





The Wanderers Club, Illovo, Johannesburg  
12 November 2018 – 8 pm

## **South African and International Art**

Session 3  
Lots 271–350

Lot 296 Irma Stern *Lady of the Harem* (detail)

271

**Celso Lagar**

SPANISH 1891–1966

*Comédiens de Foire*

signed; signed and inscribed  
with the title on the reverse  
oil on canvas

129,5 by 94,5 cm

R250 000 – 350 000





272

**Lynn Chadwick**

BRITISH 1914–2003

*Cloaked Couple VII*

signed with the artist's monogram, dated 77,  
numbered 3/9 and 767S  
bronze with black patina and polished surfaces  
height: 19,5 cm

**R300 000 – 400 000**

**NOTE**

Thanks to the Artist's Estate for the assistance  
with cataloguing information.

Lynn Chadwick's abstracted standing or sitting human forms in bronze or welded steel, with bulky draped bodies and stick-like limbs, are immediately recognisable. The artist works with the tensions set up by contrasts between dark and light, rough and smooth, solid and insubstantial, organic and geometric and matt and polished, and he succeeds equally well at all scales from table-top-sized works to monumental, larger-than-life figures that dominate the landscape. He builds a space frame that is filled in with plaster compound and then cast, so his sculptures invariably appear constructed rather than carved or modelled and his focus on geometric space-displacing forms possibly reflects his original training and experience as an architectural draftsman. In the present lots, the rectangular (male) and triangular (female) headed forms, with featureless bronze faces burnished to a mirror-like sheen, are swathed in voluminous, almost architectural drapery. In *Cloaked Couple VII*, it billows out behind as if blown by a strong wind, even though the figures themselves appear to walk on sedately. Chadwick's large-scale sculptures can be seen in the grounds at Lypiatt Park (Gloucestershire, UK), the Tudor manor house the artist bought in 1958 and slowly renovated and restored until his death in 2003. The estate is now managed by the artist's family.



Two views of Lot 272



273

**Lynn Chadwick**

BRITISH 1914–2003

*Sitting Couple on Base V*

signed with the artist's imprint, dated 77,

and numbered 4/8 and 702S

bronze

height: 18,5 cm

**R300 000 – 400 000**

NOTE

Thanks to the Artist's Estate for the assistance with cataloguing information.



Two views of Lot 273



274

**John Piper**

BRITISH 1903–1992

*Shadwell Park*

signed and indistinctly dated

mixed media on paper

39 by 55 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



275

**John Piper**

BRITISH 1903–1992

*The Coast at Goodwick*

signed and dated Jan 7 65; dated and  
inscribed with the title on the reverse

mixed media on paper

34,5 by 52 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



276

## Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

### *Congo Woman*

signed and dated 1942  
gouache on paper  
54 by 74 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

*The Congo drew me back, and back again. I felt like an explorer. The savagery of the landscape and the people, of snakes and wild birds, of tropical vegetation, of the tiny pygmies of the Bronze Age culture, the giant-like Watussi, a living relic of Neolithic culture, the snow-capped mountains of the equator, the slow moving Congo River – all this meant to me the life and beauty of Africa.*<sup>1</sup>

The two decades between 1930 and 1950 mark the highpoint of Irma Stern's career, a period during which her passion for all things sensual and exotic produced an abundance of artworks characterised by expressively lyrical observation and vigorous technical self-assurance. It is also during this period that she began to travel extensively in search of new visual stimuli that would give her the same sense of excitement that she had experienced in 1922 when she visited the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, a place where, as she put it in her *Umgababa Buch* (published in 1923), 'I believed myself able to hear the heartbeat of Africa.'<sup>2</sup>

Starting in 1930, her travels took her first to Madeira where, despite personal turmoil brought about by an unrequited love affair and the breakdown of her marriage,<sup>3</sup> her palette, as Neville Dubow notes, 'became more luxuriant ... [yielding] to a wider chromatic range.'<sup>4</sup> In 1933 she visited Swaziland in pursuit of the ostensible 'spirit of Africa' but was disappointed to see the changes wrought by increasing industrialisation and urbanisation.

Stern's pursuit of more 'authentic' subjects took her further north into the continent. She visited Dakar *en route* to Genoa in 1937 and returned there in 1938. In 1939 she visited Zanzibar for the first

#### EXHIBITED

*Expressions of a Journey: Irma Stern*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, 2003.

#### LITERATURE

Wilhelm van Rensburg (ed.) (2003). *Expressions of a Journey: Irma Stern*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, illustrated in colour on page 90.

time, and in 1942 she travelled intrepidly to the Congo, borrowing a car and chauffeur from the South African High Consul and disappearing into the forest for a number of months. On her return she published *Congo*,<sup>5</sup> a travelogue illustrated with reproductions of paintings and drawings, in 1943. She returned to Zanzibar in 1945 (publishing a companion volume to *Congo*, entitled *Zanzibar*<sup>6</sup> in 1948) and to central Africa in 1946; she visited Madeira again in 1950 and returned to the Congo in 1955.

In the Congo and Zanzibar Irma Stern found the unspoiled landscape and models she sought, resulting in an outpouring of resplendent work. 'The Congo has always been for me the symbol of Africa,' Stern wrote. 'The sound 'Congo' makes my blood dance, with the thrill of exotic excitement, it sounds to me like distant native drums and a heavy tropical river flowing, its water gurgling in mystic depths ... the forest is green and luscious, the forest is endless like a green dream of Creation Day.'<sup>7</sup>

The *Congo Woman* is one of a number of portraits of the women of the Watussi<sup>8</sup> royal household. In addition to two large oil paintings, *Watussi Queen* (1943)<sup>9</sup> and *Watussi Woman in Red* (1946), Stern made a number of drawings and colour sketches of these statuesque women, whom she described as 'about the same height as the men, about seven feet, ... [with the] most delicately beautiful limbs and enormous heads, and, on top, enormous heads of hair.'<sup>10</sup> In *Congo* she describes Queen Rosalie Gicanda (whom she does not name) as looking 'like an Egyptian statue ... Her hair is a huge arrangement of black, just perfectly proportioned to the size of her long oval-shaped head. She purses her lips as the Egyptians

did. From beneath her long flowing robe her bare foot emerges. Never have I seen such beauty; it is like the black basalt foot of an Egyptian statue. It is expressive of a highly bred cultured ancient race.'<sup>11</sup>

In this exquisite work, Stern celebrates the qualities of grace and elegance of these women, with their almond-shaped faces, refined features and dramatically upswept hairstyles. The glowing, saturated tones of the gouache imbue this image with an almost palpable sensuality and liveliness, transcending the constraints of ethnographic depiction to become a celebration of timeless beauty and femininity.

#### Federico Freschi

- 1 Irma Stern (1954). *National Council of Women (NCW) News*, page 8.
- 2 In Karel Schoeman (1995). *Irma Stern: The Early Years, 1894–1933*, Cape Town: South African Library, page 75.
- 3 Stern married Johannes Prinz, a professor of German at the University of Cape Town who was nine years her senior, in 1942. They were divorced in 1934.
- 4 Neville Dubow (1974). *Irma Stern*, Cape Town: Struik Publishers, page 18.
- 5 Irma Stern (1943). *Congo*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, Pretoria.
- 6 Irma Stern (1948). *Zanzibar*, Pretoria: Van Schaik. Both of Stern's travel books recall Paul Gauguin's decorated accounts of Tahitian folklore, *Ancien Culte Mahorie* of 1892.
- 7 *Congo*, page 1.
- 8 Referred to in colonial parlance as the Watussi or Wahuma, the present-day ethnic grouping is referred to as Tutsi, geographically dispersed between Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo.
- 9 Queen Rosalie Gicanda (1928–1994), whom Stern encountered shortly after her marriage to Mwami (King) Mutara III in 1942.
- 10 Irma Stern (1942). *Sunday Times*, 25 October, quoted by Marion Arnold, *op. cit.*, page 121.
- 11 *Op. cit.*, page 38.



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277

**Mollie Faustman**

SWEDISH 1883–1966

*Girl Raking*

signed with the artist's initials

oil on canvas

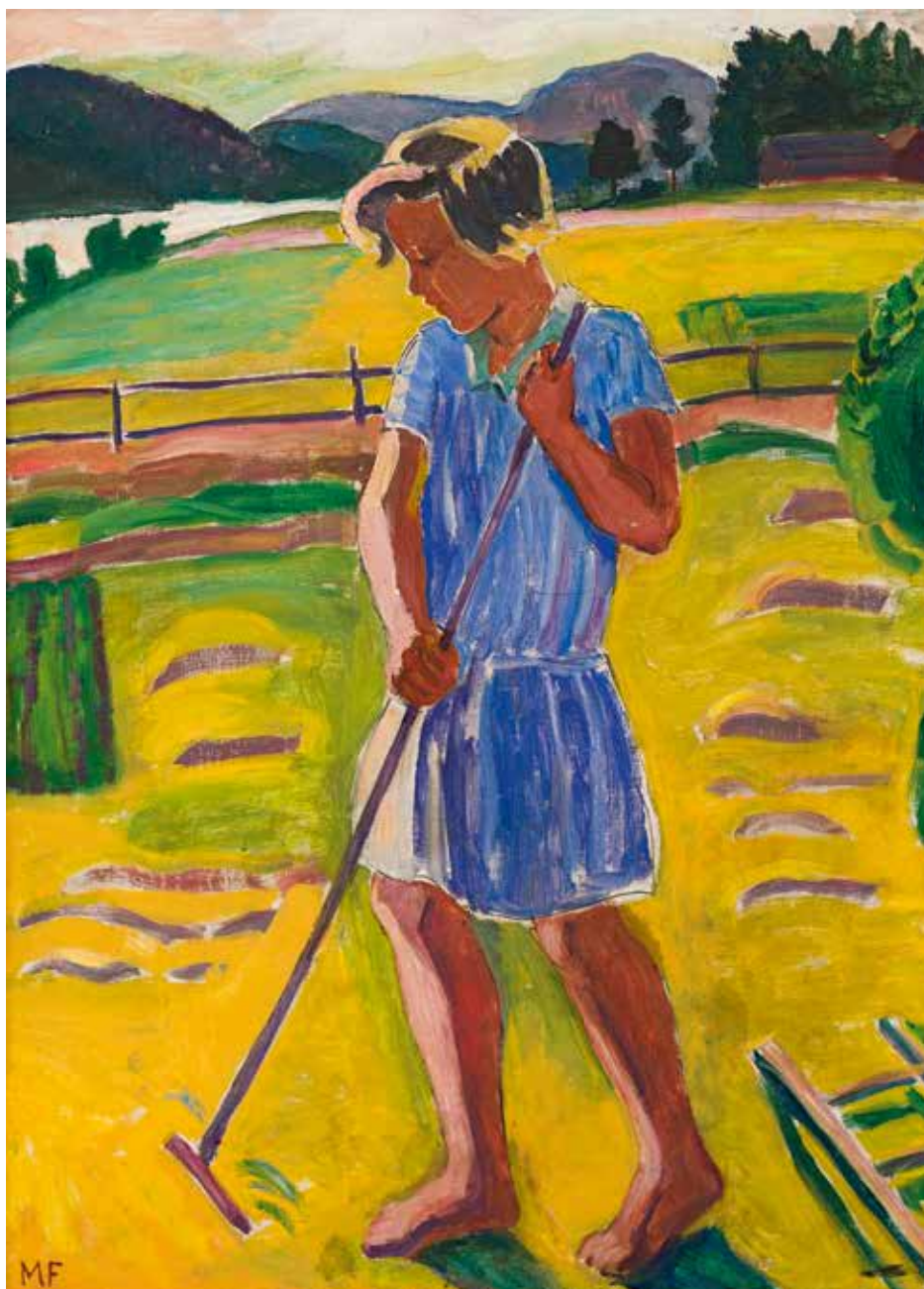
69 by 50 cm

R18 000 – 24 000

Mollie Faustman was a Swedish artist, cartoonist, poet, writer, journalist, art critic and film maker. She studied at the Valand Art School in Gothenburg from 1905 to 1908 and in Paris from 1908 to 1911, including a stint in Matisse's studio. The influence of Expressionism and Fauvism is evident in the vibrant colours and gestural brushmarks that characterise many of Faustman's artworks.

The vivid lemon yellows and brilliant lime greens of the present lot, *Girl, Raking*, suggest the work is referencing the brief but intense Swedish summer, when many city dwelling families migrate to country homes to enjoy rural living and outdoor pursuits. As a child, Faustman spent summers at her grandfather's home in the district of Flen. Faustman's two children were frequently the subjects of her paintings, and the blond girl in this painting is most likely her daughter Tuttan, whose distinctive bobbed hair style is identifiable across other works including *My Daughter*, *Children Playing on the Beach* and *Girl with a Bunch of Flowers*.

Faustman exhibited with the Optimists, a group of Swedish Modernists, from 1924 to 1932, and later with the Independents and the Color & Form group. She also had a number of solo exhibitions at the Art Centre in Stockholm during the 1930s and 1940s.





278

**Jean Welz**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1900–1975

*Still Life with Grapefruit and Knife*

signed and dated 43

oil on canvas laid down on board

22 by 28,5 cm

R90 000 – 120 000

**PROVENANCE**

Strauss & Co., Cape Town,  
8 October 2009, Lot 101.



279

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Lodewijk de Jager & Co. Tobacconist Shop;*  
three**

1. signed and dated 07; 2. signed and dated 1907;  
3. signed, dated 1906 and inscribed 'Pretoria'  
1. watercolour on board; 2. watercolour on board;  
3. pencil on paper  
1. 25 by 32 cm; 2. 24,5 by 34,5 cm; 3. 24,5 by 27,5 cm  
(3)

**R200 000 – 300 000**

**PROVENANCE**

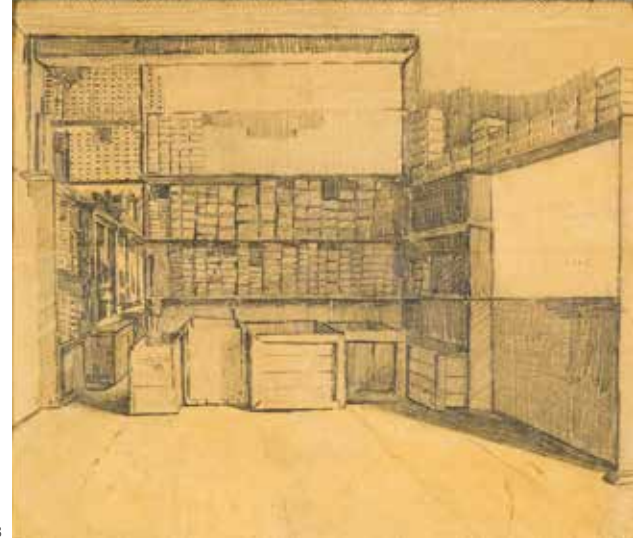
3. Mrs M. Pierneef  
Purchased from the Adler Field Gallery,  
Johannesburg, c. 1963.  
Volks Auctioneers, Important South African and  
European Paintings, 20 August 1982, lot 61. Purchased  
for R800 by the current owner's father.

**LITERATURE**

3. J. F. W. Grosskopf (1947). *Pierneef: The Man and His  
Work*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, illustrated in black and  
white on page 10.



