BRETT MURRAY
(b. 1961 Pretoria, South Africa)

Brett Murray is a South African artist known primarily for his satirically incisive sculptures and 'The Spear', a wildly infamous portrait of the nation's past president, Jacob Zuma. His work functions as an introspective stock-take on the artist's positionality within the social climate of South Africa at a particular moment, with which he aims to entertain. 'In reflecting on what is unfolding,' Murray comments, 'I hope to articulate a very personal understanding and an idiosyncratic psychological sense of place, and begin to describe who I am with this anomalous vision. Paradoxically, through this critique and comic exposure, I actually begin to define a preferred ideal in which I would like to live.'

Spanning bronze, steel, plastics, print, video and marble, Murray's award-winning work grapples with the wars of cultures, the clash between Afro- and Eurocentrism, the old and the new South Africas, identity politics and the ways in which political discussions have been shaped for the worse by social media.

Brett Murray's ambition throughout his long career has been to speak truth to power. Satire as a tool for political debate has always been a cornerstone of his practice. Brett Murray studied at the University of Cape Town, where he was awarded his Master's of Fine Arts degree in 1988 with distinction. The title of his dissertation was 'A Group of Satirical Sculptures Examining Social and Political Paradoxes in the South African Context'. His work since has been an introspective stocktake on the artist's positionality within the social climate of South Africa and the world at particularly troubling moments in time.

As an undergraduate, Murray won Irma Stern Scholarships in both 1981 and 1982. He won the Simon Gerson Prize for the most Promising student in 1982 and was awarded the Michaelis Prize in 1983. As a postgraduate student he received a Human Sciences Research Council bursary, a University of Cape Town Research Scholarship, the Jules Kramer Grant and an Irma Stern Scholarship. In 2002 he was the winner of the prestigious Standard Bank Young Artist Award in 2002.

From 1991 to 1994 he established the sculpture department at the University of Stellenbosch, where he curated the show 'Thirty Sculptors from the Western Cape' in 1992. In 1995 he curated, with Kevin Brand, 'Scurvy', at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. That year he co-curated 'Junge Kunst Aus Zud Afrika' for the Hänel Gallery in Frankfurt, Germany.

In 1999, Brett co-founded, with artists and cultural practitioners Lisa Brice, Kevin Brand, Bruce Gordon, Andrew Putter, Sue Williamson, Robert Weinek and Lizza Littlewort, 'Public Eye', a Section 27 company that manage and initiate art projects in the public arena with the aims to develop a greater profile for public art in Cape Town. They initiated projects on Robben Island; worked with the city's health officials on AIDS awareness campaigns; and initiated outdoor sculpture projects including 'The Spier Sculpture Biennale'. He curated 'Homeport' in 2001, which saw 15 artists create site specific text based works in Cape Town's Waterfront precinct.

Murray was included on the Cuban Biennial of 1994, and subsequently his works where exhibited at the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Germany. He was included on the group show, 'Springtime in Chile' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, Chile. He was also part of the travelling show 'Liberated Voices, Contemporary Art From South Africa' which opened at the Museum for African Art in New York in 1998. He won the Cape Town Urban Art competition in 1998 that resulted in the public work 'Africa', a 3.5 metre bronze sculpture, being erected in Cape Town's city centre.

Murray won, with Stefaans Samcuia, the commission to produce an 8 x 30 metre wall sculpture for the foyer of the Cape Town International Convention Centre in 2003. In 2007 he completed 'Specimens', a large wall sculpture for the University of Cape Town's medical school campus. In 2011 he produced the public artwork 'Seeds' for the University of Bloemfontein and in 2013 he was commissioned to produce the 7 metre bronze 'Citizen' for the Auto & General Park in Johannesburg. In 2025 Murray was a recipient of the Claire & Edoardo Villa Will Trust Award. This generous award acknowledges exceptional achievement in the field of sculpture by a South African artist. Later the same year in November Murray opened his major retrospective 'WILD LIFE' at the Norval Foundation in Cape Town South Africa, showcasing a review of almost 40 years of his sculptural practice

