



JOSEPH PISANI
THE SMOKE
THAT THUNDERS
EXHIBITION CATALOG 2017

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
ZAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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INSPIRED BY A SELF-DRIVE SAFARI & PURE AFRICAN ADVENTURE



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Step One: Fly to Lusaka, Zambia and pick up a specially modified, 4x4 truck at the airport from a guy nicknamed «Snake».

Step Two: Ride off into the African «Bush» with dreams of hunting «The Big 5» game with my camera while savoring my self-guided, self-driven safari as the inspiration for my next series of art work.

Leaving South Africa, I felt confident, after having spent a couple relaxing weeks studying up on the trip and learning about the hazards of off-road driving: skills like maneuvering through deep, heavy sand, dealing with giant elephants charging at your truck, and sleeping in a tent while lions and hippos roam free beside you. However, standing there in the airport parking lot as rain started to pour down, I began to question myself as Mr. Snake causally explained the details of this specially modified, safari monster.

As the storm intensified, I pulled out of the parking lot heading north, with my clothes soaking wet and my head buzzing with anticipation. My itinerary was completely open aside from the borders of the four

countries I was cleared to take the vehicle into: Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe & Namibia. Now all I needed to do was find a place to sleep.

Join me at my next solo exhibition, «The Smoke that Thunders» (the native name for the Victoria Falls), where I've translated this amazing journey into paintings, photographs and sculptures...

Joseph Pisani: a New York artist & photographer who calls Zurich home. His adventure travel to 70+ countries while purposely avoiding the easy route become the inspiration for his art. As he explains it: «Spontaneity keeps things fresh, while serendipity guides me through it all. Along with many amazing experiences, there have been a few rough spots along the way, but these often turn out to be the best memories». Pisani has extensively exhibited his art internationally including a solo show at the United Nations (UNO) in Geneva, and a permanent exhibit at the US consulate in Zurich. Pisani has also been written about numerous times by the Swiss media and has appeared on TV and radio including as a guest on the Swiss television talk show «Aeschbacher»...



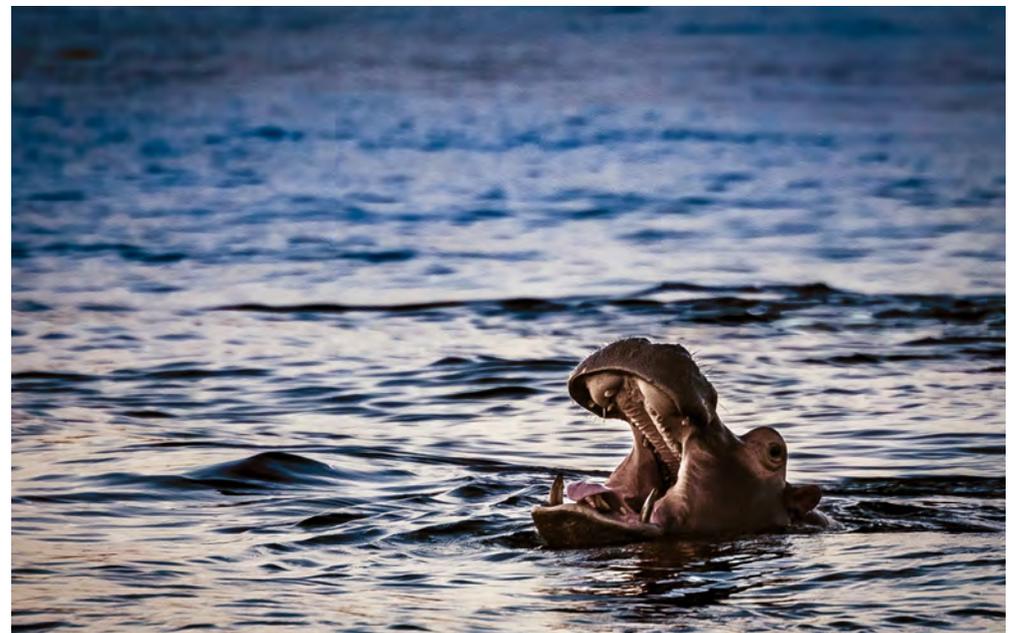


THE BACKGROUND STORY: ON THE BANKS OF THE GREAT ZAMBEZI

The Zambezi (meaning «great river») flows along the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe and is an awe inspiring life source, teeming with wild beasts and wonder.

