







The Wanderers Club, Illovo, Johannesburg  
13 November 2017 – 8 pm

## **Important South African and International Art**

Session 3  
Lots 301–391

Lot 344 Walter Battiss *Camp Fire* (detail)



TWO VIEWS OF LOT 301



301

**Henry Moore**

BRITISH 1898–1986

*Maquette Square Form with Cut*

1969

signed and numbered 2/9

bronze, mounted on a perspex base

height: 20,5 cm, including base

R500 000 – 700 000





302

**Thomas Baines**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1820–1875

*A Party Attacked*

inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

45 by 62 cm

R300 000 – 500 000



303

**Anton van Wouw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

***The Mieliepap Eater***

signed and inscribed 'SA Joh-burg' and 'G. Nisini. Fuse Roma'  
bronze with a dark brown patina, mounted on a marble base  
height: 16 cm, including base

R400 000 – 600 000

**LITERATURE**

AE Duffey (2008). *Anton van Wouw: The Smaller Works*, Pretoria: Protea Book House. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on pages 71 and 72.



TWO VIEWS OF LOT 304

304

### Anton van Wouw

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

#### *Kruger in Ballingschap*

signed, dated 1907 and inscribed 'Fonderia G Nisini Roma' bronze, mounted on a wooden base height: 17 cm, including base

**R200 000 – 300 000**

#### LITERATURE

AE Duffey (2008). *Anton van Wouw: The Smaller Works*, Pretoria: Protea Book House. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on pages 50 and 51.

Paul Kruger – idealist, frontiersman, hunter, guerrilla fighter, diplomat and tragic folk hero – remains instantly recognisable as the obstinate, devout and slack-cheeked face of Boer independence. With his capital and major towns under British control, and Lord Roberts announcing the annexation of the South African Republic, Kruger went into exile in September 1900. While his loyal commandos – die bittereinders – turned to guerrilla tactics, their leader, dogged to the last, sailed from Lourenço Marques to Marseille to raise support for the Boer cause. Despite initially being well-received in Paris, Cologne and The Hague, Kruger's health and influence dwindled. At Oranjestad, his base in Utrecht, he lowered the flags of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State after the Treaty of Vereeniging formally ended the war in May 1902. Refusing to return to his country as a British subject, however, and feeling he might better serve his people

by remaining in exile, he lived out his final days in Clarens in western Switzerland, views of his beloved veld replaced by the Alps. He died in July 1904, having penned his final letter to his people of the Transvaal, asking that each 'seek all that is to be found good and fair in the past'.

Three years later Anton van Wouw, working between Pretoria and Johannesburg, imagined the lonely ex-President sitting deep in his armchair, his knees blanketed, and with his Bible, his only comfort, resting open on his lap. The artist kept the old man's gaze from the pages; Kruger stared above them, either in resignation or resistance. The two versions that Van Wouw made of this work differ only in size, essentially; the current lot is the smaller example, another casting of which was exhibited at the artist's retrospective in 1909 at the Fine Arts Society in London, shortly before the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910.







305

**Frans Oerder**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1867–1944

*Farm Bezuidenhout*

signed

oil on canvas

48,5 by 95,5 cm

**R300 000 – 400 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired directly from the artist by Frederick Jacobus Bezuidenhout, and thence by descent.

In his still-lives and portraits Frans Oerder rarely deviated from the naturalistic style befitting his late nineteenth-century Dutch training. Greater freedom in his brushwork, however, and even a sense of adventurous experimentation, is more evident in some of the artist's formative Highveld landscapes. More likely than not, this technical variation was due to his attempts at coming to terms with the particular Transvaal colour, expanse and light. The present example, a sweeping view down to the farm purchased from the voortrekker Barend Viljoen by his son-in-law Frederick Bezuidenhout, is a dazzling case in point. Shifting tints of green, rose and yellow portray the rustling grasses in the wind, while the farmhouse, outbuildings and stone kraal, all standing in dappled, summer light, are built up with flecks and smudges of red, earthy tones. Hinting at the future, thin layers of dirty-white and dashes of blue hang over the horizon, evidence of the area's earliest mining and industrial activities.

With the older suburbs east of downtown Johannesburg in mind, Farm Bezuidenhout, today the area better-known as Bez Valley, running as it does between Observatory on the north and the Kensington ridge on the south, offers a glimpse of the city's bucolic beginnings. Like the best of Oerder's early Transvaal views, it is of enormous topographical and historical importance; that it also happens to be strikingly beautiful is testament not only to the artist's eye for arrangement and colour, but his own fondness for the landscape.







306

**Anton van Wouw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

***The Hammer Worker, maquette***

signed and inscribed 'fonderia-G-Nisini Roma'  
bronze, on a wooden base  
height: 13 cm, excluding base

R300 000 – 400 000

LITERATURE

AE Duffey (2008). *Anton van Wouw: The Smaller Works*, Pretoria: Protea Book House. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on pages 89 to 92.

J Ernst (2006). *Anton van Wouw: a Biography*, Vanderbijlpark: Corals Publishers. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on page 74 with the title *Die Hammerwerker*.

Hans Fransen (1982). *Three Centuries of South African Art*, Johannesburg: AD Donker. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on pages 326 and 327.





307

**Frans Oerder**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1867–1944

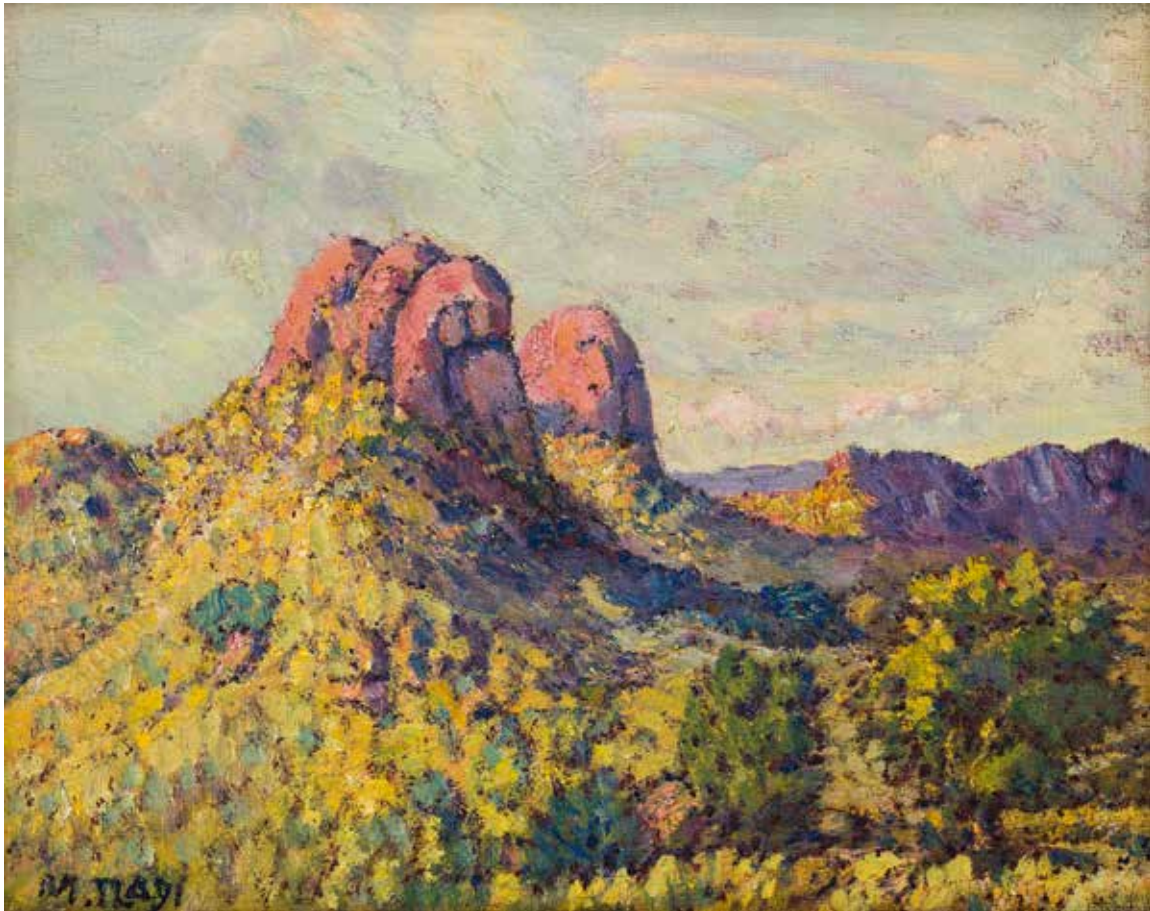
*Rhododendrons in a Vase*

signed

oil on canvas

58,5 by 78,5 cm

R120 000 – 160 000



308

## Moses Tladi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1903–1959

### *Two Hillocks*

signed, inscribed with the artist's name and title on an Iziko South African National Gallery label adhered to the reverse  
oil on board  
19 by 24 cm

R25 000 – 40 000

#### EXHIBITED

Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, *Moses Tladi Unearthed*, 24 September 2015 – 14 March 2016.  
Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, *Moses Tladi Unearthed*, 15 March 2017 – 16 July 2017.

#### LITERATURE

Angela Read Lloyd (2009). *The Artist in the Garden: The Quest for Moses Tladi*, Print Matters: Noordhoek. Illustrated in colour on page 251.

Described by Howard Pim, one-time Mayor of Johannesburg, as a 'Native genius' as early as 1928, Moses Tladi, perhaps this country's first black landscape painter in the traditional, realist mode, and the first to formally exhibit at the South African National Gallery, has remained largely and sadly unappreciated since his death in 1959. Recently, however, thanks to a nationally touring retrospective of his work, appropriately titled *Moses Tladi Unearthed*, the quality and drama of his intimate landscapes are back in the public eye.

Bearing in mind that he shared his highveld landscape with JH Pierneef, Erich Mayer and Gerard Sekoto, to name only a few of his

*continued on page 227*





309

## Moses Tladi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1903–1959

### *Near the Mill – Kroonstad (OFS)*

signed: inscribed with artist's name and the title on an Iziko South African National Gallery label adhered to the reverse  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
35 by 50 cm

R70 000 – 100 000

#### EXHIBITED

Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, *Moses Tladi Unearthed*, 24 September 2015 – 14 March 2016.  
Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg, *Moses Tladi Unearthed*, 15 March 2017 – 16 July 2017.

#### LITERATURE

Angela Read Lloyd (2009). *The Artist in the Garden: The Quest for Moses Tladi*, Print Matters: Noordhoek. Illustrated in colour on page 201.

*continued from page 226*

more familiar contemporaries, it is remarkable that his work is not better known or celebrated. Admittedly, as the lion's share of Tladi's forty-odd works has remained in his family's hands, the rarity of his pictures has played a role. In fact, *Near the Mill – Kroonstad (OFS)* and *Two Hillocks*, the two examples offered here, are the first of the artist's works to appear at auction.

Tladi served his country during the Second World War, and was based at an army supply depot in Kroonstad. *Near the Mill – Kroonstad (OFS)*, which was certainly painted during this time, is thus particularly significant.



310

**Fanie Eloff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1885–1947

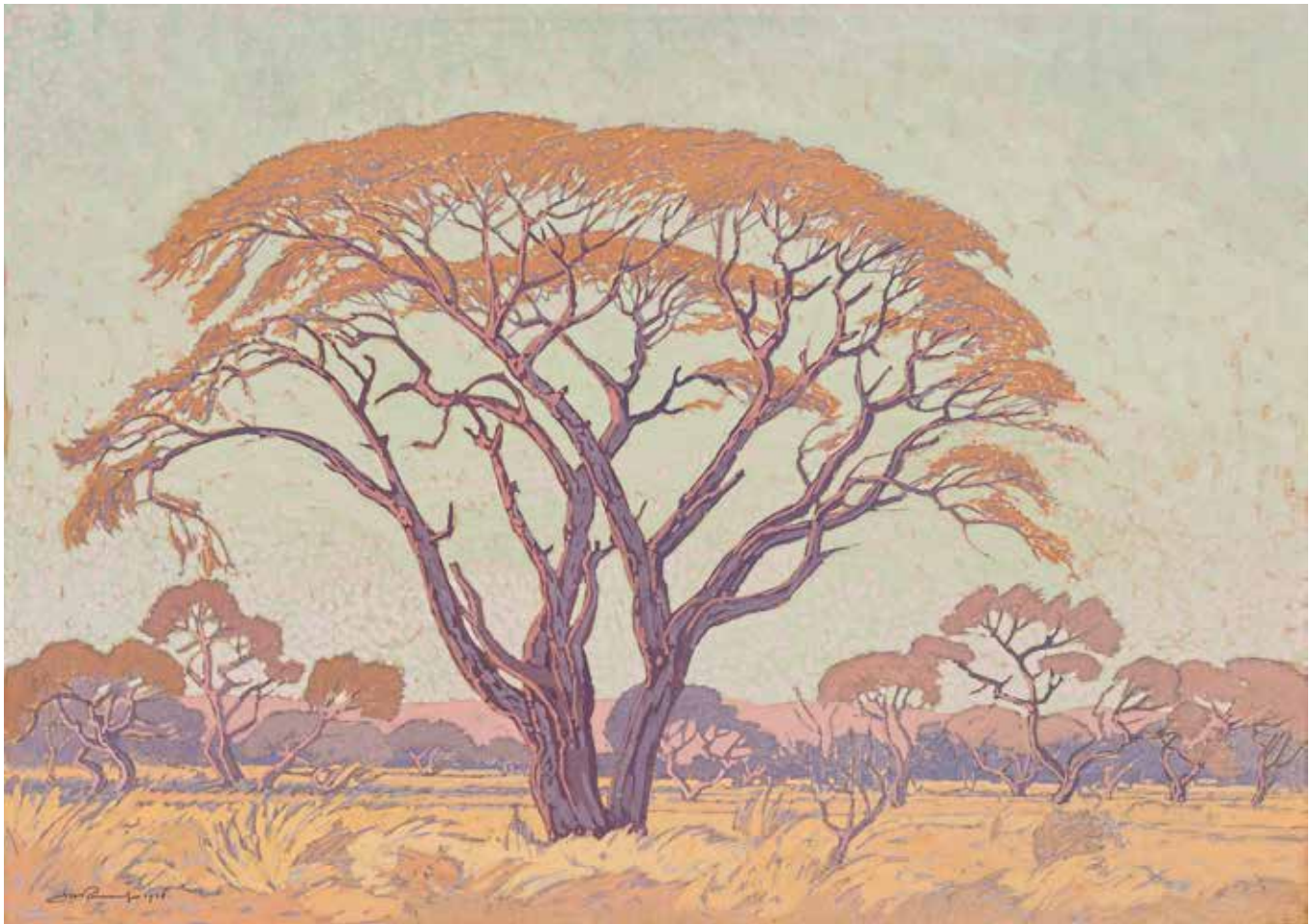
*Dancer*

signed and stamped with the  
Valsuani, Paris foundry mark  
bronze

height: 64 cm, including base

R 200 000 – 300 000





311

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Bosveld*

signed and dated 1929

casein

39 by 55 cm

R700 000 – 1 000 000

312

**Jan Ernst Abraham Volschenk**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1853–1936

***Sunlight Sheen before a Storm*  
(scene in the Langebergen near  
Riversdale)**

signed and dated 1912; signed, dated  
and inscribed with the title on the  
reverse

oil on canvas

94,5 by 75,5 cm

**R120 000 – 160 000**

Accompanied by *Blou Berge*,  
a poem by JFE Celliers.







313

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Valley with Distant Mountains*

signed and dated 1925

oil on card

34 by 51 cm

R300 000 – 400 000

**PROVENANCE**

The current owner's grandfather, the poet AG Visser, purchased this painting directly from the artist in Heidelberg.

314

**Adolph Jentsch**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1888–1977

*Near the Swakop River,  
Farm Schenkswerder,  
Okahandja District*

signed with the artist's initials and dated 1940  
oil on canvas, in the artist's chosen frame from  
Tischlerei Ellmer, Windhoek  
68 by 98 cm

**R900 000 – 1 200 000**

**PROVENANCE**

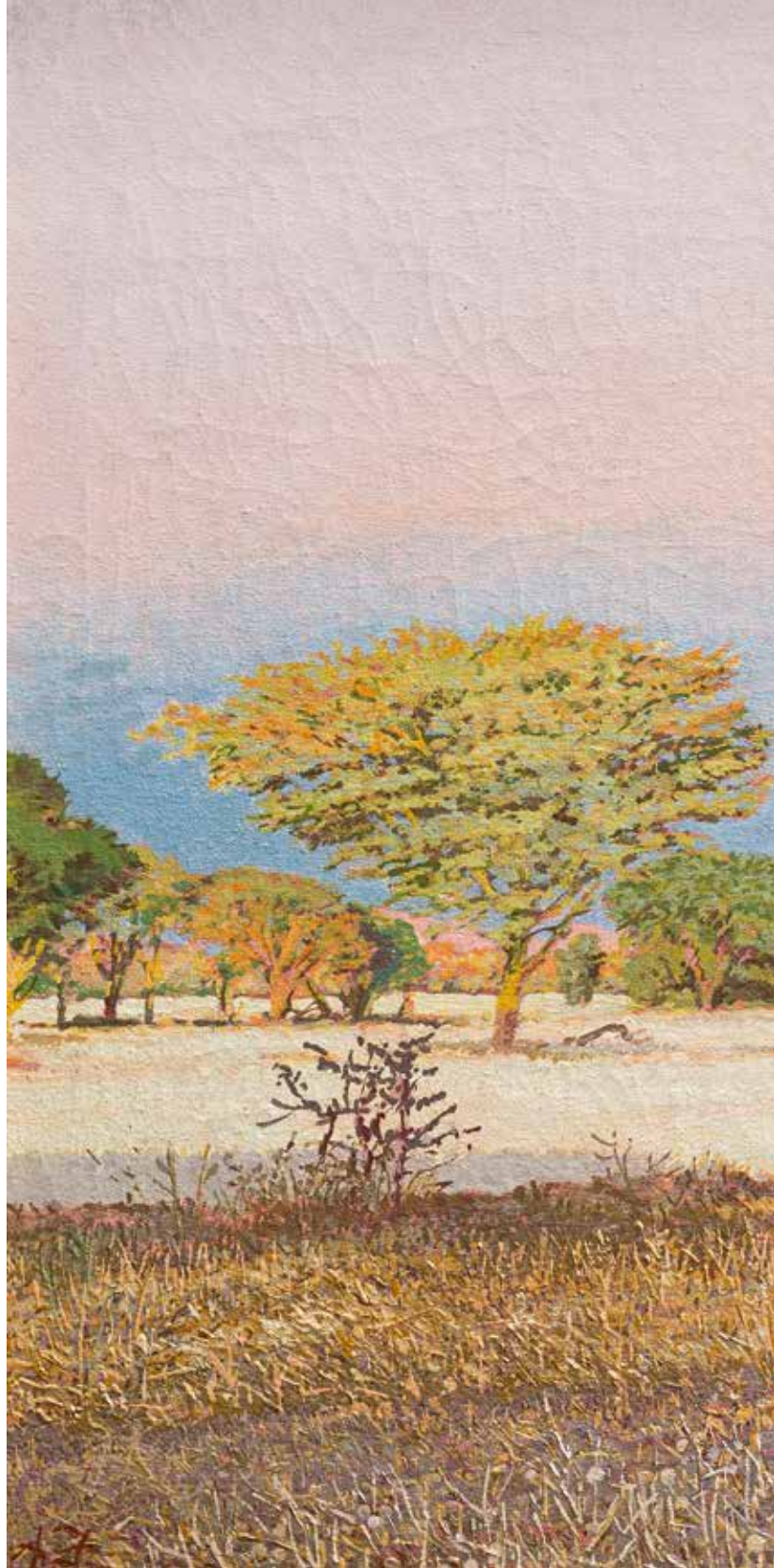
Commissioned by Dr Bergmann

Purchased by the current owner from Dr Bergmann's widow

First unmoved by German modernism, then shaken by the country's pre-War outlook, Adolph Jentsch arrived in South West Africa in 1938. Although thrilled and inspired by his new environment, and despite his training in Dresden – a hot-bed of avant-gardism – he remained faithful to his unsentimental, orthodox approach to painting. While tending to exhibit in Windhoek, he travelled widely throughout the country, staying on the farms of friends, and painting, more often than not, for his board. The present lot was painted on *Farm Schenkswerder* on one such trip, and was commissioned by the landowner, Dr Bergmann. The spot from which Jentsch painted was picked by Bergmann and his wife, not only because it was thought at the time to be the very source of the Swakop River, but because it was their favourite farm view.

