JOHN MEYER
(b. 1942, Bloemfontein, South Africa)

John Meyer is considered one of South Africa's foremost realist painters. Meyer completed his studies at the Johannesburg Technical College's School of Art before taking up employment within the advertising industry and later working as an illustrator in London. In the 1970s, Meyer returned to South Africa and made the decision to pursue a career in art. He has been exhibiting with Everard Read gallery since 1975.

Meyer's oeuvre predominantly comprises landscapes, genre paintings and portraits. Some of his most significant series of works include *Mandela*, *A Life's Journey*; *Elizabeth, A Sovereign's Journey* and *Lost in the Dust*, a body of depicting scenes relating to the Anglo Boer War. While the artist is committed to creating representational works, the scenes he depicts are imagined as opposed to being recordings of specific scenes and events. With his almost photo-realistic imagery, Meyer brings to the fore the complexities of visual perception, interpretation, and the subjectivity of the viewer.

Meyer is particularly celebrated for his unique ability to capture the intangible essence of the South African landscape within his paintings. Meyer developed his narrative genre, exploring the complex currents of human relationships, into a series of separate but related views of the same scene. These 'Sequential Narratives' typically explore the nature of intimacy between men and women. The series reflects his interest in compositional interaction rather than conventional realism and displays his traditional visual hallmark – a tight theatrical control of the painted surface. Meyer is a master of staging, plot and lighting and there is a quality to the paintwork that reinforces the themes of emotional ambiguity between the protagonists in the paintings.

Building on this process, in recent years Meyer has concentrated on several series, which offer his own take on landscapes, celebrated lives and historic events. He completed a body of fifteen works set during the Anglo Boer War, titled *Lost in the Dust*. The exhibition offered an intimate and compelling look at how war affects the lives of those swept up in it. The collection combined Meyer's talents for landscape and narrative in a unique body of works. *Lost in the Dust* was followed by a collection of sixteen works on the life of Nelson Mandela. Being such a celebrated life, Meyer avoided the obvious, and showed us what might have happened behind the scenes, from his childhood and as a young man, before he became the icon we all came to know. With the collaboration of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the private collector who owns the entire series, the exhibition opened in Johannesburg and Cape Town before travelling to the Melbourne Museum in Australia and Eden Park, Auckland, New Zealand. In a similar vein, Meyer completed a collection of eleven paintings on the remarkable life of Queen Elizabeth II. It explored her life from child to sovereign and beyond, focusing on her love of country, family, corgis and horses, as well as her dedication to her duty. In 2019 Meyer completed a series of fifteen large works titled *Migrations*, exploring the journeys of the various migrating peoples and immigrants that created the South African nation. 2022 saw the launch of a series of eighteen large paintings titled *The Planet Earth Collection*, exhibited at Masterpiece in London. The works highlighted some of the most beautiful places on earth currently under threat from climate change. With these, it was Meyer's intention to add his voice to the looming crisis before it is too late.

Meyer has exhibited extensively both across South Africa and abroad. His work is held in a number of important collections including Anglo American, Johannesburg; ExxonMobil, Dallas; the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Cape Town; and the Standard Bank collection, Johannesburg.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

One could say I'm obsessed with the magical properties of paint, with the process that allows for and unlocks the magic. It all depends on where you direct your energy. It's beyond me why any artist with talent would not want to pursue the mysterious world that lies within the possibilities of paint, the ultimate transformation of materials. Squeeze out a few lengths of pigment on a palette and transform them into the image of something.

