Set Me adrift
Giovanni Ozzola’s ‘adrift’ at SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch

by Emma Keet

Giovanni Ozzola set me adrift into a quiet, contemplative space; aim to bobbing left and right, back and forth, on a gentle ocean crossing. Each work draws you in for a moment and then nudges you on to the next. Italian-born Ozzola, a multi-disciplinary artist working primarily in photography, video and sculptural installation, has exhibited worldwide. His solo exhibition ‘adrift’ follows a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum ‘Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum. His solo exhibition ‘adrift’ follows a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, culminating in a presentation at the South African District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town

Ozzola’s work explores discovery, a universal consciousness, navigation and infinitude, both amplified by the almost ethereal lighting within the gallery. ‘Light is a dominant feature in all of my works,’ says the artist. “It defines and transforms, reveals and hides…”

Before being led towards the horizon, the light pouring through the gallery’s window reflects on the brass bell in the middle of the room, drawing the viewer back to the present. This bell, titled Sharp-Anamnesis (2016), was found in Cape Town and bears the words ‘Amers Kerk 1952.’ The object juxtaposes past and present, becoming a symbol of communal consciousness by being the ‘parchment’ on which words — gathered from local District Six community members’ accounts of fears, dreams and hopes — are recorded.

Found marine charts in Wrecks, Hope and Passes (2016) offer moments for quiet reflection, a chance to re-orientate oneself in relation to the world. Even if we choose not to use these propellers, the potential to move is comforting.

Guided to port (left), the viewer is nudged through the doorway of About the Sky – Intuition (2015). The play of light in this photograph seems unreal. The horizon is almost tangible, lying just out of reach. There is a familiarity to this landscape; space for the viewer’s personal experience as opposed to feeling like a voyager into Ozzola’s world. By including others’ remnants, a collective memory is suggested, illustrated by the markings on the walls, the artist recording this site and the contemplative viewer.

In the last room, Ghost Town with Dreams (2015) is an invitation to keep moving forward or duck. The horizon suggests potential discovery — similar to the propellers of Alight-alone (2016). This tightly framed view doesn’t feel claustrophobic, but is a reminder of the indissoluble tie between man and nature. While providing a rare moment of quiet to pause and reflect, ‘adrift’ offers South African audiences the opportunity to experience first-hand, artwork by a widely exhibited international artist such as Giovanni Ozzola.

Emma Keet is a Visual Studies lecturer at Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography. She is a joint founder of Vasiki Creative Citizens, currently in the midst of a research project involving traveling through Southern Africa, exploring the notion of creative citizenship. Giovanni Ozzola’s ‘adrift’ is on view at SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, from 22 April – 4 June 2016.

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EMMA KEET

04 Giovanni Ozzola, Sharp-Anamnesis, 2016. Found bell, dimensions variable, length of rope variable.
05 Giovanni Ozzola, Cicatrici - verso se stessi (2015), which broadly translates as ‘Scars - toward ourselves.’
06 06 Giovanni Ozzola, Sand, Warmth and Light, 2011. Lulled by the gentle movement of waves, one is brought back to reality as the view seems to disappear when the garage door closes. Trying to keep the horizon in sight, one might bend forward or duck. The horizon suggests hope – potential discovery – similar to the propellers of Alight-alone (2016).