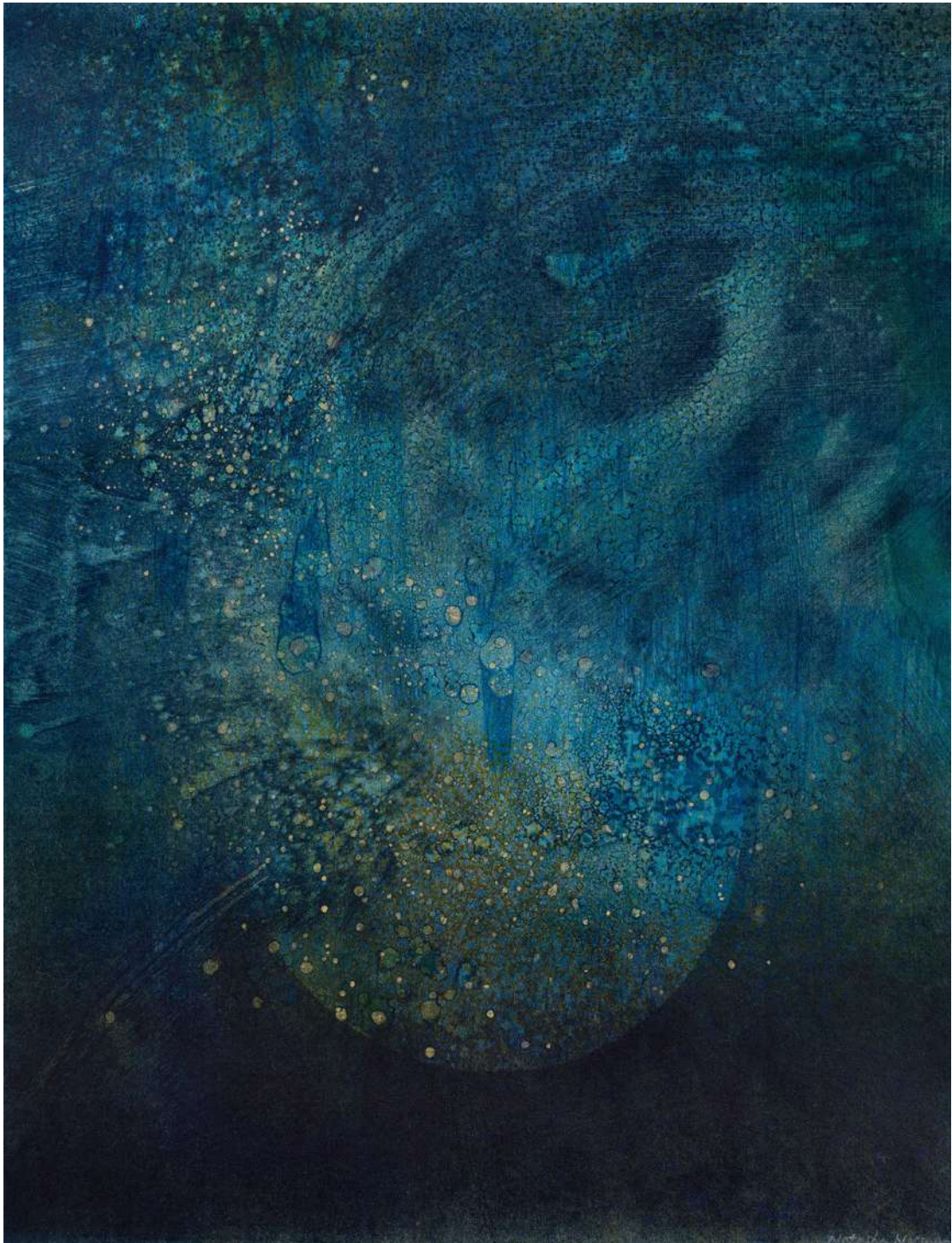
# 99 LOOP



*The Landing, 2024*  
Monotype print on washi  
97 x 63 cm  
Framed: 101.5 x 71 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with light mount)  
ZAR 26,000



