

HUNTER GATHERER FACES OF THE KHOISAN

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY
LYNNE-MARIE EATWELL





Lynne-Marie Eatwell

About the artist

Born in 1982 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Lynne is a young painter with exceptional talent. Her expression of light and movement are amongst the most provocative features of her paintings. Working in oils, both from life and references, she is focused on capturing the essence of her subject. She works fast and accurately using bold pallet strokes and loose brushwork.

From 1996 to 1999 she attended the ‘National School of the Arts’ in Johannesburg, where she achieved some of the highest accolades for art. After graduating she moved to Cape Town with her family and in 2001 opened ‘The Eatwell Gallery’ at the Noordhoek Farm village. The space, which also doubled as the artist studio, solely exhibited the work of the Eatwell family and allowed members of the public the opportunity to see the artists at work. In 2010-2011 she moved to Italy to study classical Drawing at ‘The Florence Academy of Art.’

Lynne is mostly interested in painting figurative work and portraiture. She has been influenced by: “the Impressionists,” John Singer Sargent, Sorolla, Van Gogh, as well as more modern painters like Lucian Freud, Jenny Saville and her brother Eric.

Having an appetite for travel and traditional cultures she has spent a great deal of her time painting on location in remote destinations throughout Africa and the world. She currently divides of her time living between Cape Town and Los Angeles.

Lynne’s work has found a ready home in many local and international collections and her skill and popularity continues to grow.

About the trip

March 2013

As a young girl I was inspired by a book on my shelf that once belonged to my grandmother, it was about North-eastern Namibia. I remember looking at pictures of Bushmen, typically portrayed in loin-cloth with bow and arrow in hand. There was an image of a young Khoisan girl; her features where delicate and I suppose she reminded me a bit of myself, her western t-shirt was stained by the earth while mine washed clean of any blemish. I remember thinking to myself that one day I would like to find these people and paint their portraits. I would like to travel the world and have an adventurous life and I wanted my art to take me there.

I woke up one morning in the apartment in Santa Monica thinking, “It’s now or never” I either followed that dream or would one day have to make peace with myself for not trying and that I would not do.

On my return to South Africa I immediately started researching and contacting people who worked with the Khoisan in South Africa. I was getting leads but it was not what I was looking for. Through a twist of fate I was lead to a man who lived literally a few blocks away from my house named Daivid Bruce. David was a photographer who had dedicated the past twenty-five years of his life to photographing the Ju/hoansi Bushmen of Namibia and he was about to leave on a filming trip. That same Sunday evening on 17 March 2013 I got the call from David to say that he was leaving at 4AM Tuesday and I could come along if I liked. It was the opportunity of a lifetime. Tuesday morning came and we left in his 1997 Land Rover Defender almost as complete strangers.

After four days driving at no more than 90Kmh we finally arrived at the village of Nhoma, about 40km from Tsumkwe. It was overwhelming seeing the San for the first time, they were even smaller than I had imagined and were dressed in bright clothes, patterned skirts and colourful beads, they had their own definite sense of fashion, striking and shocking to the senses as if they were making up for all the centuries of having no access to colour. The children, of which there were many, had simple hand-me-downs that didn’t fit their tiny bodies, more closely resembling garage rags than children’s clothing, but everyone seemed happy and as I would see, would spend all their waking hours at play.

The Ju/hoansi Bushmen are the only Bushmen who still live on ancestral land and the only ones who still practice the tradition of trance dancing. It was this that David had come to film and when morning came he left in the Land Rover to collect elders from other villages, leaving me on my own to settle in and find my place in the village. I sat with the woman around the fire while they boiled tea in a large black kettle, actually it would end up being sugar with some tea mixed into it, as I would learn the bushmen like sugar almost as much as they like to smoke tobacco or twak as they call it. Some of the men would speak to me in Afrikaans but the woman generally kept to their own language.

It was my sketchbook that proved to be the best icebreaker; they passed through the drawings of Florence and western buildings with little interest but would pause for long discussions when it came to the drawings of horse anatomy and nude studies from life drawing. On the second day I took out my paints and asked the grandma of Nhoma, Ikoece Ghau to sit for a portrait painting. It took a while to successfully explain what I wanted to do but some how it all made sense once I confirmed that I would pay for her





time. I had to paint sitting down to get at eye level and it was so hot that it made my paint feel as though it would melt from the canvas. The whole village had gathered behind me and the children were practically sitting on my lap. As I sat there with this wise old woman looking back at me I started to relax. I realized that there was no judgment or expectation other than my own. It was like having many proud grandmothers lovingly give of their time so that I could fulfil my hearts desire.

