

KAREL NEL *Translucent Worlds*

[Everard Read Gallery, Circa Building, Johannesburg](#), South Africa

1 September – 21 November 2026

As London and the Northern hemisphere prepare for the big Autumn season, Johannesburg leaps into its swift Spring with the FNB Joburg Art Fair (3 – 6 September) and all its surrounding events. I am delighted to be making the trip to be there and in particular, to be with **Karel Nel** for his much-anticipated exhibition *Translucent Worlds*. It opens on 1 September in CIRCA, the beautiful architectural space which is part of the Everard Read Gallery.

Nel's previous solo show, [Observe](#) at Art First in London, was in 2015. Over the decade since then he has been extraordinarily busy curating significant exhibitions with accompanying catalogues for the [Norval Foundation in Cape Town](#), including *Brett Murray: Wild Life*, currently on view till 22 November.

Translucent Worlds is therefore a hugely exciting and momentous prospect.

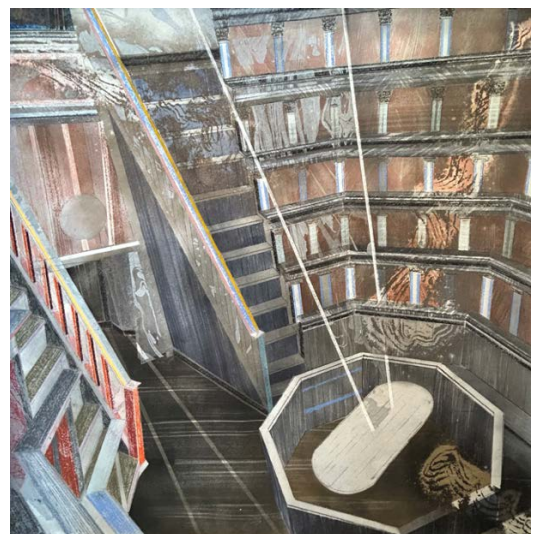
The new majestic drawings are a metaphysical encapsulation of a world suggested by books, by tools and forms within Brancusi's studio, by many journeys to different cultures. Nel's depictions of libraries and items of furniture and sculpture are made with precision and yet remain abstracted, for they represent these visual elements of both conceptual and material culture within a chosen sphere of knowledge, as 'tools' for further thinking.

Inspired by the Nobel literature selector, Per Wästberg's extensive library in Stockholm, a place familiar to Nel from visits over the years, as is Brancusi's studio, left to the French Nation and assembled, tools and all, just outside the Centre Pompidou, rather like a shrine, Nel brings together these sites of creative thought, 'of the world and its shifting paradigms' as he calls it, fusing it with 'a lifetime of journeying, thinking, connecting with others, and always drawing'.

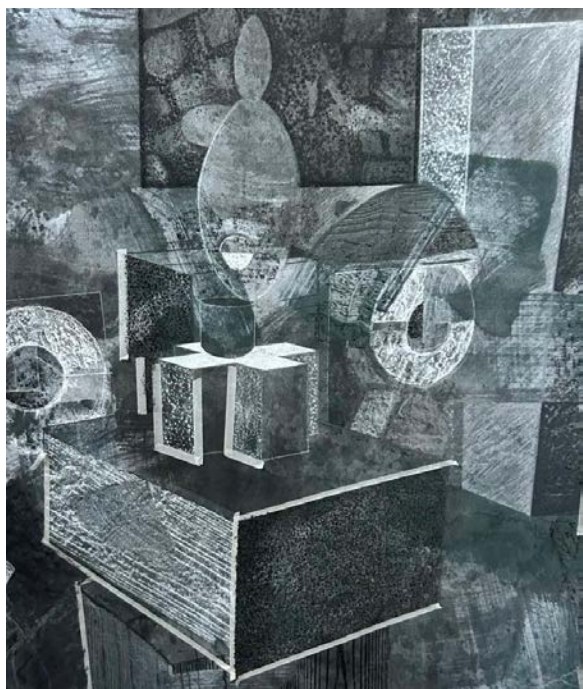
The ungraspable he explains, is created by vanishing points and shifts in perspective. Not only this but also the signature floating 'clouds' that drift across many of the surfaces, like a form of breathing. Certainly, these are works of art made for deep breathing; we do indeed pause for breath, drawn in to the spirit and mystery and the sheer scale and complexity of the liberating, ravishing sumptuousness of each individual drawing.



