



SHANY VAN DEN BERG

Her Garden



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10 June – 9 July 2022



SHANY VAN DEN BERG | *HER GARDEN*

This body of work comes from deep within my female psyche, so in many ways it's autobiographical, a manifestation of my thoughts and feelings.

The first artworks I made for this exhibition were the three sculptures. They were the starting point and they ultimately fed into the paintings. I chose to close their eyes and imbue them with a meditative quality because I wanted there to be a serenity, a peacefulness about them.

By contrast, the women in the paintings have their eyes open and I felt very strongly they were in dialogue with me, watching me as I painted every day in the quiet studio. These women are conduits for me – a painterly device to communicate emotions. I, as the artist, am in dialogue with the women I am portraying. And I feel they in turn are in dialogue with the viewer – or at least invite the viewer into a conversation.

Painting is a very solitary and introspective activity and while I'm painting, I'm thinking about the women close to me – my children, my grandchildren – and reminding myself to respect their own journeys and ways of navigating this world. I'm protective of my solitude and the creative energy in my studio. I think it's because of this that I'm able to feel a profound bond with the subjects I'm painting and to connect with them at a very deep level as I bring them into existence.

For the portraits in this body of work, I didn't use photographs or models. These women emerged from my years of observing and part of the magic – the alchemy – is for me to see who materialises from the paint. These are women I know but they are also universal women. They meet the viewer's gaze with an openness, a confidence, sometimes a vulnerability, and it feels to me that they convey an inner strength and power, a self-acceptance.

Birds have featured in my artworks for many years ... the fluttering of wings is akin to the swirling of thoughts. Birds are

beautiful metaphors for me – as messengers between heaven and earth, not in a biblical sense, but perhaps as messengers between the spiritual and the physical worlds. They feast on the ground and then fly into the sky, towards the light. They signal freedom for me – that part of one's earthly journey when you take flight but then come to rest or nest at night.

Birds also represent the passage of time, their seasonal migration signalling the end of one season and the beginning of another.

In some of these works I have incorporated foliage into the clothing, the hair of my subjects, inviting the birds to a safe space. The references to nature took on a particular poignancy during the height of the pandemic when gardens and parks were our safe spaces - our only access to the outside world, the natural world.

I wanted these artworks to convey the richness, textures and colours of nature. I regularly walk in my garden at night when the energy and palette is so different, and I tried to capture this in one of the large paintings where the featureless figures are surrounded by the shades of grey and charcoal of night.

The foliage in the paintings and sculpture intentionally enfolds the women in a protective cloak of leaves, perhaps even a suit of armour. I intended this allusion to women as goddesses, deities and, in some ways, as warriors. As we've been in a time of war recently, I've felt an even greater need to wrap a protective layer around women and children, in particular.

I think about the state of Gaia and the water we need to keep Mother Earth in growth. And I wonder what our universal garden will be like in the years ahead – for my grandchildren, for the next generation. This body of work pays homage to Her Garden, our garden.