My first experience with the Zambezi was aboard a small boat, and at the time, I was blissfully unaware of the many dangers it contained. Upon approaching the boat, the captain grabbed my shoulder, cautioning me to beware of the crocodiles that might be lurking on the banks, ready to pounce. Once aboard, I witnessed large herds of hippos scattered in every direction, and the boat captain was again careful by keeping a good distance, claiming that they could easily capsize a boat of our size.

As the sun began to set, the sky exploded into wonderful hues of blue, red and orange that danced and glittered on the water — a poetic feast of colors and emotion that immediately captured me. While gazing out into the distance, and viewing the reeds and plants mirroring off the water and into the horizon, I had already began to create this painting in my head...





THE BACKGROUND STORY: THE SMOKE THAT THUNDERS

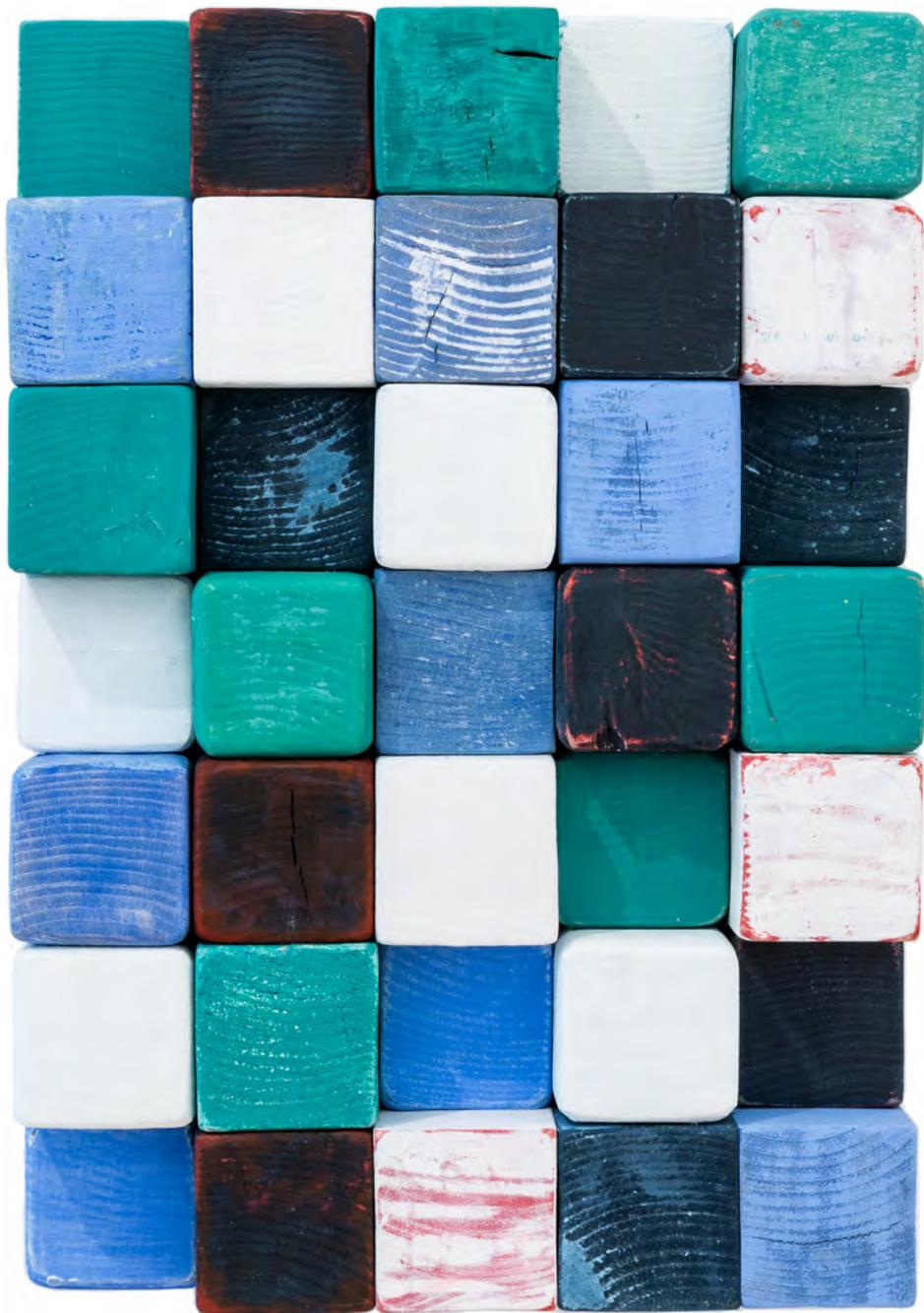
The Smoke that Thunders (Mosi-oa-Tunya) is the native name for the Victoria Falls — the largest waterfall in the world. The falls are located on the Zambezi river on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In his diary, explorer David Livingstone wrote of the falls: «Scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.»

