

EVERARD READ | LONDON

DEBORAH BELL | ARTEMIS AND HER DOGS

Deborah Bell on her monumental bronze sculpture, *Artemis and Her Dogs*







Deborah Bell
Artemis and her Dogs
Edition 5 of 6, 2009-2011
bronze
380 x 280 x 120 cm

To honour Deborah Bell's monumental bronze sculpture *Artemis and her Dogs*, first conceptualised almost 30 years ago, Bell discusses the inspirations and history behind the work.

"Artemis has great purpose," says Bell "and I can see that as an archetype she has helped me travel far."

Advancing across wherever she is placed, Bell's Artemis is a warrior who epitomises both power and grace. Bow in hand, she is forever striding forward. Her three dogs help to lead the charge and her arrows arc into the future.

Deborah bell reflects on the creation of *Artemis and her Dogs*:

"As a student studying art history, I had always been drawn to the painting by Titian called the "Death of Actaeon.

Titian depicts the goddess Diana (the Roman name for the Greek goddess Artemis) striding forward, left arm outstretched holding the bow in front of her, whilst her right arm is bent and her hand relaxed in the release of the arrow she has just shot Actaeon with.

This arrow had pierced Actaeon who was spying on her nakedness and turned him into a stag which in a sense revealed his animal nature and provoked his own hunting dogs to attack him.

Titian's image of Artemis forever striding forward - one arm bent, the other reaching forward with purpose into the future, became a symbol that I have used many times over the years.

In 1995 I made three paintings based on images from Titian depicting women in different states. States of desperation and longing, and in the figure of Artemis, moving forward in strength with focus and intent. She became the symbol of what I wanted to be.

The journey as metaphor for movement between mortality and immortality; earthly and spiritual realms is a recurring theme in Bell's work. Human figures have embodied the seeker on a journey, often accompanied by hounds – as with Artemis."



"In the late 1990s, I branched out from being a painter to make sculpture. And I always had the knowing that one day I would represent Artemis in this form. This took 10 years to realise. I had moved out to the countryside and finally had the space to create large sculpture. I was on my own, self-sufficient and bringing up two children. I now had agency.

In 2009, I made a small clay work of Artemis (which I called Diana to honour Titian). However, I knew I needed to create her on a monumental scale she had to be tall, she had to be strong her legs had to have the power of strong tree trunks, and her one arm needed to stretch forward as her arrow. She had to have focus and knowingness - her eyes closed with an inner vision.

For some reason, unlike Titian, I now placed her bow in her bent back right arm - her hand relaxed and her bow unstrung.

Her left arm pointed forward as her arrow in focus, and her eyes were closed. She was guided by an inner knowing.

Now looking back at what I made then, I can see some sense to these decisions which I was unaware of at the time.

Her relaxed hand now holding the bow shows more acceptance than agency.

Similarly, the bow is unstrung. It is no longer meant to be a weapon instead it reaches up to the Sky and down to the Earth - and for me, this represents the spiritual and the material - As Above, So Below."



"As I was building her in my outside sculpture studio, my three Great Dane dogs milled around at the base of my ladder. I then knew that they had to be part of the story.

I envisioned them sprinting forward in front of her, symbolising her arrows of intent. They were no longer the dogs of Actaeon, but rather the hounds associated with one of the other moon goddesses - Hecate.

I recently researched what they symbolised and found out that they represented Hecate's dominion over death. And whilst the shape of their bodies relates to my Great Danes, their ears are smaller, more like the ears of Anubis. And Anubis symbolises power over life and death and one of his roles is guiding souls to the afterlife.

The dogs in my work can be seen both as guides and protectors in the physical and spiritual. They move between realms."