During the days I would paint as many portraits as possible, while David worked on preparations for the nights filming, I would help him by recording the sound. As night approached the elders would prepare for a night of trance dancing in which they would communicate with their ancestors.

It was like nothing I have ever experienced before, standing right in the middle of the dance circle, the woman loudly singing and clapping the intricate rhythms while the men went into trance, laying hands on the people in the circle who were in need of healing. The roaring fire was casting warm flickering light on sweat glistening bodies. I could not believe how these people, who during the day looked like frail figures barely able to hold up their own frames would dance right through the night. I asked myself several times, "What planet am I on?"

During the seven days that we were there I was able to get an intimate glimpse into the everyday life and struggles of today's Bushmen. I saw the amazing trance dances of the different villages and heard about their concerns for the future, both for their children and thier culture. On my return home I started work on a collection of paintings inspired by my trip and in March of 2014 I was lucky enough to once again accompany David for another three-week trip to Nhoma and the village of Ilauru.



The Paintings



Pink Beaded Bag
122cm X 91cm Oil on Linen

Ikoeece Ghau
122cm X 91cm
Oil on Linen





Sebo Boo
122cm X 91cm
Oil on Linen



Xaro langlao
122cm X 91cm Oil on Linen

The Second Trip

March 2014

Things were very different for me this time around, I felt more relaxed, having had an idea of what to expect. The only thing I dreaded was not having a shower for a few weeks but even this was thankfully over come at acceptable intervals. We had three things on the agenda, film more dancing, paint more portraits and renovate a school. Everything was green and wet, Namibia had been blessed with massive amounts of rain over the season and it wasn't over yet, the Land Rover had changed colour as we hit the slushy gravel road to Tsumkwe. There were massive pools of water thick with lush grass, everywhere fat donkeys were feasting

We decided to film the dancing first hoping that the rain would hold off for just a couple of days. The Villagers of Nhoma dance the Elephant Dance; the healers, mostly men, shake their bodies in trance while the woman loudly sing and clap very specific rhythms, each having learned their segment of the song from their mother before them. As I stood there watching the dance, I realized that I was seeing something very few people on the planet will ever get the chance to see. Time and the worries of the modern world melted away and for a while it was as though I had been sucked hundreds of thousands of years back in history.

After four days of filming we prepared to moved to the village of Ilauru but first we had work to do. David's charity, 'The Ju'hoansie development fund' focuses on education and the building and renovation of schools, some of which have not had any maintenance in over twenty years. One such school near a village on the way was in desperate need of attention. The walls were made of mud from anthills and were partially plastered, snakes and wasps were burrowing in and out of the holes in the walls and the spirit of inspiration had long since left the building. We set up camp and immediately started work; sweeping and scraping, mixing plaster, painting walls and window frames, it was exhausting. The nights were eerie, the sounds of hyenas keeping me up for most of the night. Two young men from the nearby village where excited about what we were doing and offered their help, keen to get paint on their clothes to show others how they had contribute to the future of their children. It took four days of hard labor to get the job done, a marked improvement but ultimately a temporary solution to a much greater problem.

It was time to visit Ilauru, a village just off the road to Gum, probably about 100km from Tsumkwe. We had heard about the condition on the road from others who had traveled that way a few weeks before, words like 'treacherous' and 'river' were used. We took the turnoff to the village, sign posted by a rusted piece of barrel that would go unnoticed by the untrained eye. Driving along the sand track we started to wonder what everyone was talking about, the words were not even cold off our lips when we turned a corner and there in front of us lay a stretch of water we could not have imagined. It was difficult to judge how long it lasted or how deep it really was with all the turns and bends but we decided to take a chance. I watched as the wheels sank into the mud and then disappear into the 'river'. A wake was almost over the bonnet as the Landrover pushed its way through the massive body of water. A few yards in we



hit a missive bump of who knows what? We kept going at a slow steady pace trying not to loose momentum and definitely not changing gears. At one point I just couldn't look anymore and my heart beseeched the help of every angle in the area to carry us through to the other side. As we came out I smiled as if it was no sweat and said to David, "That was fun" Wide eyed he replied, "For you maybe"