Upon arrival, it's easy to understand how this massive waterfall became named «The Smoke that Thunders». The Zambezi river drops over the beautiful terrain with a giant roar as a cloud of spray shoots skyward forming a giant, ever-present rainbow. The spray is actually visible from the town of Livingston, Zambia, 14 kilometers away!

This painting, one of a series of three inspired by the Victoria Falls, is the one that most closely resembles my translation of this natural wonder and all its magnificence: clouds of smoky spray dripping upwards into the blue sky in a roar beauty...

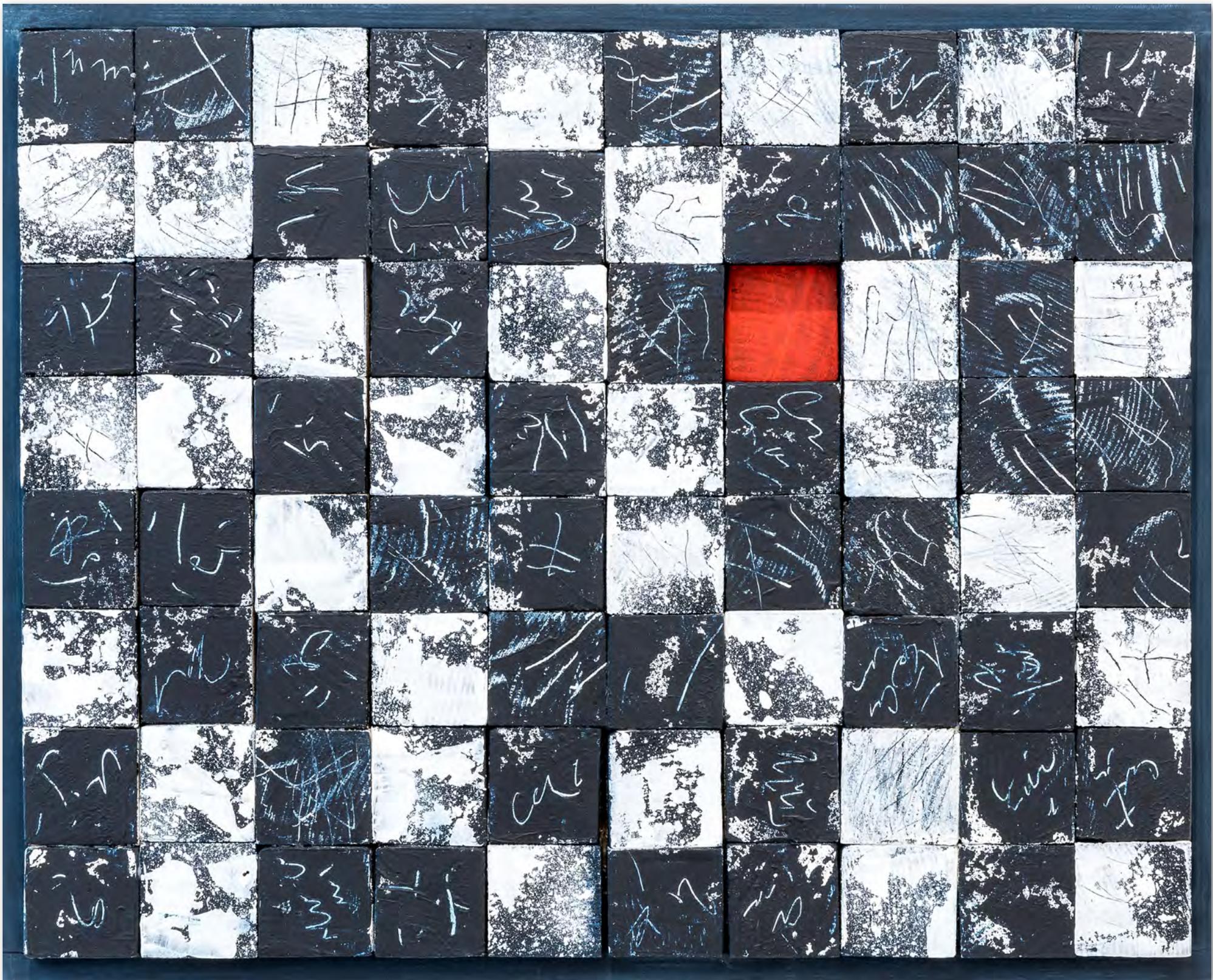




GREETINGS FROM THE AFRICAN BUSH, 2016
17.5 X 22.2 X 4.5 CM | ACRYLIC ON WOODEN CUBES



THE SMOKE THAT THUNDERS 2, 2016
100 X 120 CM | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS



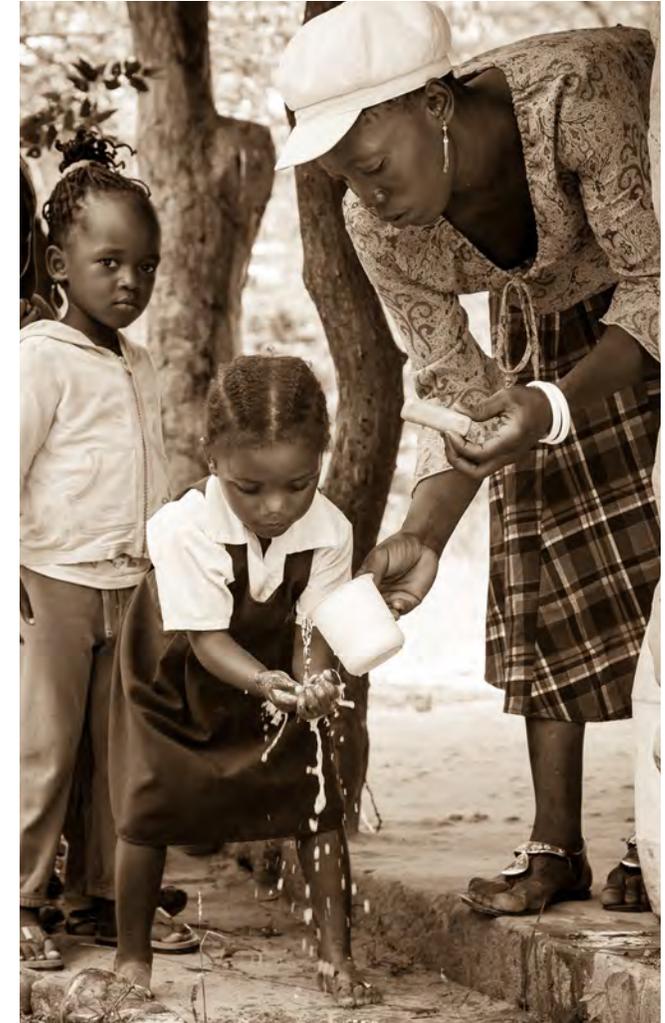
THE BACKGROUND STORY: BUSH SCHOOL CHALK BOARD

