





The Wanderers Club, Illovo, Johannesburg  
4 June 2018 – 8 pm

## **South African and International Art**

Session 3  
Lots 250–325

Lot 263 Alexis Preller *Consider the Lizard* (detail)

250

**Sir William Nicholson**

BRITISH 1872–1949

*Alcázar Estrade, Sevilla*

signed; dated 1933 and inscribed with the title on the reverse; inscribed with the title on a Leicester Galleries label and South African National Gallery label adhered to the reverse  
oil on canvasboard  
31,5 by 40 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Formerly the property of Lady Florence Philips (1863–1940), Vergelegen, Somerset West. Purchased from the estate sale, 1942.

**EXHIBITED**

Leicester Galleries, London,  
*Exhibition of Works by William Nicholson*,  
1934, catalogue number 94;  
South African National Gallery, Cape  
Town, Friends of the South African  
National Gallery, catalogue number 55.



Sir William Nicholson was an extremely versatile British artist. He began his career as a graphic designer alongside his brother-in-law, James Pryde, and from 1893-1898 they produced posters, prints and signage under the name of 'J & W Beggarstaff'. In 1900, following the recommendation of the American artist James Whistler, Nicholson began to focus his attention exclusively on painting.

Although he was initially best known for commissioned portraits of wealthy patrons, his landscape and still life subjects became synonymous with his output. The artist travelled extensively, visiting America, Europe and South Africa and was working in Spain in the early 1930s when this work was executed.

The Alcázar palace in Seville is a lasting vestige of Spain's Moorish past and one of the most celebrated historic structures in Andalucía. This painting depicts the Estanque

der Mercurio, a large pond presided over by Diego de Pesquera's figure of Mercury, cast by Bartolomé Morel in 1576.

In this work Nicholson suggests the heat of the day through a warm colour palette and portrays the materiality of the subject through thick paint application and expressive brushstrokes. The façade with shadowed archway provides a dramatic backdrop to the pool and invites the viewer to venture along the walkway into the composition. The figure on the left gives an added sense of scale to the setting.

Nicholson created the design for the original 1904 production of the play *Peter Pan* and was the illustrator for several books, including Margery Williams' *The Velveteen Rabbit* in 1922. He was the father of the British painter, Ben Nicholson (1894–1982), and he received a knighthood in 1936.



251

## Edouard Vuillard

FRENCH 1868–1940

### *Gauter en plein air*

signed  
oil on board  
49,5 by 39 cm

R1 000 000 – 1 500 000

Edouard Vuillard was part of a secret brotherhood, The Nabis (Hebrew for Prophets) founded in 1888 by French artists and theoreticians Maurice Denis (1870–1943) and Paul Sérusier (1864–1927). Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, arguably the two most famous members of the group, joined a couple of years later. The group basically objected to the photographic naturalism taught by most French art academies at the time. They preferred a strong spiritual element in their art and in this regard, their work can be related to the Nazarenes in Germany and the Pre-Raphaelites in England. Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), chief mentor of the Nabis, famously taught art classes *en plein air* and members were struck by his manner: 'How do you see those trees? They are yellow. Well then, put down yellow. And that shadow is rather blue. Render it with pure aquamarine. Those red leaves? Use vermillion.'<sup>1</sup> When Sérusier showed the group his resultant painting after the class, it seemed so daring and original that they believed it exuded mystical powers. Considering the shades of yellow and blue in the current lot, Vuillard could well have attended Gauguin's class.

Vuillard is best known for his portraiture and his intimate, domestic interiors. His usual subject matter was women and children huddled around a table in a dining room. Characteristic of these interiors is the fact that perspective seems to be obviated: the wall paper in the background has the same patterning as the cloth on the table and the carpet in the foreground, resulting in an overall uniform surface devoid of any sense of perspective. The present lot moves the group of people from an interior into *plein air*, but ironically rendered it as abstract as the interiors. Nature is as intimate as an interior. Small wonder that Vuillard is known today as one of the French Intimists of the late-19th century.

<sup>1</sup> Amy Dempsey (2002). *The Essential Encyclopaedic Guide to Modern Art: Styles, Schools and Movements*, London: Thames & Hudson, page 51.









252

**Edouard Vuillard**

FRENCH 1868–1940

*La Lecture sous les arbres à Amfreville*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium on a Dennis Hotz Fine Art gallery label adhered to the reverse

pastel and pencil on paper

26,5 by 38 cm

R500 000 – 700 000



253

**Clément Sénèque**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1896–1930

*Les Aiguilles de Warens*

signed and dated 24

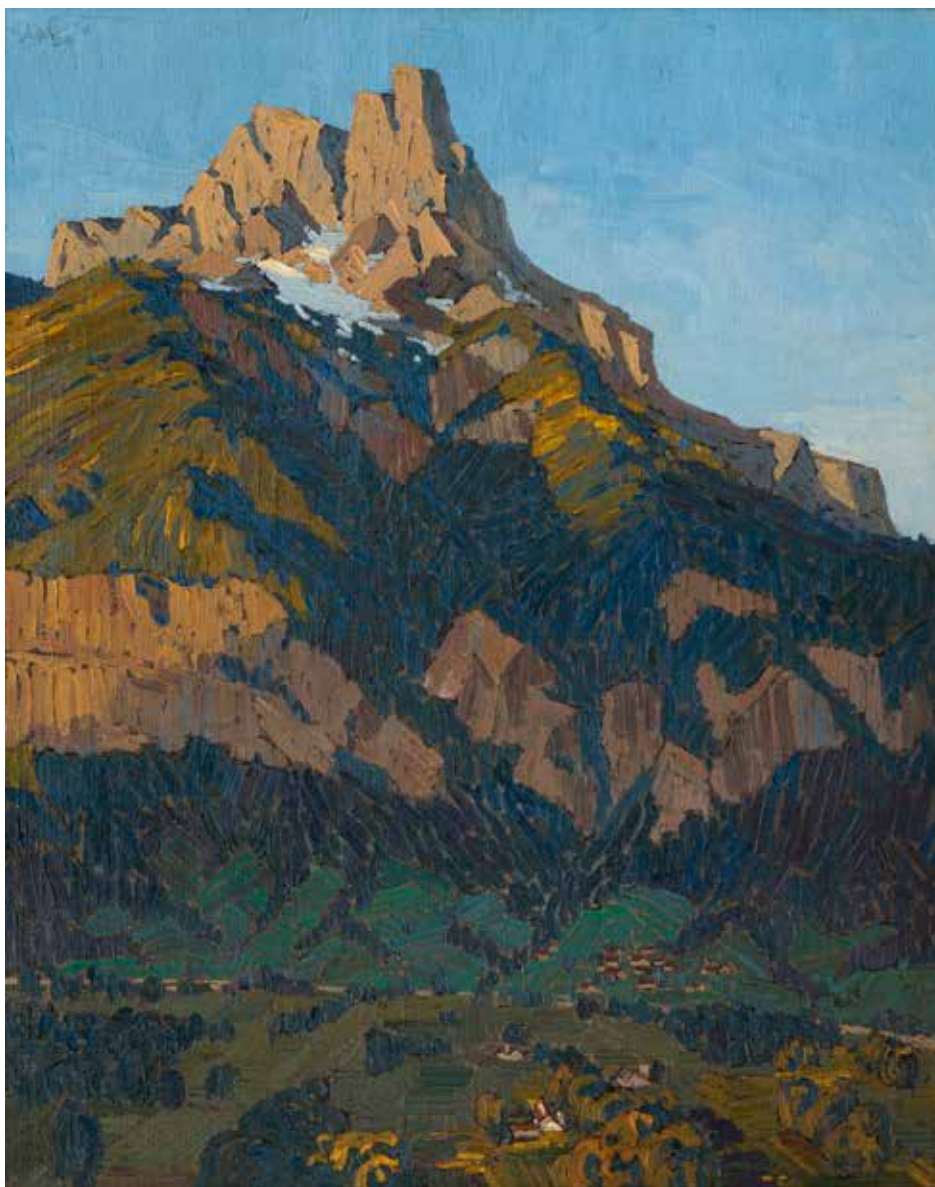
oil on canvas

98 by 79 cm

**R90 000 – 120 000**

Clément Sénèque, the gifted, Durban-raised painter-architect, moved to Paris in 1921. He enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts and, while participating in several Paris salons, and staging a solo show at the Maison des Artistes in 1924, remained under the sway of the architect and town planner, Alfred Agache. After marrying in Paris, he produced a small, beautiful and honeymoon-inspired group of French Alpine oils, to which Lot 264 belongs. No doubt aware of post-war avant-gardes, Sénèque reduced his mountainside to innumerable, dense, colour-shifting strips of paint. Remarkably, the steep ascent of the alp is suggested by nothing other than short, angled brushstrokes: shadow still seems to settle in the chasms and along the ridges, but the peak catches the sunlight as it should.

Sénèque returned to Durban mid-1925, perhaps in the same month, coincidentally, that Pierneef began his eye-opening tour of Europe. Having spent time in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Bruges, Dusseldorf, Berlin and Munich, and having met the influential Willem van Konijnenburg and Anton Hendriks, Pierneef returned to South Africa early in 1926, via the north and east coasts of Africa. Lot 254 would have been painted on this return journey, and catches the artist's on-board view from the freighter, *SS Toba*, across to Algiers. A related drawing survives, thankfully, and remains part of the Pierneef archive at the Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria. Out-and-out seascapes by the artist are of course particularly rare. *Kus van Algiers* brings to mind another example – a view towards the Sierra Nevada off the Spanish Coast, now at La Motte – which would have been sketched only days prior to the present lot.





254

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Kus van Algiers*

signed; dated 1926 and inscribed  
with the title on the reverse

oil on board

20 by 30 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

**NOTE**

Signed posthumously by May Pierneef,  
the artist's wife.



255

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Willows, 1918***

signed and dated 1918

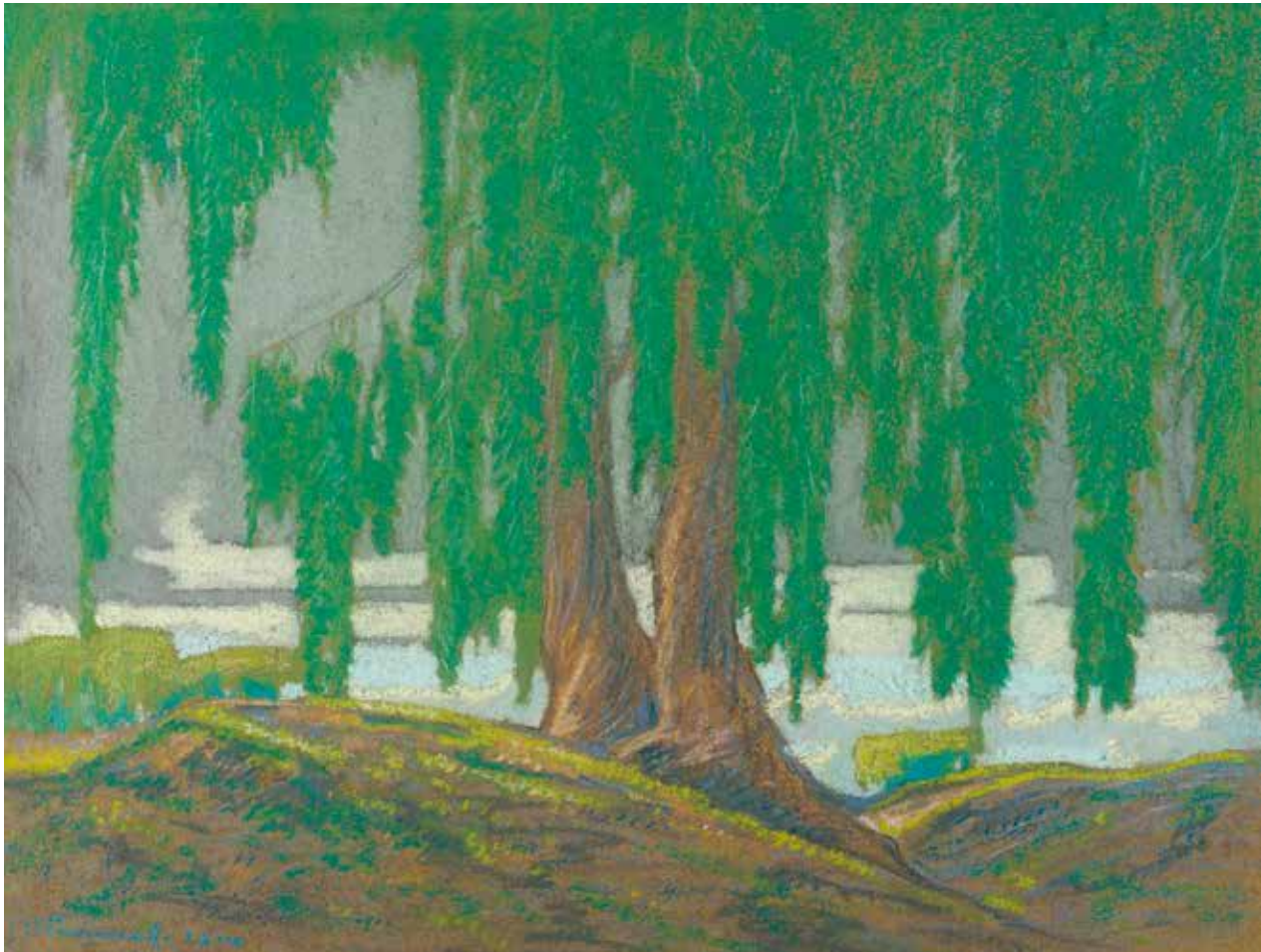
pastel on paper

33 by 44,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

JH Pierneef is perhaps best known for his still, sky-stretching acacias in the veld, trees that more often than not formed a beautiful, natural tracery against his chosen skyscape. But Henk's early passion was for the Highveld willow tree. Whether endlessly sketching the example that grew in his garden on De Waal Street, Pretoria, or others along the Apies River, the artist was enthralled by the tree's ever-changing silhouette, its seasonal transformations, and its decorative potential. 'The willow is the most beautiful tree that I know', he declared as early as 1911, having depicted the tree in a number of linocuts that went on show that year in the first exhibition of *The Individualists* at the Pretoria Town Hall.' By the time of his first solo exhibition at the JH de Bussy Building in 1913, moreover, the recurrence of the motif, albeit it in different styles and media, allowed a delighted reviewer to recognise and then admire his 'cult of the willow'.<sup>2</sup>

*Continued on page 211*



256

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Willows, 1914***

signed and dated 1914

pastel on paper

33 by 44,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

*Continued from page 210*

Pierneef's enthusiasm for the willow tree continued beyond these early shows. In the present lots, great care goes into the depiction of the cascading leaves; each one seems to get a dash or strike from the artist's blunt lime, yellow and blue pastel sticks. Similarly, it is remarkable that contour and shadow appear from the short strokes of green, brown and lilac in the foregrounds. The decorative quality of the negative spaces is particularly striking, and is emphasised by cross-hatched areas of electric blue, icy white and grey.

