

EVERARD READ

CAPE TOWN

John Meyer

(b. 1942, Bloemfontein, South Africa)

John Meyer was born in Bloemfontein in 1942. He 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. He subsequently pursued an international career as an artist, best known for his portraits of distinguished personages in Africa, Europe and the United States.

Meyer is regarded as the leading figure in the Hyper-Realist movement in Southern Africa. Decidedly contemporary in his vision and a proponent of modernism in all its guises, Meyer has a considered commitment to representational painting. He is 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, John 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.

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 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

EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN (PTY) LTD • REG No 96/04344/07
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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:

2015

Lost in the dust, Bonhams, London

2014

Lost in the dust, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg

2013

My Country, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg

2011

An Evening with John Meyer

2011

OK Harris, New York

2010

John Meyer – Paintings”, O.K. Harris, New York

2009

Museum Schloss Gottorf, Germany

2009

'Involuntary Consequences', Albemarle Gallery, London

2009

'Karoo Revisited”, The Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

2008

'Conduct and Expectations', Galerie Brusberg, Berlin

2007

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'Truths Revealed', The Everard Read Gallery, CT & JHB

2007

Distant Lives, Albemarle Gallery, London,

2005

The Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

2003

The Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

Selected Group Exhibitions:

2015

Everard Read, Cape Town at Cape Town Art Fair

'Empire', Everard Read, Cape Town

2014

Summer , Everard Read, Cape Town

2013 - 2014

100, Everard Read, Cape Town

2012

'Winter Show', Everard Read, Cape Town

2011

Everard Read, Cape Town 15th Anniversary Exhibition

'Horse', Everard Read, Johannesburg

2010

'View from the South', Everard Read, Cape Town

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'Summer 10, Everard Read, Cape Town

2009

'The City', Everard Read, Cape Town

'Summer 09', Everard Read, Cape Town

2008

'Summer 08', Everard Read, Cape Town

Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

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)

John Meyer is featured in various collections nationally and internally and has been involved in multiple publications.

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