Left: Drawing laid down ready for finishing touches in the artist's studio.



Right: *Insight, Uppsala, Sweden*, 2026, pastel and pigment on bonded fibre fabric, 172 x 172cm



Above left: Detail of *Afterimage: The Studio Absented*, Impasse Ronsin, Paris and right: Drawings under way among sculptures in Nel's studio.



Above left: The artist in his Paris studio during a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in 2025

Above right: *Karel Nel: Close & Far*, the beautiful cloth-bound book was published in January 2026 by Palimpsest after his survey exhibition at Wits Art Museum the previous year. The illuminating texts by Elizabeth Burroughs and Federico Freschi explore Nel's multi-layered life as an artist, collector, curator, teacher, writer and traveller, all of which have shaped and informed his compelling drawings and screens spanning his career. The book covers continuing elements evident within *Translucent Worlds* and is available from Art First and Everard Read: gallery@everardread.co.za

KATE MCCRICKARD

New Acquisition:

Congratulations to Kate on the acquisition by the [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#) of three richly worked drypoints for their distinguished collection in Paris.



Top: *Run for Your Life!*, 2025, Drypoint, 75 x 105 cm, edition of 12, printed on Hahnemulle by Gaetan Girard at At lier Michael Woolworth, Paris.

Bottom: *Ghosted I and II*, 2022, Drypoint printed on Hahnemulle by Julian Torhy and Gaetan Girard at At lier Michael Woolworth, Paris. Sheet size: 27 x 21cm, edition of 10.

HELEN MACALISTER

New Acquisition:

Congratulations to Helen for the trilogy of related works which have entered the [Edinburgh City Art Centre's](#) permanent collection. Ranging from 1992 to 2004, they touch on language - oral and visual - a central theme in all of her art, and most evidently evolved in the [Glamour of Backwardness](#) exhibition with Art First in 2023. Here phrases are embedded within the oil paint, integrating with landscape or the surface pattern of Gorse, a plant as ubiquitous as Heather throughout Scotland, but as she points out, more suited to the plosive sounds of the Scottish language.

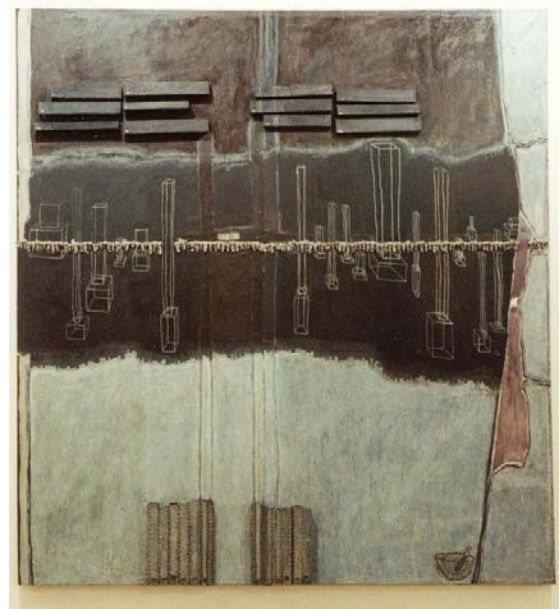
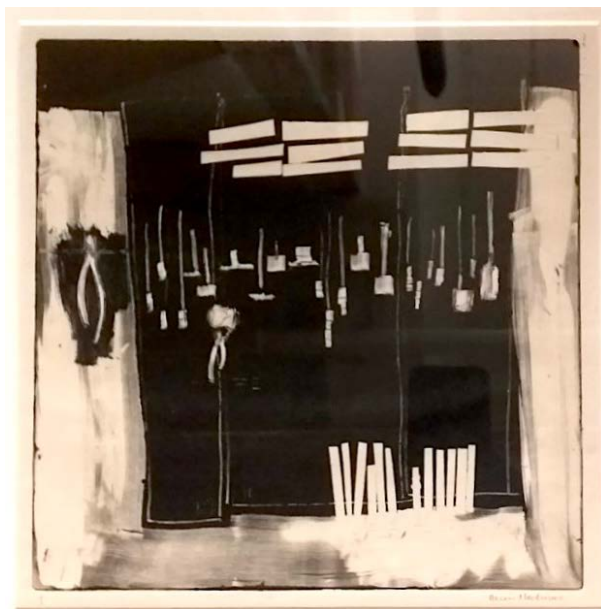
The trio, *Teeth*, *Pulpit* and *Legare: to combine*, address aspects of speech, indirectly and with subtlety, each encoded with research and honed thinking. The result is something elegant, witty and intriguing with metaphors that feed off one another, drawing us in to the culture which surrounds her art.