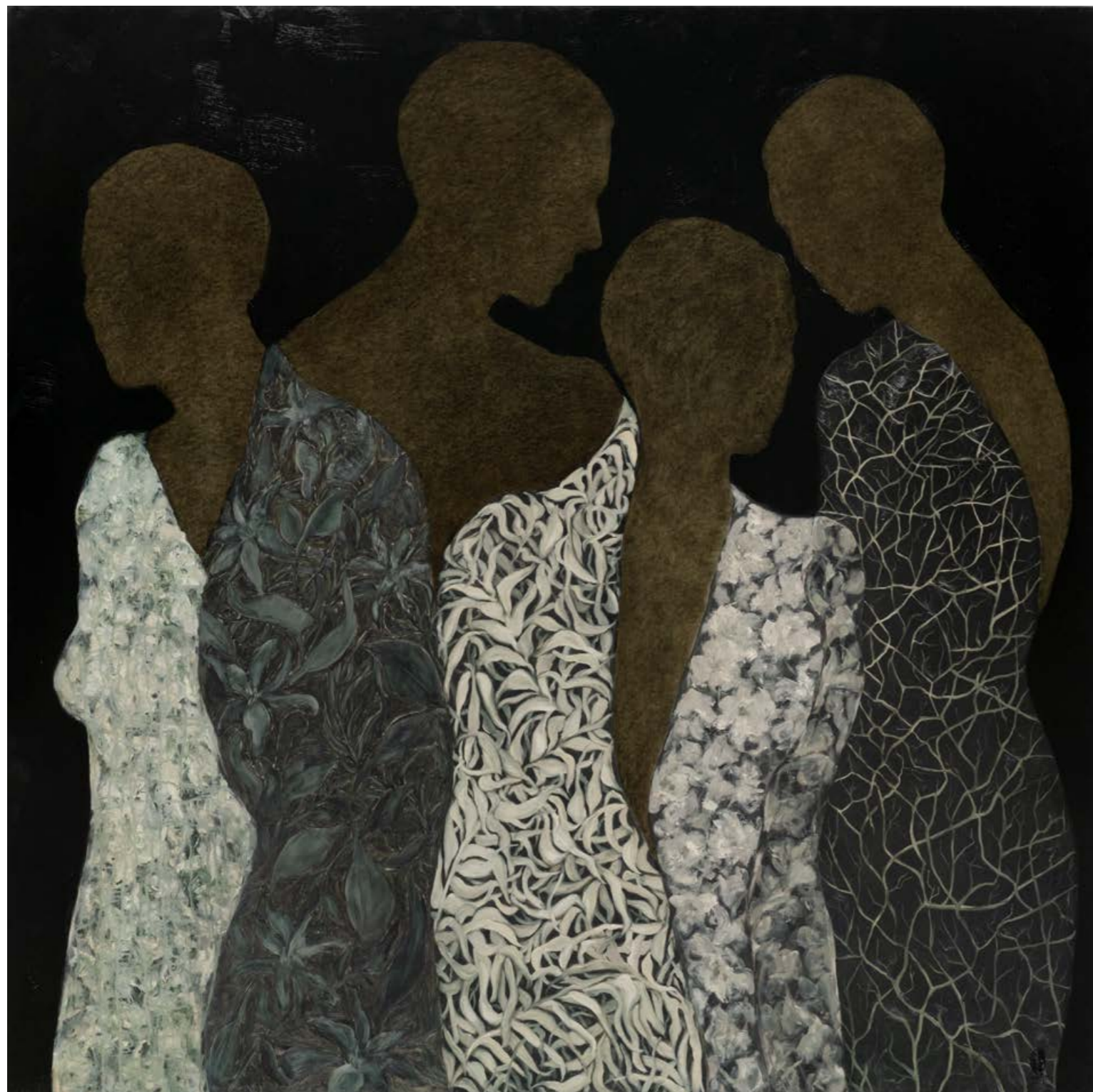
– Shany van den Berg, April 2022



Midnight fluttering
oil on board
150 x 150 cm
59 x 59 in.



Stepping into the light
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in.



Intertwined
oil on board
150 x 150 cm
59 x 59 in.





Let her garden be the safe space
oil on board
170 x 150 cm
66 7/8 x 59 in.



Gaia
bronze
Edition of 4
135 cm
53 1/8 in.





Enclosed garden
bronze
Edition of 8
55 cm
21 5/8 in.



Hidden garden
bronze
Edition of 8
50 cm
19 5/8 in.



Guardians of her garden
collage and oil on board
73 x 183 cm
28 5/8 x 72 in.

