



A n d r é S t e a d
e v o l u t i o n

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exhibition catalogue 2011

THE VEILED BRIDE

by Sanford S. Shaman

In the story of the Biblical sisters Rachel and Leah, Jacob makes a contract to marry Rachel, whom he loves. But on the wedding night the bride is hidden under a veil¹ - nevertheless Jacob consummates the marriage, only to wake up the next morning to discover it was Rachel's sister, Leah, whom he married. According to one of the many interpretations explaining this curious sequence of events, Rachel and Leah are viewed metaphorically as two antithetical aspects of the same woman.² Representative of the physical world, Rachel, who attracts Jacob with her exceptional beauty, is extroverted and out-going. Conversely the less beautiful Leah is introverted and introspective, but she suits 'Jacob's higher spiritual nature'.³ This interpretation in which an unrevealed side of the bride's personality makes her seem like two different women is the very concept that Andre Stead explores in the sculptures of his new Anamorphic Series. Inspired by the hidden imagery of the world of anamorphic art, Stead veils certain aspects of these works as a means of delving into the issue of 'duality within human beings'.⁴

Each of the smooth, organic sculptures exhibited here embodies two female figures, and each figure assumes an emotional gesture diametrically opposed to the other. Like Jacob, the viewer discovers aspects within these works that are not immediately apparent. The sculpture, Surrender, for example, is dominated by a figure that appears introverted, withdrawn, and suggestive of one who has retreated into a fetal position. But out of sight - under the sculpture and above - Stead has sculpted the profile of an antithetical upright figure that assumes the posture of an outgoing, extroverted personality. Just as Leah was concealed, Stead hides this second figure, as if to account for an aspect of the personality that is latent or kept under wraps. Infusing the sculptural form with polarized elements, here as elsewhere throughout his Anamorphic Series, Stead charges the work with a tension he defines as the 'balance between opposites'.⁵ This reference is indicative of a broader concern that also drives these works - Stead's articulated belief in the need to bring greater balance to a world of chaos.⁶ In this sense his perfectly formed idealised sculptures, charged as they are with contrasting forces, can also be understood as metaphorical vessels for a world in balance.

Everything contains its opposite. Dusk is contained in dawn, chaos in order, and the concealed within the revealed. Often, however, changeover from one aspect to another is a gradual process, like the progressive retreat of darkness as night turns to day. In a similar manner, the contrasting elements in these works emerge gradually - as we walk around the sculpture, the heavy grounded figure changes little by little until at one point it becomes a light, dancing figure that seems to take flight.

Andre Stead is a sculptor of the female figure. Since leaving the Bronze Age Art Foundry in 2007 to launch his sculpture career, his work has focused exclusively on the female form and 'the evolution of women and their interaction in society'.⁷ Although Stead repeatedly emphasizes that he is exclusively a sculptor of figures, his new Anamorphic Series represents a striking shift toward abstract form. More than simply the clever mingling of two figures, these new works also function as fully realized abstractions that facilitate transformation from one idea to its antithesis.

The revealed and the concealed coalesce in the Rachel/Leah narrative with Jacob's marriage to the two sisters. These polarities also converge in the Anamorphic Series as, a synthesis of contrasting ideas, suspended in a state of perpetual interaction, like day and night'.⁸ Stead brings this about largely through his recent shift toward abstraction, which takes him beyond the revealed, and places him among those who pursue that which is hidden.

¹ Although the Biblical text makes no reference to a veil, it is widely understood that according to custom, Leah was veiled. This is one of the major explanations as to how Jacob was deceived. The reader is also encouraged to consider Rachel's veil as a metaphorical element.

² Shortly after visiting Stead's studio and viewing the works his Anamorphic Series, I attended a lecture by Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson, in which he put forward this concept in a talk entitled 'Marriage: The Comedy and Kabbalah'. See: <http://www.theyeshiva.net/Video/View/175>.

³ Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz and Rabbi Nosson Scherman (general editors), Bereishis / Genesis Volume. IV (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1979: 1267).

