



Strauss & Co



Tuesday 18 May 2021
Session 3 at 7.00 pm

**Modern, Post-War
and Contemporary Art**

Lots 171–219

Lot 192 Alexis Preller *Mapogga Terrace* (detail)

PRELLER '81



© The Estate of Peter Clarke | DALRO

171

Peter Clarke

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

Train Passing through the Karoo

signed and dated 28.10.1963; inscribed with the title on the reverse of the paper mixed media on paper 27 by 38 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

Although circumstances prevented Peter Clarke from extensive travel abroad, he was always acutely aware of international trends. He was drawn to German Expressionism and Japanese woodcuts, for instance, and he often leaned heavily on the stylistic innovations of Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros. Looking at the present lot, a dreamy Karoo scene foregrounded by entangled, twinkling and wickedly sharp thorns, one might assume the influence of the great British visionaries, Samuel Palmer and Graham Sutherland (fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Graham Sutherland's *Thorn Head* (1944), sold at Christie's, London, 2020.

172

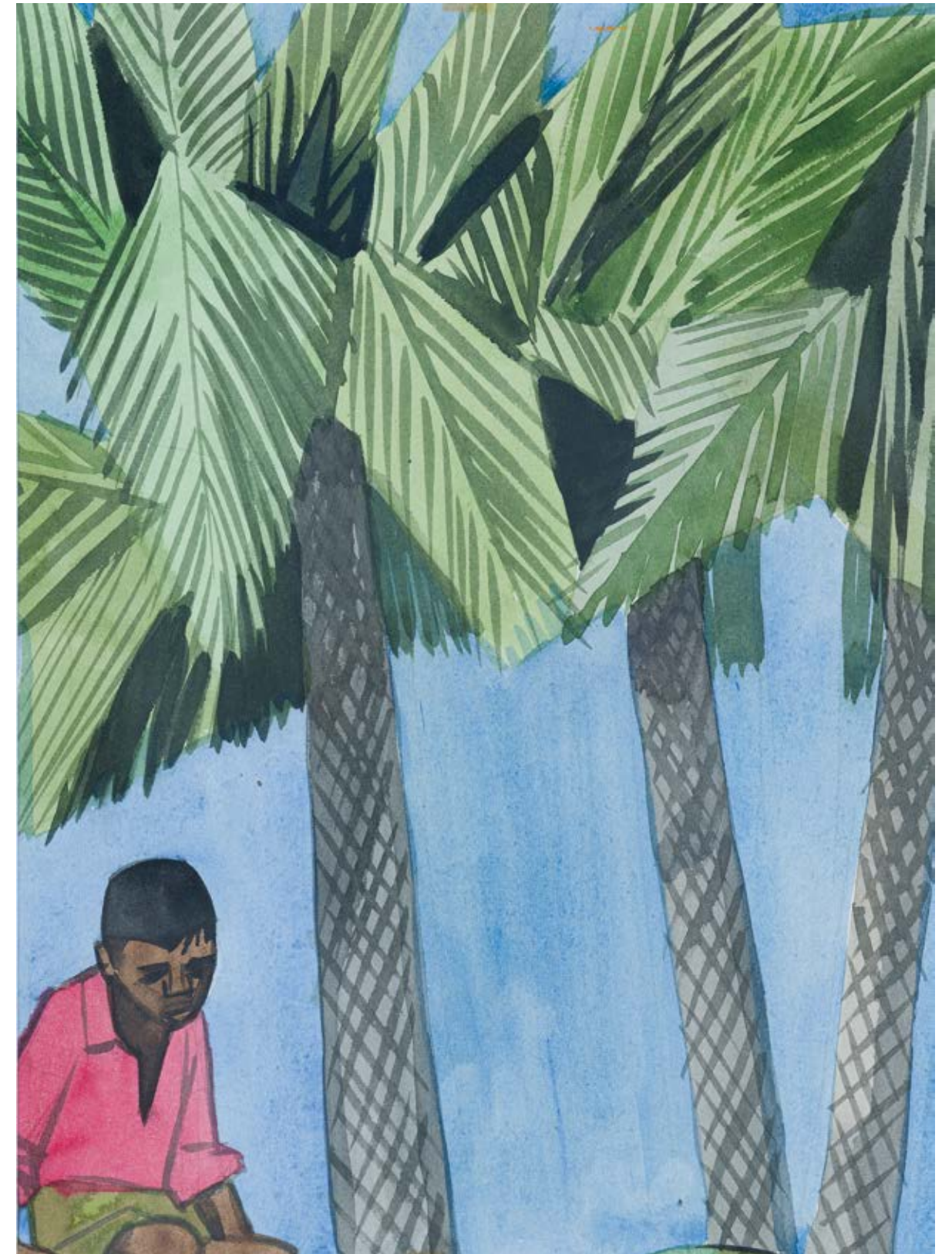
Peter Clarke

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2014

Boy under the Palms

signed and dated 10.11.1967 on the reverse of the paper mixed media on paper 26 by 19,5 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