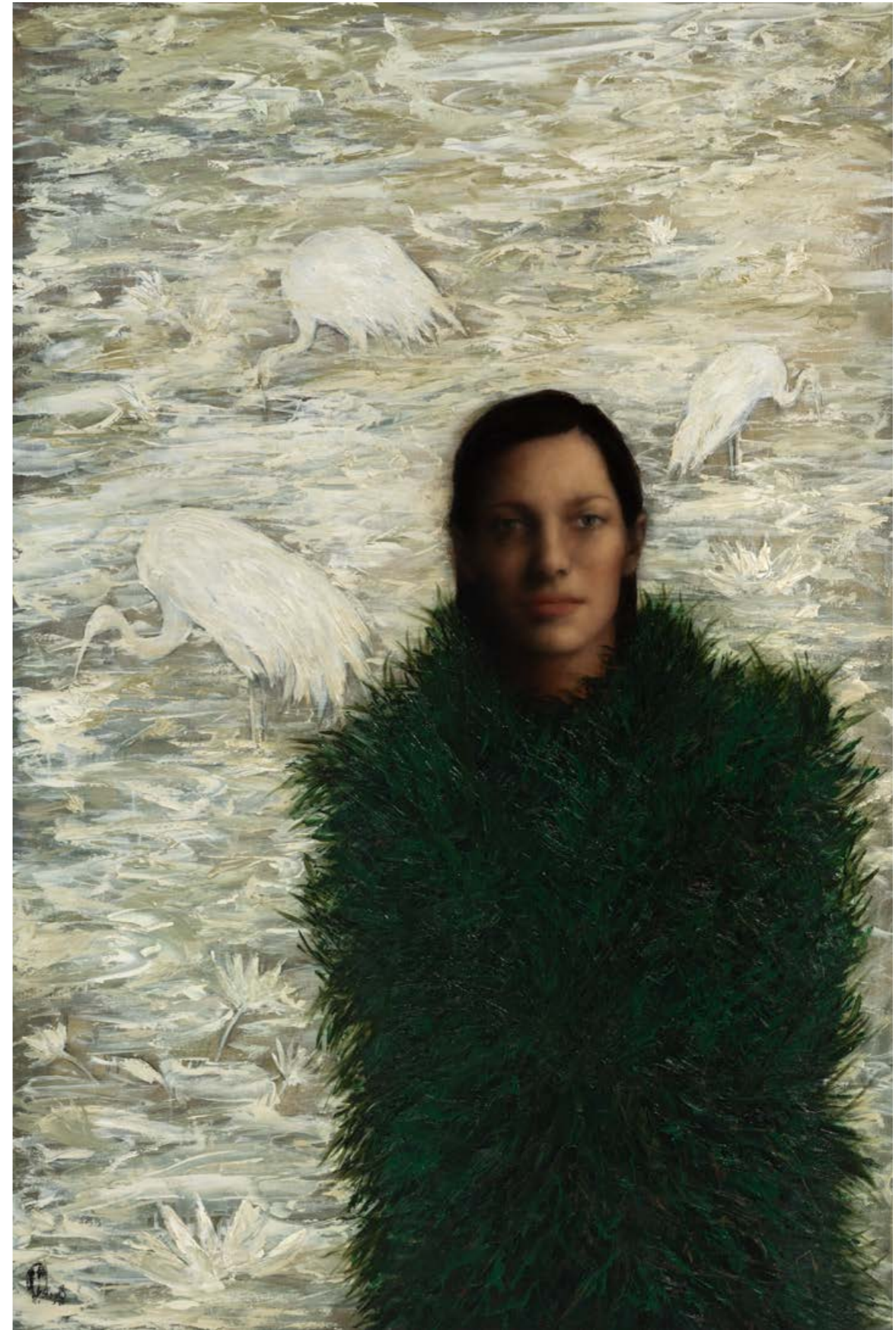


Olympia's dreamscape
oil on board
90 x 150 cm
35 ³/₈ x 59 in.





Delicate flower
oil on board
63 x 53 cm
24 3/4 x 20 3/4 in.

