

EVERARD READ

JOHN MEYER

(b. 1942, Bloemfontein, South Africa)

John Meyer studied at the Johannesburg Technical College School of Art, before joining an advertising agency. In 1967, Meyer settled in London where he carried on his studies in art while working as a freelance illustrator.

Meyer is regarded as the leading figure in the Hyper-Realist movement in Southern Africa. Decidedly contemporary in his unique vision and a proponent of modernism in all its guises, Meyer has a considered commitment to representational painting. Concerned with the complexities of visual perception and their solutions, his paintings are not mere representations of existing places and things, but exist as indelible retrospection, like total recall.

Meyer describes his paintings as being 'made.' Each layer of tension or emotion is built up over a mental and physical process creating a credible, charged and tangible event in each of his paintings. He presents us with strikingly real illusions, all distinctly familiar, yet ultimately invented. They are imagined archetypes rather than specific events. His most recent narrative genre, exploring the complex currents of human relationships, captivates his viewers. Few other artists inspire such commentary. Rarely are interpretations the same. Everyone has their own judgement and somehow the relationships continue to change with every inspection or even passing glance. There is fluidity, an evolving drama, a very real atmosphere.

He later developed these into a series of three separate but related views of the same reaction. These 'Sequential Narratives' explore the nature of intimacy between men and women. The series reflects his interest in compositional interaction rather than conventional realism and displays his traditional visual hallmark - a tight theatrical control of the painted surface. Meyer is a master of staging, plot and lighting and there is a quality to the paintwork that reinforces the themes of emotional ambiguity between the protagonists in the paintings.

More recently, Meyer has been commissioned to do a body of work around the Boer War. His *Lost In The Dust*, exhibition offered an intimate and compelling look at how war affects the lives of those swept up in it. The paintings weave history, imagination and narrative into a multi-layered realm that deals with the tragedy of war. They are at once compelling, delicate, emotional and foreboding.

In 2015 this exhibition travelled having been seen in Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa to the United Kingdom and be seen by the public in both London and Edinburgh at the Bonham's Auction Houses.

Meyer was inspired to embark on this challenging journey by his ancestors who had fought on both sides, allowing him to reflect on it from a neutral position. Set against the dramatic and hauntingly beautiful backdrop of the vast South African interior, the collection combines Meyer's talents for landscape and narrative in a unique body of works.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

'One could say I'm obsessed with the magical properties of paint, with the process that allows for and unlocks the magic. It all depends on where you direct your energy. It's beyond me why any artist with talent would not want to pursue the mysterious world that lies within the possibilities of paint, the

EVERARD READ

ultimate transformation of materials. Squeeze out a few lengths of pigment on a palette and transform them into the image of something.

'We cannot be expected to be aware of the explorative process that is the private preserve of the creative mind, however it is precisely that inability to be party to the experimental nuances and resulting struggle in the painting process, that distances us from a complete understanding of the artist's intent. How then are we to access this world of hidden complexities? If we accept that we see the world around us in various tones, shapes and patches of colour, rather than their defining contours, we realise that a single brushstroke can be anything it may suggest to us. The complex layering of painterly tones, placed in apparently random order creates the stage for a personal search. Here we indulge in our need to escape from an increasingly intrusive world.'

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022** *The Planet Earth Collection, MASTERPIECE, London, UK*
- 2018** *Elizabeth, a sovereign's journey, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK*
- 2017** *A Collection of Major Works from Private Collections, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
Mandela, A Life's Journey, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2016** Solo booth, Seattle Art Fair, USA
- 2017** *A Collection of Major Works from Private Collections, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
- 2015** *Lost in the Dust, Bonhams Auction House, Edinburgh, United Kingdom*
- 2014** *Lost in the Dust, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg, South Africa*
- 2013** *My Country, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg, South Africa*
- 2011** *An Evening with John Meyer, Everard Read Cape Town, South Africa*
New Work, OK Harris, New York, USA
- 2010** *John Meyer – Paintings, O.K. Harris, New York, USA*
- 2009** Museum Schloss Gottorf, Germany
Involuntary Consequences, Albemarle Gallery, London, United Kingdom
Karoo Revisited, The Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2008** *Conduct and Expectations, Galerie Brusberg, Berlin, Germany*
- 2007** *Truths Revealed, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg, South Africa*
Distant Lives, Albemarle Gallery, London, United Kingdom
- 2005** *New Work, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa*
- 2003** *John Meyer, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa*

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022** *Things I'd like to remember, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
- 2021** *SUMMER, Everard Read, London, UK*
- 2020** *WINTER, Everard Read, London, UK*
STILL, Everard Read Group Presentation, UK and South Africa
- 2018** *People and Portraiture, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
Summer, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2017** *Reality Check, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
- 2016** *Winter Collection, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa*
- 2015** Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery Booth, Cape Town, South Africa
EMPIRE, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

EVERARD READ

- 2014** *Summer Season*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2013 *100*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2012 *Winter Show*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2011 Everard Read, Cape Town 15th Anniversary Exhibition, Cape Town, South Africa
Horse, curated by Ricky Burnett, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
2010 *View from the South*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Summer 10, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2009 *The City*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Summer 09, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2008 *Summer 08*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Group Show, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2009** Contemporary Artist Award from the German Museum Schloss Gottorf , Germany.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Lost in the Dust / Verlore in Stof, Everard Read Gallery
John Meyer, A Retrospective 1972 - 2012, Everard Read Gallery
Art & Artists of South Africa, Esme Berman (AA Balkema)
Painting in South Africa, Esme Berman (Southern Books)
Artspeak, Robert Atkins (Abbeyville Press, New York)
John Meyer, Brett Hilton-Barber (Prime Origins)
John Meyer Sequential Narratives, Brett Hilton-Barber (Prime Origins)

CATALOGUES

- John Meyer in Retrospect (Everard Read Gallery 1983)
Drawn From Nature (Stremmel Gallery 1990)
Eiteljorg Invitational 2 (Exhibition 1991)
John Meyer Recent Paintings (Everard Read Gallery 1991)
John Meyer (Everard Read Gallery 1996)
John Meyer Sequential Narratives (Everard Read Cape Town 2005)
Distant Lives, John Meyer (Albemarle Gallery 2007)
Truths Revealed, John Meyer (Everard Read 2007)
Karoo Revisited, John Meyer (Everard Read 2009)