2



3

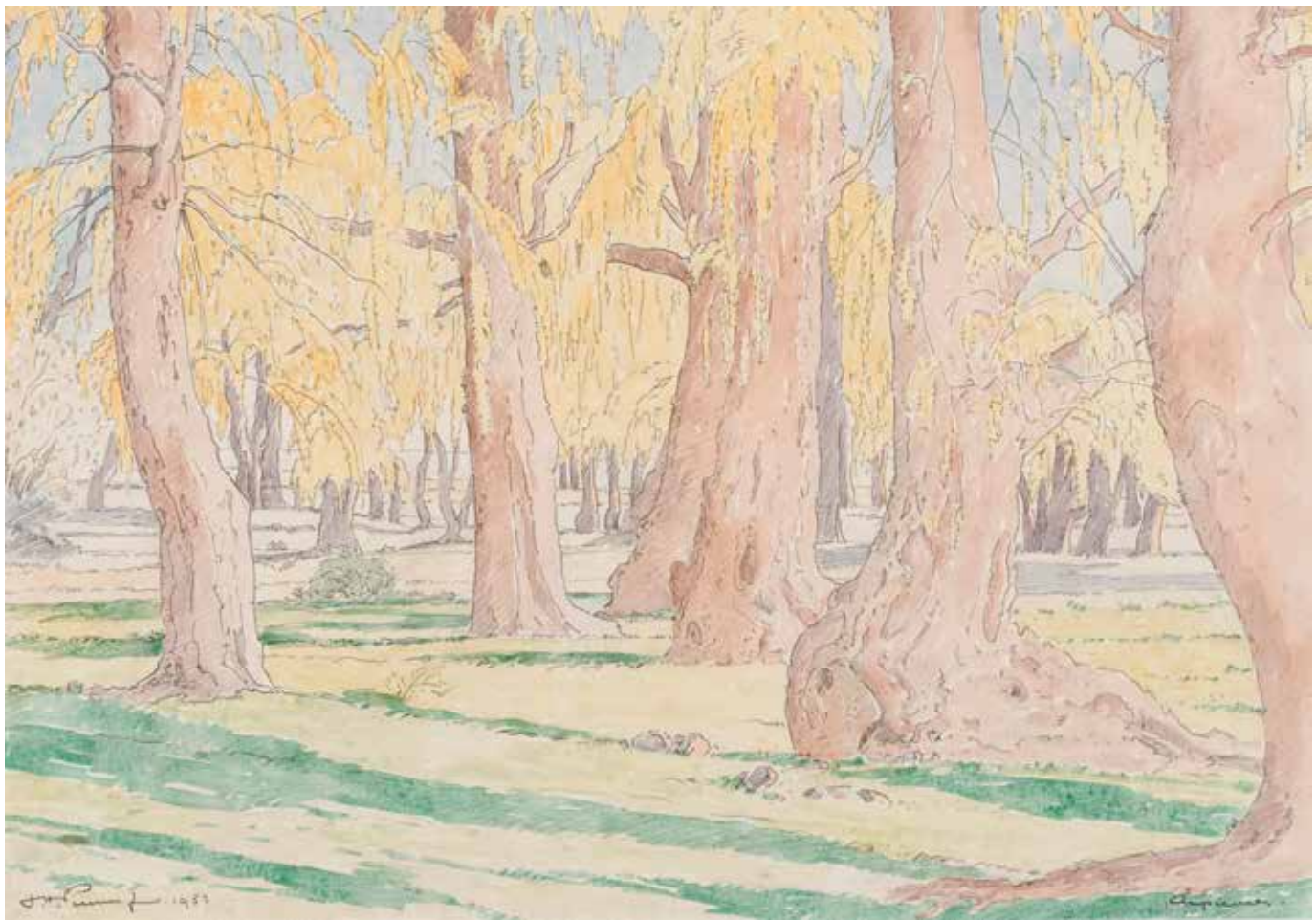
In Hilversum, in the Netherlands, during the Pierneef family's first months in exile during the Anglo-Boer War, a young Henk was afforded late-night lessons in architectural drawing. Having already grown to appreciate clean, practical draughtsmanship from Gerrit Pierneef, his master carpenter father, he continued to refine his line, rely on his observation, and improve his accuracy in the conventional, no-nonsense classes at the Rotterdam Academy. However, after returning to Pretoria shortly after the May 1902 peace, and completing a last year at school on Esselen Street, the teenage Pierneef was expected to make a living. Despite committing in his own mind to becoming an artist, as a result of his father's investment in Lodewijk de Jager & Co., the tobacconist on Church Street West, he had little option but to take up a position there late in 1906. Mischievous anecdotes from JFW Grosskopf and PG Nel, the artist's first biographers, suggest that he was frustrated by his employment, and that he would at the first opportunity neglect his retail duties for his pencils and brushes. A now famous photograph, moreover, of a boyish Pierneef outside the shop, shows him wearing an expression of some displeasure. Yet the image of a bored, wantaway

young artist, holed-up or hiding in a tobacconist's, drawing carefully, and no doubt delighting in the ordered stock around him, has become part of Pierneef lore.

Few drawings then will thrill and delight Pierneef collectors as much as these three interior vignettes from 1906 and 1907. The three-part lot includes a delicate pencil sketch and two spectacular, vivid watercolours: one showing the ordered, lime-green interior of Lodewijk de Jager's tobacco shop, with its oriental jars, its carved counter and set of scales, its exotic cigar boxes, and its ornate display cabinets stocking African and European pipes; the other the back storeroom, complete with sturdy shelving, no-frills lighting and a double delivery door, but bedecked with branded cartons neatly stacked like rows of brilliant, sharp-edged, coloured bricks. The drawings catch a young man wrestling with a sense of responsibility and his desire to spend his time painting; they offer the only full-colour glimpse of the moment. The group of drawings are not only of great historical significance, and a wonderful, unique piece of Pretoriana, but they also provide the most charming evidence of the artist's early gifts and his youthful self-confidence.



Pierneef outside Lodewijk de Jager & Co., Pretoria, 1907.



280

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886-1957

*Kliprivier*

signed, dated 1952 and inscribed with the title

pencil and watercolour on paper

38 by 53 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



281

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*By Henley on Klip*

signed, dated 1952 and inscribed with the title  
pencil and watercolour on paper  
37,5 by 53 cm

R100 000 – 150 000



282

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

*Still Life with Watermelon, Flowers  
and Grapes*

signed and dated 1933

oil on canvas

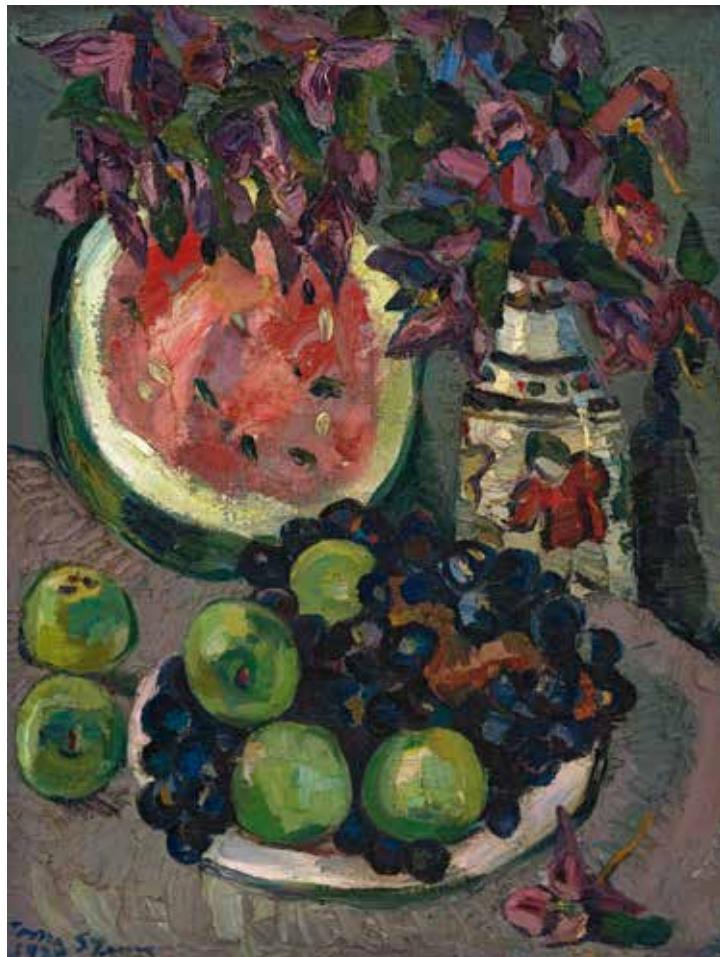
57 by 42,5 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 400 000

Many of Irma Stern's still-life paintings include both fruit and flowers, more often than not in combination with objets d'art from her eclectic collection. Several also contain examples of her own ceramics. In most of these works, Stern arranged fruit nestling in bowls or shattered below unruly bunches of freshly-cut flowers. From time to time, she also sliced open watermelons, paw paws, peaches, even pumpkins to reveal their invitingly fleshy interiors, while in a few works dating to the 1920s and 1930s, casually displayed books seem to suggest the presence of a reader.

Throughout her life, Stern returned again and again to the plants that were readily available either in her own garden or from the flower market in Adderley Street in central Cape Town. Always concerned to preserve spontaneity, her seemingly haphazard arrangement of flowers, fruit, bowls, carpets and other items suggest lack of thought. Clearly, though, Stern remained keenly attentive to the spatial and compositional relationships between the different forms she chose to include in her works.

Adapted from: Sandra Klopper (2018). 'Life Force: The Still Lives of Irma Stern', in Wilhelm van Rensburg (ed.), *Life Force: The Still Lives of Irma Stern*, Johannesburg: Strauss & Co.



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283

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Houses at the Foot of a Mountain*

signed

oil on board

28,5 by 35 cm

R600 000 – 900 000

**PROVENANCE**

The Dirk Lion-Cachet Collection.

**LITERATURE**

A. J. Werth (1965). *The Dirk Lion-Cachet Collection*, Pretoria: Pretoria Art Museum, catalogue number 3, illustrated in black and white.





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284

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Landscape with Mountains and Clouds*

signed

oil on board

14,5 by 19,5 cm

R80 000 – 120 000

285

## Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

### Mary

signed and dated 1941

oil on canvas

76,5 by 66 cm

R5 000 000 – 7 000 000

#### LITERATURE

Mona Berman (2003). *Remembering Irma: Irma Stern – A Memoir with Letters*, Cape Town: Double Storey, illustrated in colour on page 166.

Standard Bank Gallery (2003). *Irma Stern: Expressions of a Journey*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, illustrated in colour on page 81.



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The subject of this elegant portrait is Mary Cramer (née Ginsberg, 1912–1988), the younger sister of Irma Stern's friend and confidante, Freda Feldman. Although it has some of the formal characteristics that we associate with Stern's work in this genre – not least the vigorous impasto describing both form and detail – the portrait is uncharacteristically restrained for Stern. Like two other portraits painted during the early 1940s, *Argentinian Woman* (1941) (fig. 2) and *Portrait of Stella, Lady Bailey* (1944) (fig. 3) the painting also has something of a Spanish air.

Photographs of Mary taken around the time this portrait was painted show that she wore her hair with a centre parting (fig. 1), but when combined with the flower behind her ear and the black dress with its transparent chiffon top with puffed sleeves and ruched collar, the Spanish reference is intensified. In effect, the painting is evocative of Goya's portraits of noblewomen, particularly those of the Duchess of Alba. The Spanish references in these paintings may reflect something of Stern's

nostalgia for Spain at the time (her travels had been curtailed by the war in Europe, and she had not visited the continent since 1937), while they also create a sense of drama that puts the sitters outside of the constraints of everyday life.

Mary was the second daughter, after Freda (who was 15 months her senior), in a family of ten children. Mona Berman, Freda's daughter, notes that, 'Where Freda was outgoing, self-reliant and charismatic, Mary was shy, reserved and inward looking. But despite these differences, they complemented each other and were seldom apart.'<sup>1</sup> Indeed, so often was Mary at the Feldmans' Houghton home that Mona speaks of Mary, who was childless, as a second mother, intimately connected with her childhood.

Irma Stern was also a frequent visitor at the Feldmans during the 1940s and 50s, and Freda would go to considerable lengths to ensure that the artist's considerable physical and practical demands were met, including painting the dining

room walls a specific shade of emerald green at her behest, the better to offset her paintings. Compelled by Freda's elegant appearance and gracious demeanour, Stern produced a number of portraits of her, including four oils (three of which were recently sold by Strauss & Co.), several charcoal drawings and a gouache. In 1941 Stern spent an extended time at the Feldmans during which time, as Mona recalls, 'She painted many subjects, including the portrait of my mother in her model French hat and the portrait of Mary in her stylish black dress.'<sup>2</sup>

Mary, who was 29 years old when the portrait was painted, was, according to Mona Berman, 'the most beautiful of all the sisters. She had classic features – a wide forehead, clear blue-green eyes, an aquiline nose and well-formed lips ... She had impeccable taste and dressed in stylish but modest clothes ... she looked like a *Vogue* model.'<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Stern has made much of Mary's alabaster skin, fine features and poised bearing in this portrait; the





Figure 1 Mary Cramer photographed by Henry Treisman, c. 1941. (Collection Mona Berman).



Figure 2 Irma Stern, *Argentinian Woman*, 1941, oil on canvas, 61 by 51 cm. (Irma Stern Trust Collection, accession no. 12).



Figure 3 Irma Stern, *Portrait of Stella, Lady Bailey*, 1944, oil on canvas laid on board 64 by 77 cm. (Sotheby's Modern & Contemporary African Art Sale, 16 May 2017).

severe centre parting of her swept-back, chestnut hair perfectly framing her face and offsetting the glistening vermilion of her exquisitely painted lips, set dramatically against the emerald-green backdrop.

The sitter's graceful poise is enhanced by Stern's careful depiction of the details of her accessories: a pink rose holding her hair tightly in place, an elegant drop-pearl earring, a slim black-and-gold wristwatch on her slender wrist, and three black-and-gold rings adorning the ring finger of an immaculately manicured hand, which in turn holds a pale orange rose. While these details are clearly markers of gender and social standing there is something disquieting about the painting that makes them seem like talismans, there to protect the exquisitely vulnerable young woman rather than to adorn her. 'Her quiet reserve and aloof manner created an aura of mystery around her that discouraged intimacy,'<sup>4</sup> says Mona, and it is this

enigmatic air that Stern has uncannily captured.

To the outside world, Mary appeared to lead a charmed life. She was beautiful and married to a successful man who adored her. She lived in a lovely home with a fine garden and was a gracious hostess renowned for her attention to detail and exquisite taste. Yet inwardly, it seems that Mary was driven by passions and torments of which she never spoke. 'Something about her always remained a mystery,' says Mona, 'clouded in conjecture and uncertainty.'<sup>5</sup> Stern certainly captured Mary's exceptional beauty and grace, but more than that, she produced a compelling portrait of a complex, secretive woman.

There is a pensive aloofness in Mary's expression that speaks also of a certain pathos. While the slight exaggeration of her limpid eyes immediately draws the viewer, this is deflected by her refusal to return the gaze; she stares instead into the middle distance beyond the frame. While she is certainly

poised, she seems somehow emotionally tense, the pearl earring a metonymic displacement, perhaps, of an invisible tear.

Freda hung the work in pride of place in the emerald-green dining room with the portraits that Stern had painted of her. Stern, always the master of expression, presciently captured something of the quiet, unvoiced turmoil of Mary's life, and in so doing gives us an extraordinary portrait of the complexities and contradictions that lie beneath the masks of outward appearance.

*Federico Freschi*

1 Mona Berman, personal communication, 22 September 2018.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

286

**Anton van Wouw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

***Bust of General Koos de la Rey***

1940

inscribed 'JH de la Rey' and 'n Afrikaner op wie sijn volk trots is'  
bronze with green patina on a wooden base

height: 42,5 cm including base

**R240 000 – 280 000**

**PROVENANCE**

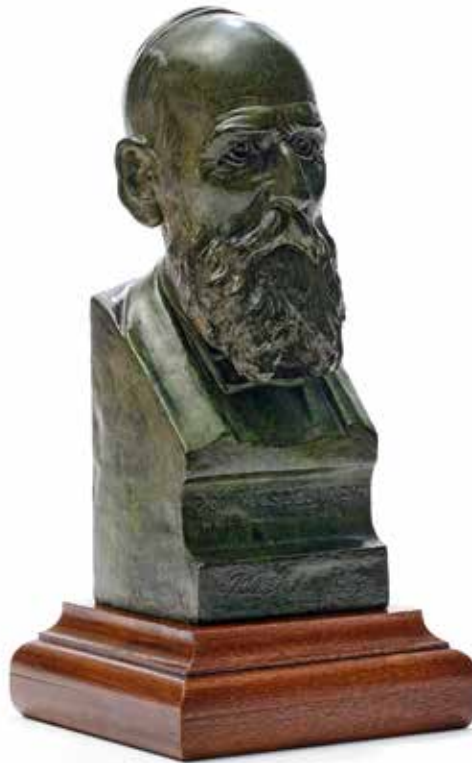
Mr Bill Collins.

**EXHIBITED**

Anton van Wouw Retrospective Exhibition, University of Pretoria, 2010.

**LITERATURE**

Professor Alex Duffey, Gerard de Kamper and Daniel Mosako (2010). *Anton Van Wouw (1862–1945)*, Pretoria: University of Pretoria Department of Arts, illustrated in colour on page 35.