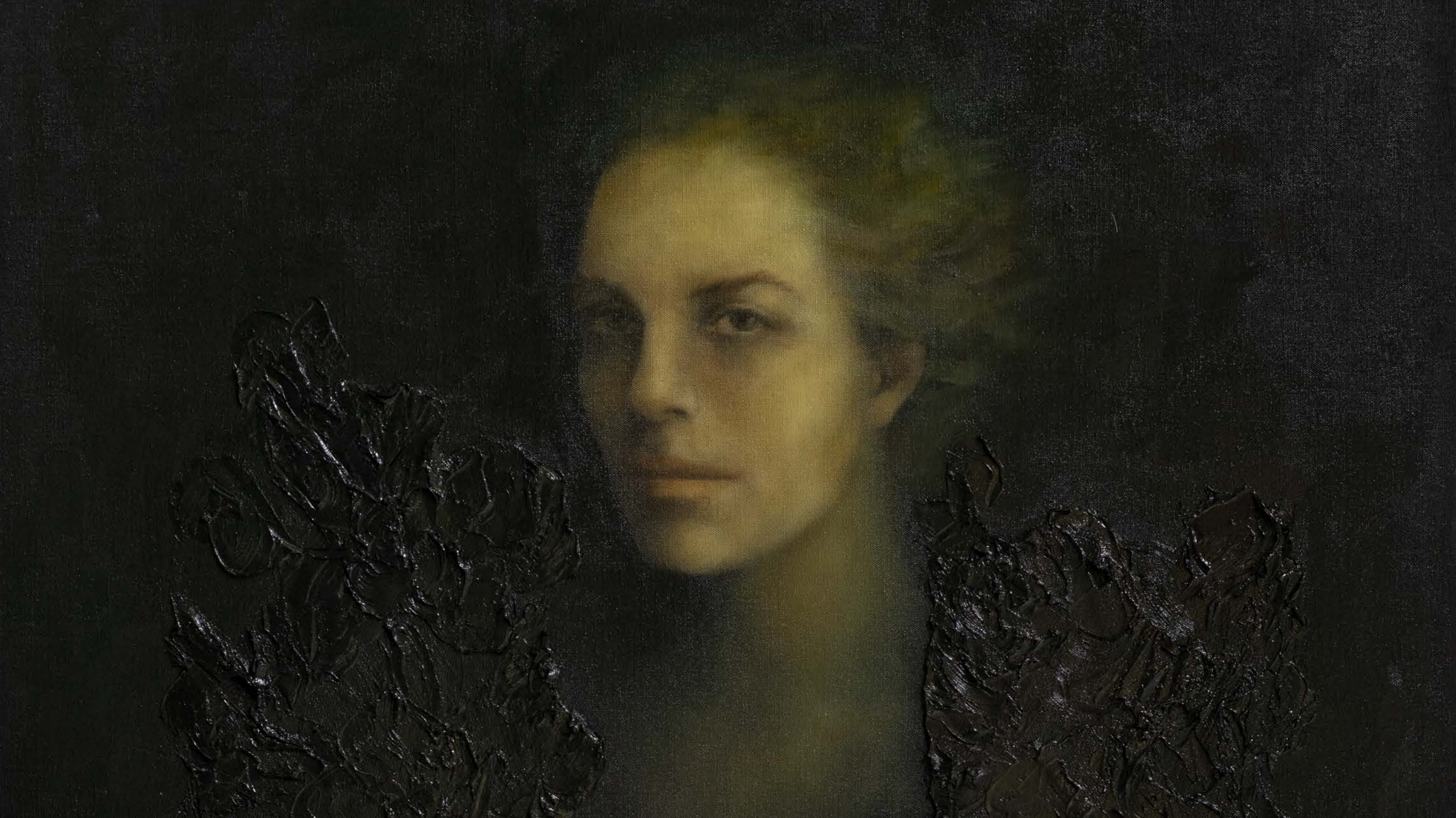


Nesting
oil on board
137 x 91 cm
53 7/8 x 35 3/4 in.



Spirit of the Back South Easter
linen collage and oil paint on linen
137 x 91 cm
53 7/8 x 35 3/4 in.