Iauru was different to Nhome in every way, the name means flat rock and that is what there was. The sand was almost grey and you couldn't dig a few inches before hitting slabs of white rock. The whole village was waiting under a tree; they looked thin and grey like the land. I remembered a few people from my first trip, Iam, Thoma and some others and they recognized me. I got many hugs and was introduced to the rest as the one who draws. We set up camp and I started painting that afternoon, there were many people to paint any many hungry faces keen to earn some money, there was no way I could go home with anything left in my pocket. Time was short as we thought it best to get out of there before the next rain topped up that river, the only way out. I painted as many portraits as I could that afternoon and painted the whole of the next day, one by one the elders took their turn to pose, each painting being inspected by the whole village to see if I had captured a good likeness. After three days it was time to go, we had pushed our luck far enough. We had agreed to take Iam, Toma and one other to Gum to do some shopping for food, they had money to spend and tea and tobacco were high on the list but first we had to get through that river. This time I didn't even bother to look, I shut my eyes and started praying and when we got to the other side both Iam and I sent up our thanks, what a relief.

Gum was fascinating, I think it was the first time many of the people there had ever seen a blond woman. The Donkeys were waiting at the village turnoff to carry the shopping home and it was time for us to make our journey home. It was sad to say goodbye but I knew that I would be back. The rain came down on the road out of Tsumkwe and it was the Cape that lay beyond the horizon.

Ilxukxa Kxoara

122cm X 91cm
Oil on Linen





Ikoee Ghau
122cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



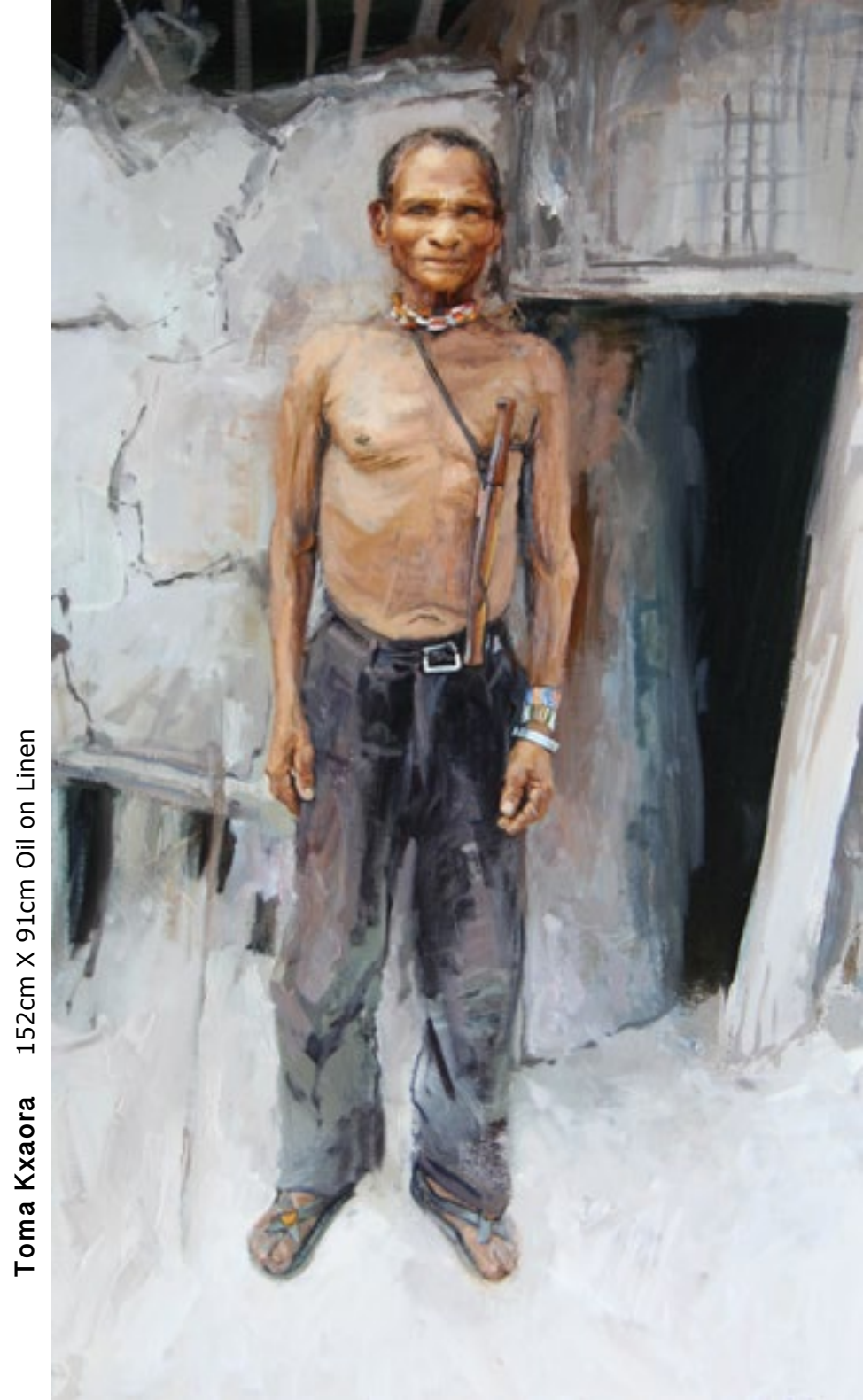
Iam Il'ao
122cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