<sup>1</sup> PG Nel (ed.) (1990). *JH Pierneef: His Life and His Work*, Johannesburg: Peskor, page 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



257

**Gregoire Boonzaier**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

*Genadendal Mission Station  
near Caledon*

signed and dated 1940

oil on canvas

50 by 76 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

LITERATURE

Sandy Shoolman (ed.) (2007). *Birth of the Modernist Body*,  
Johannesburg: Graham's Fine Art Gallery. Illustrated in  
colour on page 107.



258

**Hugo Naudé**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1868–1941

*Farm, Worcester*

signed

oil on board

24,5 by 37 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



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259

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

*Spring – Namakwaland*

signed and dated 1933; engraved with the artist's name,  
the date and the title on a plaque adhered to the reverse  
gouache on card

36,5 by 54 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired in 1990 from Frieda van Schalckwyk,  
Pretoria-based art dealer.



260

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Old Harbour, Hermanus*

signed

oil on canvas

45,5 by 54,5 cm

R200 000 – 240 000



261

**Erik Laubscher**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

*Still Life with Bowl and Vessel*

signed and dated '63

oil on board

50 by 59,5 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

Erik Laubscher produced numerous still lifes throughout his career, even after his decisive embrace of abstraction following a holiday to Bushman's River Mouth in 1953. Stylistically diverse, they track his evolution as a painter and abiding commitment to this ostensibly confining painterly genre. Trained in London and Paris, Laubscher's earliest still lifes are in a mannerist School of Paris style and reflect the influence of Bernard Buffet, a fashionable painter of the 'miserabilist' school of French expressionism. Laubscher's infatuation with Buffet was short-lived.

'In the last few paintings I did in Paris there was a big shift towards more colour, away from the subdued, Buffet-type greys and greens of the New Realists,' recalled Laubscher in 2008.<sup>1</sup> His updated palette included brilliant reds, fleshy pinks and varying registers of yellow and green. Colour is an elemental aspect of Laubscher's work after his return to South Africa in 1951. His reds especially possess a remarkable vitality and visual energy that is not easily reproduced in a photograph.

Compositionally, this lot bears out Laubscher's refusal of 'perspective gimmicks' and habit of flattening the picture plane.<sup>2</sup> A quintessential modernist gesture, objects are horizontally and vertically rendered in a unified plane: the table here is portrayed from an aerial view, the vessel is seen in side view, and the fruit bowl is viewed from a slightly elevated vantage that is between the two previous extremes. Laubscher perfected this technique in his still lifes from the 1950s, notably *Still Life with Coffee Pot and Fruit* from 1952 (sold for R2 273 600 by Strauss & Co in March 2018). Where that earlier picture is noteworthy for its stylistic transition away from Buffet and abundant use of patterning and visual decoration, here Laubscher's emphasis is solidly on form and volume.

This updated approach is perhaps unsurprising: Laubscher was now gleaning his insights from abstractedly portraying South Africa's landscapes. In a 1965 *Cape Times* interview Laubscher described how his treatment of landscape was still informed by a two-dimensional understanding of pictorial space: 'The moment you use perspective your eye travels to a certain point and there it stops and the painting becomes static. I am more concerned with expressing infinite space.'<sup>3</sup> The flattened plane evoked in this composition is also the expression of an infinite space. There is no hierarchy of subjects or forms; everything, including the obviously mimetic elements, are integrated into a unified whole.

Notwithstanding these formal innovations, this lot is recognisably a still life. It differs in this respect from another work from 1963, *Still Life with Black Bowl and Fruit* (sold for R240 000 by Strauss & Co in 2016), a depthless composition dominated by graphically orchestrated blocks of colour that surround a small bowl containing three fruit rendered in sour greens. The green fruit in this lot is of the same tree, perhaps, but the overall impression conveyed by this picture is of a synthesis of colour, form and subject. The composition emerges from a foundation of vivid red, a colour expressive of the optimism and *jouissance* of Laubscher's palette.

1. Hans Fransen (2008). *Erik Laubscher: A Life in Art*, Cape Town: SMAC. Page 261.

2. Stephen Gray (1970). 'Erik Laubscher and Landscape', *Lantern*, Vol. XIX, March 1970. Page 14.

3. *Ibid.*, page 15.

Sean O'Toole



262

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *The Fish*

signed and dated 53  
oil on wood  
20 by 24,5 cm

R600 000 – 900 000



*Fishermen of Beau Vallon*, 1949



*Mozartian Fish*, 1952



*The Gateway*, 1949

Alexis Preller's stylised *The Fish* of 1953 is highly emblematic and of great beauty. The contour-like demarcations and very precise linear quality of the fins relate in some ways to Preller's *Mozartian Fish* of 1952. In *Mozartian Fish* Preller focuses on a more tonal range in the rendition of the fish compared to the subdued colours of the present work, which is set against the rich aquatic tones above the horizon.

In the *Mozartian Fish* Preller alludes to the cello and the vibrations that move beyond the fish. Poetically he shifts the symbolic relationship of the fish and the cello, eliding them into one exquisite symbolic entity. In *The Fish* Preller does something very different as he presents the iconic beauty of the fish as almost flat with a bull's eye-like circular representation for the eye, a device he uses in many of his paintings to amplify the presence of a totemic being.

During Preller's stay in the Seychelles between 1948 and 1949, he revelled in the infinite variety of colour, shapes and forms in and around the islands and produced a number of small studies of local species of fish, birds, plants and fruit. His interest in the decorative properties of these tropical fish had been aroused by the wondrous sights off the coral reefs of Mahé Island. He was captivated by the rainbow hues and harmonies of the shoals of exotic fish, and these play their way through a series of his paintings. After his return from the Seychelles, he painted *Fishermen of Beau Vallon*, 1949, in which we see fish floating within the landscape itself, out of water as exquisite creatures liberated from the oceans.

In the 1953 painting the fish is made monumental by the horizon line above which it floats. In the sky one sees lines with arcs that seem to streak their way like shooting stars or as emblematic spatial markers. Preller creates the fish as a power animal reminiscent of his earlier *Ritual Bull* or *Herd Boy* of 1949. In both instances the bull, like the fish, is surrounded by egrets that in some way act as emblematic indicators of the status of these creatures and validate their totemic significance. The fish is also the source of the qualities that appear in *The Gateway* of 1949 where one of the heads has a fish-like eye, a circular eye that is not human, and one observes how Preller is able to 'migrate' characteristics from one being to another, even to that of the human figure itself.

As the bull represents the power animal of the southern African region, so the fish inevitably becomes the sacred and symbolic emblem of the Seychelles. Preller delves into the symbolic nature of the animal world and how this relates to the human psyche as he explores how in many cultures the highly revered animal becomes deeply associated with the consciousness of human beings.

*Karel Nel and Marion Dixon*



263

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *Consider the Lizard*

signed and dated '55; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on a Pretoria Art Museum label adhered to the reverse oil on canvas  
57,5 by 69 cm

R3 000 000 – 4 000 000

#### PROVENANCE

Vesta van Rensburg Collection, Pretoria.  
Purchased by Alexis Preller from Volks Art Auctions, Pretoria, July 1969.  
Estate Late Alexis Preller, Volks Art Auctions, 3 March 1978, Lot 8.

#### EXHIBITED

XXVIII Biennale Internazionale, 1956;  
Pretoria Art Museum, Arcadia Park, *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, 24 October – 26 November 1972.

#### LITERATURE

Volks Art Auctions (1978). *Preller-Massyn Collections*, Pretoria: Volks Art Auctions. Illustrated on page 3.

*'For me what is so beautiful is that there is this line, the dark line across the stage, but then it becomes white and enlivens the horizon line.'* Karel Nel

Alexis Preller painted *Consider the Lizard* in 1955 directly after completing *All Africa* (1953–1955), the large-scale mural commissioned by the Receiver of Revenue (now South African Revenue Service) for its building in Johannesburg. This complex mural consisting of three panels forms the backdrop to many of Preller's subsequent works, as is the case in *Consider the Lizard*.

In this painting the emblematic image left of centre, that of a flattened radiating form, seems to rest on a spiked tripod that links very strongly to the image on the far right-hand side of *All Africa*, as does the lizard and the leaf-like forms that resemble spears or sharp objects jutting out on the left-hand side. The flattened form represents a kind of insignia featuring a lizard or small crocodile, often symbolic of the male presence in African art.

This painting is characterised by beautiful russets, browns, dark maroon-toned browns and bronze, with the gentle pink and a hint of light azure blue given to the hieratic figure on the right. The shift in the background from the russet to a coral-like colour seems to stem from a shadow being cast by light streaming in from the side.

Although the painting may appear flat, it seems to imply a stage-like space: when Preller left for London in 1934 he did not necessarily intend to study painting but

was also seeking to further his deep interest in the theatre. He remained captivated both by the theatrical and by the spatial qualities of painting, and in this 1955 work he makes strong reference to both these pursuits. The hieratic woman that appears on the far right-hand side of this painting, as though she is about to step into the picture from the wings, is a direct quotation from Preller's famous painting called *Hieratic Women*, painted in the same year, 1955, which forms part of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) collection.

Above the head of the hieratic women in both paintings three very beautiful stars appear. These stars allude to Nut, the ancient Egyptian goddess of the sky, who is often depicted on the ceilings of Egyptian temples. The side-on pose of the hieratic woman also makes direct reference to representation in Egyptian art. The woman in *Consider the Lizard* holds a lyre under her arm, and this figure subsequently reappears in Preller's *Woman with a Lyre* of 1956. This bodily form is also transposed into his *Primavera* of 1955 and 1956, confirming Preller's deep interest in the notion of a powerful symbolic female presence.

When one considers these works together one understands the fugue-like quality of Preller's work where the same images or the same compositions are used again but the changing scale, or the changing colour or background alters the very nature of the work itself.

*Karel Nel and Marion Dixon*



*All Africa*, 1953–55



*Hieratic Women*, 1955



*Primavera*, 1956





264

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Camp near Roodeplaat*

stamped with the artist's signature

oil on board

18 by 28 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

265

**Maurice van Essche**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*Seated Nude*

signed and dated 48

oil on canvas

73 by 52 cm

R200 000 – 300 000







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266

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

***Near Amanzimtoti***

signed and dated 1936  
gouache on paper  
50 by 62 cm

R800 000 – 1 200 000



Amanzimtoti on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, probably in the 1930s (photograph illustrated in Karel Schoeman (1994) *Irma Stern: The Early Years, 1894–1933*, South African Library, page 76)



1936



267

**Irmin Henkel**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1921-1977

*Still Life with Plums*

signed and dated 76

oil on canvas

59 by 49 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



268

**Irmin Henkel**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1921-1977

*Still Life with Poppies*

signed and dated 76

oil on canvas

54,5 by 64 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



269

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Homestead*

signed and dated 1920

casein

29,5 by 46,5 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired from the artist by the present owner's parents

Pierneef's rare, jewel-like caseins have always been sought after, and there are few, if any, spectacular examples that date back as far as 1920. The present lot, painted in that year, shows a gabled, Cape-style homestead nestled amongst well-established trees. Its fields in the foreground have been cut short by winter sun or grazing, while a dome of clouds dominates the sky. The mountains on the horizon – orange and terracotta when catching the light, and mauve in shadow – might set the scene in the Cape, but the artist's travel itinerary between 1919 and 1920, finding him in Heidelberg, Bloemfontein, Pretoria and Potchefstroom, makes this unlikely.

Although his painting career had always been front of mind, once resigned from his teaching post at the Heidelberg Normal College in June 1919 (having grown frustrated by the Eurocentric syllabus), Pierneef set himself up as a full-time artist, and continued his active interest in the development and promotion of Afrikaans culture through lectures, poem and magazine illustrations, and even set designs for Afrikaans theatre productions. After showing work in Bloemfontein towards the end of 1919, and assisting in April 1920 with the staging in Pretoria of *Die Koerantskrywers*, a play by his friend and later biographer JFW Grosskopf, an exhibition of Pierneef's works opened in June 1920 at the Potchefstroom Town Hall. Whether or not the present lot was included in this selection is anyone's guess, but the critic reporting for *Het Westen*, delighted by the show's quality and variety, might have had a work like *Homestead* in mind during one of his more colourful descriptions: in Pierneef's paintings are 'things we have all seen ourselves', he wrote, 'but never seen in such a way as this artist brings before our eyes!'

This casein, with its clear outlines in Indian ink, exemplifies two of Pierneef's defining strengths: his flair for unusual if peaceful colour combinations is made apparent, as is his sure, clean, uncomplicated line. The brushwork is dazzling: the flicks and spots of flash-drying indigo, mustard, apricot and emerald green seems instinctive, even if the still harmony of the composition suggests otherwise.

<sup>1</sup> PG Nel (ed.) (1990). *JH Pierneef: His Life and His Work*, Johannesburg: Peskor, page 56.





270

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Scarecrows*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the medium and the title on a Graham's Fine Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse  
oil on board  
38 by 48,5 cm

**R150 000 – 200 000**

LITERATURE

Sandy Shoolman (ed.) (2008). *The Modern Palimpsest: Envisioning South African Modernity*, Johannesburg: Graham's Fine Art Gallery. Illustrated in colour on page 91.



271

**Frans Oerder**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1867–1944

*Flowers in a Vase*

signed

oil on canvas

55 by 64 cm

R150 000 – 200 000





272

**Freida Lock**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1962

*Shisha Smoking*

signed  
oil on canvas  
50 by 39 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

**NOTES**

In the artist's original Zanzibar frame.

Frieda Lock is best-known for her interiors and still-life studies, but her range of subject matter was much broader. Her early interiors and still-life studies, painted about the time she was a founder member of the New Group in 1938, members of which included such artists as Gregoire Boonzaier, Terence McCaw, Lippy Lipshitz in the Cape, and Walter Battiss up North, are the most sought after on auction. The present lot, a group of three squatting Arab figures, signals that her figure studies are not as uncommon as previously thought. During her lengthy stay in Zanzibar in 1947–49, she completed many portraits of Arab sitters. Inevitably these invite comparison with those of Irma Stern, who visited Zanzibar as early as 1939 and again in 1945. The resemblance between these artists' goes beyond that of subject matter; Lock also framed her paintings in the same type of carved wood examples that Stern used in the 1930s and 40s.