My visit to a open air, bush school in Zambia was eye opening for me. With a simple thatched roof, dirt floor, and open on three sides, it was extremely basic, to say the least. Without any toilet or running water, washing the children's hands before lunch was accomplished by the teacher pouring a small pail of water from above as the students rubbed their hands against a small bar of soap. While this struck me rather deeply, nothing summed up the situation more, than the old, dilapidated chalk board sitting on the floor in the front of the class. It was so tattered and worn, I wondered how the students could actually read anything on it.

From this worn black board, with cracks and holes, scratched deep with white chalk dust came the idea, and a potential way I too could somehow help out. It was at that moment that I decided to make a piece based on this bush school chalk board, and use the proceeds from the sale to buy them a new one, that they could better use...



CLOSE UP VIEW OF THE
ACTUAL CHALK BOARD



HANDWASHING TIME

THE BACKGROUND STORY: BUSH SCHOOL CHALK BOARD





WORK PLAN FOR THE TERM

WK	DAY	ACTIVITY	Time
1	MON	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	TUE	Project visitation	8:00-12:00
1	WED	School management	8:00-12:00
1	THU	Check up on school work	8:00-12:00
1	FRI	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	SAT	Check up on school work	8:00-12:00
1	SUN	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	MON	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	TUE	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	WED	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	THU	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	FRI	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	SAT	Office work	8:00-12:00
1	SUN	Office work	8:00-12:00



SCHOOL VISION
Quality and accessible education
for betterness of tomorrow for all

MISSION STATEMENT
An excellent learning in a
competitive environment.



THE BACKGROUND STORY: THE SOUNDS OF THE DARKNESS 1 & 2

On a small strip of Namibia, nestled between Angola, Zambia & Botswana, and bordered by the Okavango, Kwando, Chobe and Zambezi rivers is the Caprivi Strip. I had traveled from Botswana through the bush (rather than by the main street route) into Namibia, only using the actual street for a short time while clearing customs.

It was getting late, and I was looking for a camping spot that was supposed to be along the route. After driving for a while with a herd of wildebeest running parallel to my truck, I found the ranger, and settled in for the night, quickly preparing my tent and the fire, to ward off the wild animals.

Close to my tent was the Zambezi river, filled with the familiar sounds of hippos carrying over the water, as the crickets and frogs, and insects of the night started to take over. As I lay in darkness, mystified by the beautiful sounds, mixed with lions calling in the distance, the orchestra built into an amazing crescendo, and «Songs of the Darkness» was born.

