



School: School of Fine Art

Researcher: Mariele Neudecker

Project Title: Amani Vanitas and Plastic Vanitas

UOA: 32

300-Word Statement

The starting point for this collection was a 2013 workshop on the anthropology of Tropical and Arctic field stations in Finse (Norway). Residencies followed in 2014 in Amani, an abandoned postcolonial station in Tanzania, and in 2015 at the Museum of Design in Plastics [MoDoP] in Bournemouth, resulting in Neudecker's photographic, video and sculptural 'Vanitas works'. Plastic Vanitas is a re-presentation of the plastics collection as Vanitas Still-lives, 49 individually framed photographs that aim to be understood and exhibited as an evolved museum painting collection.

Using the Vanitas genre, each object was re-staged in MoDiP, creating new relationships, analogies and meanings, according to weight and physical place in the collection. In Amani the objects and situations were left depicted unarranged and untouched, both projects were asking:

1. What constitutes a collection, an archive, and what does the conservation of objects, plastics repurposing as well as plastic pollution mean today?
2. How do we represent (im)materiality and (im)mortality?
3. Past, present and future is relevant with the Vanitas series: how do we understand both 'the archive' and 'the environment' in relation to this moving timeline?

The Amani Vanitas Works refer to the Latin for vanity, in the sense of 'emptiness' or a 'worthless action'. In the arts, Vanitas is associated especially with still life painting in 17th century Flanders and the Netherlands. In the moving image works from Amani, the imagery emerges overlaid with voices and sounds from ambiguous times and places.

In addition to the extensive international exhibitions of the Plastic and Amani Vanitas works, Neudecker was also invited to discuss her ideas in the wider context of the 2019 *Plastics Heritage: History, Limits and Possibilities Congress* in Lisbon . These works attempt to bring to life knowledge of our Anthropological Heritage, History Painting and our responsibilities for the environment.