© The Estate of Peter Clarke | DALRO

173

Ephraim Ngatane

SOUTH AFRICAN 1938–1971

Boxers

signed and dated 69; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium on Everard Read and The Post House labels adhered to the reverse
mixed media on board
60,5 by 45 cm

R70 000 – 90 000



© The Estate of Ephraim Ngatane | DALRO

174

Dumile Feni

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–1991

Anguished Woman

bronze with a dark brown patina
height: 29 cm; width: 20 cm;
depth: 16 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

PROVENANCE

Bernard Janks, and thence by descent.

LITERATURE

EJ de Jager (1992) *Images of Man*, Alice: Fort Hare University Press, illustrated in black and white on page 63.
Prince Mbusi Dube (2006) *Dumile Feni Retrospective*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg: Wits Press, another cast from the edition illustrated on page 28.



Moving bronzes by the gifted and impulsive Dumile Feni, particularly those cast in the artist's lifetime, are increasingly rare. With his subjects rooted in social realism, and his style characterised by emotion and instinctive figural distortion, the majority of his best works are treasured by institutions and collectors. Heart-wrenching sculptures such as *Anguished Woman*, with its graceful silhouette and sorrowful, almond-shaped eyes, might be strikingly beautiful, but they also evoke the sense of oppression and injustice that Dumile associated with the political regime under which he lived until 1968.

Dumile moved in the so-called Polly Street circles in the early 1960s, and worked closely with Ephraim Ngatane. After catching the attention of Madame Haengggi, the fearless and progressive Johannesburg gallerist, he exhibited at her Gallery 101 and Adler Fielding Galleries from 1964. Thereafter

he received increasing international attention: his work was selected for the São Paulo Biennale in 1967, as well as for shows at the Antwerp Museum of Art in Belgium and the Grosvenor Gallery in London. The spirit of resistance in his work that attracted European gallery-goers, however, marked him as a political dissident at home, and the growing pressure he felt from his government forced him into exile in 1968, first in London and then New York.

Anguished Woman is a pre-exile bronze, made late in 1967 or early 1968, in his final months in South Africa. Four castings were produced for a Mr Bernard Janks of Johannesburg, an early supporter of the artist's work. Other castings are included in the collection of the University of Fort Hare and the Bruce Campbell Smith Collection at the Norval Foundation.

Sydney Kumalo

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–1988

Saint Francis

signed with the artist's initial and numbered V/X bronze with a brown patina on a wooden base
height: 69 cm including base, width: 23 cm; depth: 23 cm

R1 200 000 – 1 800 000**PROVENANCE**

Egon Guenther Gallery, 26 August 1969.

EXHIBITED

Norval Foundation, *Re/discovery and Memory: The Works of Kumalo, Legae, Nitegeka and Villa*, 28 April to 10 September 2018, another cast in the edition exhibited.

LITERATURE

Stephan Welz (1989) *Art at Auction in South Africa: Twenty Years of Sotheby's/Stephan Welz & Co 1969–1989*, Johannesburg: AD Donker, a terracotta version of the work illustrated in black and white on page 94.

Elizabeth Burroughs and Karel Nel (eds) (2018) *Re/discovery and Memory: The Works of Kumalo, Legae, Nitegeka and Villa*, Cape Town: Norval Foundation, another cast in the edition illustrated in black and white on page 107 as figure 8.

Sydney Kumalo's magnificent bronze sculpture *St Francis* is one of the artist's best known and most sought after works. The sculpture portrays the Christian saint who renounced a life of wealth and privilege to devote himself to serving the poor and vulnerable, and he remains renowned for his acts of compassion. He is often portrayed in art in the company of birds and other animals.

St Francis of Assisi was born at the end of the twelfth century and is often dubbed the 'other Christ'. He encouraged pathos in his teachings and communicated the scriptures in a way that was accessible to the masses for the first time. Whereas older images of Christ had stressed awe and power, St Francis humanised the presentation of biblical figures. This single charismatic individual was largely responsible for earthlier portrayals of Christ and for effecting a change in the way biblical figures were painted from the early Renaissance onwards.