Her forest I
oil on canvas
90 x 120 cm
35 3/8 x 47 1/8 in.



Her forest II
oil on canvas
90 x 120 cm
35 3/8 x 47 1/8 in.

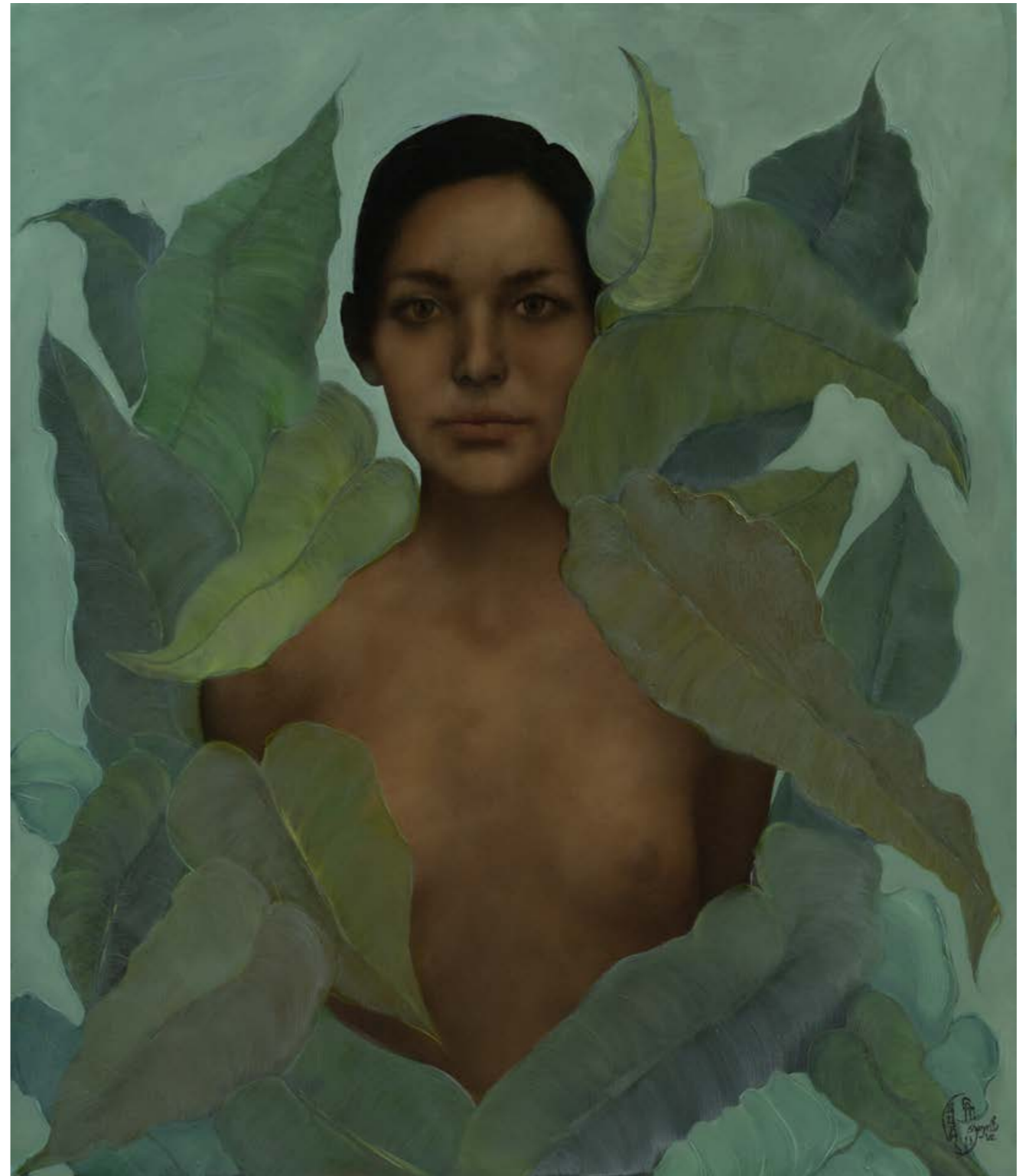


Her forest III
oil on canvas
90 x 120 cm
35 3/8 x 47 1/8 in.



