

PRESS RELEASE: *For immediate release, October 2019*

Everard Read London presents
Caryn Scrimgeour: *A Word is not a Sparrow*
15 November – 21 December 2019

Everard Read London is pleased to present a solo exhibition of oil paintings by South African artist, Caryn Scrimgeour. This new body of work entitled, *A Word is Not a Sparrow*, was completed over the past 18 months and several of the works were inspired by the artist's recent travels in Japan.

Taken from a Russian proverb, the title of the show refers to the indelible permanence of a spoken word. "A word once uttered can never be taken back; instead it floats forever within our memories," notes Scrimgeour. For me, the fleeting snapshot-like quality of my paintings evokes a sense of something just having happened; a word just spoken, a stifled cry, a sudden silence. This sense of suspension of time, of waiting, of bated breath is further emphasized by the objects floating in space between the viewer and the canvas."

Scrimgeour's paintings are obsessively immaculate – a manifestation of intense attention to detail and an extraordinary command of her palette. Her table settings intrigue and fascinate by juxtaposing fragile and precious curios with commonplace objects, each exquisitely rendered.

Rich in symbolism, her work is reminiscent of still life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age. As with the Golden Age Masters, Scrimgeour uses ephemeral objects – butterflies, blossoms and fruit – to remind us of fragility. The perfectly-rendered contours and surfaces of each object can be deceiving, though, as Scrimgeour uses them as both symbols and as more ordinary icons. While precious objects such as jewels and fine china are classical symbols of the futility of greed and materialism, we have to wonder what the torn postcard and marshmallow fish mean.

These more commonplace objects are holders of memory. They are part of our identity - when we are prompted by things to remember what we've experienced, we remember who we are. In these paintings, takeaway chopsticks and paper lanterns are treated with as much fondness and care as silver knives and fragile china and, as a result, there is a strong sense of the narrative or history in each work. We assume we can piece together parts of Scrimgeour's life from these varied clues, although it is a matter of some difficulty to separate our own associations with objects.

The absence of humans – aside from the occasional reflection of the artist – makes these works all the more poignant, as do the unlikely protagonists: the harlequin collection of delicately-patterned china; the bone-handled cutlery alongside disposable chopsticks in their paper wrapper; the lavishly painted teabag; the burnt match; the glistening fig.

Scrimgeour explains further, "The constantly changing positions of the cutlery and other objects suggest a shifting and an evolution in what we see as sacred or fundamental to our core beliefs. For instance, an empty place setting, may symbolise a loss of self, emptiness or missed opportunities."

Scrimgeour's paintings are puzzles, much like our identities – made up of fragments freighted with memories and experience. They are vanitas paintings for our age: they hint at the fragility and transitory nature of our lives. Similarly, the fragments recorded are small monuments to the human desire to leave what Antony Gormley describes as "a trace of our living and dying on the face of an indifferent universe" *.

For more information, please contact: info@everardlondon.com, +44 (0)207 590 9991

* Antony Gormley, interview with the Financial Times, 2015

About Everard Read London

Everard Read galleries are specialists in contemporary art from South Africa and the diaspora.

Established in 1913 in Johannesburg, we are Africa's oldest and one of its largest commercial art galleries with gallery spaces in London, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Franschhoek.

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.

South African artists are part of the global conversation. We seek to make their voices heard.

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

About Caryn Scrimgeour

(b. 1970, Johannesburg, South Africa)

Caryn Scrimgeour's subject matter is chosen from commonplace objects that surround her. Delicate chinaware, glassware and insects are combined with trinkets and knick-knacks and portrayed against a backdrop of richly patterned fabric in a way that is reminiscent of 17th century Dutch still life painting.

Objects that are fragile and precious are juxtaposed with mundane items, which in turn are elevated to the same level of importance. Her works are filled with symbolism, and the place settings consequently 'become representative of major events which have impacted my life over the past ten years, but which are also events that most women will experience in the course of their lives, in one form or another.' The objects in these paintings are easily recognisable, familiar and often nostalgic, making the images highly accessible to the viewer. Even the use of symbols and images drawn from other cultures and societies serve to entice rather than alienate the viewer

Scrimgeour explains, 'The constantly-changing positions of the knives and forks are indicative of the inconsistency and fluctuation of what we see as sacred or fundamental to our core beliefs...For instance, an empty place setting, symbolises a loss of self, emptiness and missed opportunities.'

The images are elevated from that of traditional still-life by the use of aerial perspective which forces a shift in our viewpoint and the way in which we interpret the objects. At the same time it creates an almost abstract interplay between the objects and the patterns, creating a contemporary context for a very traditional genre.

Scrimgeour graduated from the University of Stellenbosch with a B.A in Fine Art and lives and works in Cape Town. She has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in South Africa and at Everard Read London. Her work is held in private collections in the UK, Europe, Asia, the USA and South Africa.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019

A Word is Not a Sparrow, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK

2018

My Borrowed Life, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2016

Postcards from Chinatown, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK

2014

Breaking Point, Exhibition Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

2012

Conundrum, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2008

Fragile, Fertile Deceptions, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2006

Solo Exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017

Summer Exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK

2015

Winter, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2014

Summer, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2013

100, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2013

Centenary, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

Possessed, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Sydney Art Fair, Everard Read Johannesburg, Sydney, Australia

2012

Johannesburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

Winter, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Small Works, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

India Art Fair, Everard Read Johannesburg, New Delhi, India

2011

Johannesburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

15th Anniversary Group Exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Self Portrait, Rust En Vrede, Durbanville, South Africa

2010

Summer, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

View From The South, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2009

Sex, Power, Money, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Summer, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2008

The City, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

2007

Artwords II, Rust En Vrede, Durbanville, South Africa

2006

Seven Deadly Sins, Rust En Vrede, Durbanville, South Africa

2004

Women's Day, Rust En Vrede, Durbanville, South Africa