While from a distance the painted surface is dazzling in its mirage-like shimmer, close up it is alive with detail: the grass carpet in the foreground, for instance, weaving in straw-dry twigs, desert thistles and delicate florets, is flecked and brushed with golds, greys, russets and pinks; furrows and grooves in the sand, moreover, add to the visual complexity, which is doubled again by subtle shadows. These shadows, in fact, always painted in pure, contrasting colours, are as strong a compositional element as the objects they repeat.

Significantly, the work retains its original wooden frame. When possible, Jentsch had his major canvases framed at Tischlerei Ellmer in Windhoek.











315

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Namib Desert No 12*

signed

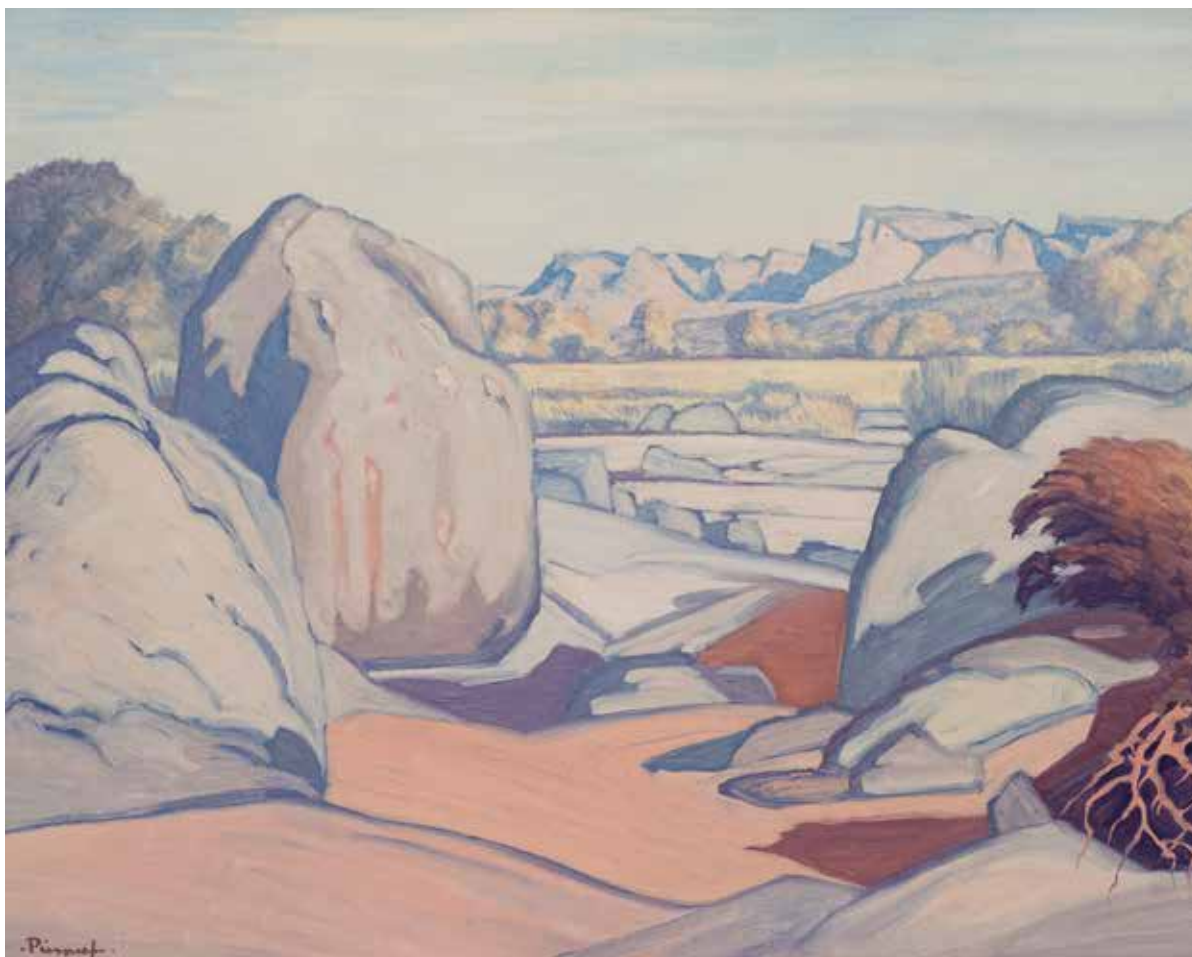
oil on canvas

97 by 129,5 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection



316

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Matopos*

signed

oil on board

43 by 53,5 cm

R700 000 – 1 000 000



317

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***The Brandberg, SWA***

signed

oil on board

28,5 by 38,5 cm

**R400 000 – 600 000**

While exhibiting in Stellenbosch in 1921, Pierneef met Hans Aschenborn, the German-trained artist who had settled in South West Africa in 1909. Aschenborn spoke passionately about the landscape of his adopted country, and along with Toon van den Heever, the judge-poet, convinced Pierneef to visit there in April 1923. Having by then painted predominately on the Highveld, and only more recently in the Cape, the South West African landscape, with its uninterrupted horizons, dramatic shadows, pristine isolation and, most memorably, its rare, startling light, left a deep impression on Pierneef. Inspired, he produced enough painted landscapes and linocuts to hold an exhibition in Windhoek in that June, and made sure to return the following year too. While he revisited his initial South West African visions throughout his career (perhaps most famously in the Karibib and Okahandja panels for the Johannesburg Railway Station), the pictures from his first two trips in 1923 and 1924 are often singled out as some of his most indelible, beautiful and intimate. The present lot is a distant view of the Brandberg range in the then Damaraland. The cloudscape above is an extraordinary example of one of the artist's favourite themes, but it is the colour of the mountains – the rich, uniquely-charged lilac-pink the sun turns that earth at dusk – that makes the picture so special.





318

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

*Still Life with Blossoms*

signed and dated 1936

gouache on paper

76 by 57,5 cm

R600 000 – 900 000



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319

**Adolph Jentsch**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1888–1977

*After the Rain*

signed with the artist's initials  
and dated 1939; engraved with  
the artist's name and the title on  
a plaque adhered to the frame  
oil on canvas  
69 by 100 cm

**R700 000 – 1 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Barloworld Collection



320

**Gregoire Boonzaier**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

*Elim*

signed and dated 1941; inscribed with  
the title in another hand on the reverse

oil on canvas

39 by 49 cm

**R150 000 – 200 000**



321

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Fruit Carrier in a Landscape*

signed  
oil on board  
44,5 by 35 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994) *Maggie Laubser: Her paintings, drawings and graphics*, Johannesburg & Cape Town: Perskor Press. Illustrated on page 332, catalogue number 1419.



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO

## Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

### Harvesters

signed; inscribed with the title on a Johannesburg Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
39,5 by 52 cm

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

#### PROVENANCE

Mrs M Mentz, Harrismith  
Mrs ML Fobian, Paarl  
Mr G Relly, Johannesburg acquired through  
Mr E Loerincz, Johannesburg  
Sotheby Parke Bernet South Africa (Pty) Ltd.,  
Johannesburg, 22 October 1974, lot 341, illustrated  
on page 341

#### EXHIBITED

Johannesburg Art Gallery, 24 November 1980  
to 4 January 1981, catalogue number 28, lent by  
Mrs J Relly

#### LITERATURE

Dalene Marais. (1994) *Maggie Laubser: her paintings, drawings and graphics*, Johannesburg and Cape Town: Perskor. Illustrated on page 274, catalogue number 1062, with the title *Two Harvesters in a Landscape with House in the Background*.

No fewer than two photographs in Maggie Laubser's albums housed in the archives at the University of Stellenbosch attest to her interest in harvest scenes. One photo depicting a lone woman in a vast field, gathering sheaves of wheat, was the inspiration for one of her earliest harvest scenes from 1922. The other is a photograph of a harvest scene on the Grosswolding estate of Baron Hafenbrödl near Deggendorf, Germany. He was a friend of Arnold Balwé, son of Jan Balwé, a very close friend and champion of the young Laubser who was studying in England and in Europe at the time.

When Jan suddenly died in 1921, Laubser returned to the family farm at Oortmanspost in the Western Cape finding solace in painting which revived her strong affinity with nature. 'In the dignity of labourers at their task, the meekness of animals, the ephemeral glory of flowers, in the



The lounge in Atyd Lig. Photo by Monique Pelser.

fertile soil itself, she perceived an interdependence of all things', maintains Johan van Rooyen.<sup>1</sup>

Dalene Marais's *Maggie Laubser: Her paintings, drawings and graphics* records many harvest scenes from this period of the late-1920s and early 30s. In addition, Elza Botha's *Die Lewe en Skilderwerk van Maggie Laubser*, her unpublished Master's Dissertation at the University of Pretoria, records yet another batch of harvest scenes from the early 1960s, of which the present lot is a fine example.

Van Rooyen emphasizes two aspects with regard to Laubser's harvest scenes: the shift in her use of colour; and her strong sense of composition. The shift in colour, verified by Muller Ballot, is evident when comparing the sombre colours of her English and Scottish landscapes and the Belgian, German and Italian landscape of the late-1910s with the harvest scenes of the late-1920s. In the present lot, the yellows and greens of the wheat fields contrast with the purples and blues of the figures and, in turn, with the dark blue clouds in the background.

In terms of composition, Van Rooyen notices in an early harvest scene that the sheaves of wheat and the bent harvesters are arranged in a veritable circle, in clock-like fashion, symbolizing the cycle of life. The composition of the present work, however, is particularly interesting. 'Anybody looking at any one of my pictures', Laubser maintained, 'will see how design is the fundamental basis of all – what is there is an intimate relationship between lines, curves,

full and half-planes in my composition'.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the two curved figures illustrate Laubser's strong sense of design: one figure curving towards the left, and the other, with the sheaves of wheat in her arms, towards the right. The left and right curves are repeated in the two stacked sheaves, left in the foreground. In addition, the curve of the bent figure on the left is intersected with another curve in the shape of a baby tied to her back with a white blanket.

Although Laubser as a Calvinist never depicted overt or outspoken Christian themes, Van Rooyen maintains that the intensely religious overtones of this harvest landscape become obvious. He likens the reaping women with the biblical reference to Ruth, gleaning the fields of Boas for the last sheaves of corn. The parable of the Samaritan woman in which Jesus admonishes his disciples that there is work to be done, is pertinent in this regard: 'Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps, draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together' (John 4: 35–36). This particular harvest scene always hung to the left of the fireplace in Laubser's sitting room in her house, Atyd Lig.

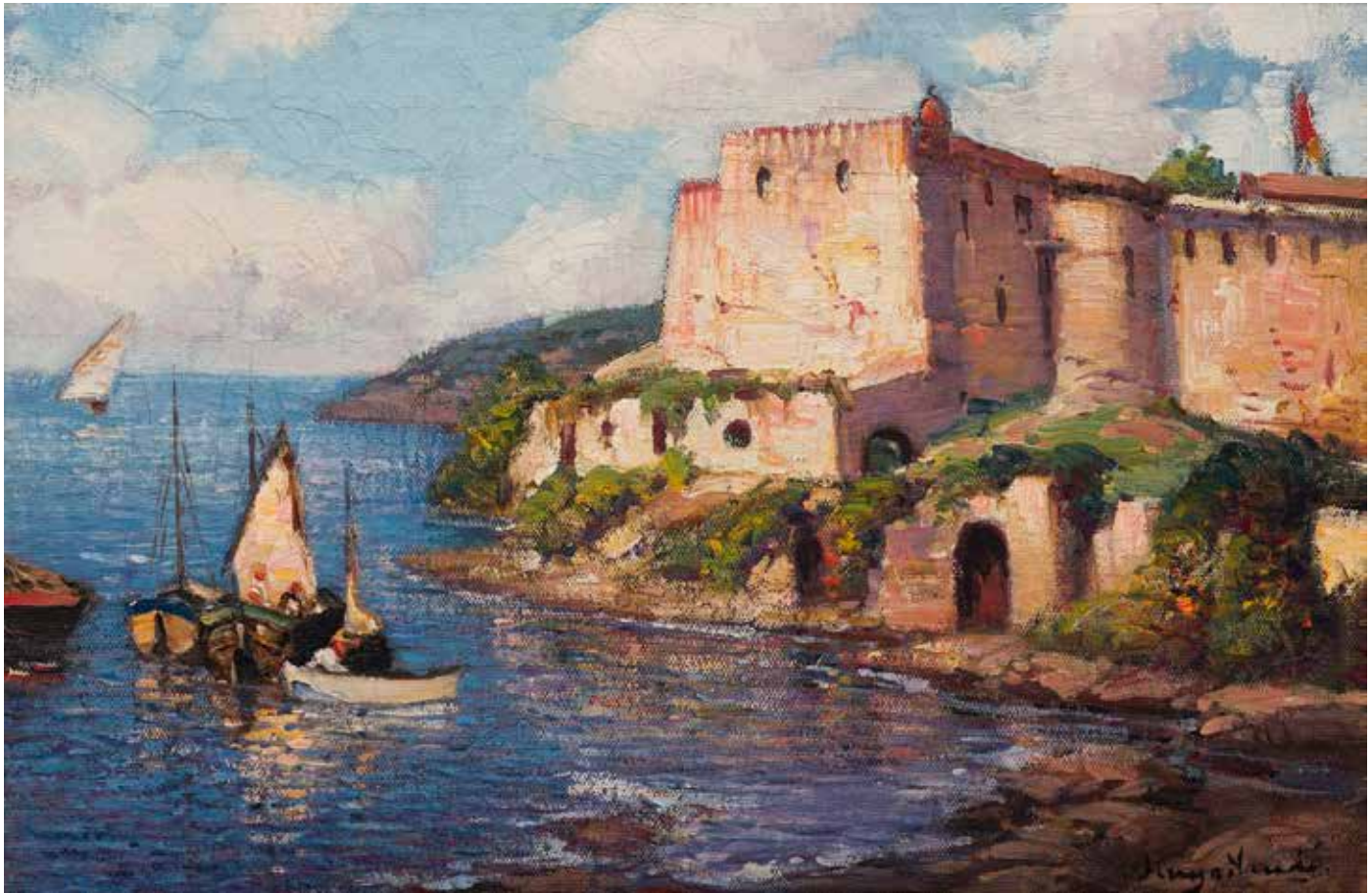
<sup>1</sup> Anon. (1974) *Maggie Laubser* South African Art Library, page 12.

<sup>2</sup> Muller Ballot. (2015) *Maggie Laubser: 'n Venster op Atyd Lig*. Sun Press. See page 308.





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323

**Hugo Naudé**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1868–1941

*Fort Jesus, Mombassa*

signed

oil on canvas

30 by 45,5 cm

**R200 000 – 300 000**

Hugo Naudé was the first South African artist to train abroad, spending time between 1888 and 1896 at the Slade School in London, the Kunst Akademie in Munich, and with the Barbizon Group in Fontainebleau. Already established as a painter back in the Cape, his homespun impressionism familiar to early-century gallery-goers, he made a second working trip to Europe in 1913, accompanying his nephew on a Grand Tour of sorts. He made memorable paintings on his travels – particularly of Venice – and returned to the Cape down the east coast of Africa. The present lot, a flashy, glittering view of Fort Jesus, was presumably inspired by this voyage. On the southern edge of Mombasa, the Fort, an exceptional example of Renaissance military fortification, and a crucially important base from which its former Portuguese and Arab occupants could control the Indian Ocean trade routes, was under British command when Naudé likely passed.

While the tropical waters shimmer in sunlight, reflecting the sails and brightly painted bows of the bobbing dhows, the walls of the Fort, shadowed and overgrown with vegetation, are painted with thick, luxurious swipes of pink, tangerine and gold. *Fort Jesus, Mombassa* forms part of a wonderful, overlooked tradition of twentieth-century South African artists painting on the east coast of Africa: Oerder, Stern, Lock, Pierneef, Preller, McCaw and Battiss were all moved by its beauty and exoticism.

Built between 1593 and 1596, Fort Jesus was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2011.







**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

***Freda in Khaki Dress***

signed and dated 1943

oil on canvas

54,5 by 49,5 cm

**R3 000 000 – 5 000 000****PROVENANCE**

Purchased by the sitter, thence by descent.

**LITERATURE**

Mona Berman (2003). Remembering Irma.

*Irma Stern: A Memoir with Letters*, Cape Town:

Double Storey Books. Illustrated in colour

on the cover and page 178.

In the final chapter of her 'memoir with letters', *Remembering Irma*, Mona Berman imagines a dinner party that might have taken place at her mother Freda Feldman's Johannesburg apartment in 1986, a year before Freda's death.<sup>1</sup> Stern had been a close friend of the Feldmans for many years, and was a frequent visitor at their gracious Houghton home<sup>2</sup> – a hub of Johannesburg Jewish intellectual and cultural life – when she was at the height of her career from the 1930s to the 50s. Indeed, during her extended visits, the dining room of the house would be converted into a temporary studio for Stern, its walls having been painted celadon green – better to offset her still-lives and portraits – at the artist's behest. Over the years, the Feldmans collected many works by Stern, and sat for numerous portraits.

By Berman's telling, the assembled dinner guests – comprising artists, an art historian, a curator and a collector – inevitably began discussing the Irma Stern portraits to which the walls of Freda's dining room had been given over. Of particular interest to the guests were three portraits of Freda painted during the war years, in 1943, when she was 33 years old. Two of these portraits are presented on this sale, with the third, *Portrait of Freda Feldman in a Basuto Hat*, having been sold at Strauss's Johannesburg sale in May 2016. Although Berman's narrative is fictional (as

she grew more frail towards the end of her life Freda rarely entertained) Berman's recounting of Freda's responses to the guests is based on her first-hand accounts of her mother's relationship with Stern. A certain amount of poetic license notwithstanding, it thus gives a fascinating insight into the primary reception of these works both by the sitter and the artist. It also provides a powerful context for understanding their significance both as portraits of an elegant and interesting woman, and as exceptional examples of Stern's skill as a painter.