Two views of Lot 286

Trained at the Rotterdam Academy, and apprenticed to the Belgian sculptor Joseph Graven, Anton van Wouw immigrated to South Africa in 1890 (the same year, incidentally, as did Frans Oerder). Having planned to work on an architectural scale between the developing cities of Pretoria and Johannesburg, the artist initially found few opportunities. However, after a major commission from Sammy Marks to cast a monument to President Paul Kruger, and syndicated backing to produce the small-scale bronzes of Boer and African figures that perhaps made his fame, his career was well-established in the years leading up to the Union of South Africa, having enjoyed solo shows in Johannesburg, Pretoria and London. But with no foundry in the country capable of casting bronze to the highest European standards, Van Wouw had little choice but to send his models and moulds for casting abroad. He routinely worked with two Roman foundries,

those of Giovanni Massa and Giovanni Nisini. Finally, in 1931, an experienced Florentine foundryman, Renzo Vignali, who Van Wouw likely met in Italy while casting the monument to President MT Steyn, opened a foundry in Johannesburg. While Van Wouw continued to have work cast in Rome, the Vignali Foundry, which moved to its current premises north of Pretoria in 1942, cast a number of the artist's works until his death in 1945.

The present lot, a sensitive portrait of General Koos de la Rey, the so-called Lion of the West-Transvaal, was cast by Renzo Vignali in 1940. With a beautiful patina like polished quartz, it shows the elderly, popular general with his brow furrowed, his beard parted and groomed, and his expression one of patriarchal concern. The head was based on the painted portrait by Edward Roworth, as well as the death mask that Van Wouw made while the general lay in state in Pretoria in 1914.





287

**Gerard de Leeuw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–1985

***Boerbok***

signed and indistinctly dated  
bronze on wooden base  
height: 72 cm

**R150 000 – 200 000**

**LITERATURE**

Matthys Strydom (1979). *Gerard de Leeuw*,  
George: Suidkaap-Uitgewery, illustrated  
in black and white on page 23.

288

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

*Primavera II*

signed, dated '41 and inscribed with the title

oil on gypsum

49,5 by 39,5 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

A multitude of flowers surround the subject in the *Primavera II* portrait, turning her into a goddess of Spring: a rose is tattooed on her neck, she lifts a common buttercup towards her nose, and her forehead and the rest of the picture plane is embellished with narcissus flowers, recalling the flower-strewn figure of Flora in Sandro Botticelli's famous *Primavera* of the late 1470s. Preller studied the art of Italy and was familiar with Botticelli's works from the many art books he accumulated during his lifetime. He was also particularly struck by the frescos of Piero della Francesca and visited Florence and Arezzo on a study trip in 1953.

The present lot, *Primavera II*, painted in 1941, appears anomalous in Preller's oeuvre. It was painted many years before the more famous *Primavera* of 1957 – a work that was inspired by the depiction of the Three Graces in Botticelli's *Primavera* – and the *Primavera* heads, or portraits, painted from 1963 to 1967. Preller served in the medical corps during the Second World War, and in his war paintings, he ameliorates the horrors of war by, for example, turning the swabs of gauze on wounded bodies into flowers or butterflies on the picture plane. What is striking about this early *Primavera* is the gauze-like texture of the surface. It is almost as if Preller made impressions with gauze in the wet Plaster of Paris before he painted the portrait. The pitted surface of the work enhances its fresco-like effect.

It is noticeable that the head in the present lot is made up of two parts: the face, an oval disc or shield turned away from the viewer, with slanted almond eyes that lend it an inscrutable expression, and a side view of the back of the skull, an angle Preller used often in such works as *African Head*, *Young Prince*, *Christ Head*, *Space Angel*, and *Greek Boy*. The band around the neck almost suggests that the head might have been severed from the rest of the body, a compositional device that Preller also employed in many other portraits.

Preller visited Egypt, and his work can be seen to have been influenced by the hieratic expression on the faces of the art of that ancient culture and the death masks of the Al Fayyum in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.



289

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Feluccas on the Nile*

signed; document from Christopher Møller Art explaining symbols on sails of boats adhered to the reverse oil on board

38,5 by 28,5 cm

**R450 000 – 550 000**

**NOTE**

Sold in 2009 with the title *Dhows on the Nile*.





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290

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

*Boats on Zanzibar Beach*

signed and dated 1943

gouache on card

51 by 63,5 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

291

## Jacob Hendrik Pierneef

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

### *Cinnamon Mill, Seychelles*

signed and dated 1954

oil on canvas

65,5 by 86 cm

R4 000 000 – 5 000 000

#### EXHIBITED

*A Space for Landscape: The Work of JH Pierneef*, Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, July 2015.

#### LITERATURE

Karel Nel. 'Rock Pools and Islands: The Imaginative Landscape of Walter Battiss, The King of Fook' in Warren Siebrits (ed.) (2016).

*Walter Battiss: 'I Invented Myself'*, Johannesburg: The Ampersand Foundation, illustrated in colour on page 302 with the title *Sawmill Seychelles*.

Standard Bank Gallery (2015). *A Space for Landscape: The Work of JH Pierneef*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, illustrated in colour on page 95.



After finishing a large-scale painting commissioned by the Pretoria City Council to commemorate the city's centenary, Pierneef took a well-deserved holiday in the Seychelles between August and November 1954. Pierneef, and his second wife, May, had visited the island once before on their way back from Europe and England in 1926, when they travelled via the Mediterranean down the east coast of Africa, visiting such harbour cities as Dar es Salaam, Mombassa and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo).

The Seychelles held a special allure for Pierneef. His first mentor and instructor, Frans Oerder, had travelled along the same coast as early as 1903, and he had no doubt told the young Pierneef about the exoticism of East Africa. Many years later, Pierneef, in turn, advised a very troubled Alexis Preller to seek refuge in the Seychelles. Preller stayed a number

of months between 1948 and 1949, and visited Zanzibar as well.

Pierneef was not impressed with the luscious verdancy of the tropical islands, however. He wrote to his friends, the Lion Cachets: 'The Seychelles has disappointed me a little as far as the landscape is concerned, everything is *very green*, apart from the few little bulls and cows.'<sup>1</sup> He nevertheless went on to say that the old houses and narrow streets of the islands were very suitable painting subjects, and he made numerous sketches to be used later in fully developed paintings in his studio. One minutely-detailed sketch of the scene depicted in the present lot has survived, and is presently part of the Ditsong South African National Cultural History Museum collection in Pretoria.

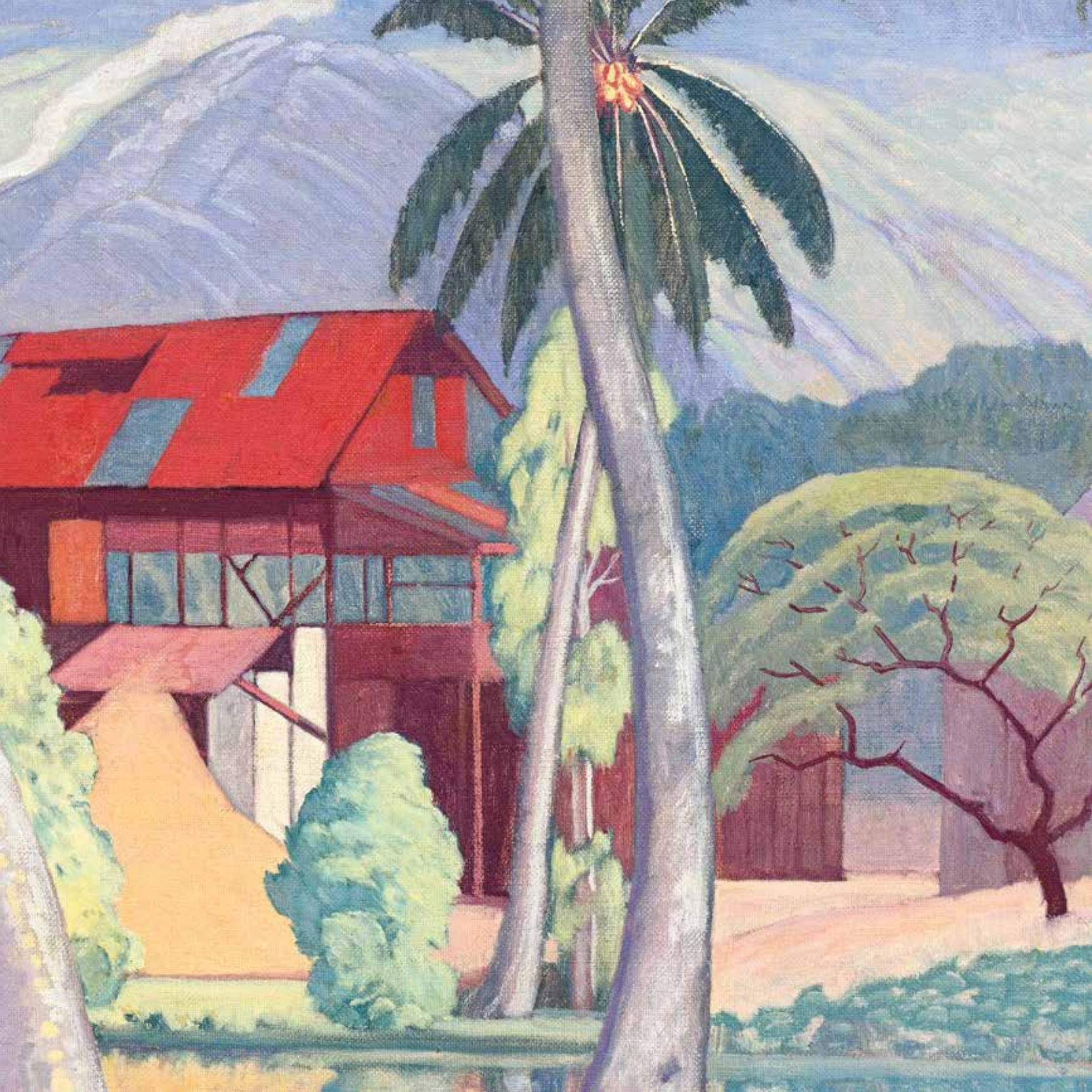
What is striking about this painting, *Cinnamon Mill*, is its unusual style. It employs what Esmé

Berman calls a 'post-impressionist style'.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, one is reminded of the work of Paul Gauguin, who lived for the last part of his life on exotic islands: Martinique, Tahiti, and eventually, the Marquesas, or Polynesian islands.

The second, most striking aspect of the present lot, is the fact that the title, *Cinnamon Mill*, evokes a sense of smell! Pierneef wrote the title in Afrikaans, *Kaneelmeul*, on the preparatory sketch in pencil. One can almost smell the exotic spice drifting lazily through the air, mingling with the smoke from the mill and getting entangled in the blue and purple clouds and mountains in the background.

<sup>1</sup> Estelle Pretorius (1990). 'Biography of Jacob Hendrik Pierneef', in PG Nel (ed.) *JH Pierneef: His Life and his Work*. Cape Town: Perskor.

<sup>2</sup> Esmé Berman (1975). *The Story of South African Painting*. Cape Town: AA Balkema, page 44.



SENDO GOV<sup>o</sup> ECAP<sup>o</sup> EN DES  
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292

**Frans Oerder**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1867–1944

*Fort Ibo, East Africa*

signed; signed and inscribed with the title on the reverse

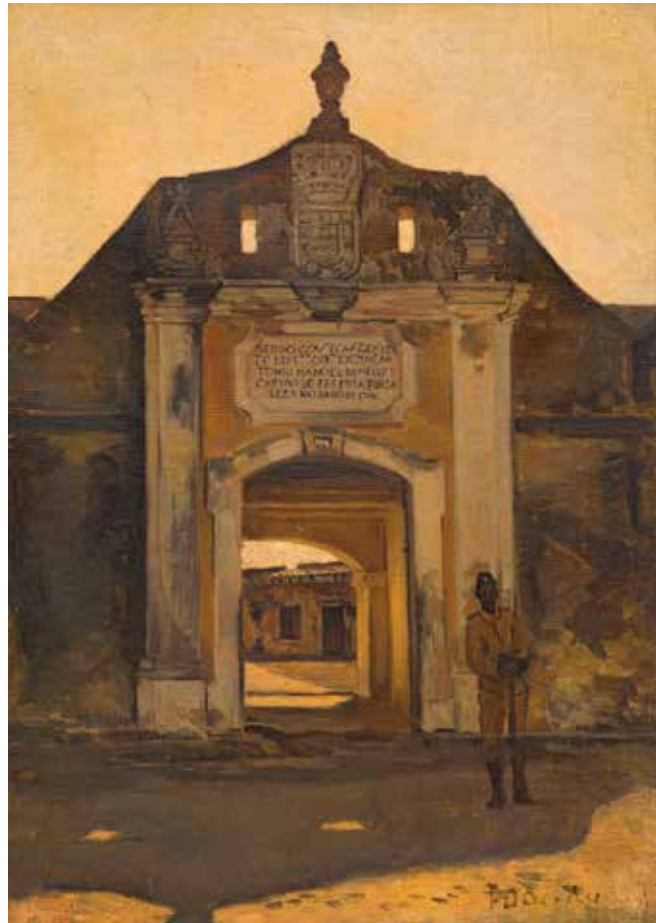
oil on canvas

49,5 by 35,5 cm

**R100 000 – 150 000**

Frans Oerder arrived in Pretoria in 1890 from Rotterdam. In 1899, and at the request of President Paul Kruger, he joined the Boer cause as an official war artist. Apart from sketching Boer positions in the field, the artist produced a fine group of British portraits while interned as a prisoner of war at Meintjieskop. After his release he travelled up the east coast of Africa, producing a small but remarkable body of exotic, sultry-aired vignettes characterised by torn banana fronds; crumbling, white-washed blockhouses; driftwood lean-tos driven into the sand; beached hulls waiting for the tide; and lithe, dark, slow-moving figures on the rocks. The present lot is a rare addition to this east African group, and catches the artist at the gates of the Forte de São João Batista on Ibo Island in the then Portuguese East Africa (present day Mozambique). A colonial guard, heavy-booted, stands sentry in the shade, while the interior courtyard, only glimpsed through the gates, appears deserted. Oerder spent some time accurately transcribing the inscription on the pediment, which referred to the building of the five-pointed fort by the Portuguese in the late eighteenth century. It served a military role, of course, and played a part in the area's slave trade.

Oerder, whose trip was cut short by malaria, might be the first on an extraordinary list of twentieth-century artists painting on the African east coast. If the tradition began with him, it was continued impressively by Hugo Naude, Henk Pierneef, Frieda Lock, Irma Stern, Alexis Preller, Terrence McCaw and Walter Battiss.





293

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Lowveld, Eastern Transvaal***

signed and dated 1928; inscribed with the artist's name, the date, the title in Afrikaans and the medium on a Graham's Fine Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse

casein on paper

38 by 54 cm

**R3 000 000 – 4 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Schweickerdt Family.

**LITERATURE**

PG Nel (ed.) (1990). *J H Pierneef: His Life and His Work*. Cape Town: Perskor, illustrated in colour on page 219.

Few South African landscape pictures are as dazzling, as evocative, and as memorable as JH Pierneef's *Lowveld, Eastern Transvaal*. Having been acquired and treasured by the Schweickert family – a name closely associated with the artist from as early as 1910 – the painting's fame has more to do with its stippled, mesmerising surface than with its prominent position, in full, blazing colour, in PG Nel's landmark monograph, *JH Pierneef: His Life and His Work*. Painted in 1928, the year of his groundbreaking and modern-spirited show at Polliack's Music Room in Pretoria, the work catches the artist at his most innovative and technically assured.

The foreground of *Lowveld, Eastern Transvaal* is dominated by two beautiful, balanced, heaven-reaching acacias, their bark in ever-changing combinations of lavender, orange and pink; behind them the bushveld recedes deep into the picture, its grasslands and clearings turning from green to coral to violet as they roll towards the mountains.



Each part of the scene – however near or distant – is treated with equal care. Pierneef colours the mountains and the clouds with his signature sense of drama: deep purples follow the shadows under ridge lines, blue and indigo define the range's silhouette, while spots of grey and streaks of silver and white make up the sky.

