

BEEZY BAILEY

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*'Beezy paints like he cooks: complete confidence, no recipe, wild exuberance and lots of strong, rich colours. He's an African artist, as colourful as the tropics, and as full of life'.
Brian Eno*

Beezy Bailey is an artist who eludes easy categorisation – painter, sculptor, printmaker, performance artist, surrealist, collaborator, iconoclast, opportunist – these are just a few of the names that have been used to describe this restless artist. Perhaps the most accurate of all is simply to say 'artist', a definition truthful beyond its seeming simplicity in the scope it has offered Beezy for a fascinating life lived in art.

This beautiful monograph, with introduction by Brian Eno and essays by Richard Cork, art historian, and Roslyn Sulcas, culture writer for the New York Times, offers a glimpse into the multi-hued and ever expansive world of Beezy Bailey. We find an artist set alight by the need to find expression for his creativity, illustrated here by work from more than three decades and across the entire range of his creative output.



Above - Beezy Bailey, image courtesy and copyright: Bruce Weber



Beezy Bailey
As it is in Heaven
Oil on canvas
180x250cm
Image courtesy:
Everard Read Gallery



Above - Beezy Bailey.
Rainbow Men, 2010
Oil, silkscreen and enamel on canvas, 170 x 250 cm
Image courtesy: Everard Read Gallery

Below - Beezy Bailey
The Moon Cried When The Elephant Died And The Poacher Ran To Hide, 2018
Oil on canvas, 90 x 120cm
Image courtesy: Everard Read Gallery



One of South Africa's leading artists, Beezy's eclectic and effervescent approach to art, has attracted a stellar list of fellow polymaths as collaborators, including David Bowie, Brian Eno and Dave Matthews. His is a storybook career that has spanned early encounters with Andy Warhol – which was to inspire Bailey's own Cape Town version of The Factory – as well as the invention of an artistic female alter-ego, Joyce Ntobe.

A love of storytelling on a grand scale is perhaps not surprising for an artist whose own family history, touched on in this book, reads like an adventure story. His father, Jim Bailey, was the publisher of the seminal magazine Drum, and grandmother Mary was a pioneer of aviation. We see these early influences in a dizzying array of engaging, often lyrical characters, including mystical flying men and his Chinese fantasy character, Lee Ping Zing.

This is not to say that he is detached from the concerns of real life, however. Beezy aspires to create art as a balm for a mad world – a corrective for our most lamentable human qualities, including a planet brutalized by extremes of wealth and poverty, environmental ignorance and negligence. The sources of his imagery are elusive. In his own words: 'frozen dreams, images and legends enter from my subconscious, the realm of my imagination. I act as a conduit for visual messages greater than I am.'

This is a book that surprises, challenges and delights in equal measure, an introduction to an artist who challenges the status quo and our own preconceptions. In Beezy, we find a rare artist, one whose 'sense of freedom gives his output a darting, inquisitive quality that sharpens our curiosity', says Richard Cork. dw

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Image courtesy: Everard Read Gallery



Above - Beezy Bailey
Wild Horses on Mars, 2017
Oil on canvas, 90x120cm
Image courtesy: Everard Read Gallery

Below - Beezy Bailey
Polishing The Floor, 1992, Linocut
Joyce Ntobe (B.Bailey)
Image courtesy: Everard Read Gallery

