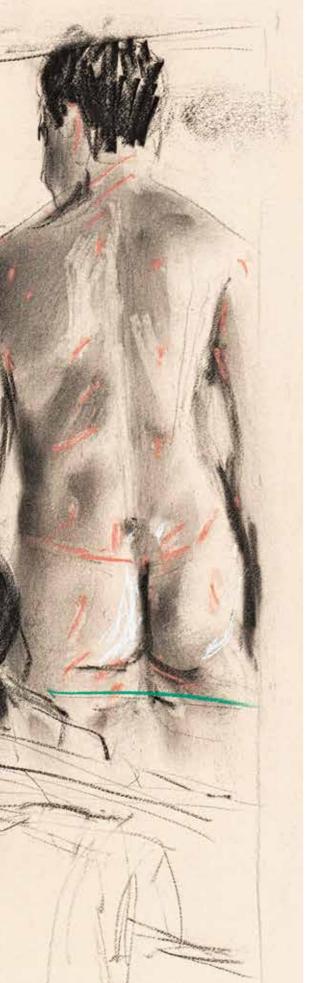


Fine Art Auctioneers | Consultants





PUBLIC AUCTION BY

# Strauss&co

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# Modern, Post-War and Contemporary Art

Monday 20 May 2019 3 pm Session One 7 pm Session Two

#### VENUE

The Wanderers Club, Ballroom, 21 North Street, Illovo, Johannesburg GPS Co-ordinates: Latitude: S26 08.123 – Longitude: E28 03.454

**PREVIEW** Friday 17 May to Sunday 19 May from 10 am to 5 pm

WALKABOUT Saturday 18 May and Sunday 19 May at 11 am

LECTURES Saturday 18 May at 3 pm: *Teachers and Students* Sunday 19 May at 3 pm: *Villa and Kentridge* 

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# **Buying at Strauss & Co**

A step by step guide for buying at auction

#### 1. BROWSE UPCOMING SALES

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Catalogues can be purchased from our offices or by subscription.

#### **Cataloguing information**

- Descriptions include size, date, medium and attribution of the lot. Where possible, provenance, literature, exhibitions and additional notes are also included.
- Estimates are given for all lots and are based on recent prices achieved for comparable property, taking into account quality, condition and provenance. Estimates are exclusive of Buyer's Premium and VAT.
- The reserve is a confidential figure between Strauss & Co and the seller below which a lot may not be sold. It never exceeds the lower estimate.

The auction preview occurs prior to the auction, as listed at the front of the catalogue. You will have the opportunity to view the lots coming up for sale. Specialists are available at the preview to advise, discuss and help you with the lots you are interested in.

Condition Reports are available on request and are advisable if you are unable to attend the preview.

Saleroom notices amend the catalogue description of a lot after our catalogue has gone to press.

#### 2. CREATE A STRAUSS & CO ACCOUNT

Get in touch and share your details with us.

Pre-registration is advised.

Registrations forms will be available at the Front Counter throughout the preview and on the day of the sale.

# IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL BIDDERS

In accordance with the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008, prospective bidders are required to register before bidding. In order to register we require your full names, a copy of your identity document, proof of your physical address, postal address and telephone numbers. Prospective Bidders who have not previously registered with us are required to register at least 24 hours before the auction commences. We may require a R5 000 holding deposit.

#### 3. BID IN THE SALE

If you are unable to attend an auction there are other ways to bid:

#### Telephone Bid

If you prefer to bid by phone, we will call you from the saleroom and bid on your behalf.

#### Absentee Bid

Submit your maximum bid and we will bid for you. We will confirm your bids by sms.

To arrange a Telephone or Absentee Bid please complete a bidding form and email: bids@straussart.co.za or contact our Client Services Departments:

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#### 4. IF YOUR BID IS SUCCESSFUL

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If you are successful, you will pay the hammer price plus the buyer's premium on each lot as follows:

12% for lots selling over R10 000, 15% for lots selling at and below R10 000 + VAT on the buyer's premium on each lot.