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 WILD LIFE, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, SA
Brood, Everard Read, London, UK
2024 Brood, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
2022 Limbo, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2021 Limbo, Everard Read, London, UK
Hide, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
2019 Hide, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2017 Again Again, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
2015 Again Again, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
2012 Hail to The Thief II, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
2010 Hail to The Thief, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
2009 Crocodile Tears II, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
2007 Crocodile Tears, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
2006 Sleep Sleep, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA and João Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, SA
2003 Us and Them, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
2002 Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award exhibition, White Like Me:
National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, SA
King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth, SA
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, SA
Durban Art Gallery, Durban, SA
Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, Bloemfontein, SA
South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
2001 Hero, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town, SA
2000 I love Africa, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town & Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
1997 Own, Hänel Gallery, Cape Town, SA and The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
1996 Brett Murray: New Sculptures, Gallery Frank Hänel, Frankfurt, Germany
White Boy Sings the Blues, Rembrandt van Rijn Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
1989 Satirical Sculptures, Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, SA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026 The Armory Show, with Everard Read, New York, USA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2025 The Armory Show, with Everard Read, New York, USA
United State, Southern Guild, Los Angeles, USA
EXPO CHICAGO, with Everard Read, Chicago, USA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2024 Inner Sanctum, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA

Winter Collection, Everard Read, Franschhoek, SA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
EXPO Chicago, with Everard Read, Chicago, USA

2023 What I Feel When I Think About The Cosmos, Everard Read, Franschhoek, SA
110 Year Anniversary Exhibition, Everard Read, London, UK
FNB Art Joburg, with Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
If you look hard enough, you can see our future, African American Museum, Dallas, USA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town

2022 Spring, group show, Everard Read, Franschhoek, SA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, SA

2021 Spring Show, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
In Conversation, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Investec Cape Town Art Fair online, with Everard Read, SA
Myths, Martyrs, Monsters & Masterpieces, Everard Read, Franschhoek, SA

2020 Staring Straight to the Future, online exhibition, Everard Read, UK & SA
Masterpiece online, with Everard Read, London, UK
Arco Lisbon online, with Everard Read, SA
The Portrait Show, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
Staring Straight to the Future, Everard Read SA & UK

2019 IncarNations, Bo Zar, Brussels, Belgium
CONTEXT Art Miami, with Everard Read, Miami, USA
Southern Aspect, Everard Read, London, UK
Signature Works of a Century, Javett Art Centre, Johannesburg, SA
Ampersand Foundation - 21 Years Celebration, University of Johannesburg, SA

2018 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA

2017 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
FNB Johannesburg Art Fair, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
Bronze, Steel & Stone II, Everard Read, London, UK

2016 FNB Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
New Revolutions, Goodman Gallery Cape Town & Johannesburg, SA
Graphica, Southern Guild, Cape Town, SA
The Armory Show, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA

2015 56th International Art Exhibition -la Biennale di Venezia, South African Pavilion, Italy
Slow Violence, Stellenbosch University Art Gallery, SA

2014 Cape Town Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, SA
Design Days Dubai, Southern Guild, UAE
My Joburg, Kunsthalle Lipsiusbau, Dresden, Germany

2013 C-16: A Group Exhibition, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
My Joburg, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France
Art Basel- Hong Kong, Goodman Gallery, China
Collectable South African Design', Collective.1 Design Fair, New York, USA
Cloud 9, Dean Projects, Kuwait City, Kuwait
Design Days Dubai, Southern Guild, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Editions, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
et.al, Nirox Projects, Johannesburg, SA
Heavy Metal, Southern Guild, Cape Town, SA
The Armory Show, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA
Art Palm Beach, Dean Projects, Florida, USA
The Loom of the Land, Michael Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
Summer Show, Casa Labia Gallery, Cape Town, SA

2012 Art Miami, Dean Projects, USA
Art Basel Miami, Goodman Gallery, USA
Spring Show, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Sensing the Subject, a selection of Piet Viljoen's art collection, curated by Penny Siopis, New Church

