

7-9 September 2018

Sandton Convention Centre, Stand C27

For the eleventh edition of the exciting, action packed FNB Joburg Art Fair, where the focus is on contemporary art from Africa and the diaspora, ART FIRST is pleased to present key works by acclaimed artists **Joni Brenner** and **Karel Nel**, and to feature a special photography section on our stand dedicated to photographic series by **Graeme Williams** and **Kim Wolhuter**, while introducing the legendary **Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher** of *African Ceremonies*.

**Joni Brenner** has just completed an intense series of full-length portraits, at once painterly and sculptural, rendered in thick, deep red oil paint on canvas, marble and on wood. They are either free standing or wall mounted, all of them thin and upright like pillars, representing the same male model. Brenner continues her practice within the realm of portraiture, where looking and being looked at are core to the process, the whole experience. Once the portrait is complete, the engagement ends and the living interaction between artist and sitter is transformed into something timeless, containing a sense of both presence and loss.

**Karel Nel** is showing a freshly completed new work – a single majestic drawing in pastel and pigment on bonded fibre fabric, 180 cm square. Its companion on the stand dates from 2015 but is making its first appearance in South Africa. These drawings explore Nel's engagement with astronomy, with the relationship between art and science, which his long-term residency with the international COSMOS Project since 2004 has taken to new heights. Star gazing has been transformed by modern technology, first moving from the simple act of looking with the human eye, to the telescopes developed during the Renaissance era to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and now there are great mechanisms on earth and in outer space which glean raw data from sources including radio, x-ray, infrared and optical telescopes. Nel's work with the COSMOS astrophysicists relates to their technologically advanced survey of a two square degree field of the universe, moving through deep time. They meet each year in a capital city to exchange ideas, insights and images; last year in Kyoto, this year in Copenhagen.

Recently Nel has re-engaged with Kandinsky's philosophical treatise of 1926, *Point to Line to Plane*, outlining the Russian artist's innovative thinking in relation to the development of abstract art. Kandinsky developed a visual syntax which formed a metaphor for different ways of looking and thinking, exploring both mental and metaphysical abstraction in ways employed by scientists and philosophers alike. This kind of visual thinking is central to Nel's own work, especially evident in these drawings.

Especially for this fair, we are presenting a large 1987 tapestry by Karel Nel, *Conciliatory Rod and Vessel Head II*, woven at the renowned Stephens Tapestry Studios for an exhibition and symposium of world wide tapestries held in Melbourne's Museum of Modern Art in Australia. This, and a companion piece, are in editions of 3 and can be purchased or commissioned singly or as a pair.

We have had the privilege of exhibiting photographic series by **Graeme Williams**, both at art fairs in South Africa and Paris, and in exhibitions at Art First in London. Newly released this year, is his series called *Remnants of a Forgotten World* from 2009, which was undertaken with the Department of History and Archaeology at Wits University for a publication of the same name in 2014. The study is based on the landscape of Mpumalanga, where 500 years ago a productive agricultural community established stone settlements and appear to have developed a sophisticated trading system. Astonishing documentation from 1930's survives, inspiring this renewal of investigation and recognition.

**Kim Wolhuter's** work in the field of wildlife conservation yields extraordinary photographic and filmic results, revealing a new understanding of what it means to survive. Newborn animals bring hope and are keenly watched in his world. There are few today who work and live amongst the animals as he does, running barefoot amongst them as they hunt, gaining a level of trust which is far beyond the bounds of the every day. The two images of female Cheetahs, one as cubs, the other as grown 'girls' able to hunt on their own without their mother, chart his two year relationship with them while they featured as the unwitting stars of his film for the BBC, broadcast last year and narrated by Sir David Attenborough. These photographs are portraits, charged with the complexity and particularity that is a feature of this art form, and they are breath-taking.

**Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher** have worked together for forty years photographing the rituals and ceremonies of the African continent. They have journeyed over 300,000 miles through 48 countries and recorded 150 African cultures. With a stream of books behind them, they have now produced their second two-volume book, *African Twilight: Vanishing Rituals and Ceremonies*. Their ability to convey the vitality of dance, to capture the joy of birth, the coming of age, of marriage or coronation or death delivers a portrait of their long years of photographic work on the African continent. Their dedication shines through their personal selection of photographic prints and it is an honour to represent them.

Printed in small editions of between 5 to 10 on Hahnemühle photo rag, the deeply moving documentary series of photographic prints from three different but vital fields of observation, offer a compelling experience and a rare opportunity to engage in realities that are at times transitional but are made timeless by the poetic, instinctive, trained vision of these accomplished award-winning photographers.

All the artists represented on our stand have work held in national and international museums and collections. Publications record their practice, and their contribution to the arts in different fields is illuminating and impressive. We invite you to enjoy their work on this platform, to meet them and to gain a sense of the dedication and commitment which underpins their output.

Please visit our website [www.artfirst.co.uk](http://www.artfirst.co.uk) for further details. Illustrated pricelists are available – contact Clare Cooper or Benjamin Rhodes on [info@artfirst.co.uk](mailto:info@artfirst.co.uk) to have them emailed to you in advance. We very much look forward to seeing you at the fair.

ART FIRST, 15 St Mary's Walk, London, SE 11 4UA

Tel + 44 (0) 207 7340386 [info@artfirst.co.uk](mailto:info@artfirst.co.uk)

**[www.artfirst.co.uk](http://www.artfirst.co.uk)**