

PRESS RELEASE: *For immediate release, October 2016*

CIRCA | Everard Read Gallery presents major new exhibition by Deborah Bell

18 November – 17 December 2016

CIRCA | Everard Read Gallery is delighted to present a major exhibition of new paintings and sculpture by Deborah Bell, one of South Africa's most eminent artists, at its London gallery, 18 November – 17 December 2016.

Dreams of Immortality: Blood and Gold is a powerful body of work that developed from Bell's major exhibitions at our galleries in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2015, which were four years in the making. This London exhibition encompasses works on paper, from the most delicate line made on Chinese handmade paper, to monumental sculpture.

Five three-metre figures in bronze, entitled *Return of the Gods: The Ancient Ones*, will occupy CIRCA London's main gallery, with a soundscape by celebrated South African composer, Philip Miller, a long-time collaborator of William Kentridge's. For Bell, the figures embody a higher spiritual force and Miller's sound reflects this. Incorporating a ram's horn, Hebraic chanting, isiXhosa calling out to the ancestors, and the bowing of a single string, the sound vibrating out of the ether is absorbed from something 'unseeable' into a single body or form.

Deborah Bell's earlier, more political work - which included collaborations with friend and fellow South African artist, William Kentridge - has given way to a deep investigation into the border between mortality and immortality, matter and spirit, presence and absence, the quotidian and the mythic, the grounded and transcendent. In recent years she has

developed an immediately-recognisable visual language - her images simple, stark, symbolic, grounded, silent, still, poised.

In her iconography Bell draws from a range of cultures - African, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, early Christian, European - and a range of philosophies (particularly the Buddhist preoccupation with stillness and the shedding of attachment and the ego) and psychologies – but her work delves deeper, arriving finally out of an internal and personal place that Bell occupies in the world as an artist, a woman and an explorer.

Her earlier figures, characterised by entrapment - in the country, in the body - have given away to figures embodying the seeker, often accompanied by boats, horses, chariots. Images of lions, dogs, horses and angels recur.

These are often intermediary figures between the physical world and a higher, more spiritual realm. They are also aspects of herself - the powerful daemons that reside in all of us - which are often accompanied by solitary female figures - some full of assertive confidence, others more vulnerable and less sure of their agency.

Bell's work has become increasingly concerned with surrender – to the higher self, the mystery of the universe, the simplicity of the present. All her art works towards the Zen mark: the single gesture of absolute presence. Her quest is ongoing and has left in its wake a series of powerful, totemic images that take their rightful place in what W.B. Yeats described as the collective soul of the universe containing the memories of all time - *Spiritus Mundi*.

For more information, please contact:

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About CIRCA | Everard Read Gallery

The Everard Read | CIRCA group of galleries was established in South Africa in 1913, making it South Africa's oldest commercial gallery. The group has flagship galleries in Johannesburg and Cape Town and CIRCA London opened in March 2016.

The galleries present modern and contemporary art from Southern Africa. Although contemporary artists from the UK, Europe and the USA are also exhibited, Everard Read | CIRCA retains at its core, an impressive stable of South African artists. The galleries each present a year-round programme of solo and group exhibitions, advise both public and private collectors around the world and have an ongoing commitment to nurturing South African talent.

CIRCA London is located at 80 Fulham Road, London SW3 6HR and is open weekdays, 10am – 6pm and Saturdays, 12pm – 4pm. www.circagallerylondon.com

About Deborah Bell

Deborah Bell

(b. 1957, Johannesburg, South Africa)

Deborah Bell is one of South Africa's most celebrated contemporary artists. She works in a range of media on canvas and paper, produces dry point etchings and large-scale bronzes. Her earlier more political work has given way to a broader, deeper investigation into the border between mortality and immortality, matter and spirit, presence and absence, the quotidian and the mythic, the grounded and transcendent. In recent years she has developed an immediately recognisable visual language, her images simple, stark, symbolic – grounded, silent, still, poised. As artist, curator and educator, Ricky Burnett has said, "at the very edge of time".

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In her iconography she draws from a range of cultures (including African, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, early Christian and European) and a range of philosophies (especially the Buddhist preoccupation with stillness and the shedding of attachment and the ego) and psychologies (more Jung than Freud) – but her work digs deeper, arriving finally out of an internal and personal place that Bell occupies in the world as an artist, a woman and an explorer. A central task is to make the unknown present – apprehended in a series of powerful images that are both of her and beyond her. Her earlier figures, characterised by entrapment (in the country, in the body), have given away to figures embodying the seeker – often accompanied by boats, horses, chariots. Images of lions, dogs, horses and angels recur.

These are often intermediary figures between the physical world and a higher more spiritual realm. They are also aspects of herself – the powerful daemons that reside in all of us, which are often accompanied by solitary female figures, some full of assertive confidence, others more vulnerable and less sure of their agency. Bell is interested in the half-formed image – the unwritten, as yet unformed spaces we move towards in our quest for self-knowledge. More recent work has also become more concerned with surrender – to the higher self, the mystery of the universe, the simplicity of the present. All her art, she has stated, works towards the Zen mark: the single gesture of absolute presence. Her quest is ongoing – and has left in its wake a series of hugely powerful, totemic images from what Yeats called *Spiritus Mundi*.