Freda shared with her husband Richard a strong sense of social justice. Richard<sup>3</sup>, who came from humble beginnings as a Lithuanian immigrant, went on to become a successful businessman. He was also a prolific public speaker and writer, in English and Yiddish, on topics of social concern. He had a particular interest in race relations, and his writings convey a deep concern with the social and cultural realities of black people in South African cities.<sup>4</sup> Freda, whom he married in 1931, was born in Johannesburg. The oldest of ten children, she grew up in the rural setting of Amersfoort (Mpumalanga) where her father ran a grocery store. Berman describes Freda's story as that of 'a young woman who was awakened by the love and passion of a sensitive, highly moral, enlightened man who taught her about life, world affairs, literature, art, culture, Yiddishkeit,

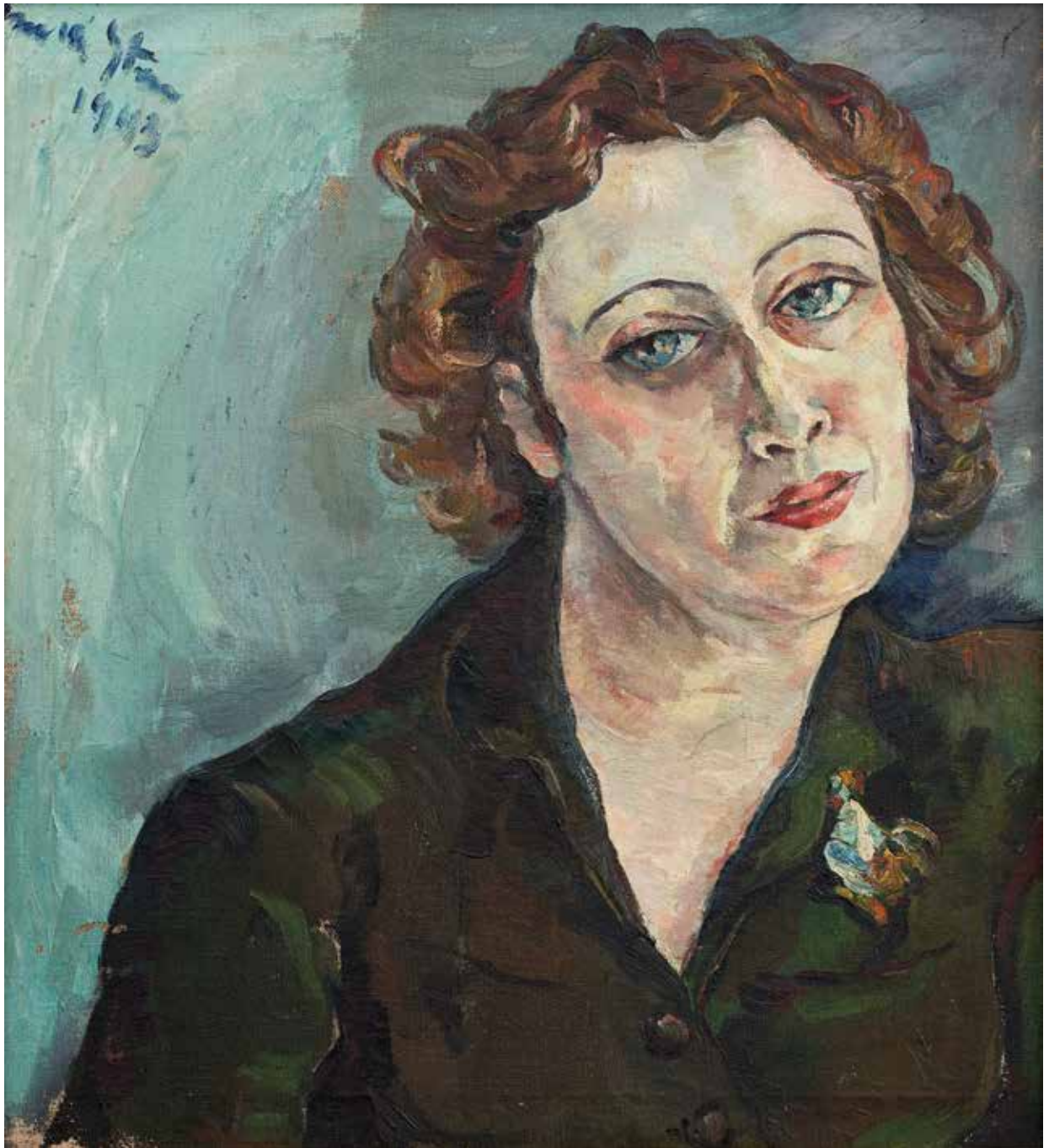
community organizations and the political reality of South Africa'.<sup>5</sup>

Encouraged by Richard, Freda learned public speaking, and together they established the South African chapter of the ORT organization, a non-profit global Jewish organization devoted to community-based education and training. Freda was elected to the World ORT<sup>6</sup> Union, and became an important and respected leader in the South African Jewish community. She used her natural sense of style to best advantage, and channeled her love of beautiful clothes and accessories into constructing an elegant public persona, 'not with the idea of showing off to others',<sup>7</sup> but rather to lend distinctiveness and grace to the countless charitable events she organized.

It was also Richard who introduced Freda to Irma Stern, whom he had met in Johannesburg in 1925. Despite the 16-year age difference between the two women, as well as their differences in appearance, temperament and outlook, they became firm friends. As Mona Berman puts it, they 'seemed to complement each other and be stimulated by the diversity of their experiences'.<sup>8</sup> Much of the strength of this relationship is evident in the portraits that Stern painted of Freda. Berman argues that Stern found 'the attractive features of my charismatic mother the perfect subject to express her own moods that allowed her to

*continued on page 258*





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325

## Ernest Mancoba

SOUTH AFRICAN 1904–2002

### *Head of a Mapedi*

carved teak

height: 17 cm

R70 000 – 100 000

#### PROVENANCE

A gift from the artist to his uncle,  
Reverend Alvin Mangqangwana.

#### EXHIBITED

Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg,  
*Hand in Hand*, 1994–1995.

The Gold of Africa Museum: Cape Town, *In  
the Name of all Humanity: The African Spiritual  
Expression of Ernest Mancoba*, 2006.

Among Mancoba's wood sculptures, done before he left South Africa to further his studies in Paris, there are two documented pieces, done roundabout 1936, without inscriptions. These are *Head of a Mapedi* (Lot 325), and *Madonna*. Both belonged to members of the artist's family: the former to the Reverend Alvin Mangqangwana, the artist's uncle, and the latter to Doctor Patiswa Njongwe, his cousin. The former, a portrait, conforms to natural appearances and the latter not; therefore foreshadowing the future radical change in Mancoba's oeuvre.

*Head of a Mapedi* was a gift to his uncle, his mother's brother. It was this uncle who arranged for Ernest to attend the well-known Diocesan Training College at Grace Dieu near Polokwane. There Mancoba qualified as a teacher, eventually taught there and also found his calling as a sculptor. His first major piece, *The African Madonna* (Johannesburg Art Gallery), was carved at the college in 1929.

Mr H Mangqangwana of Orlando East inherited

*Head of a Mapedi* from his father and until his death it was a revered piece in his home. He declined many a lucrative offer. It featured in *Hand in Hand* the retrospective exhibition of Mancoba and Ferlov which was held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery from 1994.

Ernest Mancoba inscribed his sculptures with *E Mancoba*, *Ernest Mancoba*, *EM*, *NE Mancoba* and *R Mancoba* (Ro...). The first three are self-explanatory, the two remainders not.

A Shangaan praise-singer, who was a fellow mineworker of the artist's father, Irvine, visited the Mancobas at their home on the East Rand to pay his respects to the parents and their first born. When he saw the baby he called out 'Ngungunyana!' and chanted the praises dedicated to the great chief of the Shangaans, Ngungunyana. He asked Irvine to call the boy by that name. Unfortunately the infant had already been christened Ernest Methuen Mancoba. Nevertheless the Shangaan name stuck and at the training college at Grace Dieu schoolgirls

referred to him as 'king of the Shangaans'.

In 1932, on completion of the sculpture *St Augustine of Canterbury* for the Church of Saint Augustine in Belvedere, Kent, England, Mancoba inscribed *NE Mancoba* on the base of the piece. Thus he acknowledged his African name and reconciled two perspectives: African and Occidental.

*R Mancoba* (Ro...) refers to Ronald – called Ronnie – the artist's younger brother and last born (c.1922) of Irvine and Florence Mancoba's seven children. In 1934 – two years prior to the making of *Head* – Mancoba carved a double portrait of two boys: Ronnie and his friend. Mancoba recalled they were not keen on posing; eventually he persuaded them with the promise of sweets on completion of the piece. He significantly entitled the carving *The Future of Africa* (also documented *Africa to be* and *Future Africa*). Similar to *St Augustine of Canterbury* this piece was carried out in the typical, true-to-nature style of the period.

Whilst in Cape Town in 1935 Mancoba

*continued on page 252*





326

**Ernest Mancoba**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1904–2002

*Head*

signed

carved teak

height: 15 cm

**R50 000 – 80 000**

**PROVENANCE**

A gift from the artist to Elsa Dziomba

**EXHIBITED**

Johannesburg Art Gallery,  
Johannesburg, *Hand in Hand*,  
1994–1995.



*continued from page 250*

befriended Lippy Lipschitz who recommended that he acquaint himself with *Negro Primitive Sculpture*, the seminal text on the classic art of West and Central Africa by Guillaume and Munro. Mancoba, inspired by the images and text, internalized the contents. Subsequently, he freed himself of the naturalistic viewpoint he had followed in his previous carvings. Inspired, he carves *Faith* in 1936 (whereabouts unknown) and *Head* (Lot 326) which both exemplify the African Renaissance in his oeuvre.

*Head* reinterprets the features of the two boys who posed for *Future Africa* into a kind of African mask expressing unutterable sorrow. In an interview of 1938 Mancoba observed: 'My carvings are made to show Africa to the white man. That is why they are sad!'

By reinterpreting the mood of the two boys as expressed in *Future Africa* in a masklike African manner the artist dedicates *Head* to his brother Ronnie, inscribing it R Mancoba (Ro...).

The provenance of *Head* is most interesting. When Mancoba returned to the Rand from Cape Town in 1936 he carried a letter of introduction

written by Lipschitz to the sculptress Elsa Dziomba (1902–70). Mancoba looked her up in her studio, presented the letter and they became friends. When Mancoba decided to further his art studies in Paris she was among the referees supporting Mancoba's application of a loan and grant of 100 pounds sterling from the Bantu Welfare Trust. Mancoba highly regarded Dziomba's art. Before he left for Europe in 1938, in acknowledgement of their friendship, he gave *Head* to her. Many years later Dziomba told her friend Hermien Domisse McCaul that she knew the gifted Ernest Mancoba who left for Paris to study art and she gave *Head* to her friend. A year before Dziomba died Domisse wrote an in-depth article on Dziomba's art for the December 1969 edition of *Artlook*. When Domisse McCaul learned that the Johannesburg Art Gallery was hosting *Hand in Hand*, a retrospective exhibition of the art of Ernest Mancoba and his Danish wife Sonja Ferlov, she informed the gallery of the piece she held and without any ado *Head* was collected and included in the show. Within the context of the collection of carvings by Mancoba for *Hand in Hand* the importance of

*Head* cannot be over-emphasized. Owing to the fact that the whereabouts of *Faith* is unknown, *Head* is the earliest carving so far located, showing Mancoba's breach with the naturalism of his earlier representations. This piece, expressing the spirit of Africa is a benchmark within the South African context.

To attend the opening of *Hand in Hand* in 1994 Mancoba visited South Africa for the first time after his departure in 1938. His son Wonga (1947–2015) accompanied him; Sonja Ferlov, his wife, had died in 1984.

McCaul, who only knew of Mancoba through Dziomba, was keen to make his acquaintance and invited him and his son to an afternoon tea at her home in Auckland Park. They enjoyed a memorable afternoon and reminisced about their mutual friend, Dziomba, Greek drama and philosophy as well as Shakespeare.

*Elza Miles*

<sup>1</sup> See Elza Miles (1994), *Lifeline out of Africa*, Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, p.34.





TWO VIEWS OF LOT 326



327

## Gerard Sekoto

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–1993

### *Women in the Country*

executed circa 1946–47

signed

oil on canvas laid down on board

60 by 45 cm

**R2 500 000 – 3 500 000**

#### EXHIBITED

Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, *Gerard*

*Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*, 1 November 1989 –

10 February 1990, catalogue number 62.

Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, in association with

Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, *A*

*Portrait of South Africa: George Hallett, Peter Clarke and*

*Gerard Sekoto*, 30 October 2013 – 27 November 2013.

#### LITERATURE

Lesley Spiro (ed.) (1989). *Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*,

Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery. Illustrated in

colour on page 83.

Barbara Lindop and Chloë Reid (eds.) (2013). *Song for*

*Sekoto: Gerard Sekoto 1913–2013*, Johannesburg: The

Gerard Sekoto Foundation. Illustrated in colour on

page 101.

In 1945, following a lengthy stay in Cape Town, Gerard Sekoto moved to Eastwood, a run-down black settlement outside Pretoria, to live with his mother and stepfather. Sekoto knew he wanted to move to Paris, but viewed his relocation upcountry as a necessary prelude: 'Before leaving, however, I wanted to dig into my ancestral roots, as I no longer believed that the tradition of my forefathers was evil.'<sup>1</sup> However, unable to visit the village of his Pedi forebears Sekoto turned to his immediate environment. Already attuned to describing aspects of black urban life from his extended sojourns in Sophiatown and District Six, Sekoto went on to produce gregarious studies of domesticity and street life marked by their formal innovation and painterly maturity.

It is widely acknowledged that the paintings

Sekoto produced in the two-year period between his arrival in Eastwood and his departure for France in 1947 represent the highpoint of his artistic career. Acknowledged masterpieces like *Sixpence a Door* (1946) and *Song of the Pick* (1946) date from this keynote period. Writing in the catalogue that accompanied Sekoto's first major retrospective exhibition, held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1989, curator Lesley Spiro notes: 'It was a time when he pushed his understanding of colour and form to new heights, when he seemed to sharpen even further his already remarkable sense of mood and movement.'<sup>2</sup>

*Women in the Country* (Lot 327) is a product of this fertile period and was included on Spiro's landmark 1989 exhibition. She identified the painting as bearing many of the hallmarks of Sekoto's Eastwood period,

*continued on page 256*





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328

**Gerard Sekoto**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–1993

***The Pink Road***

executed circa 1940–42

signed; inscribed with the artist's name and title on the reverse

oil on canvas

19,5 by 25 cm

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

**EXHIBITED**

Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, *Gerard*

*Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*, 1 November 1989 –

10 February 1990, catalogue number 22.

**LITERATURE**

Lesley Spiro (ed.) (1989). *Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery. Illustrated in colour on page 32.

*continued from page 254*

notably 'the graphic treatment of the landscape, the oil-slick-like shadows, and the solid, three-dimensional drapery'.<sup>3</sup> The painting also reveals how Sekoto looked and positioned himself relative to his subjects. Sekoto's biographer N Chabani Manganyi writes that the artist possessed a 'precocious inquisitiveness and wonder'.<sup>4</sup> This is certainly clear here. Sekoto was an unobtrusive observer, adept at standing to one side and – like a documentary photographer – recording the way people commuted, dressed, mingled, toiled and laughed, without judgement. Oftentimes his subjects don't seem to even register his presence.

*The Pink Road* (Lot 328) is an earlier example of Sekoto's understated way of witnessing. The work was painted during Sekoto's Sophiatown period (1939–42), when he became associated with Johannesburg art dealer Joan Ginsberg of the Gainsborough Galleries, found admiring patrons for his work, and also became acquainted with contemporaries like Alexis Preller and

Walter Battiss. The work was exhibited at the Grand Hotel in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), in July 1943 on an exhibition of paintings by Maud Sumner, together with English and South African artists selected by the Gainsborough Galleries. Spiro notes that Sekoto's contribution to the exhibition was singled out for attention in four contemporary newspaper reports. Although attention waned after his move to Paris, Sekoto is now celebrated as a pioneering modernist painter and participant in the formation of a progressive and authentic canon of South African painting.

1 N. Chabani Manganyi, *Gerard Sekoto: 'I am an African'*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004, page 43.

2 Lesley Spiro, *Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art, 1989, page 41.

3 *Ibid.*, page 39.

4 Manganyi, *op.cit.*, page 45.





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**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

***Freda with Roses***

signed and dated 1943

oil on canvas

50 by 50 cm

**R3 000 000 – 5 000 000****PROVENANCE**

Purchased by the sitter, thence by descent.

**LITERATURE**

Mona Berman (2003). *Remembering Irma. Irma Stern: A Memoir with Letters*, Cape Town: Double Storey Books. Illustrated in colour on page 174.

*continued from page 248*

imagine herself with the appearance and bearing possessed by my mother. In every portrait she did of my mother, four oils, several charcoals and a gouache, she showed a completely different aspect of Freda.<sup>9</sup>

*Freda with Roses*, the first to be painted in the series of three portraits, brings together Stern's love of flowers (which was shared by Freda<sup>10</sup>) and skill as a portraitist with dazzlingly intensity. The almost garish lime-green background vividly offsets Freda's blazing blue eyes and red lips, while the pale rose in her immaculately manicured hand creates a visual link between the rose orange, pink and yellow roses in the vase and the bright flecks of colour on the black ground of her dress. While for one of the fictitious dinner guests at Freda's party the painting 'holds no joy... as though the roses were being placed on the graves of fallen soldiers';<sup>11</sup> one could equally argue that this is Stern at her most audacious as a painter, the strident colours and confident, vigorous brushstrokes combining in a flamboyant celebration of friendship and femininity.

The third of the series to be painted, *Freda in a Khaki Dress*, is very different, both in colour and in mood. The formal severity and drab colour of the dress in question is barely mitigated by a blue and orange brooch in the form of a jeweled cockerel. The blue tones of the brooch in turn offset the pale wistfulness of Freda's eyes, which no longer

blaze with the bright intensity of the previous painting, while the distorted elongation of the neck adds to the sense of unease. Indeed, in its melancholy introspectiveness, it is in many ways atypical of Stern's work of the period.

Interestingly, this portrait only came into Freda's possession shortly before Stern's death. Although all three portraits date from the same visit to their home in 1943, this portrait was produced later in Stern's studio from drawings, without Freda's knowledge. In fact, Freda was only alerted to its existence by the Adler-Fielding Galleries in 1966, who sent it to her for verification. She bought it as she 'couldn't bear the idea of it being shown in a gallery or hung in a stranger's home'.<sup>12</sup> She wrote to Stern enquiring after it, but Stern, in one of the last letters she ever wrote to Freda, denied 'ever selling a picture of yours to anybody but yourself'.<sup>13</sup>

Given both the relationship of the sitter to the artist, and in resisting the usual epithets applied to Stern's paintings of the 1940s, this painting is a compelling testimony to the intensity of a 'friendship and mutual dependence [that] had endured through time and circumstance'.<sup>14</sup> In deflecting us for a moment into a space of unquiet intimacy, it also has the effect of rendering more visible and poignant the dazzling sensuousness of Stern's oeuvre.

*Federico Freschi*

<sup>1</sup> Freda Feldman, née Ginsberg, 1910–1987.

<sup>2</sup> They called their home Ny-Hame, meaning 'new home' in Yiddish (Mona Berman, personal communication, 21 September 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Richard (Rachmiel) Feldman, 1897–1968.

<sup>4</sup> Below, Irene. 'Between Africa and Europe', in Paul Cullen (ed.), *Expressions of a Journey*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, 2003, p. 36. In 1935 Feldman published a book of short stories in Yiddish, *Shwartz un Vays* ('Black and White'), which dealt with the plight of the downtrodden black population and the poverty of Jewish immigrants arriving in South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Mona Berman, personal communication, 21 September 2017.

<sup>6</sup> From the Russian *Obchestvo Remeslenogo Truda*, 'Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades'.

<sup>7</sup> Mona Berman, personal communication, 21 September 2017.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Berman, Mona, *Remembering Irma. Irma Stern: A Memoir with Letters*, Double Storey, Cape Town, 2003, page 28.