While still energised by his time in Europe in 1925 and 1926, and despite his head being turned there by some contemporary preferences for unrestrained colour and painterly impulse, the composition of *Lowveld, Eastern Transvaal* is organised along simple geometric lines. This clear respect for structured, mathematical pattern had much to do with the teachings of the Dutch theorist Willem van Konijnenburg, and it adds to the sense of peacefulness and harmony that pervades the artist's view of his beloved bushveld. It also provides evidence of the artist's specific attempts at the time to impose on his landscapes the kind

of rigorous, decorative order made famous by *Composition in Blue*. In fact, despite the shimmering finish of the one, and the heavy, cool permanence of the other, the two paintings have much more in common than the date of execution. Both, moreover, are icons of South African landscape painting.



*Composition in Blue*





294

**Hugo Naudé**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1868-1941

*Landscape*

signed

oil on board

25,5 by 35,5 cm

R180 000 – 240 000



295

**Anton van Wouw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

*Hammer Work, maquette*

signed and inscribed with  
'Foundry G. Massa, Rome'  
bronze on wooden base  
height: 12,5 cm excluding base

R300 000 – 500 000

## Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

### *Lady of the Harem*

signed and dated 1945

gouache on paper

77 by 55 cm

R3 000 000 – 4 000 000

#### LITERATURE

Irma Stern (1948). *Zanzibar*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, illustrated in black and white on page 14.

Painted during her second trip to Zanzibar in 1945, *Woman of the Harem* is typical of something of a shift in Stern's approach to her subjects at this time. As she put it in a letter from Zanzibar to her friends Freda and Richard Feldman, 'I am painting dramatic pictures, compositions and faces – not just types and races.'<sup>1</sup> This sense of a shift towards a deeper engagement with her subjects is reiterated by Joseph Sachs, writing in 1942, who suggests that Stern's Zanzibar paintings are the 'high water mark of her art. Canvases are full of gorgeous colour and the strange mysterious atmosphere of this tropical island, but they have also recaptured the spirit of the diverse humanity that is found on the East Coast of Africa.'<sup>2</sup>

It is important to remember, however, that Stern was a product of her time. Her approach to her subjects was informed by her early training in German Expressionism, where the notion of the 'primitive' (particularly of non-Western cultures) was upheld as something of an article of faith; a way of asserting a fundamental, utopian humanism as a means of countering the dehumanising forces of twentieth-century industrialisation. In these terms, Stern's images of the exotic 'others' – problematic as they may be when viewed through the lens of postcolonial theory – offer insights that might otherwise have been lost and leave us with a compelling visual legacy of vanishing ways of life that might otherwise have gone unrecorded. As Marion Arnold puts it, 'Her portraits of black models make assumptions about life style and sometimes, unwitting on her part, telling social comment is rendered.'<sup>3</sup>

Stern was captivated by the romance and exoticism of Zanzibar, which she saw at once as

a cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures and as expressive of a particular kind of spirituality. In a 1954 article, Stern describes being transfixed by an old Arab bead seller, who seemed to live 'in a world of his own, a spiritual world, untampered by travels and noise and desire for money or goods ... In this I found a new truth – a truth from early times and handed down from age to age, a worship of spiritual forces.'<sup>4</sup> At the same time, however, she could not avoid remarking on gender inequalities, particularly as regards the Arab community: 'Arab women are still in purdah,' she writes in *Zanzibar*, 'and only deeply veiled may they leave the house.'<sup>5</sup> She describes visiting the luxurious, mysteriously exotic and exclusively feminine world of the harem, 'filled with their dowries of lovely old eastern silks with heavy gold fringes, trousers ruched at the ankles with the frills falling over their feet. Heavy perfumes hanging in the air – expensive, penetrating Eastern perfumes. The large mirrors in heavy golden frames coming down from the ceiling and decorated with arabesques and crests are gifts from the Sultan. The rooms are laid out with mats over old dark red tiles – Persian mats and straw matting in vivid array. In front of the bed is a mattress in red silk with heavy stripes of gold brocade edging it – the day bed.'<sup>6</sup>

In this painting, the intense, jewel-like colours of the woman's garments, the way in which she fills the composition, and the inscrutability of her half-opened eyes convey something of this languid mystique and intimacy. Positioned near an open window that is partially covered with a wrought-iron screen of decorative arabesques, the painting is reminiscent of Matisse's odalisques painted during the 1920s. However, the comparison does

not go much further than certain formal similarities. Matisse's odalisques were modernist essays in an established orientalist trope: the erotic harem fantasy featuring exotic, dark-skinned women from France's North African colonies as passive fetishes of the eroticised male gaze. While Matisse claimed to have seen harem women during his trips to Morocco in 1912–13, it is improbable that he would have had access to these severely restricted spaces and was more likely to have encountered their simulacrum in the local brothels. His odalisques remain, therefore, decorative cultural stereotypes.

Stern, on the other hand, paints with an urgency born of a desire to convey her charged impressions of the intimate, feminine space, and in so doing to give a sense of the vital, colourful presence of what lies behind the veil. 'In this Eastern world the woman has no rights,' she concluded in *Zanzibar*. 'They run about like ghosts, black, with their Jashmak [sic] covering their faces and bodies. Each nation of the East has a different way of hiding their females.'<sup>7</sup>

Federico Freschi

1 Quoted in Mona Berman (2003). *Remembering Irma: Irma Stern – A Memoir with Letters*, Johannesburg: Double Storey, page 97.

2 Joseph Sachs (1942). *Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, page 61.

3 Marion Arnold (1995). *Irma Stern: A Feast for the Eye*, Cape Town: Fernwood Press, page 101.

4 Irma Stern (1954). *National Council of Women (NCW) News*, page 8.

5 *Op. cit.*, page 12.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, page 45.



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297

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Harvesters in Wheatfield*

signed  
oil on canvas  
45,5 by 55 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000

## LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in colour on the front cover and in black and white on page 202, catalogue number 634.

Johannes Meintjes (1944). *Maggie Laubser*, Cape Town: HAUM, illustrated in black and white on page 36 with the caption 'Oestyd (Olieverf) 1929'.



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On the front cover of *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics* (1994), the catalogue raisonné compiled by Dalene Marais, an image of *Harvesters in Wheatfield* is featured. This image is significant: apart from denoting the meticulous documentation by Marais, it is a seminal piece in Laubser's oeuvre. It foreshadows the engaging leitmotif of harvesting that preoccupied the artist throughout her artistic production.

Laubser was well-acquainted with labour on a wheat farm. She was born on the farm Bloublommetjieskloof in the Malmesbury district. There she spent her carefree childhood. Later, on a short visit from Europe when she visited her parents, she familiarised herself with the farm Oortmanpost, near Klipheuwel, which her father bought in 1914. Later Oortmanpost became her destination. When she finally returned to South Africa in 1924, she drew inspiration for many a year from the wealth of material she was exposed to. Here she painted her odes to the people, birds and animals of the land.

Even before her return, workers reaping and stacking wheat had already inspired her. In Belgium, at Schoten, where she stayed during 1919 and 1920, she was drawn to the labour of women harvesters. She made drawings and paintings on the theme of peasant women working in wheat fields. When she finally settled in South Africa she used a vacant room outside the farmstead as her studio. Here she started to pay homage to farm labour and many a ground-breaking piece was completed, including *Harvesters in Wheatfield*. In the present lot, two farm hands are depicted. They work in unison: the one, sickle in hand, cuts the ripe yellow ears of wheat, while his fellow worker gathers the wheat to bundle the sheaves. Stooping, they carry out their work in back-breaking positions. However, the viewer is not aware at first of what their labour really entails and is only enchanted by the beauty of the scene. On looking closer, one becomes aware of the heat of a summer's mid-day: note the position of their shadows. Nevertheless, the workers cut and gather. In the mid-distance is proof of the labour they have

already done.

Harvesting was one of Laubser's favourite subjects. In these scenes she limited the number of workers employed to carry out the work. Only in one instance do four farm hands appear. Laubser places emphasis on the worth of the sweat of the farm worker's brow. These harvest scenes belong to the 'sickle and scythe' period in the history of South African agriculture. As a matter of interest, *Somer*, the Afrikaans novel by CM van den Heever deals with the same period of farm labour, but whereas Laubser interprets the labour pictorially, Van den Heever gives a detailed description of the back-breaking labour in the heat of a high summer sun. This is a bygone epoch, of a time before mechanisation took over.

Laubser's painting additionally has religious connotations. For her, to paint was to pray. The workers in the fields conjure up the following verse from *St Matthew*: 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers few ...'

*Elza Miles*



298

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

***Leentjie***

signed with the artist's initials  
oil on board  
45 by 37,5 cm

**R1 000 000 – 2 000 000**

**EXHIBITED**

South African National Gallery, Cape Town, 1965,  
catalogue number 50.

**LITERATURE**

Dalene Marais (1994).  
*Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and  
Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in  
black and white on page 207, catalogue number  
666, and titled *Portrait of a Young Woman*.



*Portrait of a Girl with Geese*

The present lot shows off Maggie Laubser at her best. *Leentjie* is an exquisite, intense, offbeat portrait by a brilliant, singular and honest painter. A young domestic worker on Oortmanspost, the artist's farm in the Malmesbury District, Leentjie was evidently beautiful, with large, clear eyes, an open face, and deep brown, glistening skin. She sat for the artist with her hair casually shaped, wearing a lace vest, blue smock, and a pink blouse just lighter than her lips.

By arranging her sitter off-centre, and catching her with her gaze directed away from the artist, Laubser reworked a portrait composition that had served her so well in the 1920s. Leentjie's averted eyes evoke the sense of pastoral innocence that



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characterise the artist's finest portraits, while the position of the head presents the best opportunity to paint a meaningful background. In this instance, a rustic farm cottage, thatched and gently lit from within, helps contextualise the sitter, while boulder-like clouds, given volume by different shades of purple, grey and blue, enclose the scene.

While the work only includes the artist's initials on the sitter's sleeve, its remarkable quality, not to mention its stylistic elements – the dense, expressive painting of the head, the intimate if direct composition, and the fearless, rich colour – helps date the work to 1928, or very close to it. *Leentjie* also bears a striking resemblance to the

tender and magnificent *Portrait of a Girl with Geese*, that would have been executed at a similar time and in a similar mood. Both portraits pulse with life, both are filled with pathos, and both might be singled out as milestone examples.

The picture has a romantic provenance. It was purchased at an exhibition in Stellenbosch, much to the disappointment of a young woman who had missed the opportunity. Overhearing her regret, the new owner approached the woman with a light-hearted offer. She was promised the painting for her home, but only on condition of marriage. Although strangers then, a relationship developed, and the promise was fulfilled.





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299

### Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

#### *Women Carrying Wood*

signed with the artist's initials

oil on canvas

37,5 by 47 cm

R1 000 000 – 2 000 000

#### LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in black and white on page 201, catalogue number 629.

Maggie Laubser's striking painting, *Women Carrying Wood*, encapsulates the formative impressions of the artist's youth – the golden hues and unspoiled nature of the wheat farm near Malmesbury where she was born, the vivid colours, shapes and forms of farm life, and the harmony of lines that continued to inform her work throughout her life.

There is a theatrical aspect to the painting as the foreground is occupied by the two women and a child going about the daily chore of carrying firewood to the whitewashed, thatched labourer's cottage. No matter how mundane a task, Laubser imbues the figures with dignity, and sets them against a golden glow contrasted with swathes of deep blue, green and the deep mauve of the mountains. Typically, the backdrop of nature becomes subjugated to the focal figures as it cuts off the horizon with the mountains thereby emphasising the foreground even more strikingly.

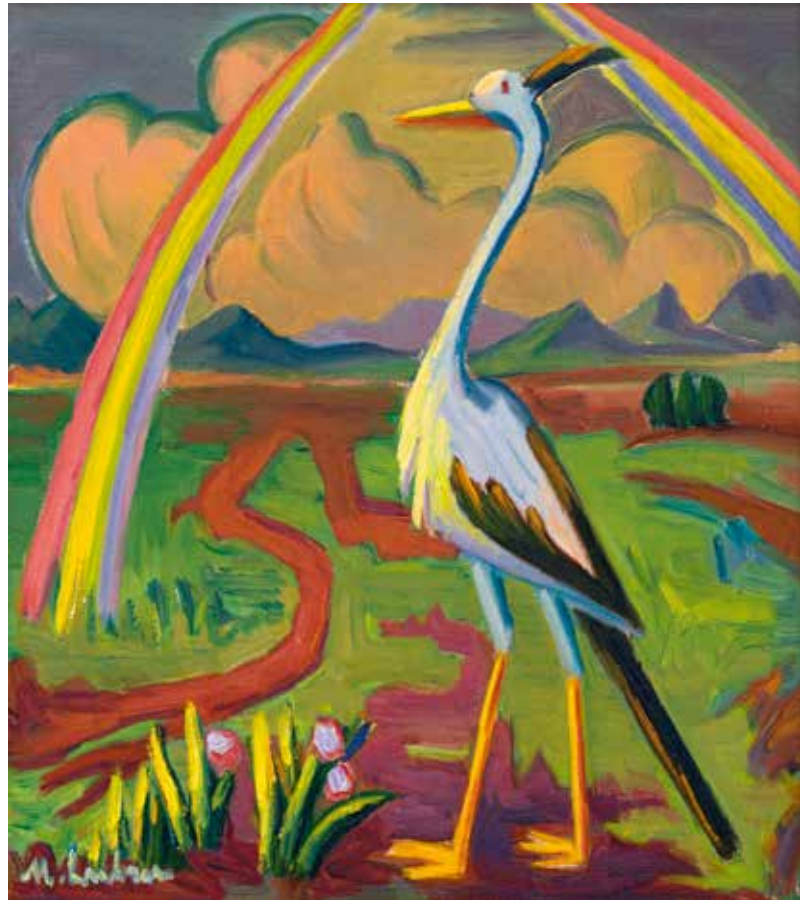
300

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

***Bird in a Landscape with Rays***

signed

oil on canvas laid down on board  
45 by 40 cm**R600 000 – 900 000****EXHIBITED**South African Association of Arts, Cape  
Town, 1960.**LITERATURE**Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in black and white on page 349, catalogue number 1525.

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In Europe, Maggie Laubser yearned for the wide open spaces of the South African landscape. Surely she also longed for the wild birds with which she was familiar from roaming the fields as a child and collecting a variety of eggs. At that time, she also observed their habits and studied their behaviour. In 1924 when she finally returned to the country of her birth, it is not surprising that she took up the ties of her youth and birds became a major source of inspiration for her pictures.

The heron features in several of her landscape paintings, sometimes with ducks and sometimes with people that move into the distance. *Bird in a Landscape with Rays* differs from other compositions

featuring herons as the bird's prominence is emphasised by a rainbow that seemingly splits into two rainbows: one on the left and the other on the right. Dramatically, the heron takes its position on the forefront of the picture plane, between the two rainbows that enshrine the bird. This configuration of the rainbow is suggestive of nature's cathedral and a Gothic arch is called to mind. Some of the rainbow colours reflect on the bird's feathers linking the bird and the rainbow that connects heaven and earth. Therefore, it signifies 'as above, as below'. This heron embodies a heavenly messenger.

In addition to the colours reflected on the bird's feathers, which connect it to the rainbow, the

elegant bearing of the bird enhances its regality. Enshrined by the rainbow arch, the bird becomes the ruler in this domain. That the earth where he treads is holy ground is confirmed by the double rainbow. In this domain there are barely any shadows, every colour is luminous. The clouds become bulbous lights and the tracks of reddish brown that seemingly meander to and from the heron are energised to take on lives of their own. The track that emerges from the left corner moves into the middle distance where it swings down towards the heron where it stops. Its sweeping movement emulates the elegance of the bird. This is the domain of eternal light.

*Elza Miles*

301

**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Lake Scene with Trees and Mountains*

signed with the artist's initials; dated 1920 on the reverse

oil on canvas

35,5 by 29,5 cm

**R300 000 – 500 000**

LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in black and white on page 131, catalogue number 225.

Maggie Laubser, having spent the War years at the Slade in London, arrived, via an important stay in Belgium, in San Vigilio, on the shore of Lake Garda, in October 1920. In the company of Arnold Balwé, her friend, fellow painter, and the son of her great benefactor, Jan Hendrik Balwé, and within such beautiful surroundings, Maggie painted with abandon, free of financial responsibility, and willing to experiment. The work she produced in this period (which ended with a return to South Africa in September 1921) was particularly bold, carefree, and rich with simple colour combinations. These pictures are easily recognised by the deep, shifting blues of the lake; stiff, multi-coloured sails on the water; crooked, simplified olive trees; arrow-straight cypresses; reflections of crumbling villas; and, of course, the sharp-edged, surrounding mountains. Lot 301 is a fine example, showing a view through dramatically shadowed trees, over the azure lake, towards the iconic peak of Monte Pizzocolo.