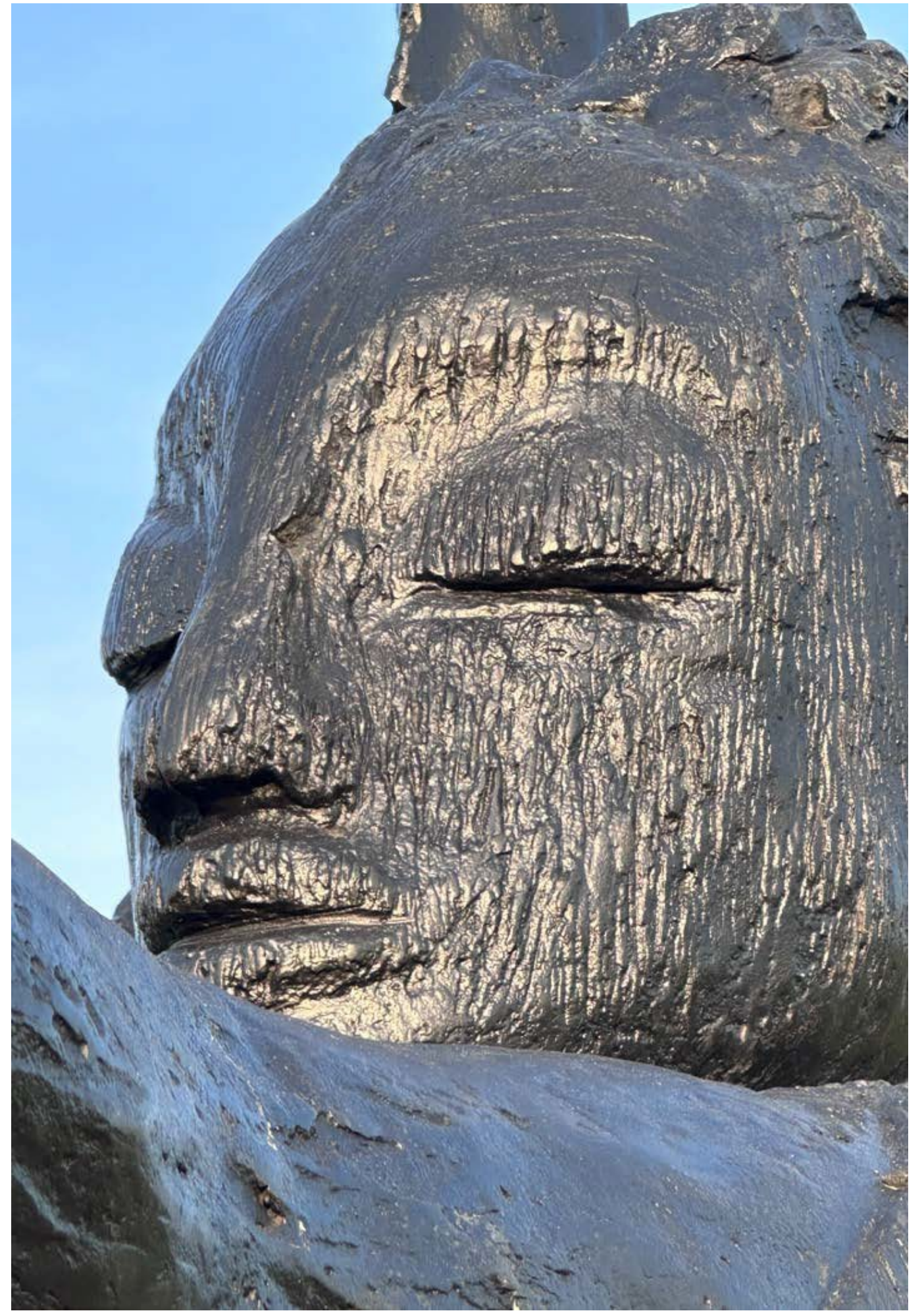
"Artemis (or Diana) became a symbol for me of an inner power as a woman. And then around 2016, I started being drawn to more nurturing feminine archetypes.

I thought I was finished with Artemis, and in 2018 I made a large painting called 'Farewell Artemis' This time I depicted her without bow and arrow stepping out of the picture looking back at figures silhouetted in a landscape reminiscent of the Tankwa Karoo in South Africa which I love. I had no idea at the time that this prefigured my leaving South Africa.

However, I needed her courage and strength to do that. Artemis is still with me, she is representative of a larger sense of self, the part of me that strides forward into the Unknown."

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DEBORAH BELL

b. 1957, 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.

In her iconography Bell 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.

Bell's earlier figures, characterised by entrapment (in the country, in the body), gave way to figures embodying the seeker – often accompanied by boats, horses, chariots. Images of lions, dogs, horses and angels. 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 observed, points 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*.

Bell has collaborated on various historically important projects with contemporaries such as William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins. She received her BAFA (Hons) and MFA degrees from the University of Witwatersrand and has been an artist working abroad and a lecturer at various South African tertiary institutions.

