

# EVERARD READ

## **BETH DIANE ARMSTRONG**

(b. 1985 Nelspruit, South Africa)

“Sculpture, for me, is a space to explore the feeling of one’s body in relation to an object. Functional objects quite obviously explore this relationship. What is functional or non-functional is debatable, especially in this strange-expanding-spacescape of life. I believe there should always be room for the obvious and non-obvious in all things.

I am always looking. I read mathematical, philosophical, scientific and medical books that go over my head. Seeking the big, grand, rushing feeling of grasping-and-not-grasping. Pushing always into the unknown. Whatever I am looking for, a fascination with density and looseness is the lens through which I see the world. It’s about how I physically and mentally feel on this earth: things are intense and then blunt, real and then unreal, meaningful and then meaningless. I am in this dynamic tension with my materials too. There is a give and take, a push and pull, an expansion and contraction – a density and looseness to working with steel. It takes a lot as it is a very demanding material: it’s heavy; it’s hot; it’s hard; it behaves unpredictably; it exhausts me. But it gives me so much back, in its permanence and reliability.”

Beth Diane Armstrong 2017

One of the leading contemporary South African sculptors of her generation, Beth Diane Armstrong captures a mastery of the steel medium. Centered on contrasting variations of density and looseness Armstrong’s use of sculpture explores the different expressions of these two terms in relation to scale, structure, materiality, space, representation and process.

Armstrong negotiates an unremitting pull between the desire to be entirely overwhelmed and subsumed by a sculpture and the drive to resolve and contain the idiosyncratic challenges posed by it. A central ambition which continues to inform Armstrong’s process is the translation of fleeting, abstract experiences into the permanence of a physically demanding material such as steel. Beginning as thought experiments, the works evolve according to a set of parameters which the artist prescribes. Armstrong develops these parameters on the level of underlying structures (calculations, measurements) and through the higher level realizations of the works as sculptural structures, maintaining a synchronous relationship to both aspects. These meticulous processes, her attention to detail and her astounding ability to effortlessly switch between intricate smaller works and imposing large-scale masses of steel reaffirms Armstrong ambitions to grapple with and understand the ways in which bodies experience space and translate this experience into structures, both perceptual and physical

Tim Leibbrandt 2017

Currently living and working in Johannesburg, Armstrong was born in South Africa in 1985. In 2010 she completed, with distinction, her Masters of Fine Arts at Rhodes University. Rhodes bought her BFA exhibition, *Hibernation*, for their permanent collection. Armstrong has exhibited several solo shows, participated in a number of group shows and projects locally and internationally, as well as being included in various private and public collections. Some highlighted commissions include the completion of a large permanent public artwork, *Flag*, in Oostvoorne, in the Netherlands (commissioned by the Kern Kunst Westvoorne Foundation); a large sculpture at the Design Miami/Basel Fair in Basel, Switzerland and Design Miami, Florida; and her *Page* for the National English Literary Museum, a 10-ton outdoor sculpture in Makhanda, South Africa. 2016 saw her launch the NELM *Page* outdoor commission in Makhanda and also partake in the Yorkshire Sculpture

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exhibition *A Place in Time*, hosted at the NIROX Sculpture Park at the Cradle of Human Kind. Armstrong was awarded the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Arts in South Africa for 2017.

## EDUCATION

- 2010 Master of Fine Arts with distinction, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa  
2007 Bachelor of Fine Arts, *cum laude*, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 (upcoming) *Cubicle Series – title pending*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
2018 *In perpetuum*, Everard Read, Cape Town; NWU Gallery, Potchefstroom; Oliewenhuis Museum; NMM Art Museum, Port Elizabeth, South Africa  
2017 *In perpetuum*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg; National Arts Festival, Makhanda, South Africa  
2011 *Towards an architecture of loss*, iArt, Cape Town, South Africa  
*To skip the last step*, iArt Gallery Wembley Project Space, Cape Town, South Africa  
2010 *Hippocampus*, iArt Gallery, Cape Town; Monument, Makhanda, South Africa  
2007 *Hibernation*, Gallery in the Round, Makhanda, South Africa

