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Members Les Cohn, Taryn Cohn

Tel/Fax +27 (0)11 447 2855 | Mobile Les +27 (0) 82 395 7417 Taryn +27 (0) 83 671 5139 | Web www.artsourcesouthafrica.co.za

P O Box 569 Rivonia 2128 Gauteng South Africa | lescohn@artsourcesouthafrica.co.za taryncohn@artsourcesouthafrica.co.za

VAT no 4250242437

Exhibition Title: *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* By Wilma Cruise

Project Vision:

"The journey is reason in itself..."

The Artist's Statement

Cruise in her catalogue *The Alice Diaries* (2012), questions, "Do we really deserve our place on top of the Cartesian pile?"

In drawing, print and word, Cruise explores the curious interface between Alice in Wonderland and the animals that inhabit her dream world.

In Wonderland the animals have agency. They speak. But Alice does not always understand what is happening. She is pushed and pulled hither and thither in a confusion of understanding. "Who are you?" asks the caterpillar. A little while later the pigeon rephrases the question: "What are you?" To neither has Alice the answer.

The caterpillar's question is significant. Who is Alice.... and by extrapolation who are we? Are we right to presume our position of superiority in relation to the animals? Do we really deserve our place on top of the Cartesian pile as it were? It is an ontological question. The drawings, prints and sculptures that make up the Alice Series explore these ideas.

"Alice" functions as an alter ego – that part that delves into the dark hole of pre-consciousness. The animals, such as those that inhabit Alice's world - a pig, a hare, a cat, a dog - carry a burden of meaning, not as universal archetypes in a Jungian sense, although this is perhaps unavoidable, but as carriers of other pre-conscious meanings yet to be deciphered. Like the Cheshire cat the pig smiles sealed in her hermetic world of pigness and pig knowledge.

In the tale of Alice in Wonderland words enhance the sense of a world inverted and turned around; one that is absurd and contradictory. Phrases from the text are used in the prints, drawn on a series of blackboards and on the walls, providing a link between Alice's elusive world and the animals that gaze out at the viewer. The words do not explain the images nor do they make (logical) sense suggesting that language fails in the face of animal-human interaction. Instead it is in the area of the pre-linguistic 'the in-between space', that possible answers lie. It is in the body and between bodies that signification lies.

'Alice' lends itself to a psychoanalytical decoding. Dreams supply images that are loaded with signification in coded form. Early childhood dream imagery provides the material research on the twin assumption that at this juncture, human and animal interface is not inhibited by language and that imagery is heavily loaded toward the animal.

Project team: Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?

The project is managed and supported by *Art Source South Africa* – in partnership with artist, Wilma Cruise.

WILMA CRUISE PROFILE

Wilma Cruise is a South African artist specialising in sculpture. She has also produced a number of works on paper, which often arise through a process of her translation of drawings toward work in the sculptural medium. In her work, Cruise is preoccupied with the body and the way that the body is represented in space, forming a link between inner realities and the social environment. Cruise's work also engages with human-animal interaction. In writing of her work, Dr Gerhard Schoeman comments: "Both intertwined and apart from humans, animals in Cruise's work appear as witnesses to the precariousness of being in the world. Tangled with the fragility of human beings, animals matter."

Language often also plays a central role in her work, as the means of articulating and understanding one's own position in relation to others on both conscious and sub-conscious levels – in what she calls "the space between".

Cruise has had sixteen solo exhibitions, curated others and completed a number of commissioned public works including the national monument to the women of South Africa. She is pursuing her doctoral studies at Stellenbosch University in the field of animal ethics. The question of the animal is the subtext of her solo exhibition project which launches at the 2013 Grahamstown National Arts Festival, *Will you, won't you will you join the dance*. This exhibition is the fourth in a cycle of works that forms part of *The Alice Sequence*.

Cruise also writes extensively in the field of ceramics. She is a Fellow of the Association of Ceramics Southern Africa. She was invited to participate in the prestigious 7th Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale in Seoul, Korea in September 2013. This International Prize is limited to 30 artists world-wide selected from over 90 nominations.

Cruise's work is represented in public, corporate and private collections throughout South Africa.

<http://www.wilmacruise.com/>



Wilma Cruise, *Detail of Alice: Self Portrait II*, Mixed media drawing on paper, 200 x 100cm, 2011. Photo: Ant Strack