Lock's portraits and figure studies, nevertheless, can hold their own in the company of Stern's. Lock's work stems from a different sensibility. Lock studied in London at the Heatherley School of Art and at the Central School of Art in the early 1930s, rather conservative institutions at the time, and her work is unlike the early work of such contemporary artists as Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. There is no lack of personality, however, in Lock's work. There is certainly a vitality in the manner in which she portrays her figures. The vitality is also evident in Lock's use of colour. She clearly found physical delight in the touch of the brush on canvas and often her canvases are crusty as a result of the use of thick oil paint. She seemed to enjoy the chalky tones obtained from zinc white applied in thick impasto. Undulated white surfaces are clearly visible in the present lot. But her forte resides in the colourful patterns of the carpet in the foreground.



273

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Shingwedzi – Kruger Wildtuin***

signed and dated 55; inscribed with the artist's name, the date and the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

44 by 59 cm

**R1 500 000 – 2 500 000**

Gigantic trees dominate the foreground in Pierneef's *Shingwedzi* painting. They form a veritable proscenium arch, framing a pleasant view of the rest of the landscape in the background. Shingwedzi is a popular Rest Camp in the Kruger National Game Reserve, and it is known of its indigenous trees. The present lot features many of these, such as the Knob Thorn on the right, and an Acacia tree in full bloom on the left. The shrubby, orange-brown trees between these two giants are Mopane trees. Marula trees can be distinguished in the middle ground, while to the right of them is a cluster of Bushwillows. Incidentally, these are considered the 'Big Five' trees in Shingwedzi.

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, for example, 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 Pierneef's large-scale paintings. These are pictures one can walk into and explore.'<sup>1</sup> Pierneef made numerous sketches of trees while criss-crossing the country on his endless painting trips. At least one Pierneef drawing of the Kruger National Game Reserve, titled *Wildtuin* (1928), is known.<sup>2</sup> This date provides an indication of when he was likely to have visited the Reserve, probably for the first time. The present lot is dated 1955, when Pierneef might have visited the Reserve for the last time. It is also possible that he painted this sumptuous landscape from memory, referring to such drawings as the one mentioned above. The drawing includes many of the Knob Thorn trees endemic in the area. It also depicts a herd of Kudu buck, of the very few works in his oeuvre that features animals.

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>3</sup>

1 JFW Grosskopf 1947 *Pierneef: the man and his work*. Van Schaik publishers, page 13.

2 PG Nel (1990). *J H Pierneef: His Life and Work*, Cape Town: Perskor, page 75.

3 Grosskopf (1947), page 13.



274

### Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

#### *Head (Adapting Itself to the Unendurable)*

signed and dated '49  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
44 by 40 cm

R3 000 000 – 4 000 000

#### LITERATURE

Stephan Welz (1989). *Art at Auction in South Africa*, Johannesburg:

AD Donker. Illustrated in colour on page 181.

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009). *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in colour on page 133.

Preller's imposing *Head (Adapting Itself to the Unendurable)* is a magnificent and important work from the artist's celebrated Seychellois period. With its very large, beautiful blue eyes and plump, sensuous lips, *Head (Adapting Itself to the Unendurable)* is in many ways strikingly similar to *The Greek Boy*, another significant work from 1948. The model for both paintings was probably a young man that Preller encountered during his happy and restorative weeks on the Indian Ocean islands.

This Christ-like head, which Preller revisited throughout his career, and which, to the irreligious artist, represented an image of personal confrontation and shifts of consciousness as opposed to devotion, is placed on a plateau that drops away dramatically in the foreground. This flat plane, with mountains only on the horizon, appears desolate, very typical of the context in which Preller placed many of his major subjects. The stormy, dark blue sky, moreover, seems out of keeping with the paradisiacal qualities of the other Seychelles paintings. It is important to recall that while on the islands, and for

the most part contented there, Preller was also wrestling internally with his own sexuality, which troubled him deeply. We might see the present lot therefore as reflecting his intense, often punishing attempts at coming to terms with himself.

The head is enclosed in a transparent shell or visor – an external constraint – that immediately calls to mind those that hover around the *Christ Head* of 1947. Rather unusually, however, the sharp-edged and glass-like visor is accentuated by scarlet, spindly and curving forms, each of which casts its shadows around the head's brow, cheek and neck. These remarkable coils might hint at the crown of thorns in the Christ theme, but they also prompt the viewer to look through the transparent cranium itself into the very epicentre of being, of thought, and of consciousness.

*Head (Adapting Itself to the Unendurable)* is a very powerful, contained and confrontational work, not to mention a vital marker for a post-war moment in Preller's life.

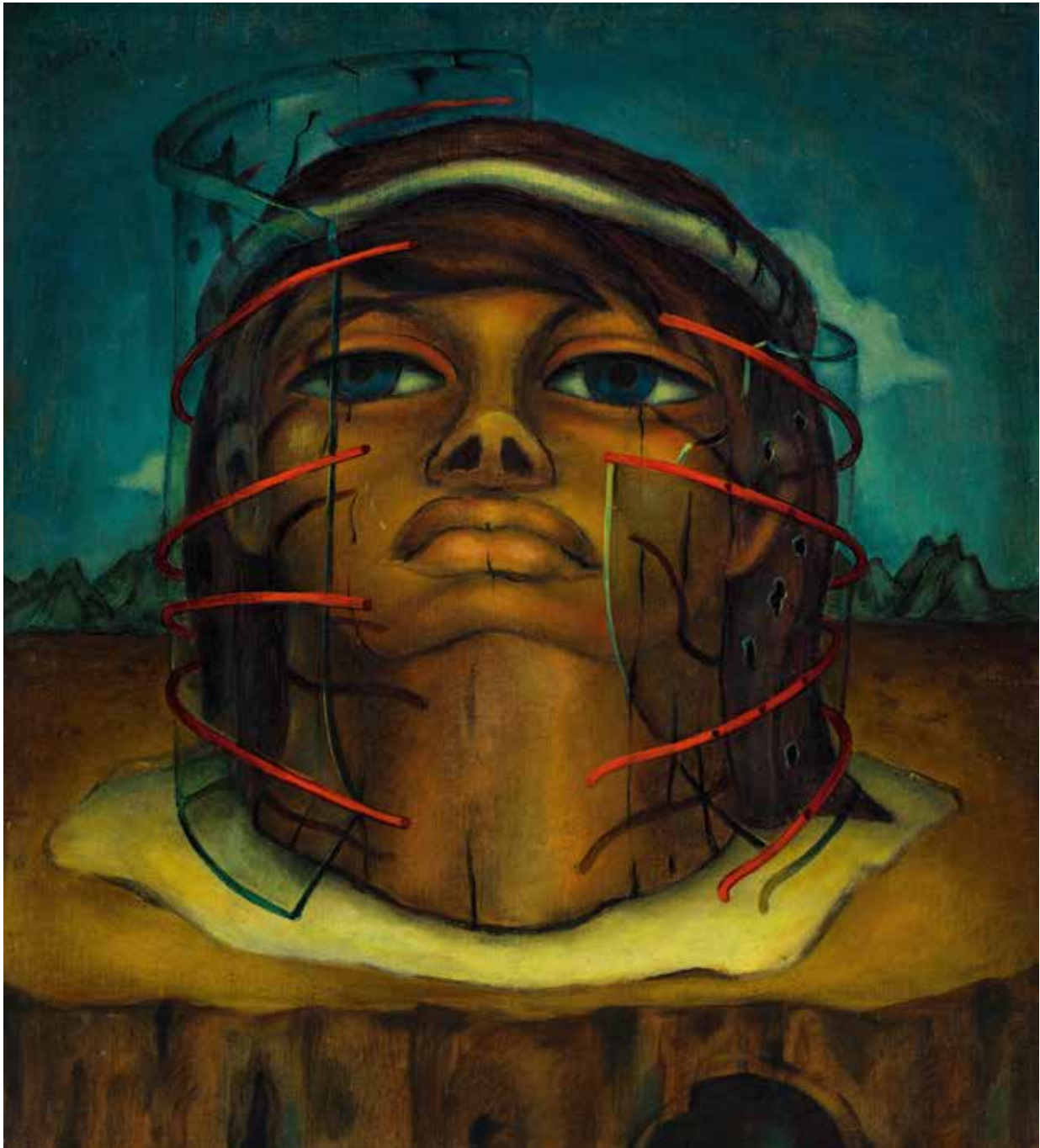
Karel Nel and Alastair Meredith



*The Greek Boy*, 1948



*Christ Head*, 1947



275

**Maurice van Essche**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*Portrait of a Man*

signed

oil on board

32,5 by 25,5 cm

R120 000 – 150 000





276

**Maurice van Essche**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*Carriers*

signed

oil on board

50,5 by 60 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

Wolpe Gallery, Cape Town.







277

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Waterberg*

signed and dated 37

oil on canvas

40 by 50 cm

R800 000 – 1 200 000



278

**Gerard Sekoto**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–1993

***Ndebele Women***

signed

oil on canvas

41 by 33 cm

**R600 000 – 800 000**

*'My subject matter was still South African life, as I had decided to hang on to it so as not to lose roots.'* Gerard Sekoto

Gerard Sekoto's undated *Ndebele Women*, would seem to have been painted shortly after he left South Africa in 1947 for self-imposed exile in Paris. During this time he painted a series of works portraying his cultural roots, the land, huts and fields and the people he had left behind. This included a series of stylised works of people in traditional dress, the Basotho, the Mandebele and, as is the case in this painting, a group of Ndebele women.

Sekoto describes the underlying impetus for these works as follows: 'These were the people with whom I used to live side by side in my youth ... The reason of my stylising at the time came out of fear of the jungles around. Varieties of styles in the new place made me feel stubborn about not losing my personality. I therefore thought to take something apart, hence the rounds and ovals ...'<sup>1</sup> Similar to other works of this period, *Ndebele Women* is a stylised study of rural people in the African landscape. In this case the lines, the composition, the women and the landscape are shaped from the very fluid rounds and ovals that were referred to by Sekoto. The artist confines his palette to the earthy tones of the southern African soil, browns and a burnt orange that shape the landscape and the women here huddled in conversation. The radiant orange outline gives the painting a gorgeous golden glow while the limited palette is further enlivened by the contrasting rich deep blue, black and white, that accentuate the figures and draw the eye towards the centre of the painting.

Sekoto portrayed the dignity of humanity, he himself having survived extreme adversity throughout his life, from his earliest days within a strictly controlled political structure to his personal struggles in his adopted Paris. His subject matter is instilled with an heroic quality. His insight into his fellow human beings within their social environment is profound, and his paintings are subtle commentary on the social, political and economic circumstances of the people living in the country of his birth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Lindop (1988). *Gerard Sekoto*, Randburg: dictum publishing. Page 187 and 189.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page iv.



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279

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *The Storm/The Mapogga Woman*

signed and dated '49; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on a Pretoria Art Museum label adhered to the reverse  
oil on canvasboard  
29,5 by 24,5 cm excluding frame

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

#### PROVENANCE

RA Bernardi.

#### EXHIBITED

Pretoria Art Museum, Arcadia Park, *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, 24 October – 26 November 1972.

#### LITERATURE

Pretoria Art Museum (1972). *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, Pretoria: Pretoria Art Museum. Illustrated in black and white, unpaginated.

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009).

*Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Illustrated in colour on page 143.

Preller was held by the mystique of the Mapogga. He certainly drew heavily from their rituals, architecture and traditional dress to colour his own vision of Africa. That he so consistently returned in his work to their motifs and silhouettes, more often than not from different directions and in different styles, hints as much at his respect for the Ndebele as at his ever-shifting imagination. The present lot, *The Storm*, is a small, early Mapogga work in subdued, translucent colours, painted at a time when the artist's work was enjoying wide exposure both locally and abroad (examples had been included in the *Overseas Exhibition of South African Art* at the Tate, London, and others had toured Italy with the International Art Club). While a sense of natural power and foreboding comes from the title, a sense of immovability and dignity is suggested by the oversized figure that dominates the composition. The conceptually scaled Ndebele woman stands centrally, conically, stylised in the

extreme, and carefully wrapped in a beautiful, striped blanket. Beaded rings and brass bracelets hide the figure's neck, wrists and ankles, her simplified, egg-shaped head sits proudly and still, and a spectacular halation of blue and green light spreads from her form into the sky.

*The Storm*, which might be considered a precursor to the *Grand Mapogga* series from the 1950s, was painted shortly after Preller's return from the Seychelles, Zanzibar and Mombasa, and provides evidence of the artist's preoccupation with distinctly African subject matter. In this regard, the landscape, in which the Ndebele village is so beautifully nestled, takes on particular significance. While the artist often envisioned poetic, internal landscapes, the one in *The Storm*, punctuated by the iconic Ndebele homestead with its *lapas*, passages and decorative walls, is undoubtedly African.

*Karel Nel and Alastair Meredith*



*Grand Mapogga III, 1957*





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280

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*By Pietersburg*

signed and dated 45; inscribed 'Exhibition by J. H. Pierneef,  
Schweickerdt's Galleries, 27th Nov to Dec 7th 1945, Cat. No. 38  
'By Pietersburg ...' on the reverse  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
29 by 39 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

281

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Near Swakopmund*

signed; inscribed with the title on  
the reverse

oil on canvas

91,5 by 72 cm

R150 000 – 200 000





282

**Gerard de Leeuw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–1985

*Dialogue – Tweegesprek*

circa 1976

signed

bronze with a verdigris patina

height: 54 cm, including base

**R200 000 – 300 000**

**LITERATURE**

Fred Scott (ed.) (2012). *Gerard de Leeuw 1912–1985: A Centenary Exhibition*, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg Art Gallery. Another cast from the edition is illustrated in colour on page 30.

Matthys J. Strydom (1979).

*Gerard de Leeuw*, George: Suidkaap-Uitgewery. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on page 107.

**NOTE**

Another cast of this work sold on Strauss & Co's March 2018 sale, Lot 566.



283

**Gerard de Leeuw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–1985

*Praying Rain Bird –  
Biddende Reënvoël*

circa 1976

signed

bronze with a black patina, mounted  
on a bronze base

height: 80 cm, including base

**R150 000 – 200 000**

**LITERATURE**

Fred Scott (ed.) (2012). *Gerard de Leeuw 1912–1985: A Centenary Exhibition*, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg Art Gallery. Another cast from the edition is illustrated in colour on page 26.