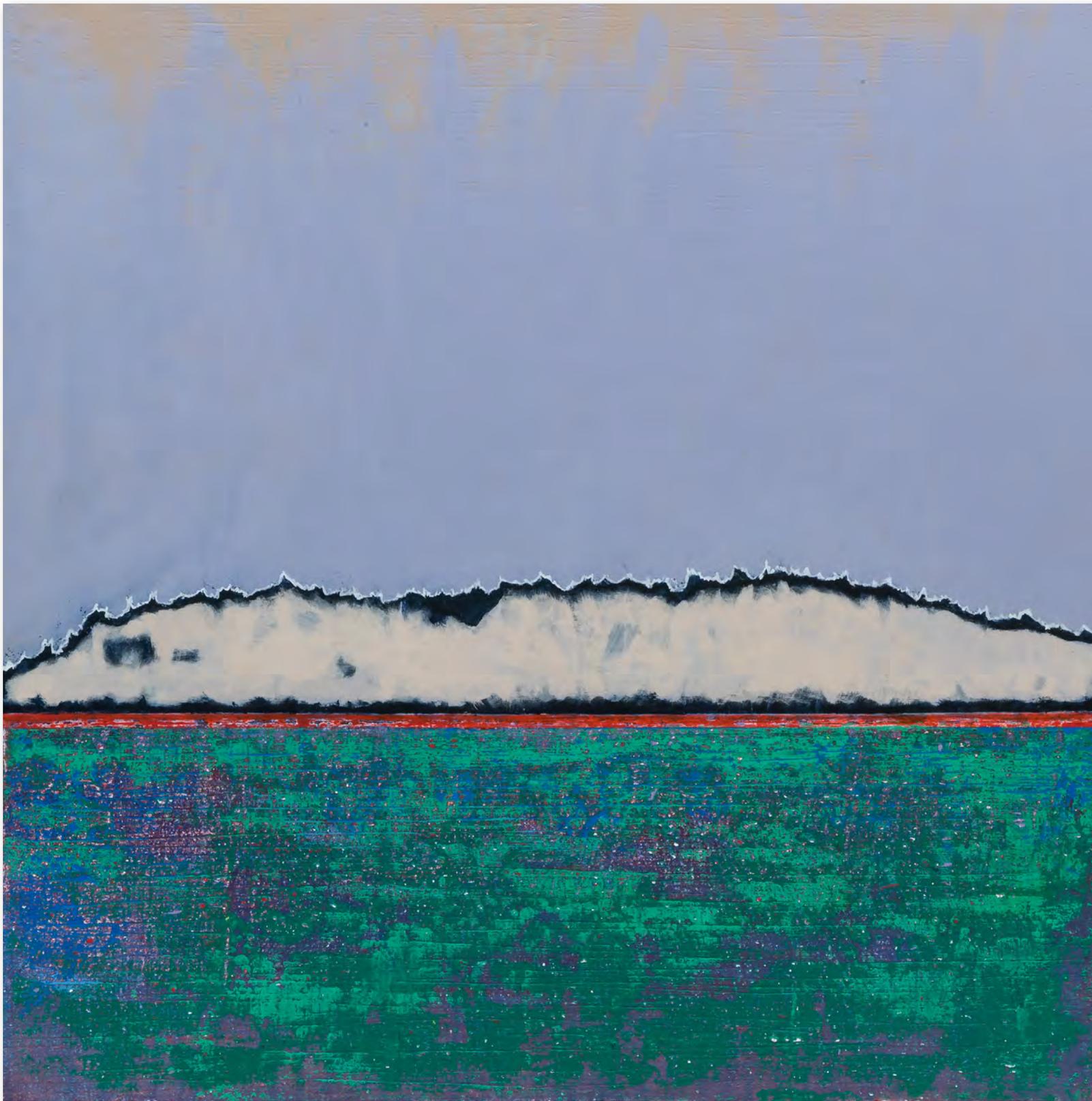


THE SONGS OF THE DARKNESS
(THINGS THAT GROWL IN THE NIGHT)









THE BACKGROUND STORY: THE JOURNEY TO SAVUTI

After reading about Savuti, Botswana, and the difficulty it would be to get there, I was immediately intrigued. A warning talked about the incredibly remote area and that the trip would take five hours through the bush on paths of heavy, thick sand and went on to suggest that it was for experienced four-wheel drive operators only. Thinking back to the 4x4 that I once owned, and mountain glaciers I visited with it in Colorado gave me a false sense of confidence, as I began to picture myself on this journey.

However, nothing I could have visualized would have prepared me for this grueling and exciting adventure. Luckily, I read about deflating the tires to stay afloat on the sand, which actually helped out a lot. Nothing I read though prepared my for the elephants that randomly ran out in front of my truck along the way though...