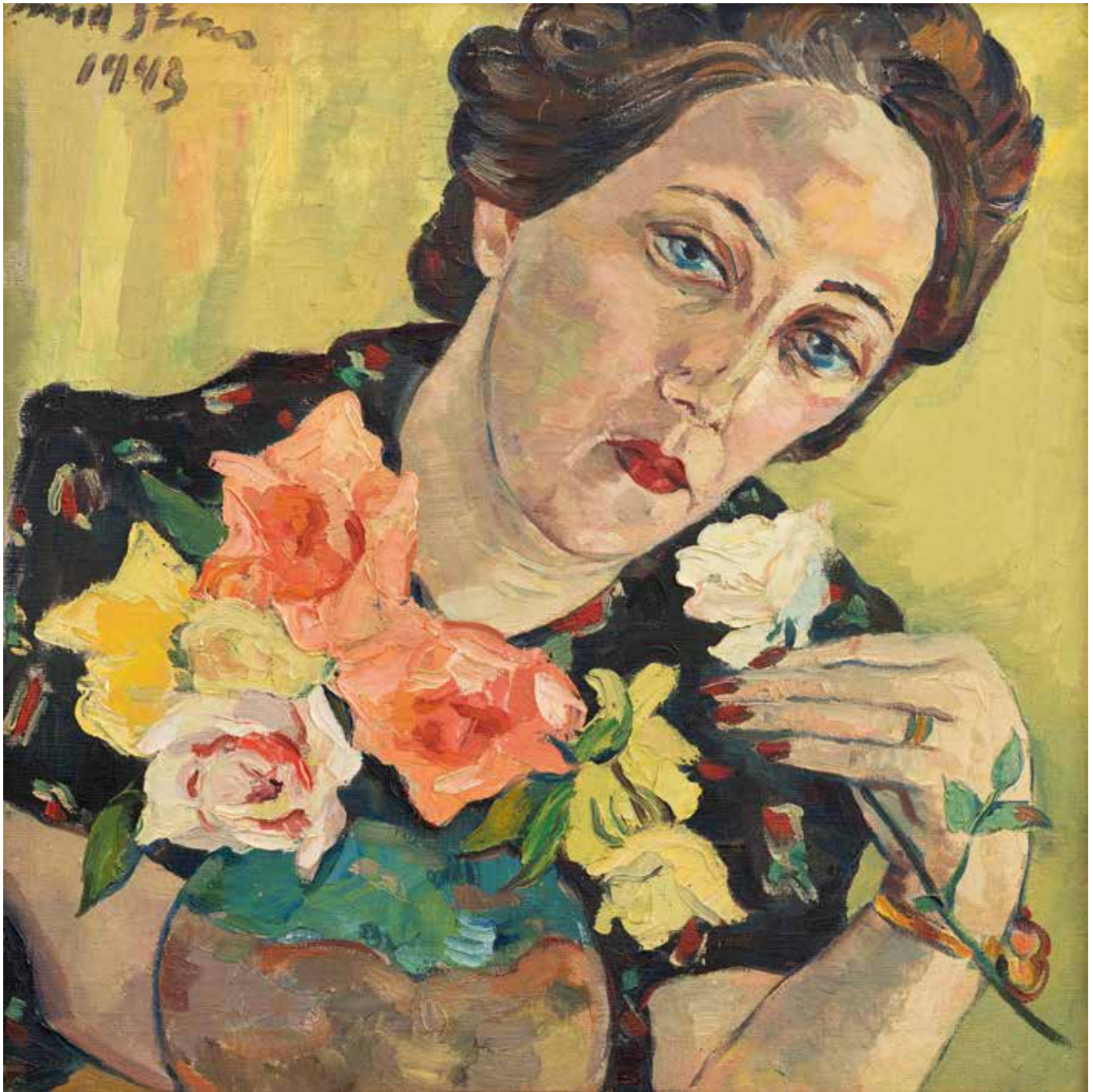
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, page 173.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, page 176.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Berman writes that Freda 'suspected Irma knew that Richard would have disliked [the painting] – which he did when he eventually saw it – and so had stashed it away in her storeroom cupboard. A dealer may have come in the months before she died, and bought a number of her discarded paintings' (*ibid.* 178).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, page 177.





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330

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

***Still Life with Flowers***

signed  
oil on board  
54 by 39 cm

**R300 000 – 500 000**

**LITERATURE**

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her paintings, drawings and graphics*, Perskor Press: Johannesburg & Cape Town. Illustrated on page 309, catalogue number 1283.



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331

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

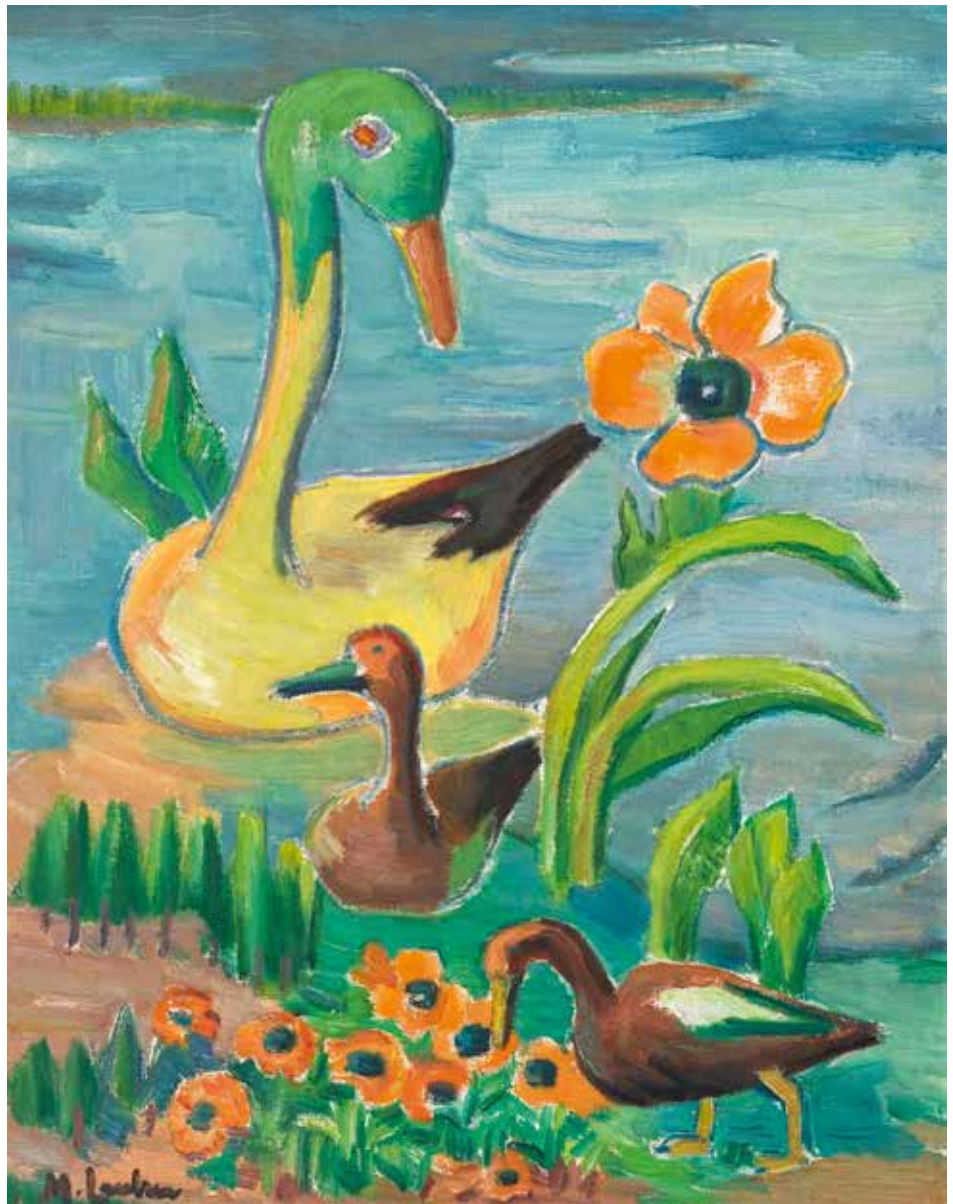
*Ducks and Flowers in a Landscape*

signed  
oil on board  
47 by 37 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg & Cape Town: Perskor Press. Illustrated on page 379, catalogue number 1714.



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332

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *Fleurs du Mal*

signed and dated 44

oil on canvas

48 by 116,5 cm

**R4 000 000 – 6 000 000**

#### EXHIBITED

MacFadyen Hall, Pretoria, 1946.

Pretoria Art Museum, Arcadia Park, *Alexis*

*Preller Retrospective*, 24 October 1972 –

26 November 1972, catalogue number 13.

Illustrated, unpaginated.

#### LITERATURE

*Alexis Preller Retrospective*, Pretoria: Pretoria

Art Museum. Illustrated, unpaginated.

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009).

*Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in colour on page 71.

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009). *Alexis*

*Preller: Collected Images*, Johannesburg:

Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in colour on

page 18.

This iconic work, *Fleurs du Mal*, was often included in Esmé Berman's public lectures when she was presenting and discussing Alexis Preller. While Berman and I were researching works for the Preller double volume publication, we were unable to track down and photograph this work, and were later informed that it was tragically lost in a fire. This necessitated our inclusion of an older, yellowed image of the work. The surprise of the recent emergence of *Fleurs du Mal* was thrilling and a relief that it had in fact not been destroyed. The revelation of its true colour again reinforces Preller's reputation as a colourist.

*Fleurs du Mal*, painted in 1944 in direct response to his war experiences, is a striking record of his ability as an artist to process significant moments in a highly personalised manner. Preller had enlisted in 1940 to serve in the South African Medical Corps and had left for Egypt by boat, which travelled up the east African coast in April 1941. Preller chose not to be an active protagonist within the war but to serve and tend those injured in the cross-fire on the front lines. This saw him actively positioned with the medical corps as a stretcher-bearer in the north African campaign, positioned at the hotspots of Helwan, Mersa, Maltruh, El Alamein, Sidi Omar, Sidi Rezegh and Tobruk.

Preller was finally captured in June 1942 and sent as a prisoner of war to Italy. He was later moved to Egypt and finally returned to South Africa in 1943 on a troop ship, again voyaging down the east coast of Africa.

This work *Fleurs du Mal* painted a year later after his return reflects his seriousness as a painter and his need to re-engage with the interrupted life he had left behind. His works eloquently embody his attempt to translate, integrate and transform his war experiences into a group of works which included *Remembrance of Things Past* and *Prisoner of War*, both painted in 1943. Both these works were included on his Johannesburg exhibition at the Gainsborough Gallery in June 1944. The exhibition was opened by the poet, Uys Krige.

Esmé Berman, in recounting the genesis of *Fleurs du Mal*, describes how his memories were very real.

They encompassed images of brutally shattered bodies, but also included acts of huge compassion and the exercise of healing, to which he was a witness. The horror of pain was transformed by the transcended beauty of merciful repair. In his mind, the gauze swabs inserted into the shrapnel wounds took on the appearance of butterflies that had settled for a moment on the tortured flesh; and when he began to give artistic expression to wartime images that haunted him, he attempted to convey that paradox of beauty in the midst of horror.

Western convention tended to restrict portrayal of the male nude body to allegorical scenes of gods and history. Even so chaste an image of a nude young man may have appeared provocative. Thus, Alexis Preller avoided defining the gender of the androgynous figure. He transformed the gauze swabs of his memory into flowers scattered across the iodine-painted torso, and he borrowed French poet Charles Baudelaire's literary title, *Flowers of Evil*. Preller's transformation of these painful wounds inflicted by the evils of war into poetic blooms represent a redemptive and healing act, both in his caring capacity as a medic in the tented operating theatres of the desert, and later in the solitary capacity as artist.

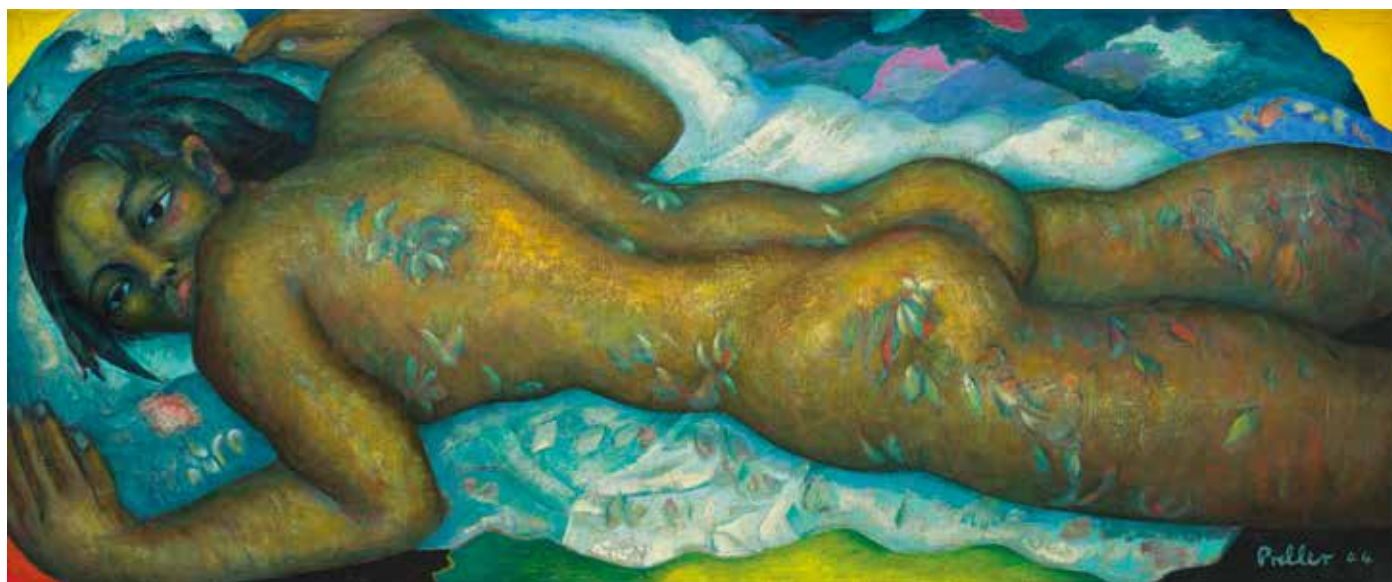
*Spirit of the Dead watching Manao Tupapau*, Paul Gauguin's startling work of 1892, was inevitably the inspiration for Preller's *Fleurs du Mal*. This painting is one of the earliest and most significant of his works to be influenced by Gauguin, who was to be an inspiration to Preller's thinking and work over a lifetime.

In both the Preller and Gauguin works, the fluorescent flowers, decorative cloths and a figure set across the horizontal format, create an eerie and otherworldly quality. Both faces reflect a fear and vulnerability, and the paintings evoke an ethereal quality set off against the sheer physicality of the recumbent human form.

The fearful face engaging the viewer in Preller's painting emerges from behind a broad shoulder. The startled almond-shaped eyes, broad forehead, straight nose and soft vermilion lips, cheekbone

*Continued on page 264*





Continued from page 262

and ear are framed by the sharply pointed hair hanging down on one side. In contrast, above, a full body of hair echoes back, almost landscape-like, into the background. The undulating cloth upon which the young person's body with the painfully swollen legs lies appears to transform, in the distance, into snowcapped mountains of the imagination or delirium, receding into the darkness.

The four corners of the work are painted bright yellows, red and black, alluding to the eroded edges of Gauguin's famous work, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897). These punctuating edges work like quotation marks alluding to the psychological and philosophical quests posed by Gauguin's artistic pursuit and his sense of engaging extremity.

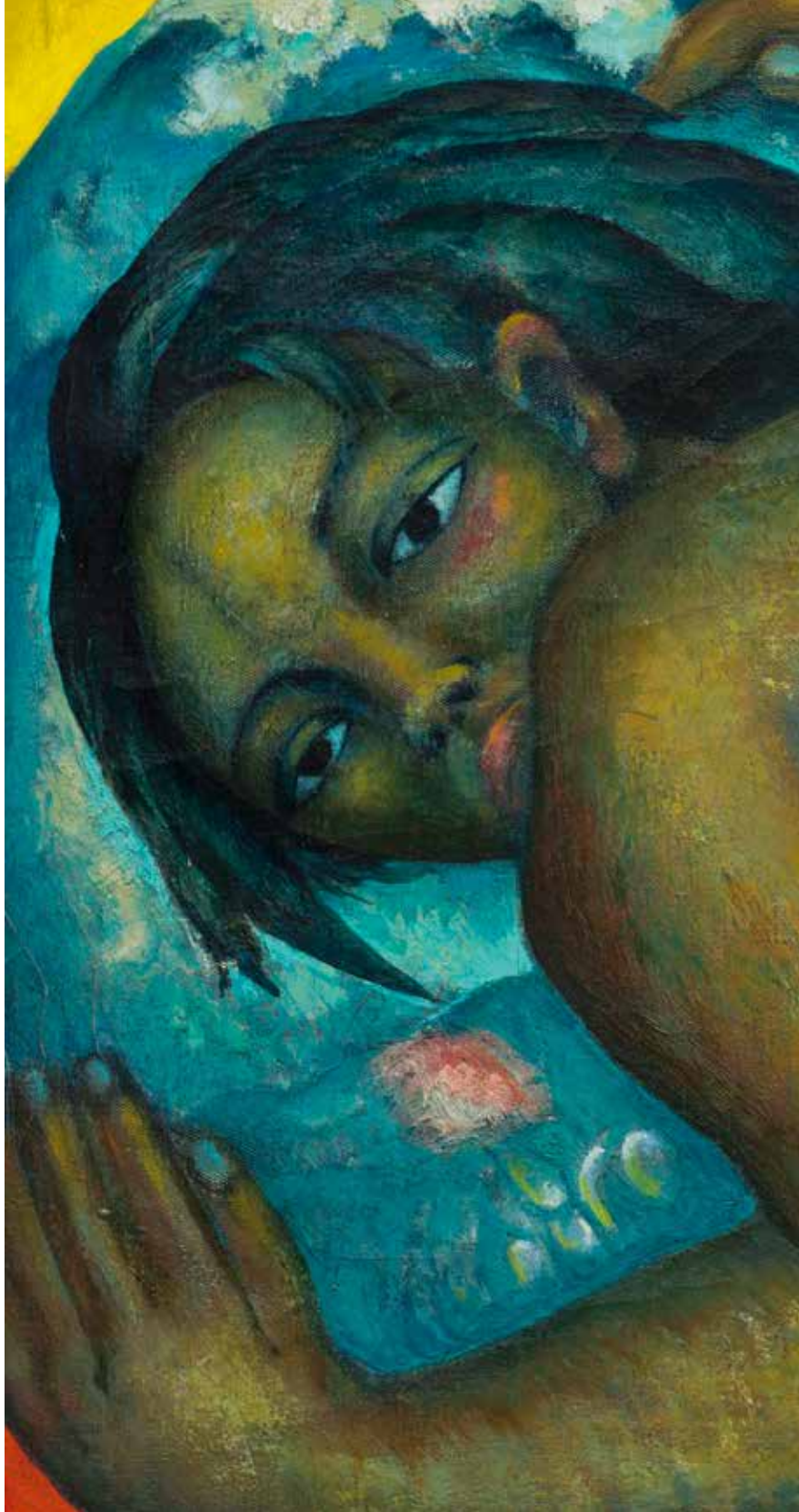
In this early powerfully poetic work, *Fleurs du Mal*, his tragic rendition of this damaged young man is a precursor to the leitmotif of the male nude in his oeuvre. The male nude plays out in many symbolic semblances: Adam, Apollo, David and Sebastian, all appear in different embodiments. These culminate in the empowered and transcendent male forms derived from the kouroi, the 5th century BC Greek marble sculptures. These heroic and iconic torsos are seen in Preller's final triumphant Marathon works of the 1970s. On a profound level, they reflect a self-realisation for Preller himself, both as a man and an artist.

Metaphorically Preller seems to have engaged on a long journey, the vulnerable and damaged young man lying prone on the edge of the battlefield in *Fleurs du Mal* is a far cry from the transcendent Marathon images of his late works.