Deborah Bell's work is represented in public and private collections around the world including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Smithsonian Institute and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, the Hara Museum, Tokyo and the IZIKO South African National Gallery, Cape Town.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024 *Deborah Bell at Spirit Studios*, Suffolk, UK
Mother Land, Everard Read Johannesburg, South Africa

2020 *Sentinels (2020)*, Everard Read, London, UK

2019 *Enthroned*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

2018 *Invocations to the Plate*, David Krut Projects, Johannesburg, South Africa

2017 *Uncovering Ancient Memory – 15 years of etching*, David Krut Projects, Cape Town, South Africa
Recent Paintings and Sculpture, Everard Read, Franschhoek, South Africa

2016 *Dreams of Immortality: Blood and Gold*, Everard Read, London, UK

2015 *Renunciation*, David Krut, Johannesburg, South Africa
Dreams of Immortality, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa

2013 *What Would Wisdom Say to Your Dark Heart?* Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2012 *A Far Country*, John Martin Gallery, London and the Glyndebourne Opera Festival, UK

2011 *Presence*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa

2010 *Alchemy*, David Krut, Johannesburg, South Africa

2009 *Flux*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Collaborations, David Krut, Johannesburg, South Africa

2007 *Objects of Power: memory of metal, memory of wood*, Goodman, Johannesburg, South Africa

2005-6 *Crossings and Monuments*, Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa

2005 *Crossings and Monuments*, Aardklop Festival Potchefstroom University Library Gallery, South Africa

2004 *Sentinels*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2002 *Unearthed*, Joao Ferreira Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2001 *Unearthed*, Goodman, Johannesburg, South Africa

2000 *The Journey Home*, Art First, London, UK

1998 *Displacements*, Goodman, Johannesburg, South Africa

1995 *Muses and Lamentations*, Goodman, Johannesburg, South Africa

1989 *Deborah Bell*, Potchefstroom Museum, South Africa

1982 *Deborah Bell*, Market Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

TWO–THREE PERSON GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Co-Responses*, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg in collaboration with Ricky Burnett

1997 *Collaborations 1986–1997* (11 years of collaborative projects between artists Kentridge, Hodgins and Bell)

at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, in association with the FNB Vita Awards, South Africa

UB101, a portfolio of etchings created in conjunction with Kentridge and Hodgins. Exhibited at the Grahamstown Festival and at the Gertrude Posel Gallery. Exhibition curated by Fiona Rankin-Smith

1994 *Memo*, installation with video at the Grahamstown festival in collaboration with William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins, South Africa
Lamentations, Art First, Cork Street, London, UK

1993 *Easing the Passing (of the hours)*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Portraits in the round, ceramic exhibition in collaboration with William Kentridge and Retief van Wyk, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

1992 *Easing the Passing (of the hours)*, computer Animation, laser prints and drawings in collaboration with William Kentridge and Robert Hodgins, Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa

1991 *Little Morals*, a portfolio of etchings created in conjunction with Hodgins and Kentridge, exhibited at the Cassirer Gallery, Johannesburg, Gallery International, Cape Town and Taking Liberties, Durban, South Africa

1988 Exhibited with Jenny Stadler and Nagel at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

1987-8 *Hogarth in Johannesburg*, a portfolio of etchings created in conjunction with Hodgins and Kentridge. This exhibition travelled to all the major centres in South Africa

1985 *MAFA* exhibition, Rembrandt Gallery, Milner Park, Johannesburg, South Africa

1983-4 Exhibited with Hodgins and Sassoon, Carriage House Gallery, South Africa

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020 *Bronze, Steel, Stone and Bone*, Everard Read London

2019 Masterpiece London Art Fair, with Everard Read
Southern Aspect, Everard Read London
Summer, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

2018 *Bronze, Steel and Stone III*, Everard Read London Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read

2017 *Bronze, Steel and Stone II*, Everard Read London

2016 *Bronze, Steel and Stone I*, Everard Read London
Opening Exhibition, Everard Read London

2016-7 *TACIT*, a group exhibition acknowledging 20

years of conjunction and reciprocity at Dionysus

Sculpture Works studio and foundry, NWU Gallery, Potchefstroom and William Humphreys, Kimberley, and Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, South Africa

2015 *Bronze, Steel & Stone*, Everard Read, Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa
1:54 Fair, with Everard Read, London, UK

2013 *Summer of Sculpture*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Centenary Exhibition, CIRCA & Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa

2012 *Rainbow Nation: Group exhibition of South African Sculptors*, Museum Beelden Aan Zee, Den Haag, the Netherlands

2011 *HORSE*, curated by Ricky Burnett, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa

2010 *TWENTY, 20 Years of South African Sculpture*, Nirox Foundation, South Africa

2009 *Contemporary Sculpture in the Landscape*, Nirox Foundation, South Africa

2007 *Lift Off II*, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
David Krut Print Workshop, UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa

