

## **‘Made Routes: Mapping and Making’**

### **Vivienne KOORLAND and Berni SEARLE**

Curated by Tamar Garb

30 August – 26 September 2019

Private view: Thursday 29 August, 6–8pm

‘Made Routes: Mapping and Making,’ curated by acclaimed academic and art historian Tamar Garb, brings together the work of two South African artists: Vivienne KOORLAND and Berni SEARLE. The encounter between them speaks to their shared artistic concerns and participation in the landmark exhibition ‘Trade Routes: History + Geography’ at the 1997 2<sup>nd</sup> Johannesburg Biennale under the artistic directorship of the late Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) to whom this exhibition is dedicated. In ‘Trade Routes,’ Enwezor and his curatorial team explored the way in which contemporary art interrogates and negotiates national boundaries and cartographic hierarchies, as well as the global movement and flow of people and commodities across modernity’s variegated landscapes.

The exhibition at Richard Saltoun Gallery revisits key works from Enwezor’s 1997 ‘Trade Routes’ show. Koorland, in her ‘flag monuments’ and ‘chimney monuments’ map paintings, conflates banal place names with iconic ones, building an intimate childhood lexicon to address collective experience through revisions of history and the brutal havoc of colonialism and its legacies. Berni Searle’s reconstructed ground plan of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Castle of Good Hope, filled with paprika, reconceives the earliest colonial building in South Africa (a fort) while referencing the role the Cape once played as a trading post for goods and peoples from the East.

Both artists continue to rework these themes, from Koorland’s painting *Pays Inconnu* (2016), her remake of the idyllic 18<sup>th</sup>-century French King Louis XVI’s map of Southern Africa, to Searle’s *As the Crow Flies* (2017), a video work using Google Earth which imitates drone footage to conjure an image of the Cape Flats today. Garb states: “For both artists the materiality of mapping is key. Routes are made and manipulated across time and space creating pathways along which people and possessions must pass. It is the politics as well as the poetics of this that interests them.”

Vivienne Koorland (b. 1957, Cape Town) describes herself as a “deskilled History Painter.” Her hand-hewn, stitched or recycled canvases eschew conventional objective painting practice to probe, through a singular visual vocabulary of signs and signals, the contested terrain of the decimations of history and its representations. The artist’s reclaimed depictions of plants, animals, letters and words confront the vexed problematic of language and the impossibility of narrative in painting. Koorland graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town in 1977, after which she travelled to West Berlin to earn her MFA at the Hochschule (now Institut) der Künste in 1981, followed by two years at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, before arriving via Bayreuth to pursue an MFA at Columbia University in New York, where she still lives. Recent exhibitions include ‘William Kentridge and Vivienne Koorland: Conversations in Letters and Lines,’ Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2017); ‘Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism,’ The Jewish Museum, New York (2011); ‘HomeLands/LandMarks: Contemporary Art from South Africa,’ Haunch of Venison, London (2008); and ‘Reisemalheurs [Travel Woes],’ The Freud Museum, London (2007). Koorland exhibited fourteen paintings in ‘Alternating Currents’ at the 1997 2<sup>nd</sup> Johannesburg Biennale ‘Trade Routes: History + Geography,’ curated by Okwui Enwezor and Octavio Zaya.

Berni Searle (b. 1964, Cape Town) works with photography and the moving image. Often but not exclusively using herself in her work, she performs for the camera, producing pieces that explore issues of self-representation, the relationship between personal and collective identity and narratives connected to history, memory and place. While her works are often explored in dialogue with the socio-political legacy of South Africa and in relation to current day realities, her use of metaphor and poetic ambiguity transcend the specificity of context, drawing on shared human emotions associated with displacement, vulnerability and loss. Searle received her MA from UCT’s Michaelis School of Fine Art, where she is a Professor and Director. Her work was featured in the 49<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Venice Biennale (2001 and 2005 respectively). Exhibitions include ‘Earth Matters at the National Museum of African Art,’ Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (2014); ‘Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography at the Museum of Modern Art,’ New York (2011); ‘Figures and Fictions,’ Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2011); ‘HomeLands/LandMarks: Contemporary Art from South Africa,’ Haunch of Venison, London (2008); and ‘Global Feminisms’ at the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2007). In 2019, Searle was artist in residence at the Maitland Institute in Cape Town and the ‘Featured Artist’ at the National Arts Festival in

Makhandu, formerly known as Grahamstown. Searle showed sculptures and installations in 'Life's Little Necessities,' curated by Kellie Jones for 'Trade Routes,' 2<sup>nd</sup> Johannesburg Biennale, 1997 at the Castle in Cape Town. Amongst these was *Com-fort*, an installation based on the ground plan of the pentagonal Castle constituting a spice-filled silhouette accompanied by simple objects set in resin on each of its five points. These took their place alongside a range of cast and cased objects that referenced the lives of indigenous communities, historic forms of display, and against the sound of a recording of one of the ancient, local languages of the 'Bushmen,' now threatened with extinction.

Tamar Garb is the Durning-Lawrence Professor in the History of Art at University College London. Her research interests have focused on questions of gender and sexuality, the woman artist and the body in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as more recently post-apartheid culture and art in and from South Africa. She has published extensively, with key publications including: *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (University of Washington Press, 2008); *The Painted Face, Portraits of Women in France 1814–1914* (Yale University Press, 2007); *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in fin de siècle France*, (Thames & Hudson, 1998); and *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth Century Paris* (Yale University Press, 1994). Garb has curated the exhibitions 'Land Marks/Home Lands; Contemporary Art from South Africa' at Haunch of Venison, London in 2008; 'Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography' at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London in 2011; 'Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive' at the Walther Collection, New York, Ulm and Berlin, 2014–2015.

'Made Routes: Mapping and Making' forms part of Richard Saltoun Gallery's 12-month programme dedicated to supporting the work of female artists. Titled *100% Women*, the programme aims to remedy the gender inequality that persists in the art world and to encourage wider industry action through debate, dialogue and collaboration. *100% Women* pursues its mission through a combination of gallery exhibitions, art fair presentations, artist talks, film screenings, external collaborations and online exhibitions hosted on the gallery's new website.

#### **Gallery information**

Opening hours:  
Tuesday to Friday, 10am–6pm  
Saturday, 11am–5pm  
Or by appointment

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