Below: *LEGARE - to combine*, 2004, oil on canvas with lego, 23 cm diameter, from the exhibition *Petrified Gossip*, 2004. The background markings refer to knitting patterns from the Hebridean islands where stitches join to form the central lettering 'to combine'. The piece of lego is a witty reference to a modern mode of combining.





*Killarow Parish Church, Bowmore, Islay, 360, 2006, pencil on paper, 42 x 29.7cm, from the sequence of drawings made for the exhibition *The Roar o'Human Shingle* in 2006. A group of these drawings is also held in the Fleming Collection. The accompanying catalogue has an edifying essay by Duncan Macmillan, a leading writer on Helen's work who examines how the drawings of driftwood suggest a pulpit from which sermons are preached.*



Above left: *Teeth*, 1992, Monoprint, 55 x 60cm, CAC collection.

Above right: *La Langue de Bois – The Wooden Language/Tongue*, 1992, oil on canvas with wooden boxes, thread fishing gut and clay teeth, 200 x 185cm. Tooth in this case is a symbol of talk. Both works were part of the exhibition of the same title, the print closely relating to the canvas. Presented by Seagate Gallery, Dundee, the show was the result of a prestigious residency at Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, supported by Miller Homes.

Teeth is included in the exhibition GIFTED, running through September to acknowledge bequests and gifts made to expand the CAC's already extensive collection of Scottish art.

WILL MACLEAN

Nowhere is the romance or the resilience of the Gaelic language and its culture better celebrated and recently memorialised in the Scottish Hebrides than on the Isle of Lewis. Here Scottish artist and sculptor [Will Maclean](#) and his artist wife Marian Leven, whose families are rooted in this glorious far flung place, have won the commissions to design the six stone monuments that commemorate the struggles and eventual triumphs of the land struggles that took place during the late 18th C and through the 19th C until after the Second World War.

It's quite a story – see below in the book 'Compelled by Memory'.

This year [Will Maclean](#) and Marian Leven completed their most recent commission, close to their ancestral home on the mainland in Polbain. *An Lorg* (the Gaelic word for footprint), was unveiled with jubilant ceremony in July. The stone monument is a moving narrative in stone, relating to the event in Coigach in the 1850's when a group of courageous women successfully resisted FIVE attempts to evict them from the land; a remarkable achievement, and a story celebrated through lively community effort and the deeply informed design by Leven and Maclean. Here they are (below) on a windy day before the ceremonies began. The front page of the Glasgow Herald paid tribute, with the full story inside. Congratulations to them both.