Once I finally did arrive, aside from an anti-poaching team from the Botswana military, and the two rangers that kept the camp running, the only other people around were a team of film makers from National Geographic who helped me to track a pride of thirteen lions that they were filming.

A short video about this part of my trip can be viewed on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImSJSdlQr9I





22 | OUR MEETING WITH THE VILLAGE ELDERS 1, 2016 ●
50 X 64 CM, ACRYLIC ON PAPER, FRAMED WITH PASSE-PARTOUT (70 X 100 CM)

THE BACKGROUND STORY: OUR MEETING WITH THE VILLAGE ELDERS

The background story of «Our Meeting with the Village Elders» started simply enough, by my actual meeting with the «elder» of a small Zambian bush village, located only a few kilometers from the Zambezi river.

The meeting in itself was somewhat strange, and involved few spoken words. Despite the fact that most of the people I met during the trip spoke English quite well, he seemed not to. Or maybe, he just didn't want to. This made me rather unsure of what, if anything, was expected from me as far as etiquette and custom while meeting tribal royalty for the first time. In situations like these, I've often found that a spontaneous portrait, can be a great way to get things going. Pointing to my camera, I asked him if it would be OK for me to take his photo. Since he wasn't very intent on moving, I instead had to shift my position to somewhat alter the available background. After a few «snaps», I walked over, and showed him the results on the digital screen, finally eliciting the first signs of a smile...

From there, things went much more smoothly, and I started to think about days past, when village elders potentially played a much larger role in the politics



MY MEETING WITH THE VILLAGE ELDER IN A SMALL ZAMBIAN BUSH VILLAGE

of African tribes. I also wondered about his relatively modern attire. Was it cliché that I had expected him to be dressed much more traditionally? With this, the idea of African tribal masks began to play in my head.

It was from this unique encounter that the idea to bring back some of the figurative aspect into my work was born, growing into a series of paintings about two curious, and somewhat skeptical people meeting together in the African bush.







26 | AFRICAN MASK (A STUDY OF OUR MEETING OF THE VILLAGE ELDERS, 2016
50 X 64 CM, ACRYLIC ON PAPER, FRAMED WITH PASSE-PARTOUT (70 X 100 CM)



THE BACKGROUND STORY: PARADISE BY THE WATERHOLE

During my African adventure, waterholes were always a prime location for me to sit by and enjoy nature while watching the amazing animals of the bush interact. One of many benefits to driving and guiding myself on this trip was the freedom to go wherever I wanted and stay as long as I wanted. If I had taken a guided game drive, this would have all been decided by the guide and others in the group, and I'm sure that I would never have been able to capture the photographs I did, or discover the incredible inspiration that I found.

Often, upon finding an interesting waterhole, I would park at a strategic location, get my camera in the ready position and wait with open windows, usually writing in my journal during the quiet moments. There was always great anticipation and surprise as to what animals would show up next. And, as the herds would come and go, I realized each had their own distinct way of approaching, and scouting out potential danger. Baboons organized themselves with front and rear scouts sitting on top of high vantage points as the rest of the troop would follow in a military like fashion. Giraffes were much slower in their approach, but they too seemed to have a system where some would hang back and scout for danger as the others spread their long legs wide to crouch down and quickly drink. I could sit by these waterholes for the entire day in pure wonderment. It was truly a paradise, watching the beauty of nature surround me.



PARADISE BY THE WATERHOLE

While staring out into the distance with gleeful anticipation of what would appear next on the horizon, «Paradise by the Waterhole» already started to take shape in the canvas of my mind...







