

MARY VISSER

GRAHAM
CONTEMPORARY

STATEMENT



Painting is a place of doing and undoing, thoughtfulness and mischief. I seek to connect with my body's intelligence through gesture and the pleasure of the tactile in order to articulate an emotional truth that resonates beyond language.

The nature of paint is sensory and the process fragmented; each next impulsive move either building or tearing down. Pushing gloopy drippy paint around; smearing and scrubbing the surface, then layering with oil stick across dry canvas. It's a delicious bewilderment—my shaking hand making spidery lines, then small irritations or disappointments in me swelling into forceful gestures, crossing out and remaking.

The image arrives through making, not before. I bring what I have in the moment as I meet the painting, making do with what I have. I pick impulsively from the images strewn across the studio floor; torn magazine shards, song lyrics, photos of buildings, signage and street debris, crayon drawings and collages, fragments of rags, canvas and tape. I juxtapose and layer many disparate things much like thoughts, events and memories might be arranged in a dream. I make do with what I have in the moment; taking chances and feeling toward what I want to see. I play at being the nonchalant prankster. Like the Cat in the Hat chasing a pink stain from bath to dress to rug to snow outside, I move between canvases paint pot in hand, shifting spaces and upending images.

The forms that return most often recall bowls, a ship's hull, a landscape view. Like a strange Rorschach, they surface through the physical labour of painting, recalled and re-imagined by the body - a hairstyle becomes a deck chair, an owl, a sock, a mushroom, a cat. Painting becomes a phenomenological act—a way of speaking non-verbally through gesture and material from within the body itself. What excites me is the tension between freedom and containment, rock and sea, form and fluidity. The act of painting becomes the conduit for an image to break the surface and stay or to slip away to be caught another day.



Ocean As Audience

Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas

155 x 130cm

2026



Realm of Nothing And Everything

Acrylic, oil, charcoal and spray paint on canvas

137 x 214cm

2026



Pirate
Oil and acrylic on canvas
137 x 214cm
2026



Reef

Acrylic and oil on canvas

155x130cm

2026



Swell

Oil and acrylic on canvas

137x214cm

2026



Corners and Turns
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas
155 x 130cm
2025



