

**ART FIRST, LONDON: IINVESTEC CAPE TOWN ART FAIR 2019, 14-17 February,
Booth B4 & TT4**

For this year's edition of the **Investec Cape Town Art Fair**, we have devoted one section of our booth to photography. In particular we focus on the documentary, anthropological nature of 4 photographers who have dedicated up to four decades of their lives to immersing themselves in studying and recording aspects of Africa and South Africa in very distinctive ways. The kind of intense *portrait* that emerges through singular works, printed in small editions, is revelatory in its sustained search for truth and its careful, cumulative observation.



Donald Teskey *Frequency* 2019, oil on paper 19 x 23.5cm

Graeme Williams *Goba, Kwazulu Natal*, 2012 91 x 121cm, image size 81 x 108cm, Edition of 5

ART FIRST is privileged to show the launching series of limited edition photographic prints from **Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher's** private portfolio. These images can also be found in their magnificent double-volume publications, *African Ceremonies* (1999) and *African Twilight: Vanishing Rituals and Ceremonies of the African Continent* (published to great acclaim by Rizzoli, New York, October 2018).

Of the newly published volumes, **George Okello Abungu**, Associate Professor of Heritage Studies, University of Mauritius, has written:

'This represents the collective heritage of humanity, rare and incomparable in both quality and quantity, it is a jewel of jewels and a resource of knowledge of unparalleled value. In this archive, the two have ensured that what has been captured will be safeguarded forever, never to die in human memory.'

Beckwith & Fisher make the point that, "*Africa is changing at a dramatic pace. Over 40% of what we have recorded no longer exists. Our photographs present traditional cultures in a contemporary context – we focus on the living rituals and ceremonies that not only express the great creativity and diversity of the continent but also facilitate the passages through life.*"

Kim Wolhuter is a renowned wild life filmmaker and photographer whose documentary films for National Geographic, The Discovery Chanel and the BBC are broadcast globally. In 2017 the BBC broadcast his

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film *Man Cheetah Wild*, narrated by Sir David Attenborough and the main subjects – two cheetah sisters – are shown here as cubs and then as grown young females, capable of hunting alone. The sequenced portraits comprise an exceptional, touching narrative that sets them apart and testifies to the rare level of trust Wolhuter achieved with the mother as well as the cubs. He works in a unique way, mostly barefoot, getting to know his subject over sustained periods, sometimes for several years. He takes things much further than most in developing a close relationship with the animals he is filming.

Wolhuter's practice as a photographer has developed privately, alongside his filming, and we are pleased to present a selected portfolio of black and white limited edition prints, including prize winning images exhibited in London at the Natural History Museum.

The vibrant series, *Painting Over the Present* conveys **Graeme Williams's** specific vision of the living realities within a rapidly changing South Africa. Township life with its many paradoxes conveys moments and places which speak of individual dignity, and of truth beautifully observed (see illustration).

Newly released is his series called *Remnants of a Forgotten World*, which stems from work 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 over 500 years ago a productive agricultural community had established stone settlements. Astonishing archaeological documentation from 1930's survives, inspiring this renewed exploration which actively charts the strong emergence of the **Pedi** and the **Venda** kingdoms.

The other half of our booth features an imaginary dialogue between ART FIRST UK artists and South Africa in the form of commissioned small works from A5 postcards upwards. *UK Messengers* includes works by **Simon Lewty**, **Will Maclean**, **Jack Milroy**, and **Donald Teskey**, who makes his first appearance in South Africa, arriving from Dublin to spend time observing the elemental clash between the Atlantic Ocean and the magnificent rocks around the Western Cape peninsula. This aspect of coastlines is his principal focus in Ireland's County Mayo and has become a leitmotif of his practice.

Lewty and Maclean have made small, charged collage works on paper, taking their role as messengers to heart. Their layered palimpsests are exquisite and must be seen to be relished. **Milroy** brings his scalpel to yield witty releases from cut books and a sardine leaping to freedom from its tin.

We have invited artist and writer **Kate McCrickard** to participate once again in the ICTAF. Her new body of paintings reflects the matrix of café society in Paris, the template for which has replicated itself globally in cities from Tokyo to New York, London, Dakar, Lagos and Cape Town, to name a few.

As a writer and art historian herself, McCrickard acknowledges the traditions to which she refers – they are a rich source of inspiration – but her subjects are her own and the painted figures increasingly occupy a larger space, either landscape or architecture, while the drawings and prints retain an intimacy and a love of the fragment, the cropped view, the telling detail.

McCrickard's essays and reviews are widely published and include pieces on Gary Schneider, Santu Mofekeng, Nnenna Okore, Paul Stopforth and El Anatsui.. For Tate's *modern artists series* she wrote the book on William Kentridge.

As a new departure, ART FIRST has been invited to participate in the curated section of the fair, *Tomorrow's /Today*. We are delighted be working with curator and art historian Olga Speakes to present award-winning **Zyza Amien's solo exhibition**.

Based in Cape Town, with a practice rooted in her family's history in the Cape Flats and the city's garment and textile industry, Zyza Amien incorporates stitching, pinning, drawing, thread, fabric, sewing machines and buttons into her practice. Whether working on a tiny scale or a large installation, she pays meticulous attention to all aspects of process, drawing attention to the tensions and conflicts between the hand-made and the machine-made to individual lives and industrial production.



Image details: Zyza Amien *Collective*, detail. Gauze, cotton, buttons, 1.20 x 5 metres.

Unbridled Series 11, Canson edition paper, gauze thread, 75 x 56cm

For her solo show at *Tomorrow's /Today*, Amien has created a major new work: *Collective*. Measuring 1.20 x 5 metres, it is a shimmering cascade of buttons stitched onto cotton gauze by a collection of family workers over a six week period. The title is telling: **collective** – done by people as a group; relating or shared by all members of a group; the collective power of the workforce; a cooperative enterprise. This is one of her central concerns. Her other installation is made from donated sewing machines and is a rich evocation of the lives of those who do not have a voice.

For further information, please visit our website www.artfirst.co.uk or contact us at info@artfirst.co.uk or clare@artfirst.co.uk