Maggie returned to Europe in November 1922, and settled in Berlin. Her exposure there to the great German Expressionists – she met Erich Waske, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and spent much time in front of paintings by Franz Marc – left a lasting impression on her work. Lot 302 has much in common with the spirit of these artists, although the lingering influence of Van Gogh, whose work she had become more familiar with while in Antwerp in 1919 and 1920, is more obvious. The facades that make up the harbour town are smears of butter yellow, cream and brown, while the watery shadows and reflections are painted as if a single, moving, decorative mass. The date of the painting – it is clearly marked 22 – exposes a curious mystery: with her travel itinerary in mind, was this European scene painted in South Africa, conjured from memory, and executed in excited anticipation for her return?



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**Maggie Laubser**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

*Fishing Harbour, Belgium, recto;*  
*Sunset, verso*

signed and dated '22

oil on board

28 by 33,5 cm

**R450 000 – 600 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Mr A Rose-Innes, Cape Town.  
Strauss & Co., Cape Town, 8 October  
2009, lot 271.

**EXHIBITED**

South African National Gallery, Cape  
Town, 1969, catalogue number 43.

**LITERATURE**

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser:  
Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*,  
Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in  
black and white on page 129, catalogue  
number 212, with the title *Lake Scene  
with Buildings*.

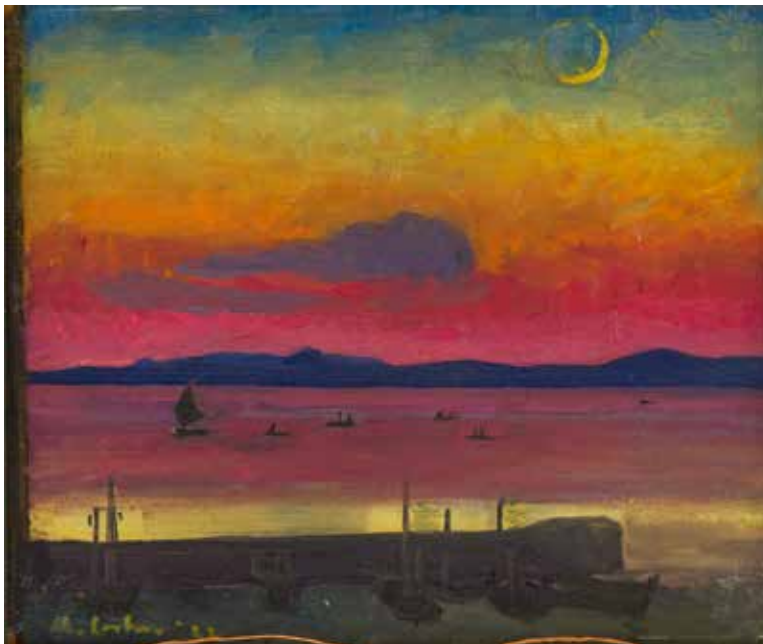
**NOTE**

*Sunset* on verso signed and dated '22.



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO

recto



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO

verso





303

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

***Willow Trees, Roodeplaat Dam***

signed and dated 1928

casein on paper

38 by 53,5 cm

**R2 000 000 – 3 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Schweickerdt Family.

**LITERATURE**

PG Nel (ed.) (1990). *JH Pierneef: His Life and His Work*. Cape Town: Perskor, illustrated in colour on pages 184 and 185.

Located on the north-eastern outskirts of Pretoria, Pierneef visited Roodeplaat Dam and its surrounding veld repeatedly. He camped in the area as a young man, occasionally with Anton van Wouw, and sketched there enthusiastically. The present lot might well have started as one of these studies, although it would almost certainly have been worked up in the studio. In any event, it is quite remarkable that *Willow Trees, Roodeplaat Dam*, so monumental a picture, is made up of such short and minute flashes of pure colour. Painted in casein, the swift-drying medium that, thanks to its curd-based binding agent, so wonderfully preserves pigment, the work shows off Pierneef's polished skill, his passion for his surrounding veld, and his flair for the spectacular.

The focal point of the picture is the mature willow tree on the right of the composition. Each branch is weighted down by the twisted and bundled strings of leaves, now pure gold late in winter. As is usual with his willow forms, Pierneef takes as much notice of the tree's architectural framework as he does the patterns created within it. The willow acts as a natural lattice, therefore, through which segments of sky and cloud can be appreciated. Below it the grass seems brushed and angled like freshly laid thatch, but the diagonal flicks of yellow and pink there offset the deep blue of the water. Between the far bank and the sky, the landscape is stacked with thin, parallel lines of dotted, contrasting colours: first lavender, then mint-green, then silver, then violet.

The artist is perhaps better known for his immense acacias, but it was the hardy Highveld willow tree that captured his attention as a young painter. Whether it was the silhouette of the tree changing through the seasons, or the unusual sense of balance created by the bunched, cascading leaves, there is little doubt that the artist's early experiments with the willow form resulted in some of his most avant-garde designs and compositions.





304

**Gregoire Boonzaier**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

*District Six*

signed and dated 1955

oil on canvas

47,5 by 57,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000



305

**Gregoire Boonzaier**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

*Vanaf die Bovlei, Wellington. K.P.*

signed and dated 1962; inscribed with the title and the artist's name on a plaque adhered to the frame

oil on canvas  
57,5 by 69,5 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

LITERATURE

'Picture of a Painter: Gregoire',  
*South African Panorama*, January 1963,  
illustrated in colour on page 23.

306

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

*Still Life with Irises*

signed and dated 1941

oil on canvas

61 by 61 cm

**R4 000 000 – 5 000 000**

One often sees beautiful fruit and/or vegetables on exotic cloths and sometimes traditional African figurines included in Irma Stern's still lifes, but the present lot is unique in having a little sketch of a portrait, only half visible, in the background of this sumptuous work. The background of sea green, also found in *Mary* (Lot 285), another work on this sale, replicates the exact colour of the walls in the dining room of Stern's friend Freda Feldman, where Stern would set up her makeshift studio when visiting her in Johannesburg. The white irises and fronds of wild plum leaves could well have been picked from Frieda's Houghton garden. It is, however, the bright red anthurium in the foreground that anchors the whole composition and fixes the viewer's immediate attention.

The enigmatic background portrait sketch is, in all likelihood, a small self-portrait of the artist, judging from the handful of rough sketches she made of her own profile. Drawing can be considered as thinking, made visible, and this sketch suggests the artist reflecting on her still life practice. As Marion Arnold states: 'In her representation of self, Stern projected and transformed her internalised emotions. She also found redemption and healing in her love of nature and created a large body of still-life paintings featuring flowers, many of which are brilliantly coloured, affirmative celebrations of the regenerative powers of nature, and personal records of Stern's life. Flowers in bowls become metaphors of nature contained and constrained by culture, and speak of Stern's free spirit disciplined by the rigorous demands of painting.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marion Arnold (1996). *Women and Art in South Africa*, Johannesburg: David Phillips Publishers, page 88.



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307

**Robert Gwelo Goodman**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1871–1939

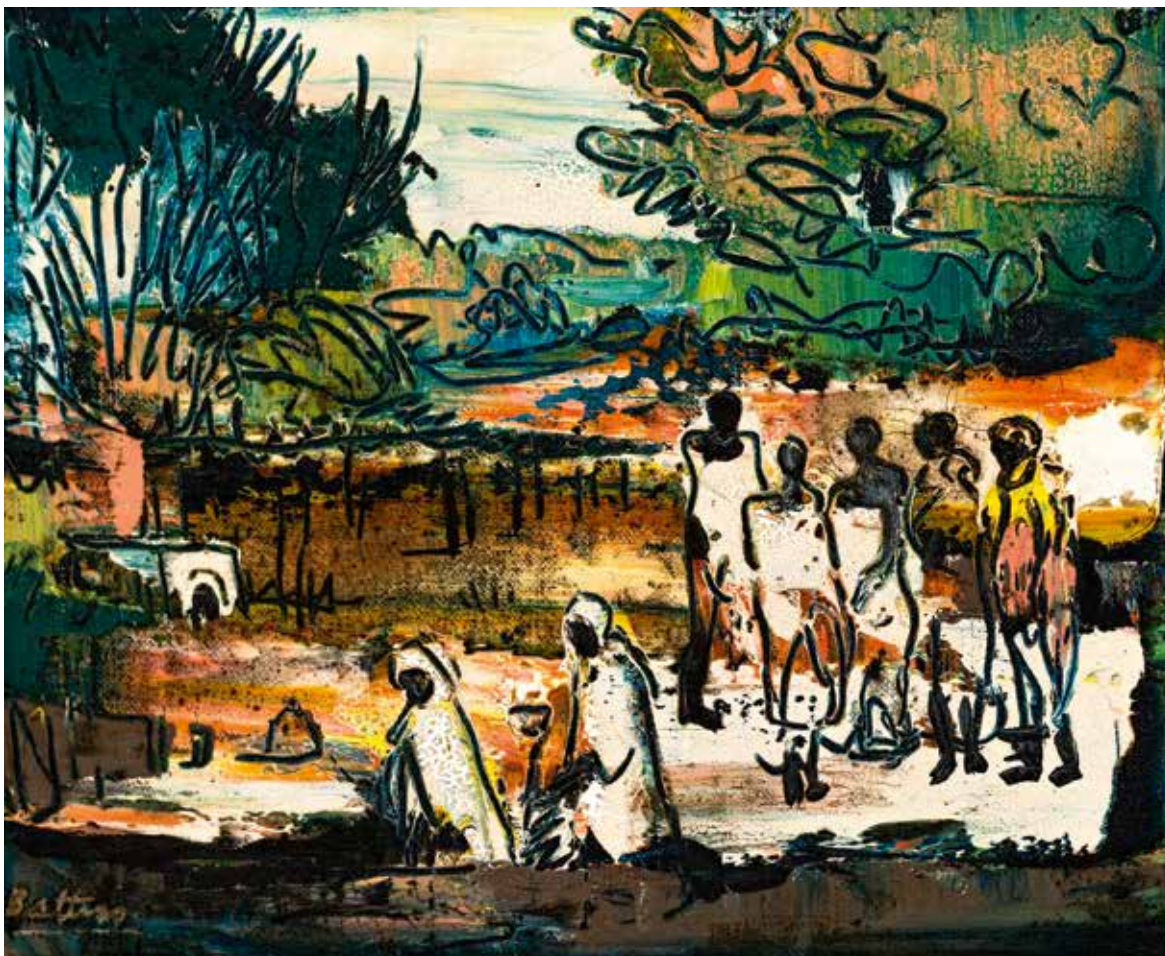
*Bay of Natal from the Berea*

signed with the artist's initials

oil on canvas

26 by 33,5 cm

R90 000 – 120 000



308

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*African Afternoon*

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

oil on canvas

20 by 24,5 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

309

**Leonora Everard Haden**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1937–

*Lekkerdraai*

signed and dated 1986

oil on canvas

81,5 by 63 cm

R70 000 – 90 000





310

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Op Doringpoort*

signed and dated 1936

oil on canvas board

29,5 by 39,5 cm

**R250 000 – 350 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Stephan Welz & Co in association  
with Sotheby's, Cape Town, 17  
October 2006, Lot 494.





311

## Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

### *Woman Stamping Mealies*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium on a Johans Borman Fine Art Gallery label adhered to the reverse oil on canvas laid down on board 45 by 54,5 cm

**R1 600 000 – 2 000 000**

#### LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in black and white on page 292, catalogue number 1183, and titled *Woman at the Pounding Block in Front of a Hut*



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO

*Woman Stamping Mealies* is a jewel in Maggie Laubser's oeuvre of painting figures in the rural landscape going about their daily toil. Laubser portrays the woman carrying a child on her back while stamping the mealies that provide her family with the staple required for their sustenance. With an exquisite vivacity, the artist uses boldly expressionistic blues and gold tones to emphasise the vibrancy of the rhythmic motion of the stamping of the mealies. The artist frames the upper half of the scene with the labourer's cottage and adds to the familial setting a young boy resting in the shade. Laubser bestows on the work a liveliness, an almost celebratory tone and respect for the humdrum, and this is further augmented by the energetic pecking of the geese shown in striking colours and shapes gathered around the feet of the woman.



312

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Trees*

signed

oil on canvas

45,5 by 64 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

**PROVENANCE**

Strauss & Co., Johannesburg,  
1 November 2010, Lot 168.



313

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*The Mole at Swakopmund*

oil on canvas

50 by 100 cm

R50 000 – 70 000





314

**Irma Stern**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

***Tomato Pickers***

signed and dated 1961

oil on canvas

53,5 by 72 cm

**R3 000 000 – 5 000 000**

Irma Stern produced a number of paintings of harvest scenes in the 1960s which Neville Dubow describes as 'lyrical figures-in-landscape compositions, loosely knit yet held together by sweeping rhythms that bind earth, workers and sky'.<sup>1</sup> We know that Stern visited Europe in 1961 and painted in Spain. It's quite possible that *Tomato Pickers* was painted there as the harvesters wear the same loose dresses and yellow sun hats as seen in *Siesta*, also painted in 1961.<sup>2</sup>

Mona Berman records that by February 1961 Stern and Dudley Welch were in Alicante, Spain, from where she wrote to Berman's mother, Freda Feldman, in the now celebrated correspondence made public through Berman's book. After complaining of illness, Stern writes: 'I am apart from that hard at work. Am doing work that astonishes even me – the local press has lately discovered me and simply put articles out "La Picasso" ... all through the Spanish press ...'

She continues: 'This place is very African in character. Palms grow – dates even get ripe – the sea is blue and the sun shines hard. We are having almond and peach trees in full flower and it is only 12th Feb ... We drive out all the days and I come back and paint in the studio.'<sup>3</sup>

With quick strokes and vigorous brushwork Stern captures the energetic atmosphere of women at work. Animated by lively rhythms and bright primary colours, the painting becomes a celebration of the harvest, of the cycles of nature and fecundity and of the people who make this possible. *Tomato Pickers* can be compared both in terms of subject and treatment to *Pimento Harvest*, painted in 1962, and now in the Permanent Collection of Iziko South African National Gallery.

1 Neville Dubow (1974). *Irma Stern*, Cape Town: Struik, page 21.

2 Marion Arnold (1995). *Irma Stern: A Feast for the Eye*, Cape Town: Fernwood Press, illustrated on page 93.

3 Mona Berman (2003). *Remembering Irma, Irma Stern: A Memoir with Letters*, Cape Town: Double Storey, pages 142 and 143.