Holding space
oil on board
90 x 60 cm
35 3/8 x 23 1/2 in.





Garden warrior
oil on board
70 x 60 cm
27 1/2 x 23 1/2 in.



Wrapped in green
oil on board
55 x 55 cm
21 5/8 x 21 5/8 in.



A little bird told me so
oil on board
55 x 55 cm
21 5/8 x 21 5/8 in.



ARE
YOU
OK?



st
ne
cess

Human
to
sent
line of sight
communication
but language



*Flower from another garden
in my favourite vase I*
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in.



*Flower from another garden
in my favourite vase II*
oil on linen
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in.



*Flower from another garden
in my favourite vase III*
oil in linen
100 x 100 cm
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 in.



SHANY VAN DEN BERG

b. 1958, Riversdale, South Africa

Shany van den Berg's practice centres on contemporary portraiture and figurative work, with an underlying theme of womanhood. Her ethereal oil paintings evoke the mood and texture of Old Master paintings, conveying complex emotions, moods and ideas through meticulous attention to detail, an extraordinary facility with paint and subtle symbolism.

Van den Berg's portraiture is most often of women, whose features morph into a composite of the artist and her loved ones, serving as portals to narratives of sacrifice, struggle and ultimately transcendence. The references are delicate and ambiguous: a nude atop a gallery plinth is transposed from stone into flesh and blood, or vice versa; a sheet draped, shroud-like, across an ethereal form emerging from or entering an abyss; hands depicted in gestures of supplication, prayer, self-protection or release; a red scarf or fragile scarlet thread seeming almost to flutter across and beyond the canvas.

A sense of layering pervades her works, in the imagery itself

and through van den Berg's painterly process. Surfaces are built up of swathes, not painted onto the board but rather, absorbed into it. Shadows are imbued with texture and skins exude an almost viscous sheen. Although unmistakably feminine, some of her forms evoke a sense of animalism through their attenuated bone structure, and an underlying sexuality pervades many of the forms. They suggest recognition, confirmation and the bittersweet knowledge of love, loss and letting go.

Van den Berg has worked as a full-time artist for almost thirty years. Her practice includes painting on board, linen and found objects, drawing, sculpture, site specific installations, mixed media, three-dimensional work as well as poetry and music.

Van den Berg is a three-time finalist in the BP Portrait Award at London's National Portrait Gallery. Her work is represented in private collections in the UK, South Africa, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Caymen Islands and the U.S.A



SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021** *nōs/ons*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2019 *Dreampond*, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK
2018 *Fluisteringe vanaf n Leliepoel/Whispers from a Lily Pond*, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa
2017 *(in)filtrationoftime*, CIRCA gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2015 *New works*, Gallery at La Grande Provence, Franschoek, South Africa
2012 *Hinterland*, Everard Read, Johannesburg, South Africa
2011 *Siel van my Vel*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2010 Solo, IS Art at Le Quartier Francais, Franschoek, South Africa
2008 *in gesprek met*, Smelik & Stokking, Den Haag, Netherlands
2007 *...(h)erken...ken...en... ,* Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
gedagtes wat reis, My Own Choice Gallery, Amsterdam, Netherlands
2006 *dwaaltuin*, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschoek, South Africa
2003 *construction site*, Limeline Design, Cape Town, South Africa
2001 *vlug in tyd*, Dorp Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
1999 *my shadow, my echo, me*, Bang the Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021** *Offering*, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa
2020 *On Being*, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa
Journeys of the Mind, Everard Read, Franschoek, South Africa
Toe ek 21 was, Toyota US Woodfees, Stellenbosch, South Africa
STILL, Everard Read, UK & South Africa
2019 *Selected Artists* curated by Trent Read, Knysna Fine Art Gallery, Knysna, South Africa
 The Ampersand Foundation/21 Year Celebration Exhibition/ A Vision of Jack Ginsberg, UJ Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Southern Aspect, Everard Read, London, UK
Winter, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Synchronous, Knysna Fine Art, Knysna, South Africa
2018 *Winter*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2017 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa