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#### 1) The Wanderers Club, Illovo

Purchased lots can be collected during the auction and on the morning after from 9am to 1pm. No collections can be made from The Wanderers Club after this time. **The premises must be cleared by** 

2pm.

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Uncollected lots will be removed to the Johannesburg office and will be available for collection from the Wednesday following the sale: 89 Central Street, Houghton. Tel: 011 728 8246.

#### 3) From Strauss & Co, Cape Town

Clients wishing to collect from Strauss & Co Cape Town may make use of the Stuttaford consolidated shipment. Please indicate clearly on your Absentee Bid Form if you would like Stuttaford to quote or inform a member of staff . Unless specifi ed by buyers, items will not be insured in transit. Payment of purchases and transport costs will be payable to Strauss & Co and Stuttaford upon collection of purchased lots from the Cape Town Offi ce: The Oval, Oakdale Road, First Floor Colinton House, Newlands. Tel: 021 683 6560.

#### Door to Door Delivery Service

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## **Teachers and Students**

#### **Bill Ainslie**

Bill Ainslie (Lot 108) started the Johannesburg Art Foundation informally in 1972 and headed the institution until his untimely death in 1989. Assisted by Jenny Stadler (Lot 107), the Foundation saw such artists as William Kentridge (Lots 145, 146, and 149 among others), Sam Nhlengethwa (Lots 120, 138, 275 and 291), Pat Mautloa, David Koloane (Lot 137), Helen Joseph (Lot 174), Penny Siopis (Lot 286), Diana Hyslop (Lots 92 and 106), Amos Letsoalo, Sholto Ainslie, Sophia Ainslie, Lucas Seage, Helen Sebidi, Mandla Nkosi, Anthousu Satiriades, David Rousseau, Lionel Murcott, and Lettie Gardiner start their artistic careers.

Ainslie promoted abstract art practice, as is evident in the paper he read at the *State of Art in South Africa* conference at UCT in 1979: 'If one looks at art in retrospect, one finds more and more, that one of the challenges to artists is to use art to define the limits of art. That is – it's moved away from creating illusions of other realities, of imitating nature. Now painting stands there for what it is. To see how it's made, in a sense. There is no attempt to disguise the media. Not to pervert or to paint what is extraneous. To do what paint can do. Paint has the quality



**Bill Ainslie** 

of colour and to make marks. These marks in colour can be used to convey a whole range of emotional experiences, exclamations and celebrations.'' Ainslie was instrumental in the Thupelo Project of the mid-1980s through which many black South African artists were introduced to Abstract Expressionism, to the chagrin of the political opposition of the time who demanded socio-realistic art criticising the ruling apartheid regime.

Elizabeth Castle expands: 'The Johannesburg Art Foundation maintained a teaching philosophy which opposed any form of discrimination and stressed that art education should be a possibility for everyone. There was no prescribed curriculum and the programme was not dependent on an external educational authority. In the decade 1982–1992, the South African apartheid government's educational policy towards cultural activities was prescriptive, stifling and potentially paralysing for many artists. Nevertheless, the teaching at the Johannesburg Art Foundation sustained a flexibility and tolerance of ideas combined with an emancipatory ambition that promoted exchange. The philosophy was infused with a social justice and a political activism agenda squarely in opposition to the separatist apartheid education laws.'2

- Bill Ainslie (1979) Paper read at The State of Art in South Africa conference at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, July.
- Elizabeth Castle (2015) Encounters with the Controversial Teaching Philosophy of the Johannesburg Art Foundation in the Development of South African Art during 1982–1992, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, unpublished Master's dissertation, page 3.

#### Heather Martienssen

The festschrift, *Art and Articles*, accompanied by a portfolio of prints by students and colleagues (Lot 206) presented to her on her retirement in 1972, is a fit and proper tribute to



The Wits Group: Heather Martienssen, Esmé Berman, Erica Berry, Larry Scully, Joyce Leonard and Nel Erasmus.