Karel Nel



Paul Gauguin *Spirit of the Dead watching Manao Tupapau* (1892)











333

**Dorothy Kay**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1964

***War News***

signed; inscribed with the artist's name  
and the title on a label adhered to the reverse  
oil on board  
60 by 53 cm

**R450 000 – 550 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired directly from the artist, and thence by descent.

Having been commissioned by the Union Government in 1941 to contribute to a war record on the homefront, and following an endorsement from Neville Lewis, the country's first and most senior Official War Artist, Kay sketched and painted fitting subjects in the aerodromes, batteries, mines, factories and hospitals of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and the then Transvaal. Working up most of her pictures in her home studio, preferred examples were consistently sent to Pretoria – to 'H.Q.' as she called it in her letters – for review and possible purchase by the Government. Rather surprisingly, and despite sending numerous works for vetting, only eight were accepted and later absorbed into the National War Museum's collection. The identity of the selection panel remained anonymous, but as the artist felt that her best pictures tended to be rejected, one has to wonder whether Lewis, perhaps for fear of comparison with his own work, played an influential part. While most of the returned pictures were painted out or cut up back in the artist's studio, a small number survived.

The present lot shows four elderly men, all past fighting age, each either bespectacled, gaunt, hunched, balding or swollen-knuckled, carefully reading the wartime news. Each man is utterly absorbed, rigid with uncertainty, disbelief and dread. If sketchbooks from early 1943 suggest that the artist chose to set the scene in the Port Elizabeth Public Library, the relative silence and order of this interior only serves to heighten the sense of anxiety, chaos and hopelessness that the pinned broadsheets no doubt describe. Kay's mid-career style, moreover, deep-rooted in the English academic tradition, and favouring sound, economical draughtsmanship, directness, and restraint in colour, well suited the weighty subject of *War News*.





334

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Portrait of a Man*

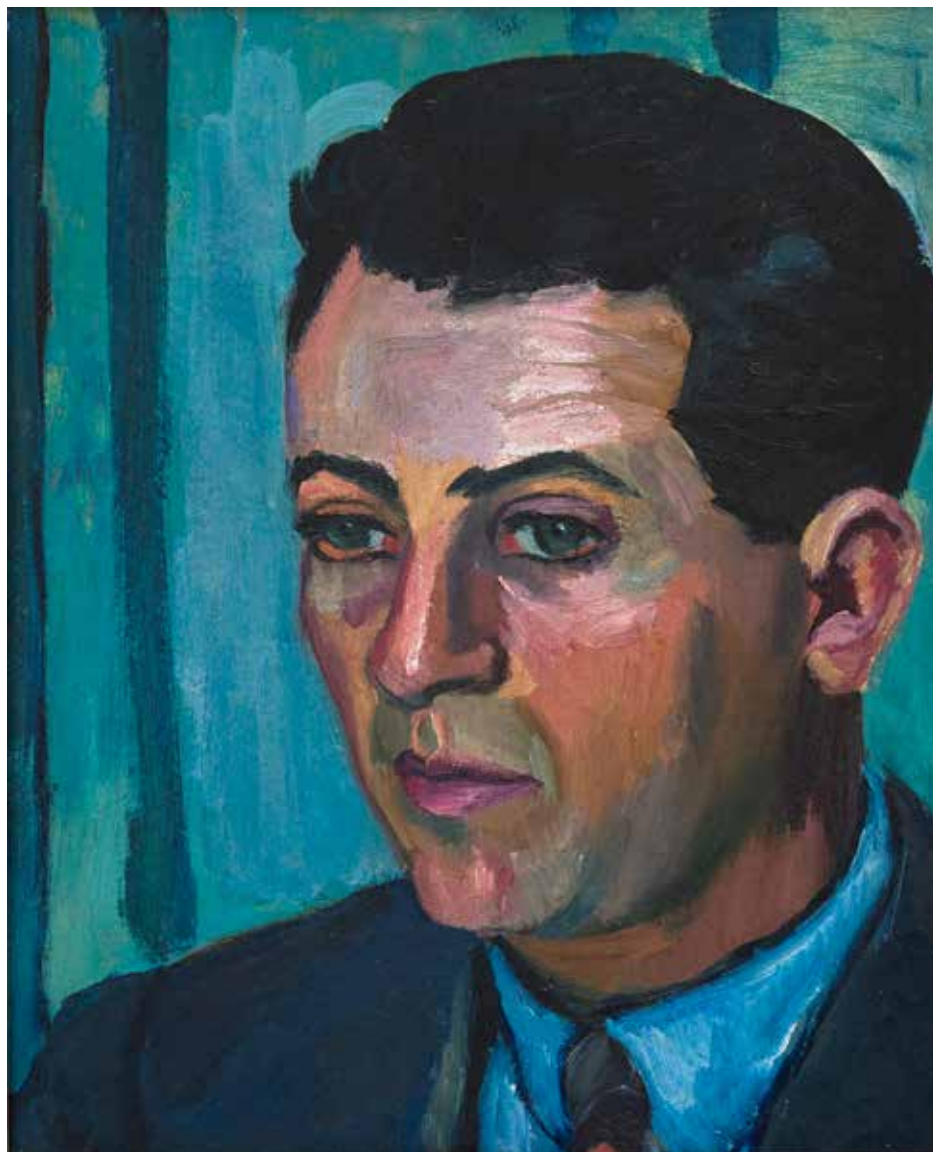
oil on board

42 by 34 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994), *Maggie Laubser: Her paintings, drawings and graphics*, Perskor Press: Johannesburg & Cape Town. Illustrated on page 204, catalogue number 650.



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335

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

***Composition with Four Heads***

signed; signed on the reverse

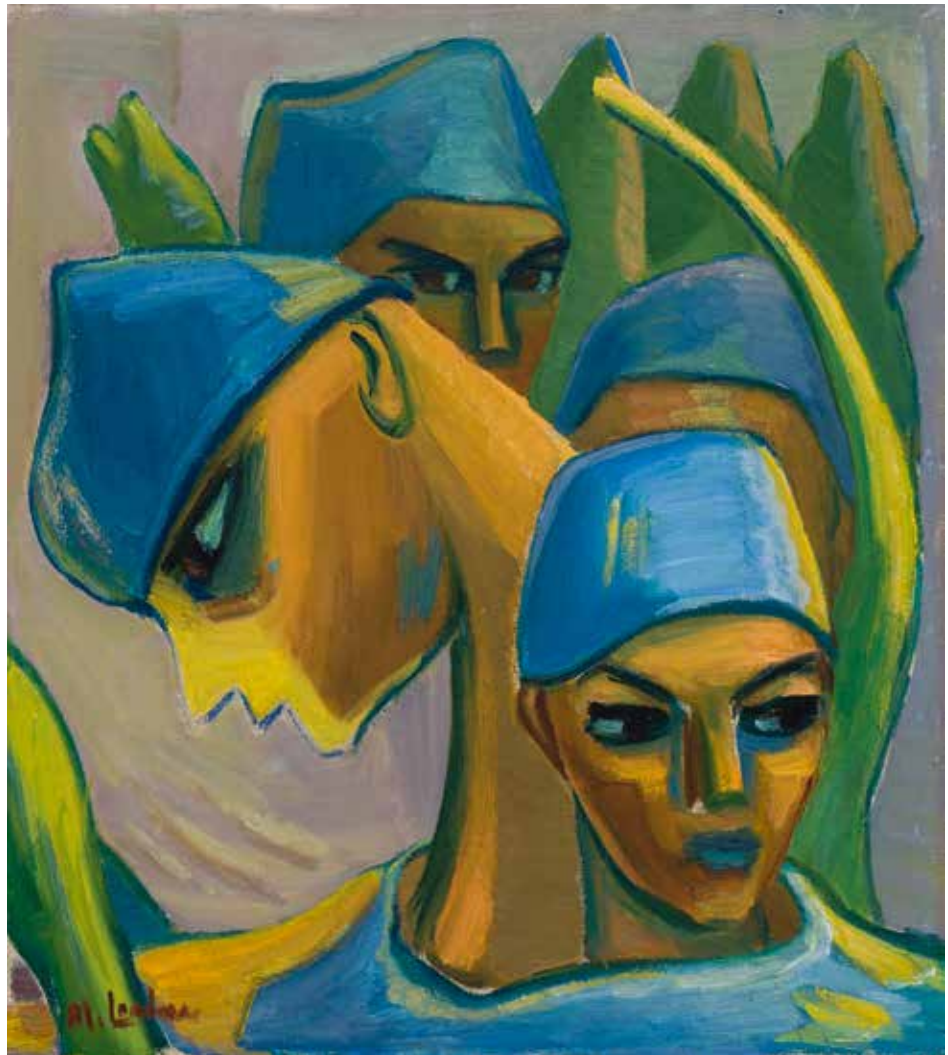
oil on board

46 by 41 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

**LITERATURE**

Dalene Marais (1994), *Maggie Laubser: Her paintings, drawings and graphics*, Perskor Press: Johannesburg & Cape Town. Illustrated on page 317, catalogue number 1325.



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336

## Maud Sumner

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

### *Still Life with Fruit on Blue Table*

signed and dated 49; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on an Everard Read label adhered to the reverse  
oil on canvas  
49 by 59,5 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

#### PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection

This painting, *Still Life with Fruit on Blue Table*, by one of South Africa's most important artists of the twentieth century, Maud Sumner, is particularly commanding in subject matter, composition and in the use of colour. Painted in 1949, after almost two decades of devoted study and artmaking in Oxford, London, Paris and Johannesburg, Sumner incorporates into this still life vignettes of the most important influences of her career, more particularly French modernism and the work of artists such as Cézanne, Bonnard, Braque, Vuillard and Matisse. This still life bears testimony to the consolidation of these influences that shaped her work and robustly demonstrates a confidence in her own direction as an artist.

This still life by Sumner is one of the most important to come on the market in recent years and was painted a year before the outstanding *Nature Mort* (1950) which sold for a record R2 200 000 on Strauss & Co's November 2010 auction. Similar to the 1950 still life, Sumner boldly paints the fruit at the peak of their voluptuous ripeness in a bowl focally placed on a mound of colorfully layered cloths lying on the flat blue table surface. This is in sharp contrast to the soot-black coffee pot with an unusually large spout on the one side of the canvas and the black tree branches dominating the other side, the latter depicting a style of landscape with trees Sumner was to return to over the years.





337

## Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

### *Still Life with Poinsettias*

signed and dated 1934

oil on canvas

98,5 by 78 cm

R4 000 000 – 6 000 000

#### PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection

#### LITERATURE

Marion Arnold (1995) *Irma Stern: A Feast for the Eye*, Fernwood Press: Vlaeberg. Illustrated on page 33.

#### EXHIBITED

*The Empire Exhibition*, Johannesburg, 15 September 1936 – 15 January 1937.

Flower paintings form a significant part of Stern's oeuvre, a theme to which she returned again and again throughout her career. In effect, they constitute something of a bridge between the other two key subjects that preoccupied her – portraits of those in her social milieu (of which the portraits of Freda Feldman on this sale are a key example), and paintings of 'exotic' others; Africans, Arabs, and Malays that she encountered both on her travels and at home. Like the social portraits, the flower paintings are intimate, and often give us insights into her private and personal preoccupations. Like the 'exotic' portraits, they are lush and sensual, vehicles for her unbounded creativity, sensuality, and love of colour and beauty. But most tellingly, perhaps, they are symbolic portraits of her personal world, a vivid recreation of the myriad artefacts and *objets* with which she surrounded herself, and which gave her pleasure.

Various writers have commented on the extent to which Stern's portraits – whether of graceful and accomplished society women like Freda Feldman, or beautifully sensual 'others' – were a means of sublimating her own lack of self-esteem in relation to her appearance. Her overweight figure, plain appearance and overbearing personality were in marked contrast to the beauty and sensuality of her paintings, and despite being a prolific and skilled portraitist, she never painted a self-portrait. As Esmé Berman put it, 'she surrounded herself with things that gave

her pleasure, and sublimated her blighted hopes and dreams by transforming her pleasurable perceptions into art'.<sup>1</sup> The flower paintings, of which *Poinsettias* is a fine example, play directly into this aspect of Stern's oeuvre. As such, they occupy an important position not only as dazzlingly beautiful objects that continue to delight us, but also as a reminder of the extent to which art allows us the extraordinary intimacy and poignancy of seeing the world through the eyes of another.

While Stern did not restrict herself regarding the choice of flora for her paintings, she returned again and again to certain favoured varieties. These included poinsettias, whose striking scarlet bracts lent themselves well both to her love of the colourful and the exotic. As with most of her flower paintings, the poinsettias are not depicted in isolation, but are accompanied by various domestic items in addition to the vase in which they are placed: a bowl of red apples, fabrics, the edge of a table. In this instance, these items serve formally to balance the composition, while at the same time setting up a sumptuous play of colour. The bright red of the flowers is picked up and intensified in the apples and the hint of the table top that is visible in the bottom right-hand corner. These reds are in turn offset against the poinsettia's leaves and a bright viridian paw paw. The strident complementarity of these colours is further intensified by a background of bright pink, with smears of pale green. This is a characteristically

audacious use of colour, and in keeping with Stern's impatience with colours that 'matched'.

Indeed, this painting is a remarkable example of Stern's brilliant sense of colour, and her ability to explore a vibrant and even riotous palette while remaining true to a single colour theme – in this case, the dominant red – accented by contrasting hues. Although they resemble each other in composition and subject, her flower paintings are never formulaic. Each is a resplendent and vital celebration of life and creativity, defying the lugubrious symbolism of the *memento mori* conventionally associated with the genre.

Painted in 1934, this painting is of particular historical significance in Stern's oeuvre, as it was exhibited at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg in 1936, along with *Malay Bride* and *Orange Harvest*.<sup>2</sup> The Empire Exhibition marked a turning point in Stern's career, bringing her both wider exposure to the South African public, and a shift away from the negative reviews that had marked her earlier exhibitions. It was also as a direct consequence of the Empire Exhibition that the South African government began acquiring Stern's work for its legations overseas, marking her out as an artist of significance, and putting in place the foundations of the canonical stature that posterity has bestowed on her.

*Federico Freschi*

<sup>1</sup> Esmé Berman, personal communication, 27 October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*





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338

**Maurice van Essche**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*Mother and Child*

signed

oil on canvas

53,5 by 37 cm

R150 000 – 200 000





339

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Still Life with Roses and Cherries*

signed

oil on canvas

72,4 by 59 cm

R180 000 – 240 000



340

**Edoardo Villa**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

*Female Form*

signed, dated 1967 and  
numbered 3/6  
bronze with a verdigris patina,  
mounted on a wooden base  
height: 49 cm, excluding base

R150 000 – 200 000







341

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

*Horseman*

signed and dated '50

oil on board

19,5 by 23,5 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

342

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

*Flower King*

signed and dated '68

oil on canvas

61,5 by 51 cm

R2 500 000 – 3 500 000

**EXHIBITED**

Pretoria Art Museum, Arcadia Park,  
*Alexis Preller Retrospective*, 24 October  
– 26 November 1972, catalogue  
number 144. Illustrated, unpaginated.

**PROVENANCE**

Purchased directly from the artist by  
A Walker and R Bernardi, and thence  
by descent.









343

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Horse Riders*

signed

oil on board

64 by 39,5 cm

R300 000 – 500 000







344

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Camp Fire*

signed

oil on canvas

25 by 50 cm

R180 000 – 240 000

345

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *Sea Amphora*

signed and dated 62

oil on panel

51 by 38 cm

R1 500 000 – 2 000 000

#### EXHIBITED

Pieter Wenning Gallery, Johannesburg,  
November 1972.

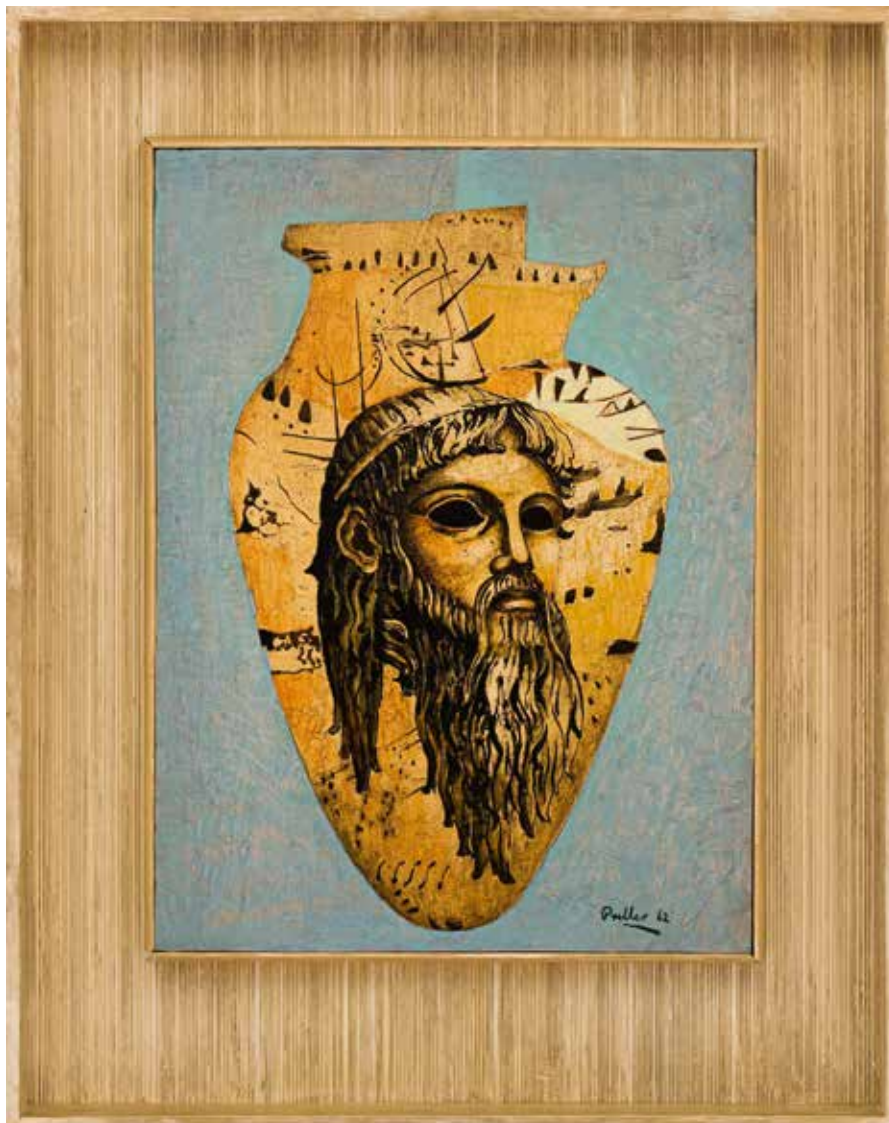
Pretoria Art Museum, Arcadia Park, *Alexis Preller  
Retrospective*, 24 October 1972 – 26 November 1972,  
catalogue number 13. Illustrated, unpaginated.

This work, *Sea Amphora*, was exhibited as part of a series of four works titled, *Sea Amphora*, *Sun Amphora*, *Earth Amphora* and *Winged Amphora*, at the Pieter Wenning Gallery in 1962. This was an unexpected departure in concept and handling of a newly introduced classical Greek theme, a new dimension in Preller's mythography. He had long been fascinated by Grecian art, was widely read and very knowledgeable about the ancient culture, although his only previous use of Grecian subject matter in a major painting had been in *Wounded Sculpture* (1947). The new works projected an altogether different mood. In this painting, an amphora or vessel-like form floats rather flatly on an azure blue background. A stark tonal rendition of a bearded head of Poseidon, from a famous ancient Greek bronze, is imposed on the golden-ochre urn form.

