

SASHA HARTSLIEF

(b. 1974 Gauteng, South Africa)

Sasha Hartsliet was born in 1974 in Gauteng. At the age of seventeen, she came to Cape Town to study English and Philosophy at UCT. Passionate about drawing from an early age, she is largely self-taught, closely observing other artists and avidly reading up on technique.

Hartsliet had always been passionate about drawing, but the desire to become an artist only crystallised into a decision in 1995, when she enrolled at Cape College under the tutelage of Elizabeth Gunter.

Elizabeth Gunter specialised in classical drawing and introduced Hartsliet to the textbook *The Natural Way to Draw* by Kimon Nicolaides, a Greek art teacher and master of drawing, who devoted his life to documenting exercises that facilitate the shift in perception required to accurately represent an objective form.

During her studies Hartsliet devoted as much as five hours a day to his exercises. She would draw at every possible opportunity, whether in shopping malls or Government Avenue, and pasted a quotation from Nicolaides above her easel to remind herself:

"If I were asked what one thing more than any other would teach a student how to draw, I should answer: Drawing – incessantly, furiously, painstakingly drawing."

Although she was blessed with an innate & prodigious talent for painting, she also has the rarer penchant for hard work. Consequently, Hartsliet has well-earned a reputation as a highly skilful draftsman. Her subjects are often viewed from a philosophical, deeply personal perspective, resulting in striking works that are emotionally charged, pensive in mood and considered in composition. Her subtle investigations into the human condition via the underbelly of Cape Town life somehow strike a chord with us.

"I defer to the classical Masters for inspiration," says Sasha Hartsliet, who admits to placing images painted by the 19th century American Impressionist, John Singer Sargent, next to her easel while she paints. Her muses include the 19th century neo-classicist, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, whose draughtsmanship and linear dexterity provide formal inspiration for her works. But Hartsliet's brushstrokes are more diffuse than the precise, stylized techniques of the neo-classicists. Like the 19th century French Impressionists, she uses brushstrokes to evoke the transience of light, colour and movement. And like her Renaissance and Impressionist forebears, she employs everyday visual devices to explore the way in which atmospheric light and tonal modulations inform a surface, and to evoke atmospheres fraught with symbolic subtexts. But the transience of the captured moment is counterbalanced by the disciplined rigour of Hartsliet's technique and painterly process. She admits to being "obsessively skills-driven and consumed" by her work. Each image becomes a formal study in light, contour and line.

Hartsliet's experimentation with *chiaroscuro* techniques derives inspiration from the works by 17th century Baroque masters such as Rembrandt who, through the buildup of *impasto* paint, evoked light and shadow in his portraits as a psychological device, similar to the way in which stage-lighting functions in the theatre. Often seeming to be lit from below, the expressive shading in Hartsliet's

portraits tends to converge around the facial hollows, giving the paintings a spatial as well as emotional depth. The eyes of the women in her portraits, in particular, seem inwardly focused.

Since 1999, Hartsliet has exhibited regularly at the Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, including several solo exhibitions. She continues to attract a broad collector base from around the world and is clearly one of South Africa's most exciting young talents.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2001 ARTLONDON 2001
- 2005 THREE (WITH SHANY VAN DEN BERG & CARYN SCRIMGEOUR), EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2006 SMALL WORKS, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2009 THE CITY, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2009 SEX POWER MONEY, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2010 VIEW FROM THE SOUTH, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2010 EVANS, HARTSLIEF, RUSSOUW, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2011 15th ANNIVERSARY, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2012 SMALL WORKS, EVERARD READ
- 2012 WINTER, EVERARD READ CAPE TOWN
- 2013 CENTENARY SHOW, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2014 WINTER SEASON, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- SUMMER SEASON, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2015 EMPIRE, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- SUMMER IN THE CITY, GROUP SHOW, CAPE TOWN
- 2017 SUMMER EXHIBITION II, EVERARD READ, LONDON
- WINTER COLLECTION, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2018 PEOPLE AND PORTRAITURE, EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2001 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2004 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2005 EVERARD READ, JOHANNESBURG
- 2007 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2009 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2011 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2012 ROSENDAHL, THÖNE & WESTPHAL, BERLIN
- 2012 EVERARD READ, CAPE TOWN
- 2013 EVERARD READ, JOHANNESBURG
- 2017 EVERARD READ LONDON