315

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Landscape with Distant Mountains*

signed and dated 1928  
casein on artist's board  
40 by 55,5 cm

R1 000 000 – 1 500 000

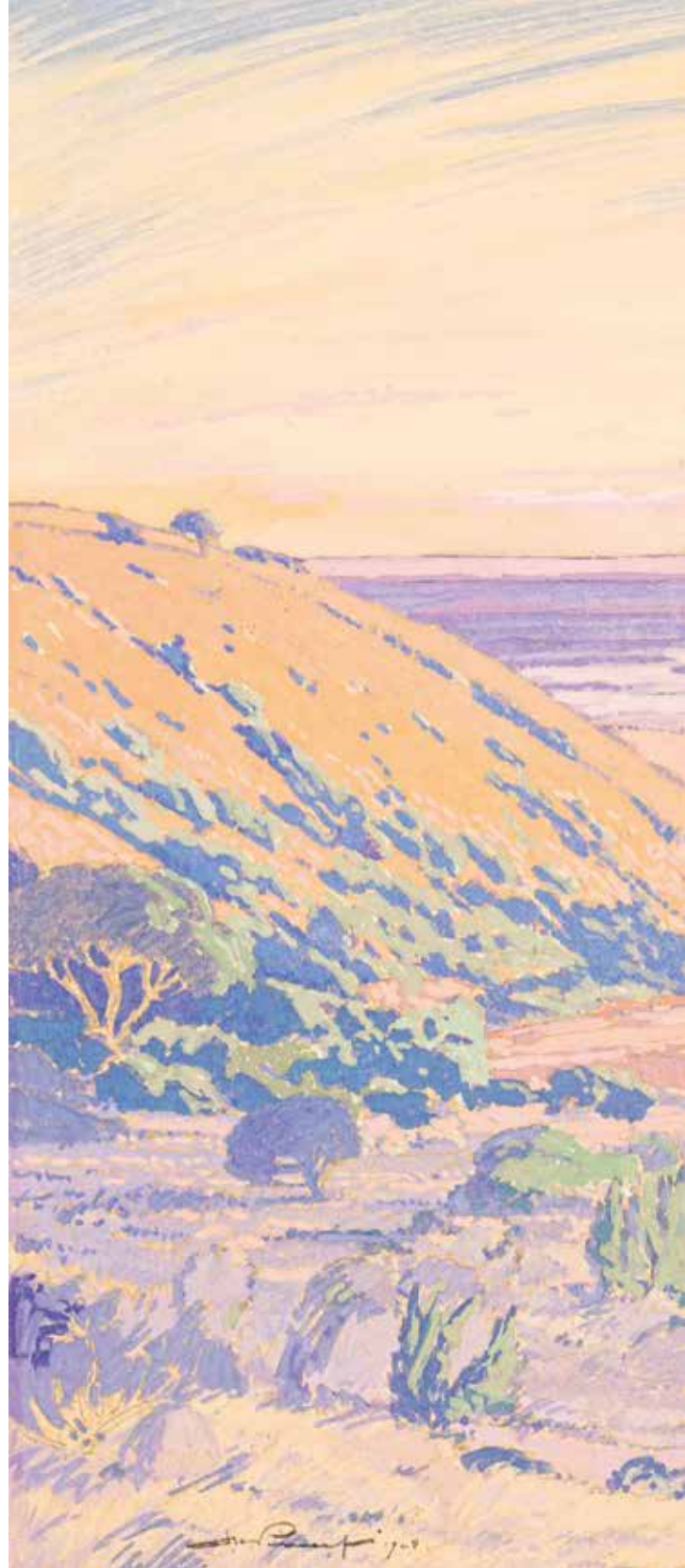
While Pierneef sketched endlessly in the veld, the studies he made more often than not served as *aides-mémoire* for later, carefully-conceived, idealised studio pictures. Evidence of this process might be recognised in the comparison of the present lot, this exquisite, varied and intricate casein, to another of the artist's slightly later benchmark examples, *Extensive Landscape, Lydenburg, Northern Drakensberg Beyond*. Even at a glance the compositions are remarkably similar: hillsides slope gently inwards and intersect centrally; the foreground is punctuated with the indigenous trees, shrubs and rock formations with which the artist was so familiar; and the landscape endlessly unfolds under a wide sky. That both pictures remain so unique while relying on the same valley viewpoint suggests the power of the artist's imagination when back in the studio. The comparison also makes clear just how the artist could re-use successful designs in new contexts, while always providing such a convincing sense of place.



Pierneef sketching in the veld.



*Extensive Landscape, Lydenburg, Northern Drakensberg Beyond*











316

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Dar es Salaam*

signed; inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on board

59,5 by 97,5 cm

**R4 000 000 – 6 000 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Acquired directly from the artist by Thomas William Nicolaas Hitge, former Judge President of the former Transvaal, and Mayor of Potchefstroom. Bernardi Auctioneers, February 2006.



317

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Still Life with Blossoms and Fruit*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium

on a Johans Borman Gallery label adhered to the reverse

oil on canvas laid down on board

37,5 by 45 cm

R350 000 – 450 000



318

**Jacob Hendrik Pierneef**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

*Boereplaas, Wellington, Kaap*

signed; inscribed with the title on the back

oil on board

22 by 26,6 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

319

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *Apple II*

signed and dated '69  
intaglio, oil on fibreglass  
90 by 79,5 by 12 cm

R4 000 000 – 5 000 000

This intaglio *Apple II* (1969) was shown alongside two other companion pieces at the Alexis Preller Retrospective Exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum in 1972. This disarmingly simple image of an apple, floating against dramatically silhouetted leaves on an azure blue-green background has a complex iconographic genesis within Preller's oeuvre.

Preller's early work is known for its strongly African themes and for his interest in still life paintings in which objects of special significance to him appear and items of fruit take on singular importance. In his famous still life, *The Feast* (1946), the Swazi platter is filled with Gauguinesque mangoes, while a single iconic mango appears in a small early work, *Red Mango*, painted in the Seychelles in 1948. In this work the low horizon line of the ocean and the foreground of the beach amplify the simple monumental presence of the single mango into something of mysterious significance.

In another work, *Mangoes on a Beach* (1948), Preller proliferates the reading of the mere presence of fruit with his inclusion of strong Hieronymus Bosch allusions, where boat-like mangoes sail out towards the horizon, embellished with quoted details of masts and long flapping pennants.

Preller's great capacity to create works of evocative power, mysterious content and a proliferation of meaning is to be seen in his complex development of a personal iconography over a lifetime.

By the late 1960s, there is a drift away from African themes in Preller's work towards a broader classical Mediterranean iconography. Archaic Greek kouros figures provide the source for his powerfully mysterious painted and intaglio images of mythical male torsos: *The Creation of Adam* (1968), *Adam* (1969) and *The Unfound Kouros* (1969).

A shift in the type of fruit that Preller chooses to



*The Feast* 1946



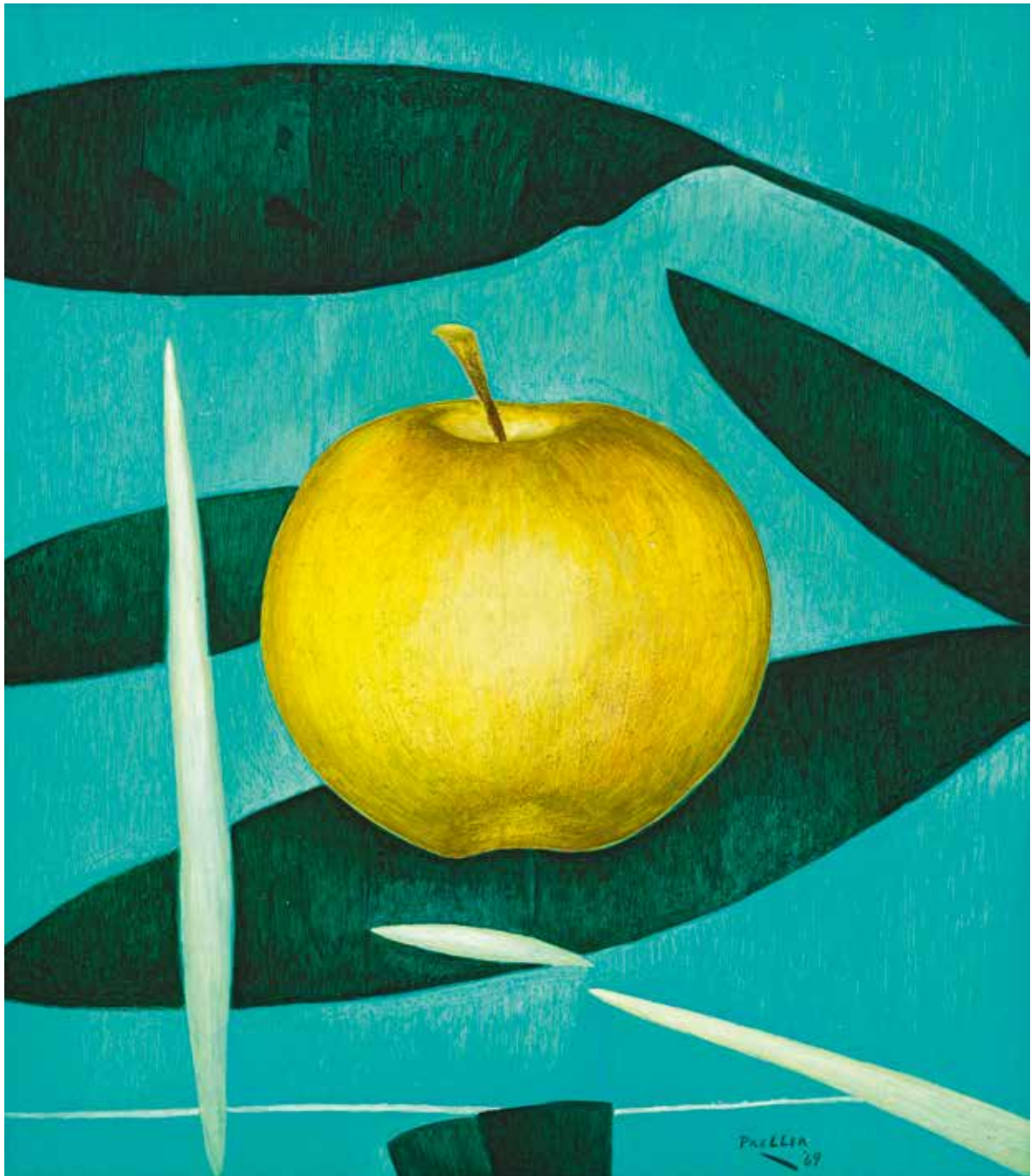
*The Red Mango* 1948

paint is also significant, the mangoes of the east coast of Africa give way, in the case of the present lot, to Eurasian apples, seemingly a banal image, but here symbolically loaded. The apple is linked to the biblical Eden, the primordial state disrupted by moral choice, temptation, the loss of innocence and original sin. The creation of Adam as the *first man* exercises Preller's creative mind and leads to a series of works in which the symbolic presence of the apple is apposite to the presence of Adam. The apple appears in a number of Preller's earlier works, but less starkly than in the intaglios prepared for the much anticipated and innovative 1969 exhibition at the Henry Lidchi Gallery in Johannesburg.

Nothing that Preller had revealed about his experimental medium had prepared viewers for a completely new *art-form*. Three versions of a favourite subject titled *Apple I*, *Apple II* and *Original Sin* exemplified the *intaglio* in its simplest state. In each of these, a concave form, the negative cast of half of a single apple, receded from a flat rectangular surface – the equivalent of the conventional picture format. Preller had then painted on both the flat and the concave surfaces, treating the apple as he would normally depict any three-dimensional object. The effect was deceptive. At first sight, the work appeared to be a conventional painting, with a prominent image of an apple. The *intaglio* form – the apple – gave no suggestion of concavity; but as the light changed, or the viewer moved, the perceived aspect of the image seemed to vary. The visual effect was dramatically apparent in the case of a more complex image.<sup>1</sup>

Karel Nel

<sup>1</sup> Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009). *Alexis Preller: Africa, the Sun and Shadows*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing, page 282.



320

## Christo Coetzee

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2000

### *Abstract Composition*

signed and dated 72

mixed media on canvas laid down on board

90 by 63 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

#### LITERATURE

Wilhelm van Rensburg (2018). *The Safest Place is the Knife's Edge: Christo Coetzee (1929–2000)*, Johannesburg: Standard Bank Gallery, illustrated in colour on page 12.

Christo Coetzee fills the picture plane with numerous circular shapes. He then places tubular shapes in such a manner that they appear to be hovering in space, above the circles. Over these tube-like structures, Coetzee then applies vertical and diagonal lines in smooth sweeps, directly squeezed out of tubes of white, yellow and black oil paint. Although painted in 1972, the present lot is a veritable inventory of a number of Coetzee's previous and future stylistic developments. So, for example, the circles refer to a very prominent phase in his art, produced while he was in Paris, France, in the early 1960s after returning from a study period of nearly one year with the Gutai Art Association, a group of avant-garde, post-World War II artists in Japan. Coetzee imbues the circles, or what he refers to as Neo-Baroque orbs, with various symbolic meanings, such as perfection, boundless time, and enclosed space. The tubular shapes refer to a short period of his development, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which he created forms that bulge like balloons and turn in and onto themselves, attempting to destroy their own forms. One of the most interesting aspects of *Abstract Composition, 1972*, is the mass of parallel lines over the forms, which prefigure Coetzee's actual slashing of 23 of his paintings at the opening of an exhibition of his work in Cape Town in 1975. The past and the future are united, in a way, in this present lot.





321

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911-1975

*Abstract*

signed and dated '71

oil on canvas laid down on board

22 by 28 cm

R50 000 – 70 000





322

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906-1982

*Landscape with Antelope*

signed

oil on board

35 by 45 cm

R120 000 – 160 000



323

**Alexis Preller**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

*A Box of Mangoes*

signed and dated 58

oil on canvas

39,5 by 49,5 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

PROVENANCE

Strauss & Co., Cape Town,  
6 February 2012, Lot 570



324

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906-1982

*Calabash*

signed

oil on canvas

35 by 45 cm

R250 000 – 350 000



325

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Birds and Flowers*

signed

oil on canvas

45 by 70 cm

R600 000 – 800 000

Walter Battiss often filled his canvases with flocks of birds. As early as 1950, in a work now in the Pretoria Art Museum, he depicted a rural landscape dotted with stylised cattle, and covered them with white egrets. *Birds of Honolulu*, 1976, in the Sasol Art Collection, is another example, and so is *Birds at Sunset*, 1980, at the Walter Battiss Museum in Somers East, the artist's place of birth. The most striking example of a canvas filled with birds is the *Artist's Hands*, 1968, in the Johannesburg Art Gallery. In this work, Battiss covered the picture plane with imprints of his hands, dipped in thick green and blue oil paint, and in the palms of the hands, attached carved wooden birds that he bought on the side of the road on one of his many trips to Hartbeespoort Dam. The resulting sculptural surface indicates that the birds emanate from his artistic hands; that they are essentially his creations; that they are almost alive. In the present lot, the birds fill the blue sky, as if they are white stars, flying from the right-hand side of the canvas to the left. Their movement is complemented in the field of white flowers in the foreground, their stems pointing in the opposite direction, from left to right. Pattern and movement are thus the compositional criteria for this wonderful painting.



326

**Gerard de Leeuw**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–1985

*Bird*

signed

bronze with brown patina on wooden base

height: 38 cm including base

R100 000 – 150 000

327

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

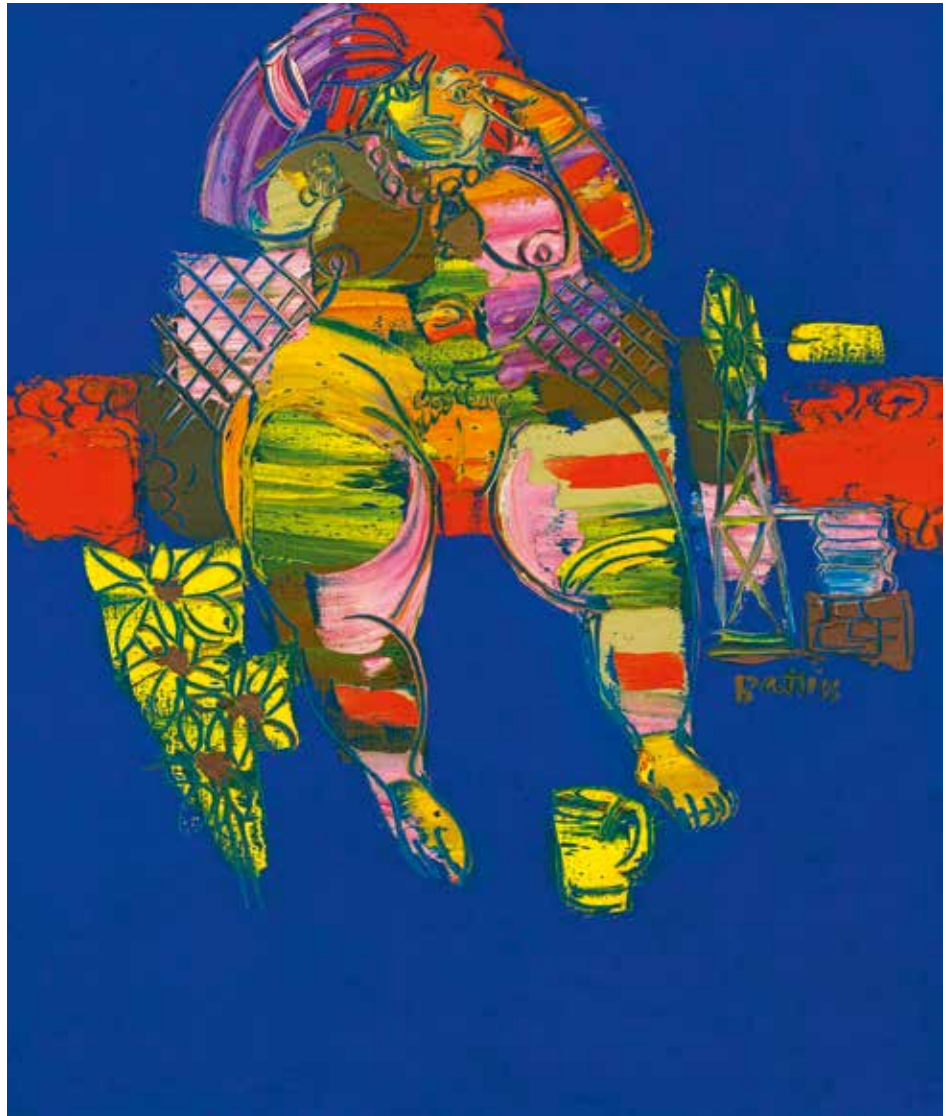
*Karoo Nude*

signed

oil on canvas

59 by 50 cm

R300 000 – 400 000



328

**Erik Laubscher**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

*Still Life with Papaya, recto;*  
*Still Life with Lemons, verso*

signed and dated 52; inscribed  
with the artist's name and the title  
on a Pretoria Art Museum label on  
the reverse

oil on canvas  
70,5 by 91 cm

R2 000 000 – 3 000 000



Verso

Erik Laubscher's paintings from the 1950s mark a distinctive phase in his early biography. Notwithstanding their formal distinctiveness within his larger corpus of mostly landscape paintings, his School of Paris still lifes are greatly prized by collectors. Laubscher apprenticed with painter Maurice van Essche in Cape Town before completing his basic art studies in London in the late 1940s. In 1950 he moved to Paris where he studied at the Académie Montmartre under painter Fernand Léger. Laubscher quickly synthesised the various influences of his French education: Leger's monumental forms, Braque's flattened planarity, Picasso's cubist innovations and Matisse's opulent colouration and clearly delineated forms.