Winter, CIRCA, Cape Town, South Africa
People and Portraiture, CIRCA, Cape Town, South Africa
Summer, Everard Read, London, UK
Winter, Everard Read, London, UK

- 2016** *Opening Exhibition*, Everard Read, London, UK
Winter Collection, Group Show, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
2015 *Fear & Loss – Industrial Karoo Group installation*, Pretoria Art Museum, South Africa
100 Years, Die Burger Artscape Group Exhibition Cape Town, South Africa
 Summer Sculpture Garden Group Exhibition Mount Nelson Hotel Gardens, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Homage, Group Exhibition, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Winter, Group Exhibition, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
2014 *Summer Season*, group exhibition, D-Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Fear & Loss – Industrial Karoo Group Exhibition, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, SA
Summer of Sculpture III, group exhibition, Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa
Magicus, group exhibition, D-Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
2013 *Cape Town Re-Imagined*, group exhibition, Suidoosterfees, Cape Town, South Africa
100, group exhibition, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Universal Suffering, group exhibition, War Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa
 Femininity, group exhibition curated by Eva Roer, Germany
 SAADA Antique Fair, Pier Rabe Antiques, Franschoek, South Africa
Hiernamaals/Hereafter, group show, Slee Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Binnehemels, group show, Red, Black & White, Stellenbosch, South Africa
2012 *Small Works*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
A Summer of Sculpture, group show, Mount Nelson, Cape Town, South Africa

- 2010** Collaboration with Mogalakwena Art and Craft in Limpopo for Waterkloof Biodynamic Wine estate
- 2009** *The Great South African Nude*, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
Sex, Power, Money, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008** *Confluence*, a two-woman exhibition between China & South Africa, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Art Fair Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2006** *Small works*, group show, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Shany van den Berg/Strijdom van der Merwe, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschhoek, South Africa
- 2005** *Three*, trio, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2000-2** Shany van den Berg/Alex Hamilton, Bang the Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2000** *A Celebration of Art & Technology*, group show in aid of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, sponsored by Hewlett Packard

COMPETITIONS & PROJECTS

- 2021** Sanlam Portrait Top 40 Finalist
- 2019** Sanlam Portrait Top 40 Finalist 'Leah se Water' Rust-en-Vrede Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2016** BP Portrait Finalist, 'SELF' Portrait Gallery, London
BP Travel Award Shortlisted Finalist, Portrait Gallery, London
- 2013** Fellowship granted by the Ampersand Foundation, New York
- 2011** Bright Ideas Ceramic art/Light from Africa Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010** BP Award Portrait Finalist, 'Bloedlyn/Bloodline Sannie en Leah', Portrait Gallery, London
- 2009** BP Award Portrait Finalist, 'Dit is ek Gladys' Portrait Gallery London
- 2008** Art exchange / Hubei Institute of Art, China
Artfair Utrecht / My Own Choice
- 2007** AAF Amsterdam / My Own Choice
- 2005** Sasol New Signatures / finalist
- 1990** Corobrick Ceramic Competition Cape Town – finalist

ART RESIDENCIES

- 2013** Fellowship to The Ampersand Foundation in New York USA
- 2007** Art Exchange Hubei Institute of Art in Wuhan Central China and Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2004** Community Arts Workshop where 10 artists from diverse walks of life exploring the first 10 years of democracy through individual and collaborative artworks
Everard Read, Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, South Africa
- 1998** One of 12 artists, 6 from South Africa and 6 from Germany working together in Lauenberg, Germany.

COLLECTIONS

Works included in private collections in South Africa, London, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Caymen Islands and U.S.A



