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€17,50



Daniel Naudé



Daniel Naudé was born 1984 in Cape Town. He graduated as a bachelor in Visual Arts from the University of Stellenbosh in 2007. His works were shown at the Ava Gallery as part of the show *Greatest Hits of 2007* and at the Michael Stevenson Gallery as part of *Summer 2008/9: Projects*.

The series *Africanis* portrays the wild dogs living in the Karoo area. The dogs have adapted to the landscape and the climate of the region,

reflected in their size, diet, posture, skin and fur. By merging the two photographic traditions of the portrait and the landscape Naudé has created mesmerizing portraits of these rare creatures.

Daniel Naudé is represented by Michael Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town.

'Africanis were in South Africa long before Westerners; they are in a sense pre-colonial or even un-colonial – untouched by this kind of historicity'

interview by Jörg Colberg

How did you come up with the idea for your series on Africanis dogs?

My first encounter with the Africanis happened in late 2006 on my way to a surfing trip in Mozambique. I was driving on a long, straight, flat road in the middle of the Karoo, far from any form of settlement, when a lone white dog ran across the highway, no owner in sight. I immediately pulled over and grabbed my Hasselblad, but the dog ran out of shot and just continued running like it knew its path through this barren land.

It took my breath away. The fact that this scavenger-like dog had survived in this landscape was astounding. The encounter was surreal, like a scene from a Tolkien tale. Soon afterwards I came in contact with another of these dogs in the Transkei and I took my first portrait. The intensity of the dog's expression inspired me to search for others in the Karoo and rural areas of South Africa.

As a child I grew up surrounded by dogs – at one stage my dad had nine of them – and I have always loved them. Dalmatians and Labradors barking behind fences was all I had known, so this encounter was far more interesting. I wanted to portray these dogs in *their* habitat and explore the history behind them.

Anyone who has ever tried to take a photo of their pet knows how difficult it is, as animals like to move a lot. Shooting these dogs must have posed a challenge.

Yes, definitely, it takes a huge amount of patience to photograph animals, and at the same time you are never really sure what you are going to get. I guess that's the excitement of photographing these dogs. I now have a kind of strategy about how to approach them, though generally I just take pictures as they appear.

Before I approach the dog I observe the landscape and make a decision about what scenery I want inside the frame to convey the environment. I try to get closer with ease and no sudden movements. I allow the dog to accept me in his space. Then I lie down on the ground at the same eye level as the dog, as standing up straight tends to create a position of power, which I've learnt intimidates him and often causes him to run off. I've also found that the older dogs seem to be calmer and easier to shoot.

I guess the most challenging element is the fact that your environment and subject are so unpredictable. You can't set up your tripod, get the exact plan and composition and then walk between the sitter and camera, perfecting the shot. There is no moving the dog's head up or down or making any adjustment.

It is about capturing a fleeting moment of stillness, in which the dog and the landscape are one. In these instances I almost feel that the animal is posing for me.

Do you see your work as part of a tradition of portraying animals, be it in painting or photography?

Yes, people have been portraying animals through various art forms from the beginning of our existence. My medium of portrayal happens to be photographic, but what I am doing is essentially no different from what the Khoi-San did with rock art or the Egyptians on tomb walls. I also want to illustrate the interaction between living creatures, men or animals, and the environment.

Africanis were in South Africa long before Westerners; they are in a sense pre-colonial or even un-colonial – untouched by this kind of historicity. Their breed is not synonymous with any culturally identifiable group, whereas Alsatians are associated with the police, Boerboels with Afrikaners, Corgis with the British.

Africanis dogs vary enormously in appearance because they have adapted to the landscape and climate. This is reflected in their size, diet, posture, skin and fur. The studio-like format of my images, with the dog centrally placed, includes the landscape that has molded them into who they are.

Let's talk a bit about your photographic background. Which photographers (or other artists) have influenced your work, and who are your personal favourites?

The work of Rineke Dijkstra, especially her minimal beach portraits, is probably one of my biggest influences. I am drawn by how the subject confronts the viewer in such a romantic, harmless and sublime way.

And then Richard Avedon's *In the American West* series. With his portable studio, he was able to portray a generation across his country. I have him in mind as a reference when I investigate the relation between men, animals and landscape in South Africa's rural areas.

I am also influenced by the works of 18th century painters such as Samuel Daniell and George Stubbs, specifically their use of colour and light, and the sculptural quality of their subjects.

I have always been fascinated by wildlife books: as a boy I used to draw the same buck (antelope) over and over again. I guess I keep doing it, with a different medium and a broader scope.

List of works (in order of appearance):

- 1 Africanis 2. Strydenburg, 1 April 2008
- 2 Africanis 6. Strydenburg, 2 April 2008
- 3 Africanis 3. Strydenburg, 1 April 2008
- 4 Africanis 9. Strydenburg, 31 March 2008
- 5 Africanis 4. Britstown, 5 June 2007
- 6 Africanis 11. Murraysburg, 4 February 2009
- 7 Africanis 1. Strydenburg, 31 March 2008
- 8 Africanis 8. Barkly East, 5 July 2008

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