While in Paris Laubscher fell strongly under the influence of Bernard Buffet, a key figure in the voguish 'miserabilist' school of French expressionist

painting. The present lot is revealing of Laubscher's infatuation with Buffet, both in his choice of subject (a still life with pears in the recto composition) and sense of colour (notably the greys and diminished greens). The assembly of attenuated, teardrop-shaped pears displayed on a footed white platter on a patterned cloth are also a typical Buffet gesture. Laubscher's brand of new realism was, however, never as graphic or reduced as that of Buffet, whose early post-war works displayed an existential barrenness that Laubscher never aspired to. The abundant colour on the right of the picture plane, notably figured in the yellow jug, is a marker of an internal optimism that Laubscher fully revealed in his mature landscape pieces.

Laubscher approached his compositions with *jouissance* and vigour. This is evident in his *sgraffito* detailing of the pitted interior of the papaya in

the recto composition, which features knotted lines scratched into the black paint, as well as the composition with lemons, grapes and pears on the verso. This cubist rendering, with its breezily detailed white cloth, is far more crowded than the gracefully achieved recto composition. It is nonetheless revealing of Laubscher's influences and evolution. Writing in the catalogue accompanying Laubscher's 1994 retrospective at the University of Stellenbosch Museum, director Muller Ballot noted that the painter's works from the 1950s prepared the way for what became hallmarks of his practice: the 'responsible simplification' of forms, expressive use of colour and 'imaginative absorption' of the essential characteristics of whatever he painted.<sup>1</sup>

Sean O'Toole

<sup>1</sup> Muller Ballot (1994). *Erik Laubscher*, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, page 8.



Recto







329

**Erik Laubscher**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1927–2013

*Overberg*

signed and dated '65; inscribed with the artist's name, the date and the title on the reverse

oil on board

95 by 121,5 cm

R1 000 000 – 1 300 000

**LITERATURE**

Hans Franssen (2009). *Erik Laubscher: A Life in Art*, Stellenbosch: SMAC Art Gallery, illustrated in colour on page 105.

330

## Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

### *Composition (Birds)*

signed; dated 1964 and inscribed with the title on the reverse

oil on board

52,5 by 42,5 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

#### EXHIBITED

South African Association of Arts, Pretoria, November 1965.

#### LITERATURE

Dalene Marais (1994). *Maggie Laubser: Her Paintings, Drawings and Graphics*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in black and white on page 364 with the title 'Composition with Birds'; catalogue number 1618.

*Die Brandwag* (1973). 'Jan Prinsloo Gesels oor SA Kunstenaars: Maggie Laubser', 25 May, the painting appears in the background in a photograph of the artist.

*Pretoria News* (1965). 'Tribute to Cape Artist', 2 November, illustrated in black and white.

Maggie Laubser returned time and again to subjects that resonated with her rural childhood growing up on a Swartland wheat farm, such as harvesters, cats and birds. Muller Ballot writes that the repetition of familiar forms allows the artist to transcend the 'material' and stress instead the 'essential', such that a painting of birds is less about individual appearance that about birds as a vehicle for compositional unity and visual force, achieved through stern simplicity, angularity of form and strong colour.<sup>1</sup>

The present lot, *Composition (Birds)*, is one of a series of related works depicting birds and bird-like forms from the 1950s and 60s that range from ostensibly representational paintings, such as *Birds in a Landscape* (1960–1962), through semi-abstract works including *Composition with Birds and Arums* (1950) and *Composition with Birds and Heads* (1950) to fully abstract arrangements like *Abstract Composition* (1960–1970) (all in the University of Stellenbosch Collection). The stylised bird forms and curvilinear bodies and necks work with overlapping planes and juxtapositions of complimentary colours – blue and orange, red and green – to exemplify the artist's statement that 'design is the fundamental basis of all ... I harmonise both structure and colour in such a way that it is a coherent whole ... according to my ideal of absolute beauty.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Muller Ballot (2016). *Maggie Laubser: A Window on Always Light*, Stellenbosch: Sun Media, page 232.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Ballot (2016), page 251.



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The artist with *Composition (Birds)*.



331

**Maud Sumner**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

*Blue Vase*

signed and dated 45; dated, inscribed with the artist's name, title and 'bought 1945 from Sumner Exhibition, Pretoria by Prof. N. Sabbagha' on the reverse  
oil on canvas

54 by 66,5 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

The Collection of Professor N Sabbagha  
and thence by descent.

332

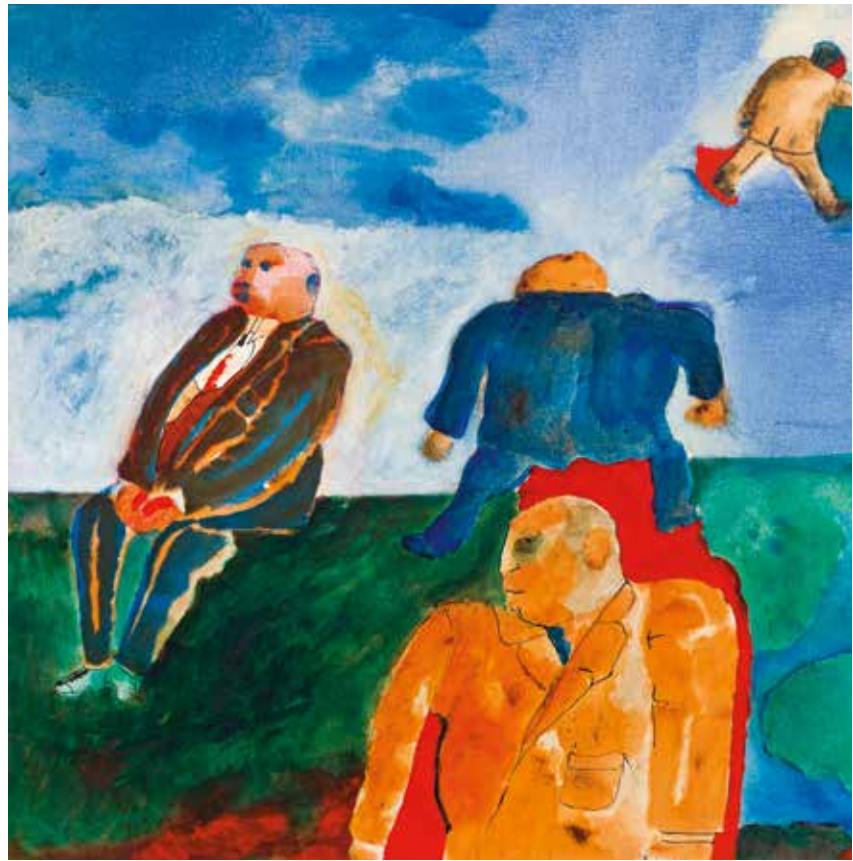
## Robert Hodgins

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

### *Four Business Men*

signed, dated 2004/5 and inscribed with the title, the medium and a dedication 'For Noël and Natasha 5/5/05' on the reverse  
oil over indian ink on canvas  
90 by 90 cm

R800 000 – 1 000 000



The suit is a recurring wardrobe item in Robert Hodgins's late-career paintings. Their wearers are now routinely interpreted as malevolent. This is an overly determined reading. 'I look at these men in their suits, and I'm not sure,' Hodgins said in 2008. 'They could be criminal, or they could be – you know, they're all victims of circumstance. I wouldn't say I'm sorry for them, but I do faintly have enough of the dishonest in me to understand how they get there.'

Hodgins's awareness of the suit as a marker of social status has its origins in his biography. In his adolescence, Hodgins was a newsagent's assistant in Soho, London, and delivered reading material to the area's sartorial elite. But there is also an art historical thrust to his suited and booted figures. Hodgins was an unabashed fan of George Grosz,

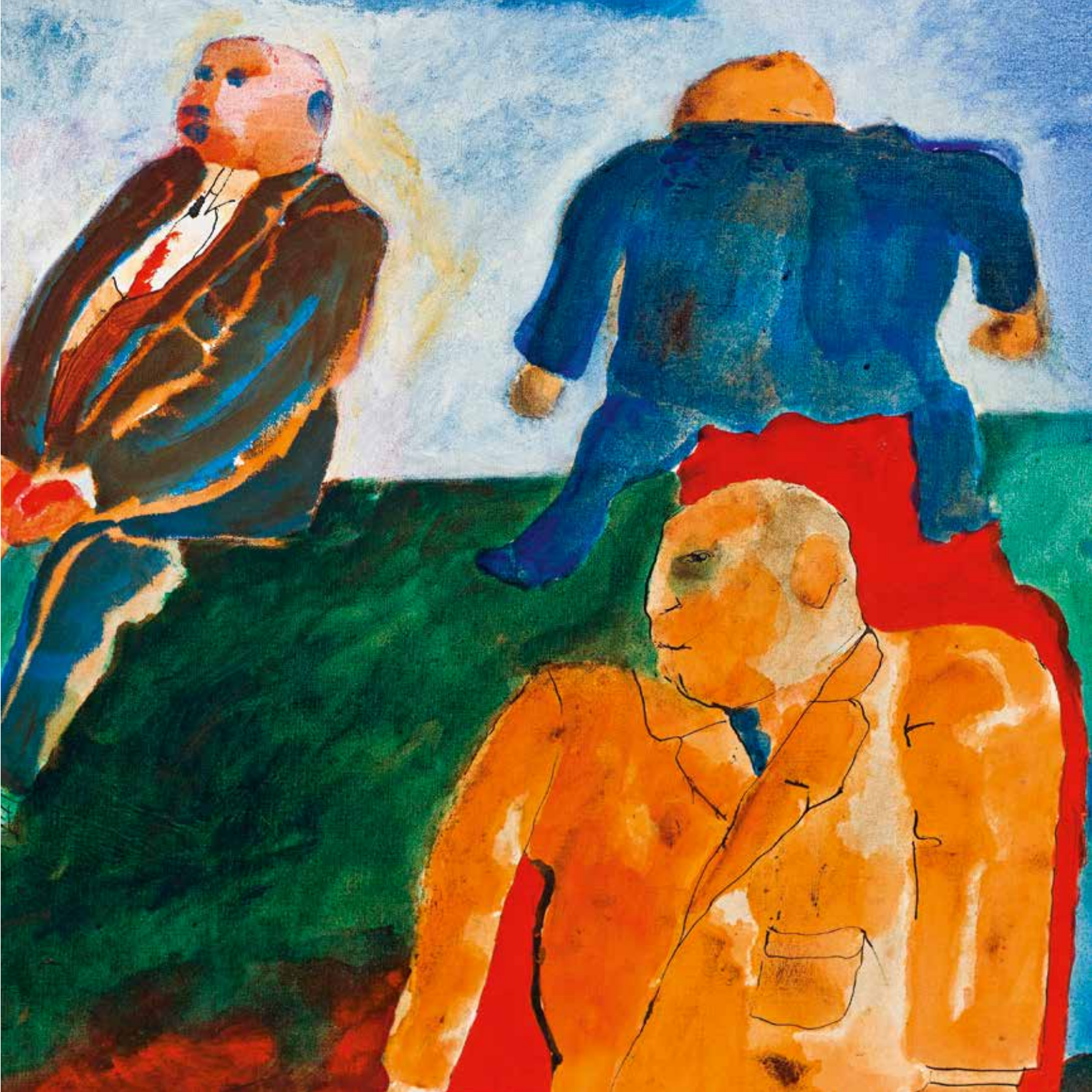
a German expressionist whose work was, on one level, an elucidation of the relationship between power and dress. 'Grosz has been fascinating me for over 40 years,' Hodgins told critic Ivor Powell in 1984, adding, 'I've picked up certain qualities of Grosz.'<sup>2</sup> An eye on masculine vanity was one of those qualities.

Notwithstanding the frequency with which he portrayed men in suits, Hodgins admitted to his uncertainty why. 'I've been working with businessmen in suits,' he told Powell in 1995. 'Now what are those suits? Are they protection, are they coats of armour, are they camouflage, are they sexual devices to show they're successful? What are those suits really?'<sup>3</sup> A decade later, when he produced the present lot, his fascination with these questions remained. This lot is noteworthy for Hodgins's unusual, almost Matisse-like treatment

of space. He floats as much as places his four figures on a ground with a distinct sky and earth. The midline, a typical feature of Hodgins's later work, here forms a horizon. There is the faintest echo of Matisse's dancing celebrants about his composition, but modulated by Hodgins's droll, knowing sensibility that men congregated in suits don't dance.

Sean O'Toole

- 1 Kathryn Smith (2012). 'Some General Rules: Roberts Hodgins in Conversation with Kathryn Smith', in *A Lasting Impression*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, page 122.
- 2 Ivor Powell (1984). 'One of My Own Fragment: An Interview with Robert Hodgins', *De Arte*, No. 31, September, page 42.
- 3 Ivor Powell (1994). 'At the Scene of the Crime: An Interview with Robert Hodgins', *Ventilator*, No. 1, September, page 46.





333

## Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

### *African Profile*

signed and dated '65

oil on canvas

86 by 102 cm

R1 000 000 – 1 500 000

#### PROVENANCE

The Alexis Preller and Guna Massyn

Collections, Volks Auctioneers, Pretoria,

18 November, 1977, lot 85

Strauss & Co., Cape Town, 17 March 2014, Lot 711

#### NOTE

1965 marks the beginning of what Esmé Berman has referred to as Alexis Preller's Gold Period,<sup>1</sup> which gave rise to a series of god-kings with their jewel-like colours and to an increasing abstraction of forms. His travels to Italy, where he studied frescoes in Florence and Arezzo, and to Egypt, stimulated him to explore a new symbolic language which he synthesised with African-inspired forms and colours. The cross and star patterns on the gold neckpiece derive from sources like Dogon sculpture while the circles such as those found in East African kikoi cloths are described by Karel Nel as 'a kind of power symbol'.<sup>2</sup> The face, with its bejewelled temples, is marked with scarification that is associated with beauty and elevated social status. Rendered in contrasting black and intense orange, it suggests multiple ways of being in the world.