Preller finally travelled to Greece and Turkey in 1968, seeing at firsthand the early Greek bronzes and marble Kouros figures, which further prompted the influence of ancient Greek art on the themes of his future work.

*Sea Amphora* was included on the 1972 Preller Retrospective at the Pretoria Art Museum. The long-term influence of this image of the Poseidon head only became apparent when it was eventually exhibited alongside his subsequent large intaglio mythical heads, made after his return from Greece. These intaglios were an unusual Preller innovation, in his use of a negative cast relief, a mould-like structure cast in resin and then painted to read in reverse.

Karel Nel















346

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Extensive Landscape*

signed

oil on canvas

44,5 by 60 cm

R1 500 000 – 2 000 000

The objective correlative of Pierneef's *Extensive Landscape*, is certainly the mountain range, extending the view far towards the background, but also extensively in a sideways manner to the left and the right of the picture plane. Not only does it carry the structural elements of the composition, but also the emotive connotations of the landscape.

Apart from trees and clouds, mountains are a recurring motif, often holding together the composition of a landscape with its interesting rock formations, resulting in a monumental decorative aspect in his work, no matter how small the actual size of the canvas. 'The true South African landscape' according to Nobel laureate JM Coetzee, 'is of rock, not of foliage and therefore the South African artist must employ a geological, not a botanical gaze. This geological turn is particularly intriguing because it claims that vegetation disguises landscape.'<sup>1</sup> Pierneef has no trouble laying bare the landscape in its full glory.

Pierneef's perennial interest in the compositional potential of the role of the mountain in a landscape is most evident in the numerous landscapes of the Station Panels dealing with mountains: no fewer than 14 of the 28 large scale panels contain mountains as dominant feature in the composition. Of particular interest is the mountain ranges of Lesotho, the so-called 'Mountain Kingdom', and the Drakensberg mountain range, the latter suggesting Pierneef's interest in prehistoric Rock Art as is evident in the very first commission he executed for the Ficksburg High School: eight panels of rock art images he found in caves in the Eastern Free State and in the Drakensberg range. The prehistory of a country is embedded in the mountains, Pierneef seems to suggest in this *Extensive Landscape*.

<sup>1</sup> JM Coetzee (1988) *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. New Haven: Radix publishers p167.



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347

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Swakopmund*

signed

oil on canvas

48 by 98 cm

R120 000 – 160 000



348

**Fritz Krampe**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–1966

***Masks of Africa***

signed with the artist's initials  
oil on canvas

141 by 125 cm

**R250 000 – 350 000**

**PROVENANCE**

South African National Gallery,  
Cape Town, *Commemorative  
Exhibition*, October 1967, catalogue  
number 5.  
Everard Read.

**LITERATURE**

cf. Peter Strack. (2007) *Timeless  
Encounters, Fritz Krampe: A Painter's  
Life in Africa*. Kuiseb Verlag: Namibia.  
A similar example is illustrated in  
colour on the back cover.









349

## Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

### *Still Life with Fruit, Urn and Pot*

signed and dated 1948; inscribed with the artist's name, address and the title on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
83 by 60 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

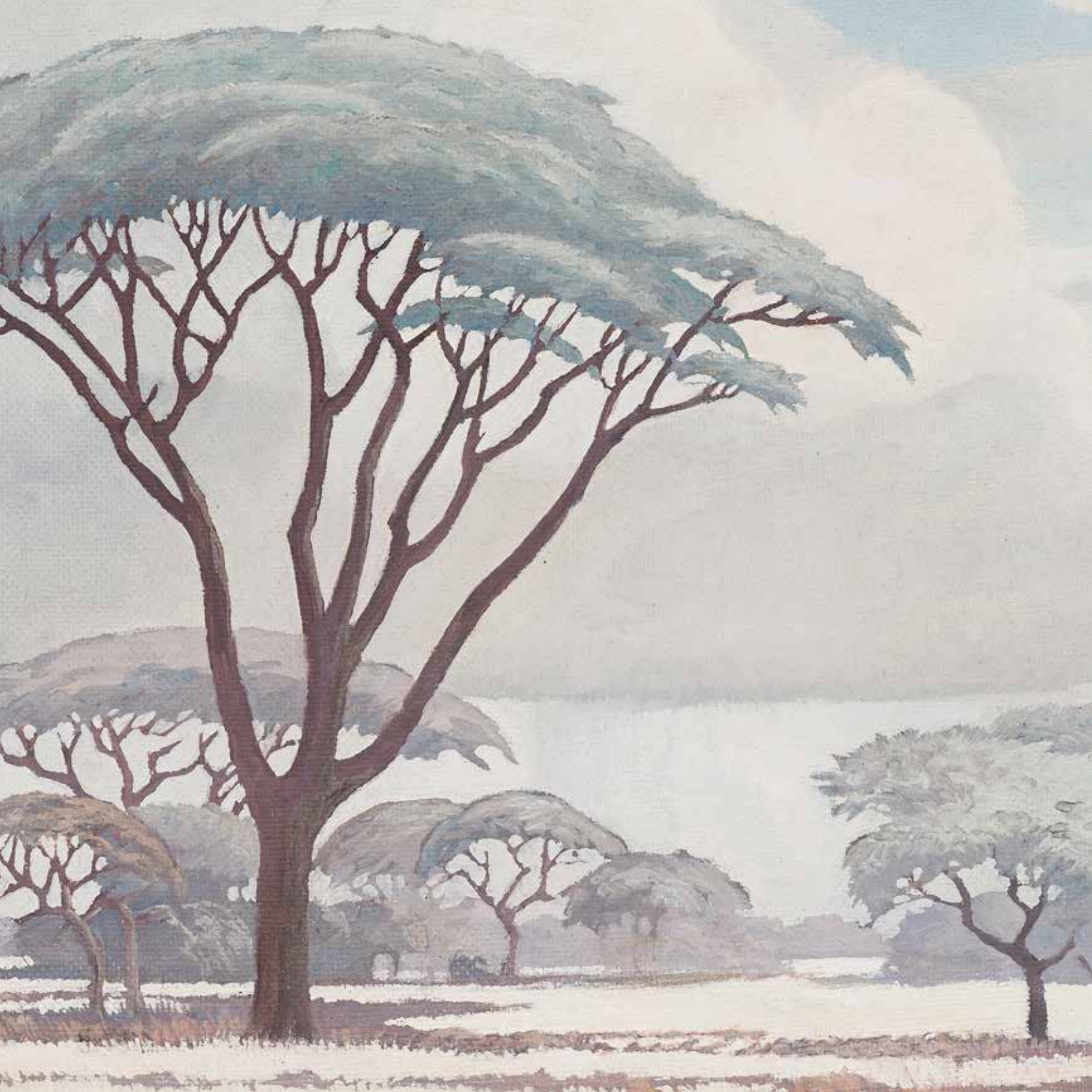
The central composition of this still life features a representation of a tile depicting The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. It is now set into the wall at the visitor's entrance of her former home, *The Firs* in Rosebank in Cape Town, which today houses the Irma Stern Museum.

Before being fixed into the wall, the painted and glazed earthenware tile, executed in the 17th century style, was a free object in her studio and was most likely collected on a trip to Italy. Stern had an interest in early Christian art which is reflected in a number of her paintings which draw inspiration from familiar themes.

Coupled with a copper coffee pot and a rich bowl of apples and pears, the painting reflects a deeper meditation on the theme of the tile where the ill-fated couple, now shamed by their nudity, are expelled from the orchards of the Garden of Eden.



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350

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Acacias in the Veld***

signed and dated 1940

oil on board

44 by 60 cm

**R1 200 000 – 1 600 000**

**EXHIBITED**

Turbine Art Fair, Johannesburg,

*Pierneef: A Collector's Passion*,

14–16 July 2017.

The Acacia is one of many in the Pierneef inventory of indigenous trees that he painted throughout his life, judging from a catalogue list of trees exhibited on one of his exhibitions in Cape Town in 1947: *The White Tree – Lowveld, Thorn Tree – Bushveld, Hardekoolbome, Rooibosboom, Harpuisboom, Wild Acacia*, and so on. This list can be extended when Pierneef's *Baobab Tree* and *Siringa Tree* paintings were included in the seminal exhibition, *Overseas Art from South Africa* at the Tate Gallery, London in 1948, an exhibition that travelled to The Hague in the Netherlands in 1949. Charles te Water aptly called Pierneef 'the doyen of South African painting' in the catalogue that accompanied this exhibition.

Depicting indigenous trees has always been Pierneef's forte as a fine artist. Commenting on his momentous exhibition at the Lidchi Gallery, Johannesburg in 1942, a *Star* reporter describes it thus: 'Flat, decorative and formal in treatment, and high in key for the most part, the tree

paintings represent an enthusiasm which finds full expression in the large painting, *Patriarch of the Bushveld*. This is a picture one can walk into and explore, it is the Bushveld! With this in mind, the present lot could well have been another patriarch in Pierneef's oeuvre as a foremost painter of trees.

He made numerous sketches of trees while criss-crossing the country on his endless painting trips. Sketches of trees abound in the first biography of Pierneef by JFW Grosskopf (1947). Says Grosskopf: Pierneef himself believes in hard work and patient preparation. For many of the panels of the Johannesburg Station he worked out up to thirty, and even more preliminary sketches and projects. When he puts our South African trees, particularly the Bushveld trees that he loves, into one of his more decorative pictures in a somewhat formalized manner, those that know him also know that he has made hundreds of drawings from nature of all those trees with punctilious detail. He has drawn the roots gripping



the earth, leaves and thorns, blossoms or curled seed pods, with the accuracy of a botanist.<sup>1</sup>

Pierneef places the tree in the present lot slightly off-centre to the left in the overall composition in such a manner that the canopy of the tree forms part of an overarching umbrella, a form completed in the background by dramatic storm clouds. The green canopy is complemented by the cluster of smaller acacia trees in the middle ground, dwarfed by the giant Acacia towering over them. In addition, the big tree contrasts sharply with the white of the cloud behind it. The green and white colours dominate, providing an austere, bleached-out landscape which cuts to the essentials of the veld. Pierneef usually foregrounds his bulbous clouds in a vast sky that takes up most of the picture plane, but in this case, the emphasis is clearly on the tree. The tree is clearly the patriarch of the Bushveld.

<sup>1</sup> JFW Grosskopf 1947 *Pierneef: the man and his work*. Van Schaik publishers, p13



351

## Cecily Sash

SOUTH AFRICAN 1924–

### *Abundance*

signed, dated Dec. 2015, numbered 1/6 and inscribed with the title on a label adhered to the reverse  
hand-woven tapestry  
244 by 353 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

Woven in The Stephens Tapestry Studio (Weavers)

Marguerite Stephens, renowned South African weaver relates that she often gets requests from artists to *translate* an existing painting of theirs into a woven tapestry, but the best for weaving, she maintains, are those that artists conceptualise as designs, not as fine art. This is in fact the case with the present lot, for which Cecily Sash made a design in the early 1970s. The tapestry could not be woven at the time, but the now elderly Sash signed it once it was completed. Sash and Stephens collaborated on many projects in the past, most notably in the late-1960s, creating such memorable tapestries as *Six Vertical Plant Forms*, and *Pomegranates*. Sash's interest in plant motifs is clearly evident in this tapestry, and so is her strong sense of composition. In fact, Sash is still known today for the ground breaking changes she introduced to the teaching of fine art students at Wits University. She emphasized the essential need for a concerted element of structure, executed in a coherent design, for each of their paintings. Her own work often exhibits a linear sense of design, as is evident in this tapestry with its many cross sections of fruit and seed pods and graphic rendering of the giant flower on the left. Also of note is the bird in the bottom right hand corner of the tapestry. Sash had a lifelong interest in birds, especially after a bird flew into her classroom one day and knocked itself dizzy when it crashed head on with a closed window while trying to escape. She often depicts birds as having scissor beaks and bearing a target on their backs.





352

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

*Zebras*

signed and dated 46

oil on panel

20 by 24,5 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

353

# Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

## *Calligraphic Forms, recto; Abstract Composition, verso*

signed

mixed media on canvas

50 by 45.5 cm

R300 000 – 500 000

The colourful calligraphic forms in the present lot are inspired by Walter Battiss's lifelong interest in South African rock art, which he studied intensively from the early 1930s until his death in the early 1980s. Specifically, they refer to the petroglyphs he recorded at the Lower Riet River in the Douglas district of the Northern Cape, symbols he later equated with the letters in the alphabet of a San language and published in his book, *The Art of Africa* (1958, p50). He used the shapes of these letters, together with those of the letters in Southern Arabic, an area which he visited for the first time in the early 1960s, to devise his own Fook alphabet. Not only do these shapes refer directly to San rock art, but, as Rory Doepel documented in an essay, also to the rock art found in Spain, a form of art that inspired Joan Miro in a profound way.<sup>1</sup> The most important part of this painting, however, is the painted wooden parts attached to the picture plane. Few people are aware of the fact that Battiss was keenly interested in wood carving, a practice he took up one holiday after having picked up bits of drift wood from the beach at Leisure Bay, on the KwaZulu coastline near Port Alfred, where the Battiss family had their holiday home for many decades. The first example of wooden figures on a canvas can be found at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, in a work called *Artist's Hands* (1968) onto which Battiss affixed a number of carved wooden birds to every print of the palm of his hand that covers the entire surface of the painting. The very last work in his studio when he died in 1982 had attached to it many colourfully painted wooden figurines. These wooden pieces lend a sculptural element to the otherwise flat canvas. In a sense they provide an additional dimension to a language.

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Influence of Spanish Rock Art on Miro's Development' in Frieda Harmsen (1973) *Art and Articles: Festschrift in honour of Heather Martienssen*. Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, pp134 – 143.











354

## William Kentridge

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

### *Drawing for 'Il Sole 24 Ore'*

inscribed with the artist's name,  
date 2007, medium and the title on a  
Marian Goodman Gallery, New York  
label adhered to the reverse  
charcoal, colour pencil, gouache and  
pastel on paper

213 by 147 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 400 000

William Kentridge was working on one of his stop-frame animation films, *What will come has already come* (2007), dealing with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s, when he received an invitation to do drawings for the front page of the cultural magazine accompanying the weekend edition of the Italian financial paper, *Il Sole 24 Ore*. Paging through back copies of the magazine, Kentridge was struck by the space devoted to Old Masters and to covering large scale restoration projects of the Italian Renaissance artist Giotto, and the most famous artist of the Italian baroque period, Carravaggio. The five drawings which emanated from this commission, of which the present lot is a prime example, combined visual elements of the chemical warfare the Italians used against the Abyssinians, such as gas masks, and images referencing the work of the old masters, such as Giotto's *The Massacre of the Innocents* (1305), at bottom left of the drawing. The *Massacre* is a biblical story, but Kentridge notices a clear similarity between this image and the victims of dead Kurdish villagers in the Middle-East. Since he could not find any actual images of the effect of the chemical warfare in Ethiopia at the time, the image of a crying mother suffices in his mind as relevant and applicable to the victims in the Horn of Africa as well.

The form of the drawings was dictated by the shape and scale of the sheet of newspaper they would be printed on, and by the quality of the printing normally associated with newsprint. Large-scale drawings seemed to be the ideal choice in which detail could be captured and then later reduced to tabloid size. In addition, he was

fully aware of the role images play on the front page of a newspaper, and hence adapted very strategic positioning of the visual elements that complemented the 'verbal' ones, or the text itself, which Kentridge ironically renders illegible, the implication being that history is often obliterated from the records and from public memory.

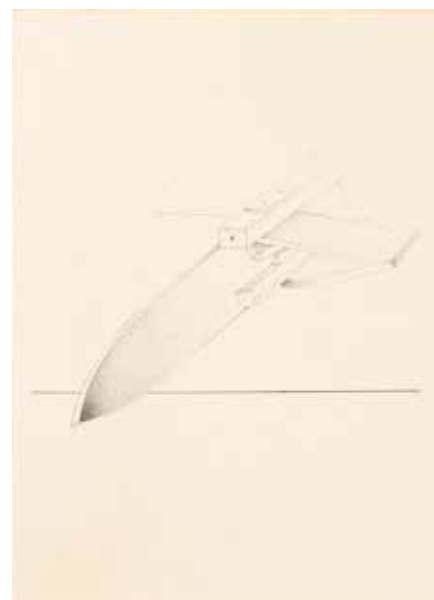
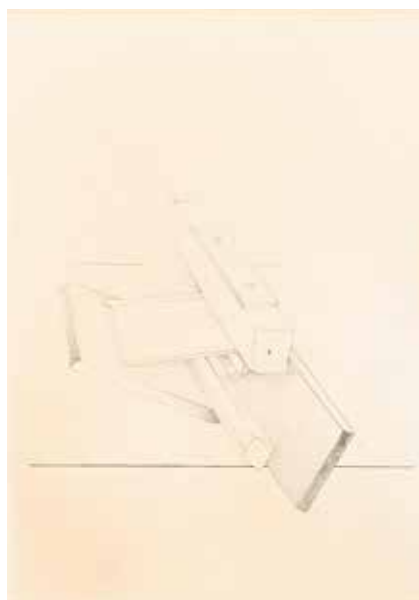
Kentridge, however, quickly abandoned working on a large scale, and instead worked on a series of small sized etchings to generate the five images, which he then later enlarged into the present format of the drawing, approximately eight times the size of the newspaper. When he made the present lot, Kentridge used a very soft Korean paper and included embossing, carried out using a blunt instrument pressed into the paper, and then he applied poster paint for the intense black areas, supplementing these with charcoal and pastel, and erasing certain parts. The large-scale drawings were then used to make the plates for newspaper printing.

The most recent iteration of Kentridge's interest in Italian history is to be found in the majestic project on the banks of the Tiber river flowing through the heart of Rome, in which he captures scenes from Italian history, specifically those pertaining to Rome, by means of applying a stencil to the grime on the walls of the river bank, and spraying the stencil with high pressured water hoses, laying bare the negative spaces which create the final image.

A similar drawing is illustrated in Lilian Tone (ed) (2013) *William Kentridge: Fortuna*. Thames & Hudson, p85.







355

## Karel Nel

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

### *Edge Piece II*

bronze

length: 59 cm

(2)

R70 000 – 100 000

#### LITERATURE

Esmé Berman (1983). *Art & Artists of South Africa*, Cape Town: AA Balkema. Illustrated on page 406.

Accompanied by three pencil preparatory drawings showing the front, back and side.

In 1981 Karel Nel was awarded the prestigious Almaks Prize for his bronze, *Surface Piece*, on the South African Almaks national sculpture competition. He had returned the previous year from his studies in London at St Martin's School of Art, where he had been taught by two of the foremost British sculptors, Anthony Caro and Phillip King. He had previously in 1977 been awarded the Afrox Student Award for Sculpture and in the following year, 1978, the Afrox Prize, a major national award for sculpture. *Edge Piece* (1977), recently sold on auction by Strauss & Co, was one of these prizewinning works. The monetary awards enabled him to undertake his international studies before returning to teach in the Fine Art Department at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Nel's abstract constructed works of this period reflect his interest in sculpture's relationship to base, edge and surface, zones of relational significance, engaging with how sculptures interact with the physical world and the interface between their physicality and their allusions to imagery and the illusionistic world.

*Surface Piece*, a one-off bronze cast, reflects Nel's engagement with a tipped-up ski like form which implies a sense of poise and gliding over a 'surface'. Its load of a slab of bolted white felt, normally used as a buffer between two hard surfaces, is here displaced, its soft visual warmth set in contrast to the precise constructed forms cast in bronze, a metal with a deep historic ancestry.





