

Karen Harkema

Karen Harkema is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores the evolving relationship between humans and technology. With a background in computer science and years of experience in the tech industry, her transition into the arts brings a unique perspective to questions of machine intelligence, embodiment, and materiality. Her early fascination with artificial intelligence began through conversations with her father, who introduced her to the idea of machines learning on their own. While her university studies focused on expert systems rather than AI itself, these formative experiences laid the groundwork for her current artistic inquiry.

Now studying fine art in her 50s, Karen is completing her degree and continues to pursue further academic and creative development. Her final-year exhibition, *Religare: Dia Logos with the Machine*, marked a pivotal moment in her practice—merging digital media, painting, video, ceramics, and installation to investigate the physical and philosophical dimensions of our technological entanglements. Karen’s work is grounded in process, material experimentation, and conceptual depth. She enjoys working across mediums to create immersive, tactile dialogues with the machine—inviting viewers to reflect on the future we are shaping together.

Curriculum Vitae

Formal Qualifications

- 2025 BA Multimedia Visual Arts degree, UNISA (Passed with distinction).
- 1991 BSc Computer Science Honours degree, University of Johannesburg.
 - 1990 BSc Computer Science degree, University of Johannesburg.
 - Informal Art Training & Instruction
 - 2024 Object Workshop, Elfriede Dreyer.
 - 2022 Shamaan Workshop, Elfriede Dreyer.
 - 2019-2022 Figures and Form, Life drawing classes.
- 2018-2022 Contemporary Painting workshops and monthly classes, Ruth Walters.
 - 2003-2008 Weekly Art Instruction classes, Ronzwa Swarts.
 - Group Exhibitions
- November 2025 Final Year, UNISA Student Exhibition, Kgorong Art Gallery, Pretoria.
- September 2024 Object curated by Prof. Elfriede Dreyer, Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria.
 - December 2023 Ubuntu Group Exhibition, Pretoria Art Museum.
- December 2022 Shaman Exhibition, with CAP Institute, Art and Collect Gallery.

- September 2022 Otherwise Healthy Exhibition, curated by Kyle Richard Solms, Gallery One 11.
 - April 2019 Rotary GTC Portrait and Art exhibition

Awards

- 2025 Unisa Top Student, 2nd Place.
- 2023 Online Art Gallery Art Competition, 3rd Place.
- 2021 Online Art Gallery Art Competition, 2nd Place.
- 2019 Rotary GTC Portrait Award, Special Mention