

**New exhibition at WAM:**

***Karel Nel: Close and Far***



Karel Nel. *Keeping out the light: Centre for Astrophysics, Paris. 2011*,  
pigment on bonded fibre fabric

Pastel and sprayed

Join us at WAM for the opening of *Karel Nel: Close and Far* on Thursday 30 May 2024 @ 18:00 for 18:30. The exhibition will be opened by Federico Freschi, Executive Dean: Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture University of Johannesburg.

*Close and Far* is a survey exhibition of Karel Nel's work curated in relation to themes present in four works by this artist in WAM's permanent collection. Nel's wide-ranging interests and lifelong engagement over four decades with the role of thought and consciousness in our interpretation of the world – and the universe – are explored.

The earliest of the works from the early 1980s are mind's eye drawings that map mental states. Nel's exhibition alternates between the highly abstract and the carefully observed world around him. Whether he renders intimate narrative still lifes, his studio, a lecture theatre at the Centre for Astrophysics in Paris, or the formal sand and rock garden at the Ryōan-ji temple in Japan, his concern is not simply optical fidelity but how we find ways to make sense for ourselves of the multiple realities about us.

Another stream is his set of dust 'landscapes', which use forensic materials to evoke, remember and commemorate critical moments in human thought and history. These works include *Monument* and *Eleven*, two works that – in the very dust that constitutes them – encourage us to acutely remember the terror and loss of 9/11.

Nel's longstanding relationship with the Cosmic Evolutionary Survey (COSMOS) team of astrophysicists is reflected in his highly abstract works that represent his efforts to understand the complexity of human thought as our species grapples with the immensity of our universe. His artistic enquiry into the ideas, insights, images and raw data the astronomers use to explore a two-degree square of space below the constellation of Leo are examples of his most recent work.

The exhibition is accompanied by objects selected from Nel's extensive collection of African and Oceanic art.

*Close and Far* is curated by Fiona Rankin-Smith.

Parking for the opening event is available in the garage beneath the museum.

Museum hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00 – 16:00

Entrance is free and all are welcome

Exhibition dates: 30 May – 3 August 2024

For more information on the show and museum please email [Fiona.rankin-smith@wits.ac.za](mailto:Fiona.rankin-smith@wits.ac.za)