356

**William Kentridge**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

***Ubu Tells the Truth*, eight**

each signed, numbered 41/50 in pencil in the margin and embossed with the Caversham Press chop mark  
hardground, softground, aquatint, drypoint and etching  
plate sizes: 25 by 30 cm

**R250 000 – 350 000**

**LITERATURE**

Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (ed.) (2006). *William Kentridge Prints*, Parkwood: David Krut Publishing. Another set from this edition is illustrated in colour on pages 60–63.







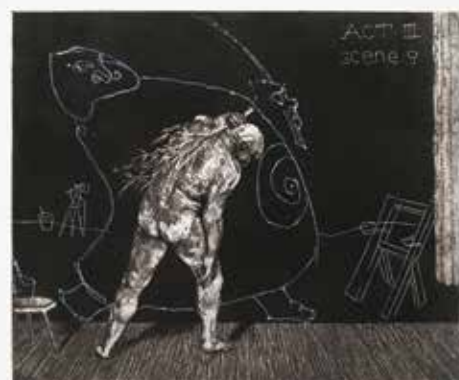
1964



1964



1964



1964



1964



1964



357

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Rock Formations*

signed

oil on canvas

43 by 56 cm

R250 000 – 350 000





358

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Figures and Stripes*

signed

oil on canvas

50 by 60 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

359

## Karel Nel

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

### *Wayfarer, Mudif, Johannesburg*

signed, dated 2004/2005 and inscribed with the title on the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name, title, date and medium on an Art First Contemporary Art label adhered to the reverse charcoal, pastel and sprayed pigment on bonded fibre fabric  
sheet size: 181 by 181 cm

**R400 000 – 600 000**

#### PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection

'Much of my drawing and environmental artwork explore the external and internal phenomena we call reality and, in my work, I draw on both artistic and scientific ways of making the world.' Karel Nel

*Wayfarer, Mudif, Johannesburg* forms part of a series of drawings by Karel Nel shown on his 2005 London Exhibition titled, *In the Presence of Leaves*. This series of works constitute a breathtaking body of drawings that are elegies for our times: tributes to the beauty and symbolic value of trees and their threatened position through environmental exploitation.

Nel has travelled extensively to remote parts of the world, collecting some of the largest leaves in existence. From the famous Coco de Mer palms on the Seychelles to Baobab fibres found in Morandava in Madagascar, and the Pandanus leaves of Rabal, New Island, in Micronesia, these exquisite specimens have been taken to Nel's studio in Johannesburg to become the very substance of his investigations into nature and the ecological conundrums of our time.

Nel says, 'Leaves have always struck me as such remarkable structures. They have the ability to produce nutrition from sunlight, and their

#### EXHIBITED

Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, *Lost Light: Fugitive Images from Deep Space*, Karel Nel, 12 April 2007 – 26 May 2007.

Art First Contemporary Art, London, *In the Presence of Leaves*: Karel Nel, 13 September 2005 – 13 October 2005.

#### LITERATURE

Chris Spring (2008). *Angaza Afrika: African Art Now*, Cape Town: Francolin Publishers. Illustrated in colour on page 229.

Karel Nel and Emile Maurice (eds.) (2007). *Lost Light: Fugitive Images from Deep Space*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Illustrated on page 35.

forms clearly reflect the radiant nature of their purely contained and diffuse energy fields. For they have been a model for me of the sacred, purposeful and non-wasteful life that continues quietly without partaking in the violent food chain of consumption upon consumption. They are nonetheless flamboyant, while transitory and cyclical, with transcendent inevitability in their life cycle.'

In *Wayfarer, Mudif*, Nel draws the vast leaf of the coco-de-mer palm of the Seychelles in his studio, Mudif, in Johannesburg. Two wooden stools of the Asante people of Ghana stand before the leaf as testament to the enforced exile of Asantehene (king) Prempe I to the Seychelles by the British in the late nineteenth century.

*Wayfarer, Mudif*, evokes the simple life on North Island, a beautiful until recently uninhabited island in the Seychelles where over the past years Nel has explored and had the opportunity to work. With a lean-to made of a huge palm leaf for shelter, and later in the exquisitely designed structures by architect Silvio Rech, he scoured the great palm forests of the island observing plants, birds, fruits and hundred-year-old tortoises.

After complex negotiations with the Seychelles Ministry of Environment, Nel was able to harvest three vast coco de mer palm leaves to accompany him back to his studio. These were transformed into a magnificent series of large drawings that describes a natural luxuriance. The leaves are set in atmospheric, elemental architectural spaces. Reflected in the works is Nel's meditative approach to the natural world: to its temporal dynamics and the lines, points and relations where art, science and biology meet.

Nel is one of South Africa's most distinguished and internationally respected artists. He is Associate Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand, travels extensively and is a renowned collector and curator of traditional African artefacts. He is a former Fulbright scholar to the University of California, Berkeley and is the winner of numerous awards, commissions and residencies. His work may be found in most museums and public and private collections in South Africa, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and in the British Museum, London.











360

## Peter Clarke

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

### *Landscape with Sisal Trees*

signed and dated Feb 1966

gouache on paper

53,5 by 45 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

During the 1960s Peter Clarke visited Tesselaarsdal which he described as ‘very quiet, peacefully, soothingly quiet after the racket left behind at the Peninsula.’<sup>1</sup> Describing his rural scenes Philippa Hobbs and Elizabeth Rankin suggest that Clarke was ‘revisiting this pleasurable subject matter at a time when his own urban world was filled with unease.’<sup>2</sup> Noting the characters that people his landscape from this period, Hobbs and Rankin suggest that ‘most of the figures in his rural scenes lack a strong sense of individuality, as though they are willingly part of a life of agrarian labour. This is not out of tune with other subjects in his work: while Clarke rarely creates individualised portraits, his figures are not devoid of the dignity of self-will, whatever their setting.’<sup>3</sup>

Commenting on his formal compositions of clouds Clarke noted that he was ‘exploring patterns as if they were woven in a tapestry. I have spent a long time looking at clouds. You can find one type of cloud here that is unique simply because of the topography. This was a formal gesture of shaping the clouds. The sky is never really cloudless here ...’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, Peter. 1964. *Winter Shepherdling*. Contrast X: South African Quarterly 3(2). October, p 40.

<sup>2</sup> Hobbs, Philippa & Rankin, Elizabeth. (2011) *Listening to Distant Thunder: the Art of Peter Clarke*, Johannesburg: The Standard Bank of South Africa. Page 108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



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# **Christo Coetzee**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2000

## *Forma Decorem*

signed and dated 79; signed, dated and inscribed 'Spain' on the reverse  
mixed media, with a detached Perspex cover painted by the artist  
122 by 122 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

Christo Coetzee's formidable work, *Forma Decorem*, is a prime example of his interest in portraiture. It constitutes a fulcrum between the numerous portraits of brides he painted in the early years of his career, after his studies at Wits in the late-1940s, and the hundreds of facile portraits on paper rendered in linear profile in the 1980s and 90s.

Coetzee abandoned portraiture for much of the 1960s and 70s and pursued a more abstract, non-figurative style in his work, largely due to his exposure to contemporary abstract expressionist trends in Europe, employed by such artists as Georges Mathieu, Lucio Fontana and Alberto Burri, as well as by members of the Gutai Artists Association, a movement in post-war Japan.

In *Forma Decorem*, however, Coetzee creates a veritable inventory of art historical concepts and ideas that are all spliced together in this singular, angelic portrait. He includes Byzantine angels in collaged form on the frame, as well as references to Renaissance portraiture, and even to the famous Dutch 17th century portrait tradition by satirically



using a cut-out image of the famous Rembrandt self-portrait from a popular cigarette brand at the time in this work.

Not only does he reference the Renaissance interest in the study of Mathematics and Astronomy, as is evident in the numerous equations embellishing the portrait, and the orbs surrounding the sitter's face, but he also suggests wider cultural-historical traditions of the Italian performance and dramatic arts by invoking the Commedia del Arte stock character of the Pierrot in the dress of this sitter. In addition, Coetzee suggests something of the science of perspective, closely associated with the painting of the Renaissance, by using many diagonal lines which criss-cross the picture plane. Coetzee frames the portrait numerous times, from his own hand-painted frame, to no fewer the five other framing devices or suggestions of borders surrounding the portrait.

One of the most interesting and novel aspects of this portrait, however, is that the picture plane is obscured by a sheet of painted plexi-glass that



THREE VIEWS OF LOT 361

is affixed on top of it. It obscures the identity of the sitter and at the same time, provides an additional, if embellished, one. The plexi-glass can be reversed, or turned around, encouraging ongoing viewer participation, and provides different perspectives on the portrait: the one, by means of the painted eyes on the Perspex which are reflected on the actual painting, effectively adding an additional pair of eyes; the other side, emphasizing the locks of hair of the sitter.

'What could be more compelling in our time than this angel with its *incomprehensible face*?' Coetzee observed in the catalogue notes to an exhibition, *Tableaux Peintures*, at the Rand Afrikaans University in 1987. It is certainly the case with this portrait. He also invokes the word, 'iudicium', meaning a form of self-assessment of what the artist has produced, and in terms of that, the title of this portrait, *Forma Decorem* appears somewhat ironic, given all the various ways Coetzee deconstructed the conventions of portrait painting in this work.





362

**Sydney Kumalo**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

*Homage to Maillol*

signed with the artist's initials  
and numbered 5/10  
bronze with a green patina,  
mounted on a wooden base  
height: 34 cm, excluding base

R150 000 – 200 000







© The Estate of Cecil Skotnes | DALRO

363

**Cecil Skotnes**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2009

*Still Life with Bowls and Utensils*

signed and dated 93

incised and painted wood panel

74 by 99 cm

R400 000 – 600 000



364

**George Pemba**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–2001

*The Bus Shelter*

signed and dated 89; inscribed with the title in  
another hand on a label adhered to the reverse

oil on board

41 by 54,5 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



365

**Gerard Sekoto**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–1993

*Senegalese Figures*

signed and dated 60  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
26 by 20,5 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



© Gerard Sekoto Foundation | DALRO

# HOMAGE to DUMILE

&  
to the children,  
the brothers & sisters  
of the Diaspora  
where ever they went,  
where ever they  
might be.

Clarice



the lifeless may be made to  
buckle, men, for it's not  
distant to be for free.  
I am my own found  
ation... And it is  
my place beyond  
the historical  
instrumental  
hypothesis  
that I will  
incubate the  
case of my  
freedom.

The disease of the  
man of color lies  
in the fact that  
he was enslaved.  
The disease & the  
inhumanity.

If the white man be in the flesh that somewhere  
he has killed man.

§ The man of color, must only this:  
that the tool have, possess the man, that the engine  
man of man, man, cease for ever. That is,  
if the man be another, that it is possible for me  
to discover & to love man,  
wherever he may be...

My final power:  
"no better, make of me always a man  
who questions." Frantz Fanon





366

## Peter Clarke

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

### *Homage to Dumile*

signed, dated 29.4.1979 and inscribed 'France';  
engraved with the date, the title, 'acquired from  
Artist's collection' and medium on a plaque  
adhered to the frame  
gouache and collage  
49 by 65 cm

R300 000 – 500 000

#### EXHIBITED

Iziko, South African National Gallery, Cape Town,  
*Listening to Distant Thunder: The Art of Peter  
Clarke*, 20 October 2011 to 19 February 2012.  
Institute of International Visual Arts, London,  
*Peter Clarke: Wind Blowing on the Cape Flats*,  
5 December 2012 to 30 April 2013

#### LITERATURE

Philippa Hobbs & Elizabeth Rankin (2011).  
*Listening to Distant Thunder: The Art of Peter  
Clarke*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery,  
P144 – 146, 156, 170 & illustrated in colour on  
page 145.

Peter Clarke's gouache, *Homage to Dumile*, was painted at the home of photographer Peter Hallett in Boule d'Amont in the Spring of 1979. Clarke's work is dominated by a simulacrum of a Dumile Feni drawing *Homage to Soweto*, a double-headed beast, held in the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG). Hallett showed Clarke a UNESCO poster in which this image was used. Clarke's work effectively acts as a veritable poster on a wall that could well have announced some sort of political rally during the Struggle. The image is surrounded by a dedication written graffiti-like on a wall by Clarke to Feni, as well as by quotes from



Langston Hughes and Frantz Fanon. Feni, in exile in New York at the time, was one of many political activists, part of a large scale diaspora community living abroad. In *Homage to Dumile* Clarke pays tribute to the work these exiles did for the Struggle while living away from the country of their birth. The Hughes and Fanon quotes, ironically, are about reconstruction and reconciliation, not about resistance, war and destruction. Clarke, who was first introduced to the work of Feni by Hallett, subsequently saw and greatly admired Feni's work, particularly *Train Disaster* at Iziko: South African National Gallery.



367

## Fred Page

SOUTH AFRICAN 1908–1984

### *Untitled*

signed and dated '67

acrylic on board

70 by 80 cm

**R250 000 – 350 000**

#### LITERATURE

Jeanne Wright and Cecil Kerbel (eds.) (2011) Fred Page: *Ringmaster of the Imagination*, Publishers Jeanne Wright and Cecil Kerbel: Port Elizabeth. Illustrated in colour on page 111.

Fred Page is regarded as South Africa's foremost Surrealist. He died in 1984 at the age of 76 having produced a body of work remarkable for its unique personal imagery. He represents a rare example in the 20th century of a painter who portrays with some accuracy the particular architectural features of the city in which he lived. Reclusive by choice, Port Elizabeth formed the backdrop for his extraordinary fertile visual imagination between 1947 and 1980.

Page appears to have been obsessed with cataloguing the dynamics of the relationships between men women and with the salacious aspects of adult human behavior. *Untitled* is a large and powerful painting in which he returns to imply sexual commerce or a covert meeting between a seemingly emasculated male and female protagonists, typically portrayed in an unflattering manner. In the dark of night, the suave looking man is rendered impotent in the once impressive vehicle now without an engine, with a broken grill and no wheels.





368

**Fred Page**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1908–1984

*Lighthouse and Owl*

signed and dated '80  
oil and pencil on artist's board  
74,5 by 39 cm

R100 000 – 120 000





369

**Fred Page**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1908–1984

*The Summons*

signed and dated 82  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
59 by 50 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

Most of Fred Page's paintings feature spaces defined by architecture, and when figures appear in these settings, they seem to have little logical function but to enhance the intended sense of oddness and disquiet. *The Summons* depicts a young boy in a room, an oversized white Knight associated with the game of chess, a toy train engine on a table, and beyond the window a real train and a boy with bugle summoning someone, but who we do not know. Typically, Page's palette is restricted to black and white, but here he makes generous use of a muted shade of pink, a curious choice for the subject matter, but then that is what Page does: he keeps us guessing.



## Sydney Kumalo

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

### *Madala VI*

signed with the artist's initials and numbered I/X  
bronze, mounted on a wooden base  
height: 86 cm excluding base; base 6,5 cm high

**R700 000 – 900 000**

#### PROVENANCE

Acquired directly from Egon Guenther in 1967.

Sydney Kumalo was a still a teenager when, in 1952, he began attending biweekly art classes at a hall designated for 'non-European' adult recreation on Polly Street in central Johannesburg. Sophiatown-born Kumalo pursued painting, an interest sparked by youthful encounters with paintings and sculptures seen in white suburban homes serviced by his house-painter father. The death of Kumalo's father prompted a sudden transition from watercolour painting to sculpture. His first sculptural work was a ceiling mural at St Peter Claver Church in Seisoville, Kroonstad, which he executed with his mentor, Cecil Skotnes. Kumalo additionally produced bas-reliefs of the 14 Stations of the Cross, photographs of which Skotnes showed to Edoardo Villa. In 1958 Villa agreed to mentor Kumalo twice a week at his studio.

A figural sculptor interested in synthesising the idioms of West and Central African sculpture with the volumetric experiments and simplifications of the human form by modernist sculptors like Brancusi and Moore, Kumalo's syncretic style gained him great acclaim. In 1962 Kumalo held his debut solo exhibition with Johannesburg dealer Egon Guenther, who further aided Kumalo's early public reception by, from 1963, showing him under the Amadlozi banner with fellow artists Giuseppe Cattaneo, Cecily Sash, Skotnes and Villa (and later Ezrom Legae). His work was included on a group show organised by American dealer Eric Estorick at his Grosvenor Gallery in London. *The New York Times* discussed the show. After introducing Kumalo as South Africa's 'best-known, most admired and most sought-after figurative sculptor,' the newspaper's critic favourably remarked on

the 'powerful monumentality' of Kumalo's works.<sup>1</sup> In 1966 Kumalo represented South Africa at the Venice Biennale.

Kumalo's mature style, of which this is a representative work, is noted for its expressive figuration and preference for stippled and/or lacerated surface finishes. His output included both human and animal subjects. Kumalo would sometimes show his human subjects as sitting or crouching; while anatomically awkward, these distorted portrayals of the human figure were nonetheless meant to suggest reverence and devotion. The mood in these peak-career works, noted poet and critic Lola Watter in 1968, 'is one of intense contemplation'.<sup>2</sup>

An additional note from Dr Gavin Watkins: In what many regard as his golden period, from 1966 to 1968 Kumalo produced a number of sculptures under Egon Guenther's tutelage in a series which has been labelled his 'Madala series'. Madala is the Zulu word for 'old man'. In her thesis *Sydney Kumalo en ander bantoeekunstenars van Transvaal* (University of Pretoria, 1970), Susanna Jansen Van Rensburg writes as follows: 'During 1966, Kumalo started a series of sculptures with the old man as the theme. He conceived a number of figures of old men and compassionately expressed the peculiarities and specific characteristics of old age'.

According to Jansen van Rensburg, the precursors to the Madala series are the wonderfully evocative sculptures *Tongue-out* and *High Shoulders* (conceived in 1966) with the powerful large sculpture *The Listener*, conceived in 1968, forming

the conclusion and pinnacle of this series.

In addition to these before-mentioned sculptures, there are eight Madala figures in the series (*Madala I* to *Madala VII* and *Happy Madala*) conceived in 1966 (*Madala I*), 1967 (*Madala II, III, IV, V, VI* and *VII*) and 1968 (*Happy Madala*). Egon Guenther cast only one or two editions of each of these sculptures so they are very rare. It is worth noting that the only other casts of these sculptures are a small edition of *Madala II* and *Madala IV* cast in 1976 after Linda Goodman had replaced Egon Guenther as Kumalo's art dealer.

*Madala VI* is a particularly large and striking example from the Madala series. In the absence of any photographic records of this work, until recently this sculpture was known only from Egon Guenther's records and from Jansen van Rensburg's thesis. The face of *Madala VI* is however familiar because the upper half of the body of *Madala VI* was recast by Linda Goodman in the early 1990s as a new sculpture which she titled *The Patriarch*. Given the fact that *Madala VI* was cast as a single edition only, discovering the original *Madala VI* cast is a very rare and important find indeed especially when one considers that it hasn't changed hands since it was bought directly from Egon Guenther in 1967.

Many thanks to Mr Gerard de Kamper, Chief Curator of Museums at the University of Pretoria, for his assistance in identifying this lot.

<sup>1</sup> Anon. (1965) *Art under apartheid*, New York Times Magazine, 28 March.

<sup>2</sup> Lola Watter. (1968) *Sydney Kumalo: Sculptor*, Lantern, September, page 42.