1 Esmé Berman (1983). *Art and Artists of South Africa*, Cape Town and Rotterdam: AA Balkema, page 350.

2 Berman, Esmé and Nel, Karel. (2009). *Alexis Preller: Collected Images*, Saxonwold: Shelf, page 213.







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334

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Nasty Young Bugger*

signed, dated 2009 and inscribed with the artist's name  
and the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

60 by 60 cm

R400 000 – 500 000



335

**Walter Battiss**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

*Sunbathers*

signed

oil on canvas

41 by 50,5 cm

R300 000 – 400 000





336

**Lionel Smit**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1982–

*Crackhead; Broken Submerge; Submerge;  
Small Malay Girl with Holes*

1. signed, dated 2010 and numbered 10/12 and stamped with the artist's monogram;
  2. signed, dated 2012 and numbered 11/12 and stamped with artist's stamp;
  3. signed, dated 2010 and numbered AP:1 and stamped with the artist's monogram;
  4. signed, dated 2010 and numbered 3/12 and stamped with the artist's monogram
- bronze  
height including base: 1. 77,5 cm; 2. 84,5 cm;  
3. 84,5 cm; 4. 78 cm  
(4)

R500 000 – 600 000





337

## Karel Nel

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

### *White Sound*

1983

pastel and sprayed pigment on bonded fibre

164 by 249 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

#### LITERATURE

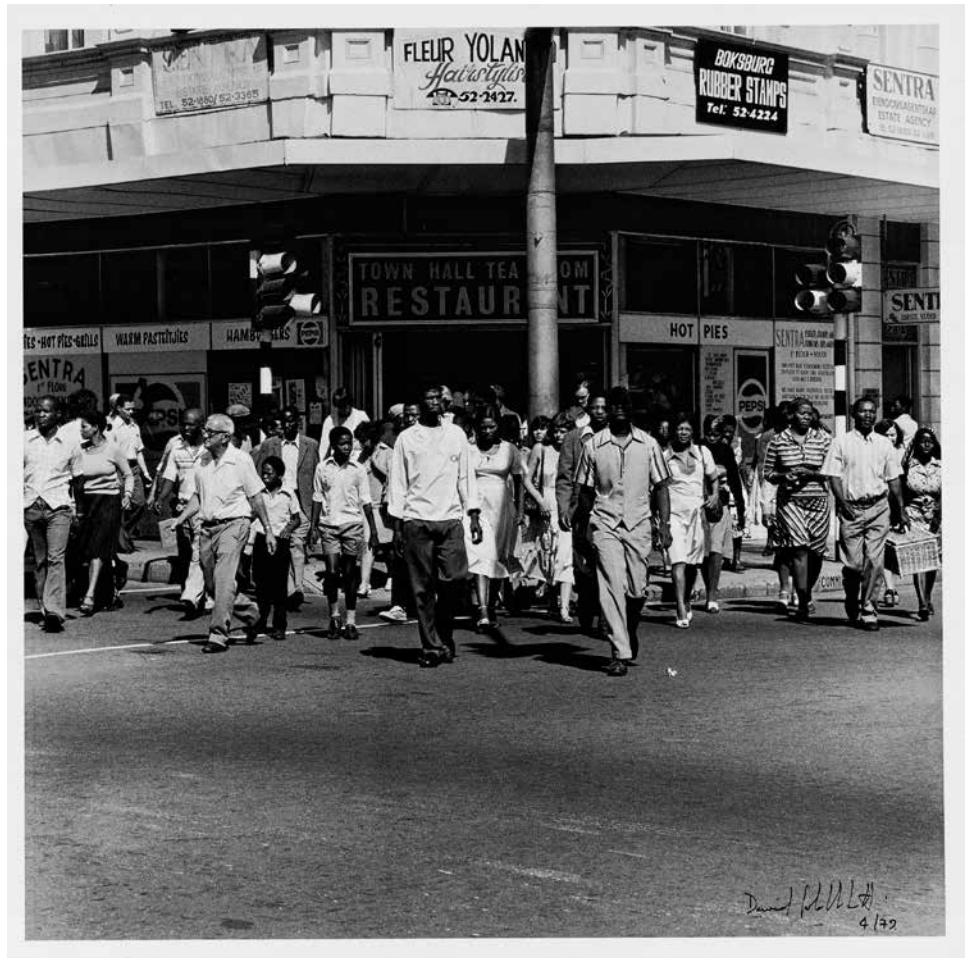
Rory Doepel (1993). *Karel Nel: Transforming Symbols*, Johannesburg: Foundation for the Creative Arts, illustrated in black and white on page 10.

This largescale work in silver greys, white and black evokes a distant view of the planetary arc as though looking down onto the world's weather system. The swirling vortices, radiant cloudlike forms, shimmering whites and dark blacks evoke quiet fluid processes that underlie both climatic systems and the intangible 'weather' of human thought. It is a visual mapping of the internal mental shifting of ideas leading broadly to changes in social behaviour and paradigm shifts in human consciousness.

Rory Doepel, in his early text titled *Karel Nel: Transforming Symbols*, comments that 'Nel conceives of life and matter as being interconnected – nothing is isolated, everything is seen to interact. Reality is understood as a web of energy fields. Such fields, rendered in Nel's work find their counterpart in both scientific theory and esoteric literature. The philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin conceived of the 'Noosphere' which he explained as thought atmosphere, or 'the terrestrial sphere of thinking substance';<sup>1</sup> the probable source for Nel's *White Sound* of 1983;<sup>2</sup>

1 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1974). *Let Me Explain*. London: Collins, pages 19 and 20.

2 Rory Doepel (1993). *Karel Nel: Transforming Symbols*, Johannesburg: Foundation for the Creative Arts.



338

**David Goldblatt**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1930–2018

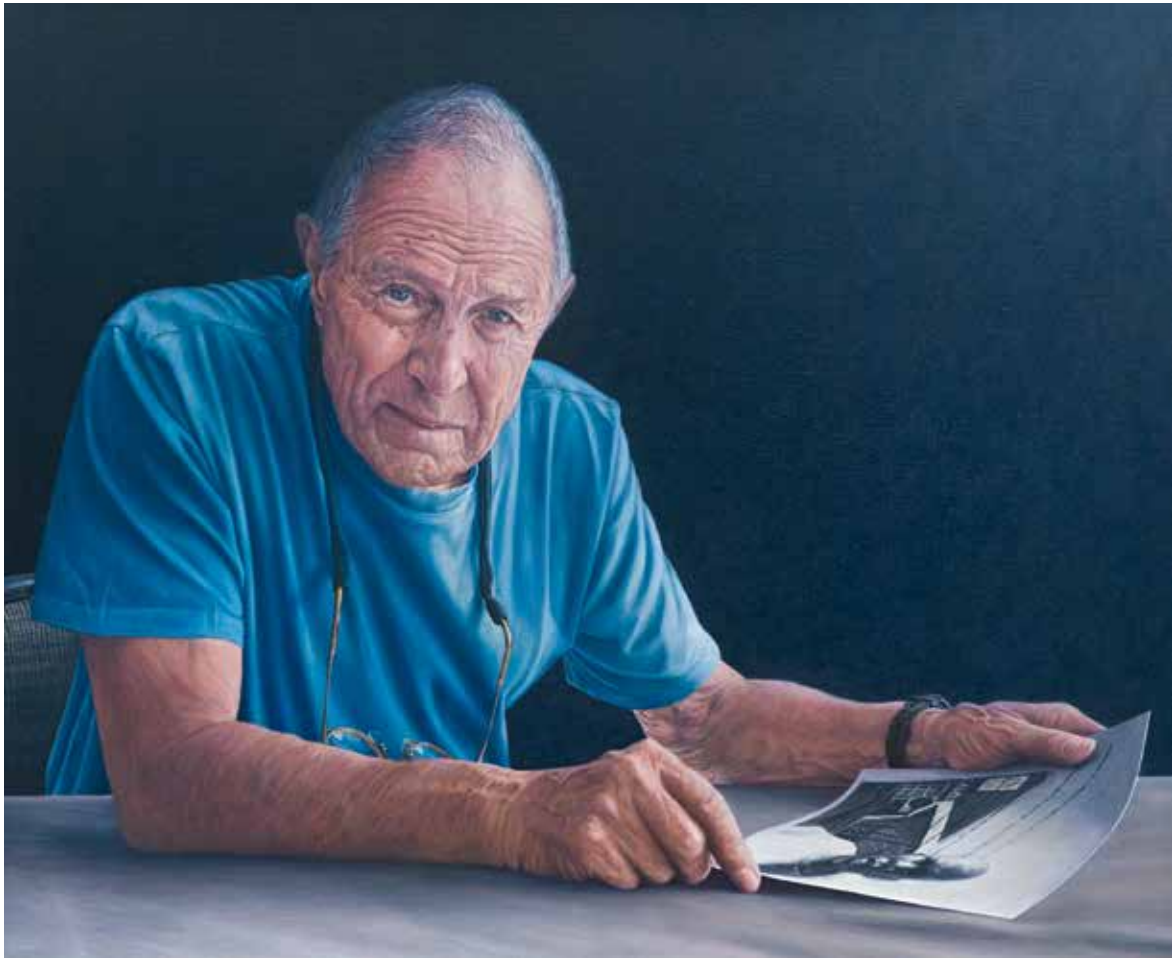
*Saturday Morning at the  
Corner of Commissioner and  
Trichardt Streets, Boksburg*

signed and dated 4/79  
silver gelatin photograph on fibre-  
based paper  
40 by 40 cm

**R70 000 – 100 000**

LITERATURE

David Goldblatt (1980). *In Boksburg*,  
New York: Errata editions.



339

**Heather Gourlay-Conyngham**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1956

*David*

oil on canvas  
72 by 87,5 cm

**R80 000 – 100 000**

LITERATURE

Heather Gourlay-Conyngham (2012).

*Unfoldings: Heather Gourlay-Conyngham*, Pietermaritzburg: Heather Gourlay-Conyngham, illustrated in colour on page 36.

NOTE

In 2013 Gourlay-Conyngham won the first Sanlam Portrait Award. The present lot is a portrait of the photographer David Goldblatt.





340

**Adriaan Boshoff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–2007

*Cattle and Wagon in Landscape*

signed

oil on board

59,5 by 90 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



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341

**Adriaan Boshoff**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–2007

*Burning Field*

signed and dated 69

oil on canvas laid down on board

60 by 90 cm

R150 000 – 200 000



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342

**Harold Frederick Voigt**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1939–

*Abstract Landscape*

signed and dated 81

oil on canvas

90 by 120 cm

R70 000 – 100 000



343

**Dylan Lewis**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

*Walking Leopard*

signed, dated 96 and numbered 4/8

bronze

height: 72 cm including base;

length: 182 cm

**R700 000 – 800 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Strauss & Co., Cape Town,  
12 October 2015, Lot 598.

344

## William Kentridge

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

### *Blue Head*

1993

signed and numbered 22/35

colour etching

110,5 by 86 cm

R700 000 – 1 000 000

#### 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.

William Kentridge's *Blue Head* was made during the early nineties, a transitional period in South Africa: after the release of Nelson Mandela and before the first democratic elections in 1994. This was a period of extreme intensity, of enormous possibility and the looming threat that the process towards democracy might be derailed by violence.

Internationally revered, Kentridge's imposing and emblematic *Blue Head* magnificently captures a moment in the country's troubled history, the monumental disembodied head with closed eyes poignantly and optimistically facing upwards while the picture plane bears the painful scars of a turbulent and violent society.

Drawing continues to be the core of all Kentridge's work, whether a drawing to create singular works on paper, drawing for printmaking, for sculpture or filmed projection. Though quiet and still, his drawing and printmaking are as varied and complex as his films and his large-scale projects found in major centres throughout the world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Susan Stewart (2006). 'Resistance and Ground: The Prints of William Kentridge', in Bronwyn Law-Viljoen (ed.) *William Kentridge Prints*, Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing.



345

**Deborah Bell**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1957–

*The Lovers*

mixed media

140 by 57 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

Deborah Bell's paintings and drawings of lovers in different positions of embrace, made during the mid-1980s, powerfully depict the anguish of desire and the struggle of wills. Typical of these works, in the present lot, *The Lovers*, the woman shifts and twists towards and away from the man, desiring consummation yet fearful of the intrusion. *The Lovers* touches on meanings similar to other paintings of lovers at the time, the woman is in a state of turmoil, passion and ambivalence expressed through the churning of the heavy drapery, her twisted clothing, the sense of being thrown off centre by the man's resigned clasp. Set against a scarlet red backdrop, evoking both passion and violence, the woman seductively wears a sharply pointed red shoe, a recurring motif in Bell's work. There is little tenderness between the man and woman. She seems reluctant, afraid of his power, but needing to lose herself in a desperate, all consuming passion. The figures are corporeal but sensuous: Bell evokes this sensuality through skilful manipulation of medium and colour to produce dramatic contrasts of coloured light and velvety shadow.

At the time, Bell described the feeling of claustrophobia that these paintings and drawings induce as 'the claustrophobia I feel in this country'. This can be seen in the images of tightly enclosed, tilted interiors in which the characters remain trapped in their own, isolated worlds. Unable to exit the suffocating environment in which they have been created, to move into the outside world of political action, they seek comfort in empty, fearful embraces.

Bell says, 'it is only in retrospect, in trying to work out what those spaces meant to me, that I think that there was an enormous amount of fear in those images, a fear of mortality!'

<sup>1</sup> Pippa Stein (2004). *Deborah Bell, Taxi 010*, Johannesburg: David Krut Publishing, pages 13 and 14.





346

**William Kentridge**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

*Music Box Tondo*

signed and numbered 7/60

archival pigment print

110 by 110 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

347

**William Kentridge**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955-

*General*

signed

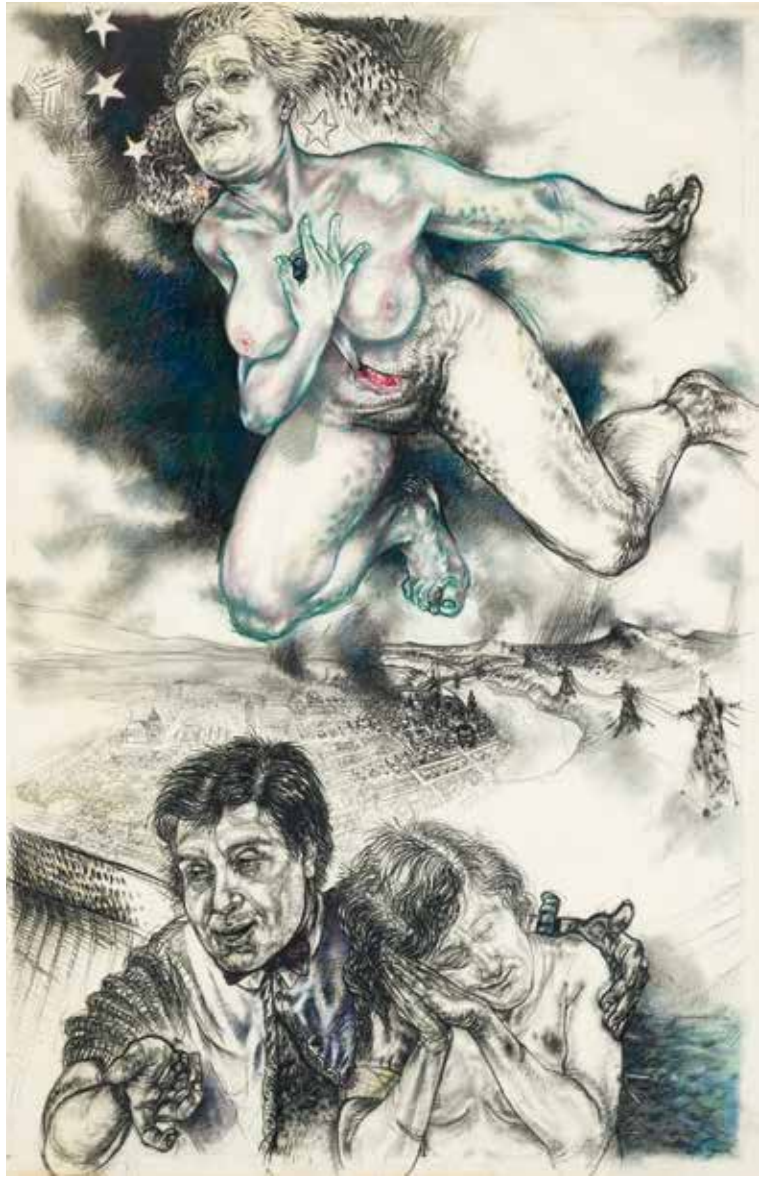
hand-painted engraving

120 by 80 cm

R300 000 – 500 000









348

**Diane Victor**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

*No Hope, No Guts, No Glory,*  
*triptych*

signed and dated Nov 1991 on  
the reverse of central panel  
mixed media

central panel: 149 by 97 cm;  
left side panel: 149 by 77 cm;  
right side panel: 149 by 75 cm

R250 000 – 350 000



349

**Robert Hodgins**

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

*Ubu and the Judgement of Paris*

inscribed with the title, the medium, 'c19' and dated 1985

on a label adhered to the reverse

oil over tempera on pressed board

34,5 by 50 cm

R250 000 – 300 000

350 NO LOT  
END OF SALE