# 99 LOOP



*Blue Womb, 2024*  
Monotype print on washi  
63 x 48 cm  
Framed: 69.6 x 54.2 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with dark mount)  
ZAR 18,000



# 99 LOOP



*Pau Amma, 2024*  
Monotype print on washi  
63 x 48 cm  
Framed: 69.6 x 54.2 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with dark mount)  
ZAR 18,000

# 99 LOOP



*Black Waters, 2024*  
Monotype print on washi  
63 x 48 cm  
Framed: 72.2 x 54 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in walnut with light mount)  
ZAR 18,000



# 99 LOOP



*Distant Squall*, 2024  
Monotype print on washi  
56 x 48 cm  
Framed: 68.2 x 54 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in walnut with light mount)  
ZAR 18,000



# 99 LOOP



*Time and Tide | Crescent Moon, 2024*

Monotype print on washi

48 x 31.5 cm

Framed: 55.3 x 39 x 4.5 cm

(Framed in kiasat with dark mount)

ZAR 13,000

# 99 LOOP



*Time and Tide | Full Moon, 2024*  
Monotype print on washi  
48 x 31.5 cm  
Framed: 55.2 x 39 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with dark mount)  
ZAR 13,000



# 99 LOOP



*Time and Tide | Gibbous Moon, 2024*

Monotype print on washi

48 x 31.5 cm

Framed: 55.3 x 39 x 4.5 cm

(Framed in kjaat with dark mount)

ZAR 13,000

# 99 LOOP



*Time and Tide | Quarter Moon, 2024*

Monotype print on washi

48 x 31.5 cm

Framed: 55.3 x 39 x 4.5 cm

(Framed in kiaat with dark mount)

ZAR 13,000



# 99 LOOP



*Time and Tide | Sliver Moon, 2024*

Monoprint print on washi

48 x 31.5 cm

Framed: 55.3 x 39 x 4.5 cm

(Framed in kiat with dark mount)

ZAR 13,000





*A Sudden Lightness, 2024*  
Mokuhanga woodblock print  
Single edition  
1/3  
60 x 46 cm  
Framed: 66 x 52 x 4.6 cm  
(Framed in walnut with light mount)  
ZAR 10,000





*What Joy to Come Falling, 2023*  
Mokuhanga woodblock print  
Single edition  
3/4  
61 x 46 cm  
Framed: 67 x 51.8 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with light mount)  
ZAR 10,000



*Soaked with the Sky, 2023*  
Mokuhanga woodblock print  
Single edition  
3/6  
61 x 46 cm  
Framed: 67 x 51.8 x 4.5 cm  
(Framed in kiaat with light mount)  
ZAR 10,000



## About the Artist

Natasha Norman (b.1982) completed her Honours (2005) and Masters (2011) degree in Fine Art at the University of Cape Town. She currently works as a part-time lecturer, arts writer and practicing artist. Throughout her art training and career she has consistently been inspired by the medium and technical challenges of print. She trained in traditional Western print methods at the University of Cape Town and subsequently attended residencies in Japan to study the Japanese relief print method, Mokuhanga.

Natasha's mastery of printmaking enables her to work across various print techniques. Her work is deeply inspired by her experiences of the natural world. Her practice is about experiencing time and place. In her optically shifting colour layers and planes of marks and tone is an elementary, sensory memory.

In recent works, Natasha has taken much inspiration from the Japanese cultural aesthetic wabi sabi. Her study of this term that defies translation has fostered an appreciation for the beauty in transient natural moments and a sense of spiritual well-being centred on imperfection and simplicity. The theme of her work tends toward expressing the momentary and experiential in a pared-down language of mark and form that seeks to evoke a resonant response in the viewer rather than portray a particular event.