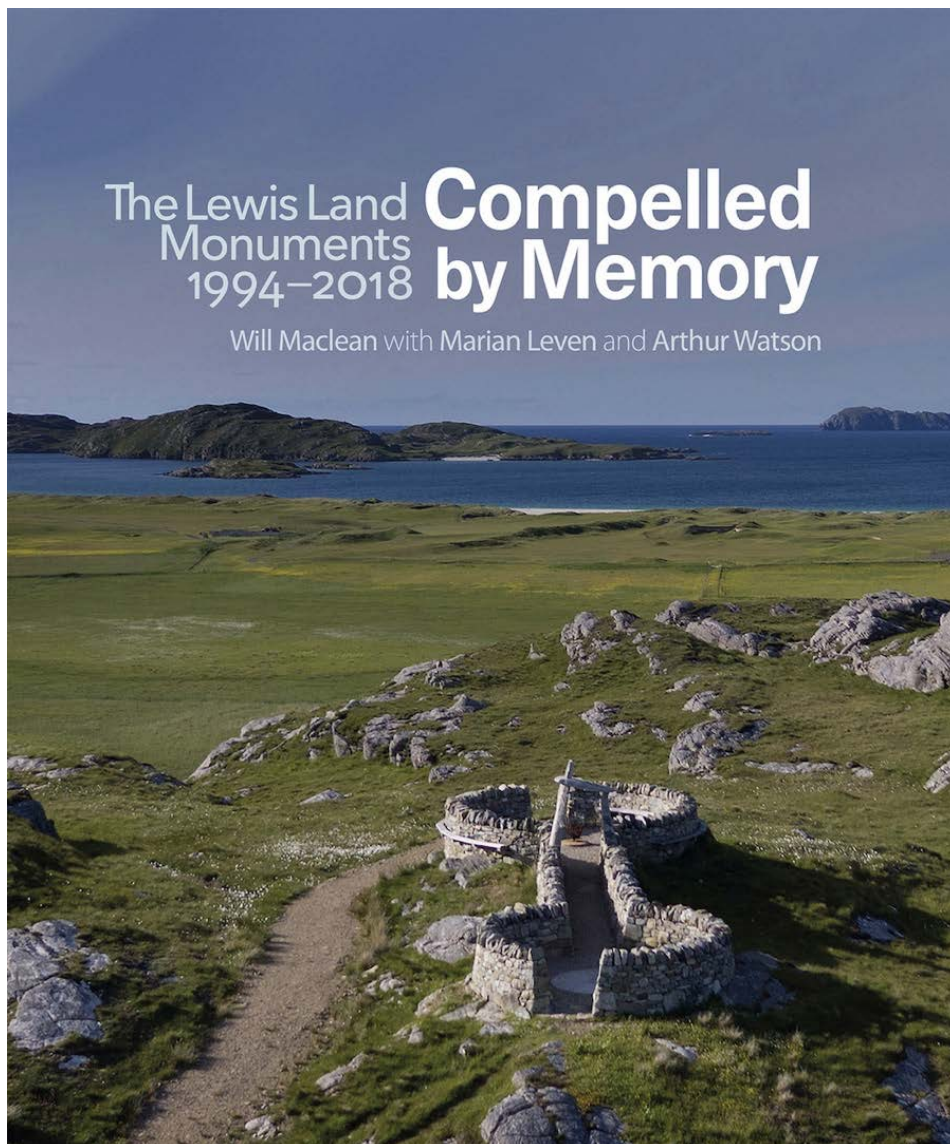


Above: *An Lorg* and below: Marian Leven's watercolour for the project

The Isle of Lewis is now host to six magnificent stone structures, all award winners and a central part of the proud island history. In every case, since 1992, Maclean has been centrally involved in their conception. He was joined by his wife for the design of *An Suileachan* 2013, on the west coast close to Uig, *The Iolair* 2019, in Stornoway and *Na Dorsan*, in the north of Lewis, 2025.

The profoundly moving story of how the Lewis people rescued their Gaelic language and way of life is fulsomely told in a book called 'Compelled by Memory' published in 2022 by Sansom & Co and produced by Art First. Essays by Duncan Macmillan, Joni Buchanan, Tom Normand and Lindsay Blair, with photography by Robin Gilanders pay tribute to the integrity of the vision behind the monuments and their restorative impact on the Communities for whom they were created.

[Do contact us if you would like to buy a copy \(£20 pls p&p\).](#)



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ART FIRST, London www.artfirst.co.uk E: info@artfirst.co.uk T: +44 (0) 7711 945098