The brilliance of Kumalo's bronze St Francis rests in the way that he captures and conflates both Christian and African symbolism. Kumalo's St Francis is firmly rooted on sturdy, splayed and bent legs reminiscent of African wood carvings that not only support the commanding, stylised and elongated torso but provide a perfect counterbalance for the angled head leaning towards the left and the outstretched right arm. Kumalo masterfully captures the pathos, spirituality, humility and human frailty of the saint that he depicts with an African mask-like face. Kumalo's St Francis embodies both serenity and burden, vulnerability and potency, also made manifest by the contrasting and exceedingly strong and muscular neck that supports the head of the saint.

The tension created between the left arm protectively cradling a stylised dove, a gesture of peace, and the victoriously raised right hand pointing dramatically heavenwards in a gesture that is both a Christian blessing and an echo of the black power salute, *Amandla*, used to signal solidarity and resistance to oppression during the apartheid era, emphasises the dualities and complexities of Kumalo's rendering of St Francis.

Kumalo was born in Soweto in 1935 and it was not long

before his artistic talent was apparent. From 1948 he attended Polly Street Art Centre where he studied under Cecil Skotnes. He subsequently became a teacher and mentor at the school, which later became known as the Jubilee Art Centre after a move to new premises.

In 1957 Skotnes was approached to provide imagery for the newly built St Claver church at Seisoville on the outskirts of Kroonstad, imagery that would be more relatable and fitting for the church's black congregation. For the commission, the students were drawn into discussion of Christian symbolism and African imagery that could be used for the ceiling painting. Skotnes encouraged his students to look at designs of African, Oceanic and Aboriginal pots in his collection as well as at African art in the Africana Museum in Johannesburg. The amazing speed and certainty with which Kumalo worked on the ceiling panels led to the artist being commissioned to sculpt images of both Jesus and Mary and to model the fourteen Stations of the Cross for the same church. Other commissions followed for relief panels and sculptures at Our Lady of the Rosary, Thabong, and St Joseph the Worker, Bosmont.

The clarity of Kumalo's emotionally charged images prompted Skotnes to approach Edoardo Villa to provide greater professional support for Kumalo to grow his talent and understanding of sculpture. Kumalo then began to work in Villa's studio twice a week.

Arguably the most important influence on Kumalo's work began in 1962 when Kumalo was introduced to the collector and gallerist, Egon Guenther. In 1962 Kumalo had his first solo exhibition (a sell-out) at Guenther's gallery and showed again later in the 60s with Guenther's Amadlozi Group, which included Villa, Skotnes, Cecil Sash, Giuseppe Cattaneo and later Ezrom Legae. Kumalo held another two solo exhibitions at Guenther's gallery, one in 1966 and the other 1967. When Kumalo eventually left Guenther's gallery he continued his successful career, first with a stint at the Grosvenor Gallery in London before later joining Linda Givon at Goodman Gallery.



Sydney Kumalo, *St Mary* (left) and *St Joseph* (right), relief panels for the Church of St Joseph the Worker, Bosmont, c.1969.



176

Wolf Kibel

SOUTH AFRICAN 1903–1938

The Red Roof, Cape Town

signed; inscribed with the artist's name on a B Jaffe label adhered to the reverse
oil on canvas laid down on board
20 by 24,5 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

Wolf Kibel spent most of the last nine years of his life, between 1929 and 1938, living in Cape Town at 'Palm Studios', a dilapidated house on Roeland Street, with a single, forlorn date palm tree in the front yard. His studio was on the upper storey, and the sculptor Lippy Lipschitz worked next door. One of Kibel's most striking paintings from this time is *View from My Studio*, currently in the Sanlam Art Collection. It shows a foreshortened studio interior with two door panels opening onto the rooftops of the city that lies to the north of the house. Kibel's studio also had a good view of the rooftops of the Malay Quarter to the west. The present lot depicts another rooftop scene in Cape Town. The interior/exterior duality was always present in Kibel's work, with the outdoors being especially captivating for him. He was not really interested in grand facades and imposing buildings, but rather in inconspicuous street scenes, and unassuming backyards, courtyards and rooftops.

Why this interest of Kibel's in rooftops? How did the subject settle so comfortably in his mind, becoming a source of inspiration for many of his best paintings?

The answer is probably found in a closer look at the artist's life and the manner that rooftops became part of the usual observation of his immediate physical surroundings, observations that could possibly have settled in his subconsciousness, founding a visual outlet for his striking rooftop paintings.

