



Prof. Kim Berman's 'Remembering and Forgetting': Landscapes in Dialogue



Exhibition: Remembering and Forgetting: Landscapes in Dialogue

Venue: UJ Art Gallery

Dates: 7 August to 12 September 2025

Prof. Kim Berman's long awaited solo exhibition, *Remembering and Forgetting: Landscapes in Dialogue*, marked a significant moment in her career and in the history of the University of Johannesburg. Opening at the UJ Art Gallery, the exhibition was her first solo presentation in fifteen years and offered a deeply personal reflection on her journey as an artist, educator and activist.

Throughout her career, Prof. Berman has used the landscape as a powerful metaphor, a space through which she explores social, environmental and political change, expressed through the shifting balance of darkness and light on the horizon. The exhibition brought together a remarkable collection of works spanning her entire career, from her student pieces of the 1980s, shown in South Africa for the first time, to her most recent creations.

"As I selected these works, I was struck by how the themes recur, always somewhat changed, but appearing as a dialogue between different landscapes," Prof. Berman reflected. "They bring new perspectives on the same issues, and new issues that emerge with familiar historical roots."

Rusted Ghosts and Fields of Mourning

A central theme in the exhibition was the haunting concept of rusted ghosts. Prof. Berman reclaimed and transformed old etched plates, cutting and reusing them to connect the past with the present. The resulting works revealed traces of war, destruction and renewal, their rusted surfaces evoking both decay and rebirth.

Recurring motifs of fire, smoke and sunflowers threaded through her pieces. Smoke concealed and revealed; fire destroyed and regenerated. In her fields of mourning sunflowers, collective grief was intertwined with renewal, the fallen blooms scattering seeds of new life.

From Ashes, a Rekindling

The timing of the exhibition carried poignant echoes of Prof. Berman's own experiences. A few years ago a fire swept through her home office, destroying much of its contents. Although the loss was painful, it also revived memories of the devastating 2003 blaze that destroyed Artist Proof Studio, which she co-founded. Rather than diminish her, the fire reignited her creative spirit. It became a living metaphor for her work, a reminder that from destruction often comes transformation.

"It awakened so many memories and feelings," she shared, "and brought alive my deep creative connection with the power and metaphor of fire to destroy and recreate."



A Full Circle Moment

The exhibition formed part of UJ's 20th anniversary celebrations and coincided with the culmination of Prof. Berman's 31 years of service to the institution, a career dedicated to art education, research, activism and mentorship. Having guided more than 20 postgraduate exhibitions at UJ, Remembering and Forgetting offered her a chance to reflect, renew and reinvent herself as an artist at the close of her academic chapter.

"It felt wonderful to be making art again," she said. "This exhibition gave me an opportunity to reflect, renew and reinvent myself as a visual artist."

A Celebration of Legacy and Light

The exhibition was accompanied by an online catalogue available at www.kimberman.net, and attracted widespread media coverage, including features on SABC TV, the Mail & Guardian's Thought Leader platform, and a review in Sunday Times Living (12 October 2025). Additional interviews and features are available through Prof. Berman's website.

A Testament to Transformation

Remembering and Forgetting was more than an exhibition, it was an act of remembrance, renewal and resilience. Through landscapes marked by both loss and light, Prof. Berman reaffirmed the role of art in fostering empathy, reflection and renewal, values that continue to shape the creative and educational spirit of the University of Johannesburg.

Vigil at Dusk (2025) Etching with drypoint on aluminium