We cannot be expected to be aware of the explorative process that is the private preserve of the creative mind, however it is precisely that inability to be party to the experimental nuances and resulting struggle in the painting process, that distances us from a complete understanding of the artist's intent. How then are we to access this world of hidden complexities? If we accept that we see the world around us in various tones, shapes and patches of colour, rather than their defining contours, we realise that a single brushstroke can be anything it may suggest to us. The complex layering of painterly tones, placed in apparently random order creates the stage for a personal search. Here we indulge in our need to escape from an increasingly intrusive world.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 A Remarkable Journey: 50 Years at Everard Read, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2022 The Planet Earth Collection, MASTERPIECE, London, UK
Elizabeth, A Sovereign's Journey, National Horseracing Museum, Suffolk, UK
2018 Elizabeth, A Sovereign's Journey, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
2017 A Collection of Major Works from Private Collections, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Mandela, A Life's Journey, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
A Collection of Major Works from Private Collections, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2016 Solo booth, Seattle Art Fair, USA
2015 Lost in the Dust, Bonhams Auction House, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
2014 Lost in the Dust, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg, SA
2013 My Country, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg ,SA
2011 An Evening with John Meyer, Everard Read Cape Town, SA
New Work, OK Harris, New York, USA
2010 John Meyer – Paintings, O.K. Harris, New York, USA
2009 Museum Schloss Gottorf, Germany
Involuntary Consequences, Albemarle Gallery, London, United Kingdom
Karoo Revisited, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
2008 Conduct and Expectations, Galerie Brusberg, Berlin, Germany
2007 Truths Revealed, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg , SA
Distant Lives, Albemarle Gallery, London, United Kingdom
2005 Sequential Narratives, Everard Read, Cape Town & Johannesburg, SA
2003 John Meyer, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
1996 Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
1992 Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
1991 Schmidt Bingham Gallery, New York, USA
1987 Schmidt Bingham Gallery, New York, USA
1983 In Retrospect, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
1982 Yaneff Gallery, Toronto, Canada
1981 Krane Kalman Gallery, London, UK

1978 Stremmel Gallery, Reno, Nevada, USA
1975 Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
1972 Pieter Wenning Gallery, Johannesburg, SA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026 Winter Collection, Everard Read, Franschhoek, SA
ArtParis, with Everard Read, Paris, France
2025 Investec Cape Town Art Fair, with Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
EXPO CHICAGO, with Everard Read, Chicago, USA
2024 110 Year Anniversary, Everard Read, London, UK
2022 Things I'd like to remember, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2021 SUMMER, Everard Read, London, UK
2020 WINTER, Everard Read, London, UK
STILL, Everard Read, UK and SA
2018 People and Portraiture, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Summer, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2017 Reality Check, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2016 Winter Collection, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2015 Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery Booth , Cape Town, SA
EMPIRE, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2014 Summer Season, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2013 100, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2012 Winter Show, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2011 Everard Read, Cape Town 15th Anniversary Exhibition, Cape Town, SA
Horse, curated by Ricky Burnett, Everard Read, Johannesburg, SA
2010 View from the South, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Summer 10, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2009 The City, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Summer 09, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
2008 Summer 08, Everard Read, Cape Town, SA
Group Show, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, SA
1988 Face of the Land, Southern Alleghenies, Museum of Art, Loretto, Pennsylvania, USA
1986 Landscape, seascape, cityscape, Contemporary Arts Centre, New Orleans, USA

AWARDS

2009 Contemporary Artist Award from the German Museum Schloss Gottorf , Germany.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Lost in the Dust / Verlore in Stof, Everard Read Gallery
John Meyer, A Retrospective 1972 - 2012, Everard Read Gallery
Art & Artists of South Africa, Esme Berman (AA Balkema)
Painting in South Africa, Esme
Berman (Southern Books)
Artspeak, Robert Atkins (Abbeyville Press, New York)
John Meyer, Brett Hilton-Barber (Prime Origins)
John Meyer Sequential Narratives, Brett Hilton-Barber (Prime Origins)

CATALOGUES

John Meyer in Retrospect (Everard Read Gallery 1983)
Drawn From Nature (Stremmel Gallery 1990)
Eiteljorg Invitational 2 (Exhibition 1991)
John Meyer Recent Paintings (Everard Read Gallery 1991)
John Meyer (Everard Read Gallery 1996)
John Meyer Sequential Narratives (Everard Read Cape Town 2005)
Distant Lives, John Meyer (Albemarle Gallery 2007)
Truths Revealed, John Meyer (Everard Read 2007)
Karoo Revisited, John Meyer (Everard Read 2009)