371

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Dancing Figures, recto;  
Figure and Fruit, verso*

signed

oil on canvas

61 by 76 cm

R200 000 – 300 000





372

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Braves*

signed, dated 2003 and inscribed  
with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

91 by 121 cm

R350 000 – 450 000

373

**Deborah Bell**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

***Sentinel Figure***

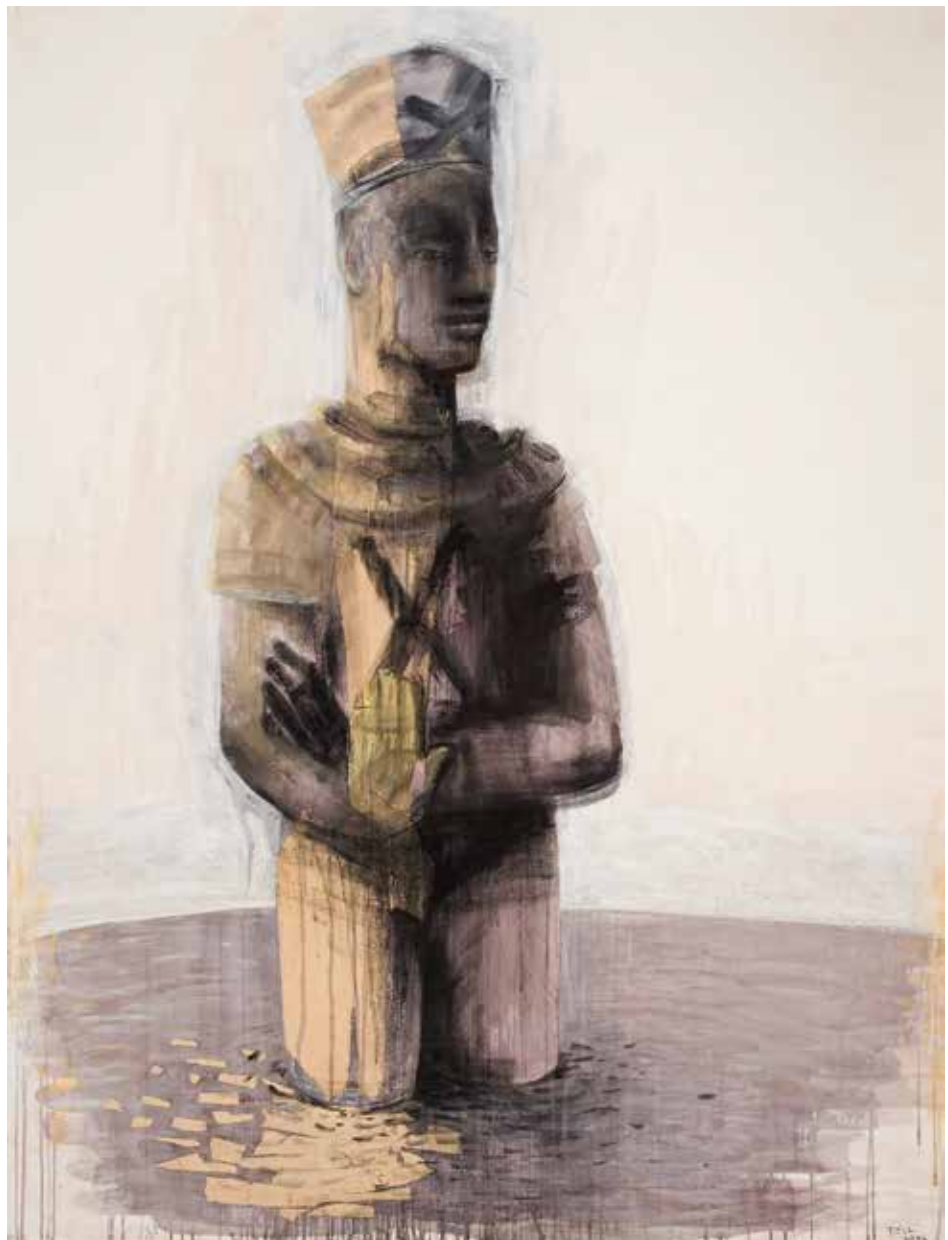
signed and dated 2002  
mixed media on paper  
sheet size: 158 by 121,5 cm

**R200 000 – 300 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Barloworld Collection

Important artworks of this size by the artist Deborah Bell rarely come to auction, and this work embodies the 'mystical godliness' of her art making. Bell's art is created in dialogue with multiple worlds, texts, histories and consciousness. For Bell art is a spiritual practice in which the role of the artist is to 'co-create the world, to materialize what exists for all time'. Her work incorporates multi-layered visual, symbolic and iconographic references to past and present worlds. She is fascinated by ancient civilizations and excavated objects displayed in museums. She searches for the spiritual within the material and for the material within the spiritual.





374

**William Kentridge**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

***Head: Blue***

signed and inscribed 'Proof Slate 3'

colour etching

plate size: 103 by 79 cm

**R600 000 – 800 000**

**LITERATURE**

Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (ed.) (2006).

*William Kentridge Prints*, Parkwood:

David Krut Publishing. Another

example from this edition is illustrated  
in colour on page 47.





375

**William Kentridge**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

*Highveld Landscape*

signed

charcoal on paper

37 by 44 cm

R700 000 – 1 000 000

Having to come to terms with the Highveld landscape in and around Johannesburg, William Kentridge adopted the habit of driving out of the city for any arbitrary distance, say, 6.3 or 19.8 kilometres in the late-1980s, and drawing the scene in front of him. 'Generally I ended up with a catalogue of civil engineering details,' he relates. 'It became clear that the variety of human intervention on the landscape was far greater than anything the land itself had to offer: the varieties of high-mast lighting, crash barriers, culverts and so on. The transitions from veld, to fence, to road, to field, are as great as any geological shifts anywhere.' Added to this list, one can enumerate the headgear of an abandoned mine shaft, sluice pipes, and a set of railings as is clearly visible in the present lot of one of Kentridge's typical Highveld scenes.

The history of the landscape is clearly evident in all these human manufactured structures. And despite his practice of erasing elements of the landscape when he produces his stop-frame animation films, it is impossible to negate the traces of a previous presence in this Kentridge landscape.

Writing about South Africa under apartheid in an essay titled 'Landscape in a state of siege' (1988), Kentridge points out that the Highveld landscape in which he grew up, especially the dreary winter landscapes with the burnt grass which renders everything in stark black and white, was very different from the Pienaar landscapes with which he was familiar. He says they seem to not contain any traces of the history of the land, although it would be foolish to deny the beauty of a Pienaar landscape.<sup>1</sup> Kentridge recently renewed his interest in mining but added yet another layer of the history of place when he drew Highveld landscapes on double page sheets torn from old mining ledgers (*Accounts and Drawings from Underground*, 2015) which lays bare the political economic history of the land it financial detail.

<sup>1</sup> William Kentridge (1988) 'Landscape in a state of siege'. Johannesburg, *Stet* magazine, volume 5 number 3, pp15–18.







376

**Vladimir Tretchikoff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

*Still Life with Vase and Fabric*

signed and dated 50

oil on steel

60 by 90 cm

R200 000 – 400 000



377

**Helen Sebidi**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1943–

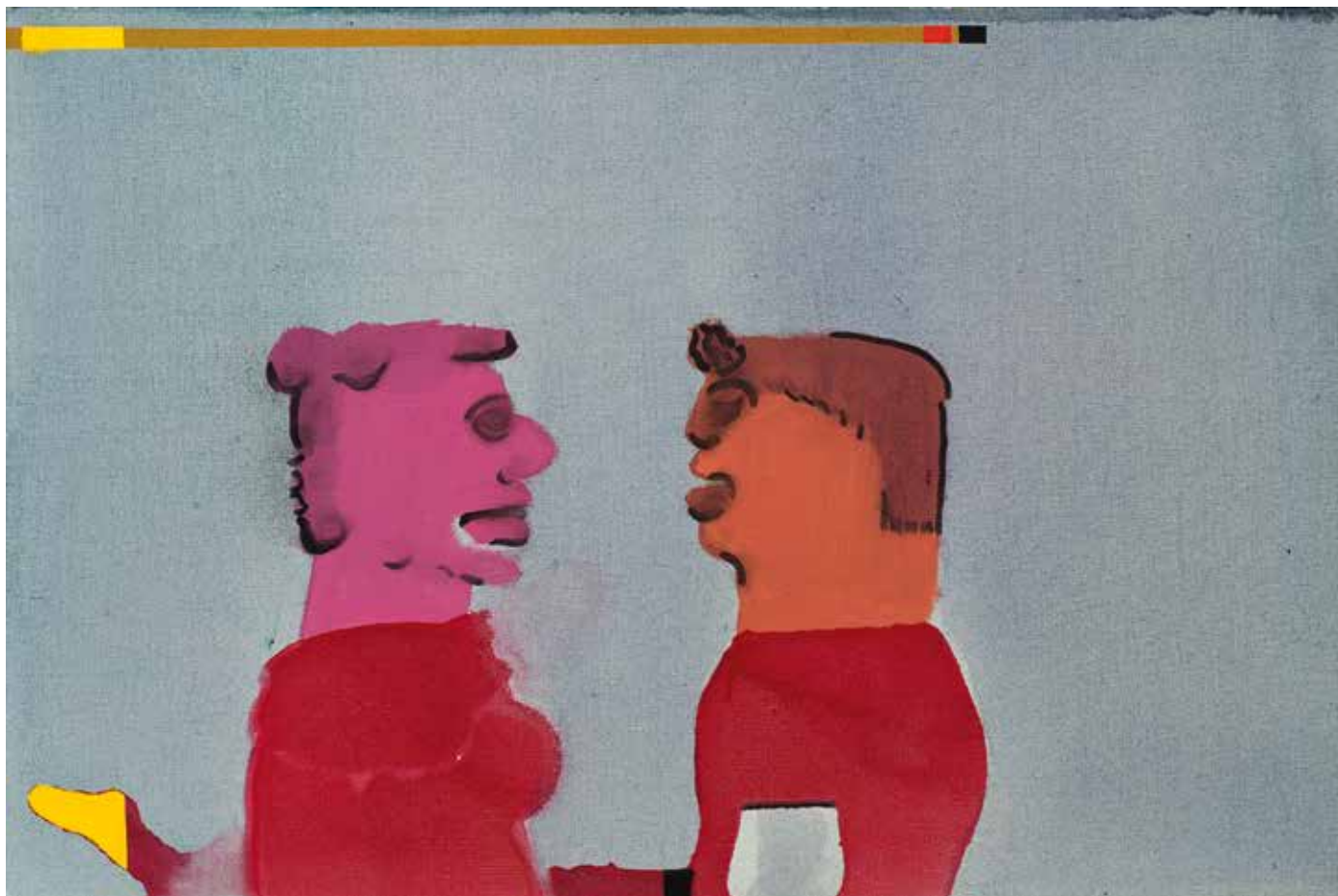
*The Traditional Lovers*

signed; signed, dated 2013/14 and  
inscribed with the title on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
115,5 by 66,5 cm

**R150 000 – 200 000**

A beneficiary of a Fulbright scholarship, and the winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award in 1989, Helen Sebidi is best known for her dazzling surfaces built up in globular, high-relief impasto. The present example shows tender, intertwined lovers, lost in each other's gaze, surrounded on all sides by an expanse of water, but seemingly joyful and safe. More often than not drawing on traditional rural life and mythology, Sebidi's work was recently and prominently represented at *South Africa: The Art of a Nation* at the British Museum in London.





378

## Robert Hodgins

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

### *Poaching on Norman Territory*

signed and inscribed with the title and 'This title by Genial Permission of Mr Norman Catherine. South African Artist' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
60 by 90 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

After an unsuccessful attempt at an exhibition career in the 1950s and early 1960s, Robert Hodgins worked as an art critic and university lecturer. He retired from the art department of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1983 and committed himself to painting. A survey of his work was mounted in Grahamstown in 1986. A year later he began his lengthy professional association with dealer Linda Givon and the Goodman Gallery. This lot was originally offered on an exhibition at the gallery and tracks a lesser-known aspect of the painter's creative associations with artists represented by the Goodman Gallery. As is well known, Hodgins often collaborated with Deborah Bell and William Kentridge. But he also worked with Norman Catherine, for instance producing an enigmatic double portrait: each artist painted an interpretive study of the other; the two portraits, both in oil, function as one work. This lot is not a collaborative work, but nonetheless speaks of Hodgins' spirit of camaraderie, even when producing a resolutely Hodgins-esque work depicting two rudimentary figures on a typically flattened, monochromatic plane.





379

## Robert Hodgins

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

### *Girls in the Grass*

signed, dated 2000 and inscribed with the title and 'released by me 27/5/07' on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
90 by 120 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

Whether fully described or roughly delineated in a few brushstrokes, Robert Hodgins' idiosyncratic treatment of the human figure was functionally rooted in the expressionist tradition. An assiduous student of western modernism, Hodgins drew inspiration from the scathing caricatures of George Grosz, fraught figuration of Francis Bacon, and sardonic optimism and exuberant colouration of later Philip Guston. The present lot, made after a personal trip to the Transkei, hints at the painter's familiarity with Otto Müller, a first-generation German expressionist known for his many lyrical studies of female nudes and bathers. Hodgins, a gay man, rarely produced female nudes. His elementary description of the three female figures and bold colour palette functionally deracialises his subjects and mitigates the latent exoticism. The lot typifies his painterly mission to reconcile 'the abstract and expressive life of the paint' with 'the volatile suggestion of representation,'<sup>1</sup> without forsaking the agency of the other.

1. Ivor Powell, *Robert Hodgins*, Johannesburg: Robert Hodgins, 1996, p.6







380

**Keith Alexander**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

***Petrified Land***

signed and dated 87

acrylic on canvas

155 by 209 cm

**R700 000 – 1 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Barloworld Collection

**LITERATURE**

David Robbins (2000). *Keith Alexander: The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers. Illustrated in colour on page 69.

381

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Some Years Later*

signed, dated 2006, inscribed with  
the title and medium on the reverse

oil on canvas

45 by 45 cm

R150 000 – 200 000





382

**Edoardo Villa**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

*Fortress Figure II*

signed, dated 1992 and  
indistinctly numbered

bronze

height: 91 cm

R300 000 – 400 000





383

**Keith Alexander**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

***Kolmanskop in Fog***

signed and dated 83; inscribed with the  
title in another hand on the reverse

oil on canvas  
90 by 120,5 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

**PROVENANCE**

Barloworld Collection

**LITERATURE**

David Robbins (2000). *Keith Alexander:  
The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg:  
Jonathan Ball Publishers. Listed on  
page 233.



384

**Simon Stone**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1952–

*The Cave*

signed and dated 2012

oil on panel

100 by 78 cm

R100 000 – 150 000











385

**Karel Nel**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

*Inventory*

signed, dated 1996–97

mixed media on paper

100 by 180 cm

**R300 000 – 400 000**

A bird's eye view of a complex group of objects are scattered across a surface transparently underscored and structured by a series of coloured squares. The work challenges traditional notions of still life painting usually set on a horizontal table surface. Nel's interest in the complex nature, the origins and 'lives' of objects is central to the making and reading of this piece. Titled, *Inventory*, it alludes to a drawing and engagement with many objects collected on various of his travels. For him seems to become a way of engaging the object by drawing it and creating a visual lexicon, an inventory, of significant objects. Rich and radiant colour exudes from the many series of unusual and modest objects, at times defining their very nature while at others obscuring them by the ambiguity of the intensity of the colour fields.

The horizontality of the surface is constantly challenged, a small blue and white Ming bowl tips precariously in the center of the work while a flattened Chinese Pi-disk with its dark center punches a hole in the middle of the drawing. Next to it leans a pointed green Thai tile, collected from the restoration of the roof of the great Royal Palace in Bangkok. Two small skull-like terracotta forms in the bottom right hand corner, one elevated on a small transparent plexi slab, are archaic Italian whistles collected many years before in Rome. A wooden conical spindle found near the hill site of the Oracle in Delphi in Greece abuts the small Ming bowl. The series of seemingly disconnected objects together create a tracery of connections of Nel's itinerant and searching life. Ghostly green leaves, a leitmotif of many of his works, are scattered casually across the surface of this mysterious and complex still life.



386

**John Meyer**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

*Schoonspruit Valley (W. TvI)*

signed

mixed media on canvas

149 by 242 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection





387

**John Meyer**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

*Miner's Cottage Pilgrim's Rest*

signed and dated 1979; engraved with the artist's name and the title on a plaque adhered to the frame  
mixed media on canvas  
117 by 177 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

#### PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection

John Meyer is regarded as the leading figure in the hyper-realist movement in South Africa. Born in 1942, Meyer became a professional painter in 1972. Meyer's representational painting appears to capture the essence of the land so accurately that the viewer senses a familiar place with wonder, yet what he presents are strikingly real illusions, ultimately invented.

In this fantastic landscape Meyer dramatically captures the isolated cottage with its emphatic red roof and aquamarine walls, set against the vast emptiness of the dune-like rolling hills. The contradictions of his illusionary realism are captivating as Meyer builds each layer of tension or emotion creating a credible, charged and tangible panorama.

388

**Brett Murray**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1961–

*The Party vs. The People*

painted bronze

height: 56 cm

**R280 000 – 340 000**



TWO VIEWS OF LOT 388

The present lot was first exhibited on Brett Murray's solo exhibition, *Hail to the Thief*, held at the Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, in 2010. Billed as a continuation of Murray's 'acerbic attacks on abuses of power, corruption and political dumbness',<sup>1</sup> the exhibition was primarily composed of wall-hung sculptures, mixed-media text pieces and silkscreen graphics based on anti-apartheid posters. This lot was one of two anthropomorphic bronze sculptures prominently displayed at the centre of the gallery. The stunted form, curvilinear features and graphic styling of the sculpture are hallmarks of Murray's output and harken back to his earliest professional work, notably *Fat Sculptures* (1991), painted resin sculptures depicting various animals including apes.

Murray is a graduate of the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town where he was mentored by the modernist sculptor Bruce Arnott. His MFA exhibition in 1989 was made up of

painted resin sculptures depicting various white authority figures, including policemen, soldiers and potentates. The reduced formal language of these early sculptures bear out the strong influence of Arnott. But Murray's early sculptures also heralded a practice marked by strong social commentary and use of pop iconography. Whether working in resin, steel or – since 2001 – bronze, Murray's sculptural practice remains anchored in the figure and the complications of being a social being.

The polished-bronze animal figures that feature prominently in his mature practice were first introduced in his 2006 exhibition, *Sleep*, which included squat interpretations of a donkey, gorilla and pig. In a 2017 interview, Murray spoke of how his 'little short fat' sculptures are both autobiographical, quoting his stout physical form, and informed by the graphic simplicity of Asian vinyl toys.<sup>2</sup> The action

depicted in the present lot is self-evident, as is the artist's criticism of the post-Mbeki political order. It bears noting that the present lot was also exhibited on Murray's controversial 2014 exhibition, *Hail to the Thief II*, at Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg. A sequel to the artist's earlier Cape Town exhibition, it included a satirical painting portraying President Jacob Zuma with his genitals exposed. The artist received death threats, his exhibition was picketed, the gallery served a legal injunction, and the painting ultimately vandalised, twice on the same day. Murray however remains true to the arc of his career and continues to produce bronze sculptures offering strident allegories of contemporary life.

<sup>1</sup> Press release for *Hail to the Thief*, 20 November 2010, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Matthews, 'Coal mine canary Brett Murray shows the elephant in room', *Business Day*, 29 March 2017







389

**John Meyer**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

*Above Sterkfontein*

signed; inscribed with the title on the reverse

mixed media on board

56 by 79 cm

**R350 000 – 500 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Barloworld Collection





390

**John Meyer**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

*Karoo Sluice*

signed; signed with the artist's initials,  
dated July 1976 and inscribed with  
the title on the reverse  
mixed media on board  
55 by 110 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

Barloworld Collection

391

**David Shepherd**

BRITISH 1931–2017

***Mother and Calf***

signed and dated '96  
oil on board, in the artist's  
hand-painted frame  
60 by 90 cm

**R250 000 – 350 000**

Sadly, the artist died on  
20 September 2017 at the  
age of 86.







David Shepherd '96