Museum, Cape Town, SA
The Art of Banking: celebrating through collections', Standard Bank, Johannesburg, SA
FIAC, Paris, France
Johannesburg Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, SA
Our Fathers, AVA Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Recollect, Southern Guild, The Woodstock Foundry, Cape Town, SA

2011 Impressions From South Africa, 1965 to Now, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Thinking Around, Tokara, Stellenbosch, SA
Art Basel Miami , Goodman Gallery, USA
A Natural Selection: 1991-2011, The AVA Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Southern Guild 2011, Johannesburg Art Fair, SA
Persona, Johans Borman Fine Art, Cape Town, SA
The Johannesburg Art Fair, Goodman Gallery, SA
Editions, Goodman Gallery Projects, Arts On Main, Johannesburg, SA
The Armory Show, Goodman Gallery, New York, USA

2010 Art Basel Miami, Goodman Gallery, USA
The Lie of the Land: Representations of the South African Landscape, Iziko Michaelis Collection, Cape Town, SA
Divisions: Aspects of South African Art 1948 -2010, SMAC Gallery, Stellenbosch, SA
In Other Words, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
Halakasha, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
Winter Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
Twenty - South African Sculpture of the Last Two Decades, Nirox Sculpture Park, Gauteng, SA
1910 to 2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Spier Contemporary, Cape Town City Hall, SA

2009 The Marks We Make, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Strengths and Convictions: The life and times of the South African Peace Prize Laureates, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Dada South? Exploring Dada legacies in South African art 1960 to the present, curated by Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith, Iziko SA National Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Registration, Joao Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Forward March, Spier, Stellenbosch, SA
Words!, AVA, Cape Town, SA
Life Less Ordinary, Djanogly Art Gallery, Lakeside Arts Centre, University Park, Nottingham, UK
The Other Mainstream II, Selections from the Collection of Mikki and Stanley Weithorn
Arizona State University Art Museum
Johannesburg Art Fair,The Goodman Gallery, SA
Nirox Foundation Outdoor Sculpture, Gauteng, SA

2008 Johannesburg Art Fair, with Goodman Gallery, SA

2007 Lift Off II, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town, SA
Cape 07, Biennale, Cape Town, SA
Turbulence, HANGAR-7, Salzburg, Austria
The Geopolitics of Animation, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Seville, Spain

2006 Art Basel Miami, USA: The Goodman Gallery

2005 Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland: The Goodman Gallery booth, SA
Dorp Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, SA
Imprints, Axis Gallery, New York, USA

2004 Post Pop, Moja Modern, Johannesburg, SA
Min(e)dfields, Kunsthaus Baselland, Switzerland
Identity, Fortis Circus Theatre, Scheveningen, Holland
A Decade of Democracy, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA

2003 Literally and Figuratively: Text and Image in South African Contemporary Art, Stevenson, Cape Town, SA
Absolutely/Perhaps, Simon Mee Fine Arts, London, UK
Mettle and Paint, Mettle Headquarters, Johannesburg, SA

Retreks, Video projections, Fotografins Hus, Stockholm, Sweden
Space Repurposed, Red Bull Music Academy, Cape Town, SA
Art City, Cell-C, Johannesburg, SA 'Picnic', Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town, SA

2002 Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa, curated by Frank Herreman, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, Arizona, USA
I.D./Ology, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
Con/Text, Axis Gallery, New York, USA
Broadcast Quality:The Art of Big Brother, SABC TV, SA

2001 Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa, curated by Frank Herreman, Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Centre for Visual Arts at Stanford University, California, USA
World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Body: Rest and Motion, Oudtshoorn Festival, SA

2000 Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa, curated by Frank Herreman, The Austin Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, USA
Cast, Bronze Age Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Retreks: How the other half…, Animated Video Projection, Johannesburg, SA
Collaboration, Bell-Roberts Contemporary, Cape Town, SA
Returning The Gaze, Cape Town One City Festival, SA