String of Days
Acrylic and wax pastel on canvas
155.5 x 130.3cm
2025

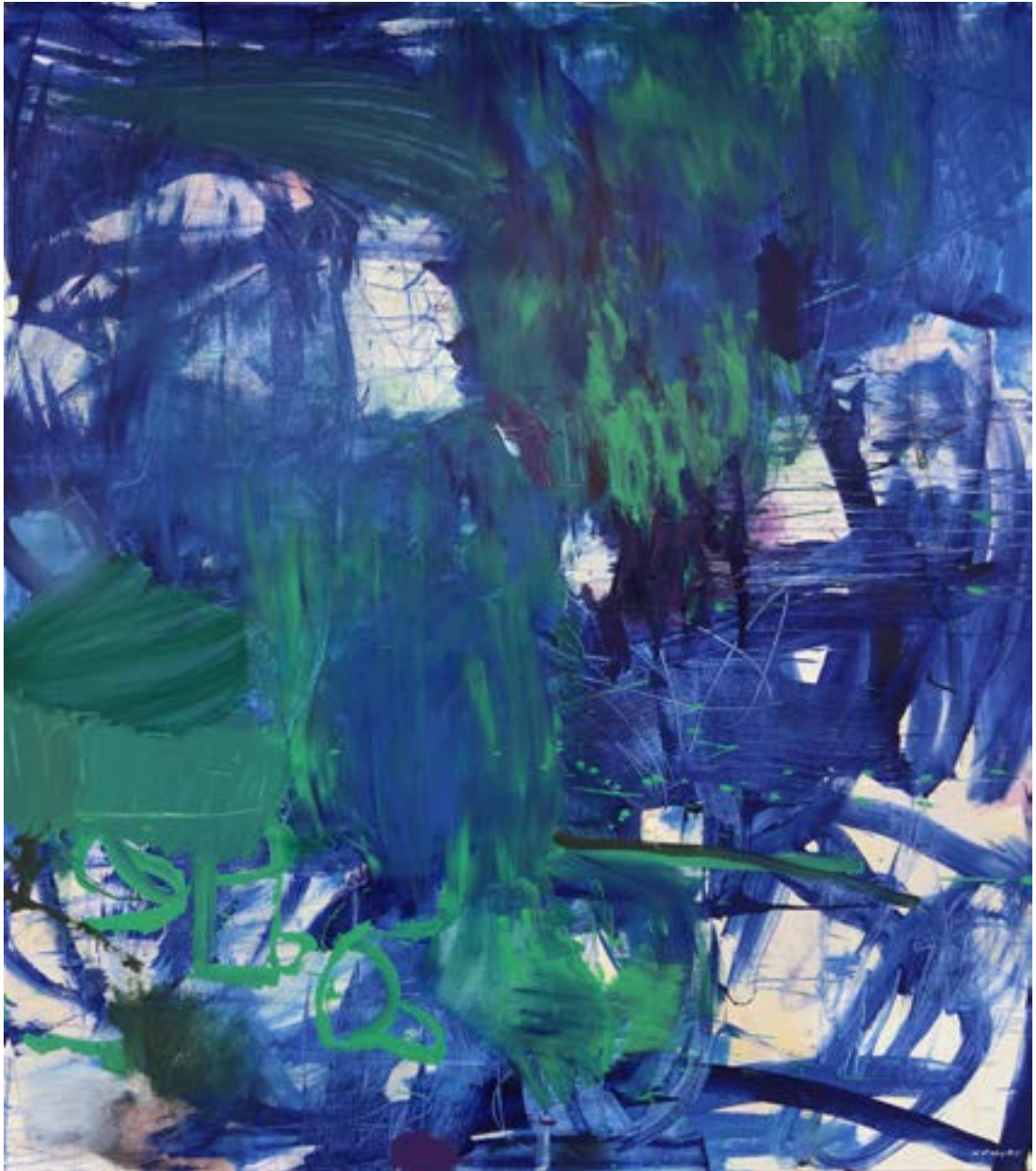


Salt Path

Acrylic, spray paint and wax pastel on canvas

155 x 130cm

2025



Forest

Acrylic, spray paint and wax pastel on canvas

223 x 195cm

2024



Musical Chairs

Acrylic and wax pastel on canvas

130 x 155cm

2024



Shortcuts

Acrylic and crayon on canvas

155 x 130cm

2023

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Visser is a Cape Town-based visual artist. Rooted in the tactile pleasures of paint, her practice transforms sensory experience into a visual language that seeks connection with an inner wildness. Influenced by post-war American abstraction, German Expressionism, and the Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi, Visser embraces humour, awkwardness, and risk taking as central to her process.

She holds a BFA from Rhodes University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Art from the University of Cape Town. Her solo exhibitions include *Celestial Trampoline* at The Yard in Cape Town's Silo District (2021), *Funny Things are Everywhere* at AVA Gallery, Cape Town (2018), *Assembly* at Circa Gallery, Everard Read, Cape Town (2018), and *Along these City Streets* at AVA Gallery, Cape Town (2011). Her work has also been presented in numerous group exhibitions, including *Brave New World* at Graham Contemporary, Johannesburg (2025); *In Conversation: Mary Visser and Sibusiso Ngwazi* at Ebony/Curated, Cape Town (2024); the Investec Cape Town Art Fair with WorldArt (2024); *Room With a View* at Ebony/Curated, Cape Town (2023); and *Natural Abstraction* at Graham Contemporary, Johannesburg (2022).

Visser's paintings are represented in local and international collections, including those of the University of Cape Town, Nando's, HSBC Bank, and the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

CV

Mary Visser holds a BFA in drawing and painting from Rhodes University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Art from the University of Cape Town. Her work is in collections both locally and internationally, including the University of Cape Town, Nando's, HBSC Bank and the New Constitutional Court, Johannesburg.

Solo exhibitions

- 2021 'Celestial Trampoline', The Yard, Silo District, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2018 'Funny Things are Everywhere', Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town, South Africa
'Assembly', Circa Gallery, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2011 'Along these City Streets', Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010 'The Weight of Light', The Bay Hotel, Camps Bay, South Africa
- 2005 'Nocturnes', UCT Irma Stern Museum Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Selected group exhibitions

- 2024 'In Conversation: Mary Visser and Sibusiso Ngwazi', EBONY/CURATED, Cape Town, South Africa
Investec Cape Town Art Fair, WorldArt
'Imagine', WORLDART, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2023 'Room With a View', Curated by Karen Elkington, EBONY/CURATED, Cape Town, South Africa
'New Day', Graham Contemporary, Hyde Park Corner, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2022 'Natural Abstraction', Graham Contemporary, Hyde Park Corner, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2020 'Group Show', 131a gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2019 'Group Show', Eclectica Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2018 'Prelude', Worldart Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2017 'Summer Show', Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
'Out of Nowhere', Smith Studio Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2014 'Small Canvas' Project, Benetton Project (Venice Biennale)
- 2013 'Possession', Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008 'New Works' (Mary Visser, Nick Bladen & Marieke Prinsloo), Grande Provence Gallery, South Africa
- 1998 'Boudoir Biscuits Exhibition', UCT Irma Stern Museum Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

Awards

- 2003 Carpet Design (as part of The Boudoir Biscuits Artist Collective) Judges Chambers, New Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2002 Runner-up in Convenco Public Art Work Competition, Cape Town Convention Centre
(as part of The Boudoir Biscuits Artist Collective and the women of St Anne's Home, Cape Town)

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