Born in Grodzisk, near Warsaw, Poland in 1903, Kibel was surrounded by crammed buildings with small living spaces stacked on top of each other in the Jewish ghetto, a similar living arrangement he experienced when he was apprenticed in the neighbouring village of Kutna in 1911, and later in the ghetto in Vienna, where he fled in 1923 to escape conscription into the military. In 1925 he relocated to Israel, living in an ancient, deserted monastery just outside Jerusalem. Kibel, along with all the other homeless people who occupied the place at night, had to scale the high wall surrounding the monastery, which gave him a fascinating view of the rooftops of nearby Jerusalem. Even when he moved to Tel Aviv later that year, the studio he occupied in Bialik House gave him a clear view of the rooftops of the city below.

Kibel had always wanted to study in Paris. In Palestine, he met various artists who *had* studied in Paris and who brought back tales of fabulous artists such as Paul Cézanne, Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse and Chaim Soutine. Up until then, Kibel had only had the privilege of meeting Oscar Kokoschka in Vienna. Knowledge of Cézanne's cubist approach to form and composition was a great influence on Kibel's subsequent work, as were Matisse's fauvist use of colour, Chagall's poeticism, and Soutine's expressive brushstrokes. Kibel distilled a unique style of all this visual inspiration. Harold Jeppe aptly remarks: 'Subject matter and its correlation with previous styles constitutes a false premise on which to judge an artist's individuality: no artist is independent of his predecessors.'¹ Kibel's interest in the formal qualities of painting led his wife Freda to observe that his art was essentially about 'the absolute maximum of expressiveness extracted from the minimum of material.'² She also observed that Kibel's lifelong quest personally and artistically was 'to keep a roof over our heads.'³

Such artists as Hugo Naudé, Maggie Laubser, Cecil Higgs and Lippy Lipschitz were quick to embrace a fellow modernist in this country, but the general art community in the Cape was initially very sceptical about Kibel's work. His inclusion in the Empire Exhibition of 1936 helped to win them over, but it was the indefatigable endeavours of his wife after his death, organising numerous memorial and retrospective exhibitions, that kept Kibel in the public imagination until the 1970s.⁴ Sadly, a whole generation of art lovers missed out on Kibel's artistic sensibilities and the present lot is the ideal opportunity to admire and reassess his merits as one of our foremost South African modernists.

1. Harold Jeppe (1964) 'Wolf Kibel 1903–1939', *Lantern*, XIII (3), page 38.
2. Freda Kibel (1968) *Wolf Kibel: A Brief Sketch of his Life and Work*, Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, page 28.
3. *Ibid*, page 22.
4. 1942: Memorial exhibition, Cape Town; 1947: Memorial exhibition, Johannesburg; 1950: Memorial exhibition, Cape Town and Johannesburg; 1963: Memorial exhibition, Johannesburg; 1965: Memorial exhibition, Pretoria; 1976: touring retrospective exhibition at the South African National Gallery, Cape Town, William Humphreys Art Gallery, Kimberley, Pretoria Art Museum, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg, Durban Art Museum, and King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth.



Wolf Kibel, *View over Rooftops towards the Sea*, not dated.



Wolf Kibel, *Houses*, not dated.



Wolf Kibel, *Settlement in a Landscape*, not dated.

177

Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

Still Life with Lilies

signed and dated 1948
oil on canvas
86 by 66,5 cm

R6 000 000 – 8 000 000

PROVENANCE

The Jack Lewsen Collection.
Stephan Welz & Co, 31 May 2004, lot 518.
Graham's Fine Art Gallery, 2007.

LITERATURE

Stephan Welz & Co, 31 May 2004,
illustrated in colour on the front cover
of the auction catalogue.

Wilhelm van Rensburg (2007) *The Birth
of the Modernist Body*, Johannesburg:
Graham's Fine Art Gallery, illustrated
in colour on page 67, incorrectly titled
Lilies in an African Pot.



Martabani in Irma Stern's collection, photographs
courtesy the Irma Stern Foundation.

Irma Stern realised quite early on in her career that the genre of still life offers many very distinct and very different expressive possibilities to an artist that figure studies or portraiture do not. An article in *The Star* newspaper reported that 'it was at her 1930 exhibition in Paris while hanging her pictures that [the artist] had difficulty in giving a total impression of her work without repeating her colour schemes. Brown, orange, red and green, were domineering colours in her canvases, and this made her think that her palette was limited except for a few still lifes in which she saw a wealth of colour, and on those still lifes she determined to build up her work.' The present lot is undoubtedly testimony of the success she achieved in and through her still life paintings. This genre not only provided an opportunity for formal experimentation, it also acted as a visual metaphor for the abundance and fecundity of nature, but also the transience of life. The vessel and the cloth on which it stands are permanent, and yet the flowers, the obvious transient element in the work, dominate the picture plane in this magnificent work.