Matthys J Strydom (1979). *Gerard de Leeuw*, George: Suidkaap-Uitgewery. Another cast from the edition is illustrated on page 16.

**PROVENANCE**

The artist's family.



284

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Portrait of a Youth*

signed  
oil on board  
47 by 37 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg and Cape Town: Perskor. Illustrated on page 386, catalogue number 1757.



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285

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Landscape with Figure and Ducks*

signed

oil on board

44,5 by 39 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg and Cape Town: Perskor. Illustrated on page 377, catalogue number 1699 with the title *Landscape with Tree, Ducks, Figure, House and Sun*.



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286

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Still Life with  
Nasturtiums*

signed and dated 49  
oil on canvas  
64 by 53 cm

R200 000 – 300 000





287

**Maurice van Essche**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

*La Seine à Bougival Rivière*

signed and dated 38; inscribed with  
the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

53 by 64 cm

**R80 000 – 120 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired from the Van Essche family  
by the current owner.

288

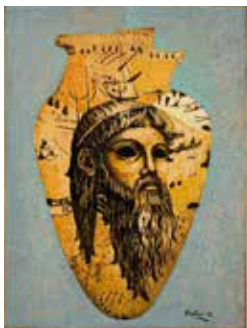
**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

***Poseidon***

*intaglio*, oil on fibreglass  
92,5 by 107 by 23 cm

R3 000 000 – 5 000 000



*Sea Amphora*, 1962

*Poseidon* forms part of Preller's landmark, late-career series of breathtaking, enigmatic and mighty *intaglios*. Cast and painted in 1970, the work has never been exhibited; it was a gift from the artist to close friends, and has remained in the same family collection since it left the artist's studio.

Yet *Poseidon* relates to the group of *intaglios* that was produced during the lead up to Preller's remarkable 1969 exhibition at the Henry Lidchi Gallery in Johannesburg. The show was much anticipated – the public having caught wind of a radical change in the artist's style – and it caused a sensation when it opened. Considerable attention was given to the *intaglio* technique that Preller had pioneered, requiring a resin cast to be lifted from a clay mould and then painted and gold-leafed in such a way that took the work's low, concave relief into account. The results, which the artist described as 'part painting and part sculpture', were certainly spectacular.<sup>1</sup>

Two versions of *Poseidon's* cast were painted in 1970; the other, *Neptune*, taking its title from the Roman name for the same god of the sea. Classical and mythological subjects dominated Preller's *intaglios*, inspired in the most part by a trip to Greece, Turkey and Italy towards the end of 1968. There he had been moved by the nude, sculpted, ideal beauty and symbolic potential of the archaic, *kouroi* figures, and had been awestruck in Athens in front of the

bronze *Poseidon of Artemision*, the face of which he had used in his earlier, small-scale *Sea Amphora*. Perhaps only in Preller's imagination could the sea-god's recognisable profile be so dramatically reinvented into a work like *Poseidon*.

*Poseidon's* disembodied, bearded head, with its beautiful, golden plait, floats in an aquamarine background. A flat, complex coiffure slopes down from the forehead, while atop it a sweeping element implies swift, sleek movement. As a counterpoint to the series of sky-floating angel heads that Preller unveiled at the Henry Lidchi Gallery, *Poseidon*, more appropriately, glides through a glinting, translucent, oceanic world.

While at first glance the present lot resembles a hollow, helmet mask, the slender, electric-blue eye seems to register the viewer's presence. In this way *Poseidon* takes on the power of an archaeological relic. It is no coincidence, moreover, that it calls to mind, in both its form and its intensity, the golden, hammered and chased *Mask of Agamemnon* (1550–1500 BC) in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

<sup>1</sup> Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009). *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Page 280.

Karel Nel and Alastair Meredith







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289

**Peter Clarke**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

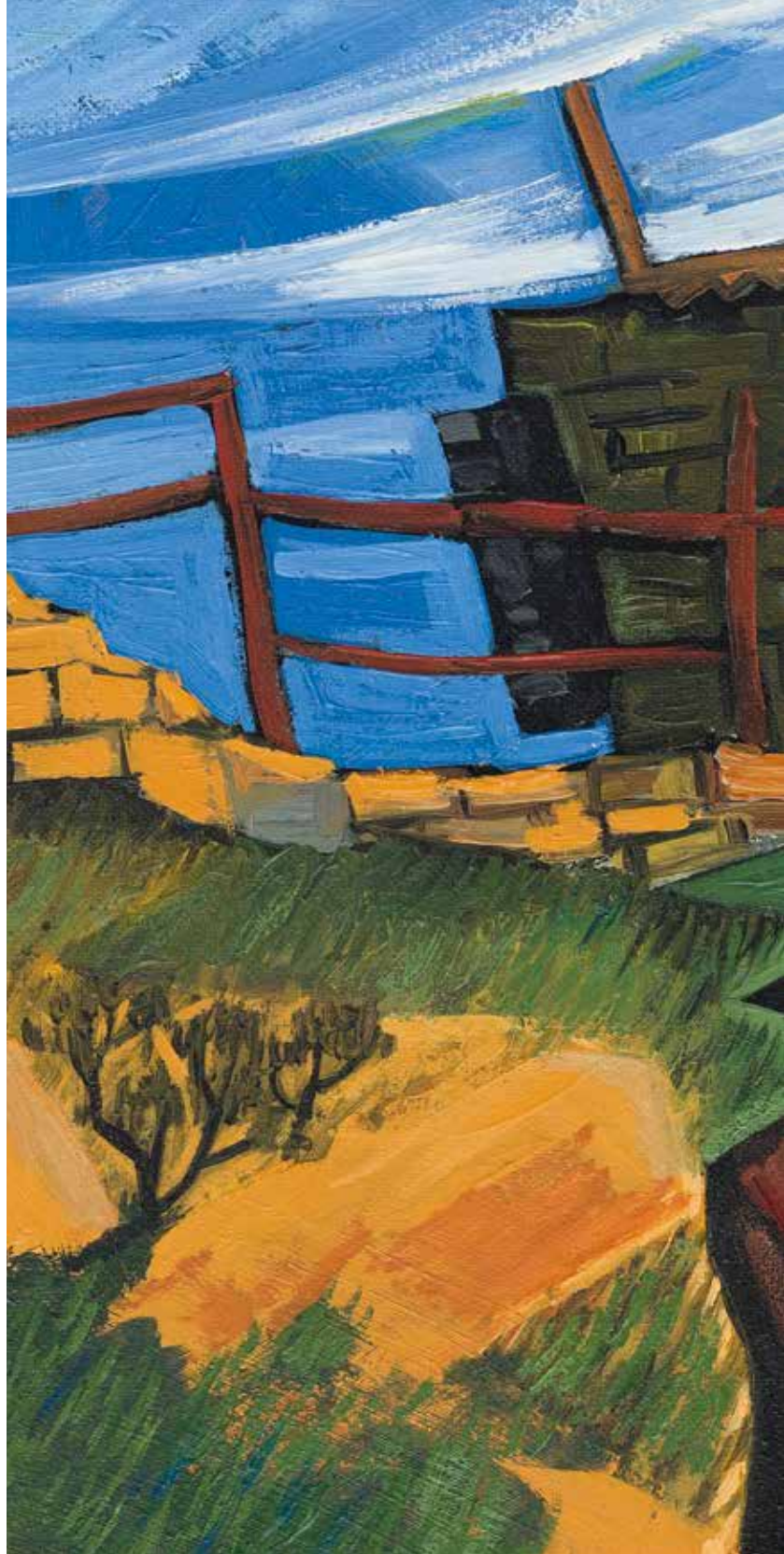
*Goatherd*

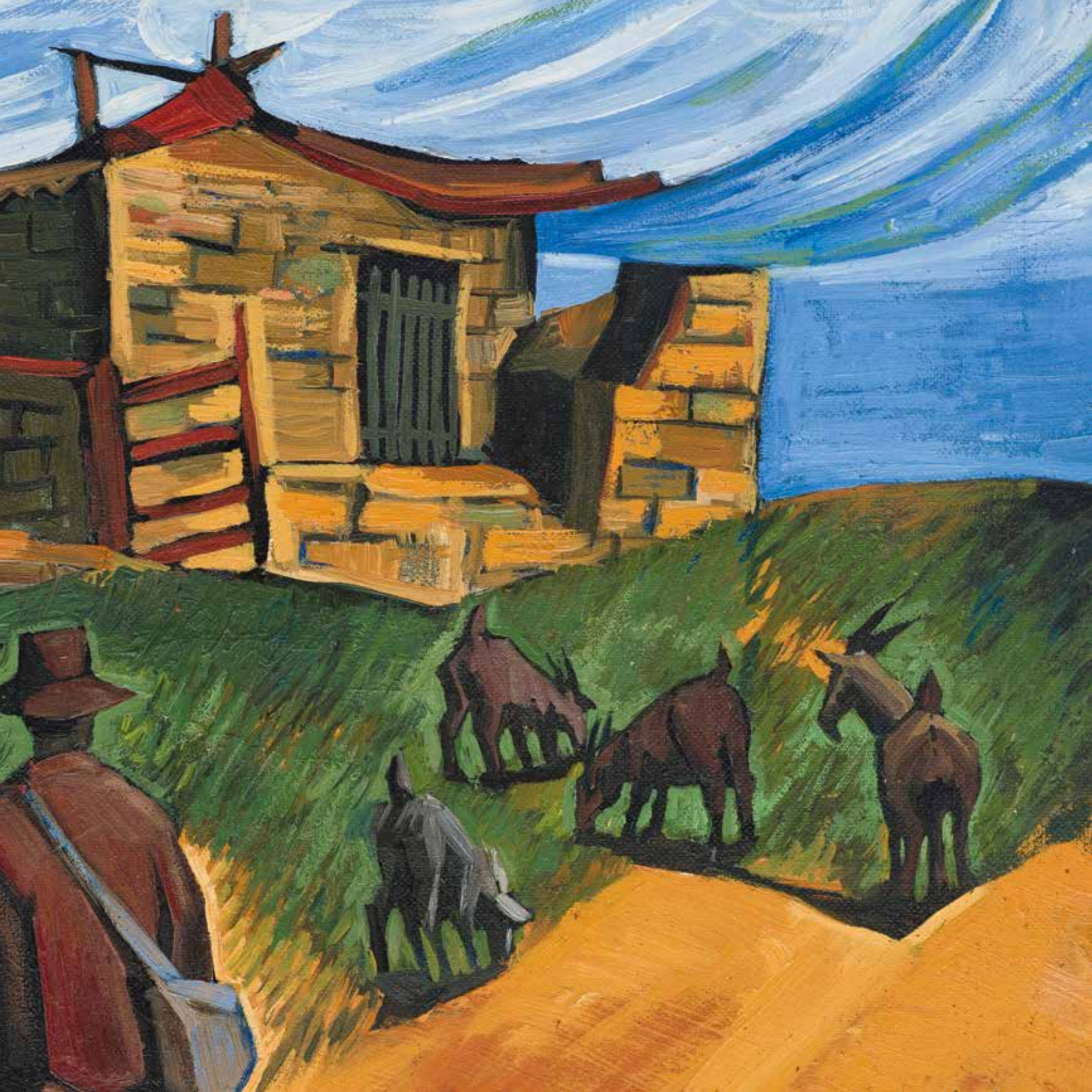
signed and dated 30.9.1964; inscribed with title and date on a label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvasboard

41 by 59 cm

R500 000 – 700 000





290

**Sydney Kumalo**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

*Tree Trunk Woman  
(Kneeling Figure)*

1965

signed

bronze

height: 35 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



291

**Lucas Sithole**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1931–1994

*Elongated Figure*

signed

carved wood

height: 70 cm

**R300 000 – 500 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Gallery 101, Johannesburg.

*'Sithole's method of sensed realism combined with expressive distortions, his concentration of surface manipulation and the play of light and shadow over the figures, emerge and merge with an iconography of the human being, the human condition and animals.'*<sup>1</sup>

The elegant and graceful lines of the tall, streamlined and beautifully carved *Elongated Figure* with its outstretched arms and legs exemplifies Sithole's mastery of his medium and his remarkable ability to be guided by the shape of the wood and to coax from it such a beautifully formed sculpture. In contrast to the flowing lines and silky finish of the honey-coloured indigenous wood the face of the figure is more robustly carved, creating pronounced shadows.

<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Martin (1993). *Lucas Sithole: Our Art 4 = Ons Kuns 4*. Pretoria: Pretoria Foundation for Education Science and Technology. Pages 178–185.



292

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *Self-portrait as an Old Man*

signed and dated '50  
oil on canvas  
50,5 by 60,5 cm

R3 000 000 – 5 000 000

*'Nothing in Preller means anything specific, you can't fix the meaning, but it creates a penumbra of meaning that he pulls together in poetic ways.'* Karel Nel

It is quite uncanny how Alexis Preller in his *Self-portrait as an Old Man* of 1950, painted 25 years before his death in 1975, captures the thoughtful expression, grey hair and moustache of his older self with such remarkable acuity. This likeness is borne out in photographs taken of the artist during the last years of his life, particularly the one taken during the construction of the Mudif, illustrated here.

Alexis Preller rarely painted himself and, apart from *Self-portrait as an Old Man*, there are only two other known self-portraits by him. These include an early *Self-portrait* of 1940, in which Preller depicts himself alongside an easel, exhibited on his 1972 exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum (catalogued as number 10) and another painting where the artist has painted himself in front of a very early version of his African heads series (no illustration found of this work). This self-portrait of 1950 also makes strong reference to Preller's earlier painting, *Symbols on a Beach (Homage à Bosch)* of 1949 painted just after his Seychellois period (1948–9).

In this 1950 self-portrait Preller presents two versions of his older self. In the first instance there is a portrait of the artist in a rather pensive mood looking down and beyond the picture plane. He modestly places himself right at the bottom of the painting, off centre and surrounded by a number of emblematic images which

appear to be occupying his thoughts, his subconscious and imagination.

Preller portrays himself within a landscape with a very particular quality of evening light that casts soft shadows across the painting and reveals the deeply internalised nature of this self-portrait. The buildings included on the right of the picture plane are a quotation from the work of the Italian surrealist and mystical painter and writer, Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978). The desolate landscapes and abandoned temples in De Chirico's paintings underline the inner dreamlike or symbolic world of Preller rather than being a depiction of the actual landscape.

