

## **Jarrett Erasmus**

South Africa

### Biography

Jarrett Erasmus, born 1984, artist and educator, is a former resident artist at Greatmore Artist's Studios and member of the Burning Museum Collective. He graduated from Rhodes University with a BFA (2011) and received the David Koloane Award from Bag Factory Artists Studios (2012). Erasmus completed a summer course at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) in 2016, and in 2017 he completed his Masters in Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand; where he is also a lecturer.

Jarrett Erasmus lives in Johannesburg and his work explores the realities of post-apartheid South Africa and their impact on social dynamics, spatial aesthetics, and communities, both within South Africa and in various African diasporas. Erasmus has presented his individual works and collaborative projects in a variety of institutional and public contexts, including Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2019); Festival d'Art Urbaine, Antananarivo (2016); Studio Museum, Harlem, New York (2014); and African Art Forum, Venice (2017). Erasmus remains active in several community arts initiatives that were instrumental in promoting arts education for people of color under the apartheid regime, and is currently chair of the Thupelo Arts Trust, a foundation dedicated to promoting artistic experimentation and international exchange.

### Exhibitions (selection)

He works in a variety of media, focusing on painting and collaborative practices that explore post-apartheid realities and their impact on social dynamics between communities in South Africa and the diaspora.

2022 Time Is A Broken Umbrella, AVA, Cape Town. 10/03/2022 - 21/04/2022

2019 The Main Complaint, group exhibition, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa.

2018 Museum Dialogues conference, Goethe Institut, Windhoek, Namibia.

2017 Panelist, Any Given Sunday presentation, African Art in Venice Forum, Italy

2016 Re(as)sisting Narratives, group exhibition, District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa (Burning Museum)

2016 Festival D'Art Urbain, Antananarivo, Madagascar

2016 Poetry Circle Nowhere workshop, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
2015 Artificial Facts: Boundary Objects, group exhibition, Kunsthaus Dresden, Germany (Burning Museum).  
2015 Objetos Frontera, CA2M, Madrid, Spain (Burning Museum)  
2015 Addressing the Headquarters, presentation, Framer Framed, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Burning Museum)  
2014 Ubuntu Artist Exchange, Studio Museum in Harlem, NY  
2014 Do It, Michaelis Gallery, UCT, Cape Town, South Africa (Burning Museum)  
2013 TO LET , Centre For African Studies gallery, UCT, Cape Town, South Africa  
2012 Material Things, solo exhibition, Nafasi Art Space, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
2011 Mural Painting project at Community House, Salt River

### The Artworks

#### *The Hidden Figures*

2018

Size: 130 x 160 cm

Oil on canvas

#### *Waa Geskidienis Jou Mis Sien*

2018

Size: 20 x 150 cm

Oil on canvas

#### *Castle*

2018

Size: 120 x 120 cm

Oil on wood

#### *Many Mansions #2*

2018

Size: 165 x 120 cm

Oil on canvas

*The Lobola Cattle Turned on Him*

2018

Size: 167 x 130 cm

Oil, acrylic on canvas

## Work comment by kukutana

Wallace Erasmus reflects South African society in all its contradictions. He abstracts and shows, letting South Africa represent the whole continent, reflecting on colonialism and violence. His works pose (hidden) questions to Europe: Where are you in the pictures, the stories, you Dutch, British, Germans, you white South Africans?

"The Hidden Figures": two black men squat, probably at night, seemingly hidden or hiding in the bushes in front of a scenery of trees under which huts are hidden. Their faces are almost greenish under the night sky. Their eyes are covered with a black bar, their identities thus obscured, or at least making identification difficult. Who are they waiting for? Are they hiding? They look at the viewers, but if their eyes are covered, they cannot see the viewers. Or does the black bar stand for censorship? For the fading out of the black majority? They certainly seem to be on the move, rather tense, but quite calm. They bend towards the viewers as if they wanted to communicate something. If only we could hear them, if only they could see us.

"Waa Geskidienis Jou Mis Sein": History sees you, sees you. Two shadowy figures in yellow and red sit on a sofa in front of a TV set. They look at a younger man standing/walking in an enclosed space. He is shown in black and white - a moment from before the introduction of color television, a moment from apartheid. A dog sits at her feet and looks at her. A white police officer can be seen in a picture frame on the wall, looking into the room - a member of the family? Is the younger man in prison; it could be the courtyard of one? From a distance, the people in the room watch, unconcerned, doing well. How are the others?

"Castle": a simple tub shape in blue, green grass in it against a brownish-reddish-black background. A riddle? A clue through the title: castle, castle. Does the castle here turn away strangers or does it not let its inhabitants out? The object rests in the center of the picture, stands for itself in its hermeticism. In series of works Erasmus repeatedly shows object-pictures (often swimming pools) of isolated single objects, single moments. These mysterious surfaces suggest another dimension; they also convey something unsettling, like a horror film in which one already suspects the moment of horror in the strange calm beforehand. Such is

the case in "Many Mansions #2." Here, three isolated doors can be seen in greenish surroundings. These doors lead to rooms that are not visible. They float in the picture. Perhaps they would allow passages, if there were any access at all to the space of the picture. But there is none. The viewers remain outside, are excluded, cannot enter the houses (mansions). A metaphor for the restless motionlessness of social events in South Africa, or even worldwide: nothing changes, or hardly anything, but this is hidden under breathlessness and hectic. The object-pictures oppose this; this is what they show: The horror in the current present.