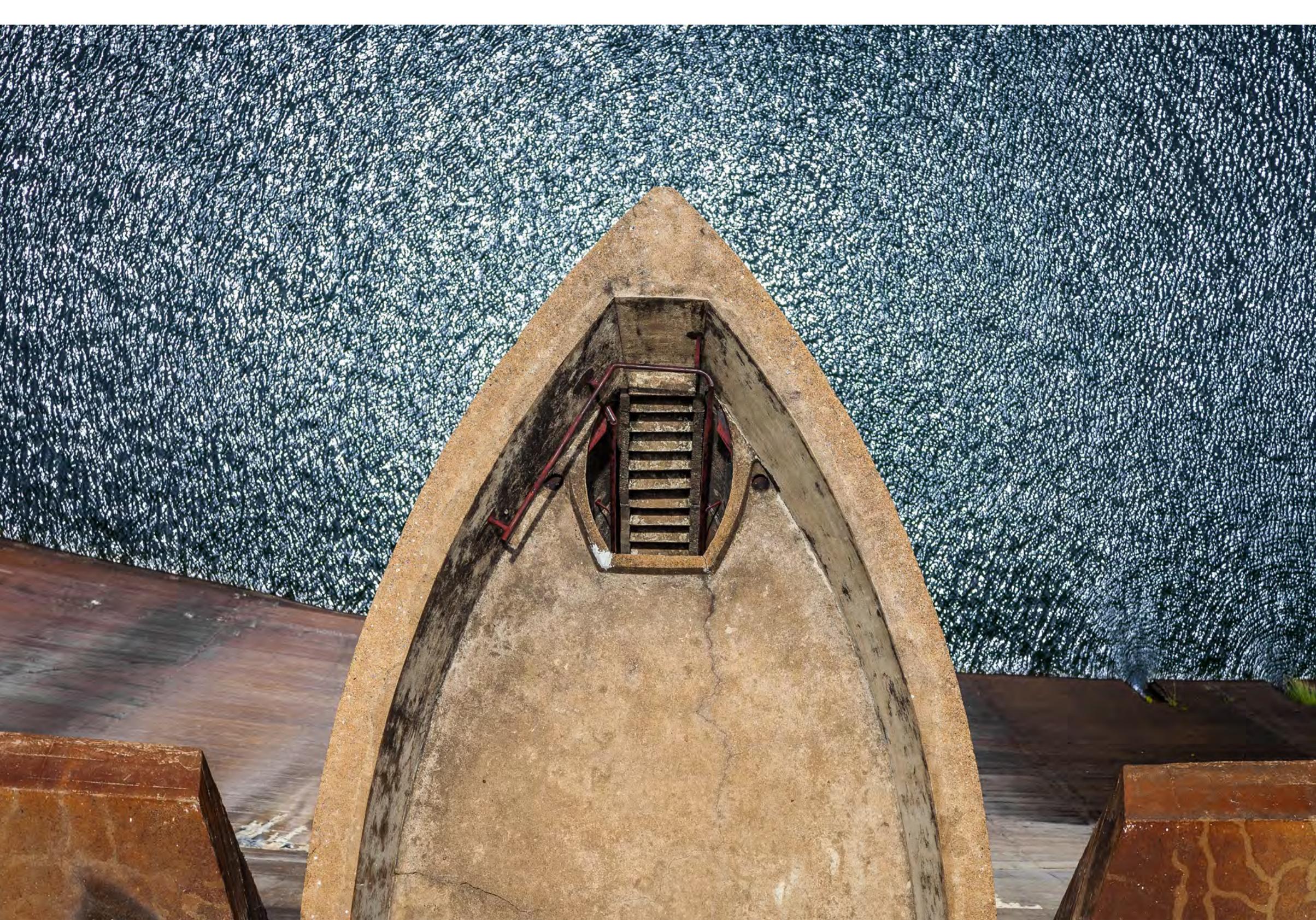








35 | THE SMOKE THAT THUNDERS 1, 2016 ●
50 X 64 CM, ACRYLIC ON PAPER, FRAMED WITH PASSE-PARTOUT (70 X 100 CM)



JOSEPH PISANI
THE NEXT
ADVENTURE IS
COMING SOON