In the second portrayal of himself the artist paints a full figure version of himself yet diminished and set back into the landscape. This figure clearly resembles the artist but in retrospect it also curiously evokes an impression of Einstein and is surrounded by the pages of a book strewn across the ground, significantly referencing the importance of books in Preller's life and his use of them as a recurring leitmotif, most dramatically depicted in his *Homage to Hieronymus Bosch* of 1948, which Strauss & Co sold in October 2017.

Preller often returns to the cello and the strings of the instrument as a stylistic device in his paintings. In this instance a cello lies half buried behind the artist, its concealed strings transformed into the bars of a cage, often related to containment for Preller, which, in this instance contains a mango, another recurring symbol in Preller's work.

*Karel Nel and Marion Dixon*



*Homage to Hieronymus Bosch, 1948*



*Symbols on a Beach (Homage à Bosch), 1949*



*Alexis Preller, c.1975*



*Self-portrait, 1940*



293

## Bertha Everard

SOUTH AFRICAN 1873–1965

### *Willows*

1916

signed; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on a label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvas

101 by 59 cm

**R100 000 – 150 000**

#### LITERATURE

Frieda Harmsen (1980). *The Women of Bonnefoi: The Story of the Everard Group*, Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik. Illustrated in black and white on page 37.

Bertha Everard's first days as a teacher in South Africa were at the Staats Model School in Pretoria, beginning towards the end of 1902. Had the war not forced so many local families into exile, she might have come across at the newly-reopened school a small group of young, talented artists-in-the-making, including Henk Pierneef, Fanie Eloff, Gordon Leith and Gerard Moerdijk. In any event, her stay in Pretoria was brief, having met Charles Everard at Bonnefoi, a small trading post on the Eastern Transvaal escarpment. After marrying in Pretoria in 1903, the couple returned to Bonnefoi, where the present lot was painted over a decade later. By this time their children – Ruth, Rosamund and Sebastian – had been born.

Bertha, and her sister Edith King, who had also settled at Bonnefoi, were ever-captivated by their surroundings, whether lush and overgrown in summertime, or dry and golden in winter. In *Willows*, a large, narrow canvas, green, teal and burnt orange paint is smeared thickly and expressively on the canvas. Writing about the painting to Edith, who was at the time teaching in Bloemfontein, Bertha's satisfaction with the picture, not to mention her contented mood as she painted it, is appreciable: 'I have managed nearly to finish a painting of willows down by the river. It's rather nice – greeny blue with dull purple ground. I thought I would like to put in the three naked babes, but I haven't done so ... The rattle of laughter is still in my ears. Goodness!'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frieda Harmsen (1980). *The Women of Bonnefoi: The Story of the Everard Group*, Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik. Pages 36 and 37.



294

## Derek Milton Leigh

SOUTH AFRICAN 1940–1993

### *Eastern Transvaal Landscape*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the exhibition title, on a Tatham Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvas

85,5 by 71 cm

**R80 000 – 120 000**

#### EXHIBITED

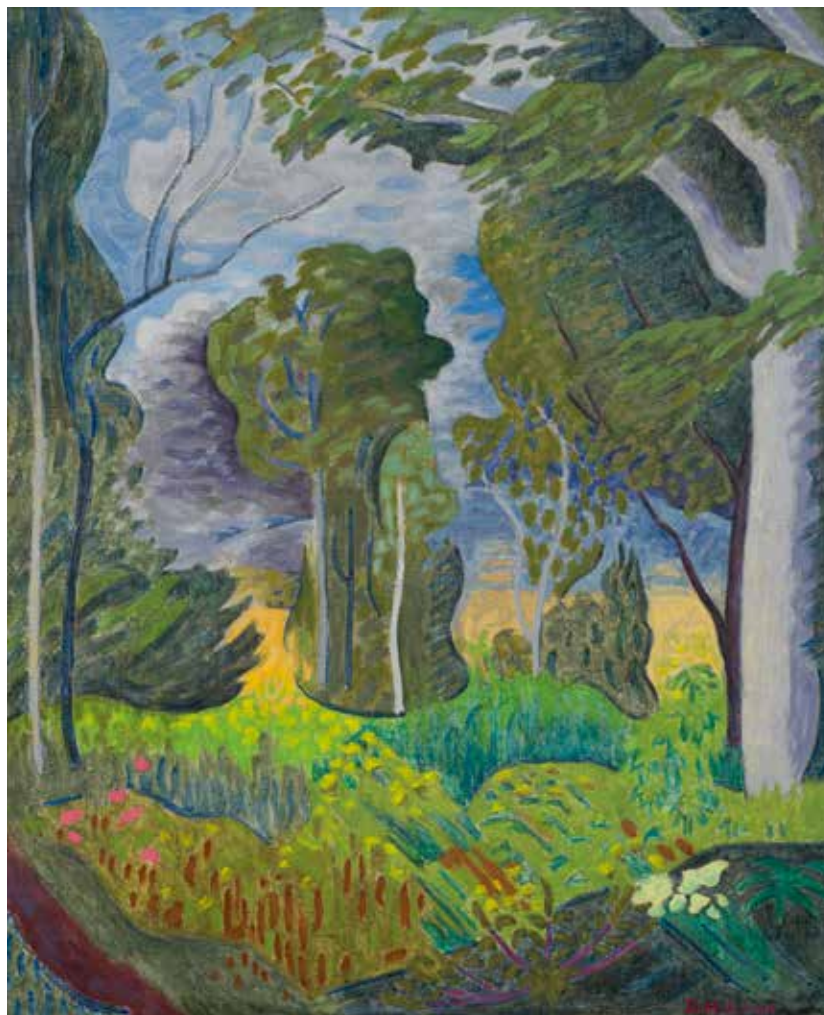
Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, *Derek Milton Leigh: A Memorial Exhibition*, 15 November 1994 – 8 January 1995, catalogue number 7.

#### LITERATURE

Brendan Bell and Bryony Clark (eds.) (1994). *Derek Milton Leigh (1940–1993): A Memorial Exhibition*, Tatham Art Gallery: Pietermaritzburg. Illustrated in black and white on page 90.

Derek Leigh studied under the British modernist Jack Heath at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg between 1959 and 1962. His rounded training there was characterised by a strict emphasis on drawing, design, sound technique and art history. Later, in Paris, with his sister Valerie and his soon-to-be-wife, Leonora Haden, he fell under the sway, as did so many other talented, impressionable young artists, of André Lhôte. It comes as little surprise then that his developing style, particularly in its approach to the landscape, borrowed from Lhôte's tonal key, formal solidity, and Fauvist colour palette.

After a stint teaching art at Luanshya High School in Zambia in 1966, Leigh spent a year painting at Bonnefoi, his wife's now famous family farm in the Eastern Transvaal. While already committed to a gently geometric and bright brand of neo-impressionism, his work at Bonnefoi could not have escaped the influence of Bertha Everard and Edith King, both of whom had recently passed away, while he might have found in Ruth Everard Haden's sinuous horizon lines, quilted landscapes and rich, ravishing colour combinations a beautiful, convincing template. The present lot, *Eastern Transvaal Landscape*, was probably painted during this formative moment.







295

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Mountain Landscape with Clouds*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name,  
medium and the title on a Graham's Fine Art  
Gallery label adhered to the reverse

oil on board

50 by 61 cm

**R1 200 000 – 1 600 000**

A sense of mystery and wonder surrounds JH Pierneef's *Mountain Landscape* captured beautifully in the present lot. What lies behind the bend in the road that disappears behind a flat hill on the right? Where does the road lead? What lies underneath the bank of low-lying clouds in the middle?

Pierneef deviates from his usual placing of his famous voluminous, cumulus clouds in the sky in the background, to the middle ground, below the jaggedly etched shapes of the mountain range in the background. Going to the mountain, travelling on the curved road, would be like going back to nature, a meditative experience. The mystery and wonder could become a spiritual journey. In this sense, the colours – green tones in the foreground, purple and orange in the background – assume a spiritual value. Inadvertently the spiritual nature of art, as expressed by Wassily Kandinsky, springs to mind, suggesting that colour has a psychic effect on human beings as their sense of colour shifts readily from a sensory experience of colour to one with the inner meaning of colour, with the spiritual harmony that colour combinations bring about.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wassily Kandinsky (1914)(1977). *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, New York: Dover Publications, pages 23–26.





296

**Peter Clarke**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

*The Boat*

signed and dated 2.12.1966; inscribed with the title and medium on the reverse  
mixed media on paper  
26,5 by 39,5 cm

**R300 000 – 500 000**

Slight of figure himself, Peter Clark formed a life-long friendship with the writer, James Matthews, best-known for the fact that he was an avid body builder. Says Matthews of this time: 'A knock on the door announced [Peter's] arrival on a Saturday afternoon, his dress one of reserve. His reserve soon melted, to be replaced by the warmth of his spirit after I had introduced him to my friends, all members of the YMCA body-building club in Chiappini Street, Bo-Kaap, close to where I lived at the time. I looked forward to the Saturday afternoon visits from Peter as he introduced me to the world of fine art.'<sup>1</sup>

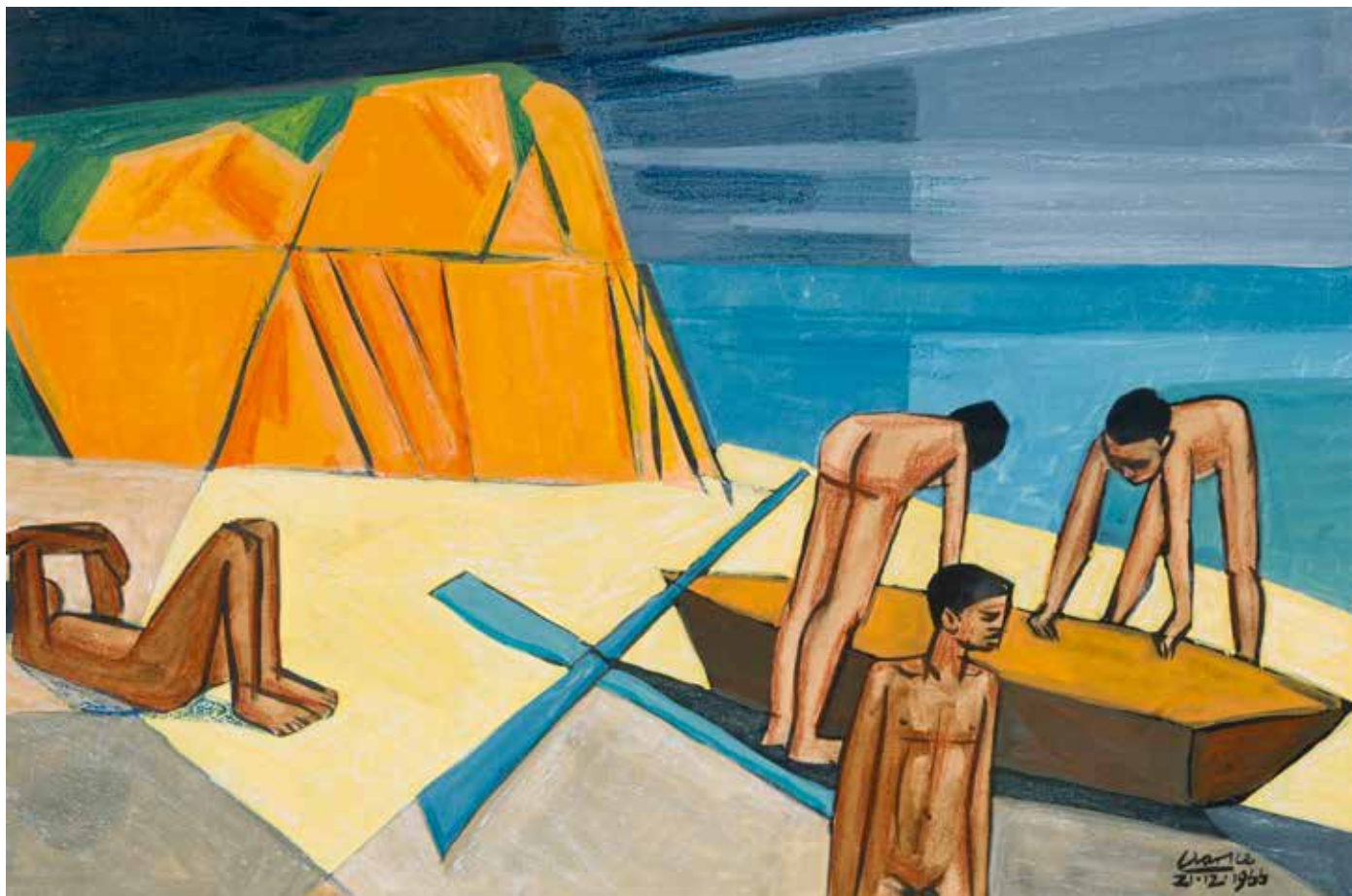
Clark's interest in depicting the male body was consolidated when he attended art classes at the Roeland Street Art Club. One of his teachers was Johannes Meintjes who sharpened his rendering of the male nude in strong, graphic lines, a stylistic feature amply in evidence in the present lot.

In addition, Clark encountered the teachings of John Coplans at the Club as well. Coplans, *en route* to the United States, was a British artist with a similar interest in male nudes which he depicted in bright watercolours and which Clark must have seen. Coplans went on to great success as an artist in the US, acting as editor of *Artforum*, the foremost art magazine in the world, in the 1970s. In the early 80s he switched to photographing the male nude, a body of work for which he is best-known today. Clark positions his male nudes on the beach, sunbathing, walking and readying a canoe for paddling on the sea, a glowing orange-yellow rock formation standing guard in the background. Their youthful bodies are captured in all their glorious sensuality in Clark's translucent gouache technique.

The male nude is only cursorily referred to in the catalogue accompanying Clark's retrospective exhibition in 2011. A short paragraph in the catalogue reads that 'Nude figures are fairly rare in Clark's practice, although there are a number of bathing boys that recall the carefree days of his youth, such as a 1971 oil of boys on a beach and a related reduction relief print, *The Boat* (1972).'<sup>2</sup>

1 Hein Willemsse (ed) (2000). *Peter Clark & James Matthews at 70: More Than Brothers*, Cape Town: Kwela Books, page 102.

2. Philippa Hobbs & Elizabeth Rankin (2011). *Listening to Distant Thunder: The Art of Peter Clark*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, pages 196–197.