2005 Art Basel, with Goodman Gallery, Miami, USA

Works on Paper, Collaborative prints from David Krut Print Workshop, Franchise Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

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

2004 *Earthworks/Claybodies*, Sasol Museum Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

2003 *Earthworks/Claybodies*, Pretoria Art Museum, Standard Bank Centre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2000 *Icons for the Millenium*, Atlanta, USA

1999 *The Paper Show*, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Emergence, Group Show, National Arts festival, Grahamstown, South Africa
Artery, AVA, in conjunction with the Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Artists in residence, Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa

1998 *Earth Hues – Contemporary African Art*, World Space, Washington DC, USA
100 Artists Protest detention without trial, in aid of DPSC, Market Theatre, Johannesburg, South Africa
Artists for Human Rights Exhibition, Durban Exhibition

Centre, South Africa

4 UNISA Lecturers, Bloemfontein, Pretoria Art Museum, South Africa

1997 *Images and Form: Prints, drawings and sculpture from Southern Africa and Nigeria*, Brunei Gallery, University of London and Edinburgh College of Art, UK
The Gencor Collection, Sandton Art Gallery, and The Grahamstown Festival, South Africa
Kempton Park Metropolitan Substructure Fine Arts Award Show, Kempton Park, South Africa
New Art from South Africa, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
Les Arts de la Résistance (Fin de Siècle 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, South Africa
CRAM, AVA, in conjunction with the Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

1996 *Gay Rights: Rites, Re-writes*, travelling exhibition, South Africa
Group Salon, Rose Korber representing artists at the Bay Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa

Common and Uncommon Ground: South African Art to Atlanta, City Gallery East, Atlanta, USA
Vita Awards, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
Tomorrow is Now, First Canadian Place and Knights Galleries International, Toronto, Canada
Barber Signs, the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Recent Drawings, Gallery on Tyrone, Johannesburg,

South Africa
Ceramics Biennial, Sandton Art Gallery, South Africa

1995 *The Bag Factory: The First Five Years*, the Civic Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
The Art of Tea, Kim Sacks Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Group Salon, Rose Korber representing artists at the Bay Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa

1994 *Group Show*, Newtown, Johannesburg, South Africa
Anything Boxed, Group Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
South African works on Paper, North Western University of Illinois, Chicago, USA

1993 Gallery on Tyrone, Johannesburg, South Africa
Vita Awards, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
Momentum Life Exhibition, Pretoria, South Africa

- Internations of Millenium*, Newtown Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1992** *ICA*, 50 Johannesburg Artists, Johannesburg, South
Africa
Paris: The Catalyst, Alliance Francaise, Durban, South
Africa
Looking at Art: Looking at Watercolours, Goodman
Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Vita Awards, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa
Works made in August, Newtown Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa
- 1991** *Cape Town Triennial*, South Africa
Painted People: Painted Spaces, Newtown Galleries,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Hand Coloured Graphics, Goodman Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Tiny Tapestry Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg,
South Africa
- 1990** *Women choose Women*, University of the
Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
Art from South Africa, MOMA, Oxford, UK
Standard Bank Drawing Competition, Johannesburg,
South Africa
- 1989** Volkskas Atelier Award Exhibition, Johannesburg Art
Gallery, South Africa
African Encounters, Dome Gallery, New York and
Washington, USA
The Little Big Show, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg,
South Africa
- 1988** CASA (Culture for Another South Africa), conference in
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Volkskas Atelier Award exhibition, South African
Association of the Arts, Pretoria, South Africa
- 1986** Volkskas Atelier Award Exhibition, South African
Association of Arts, Pretoria, South Africa
- 1985** Cape Town Triennial, New Visions, Market Gallery,
Johannesburg, South Africa
11 Figurative Artists, Market Gallery, Johannesburg,
South Africa

COLLECTIONS

BHP Billiton South Africa Ltd.
Bristol Myers Squibb Corp. USA
The Leeu Collection, Franschhoek
Delaire Graff Estate, Stellenbosch
Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town
Hara Museum, Tokyo
Johannesburg Art Gallery
Johannesburg City Council
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Gqeberha
(formerly Port Elizabeth)
Legal Resources Centre, Johannesburg
Museum of Modern Art, New York
MTN Art Institute, Johannesburg
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C
Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein
Pretoria Art Museum
Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C
Standard Bank Investment Corporation, Johannesburg
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg
University of South Africa Art Gallery
University of Pietermaritzburg
University of the Free State
University of the Witwatersrand



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PHOTOGRAPHY

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