



# VIVIEN KOHLER

SOUTH AFRICA

Vivien Kohler is a painter based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Like millions of other South Africans, Kohler has navigated the social geography of a racially turbulent society his entire life. Kohler's work, whether hyperrealistic or his more recent abstracted pieces, has always drawn from his surroundings, the realities which make up life in Johannesburg. That is why Kohler's work mostly centers on the themes of migration, marginalization, and displacement in the urban landscape of postapartheid South Africa. "My aim is to narrate the overcoming of unfair perception in an attempt to attain the authentic self," says Kohler. "Whether it is a personal perception of one's circumstances, a generalization thrust upon you by society, or a wrestling with your inner self. The obstacle might seem insurmountable, yet in reality, the issue is only skin deep." Kohler constructs and paints on assemblage pieces. Kohler does not seek to hide the realities of unfair perception, but to symbolically represent resilience and strength. The artist's creative process involves using discarded objects. He transforms these remnants into powerful displays, reflecting his characters' triumph over their limiting circumstances. "My heritage is that of one birthed from two different racial groups and its inevitable political discharge," says Kohler. "The search for home is not always a physical one. My endeavor is to find the home within my own skin." (AB)

1  
Those who dream  
2014, grout and  
oil on board  
150 × 175 cm

2  
Pieta'  
2019, campaign posters,  
acrylic and oil on board  
182 × 193 cm

3  
My Iron Lung  
2014, found metal  
objects, grout,  
and oil on board  
170 × 146 × 4 cm

4  
(next spread)  
SY8^>>.&7 (Sybariter)  
2021, spray paint  
and ink on MDF  
30 × 38 cm

5  
(next spread)  
Young Prince  
of Aksum  
2020, oil and spray  
paint on canvas  
30 × 40 cm