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297

**Erik Laubscher**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

*Landscape*

signed and indistinctly dated

oil on board

44,5 by 86,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

298

**Cecil Skotnes**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2009

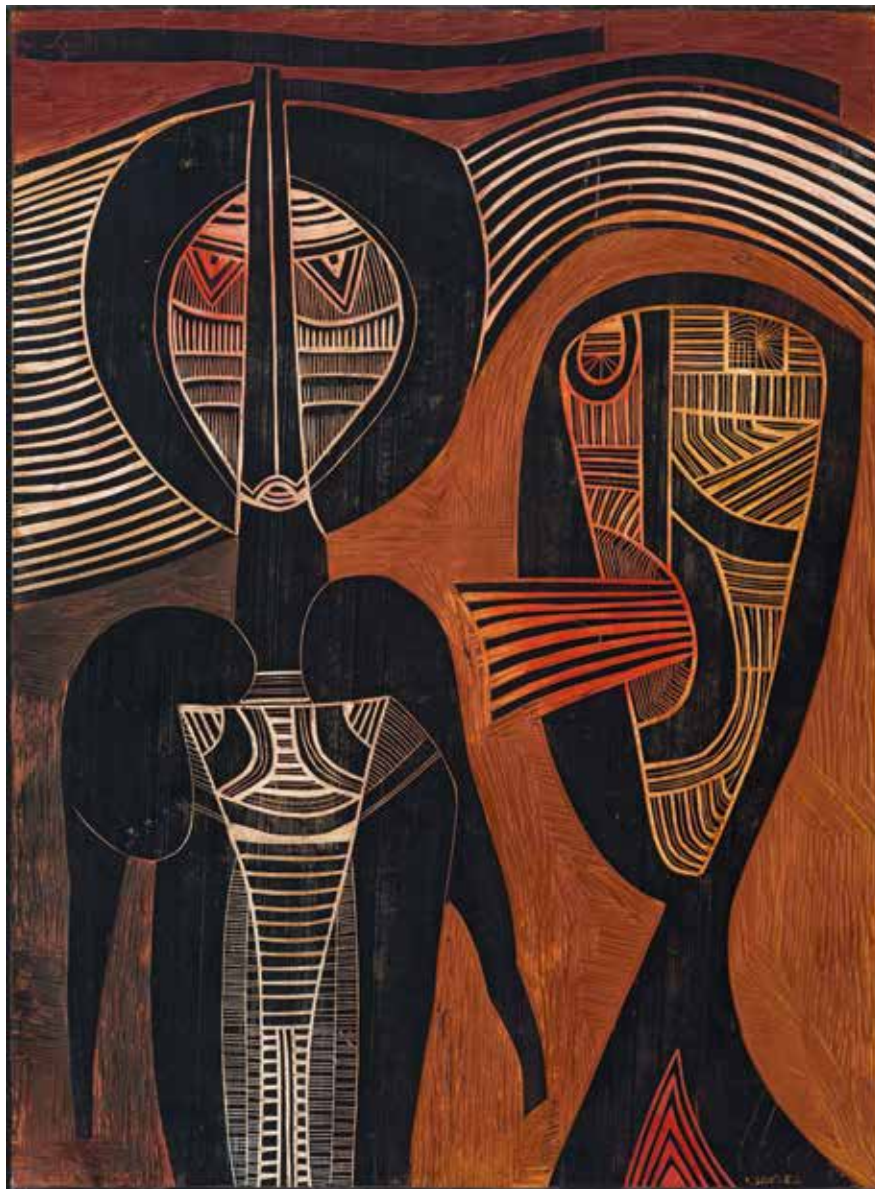
*Verbal Onslaught*

signed

carved, incised and painted wood

61 by 45 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



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299

**Edoardo Villa**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

*Endogenuous*

signed and dated 1997

painted steel

height: 133 cm

R200 000 – 300 000





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300

**Jack Heath**

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–1969

*Veld Phoenix*

signed and dated 1961; signed and  
inscribed with the title on the reverse

enamel with sand on board

122 by 122 cm

R90 000 – 120 000





301

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Late Afternoon*

signed; inscribed with the title in another  
hand on the reverse

oil on canvas

25 by 30 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



302

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*African Figures in a Moving White Light*

signed; printed with the title on a label adhered  
to the reverse

oil on canvas

34,5 by 90 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

PROVENANCE

Professor FCL Bosman.

303

## Sydney Kumalo

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

### *Figure on a Bull*

signed and numbered 3-5

bronze

height: 43 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

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, Sydney Kumalo's syncretic style gained him great international acclaim. When he was still a teenager, though, Sophiatown-born Kumalo wanted to be a painter, an interest sparked by his encounters with the art in white suburban homes serviced by his house-painter father. In 1952, Kumalo began attending biweekly art classes at a hall designated for 'non-European' adult recreation on Polly Street in central Johannesburg. The death of Kumalo's father, and the economic crisis it precipitated, prompted his sudden transition from watercolour to sculpture.

Kumalo's first sculptural work was a ceiling mural at St Peter Claver Church in Seeisoville, Kroonstad, which he executed with his Polly Street 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. In 1962 Kumalo held his debut solo exhibition with

dealer Egon Guenther, who further aided Kumalo's public reception by, from 1963, showing him under the Amadlozi banner with Skotnes, Villa, Giuseppe Cattaneo and Cecily Sash (later on with Ezrom Legae too). In 1965 the American dealer Eric Estorick included him on a group show at his Grosvenor Gallery in London. In its coverage of the show *The New York Times* described Kumalo as South Africa's 'best-known, most admired and most sought-after figurative sculptor,' his work further praised for its 'powerful monumentality':<sup>1</sup>

Kumalo's mature style from the 1960s and 70s, of which this is a representative work, is noted for its expressive figuration and preference for stippled and/or lacerated surface finishes. Alongside his diverse cast of human and animal forms, Kumalo also produced a number of bronzes that placed his two key subjects in conversation. Kumalo's approach to form in these works was confident and expressive. His figures are effortlessly shaped and wilfully distorted. Many of Kumalo's studies of humans astride bulls and horse-like creatures were compact and portrayed the human figure straddling a diminutive animal subject. The power relation in

this study of a man seated on a bull is, to an extent, obvious: the animal is a beast of burden. But the figures also share limbs, useful in simplifying the composition but also complicating assumptions about the relations between the two beings. Their shared pose, both figures look up, further contributes to an exultant unity proposed by this work.

Kumalo's approach to modelling further underscores this commonality. Eyes and mouths are evoked with the same elementary flourish. In this lot both the animal and human components feature the same striated surface texture. The pronounced grooves on the human figure's abdomen bear noting. The same surface forms are discernable in Congolese 'power figures', or *nkisi*, representing heroic ancestors. There are also affinities between Kumalo's overall approach to his human figure and the male guardian figures produced by Senufo and Northern Fang carvers. Guenther had these figures in his formidable collection of African art.

<sup>1</sup>'Art under Apartheid', *New York Times Magazine*, 28 March, 1965.

Sean O'Toole





304

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

***Contrapuntal Figures II***

signed and dated '64

oil on canvas

85 by 100 cm

**R2 000 000 – 3 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Estate Late Alexis Preller, Volks Art Auctions, 3 March 1978, Lot 33, (titled *Two Seated Figures*).

*Contrapuntal Figures II*, a large and dazzling canvas, was painted in 1964; its distant companion piece, *Contrapuntal Figures*, had appeared under the 'African Figures' subtitle at the Henry Lidchi Gallery in March 1956, alongside such iconic paintings as *Hieratic Women*, *Woman with Lyre* (the first version), *Primavera* and *Consider the Lizard* (included in this catalogue as Lot 263). Despite this time gap, both versions are characterised by a strong emphasis on a painterly quality. The fluidity of paint is especially noticeable in the present lot, and is used as a device to create a sense of shifting surface layers. This is of course in contrast to the meticulous, linear nature of the artist's more familiar mid-century style.

Excitingly, Preller shows his bravura handling of paint in *Contrapuntal Figures II*, allowing it to run down the canvas in areas, much as he had allowed it to do in *The Golden Fleece*, his blazing, unforgettable work from 1962, celebrated as the first entirely abstract composition the artist had exhibited. Moreover, he shows his sophisticated colour range: delicate lilacs, warm yellows and recessive, cobalt blues overlap, while interjections of black and red play strong compositional roles.

While the influence of Georges Braque is evident in the use of colour and painterly application, and a nod to Henry Moore appreciable in the two curvilinear and dense forms, a number of Preller's own symbols and quotations appear in *Contrapuntal Figures II*. Perhaps most obvious is the couple of seated or semi-reclining bodies – their heads cleaved and flattened and their limbs stylised in the extreme – which are so closely related to the artist's numerous hieratic women. Sharp, curving spikes, teeth and thorn motifs recur, moreover, while egg forms, having first appeared in Preller's paintings in the late 1940s, seem to emerge through the soft lilac veil of the background, much in the same way one did in another work from the same year, *In the Beginning*.

The expansiveness of *Contrapuntal Figures II*'s approach suggests the artist re-engaging with a painterly world after spending the years between 1959 and 1962 on the enormous, intricate, all-consuming *Discovery* mural for the Transvaal Administrative Building in Pretoria.

*Karel Nel and Alastair Meredith*





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305

**Erik Laubscher**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

*Sunset, Ceres*

signed and dated '94; signed, dated 1993 and  
inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

92 by 119 cm

R250 000 – 350 000



306

**Edoardo Villa**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

*Red Bird*

signed and dated 2005

painted steel

height: 68 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

PROVENANCE

Everard Read gallery



307

## William Kentridge

### *Deep Pool*, from the series *Colonial Landscape*

signed and dated '96; inscribed with the artist's name, the date, the medium and the title on a New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York label adhered to the reverse charcoal and pastel on paper  
120 by 160 cm

**R3 000 000 – 4 000 000**

#### EXHIBITED

Annandale Galleries, Sydney, *William Kentridge: Eidophusikon, Several Colonial Landscapes & Drawings from Faustus in Africa*, 27 March 1996 – 20 April 1996.

Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, 1997.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, *William Kentridge*, 28 February 2001 – 13 May 2001, catalogue number 38.

New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, *William Kentridge*, 3 June 2001 – 16 September 2001, catalogue number 38.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, *William Kentridge*, 20 October 2001 – 20 January 2002, catalogue number 38.

Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, *William Kentridge*, 1 March 2002 – 5 May 2002, catalogue number 38.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, *William Kentridge*, 21 July 2002 – 6 October 2002, catalogue number 38.

South African National Gallery, Cape Town, *William Kentridge*, 7 December 2002– 23 March 2003, catalogue number 38.

#### LITERATURE

Michael Sittenfeld (ed.) (2001). *William Kentridge*, Chicago and New York: Museum of Contemporary Art and New Museum of Contemporary Art. Illustrated in colour on page 106.

A museum-quality artwork, included in the first American survey of Kentridge's work in 2001, *Deep Pool* forms part of a series of works by William Kentridge known as *Colonial Landscapes* (1995–1996). These landscapes constitute a shift away from his anti-epic depictions of landscapes in such works as the roughed-up Johannesburg landscapes and dystopic city edges, serving as backdrops for his stop frame animation films. He would sooner draw what he sees as arenas of social contestation caused by man's interference than nature's alluring topographical wonders. Kentridge's depiction of a man-handled terrain, likewise, serves as backdrop for the theatrical production, *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992) and the molested landscapes for *Felix in Exile* (1994).

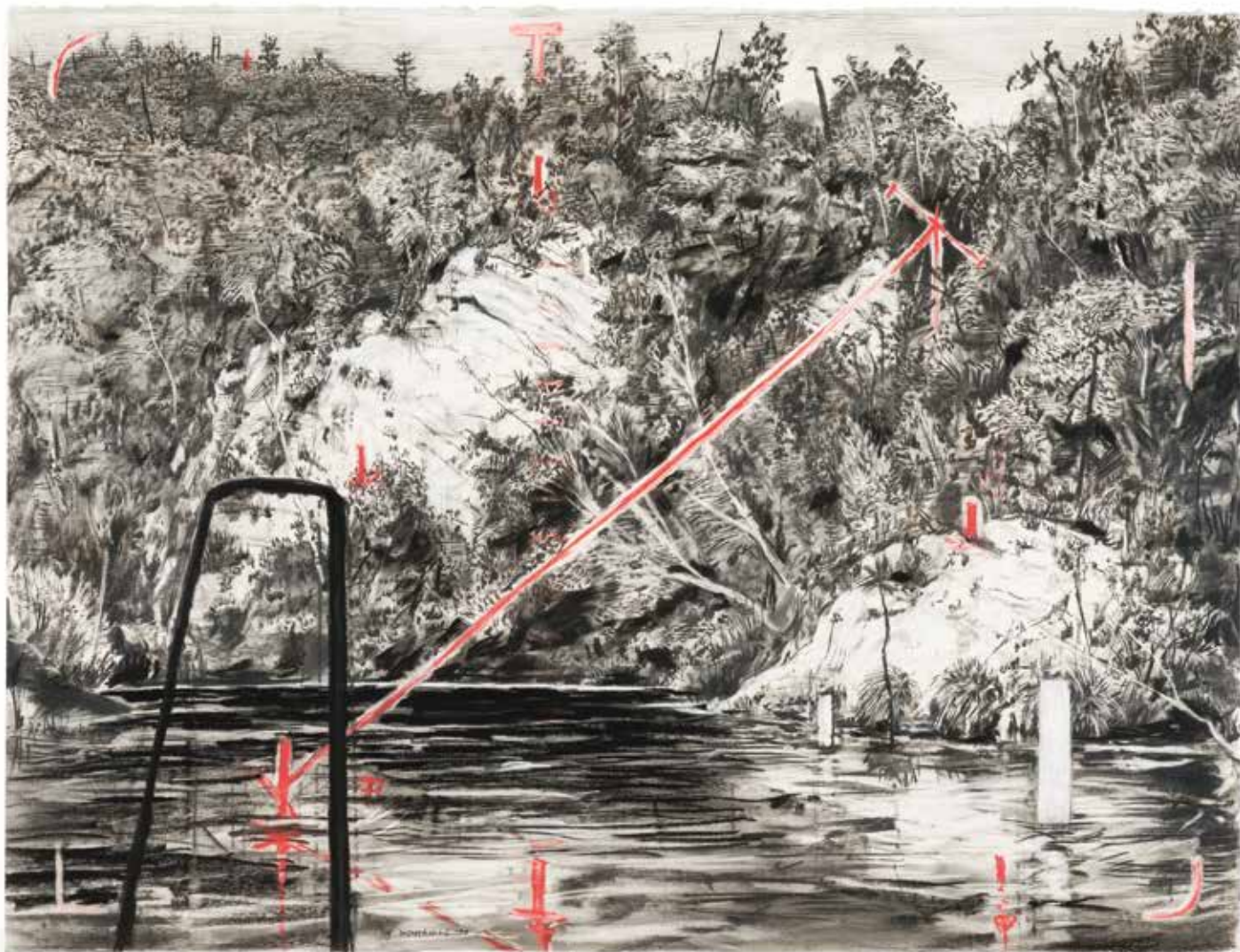
*Colonial Landscapes* is a suite of large, polished drawings made in 1995 and 1996. The inspiration behind them was a nineteenth century publication, *Africa and its Exploration as Told by its Explorers* (c.1907), a two-volume account of expeditions made by Livingstone, Burton and others. In prose akin to the cheery adventures of *Boy's Own* annuals and with intricately engraved images of Africa's natural splendour tracked down by the explorers, it recounts the colonial experience.

