

BARBARA WILDENBOER**THE INVISIBLE GARDENER**

Everard Read CIRCA Cape Town is very pleased to present Barbara Wildenboer's *The Invisible Gardener*. Opening the 3rd May this is Wildenboer's first solo exhibition with Everard Read CIRCA Gallery in Cape Town.

*Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees, "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible, to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Sceptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?" (Antony Flew, R. M. Hare & Basil Mitchell, "Theology and falsification: the University discussion" in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*. New York, Macmillan.1964.)*

In the *Timaeus* Plato gives an account of how the universe was formed. It is especially the order and beauty he observed that made an impression on him. Plato focuses on the idea of a divine Craftsman/*Demiurge* who creates an ordered universe by creating a mathematical order from the pre-existing chaos. Many natural phenomena are so remarkable, delicate and fragile that it's difficult to conceive that they are not created solely for the pleasure and enjoyment of humans.

In *The Invisible Gardener* Barbara Wildenboer makes reference to the interconnectedness of all living things by creating visual simulations of nature that speak of a sense of wonder at the complicated beauty of patterns in the universe. She references causal connection, the relationship between chaos and order and the sublime beauty of fractal geometry while reflecting on the unanswerable question: Why is there *something rather than*

nothing? The work is concerned with environmental aesthetics and the mathematical sublime and how a boundless, formless universe can be regarded as something that transcends the limits of reason.

In contrast to the perfection of the mathematical sublime, she also looks at the fragility of the symbiotic relationship between man and ecology by referring to the toxic sublime. The current relationship is a nebulous one that is jeopardised by consumerism, wastefulness and a sense of disconnection from the natural world. These works reflect on how humankind is affected by globalisation, economic upheavals, scarcity, pollution and manmade disasters.

Focusing on Exploring both *beauty and excess*, and the *magnitude* of the mysterious vastness of the cosmos contrasted against the comparable *insignificance* of humans, *The Invisible Gardener* poses questions about how our universe came to be as it is and why it is there at all.

The exhibition runs 3-31st May at CIRCA Cape Town. A portfolio is available upon request.