

The pinhole offers an eerie or ghostlike quality to the photographic medium. It's this creepy aesthetic that marks South African artist Tenille van den Berg's photography so well. Creating photos inspired by loss, van den Berg attempts to answer the question of what really happens when we leave this world and move on to the next. She effectively experiments with materials and technique, and in doing so has produced a body of work that can move the observer to feel as though they too have crossed over to some different plane.



Van den Berg's analog manipulation of negative exposures in the dark-room opens up possibilities for the unknown in her creations. The photographs are created in two ways; some are made by using a pinhole camera, and others by using a method of direct exposure. The techniques themselves reference the main themes of her work. The pinhole pieces, with their ghost-like and ethereal mood, are representative of the inexplicable and mysterious movement toward the afterlife. The ghostly images of feet signify crossing over as well as staying grounded. On the other hand, her direct exposure technique produces strange petal-like shapes, which are based on the images of enlarged cancer cells. These magnified experimental images represent medicine and science: the things we know to be real.

When asked about the repeated medical imagery in her work, van den Berg clarified that the photos were a response to "a battle that was lost against cancer." However, it wasn't traditional medicine or hospitals that inspired the imagery. "I like to think of it more in a crazy scientist type of way," she explains. "I think of my photos as an experiment to get an answer to what the transition between this world and the spiritual world might be like."

Van den Berg's back-and-forth between the known and the unknown – the familiar and the undeterminable – is an attempt at capturing the frailty and perplexity of human life.

From an early age van den Berg looked to art for answers. In grade school, she was drawn to the liberation that creating art granted her. Later



# Tenille van den Berg







in life, her creative spirit pushed her to continue her studies which resulted in enrolling at Tshwane University of Technology in 2001. From there, she traveled the world, took on odd jobs abroad, got married, and even operated her own wellness center and garden design business. She ultimately completed her schooling in Pretoria, South Africa in 2012. The questions she has been asking

through her art along the way have certainly provided some fruitful answers. A hard-earned fine art degree in hand, van den Berg continues her artistic journey. She currently lives and works in Daegu. **[b]**

*Lisa Highfill*