The attention to detail in the engraved topographic bookplates gave Kentridge an opportunity to work up highly polished, well-rendered drawings that define every rock formation and blade of grass. He reworked the bookplates, blowing them up in scale and animating his monochrome charcoals with measures and notations chalked in cadmium red pastel, like a surveyor's plotting and sizings. The viewer shares a conspiratorial sense of looking in through a viewfinder, stealthily scrutinising the land before division and exploitation or embarking on a big game hunt. Kentridge talks about these marks as 'bruising the landscape'. He intends to show that the European taste for exotic foreign lands and a new world was foolish. Alongside this, his language of motifs develops with glimpses of megaphones, distant goal posts and a diving board that hovers over a mire.<sup>1</sup>

Says Kentridge: 'These *Colonial Landscape* drawings came from the work I had been doing on *Faustus in Africa*! The source was a 19th century volume of the diaries of "African explorers", illustrated with engravings of the exotic other the travellers were passing through. Part of the pleasure of doing the drawings was working with the "code" of engraved marks, and playing with the mediations from the raw veld, to the sketchbook of the traveller, back to London to the professional engraving shop where the view would be re-dramatised, and engraved, to a hundred years on, looking at these now yellow pages. The new red marks are both beacons erected in the landscape and the surveyor's theodolite markings of the image in a viewfinder.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Text drawn from Kate McCrickard (2012). *Modern Artists: William Kentridge*, London: Tate Publishing, pages 20–23.

<sup>2</sup> William Kentridge (1996). Statement on *Colonial Landscapes*. Sydney: Annandale Gallery and Johannesburg: Goodman Gallery.





308

**Sydney Kumalo**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

*Horse*

1964

signed

bronze

width: 23 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



309

**Douglas Portway**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1922–1993

*London 62*

signed and dated 61; inscribed with the title on the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name, the date, and the title on a João Ferreira Gallery label adhered to the reverse oil on canvas

97 by 145 cm

R120 000 – 160 000

Douglas Portway is an important figure in the history of non-figurative and abstract art in South Africa. Born and raised in Johannesburg, Portway studied at the Witwatersrand Technical College during the 1940s and initially worked as a realist painter. A travel grant to the United States in 1952 enabled Portway to encounter directly the painterly innovations heralded by abstract expressionism, prompting him to recalibrate his ambitions as a painter. Four years later, Portway, now working in a Cubist-inspired manner, was selected to show work on the 1956 Venice Biennale. He emigrated a year later and eventually settled in Ibiza in 1959. Despite the break with his homeland, Portway's canvases retained elements of his earlier colour schemes, notably black, white, grey and beige.<sup>1</sup> This fine abstract composition is typical of the spectral forms and atavistic markings Portway incorporated into his increasingly mystical canvases.

<sup>1</sup> Josef Paul Hodin (1983), *Douglas Portway: A Painter's Life*, London: Art Alliance Press. Page 46.

Sean O'Toole

310

### Vladimir Tretchikoff

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

#### *Witch Doctor*

signed

oil on canvas, in the artist's frame  
101 by 75 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

#### PROVENANCE

Acquired from the artist by the current owner's parents in 1976.

#### EXHIBITED

Tretchikoff exhibition at Greenacres, Durban, June 1976.



This painting appears to be unique in Tretchikoff's body of work. At first glance, it could fit into his gallery of 'exotic' portraits of black South Africans that he regularly expanded throughout his career in this country. The artist would dress his urban models in diverse items of 'traditional' African clothing, add European jewellery for good measure and end up with pastiches that were visually pleasing to admirers of his work. It would seem that the 'witch doctor' in this painting wears a similar outfit, a product of Tretchikoff's imagination. He was known to disregard cultural significance and authenticity, embellishing the look of his African models according to his taste and ideas of beauty. We see a similar approach in his iconic *Chinese Girl*, whose permed hair and Western-style make-up suggested the emancipated Asian woman of the mid-twentieth century while her heavy embroidered robe dated back to the times when women in China still bound their feet.

Yet, apart from the *Witch Doctor*, I do not know of any other African portrait of his in which Tretchikoff expressed his fascination with magic, occultism and the supernatural. Readers of his autobiography would remember that '13' was his lucky number, and he tried to time important events so that they would take place on the thirteenth day of the month. His international success was foretold to him at a séance in Jakarta during World War II. Even the title of his book, *Pigeon's Luck*, referred to a supernatural occurrence. Before his first exhibition in South Africa, a pigeon came to live on the balcony of his flat and left only after that show made him a celebrity. Tretchikoff's interest in the irrational emerged in China, where he spent his teenage years. His early graphic work that appeared in Shanghai magazines in the 1930s often featured statues of Buddha, meditating monks and dragons, mythical Chinese creatures remotely related

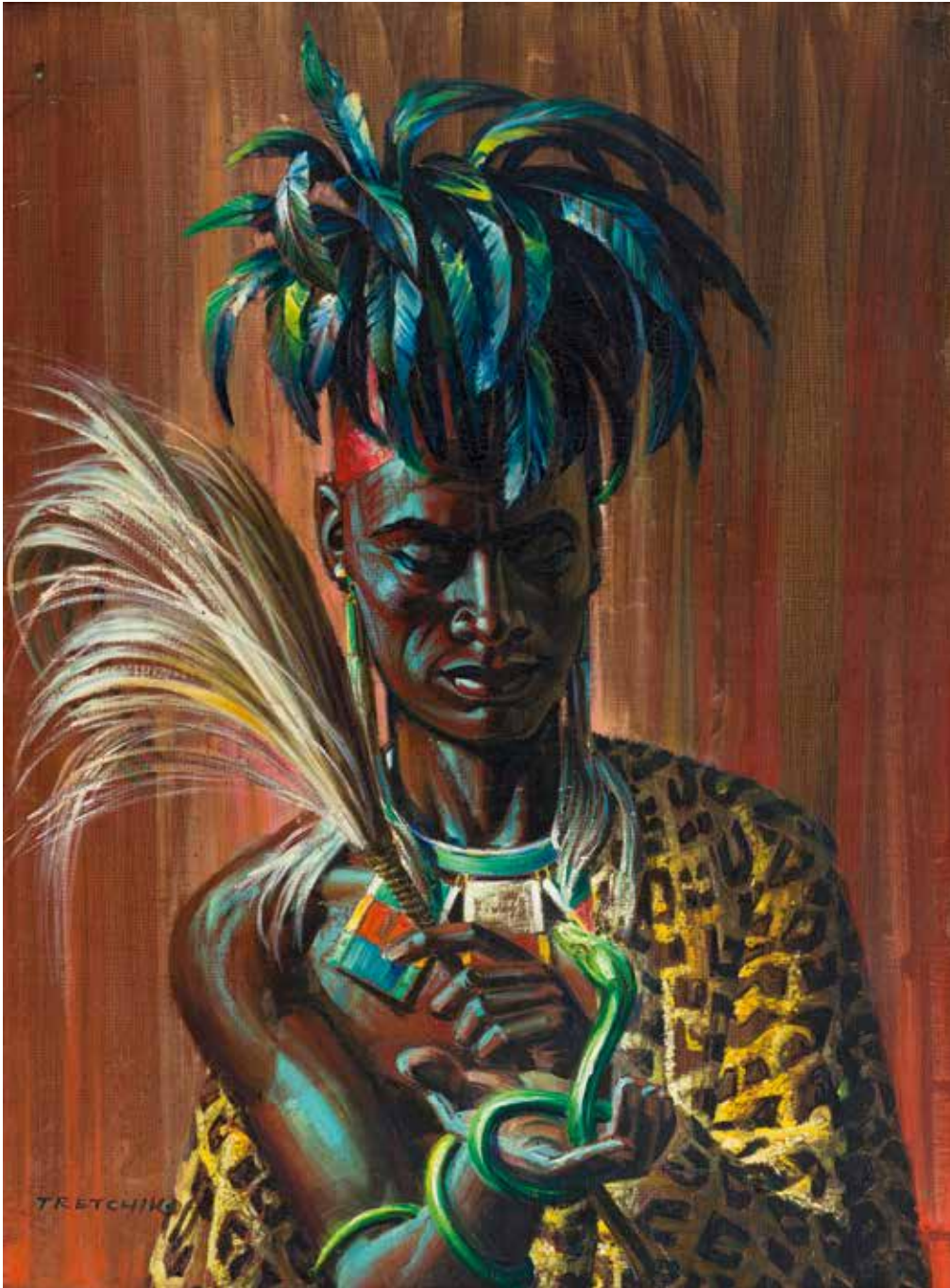
to the serpent we see in the *Witch Doctor*. In the mid-1970s, when the *Witch Doctor* was produced, Tretchikoff returned to these subjects. Monks and statues of Buddha reappeared for the first time in forty years in the canvases he showed at his exhibitions in England and Scotland.

The highlight of his last display of new work (1978) was a series of paintings called *The Ten Commandments* – allegorical interpretations of the biblical laws. It would have been inspired by the Rosicrucian teachings: Tretchikoff was a member of the Good Hope Chapter in the 1950s. The order sponsored his first show in the US.

The original owner of the *Witch Doctor* purchased this canvas in Durban in 1976. It was the last exhibition tour of South Africa for Tretchikoff. Shunning 'elitist' art galleries, he showed at a department store as he always did. His exhibition opened in June on the first floor of Greenacres, where, as his adverts promised, admirers could 'see his controversial canvases and meet him in person daily'. It came to be the best-attended Durban show of his career. Nearly fifty thousand visitors saw the *Witch Doctor* within the five weeks it was on display.

Never recognised in his lifetime for what he was worth, South Africa's leading purveyor of 'mass-market masterpieces', Tretchikoff remained a pariah in the country's art circles. 'I would like them to admit I am an artist', he told a Durban newspaper during the exhibition. To verify his claim, the journalist asked Chand Singh, the doyenne of South African palm readers, to study Tretchikoff's hand. After a thorough examination of his Head Line, Singh pronounced, 'Of course, he is an artist.' Viewed in this context, the *Witch Doctor* reflects the artist's lifelong interest in spirituality that intensified in the period when this work was produced.

Boris Gorelik





311

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

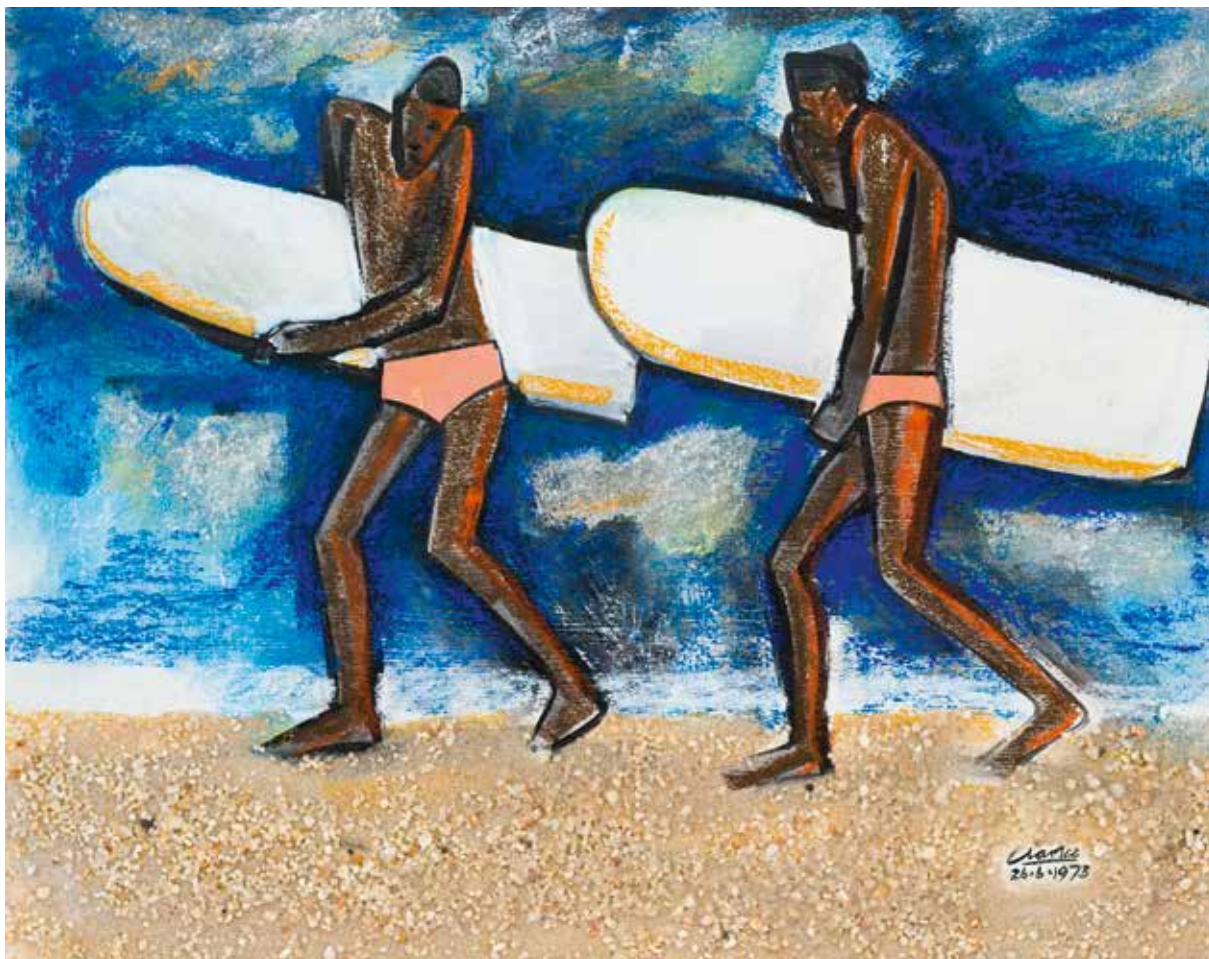
*Comoros*

signed

oil on canvas

39,5 by 44,5 cm

R180 000 – 240 000



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312

**Peter Clarke**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

*Surfers*

signed and dated 26.6.1973

mixed media on card

30 by 37,5 cm

R400 000 – 600 000



313

### Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

#### *People Who Live Under Tables*

signed and dated 82; inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

90,5 by 120,5 cm

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

#### EXHIBITED

Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg,  
*A Retrospective Exhibition of the Works  
of Walter Whall Battiss (1906–1982)*,  
20 October – 3 December 2005.