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Things I'd like to remember*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*Too many dinner parties*, Meta Foundation, August House, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*3D in 22*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
2021 *OASIS*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*Spring Show*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
2020 *Gallery Opening Exhibition*, Everard Read, Leeu Estates, Franschhoek South Africa  
*TINY2020*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Odyssey*, online exhibition, Everard Read, South Africa & UK  
*Summer*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*PINK: Art Joburg*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Still*, online exhibition, Everard Read, South Africa & UK  
*Staring Straight to the Future*, online exhibition, Everard Read, South Africa & UK  
2019 *Southern Aspect*, Everard Read, London, UK  
FNB Joburg Art Fair, with Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
2018 *Summer*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
FNB Joburg Art Fair, with Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Not a single story*, co-curated by Elizabeth Millqvist & Mattias Givel, in association with the Wanås Foundation – Wanås Kons at NIROX Sculpture Park, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
2017 FNB Joburg Art Fair, with Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*A Panel of Patrons: a Surge of Artists*, Julia Meintjes, Tokara Winery, Stellenbosch  
*Bronze, Steel & Stone II*, Everard Read, London, UK  
*Off the wall: A group sculpture exhibition*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa



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- 2016 FNB Joburg Art Fair, with Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Pastoral Abstraction*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*Opening Exhibition/Summer Season*, Everard Read, London, UK  
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa  
*A PLACE IN TIME* (in association with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park UK), curated by Helen Pheby, NIROX Sculpture Park, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Bronze, Steel & Stone*, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2014 *Design Miami*, Southern Guild, Miami, Florida, USA  
*The Benediction of Shade II*, David Krut Projects, Johannesburg, South Africa  
FNB Joburg Art Fair, with David Krut Projects, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Design Miami/Basel*, Southern Guild, Basel, Switzerland  
*NIROX Winter Show*, NIROX Sculpture Park, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Turbine Art Fair, David Krut Projects, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Joburg Joburg*, Rooftop in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Guild*, Southern Guild, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2013 *Southern Guild 2013 Collection*, MOAD, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*The Benediction of Shade*, David Krut Projects, Cape Town, South Africa  
*After the Rainbow Nation*, NIROX Sculpture Park, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2012 *Material/Representation*, BRUNDYN + GONSALVES, Cape Town, South Africa  
FNB Joburg Art Fair, with BRUNDYN + GONSALVES, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2010 *Summer in the City*, iArt Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa  
*NOVUS*, iArt Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa  
Make A Difference Foundation Exhibition, iArt Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa  
*The Mechanics and Mysteries of Perception*, iArt Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa  
Johannesburg Art Fair, with iArt Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2008 Absa l'Atelier Competition, Absa Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2007 Absa l'Atelier Competition, Absa Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa  
*Fourth Year Student Show*, Fine Art Building, Makhanda, South Africa  
*Untitled*, Salem House, Salem, South Africa
- 2006 National Arts Festival, Makhanda, South Africa
- 2005 National Arts Festival, Makhanda, South Africa
- 2004 National Arts Festival, Makhanda, South Africa

## **RESIDENCIES**

- 2013 NIROX Sculpture Park, NIROX Foundation, Cradle of Humankind, South Africa

## **SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

National English Literary Museum Makhanda, South Africa  
Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa  
Standard Bank of Southern Africa

## **COMMISSIONS/AWARDS/NOMINATIONS**

- 2020 Shortlisted in the top 80 artists globally to submit a sculpture proposal for the third and fourth The High Line Plinth in New York City

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- 2017 Standard Bank Young Artist Award – Visual Arts
- 2016 *Page*, outdoor sculpture, NELM, Makhanda, South Africa
- 2015 NELM *Page* outdoor sculpture, Makhanda, South Africa
- 2014 Flagpole Sculpture Commission for Kern Kunst Westvoorne Foundation, the Netherlands
- 2011 3 Sculptures for Prescient Investment Management Group's first major advertising campaign, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010 Not all is Black and White, All for World Foundation, FIFA World Cup Initiative  
Academic Honours
- 2008 Purvis Fine Art Prize

## **CONFERENCES**

- 2021 Panellist on the discussion The Arts: Shaping the Post-COVID future, with the Horasis Global Meeting. The Chairperson was Richard Vine from Art in America Magazine.
- 2009 'Locating Space: An Investigation into Two and Three Dimensions in Art Practice', Rhodes University Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- 2017 Included in Ashraf Jamal's book 'In the World: Essays on Contemporary South African Art'. Pages 353-368 'Beth Diane Armstrong: Critical Object'
- 2017 *in perpetuum* Standard Bank Young Artist Award 2017, catalogue in association with Everard Read, Cape Town
- 2010 '*Hippocampus: Seahorse; brain-structure; spatial map, concept*'. Masters Thesis, Rhodes University