Heather Martienssen, an art teacher at the University of the Witwatersrand for a good guarter of a century. It is a testimony to the wide range of her interests, from classical Greek art and architecture, to Caravaggio and Pierneef, as well as to her success as an art teacher. Such prominent artists as Cecil Skotnes (Lots 150, 153, 158, 268, and 269), Larry Scully (Lot 115), Nel Erasmus (Lot 165), Christo Coetzee (Lots 116, 280, 302, 304 and 305) and Gordon Vorster (Lot 63), known as the Wits Group, passed through her hands, each of whom went on to a highly successful artistic career. The common denominator is perhaps that these artists all in some or other unique and significant way, contributed to the shift from naturalistic representation to a more modern, abstract idiom in South African art.

Martienssen initially qualified as an



Heather Martienssen

architect, in 1939, one of the first women graduates from the faculty at Wits. Her husband, Rex, reinforced her interest in Modernism: he had studied under Le Corbusier in Paris and reflected the European International Style in his buildings and houses in Johannesburg in the 1930s. Martienssen crossed over to Fine Art, and obtained her degree in 1940. This was followed by a Master's degree under the famous art critic, Vernon Lee. After a brief stint at the Courtauld Institute of Art, she went on to obtain a PhD at the University of London in 1949.

As the head of the Department of Fine Art at Wits, Martienssen not only held sway over a strong group of lecturers that included Joyce Leonard, Marjorie Long, Erica Berry, Douglas Portway (Lot 282), Maria Stein-Lessing and Willem Hendrikz, she also mentored such prominent artists as Anna Vorster, Nils Burwitz, Judith Mason (Lot 143), Margaret McKean (Lot 179 and 181) Patrick O'Connor and Cecily Sash (Lots, 151, 152, and 270).

Esmé Berman, a student at Wits in the late 1940s says of Martienssen: 'She had given order and direction, and in co-operation with the small but accomplished team of practical teachers, helped to make the [Fine Art] department prominent among South African art training institutions.<sup>n</sup>

1. Esmé Berman (1983) Art and Artists of South Africa, Cape Town: AA Balkema, page 384.

#### **Kevin Atkinson**

'Atkinson's skill as a teacher had long been apparent, but it was only in the mid-1970s [when he was appointed at the Michaelis School of Fine Art] that he began to acknowledge the personal creative gratification latent in that area of his professional activity. By his own account, he now 'became conscious of Teaching as an art form.''

'Kevin Atkinson was a challenging, charismatic and mind-blowing teacher who adopted an entirely unorthodox approach. He challenged everything his students did and said in an effort to develop their own personal vision – rather than concerning himself with what they actually painted – and this focus on process rather than product dominated his oeuvre during the 705.'<sup>2</sup>

Testimony to the brilliance of Kevin Atkinson as an art teacher abounds. He was eminently suitable to be an educator, because not only did he travel extensively in and through the art world, but he also experimented widely in his own art practice, and realised the importance of artist-run initiatives (as opposed to, say, the white cube gallery space approach to selling art). Atkinson studied under Stanley William Hayter in Paris after graduating from



Kevin Atkinson and Walter Battiss

Michaelis in 1962 (Breyten Breytenbach had been a classmate). Hayter's work is characterised by a very lively, linear abstraction, a style that Atkinson related to at the time. The influence of Josef Albers was also important and Atkinson responded to the theories about the interaction of colour that Albers developed during the time he taught at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, in the United States. The most significant single experience, however, was Atkinson's visit to Documenta in Kassel, Germany, in 1972, where he met Joseph Beuvs.

Atkinson experimented with a wide variety of styles ranging from abstracted landscapes, to colour field painting, conceptual art, Op Art, Land Art, minimalism, performance art, and photograph as means of artistic expression (Lots 130, 164).