Deborah Bell has worked with a great variety of media during her career and has collaborated on various historically important projects with contemporaries such as William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins. Bell received her BAFA (Hons) and MFA degrees at the University of Witwatersrand, and has been an artist working abroad and a lecturer at various South African tertiary institutions, including the University of the Witwatersrand. Bell lives and works from her studio in Magaliesburg, as well as being a collaborator at the David Krut studios on several projects.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2015

Renunciation, David Krut, Johannesburg

Dreams of Immortality, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg and Cape Town

2013

What Would Wisdom Say to Your Dark Heart?, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

2012

A Far Country, John Martin Gallery, London and at the Glyndebourne Opera Festival

2011

Presence, CIRCA & Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

2010

Alchemy, David Krut, Johannesburg

2009

Flux, Goodman Gallery, Cape

Collaborations, David Krut, Johannesburg

2007

Objects of Power: memory of metal, memory of wood, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

2005-6

Crossings and Monuments, Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein.

2005

Crossings and Monuments, Aardklop Festival Potchefstroom University Library Gallery.

2004

Sentinels, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

2002

Unearthed, Joao Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town.

2001

Unearthed, The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

2000

The Journey Home, Art First, London.

1998

Displacements, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

1995

Muses and Lamentations, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

1989

Deborah Bell, Potchesfstroom Museum

1982

Deborah Bell, Market Gallery, Johannesburg

Selected Group Exhibitions

2013

Centenary Exhibition, CIRCA & Everard Read, Johannesburg

2012

Rainbow Nation: Group exhibition of South African Sculptors Museum Beelden Aan Zee, Den Haag

2011

HORSE: 60 South African artists curated by Ricky Burnett, CIRCA & Everard Read, Johannesburg

2010

TWENTY, 20 Years Of SA Sculpture, Nirox Foundation

2009

Contemporary Sculpture in the Landscape, Nirox Foundation

2007

Lift Off II, Goodman Gallery Cape, Cape Town.

David Krut print workshop, UNISA Art Gallery. Pretoria

2005

ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH, Miami Beach, USA, in collaboration with Goodman Gallery

Works on Paper, Collaborative prints from David Krut Print Workshop, Franchise

Gallery, Johannesburg

David Krut Collaborations: 25 Years of Prints and Multiples, National Arts Festival, Grahamstown

2004

Earthworks/Claybodies, Sasol Museum Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch

2003

Earthworks/Claybodies, Pretoria Art Museum

Earthworks/Claybodies, Standard Bank Centre Gallery, Johannesburg

2000

Icons for the Millenium, Atlanta, USA.

1999

The Paper Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

Emergence, Group Show, National Arts festival, Grahamstown.

Artery, A.V.A Gallery, Cape Town – in conjunction with the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

Artists in residence, Standard Bank National Arts Festival, 25th Anniversary, Grahamstown

1998

Earth Hues – Contemporary African Art, Group Show, World Space, Washington DC, USA.

1997

Images and Form: Prints, drawings and sculpture from Southern Africa and Nigeria, Brunei Gallery,

University of London and Edinburgh College of Art, U.K.

The Gencor Collection, Sandton Art Gallery, and The Grahamstown Festival.

Kempton Park Metropolitan Substructure Fine Arts Award Show, Kempton Park.

New Art from South Africa, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, U.K.

Les Arts de la Resistance, (Fin de Siecle a Johannesburg), Galerie Convergence, Galerie Jean-Christian

Fradin, Galerie Michel Luneau, Galerie les Petit Murs, Nantes, France.

Not Quite a Christmas Exhibition, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

CRAM, A.V.A Gallery, Cape Town – in conjunction with The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg

1996

Gay Rights: Rites, Re-writes, Travelling Exhibition, South Africa.

Group Salon, Rose Korber representing artists at the Bay Hotel, Cape Town.

Common and Uncommon Ground: South African Art to Atlanta, City Gallery East, Atlanta, USA.

Vita Awards, Johannesburg Art Gallery.

Tomorrow is Now, First Canadian Place and Knights Galleries International, Toronto, Canada.

Barber Signs, The Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg

Recent Drawings, Gallery on Tyrone, Johannesburg.

Ceramics Biennial, Sandton Art Gallery

Collections

BCE, Johannesburg

Bell, Dewar and Hall, Johannesburg

Bristol Myers Squibb Corp. USA

Friends of the National Gallery, Cape Town

Hara Museum, Tokyo

Johannesburg Art Gallery

Johannesburg City Council

King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth

Legal Resources Centre, Johannesburg

Museum of Modern Art, New York

MTN Art Institute, Johannesburg

Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C

Pretoria Art Museum

Roodepoort Museum

SA National Gallery, Cape Town

BHP Billiton South Africa Ltd.

Sanlam Collection

Sasol Collection

Smithsonian Insitute, Washington, D.C

Standard Bank Investment Corporation, Johannesburg

Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg

Telkom

UNISA Art Gallery

University of Pietermaritzburg Collection

University of the Orange Free State Collection

University of the Witwatersrand Collection

Commissions

1999

Sculpture for Standard Bank

1991

Large sculpture for Wits Business School

Artist-in-Residence, Standard Bank National Arts Festival – 25th Anniversary, Grahamstown.

1994

Graphics for Weekly Mail Film Festival Poster

Involvement in movie animation for Arts Alive

Title sequence for Grass Roots, NNTV

1993

Graphics for Weekly Mail Film Festival Poster

1990-1

Set of 6 Graphics for First National Bank