



Karin Preller

Reflections on Aperture

by Lisa Allan

One of the essential paradoxes in Karin Preller's work is the artist's critique of 'high' art – particularly as it is expressed in figurative oil painting on canvas – by depicting 'popular' imagery in this medium. Preller's use of the combination of photography and painting is, in part, a meditation on the nature of representation. Although this exploration has been relatively well documented, there are other important aspects of Preller's oeuvre that have not been so intensely investigated. Preller has used family photographs, film stills, and the black-and-white pulp comics of the 1970s as subject matter, amongst other sources. This material has the effect of bringing distant memory to the surface for the viewer, of setting in motion a conflict between recognition and alienation, since the memories evoked are not quite the viewer's own but are nonetheless intensely familiar.

The paintings in the *Aperture* series depict black-and-white photographs of family visits to the Kruger National Park, a favourite holiday destination for many white South Africans in the period suggested by the images. The photographs are, of course, evidence of the sighting of

the wildlife in the park, evidence that the purpose of the visit has been achieved. They are also no doubt the source of endless comparisons and slide-show evenings between friends and family – an aspect of the holiday photograph that is essential and essentially boring. The tourist's fascination with wildlife has not only been captured in the personal snapshot but has generated an industry of images, ranging from professional photographs to the popular genre of wildlife painting. Such paintings are usually large and feature the more spectacular of the animals: lion, leopard, elephant and so on in their 'natural' habitat. Indeed these animals have become part of the South African brand. By invoking the genre, Preller's animal images undermine and offer commentary upon wildlife painting.

Preller's works foreground the amateur photograph with its printing errors and the compositional accidents of the 'view through the window'. She emphasises the mediated nature of the photograph by directly translating these accidents onto the canvas. The sense of awe at the wonder of 'nature' that wildlife photography and painting are supposed to generate is subjected to Preller's critique.

1. Jack, Kruger Park, 1950s



2. Jack, Pieter and Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s



3. Jack, Chris and Marie, Kruger Park, 1950s



4. Baboon and tree, Kruger Park, 1950s



5. Baboon on car, Kruger Park, 1950s



6. Baboon and baby on car, Kruger Park, 1950s



7. Lion walking in road, Kruger Park, 1950s



8. Lion lying in road, Kruger Park, 1950s



9. Lion through car window, Kruger Park, 1950s



10. Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s



11. Rienie and Marie, Kruger Park, 1950s



12. Baboon through car window, Kruger Park, 1950s



13. Lion, Kruger Park, 1950s



14. Baboon next to TJ 67464 I, Kruger Park, 1950s



15. Baboon next to TJ 67464 II, Kruger Park, 1950s



Series: APERTURE, 2008

Medium: Oil on canvas

Image: 1. Jack, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 2. Jack, Pieter and Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 3. Jack, Chris and Marie, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 100cm

Image: 4. Baboon and tree, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 5. Baboon on car, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 100cm

Image: 6. Baboon and baby on car, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 83cm

Image: 7. Lion walking in road, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 8. Lion lying in road, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 9. Lion through car window, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 10. Chris, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 102cm

Image: 11. Rienie and Marie, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 12. Baboon through car window, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 100cm

Image: 13. Lion, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 90cm

Image: 14. Baboon next to TJ 67464 I, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

Image: 15. Baboon next to TJ 67464 II, Kruger Park, 1950s

Size: 83cm x 108cm

First published 2010

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