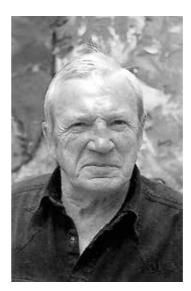
Atkinson was involved in numerous artist-run initiatives, including the Cape Town Art Centre (1963); the Artists' Gallery (1968) (which showed the work of such prominent artists as Claude Bouscharain, May Hillhouse, Erik Laubscher (Lot 248) and Stanley Pinker (Lot 113)); the Visual Arts Research Centre (1968); the Space Gallery (1972) and the Artists' Guild (1980).

Atkinson's students at Michaelis included Bruce Arnott; Wayne Barker (Lot 131); Marlene Dumas; Tembinkosi Goniwe; Stephen Inggs; Brett Murray (Lot 157); Malcolm Payne; Berni Searle; Pippa Skotnes (Lot 161); Helmut Starke and Gavin Younge.

- 1. Esmé Berman (1983) Art and Artists of South Africa, Cape Town: AA Balkema, page 51.
- 2. Lloyd Pollack (2016) The Many Atkinsons: Kevin Atkinson's Re-opening Plato's Cave, *Artthrob*, 3 November 2016.

#### Brian Bradshaw

Brian Bradshaw was appointed professor of Fine Art at Rhodes University in 1960, taking over from Walter Battiss, who left the university in 1959. His inaugural lecture, titled *The Culture Plan: World* 



Brian Bradshaw

Techniques in Uniformity, criticised the reigning orthodoxy of social realism in the UK at the time, and proposed replacing it in South Africa with a strident expressionism.

'As a teacher Brian Bradshaw radiated a personal magnetism which imprinted itself upon his students. In 1964 he founded the Grahamstown Group as a vehicle for the artistic attitude which he shared with several of his graduates. Many of the young artists who clustered around Bradshaw in the Group subsequently became teachers themselves, and aspects of their mentor's approach were inevitably perpetuated both in their own work and in their teaching. Although he departed from South Africa in 1980, Bradshaw left his imprint on the art of the country.'

Bradshaw's use of thick impasto, and his aggressive forms, were weighted with the dignified atmosphere specific to a place, engulfed in sunlight, and surrounded by opulent, vibrating colour. One of his most renowned students, Penny Siopis, embraced the use of thick impasto, especially in her early cake paintings (Lot 286). His influence was apparent in the work of the artists of the Grahamstown Group, and it can still be seen in the work of other artists who studied under him, including Robert Brooks; David Champion; Hilary Graham; Noel Hodnett (Lot 112), Wendy Malan; Thomas Matthews; Joss Nell; Neil Rodger (Lot 129) and Christopher Till. 1. Esmé Bernan (1983) Art and Artists of South Africa, Cape Town: AA Balkema, page 74.

Alan Crump

When Alan Crump was appointed professor and head of the Fine Art department at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1980, through the influence of Neels Coetzee (Lot 215), it was a radical change from the benign reign of the avuncular Robert Hodgins, who had been acting-head of the department the year before. Crump fairly terrified junior students with his scathing critique of pedestrian conceptual frameworks and less-thanperfect craftsmanship. Only 31 years old at the time of his appointment, one of the youngest professors ever appointed at the university, the Fulbright scholar and international art world luminary shook things up and pushed the boundaries of creative practice and art education and helped make Wits one of the leading art schools in South Africa in the 1980s and beyond.



Alan Crump

'Crump was driven throughout his distinguished career by a fearless vision of excellence',<sup>1</sup> which he applied not only to teaching and mentoring, but also to curating, publishing and arts administration – he was influential in local biennales, worked with various galleries and public and corporate collections, sat on acquisitions committees and advisory boards, and shaped the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, in a number of important ways.

A master printmaker and watercolourist, Crump's own art-making ranged from esoteric conceptual etchings like the Wedge Series (1978), to the monumental large-scale mining landscapes of breath-taking beauty and technical dexterity that antithetically magnify the ravages and degradation they depict (1993), and the reduced macro focus of the exquisitely delicate and subtle camphor tree studies of 2001.

