

EVERARD READ

MORNÉ VISAGIE

(b.1989 South Africa)

Morné Visagie is a South African artist, printmaker and curator who lives and works in Cape Town. In 2019, he completed his MFA at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. Visagie has had several solo exhibitions, and his work has been included in many group shows. His first international solo exhibition, *Die Bloue Wis*, was presented by Nuweland Gallery, the Netherlands, in 2018, and offered an overview of the artist's practice from 2011 to 2018.

The early years of Visagie's life (1989–1995) were spent on Robben Island, South Africa. While it was a safe place for children to wander freely – a suburban idyll of sorts – it was a prison to many of its residents. Apartheid South Africa, however, was coming undone. Soon, prisoners would leave, and so too would the children. The year 1994 was the start of new beginnings on the mainland: for the warders and their families who lived on the Island and for the many political prisoners who had been exiled there.

Growing up on the Island, the Atlantic Ocean that separated Visagie from the mainland became a recurring theme in his imagination. To this, the colour blue has been the primary medium in his work: a personal symbol of death, loss, nostalgia, memory, religion, sexuality, exile and distance. Visagie engages with the Island's history as a place of dislocation and loss for those imprisoned there and the sea as a transitional space between life and death. Drawing on personal recollections and collective histories, Visagie's work offers a meditation on the sea as both a physical and psychological landscape.

I do not recall when I first realised the historical weight that my childhood island carried and the fate it promised for many people who were banished there. Innocent family photos of birthday parties and days spent by the swimming pool are haunted by the realities of the time. The enormity of the Island's violent past exists alongside my personal relationship with that burdened space; it is the unspoken presence in much of my work as in my memories.

Memories of Visagie's childhood on Robben Island are interwoven with historical facts, with narratives borrowed from literature and film, and images from art and life. Indeed, he has found in the lives and works of Adriaan Van Zyl, Derek Jarman, Jean Genet, Virginia Woolf and others a shared affinity for water. The sea – changeable, inconstant – reveals itself to be evocative of not only promise and peril, but of sensuality, desire and eroticism. It offers as imperfect parallel the image of the swimming pool and its attendant changing room, evoking a history of the queer body in art and writing.

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SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023** A Sinless Season (Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2019** The Last Colour to Fade (WITW/KRONE Gallery, Tulbagh, SA)
- 2018** Die Bloue Wis (Nuweland Gallery, Oosterzee-Buren, NL)
Fountain (Smith Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2016** There are Gold Flecks in the Lapis (What If The World Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2015** The Line of Beauty (What If The World Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2014** Derek Jarman, 1994 (Brundyn+ Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2013** Far from the sea, perhaps... (What If The World Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2011** Tryst (Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town, SA)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023** What I Feel When I Think About The Cosmos, Everard Read, Franschhoek, South Africa
- 2023** Zsonamaco Sur Artfair (Nuweland Gallery, Mexico City, CDMX)
- 2022** AKAA Fair Paris (Nuweland Gallery, Paris, FR)
- 2021** AKAA Fair Paris (Nuweland Gallery, Paris, FR)
- 2021** 1:54 London (Nuweland Gallery, London, UK)
BIG ART (Nuweland Gallery, Amsterdam, NL)
Volta Basel (Nuweland Gallery, Basel, Switzerland)
Art Rotterdam (Nuweland Gallery, Rotterdam, NL)
1:54 New York (Nuweland Gallery, Online)
- 2020** PEEP SHOW (HOICK, Online)
AKAA Fair Paris (Nuweland Gallery, Online)
BIG ART (Nuweland Gallery, Amsterdam, NL)
1:54 New York (Nuweland Gallery, Online)
Art Rotterdam (Nuweland Gallery, Rotterdam, NL)
- 2019** AKAA Fair Paris (Nuweland Gallery, Paris, FR)
Re-Imagined Realities (Open24hrs, Cape Town, A)
- 2016** A New Wave (Southern Guild, Cape Town, SA)
- 2015** Rhinos Are Coming (Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town, SA)
Concerted Efforts (West Space, Melbourne, AUS)
- 2013** Positive Tension (What If The World Gallery, Cape Town, SA)
- 2012** Context (Michaelis Galleries, Cape Town, SA)
Outside the Lines: An Exploration of Abstract Materiality (What If The World Gallery, Cape Town, SA)