

January 2017

Following the record breaking success of Aspire's Inaugural Auction, held in Johannesburg in October 2016, the eagerly awaited Inaugural Cape Auction will offer a diverse range of top quality historic, modern and contemporary fine art.

World Travels

Two key examples of JH Pierneef's remarkable landscape paintings will be on offer, each never before seen at auction. *Vrystaat Reën*, painted in 1943, depicts a welcome scatter of rain over a parched landscape, just as the sun attempts to break through a sky of billowing clouds. As the title suggests, *A View across Fisherman's Cove, Seychelles*, painted in 1955, is a breathtaking vista across a calm bay, dotted with waiting fishing boats and lined by palm trees. Treasured photographs of Pierneef standing on those very shores, as well as the diary entries of a close friend on that same island trip, add to the romance of the scene.

Painted 'in the open air', Pieter Wenning's *At Riverside Road, Newlands* captures the soft yet dramatic changes of twilight on the lush vegetation growing in the shadow of Table Mountain. An exciting range of work by the experimental Modernist, Christo Coetzee will be on offer - from his mesmerizing blend of texture, form and colour in *Black Rose Africa*, to the enigmatic assemblage piece, *Italian Heads*.

A pioneering woman of her time, Eleanor Esmonde-White traveled frequently, sketching scenes of daily life from Cape Town to Corfu. Capturing three voluptuous women, lost in thought, Esmonde-White's *Nudes* is a strong example of her focus on the female form and the warmth of her limited palette. The playful humour of the great colourist, Robert Hodgins, is evident in the suggestive shapes of *Lamb Chop*, and the bulging silhouettes of *Sunset Jocks*, seen amidst the jumble of city life.

Contemporary African art

As the first auction house in South Africa to pay living artists a percentage of sale proceeds, Aspire's espousal of Artist's Resale Rights (ARR) highlights a commitment to developing the burgeoning contemporary market.

William Kentridge's *Grande Jeté*, an early, large-scale drawing bought directly by the seller from Kentridge's 'Standard Bank Young Artist Award' solo exhibition in 1987, is attracting much attention. Already suggesting Kentridge's interest in the mechanics of theatricality, there is a graceful tension in the young female ballet dancer suspended, mid-air, against a colosseum of

indeterminate spectators. The suburban ballerina of David Goldblatt's *Girl in her new tutu on the stoep* is frozen, too, in time. This key, early black and white photograph was used on the cover of Goldblatt's *In Boksburg*, one of South Africa's earliest photobooks published in 1982. Of the same series and also handprinted by Goldblatt himself from his studio in Felside, *Before the fight: amateur boxing at the Town Hall, Boksburg*, is an arresting moment which documents the surreal nuances of white, middle-class life in a small town during apartheid. Another remarkable photograph on offer is a panorama of Pollsmoor Prison, made up of multiple images stitched together, from Mikhael Subotzky's acclaimed '*Die Vier Hoeke*' series.

A re-imagining of identity is evident in a number of upcoming works by leading contemporary artists. Kudzanai Chiurai draws our attention to the artifice of propaganda in his satirical portrait, *The Black President*. In Athi-Patra Ruga's vibrant tapestry, *Castrato as [the] Revolution*, the identity of a provocatively posed male figure is obscured. In contrast, Adams' *Parda IV* is absorbing in its abstraction, a delicate interweaving of coloured nylon and rope which both attracts and displaces the viewer's attention.

The use of the artist's own body, and the prominence of performance in contemporary art, is seen in the works on offer by Nandipha Mntambo, Mohau Modisakeng and Steven Cohen. Wearing an armour of cow hide, Mntambo explores the troubled traditions of bull fighting in the abandoned Praça de Touros, Maputo. Modisakeng, one of two artists to be featured for the South African Pavilion in the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, stills time in his suggestions of the violence intrinsic to post-colonial societies in *Ditaola XV*. The photograph of Cohen, bedecked in vertiginous heels and a chandelier tutu as he teeters through Newton, Johannesburg, was taken during one of his most pivotal performances.

Inaugural Cape Town Auction 2017

Avenue | V & A Waterfront | 40 Dock Road | Cape Town
27 March 2017 | Evening Sale | 8pm

Auction preview:

Friday 24 March | 10am to 5pm

Saturday 25 March | 10am to 5pm

Sunday 26 March | 10am to 4pm

Exhibition walkabouts:

Saturday 25 March & Sunday 26 March | 11am

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Image Caption

William Kentridge | *Grande Jeté* | 1987 | Charcoal and pastel on paper | 149 x 101.5 cm