1999 Visit, Natal Society of the Arts, Durban ,SA
Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa, Museum for African Art, New York, USA
New Worlds: Contemporary Art from Australia, Canada and South Africa, Canada House, London, UK; Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton, Canada; Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia
P.T.O - Public monuments reconsidered, various locations, Cape Town, SA

1997 Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, re-launch, SA
Fin de Siecle, Lyons, France
Cologne Art Fair, with Gallery Frank Hänel, Germany
30 Minutes, Robben Island Museum, Cape Town, SA
District Six Public Sculpture Project, Cape Town, SA
Smokkel, 2nd Johannesburg Biennale Fringe, SA

1996 Vita Art Now, Johannesburg Art Gallery, SA
New Sculptures, Gallery Frank Hänel, Frankfurt, Germany
Anima-L: Der Mensch im Tier - Das tier im Mensch, Eislingen Kunstverein, Germany
Cologne Art Fair, with Gallery Frank Hänel, Germany
Groundswell, Mermaid Theatre, London, UK

1995 The Laager, Johannesburg Biennale, SA
Scurvy, The Castle, Cape Town, SA
The Scurvy Show, Newtown Galleries, Johannesburg,SA
Venice Biennale, Malcolm Payne's installation, Italy
Spring time in Chile, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile
Junge Kunst Aus Zud Afrika, Galerie Frank Haenel, Frankfurt, Germany
Panoramas of Passage: Changing Landscapes - South Africa, Albany Museum, Grahamstown, SA
Frankfurt Art Fair, Gallery Haenel, Germany
Cologne Art Fair, with Gallery Frank Hänel, Germany

1994 Banquet, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
5th Cuban Biennale, Wilfredo Lam Museum, Havana, Cuba
Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Aachen, Germany
Contemporary Art from South Africa, Deutsche Aerospace Gallery, Otobrun, Germany
Exit, Metlife Association Of Art, Cape Town, SA
Staff Exhibition, University of Stellenbosch, SA

1993 Vita Art Now, Johannesburg Art Gallery, SA
Volkskas Competition, Metlife Association Of Arts, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, SA
Aids, Metlife Association of Arts, Cape Town, SA
Limits Of Liberty, Wits Theatre, Weekly Mail Anti-Censorship Exhibition, Johannesburg, SA

1992 Volkskas Competition, Metlife Association Of Arts, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, SA
Staff Exhibition, University of Stellenbosch, SA
Other Visibilities, Newtown Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
Curator of '40 Sculptors From The Western Cape', Stellenbosch University, SA
1991 Passages and Transitions, Newtown Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
B and B with Barend De Wet , Association of Art, Cape Town, SA
1990 Vita Art Now, Johannesburg Art Gallery, SA
1988 Art and Militarism, Michaelis Gallery, University of Cape Town, SA
1986 About Time: Towards a People's Culture Cultural Festival, University of Cape Town, SA. Banned by the Apartheid State
Art For Peace, Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, SA
1985 Group Show for the opening of 'Gallant House' club and art centre, Johannesburg, SA
1984 Aches and Pains, Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, SA

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Iziko, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, SA
Johannesburg Art Gallery, SA
Durban Art Gallery, SA
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, SA
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, SA
University of Cape Town, SA
University of South Africa, Pretoria, SA
University of Bloemfontein, SA
Sandton Municipality, Johannesburg, SA
DirectAxis Collection, Cape Town, SA
BHP Billiton Collection, Johannesburg, SA
MTN Collection, Johannesburg, SA
Sasol Collection, Johannesburg, SA
South African Breweries, Johannesburg, SA
South African Broadcasting Corporation, Johannesburg, SA
The South African Reserve Bank, Johannesburg, SA
Vodacom Collection, Cape Town, SA
Nando's Art Collection, Johannesburg, SA
Sindika Dokolo African Collection of Contemporary Art, Luanda, Angola
Red Bull, Salzburg, Austria
Collection of Mikki and Stanley Weithorn, USA
The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, USA
The New Church Museum, Cape Town, SA