⁴ Andre Stead, 'Anamorphic Series, Overview,' Andre Stead, (http://www.andresteadsculpture.com/series.php?series_id=4&subseries=Overview).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ As related by the artist in a recorded conversation.

⁷ Ronnie Watt, 'Biographical notes and Work Philosophy,' unpublished document, May 2009.

⁸ Stead, quoted from his artist's statement for the exhibition, Evolution, Is Art, Franschhoek, August 2011.

Incarnation

maquette

2010

resin

420 x 460 x 200 mm



Incarnation
maquette
2010
resin
420 x 460 x 200 mm



Incarnation
maquette
2010
resin
420 x 460 x 200 mm



Reclining figure

large maquette

2010

resin

570 x 1100 x 420 mm



Reclining figure

large maquette

2010

resin

570 x 1100 x 420 mm



Ascend
maquette
2010
resin
420 x 240 x 100 mm



Ascend
maquette
2010
resin
480 x 240 x 100 mm





Soporific figure

maquette

2010

resin

480 x 240 x 140 mm



Soporific figure
maquette
2010
resin
480 x 240 x 140 mm



Reclining figure

maquette

2010

resin

250 x 420 x 180 mm



Elevation
maquette
2011
resin
500 x 250 x 140 mm



Elevation

large maquette
2010
resin
1500 x 700 x 450 mm

Surge
2010
resin
1200 x 380 x 250 mm



Surge
2010
resin
1200 x 380 x 250 mm





Surrender

maquette
2010
resin
250 x 460 x 150 mm



Surrender
large maquette
2010
resin
740 x 1200 x 450 mm

Andre Stead

Born in Evander, 1975. Lives and works in Cape Town.

Qualifications and awards

2007 Eight years bronze casting experience, Bronze Age Art Foundry, Simon's town

1997 Metal forging tuition, John Allesandri, Cape Town

1995 Graphic design course, Gunther Komnick, Cape Town

1994 Goldsmith apprenticeship, Pretoria

1993 Pro Arte School of Arts, Distinction with colours for Art, Pretoria

1991 Merit award, Iscor Art Competition, Iscor Permanent Art Collection, Pretoria

Selected Exhibitions and Commissions

2011

Flight of the Swallows, Corporate commission, Delaire Graff Wine Estate, Stellenbosch

Evolution, Solo exhibition, Is Art Gallery, Franschhoek

Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg

Roodt Inc, group exhibition, Dawid's Choice Gallery, Johannesburg

2010

Group exhibition, Dimitrov Art Gallery, Dullstroom

Rooftop exhibition, group show, St. Lorient, Pretoria

Group exhibition, The Upper Deck Gallery, Plettenberg Bay

Group exhibition, Christopher Møller Art Gallery, Cape Town

2009

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg

Identity, group exhibition, Platform on 18th Gallery, Pretoria

Figures, solo exhibition, Northcliff, Johannesburg

Female series launch, Grande Provence Heritage Wine Estate, CTICC

2008

Angels, group exhibition, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschhoek

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

Medallions, Corporate Commission, Burj Dubai Development, Dubai

2006

Corporate commission, Graham Beck Wine Estate, Franschhoek

Group exhibition, Bronze Age Sculpture House, Cape Town

2000 – 2005

Group exhibition, Seidelberg Wine Estate, Paarl

Miniatures, group exhibition, Bronze Age, Cape Town

Board of Executors, Corporate commission, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Vineyard Gallery, Cape Town

1999

Group exhibition, The Christie Gallery, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town

1998

Wooden figures, Solo exhibition, Novalis Institute, Cape Town

Sanlam Restoration - Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Cape Town

Group exhibition, Association for visual arts, Cape Town

1997

Sanlam Literary Award, Corporate commission, Sanlam, Grahamstown

Group exhibition, Primart Gallery, Cape Town

Collections

Laurence Graff

Willy Woestyn

Johnny Walker Stride Awards

Graham Beck Estates

Board of Executives

Hal Shaper

Sanlam

Iscor



Photo: Wiehahn Diederichs