In the catalogue for the posthumous retrospective held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 2011, Freschi writes that Crump was 'an extraordinary man and a brilliant artist, whose legacy is the professionalism and bold fearlessness that characterises the contemporary South African art world that he helped to shape'.<sup>2</sup>The calibre of the artists who benefited from coming into his ambit - Jane Alexander; Deborah Bell; Kim Berman; Candice Breitz; Kendell Geers; Neil Goedhals; Moshekwa Langa; Karel Nel; Walter Oltmann; Joachim Schönfeldt and Diane Victor - is an indicator of the veracity of that statement.

- Federico Freschi (ed) (2011) Alan Crump: A Fearless Vision, Johannesburg: Friends of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, page 9.
- Federico Freschi (ed) (2011) Alan Crump: A Fearless Vision, Johannesburg: Friends of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, page 10.

# The Polly Street and Jubilee Art Centres

The Polly Street Centre in Johannesburg began in 1949 as a centre for adult education and recreation. It offered literacy classes, music lessons, boxing and ballroom dancing and, although art classes were established, it was only after Cecil Skotnes was appointed as the full-time cultural recreation officer in mid-1952 that Polly Street was to effect 'a minor cultural revolution' and become 'the launching-pad for the first large-scale venture of urban black South Africans into the plastic arts.'

The Polly Street Art Centre - and later the Jubilee Art Centre following a move to Eloff Street towards the end of the 1950s – providing training for many who would become renowned professional artists, and teachers who would influence the course of art history in South Africa. Classes took place initially only once a week, materials were in short supply and, other than Skotnes, the teachers, including Fred Schimmel and Larry Scully, were volunteers. Although Skotnes stressed the importance of sound technical training in a variety of media and the development of a personal style, a lack of funding prompted the focus on inexpensive two-dimensional media drawing with pencil and charcoal and painting with water-based paints - and modelling in clay, which did not require expensive equipment.

Polly Street seems to have been more of an art workshop than an academic art school. Past students remember working predominantly from imagination, following their own ideas and participating in constructive discussions. The role of the teachers seems to have been to guide students, rather than set specific assignments or follow a curriculum. Ezrom Legae recalls that Skotnes would never tell students how to do something, but was rather intent on 'making people think with their eyes'. Durant Sihlali stresses how important the Centre was as a meeting



Cecil Skotnes



Fred Schimmel



Larry Scully

place in the city for practising artists, and successful black artists continued to make use of the facilities that the Centre offered and to participate in the discussions.

When Sydney Kumalo was appointed to teach in 1958, it provided him with the opportunity to focus on his own artmaking, and furnished a role model for other aspiring black artists. By 1964, both Skotnes' and Kumalo's personal careers were flourishing and demanding more



Sydney Kumalo



Ezrom Legae

of their time. Kumalo left the Centre that year to devote himself to a professional career as an artist, and he was replaced by Ezrom Legae. Skotnes resigned the following year.

The authorities became increasingly less tolerant of a thriving black project in what was designated a white area and the centre finally closed in 1970. Other artists associated with the two centres include Ben Arnold; Wilfred Delporte; Louis Maqhubela; Pat Mautloa; David Mogano; Ephraim Ngatane; Winston Saoli; Lucas Sithole and Moses Tladi.<sup>2</sup>

- 1. Esmé Berman (1983) Art and Artists of South Africa, Cape Town: AA Balkema, page 338.
- 2. Adapted from Elizabeth Rankin (1996) 'Teaching and Learning: Skotnes at Polly Street', in Frieda Harmsen, *Cecil Skotnes* (Retrospective catalogue), Cape Town: South African National Gallery. See also Eliza Miles (2004) *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre*, Johannesburg: The Ampersand Foundation.

#### RIGHT

Lot 298 Karel Nel Presence: Leaf Shrine, North Island, Seychelles (detail)