Toma Kxao 152cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



Iukxa Ghau 152cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



Toma Kxaora 152cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



Iukxa Ghau
122cm X 91cm Oil on Linen



Ioce
50cm X 70cm Oil on Linen



Ilxukxa Kxoara
28cm X 49cm
Oil on Linen



Toma Kxaora
28cm X 49cm
Oil on Linen



Ikoece Ghau
28cm X 49cm
Oil on Linen



Iam Il'ao
28cm X 49cm
Oil on Linen



The Conversation

130cm X 91cm
Oil on Linen

The Drawings



Ikocece Ghau
122cm X 91cm
Graphite & watercolour
on cloth



Ikocece Ghau
122cm X 91cm
Graphite & watercolour on cloth



Pink Beaded Bag
122cm X 91cm
Graphite & watercolour on cloth



Sebe Boo
122cm X 91cm
Graphite & watercolour
on cloth



Iixukxa Kxoara
 122cm X 91cm
 Graphite & watercolour
 on cloth



Xaro langlao
 122cm X 91cm
 Graphite & watercolour on cloth



Toma Kxaora

152cm X 91cm

Graphite & watercolour on cloth

Toma Kxao

152cm X 91cm

Graphite & watercolour on cloth

Iukxa Ghau

152cm X 91cm

Graphite & watercolour on cloth



Lynne-Marie with Ikoce Ghau from Nhoma Village

Exhibitions and Events

- 2004 June Group Show at “The Redleaf Gallery” Tunbridge Wells, Kent, U.K.
- 2007 April Solo Show at “The Orient Boutique Hotel” Francolin Conservancy
- 2009 June Open Studio Exhibition at “Santa Monica Fine Art Studios”
- 2010 July Group Show at “Rebecca Molayem Gallery” West Hollywood
- 2010 -2011 Studied “Intensive Drawing Program” at The Florence Academy Of Art
- 2011 October Traveled to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Collection commissioned by Cobus Du Plessis.
- 2013 March Traveled to Tsumkwe, Namibia to stay with Bushmen Communities /Research
- 2013 May Opening Exhibition of The Eatwell Gallery,
- 2013 September Exhibiting Member of the First Venice Artblock Studio tour, Venice Beach, CA, U.S.A.
- 2013 December Group Show at The Eatwell Gallery
- 2014 February Group Show ‘Pastoral Symphony’ at Rebecca Molayem Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, U.S.A.
- 2014 March 2nd Research trip to Tsumkwe, Namibia to stay with Bushmen communities.
- 2014 August Solo Exhibition, “Hunter Gatherer, Faces of the Khoisan” at the Orient Boutique Hotel, Pretoria

Representation

Imibala Gallery, Somerset West
Knysna Fine Art, Knysna/Grand Provance Franschhoek
The Orient Hotel Museum, Francolin Conservancy
The Studio Gallery, Simons Town
The Eatwell Gallery, Noordhoek

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