#### LITERATURE

Karin Skawran (ed.) (2005). *Walter  
Battiss: Gentle Anarchist*, Johannesburg:  
Standard Bank Gallery. Illustrated in  
colour on page 162.

The title Walter Battiss ascribed to the present lot, *People Who Live Under Tables*, a work done in the year of his death in 1982, seems rather enigmatic. On face value, not much happens under these tables, judging from the fact that these people – four figures and perhaps two aquamarine shadows of people – are confined to a small section at the bottom of the left-hand side of the picture plane. Many more people are at the table, not under it. Could this strange assembly of people be members of what Battiss called a good ten years before he painted the present lot, an imaginary 'International Secret Society of Invisible People', a slogan prominently displayed at the entrance to his studio at his home, Giotto's Hill in Pretoria. These people could then be seen as constituting an alternative reality with which all free spirits might identify themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Looking at those around the table on the left, the number of people, thirteen in total, is significant, as that number could reference the Last Supper, Jesus together with his twelve disciples. No discernible hierarchical order makes it difficult to pinpoint which figure might be that of Jesus. One aquamarine figure, however, stands out amongst the rest. The focus of the painting is located in two figures standing at what appears to be an architect's or a draughtsman's table, judging from the square ruler in one of their hands, and the compass in the other's. These two figures could well design their own alternative reality.

Above the two figures, to the top right-hand side, appears what might be another abstract figure, perhaps pointing a finger at the two with an outstretched arm. Invariably this would then invoke Michaelangelo's famous depiction of the Creation of Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the listless body of Adam about to be animated by the spirit of God at the gentle touch of their fingertips. Battiss had always been fascinated by Michaelangelo: apart from the many books on the artist in his personal library, Michaelangelo was always present in the curriculum for his pupils when he was Art Master at Pretoria Boys High School during the three decades between the mid-1930s and the 60s, after which he became Professor of Art at Unisa.

Says Karin Skawran of the last Battiss paintings: 'What set Walter Battiss apart as an innovative artist and a vibrant personality, was his ability, even in old age, to constantly renew himself and to see the world as new each day. His irrepressible curiosity in everything he encountered – human beings, the landscape, objects – continued to fascinate him and feed his imagination'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Esmé Berman (1983). *Art and Artists of South Africa*, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, page 60.

<sup>2</sup> Karin Skawran (2005). *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, page 17.





314

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

***Rain Tahiti***

signed and dated 1978; inscribed with the artist's name, the date and the title on a Graham's Fine Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvas  
46 by 61,5 cm

**R350 000 – 450 000**

**LITERATURE**

Sandy Shoolman (ed.) (2007). *Birth of the Modernist Body*, Johannesburg: Graham's Fine Art Gallery. Illustrated in colour on page 95.



315

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

**Three Nudes**

signed

oil on canvasboard

29,5 by 40 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

**EXHIBITED**

Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, *A Retrospective Exhibition of the Works of Walter Whall Battiss (1906–1982)*, 20 October 2005 – 3 December 2005.

**LITERATURE**

Karin Skawran (ed.) (2005). *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery. Illustrated in colour on page 15.



316

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Fête Champêtre*

signed, dated 2000 and inscribed  
with the title on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
90 by 120 cm

**R800 000 – 1 000 000**

A *fête champêtre*, or garden party, was a popular, elegant form of entertainment in 18th-century France, especially at the Court at Versailles. The extensive landscaped gardens lent themselves to all sorts of follies, pavilions and temples to accommodate such festivities, with orchestras hidden in trees and guests in fancy dress. The intended simplicity of such festivities, however, was rather contrived. Robert Hodgins enters into the spirit of such a *fête champêtre* in the present lot, fancy dress costumes all discarded for a romp in a pool. In his inimitable style, Hodgins suggests something of the festive celebration of nature in and through his abstract figures, their pink flesh contrasting joyfully with the green surrounds and deep blue colour of the water.

Edouard Manet's famous *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) could well have inspired Hodgins's spirited composition. Manet's nudes certainly caused a stir among the French art establishment as they were not sufficiently idealised as allegorical Greek goddesses but depicted as ordinary companions to two men about town. Hodgins does not hesitate to rid these two gentlemen of their clothes and have them jump in the pool. Similarly, Paul Cézanne's *The Great Bathers* (1898) in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, could be invoked as serving an inspirational function for Hodgins. In the same manner as Cézanne attempted to integrate nude figures with the landscape and the arch of trees soaring up from the simplified curves of the women's bodies, Hodgins's bathers become part of the natural world as well.<sup>1</sup>

The most striking resemblance between the present lot and one of Hodgins's other works is a work titled, *Hodgins Person between Two Hodgins Paintings*, depicting precisely what the title suggests: a collar and tied gentleman views what appears to be an exhibition of Hodgins's work. On the right a painting of a dark coloured pianist and, on the left, a very similar painting to *Fête Champêtre*, complete with romping figures executed in the similar colour tone of pink flesh against a green background.

<sup>1</sup> Brenda Atkinson (2002). *Robert Hodgins*, Cape Town: Tafelberg, pages 30–31.





317

**Vladimir Tretchikoff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

*Flower Seller*

signed

oil on canvas

66,5 by 77 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

318

**Peter Clarke**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

*Goats Grazing Under a  
Winter's Sun*

signed and dated 11.4.1962;  
inscribed with the title and  
medium on a label adhered to  
the reverse of the mount  
egg tempera on paper  
36,5 by 26,5 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



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319

### Robert Hodgins

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

#### *Ubu at the Penitentiary Ball Game*

signed, dated 1980–1984 and inscribed with the title, the medium and 'Exhibited at the Carriage House Gallery, Jhb, Oct/Nov 1984' on a label adhered to the reverse

**R500 000 – 700 000**

EXHIBITED

Carriage House Gallery, Johannesburg, October – November 1984.

Hodgins's first representation of Ubu dates from 1960 when he pulled a small etching of an Ubu figure. The interest in Alfred Jarry, a French dramatist of the late 19th century and inventor of the fictitious avaricious character, Ubu Roi, used in many of his plays, stemmed from Hodgins's fascination with the work of Georges Rouault (1871–1958), for he, too, rendered images of Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Some twenty years later, in the late 1970s, Hodgins became captivated by the theme and began a series of paintings which cast Ubu in various roles and situations: General, Lawyer, Politician, Interrogator, Voyeur, and so on.

In the present lot Ubu attends a football match in Alabama, Georgia in the United States. The name of the stadium is clearly visible at centre and a football hurtles over the three figures' heads also at the centre of the picture plane. These three portraits could well be those of a greedy club owner, a disgruntled coach, and/or a

thuggish sports spectator. Ubu is the universal tragicomic character in what makes up a personality: part gentle altruist and generous philanthropist; part brutish dictator and authoritarian oppressor. William Kentridge uses him in his play, *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. Ubu was the subject matter of a collaboration between Kentridge, Hodgins and Deborah Bell in which they all produced a set of prints. Says Rory Doepel: 'When talking about his work, Hodgins reveals a very strong empathetic relation to his subjects, especially when they are victims, evincing a strong moral consciousness. But at the same time, he is (as he says), 'also sorry for the Ubu's – the brutes – of this world!'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rory Doepel (1997). *Ubu: 101: William Kentridge, Robert Hodgins, Deborah Bell, Johannesburg: The French Institute of South Africa and The Art Galleries, University of the Witwatersrand, page 49.*



320

**Fred Page**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1908–1984

*Mask and Playing Card*

signed and dated 65  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
75 by 49 cm

R200 000 – 300 000





321

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Ubu Portrait*

1990

oil on board

57 by 60,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

**NOTE**

Authenticated on the reverse by  
JH Neethling 25/08/2012.

Based on the overweight regent presented in Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi* (1896), Ubu is a recurring figure throughout Robert Hodgins's oeuvre from the 1980s and 1990s. Jarry's Ubu is a cauldron of human follies, especially those associated with power. In equal parts crackpot emblem of the aristocracy and cartoon capitalist, Hodgins successfully transposed this vulgar European figure to late-apartheid South Africa. While not as corpulent as the archetypal Ubu, the sober-suited personage in this composition embodies Ubu's virtues of menace and ostentation. As in every Hodgins painting, this work stages an argument between icon and matter. The fleshy pink, while descriptive of race, also acknowledges the simplified figuration and vital colouration of Philip Guston, whom Hodgins esteemed. The composition is neatly intersected, the right half painted a menacing wine-red. The two geometric forms in this interior room, if indeed it is a room, suggest paintings. Is this Ubu an art collector? *Sean O'Toole*





322

**Adriaan Boshoff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–2007

***It Was a Good Day***

signed

oil on board

107 by 185 cm

**R900 000 – 1 200 000**

*'I love my country, its people – especially its children, and its natural beauty. In my work I endeavour to portray things in a way which people are able to understand. I enjoy capturing scenes and images I see and experience around me, as I perceive it – as it impressed itself on me.'* Adriaan Boshoff

Boshoff's *It Was a Good Day* is one of the last works he painted before his death in 2007, and to date it is the largest work to come up on auction. The vast, golden, outstretched beach is populated by men, women and children fisher folk, hauling in and carrying in their woven

baskets an abundant catch from the magnificent deep aquamarine and turquoise ocean. Typical of Boshoff, the clothes of his figures are painted in a spectacular array of jewel-like colours, reds, yellows, blues and purple, adding to the richness and vivacity of this work.

Few artists have captured the imagination of a nation as much as Boshoff with his landscapes, often with cattle grazing, seascapes, still lifes and figures. His oil paintings have become known for portraying everyday scenes in his very own unmistakable impressionistic style as he represented the mood, soul, atmosphere, colour and light of the South African sun-baked landscape.

323

**John Meyer**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

*Late Autumn, Hexriver*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the  
medium and the title on an Everard Read gallery  
label adhered to the reverse  
acrylic and sand on canvas  
104 by 155 cm

R500 000 – 700 000









324

**Edoardo Villa**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

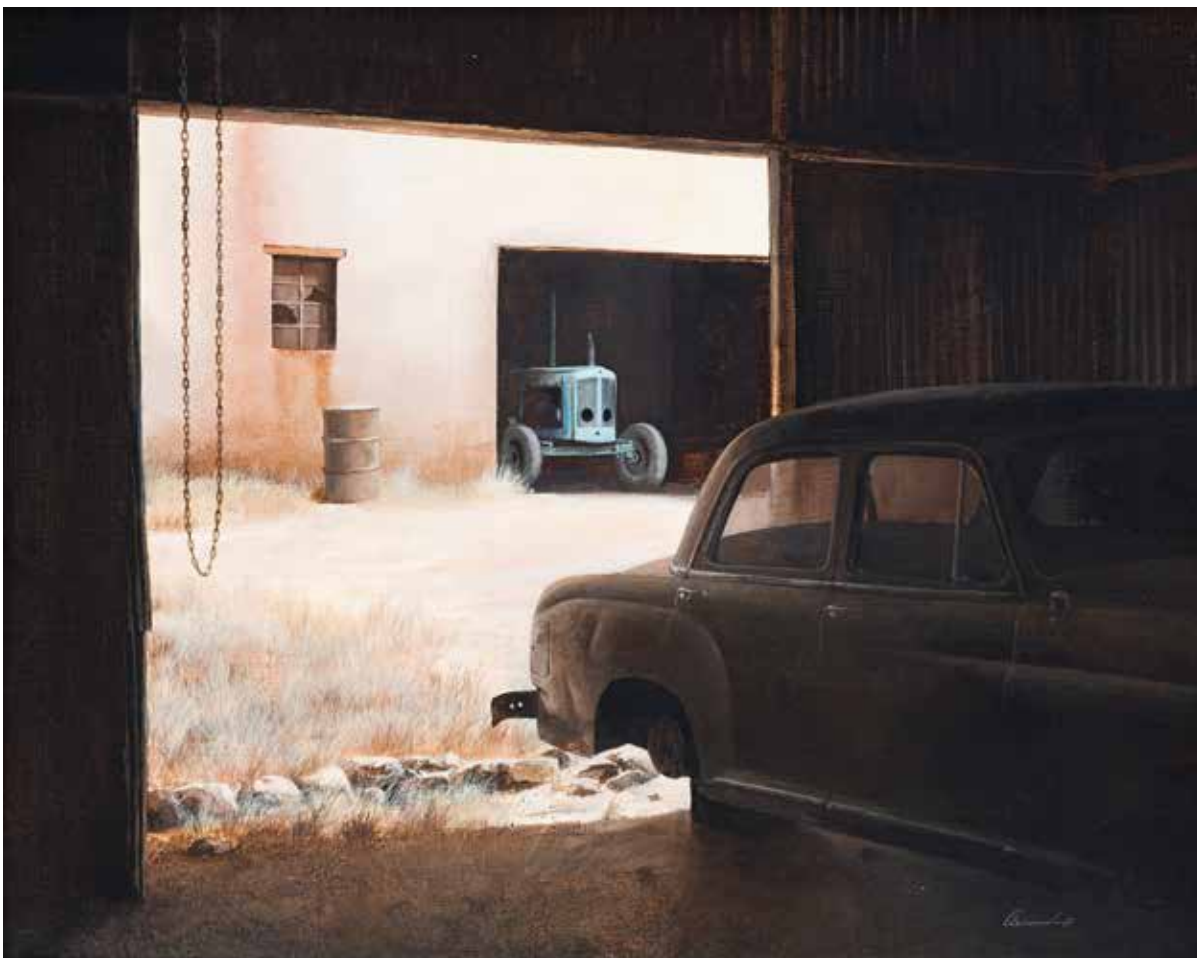
*Single Figure*

signed, dated 1974 and numbered 5/6  
bronze with a brown and cream patina,  
mounted on a marble base  
height: 42 cm, excluding base

**R120 000 – 160 000**

**LITERATURE**

Chris de Klerk and Gerard de Kamper (eds.) (2012).  
*Villa in Bronze*, Hatfield: University of Pretoria Art  
Museum. Another example from the edition is  
illustrated in colour on page 165.



325

**Keith Alexander**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

*Farm Yard*

signed and dated 81

oil on canvas

60,5 by 75,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000