

STEVENSON

Buchanan Building
160 Sir Lowry Road
7925 Cape Town
+27 21 462 1500

46 7th Avenue
Parktown North
2193 Johannesburg
+27 11 403 1055

Prinsengracht 371B
1016 HK Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 62 532 1380

info@stevenson.info
www.stevenson.info
@stevenson_za

2 November - 14 December 2024

DEBORAH POYNTON

A THIN VEIL

Deborah Poynton has known Ilsa her whole life. She was her mother's friend, her art teacher when she was a toddler and again at school as a teen; she has been mentor, ally, model and muse. Deborah first drew Ilsa in 1982, when she was 12, and has continued to do so ever since. Stevenson is pleased to present Poynton's latest such painting, *A Thin Veil*, in our Amsterdam space - the entire gallery given over to this singular piece. Showing just one work, 'één werk', is also a quiet tribute to Julius Vermeulen, the maverick designer and gallerist who passed away in February of this year. He was the founder of EENWERK, an Amsterdam gallery based on the premise of showing single works.

Of the title Poynton writes:

A painting is like a thin veil, hanging suspended between me and the unknowable. As I peer through this veil, I can glimpse reality in softened, reduced tones, artfully selective, brutally reductive.

The world itself is veiled from us. We exist on a curtained stage, enacting our self-important roles as we pursue our imaginary dreams. Birth and death are the violent partings of this curtain, beyond which we know nothing.

Life is full of paradox. We invent what we see. We desire what we don't have. We believe what we can't know.

Painting embodies this paradox. The veil of the painting protects me, its thousands of small brushstrokes weaving something out of nothing. The act of painting lends meaning to my existence, even as I try to efface myself behind this shimmering illusion.

And of painting the particular people who recur in her works, she observes:

Painting someone is an act of love. My brush creeps over their skin, the lines of their face, their strands of hair, in awe at how life-like they are.

I paint very few people, over and over again. I lead a parallel existence with these people, in the world of my paintings, hauling them along with me always, keeping them close. I feel driven to use these particular people because I love them, and love is unbearable.

I feel as if I eat them whole, there is a merging of me and them which has nothing to do with portraiture. Once they've been consumed, I lurk there behind the image, sated, knowing that I can't lose them now.

Until it dawns on me that I have captured only air, and I am forced back into the unending labour, weaving my intricate web. In the end, a painting is just a leftover husk, a byproduct of my endless attempt to have and to hold.

Poynton was born in 1970 in Durban and lives in Cape Town.

In 2021, a survey of the last decade of her work, *Beyond Belief*, took place at the Drents Museum in Assen, the Netherlands. This was followed by her first solo show in Germany, at Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, in 2022. A previous survey of 25 years of painting, titled *Model for a World*, showed at the New Church Museum, Cape Town, in 2014. Poynton's first US solo exhibitions took place at the Savannah College of Art and Design's galleries in Savannah and Atlanta in 2009. Institutional shows have also taken place at the KZNSA Gallery in Durban (2010) and the Institute of Contemporary Art Indian Ocean in Port Louis, Mauritius (2018). She has held 14 solo exhibitions at Stevenson in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Amsterdam (2004-2024).

Notable group exhibitions include *If You Look Hard Enough, You Can See Our Future*, African American Museum, Dallas, USA (2023); *Unlimited: Self-portraits from the collection*, Drents Museum, the Netherlands (2022); *I have made a place*, Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa (2021); Tamawuj, the 13th Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2017); *Home Truths: Domestic Interiors from South African Collections*, Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town (2016); *I Love You Sugar Kane*, Institute of Contemporary Art Indian Ocean, Mauritius (2016); *Der Feine Riss: Zeitgenössische Malerei auf dem Historischen Feld*, Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, Germany (2016); *Exact Imagination: 300 Years of Botanically Inspired Art in South Africa*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2014); *Experience 3: Truth*, El Segundo Museum of Art, El Segundo, California, USA (2013); *Eros and Thanatos*, SOR Rusche Collection, Oelde/Berlin, Germany (2012); *Von Liebeslust und Lebenslast - der inszenierte Alltag*, Corvey Castle, Germany (2009); *What lies beneath*, Galerie Mikael Andersen, Copenhagen, Denmark (2006); *New Painting*, KZNSA Gallery, Durban, and Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa; and *Show Me Home*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa (2003).