After buying her house, *The Firs*, in Chapel Road, Rosebank, in Cape Town in 1927, Stern took to gardening. She listed the flowers being cultivated in her garden in a letter to her good friend Trude Bosse: '... larkspur, stocks, enormous geraniums, all shades of pelargoniums, great balls of white and also yellow daisies, violet and yellow poppies, sunflowers, and many, many roses, carnations, petunias, fuchsias.'² Christopher Peter, director of the Irma Stern Museum for over 40 years, adds zinnias and delphiniums to the list.³ Although not mentioned in these lists, the indigenous amaryllis flower (common Afrikaans names *seeroogblom*, or *gifbolblom*) depicted in the present lot, was popularly planted as a cut flowers in local gardens in the 1940s and 50s, and it is likely that Stern also tried her hand at growing them. Debunking the myth that Stern only painted flowers from her own garden, Peter points out that her garden was 'cold, shady and tricky', maintaining that she in all likelihood bought showy flowers such as dahlias and chrysanthemums from the flower sellers along Adderley Street in the city centre. Given that these flower sellers routinely offer the arum lilies that grow wild along the many streams and ponds in the Western Cape, and that the amaryllis also grows wild in similar conditions, it is likely that Stern could have bought bunches of these amaryllis in the city as well.

The vase containing the flowers is a late-19th century Chinese storage jar, a *martabani* – with rotund body and heavy blackish-brown glaze – one of 10 martabani in Stern's vast collection of artefacts that was well-documented in an extensive inventory of



her holdings when her house became a museum in 1971.⁴ Stern collected these artifacts and cultural objects locally and on her travels all over the world: from the barber shops on Long Street, Cape Town, where passing sailors often traded, barbered or exchanged exotic wares, to the Caledonian Market in Islington, London, in 1937, where she ran into South African artist, Edward Wolfe.⁵ It is possible that Stern bought the martabani on one of her visits to the island of Zanzibar in 1939 and in 1945. Describing the bazaar in Stone Town in her travelogue, *Zanzibar* (1948) she mentions not only the fresh produce and fresh fish, but also the abundant spices, ivory, gold and silver traded there, as well as textiles and ceramics. Her martabani are, in all likelihood, examples of *lamu*-pottery, Chinese ware made specially for the Arab Market.⁶ At the time of her visits, Zanzibar flourished as the confluence of trade routes from the Far East, the Middle East and from across Africa.

The cloth on which the martabani is placed significantly echoes the patterning and colours of the flowers, conjoining all in a celebration of tone and texture. From an examination of the inventory of textiles in the Irma Stern Museum, with examples from the Americas, Africa and the Middle and Far East, it seems likely that this particular example was a Javanese cloth from Indonesia, judging from the geometric designs of squares and star shapes.

Stern had infinite possibilities of combinations of containers and cloths in her collection, and different flowers either grown in her garden or bought on the street, at her disposal for use in still life compositions. Not only did the still life genre offer Stern the opportunity of experimenting with colour and composition, but it also allowed her to celebrate the infinite variety of life.

1. Anonymous (1931) *The Star*, 6 June, clipping in one of Irma Stern's scrap books (1914–1946) in the South African Library in Cape Town, as quoted in Karel Schoeman (1994) *Irma Stern; The Early Years, 1894–1933*. Cape Town: South African Library, page 99. This view is shared in a recent publication by Sean O'Toole (2020) *Irma Stern: African in Europe, European in Africa*. Munich: Prestel, page 94.
2. Irma Stern (1928) Letter to Trude Bosse, dated 14.11.1928, as quoted in Schoeman, *ibid*, page 88.
3. Wilhelm van Rensburg (ed.) (2018) *Life Force: The Still Lifes of Irma Stern*, Johannesburg: Strauss & Co, page 25.
4. Donald Inskip (ed.) (1971) *Irma Stern Museum: Catalogue of the Collections in the Irma Stern Museum*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town, pages 38 and 39.
5. Sandra Klopper (2017) *Irma Stern: 'Are you still alive?' – Stern's life and art seen through her letters to Richard and Freda Feldman, 1934–1966*, Cape Town: Orisha, page 69.
6. *Ibid*, page 86.

Irma Stern in her studio at The Firs, Cape
Town, 1936, a martabani pot is visible in
the top right, photograph courtesy the
National Library of South Africa.





Irma Stern in the garden at The Firs, Cape Town, c.late 1920s, photograph courtesy the National Library of South Africa.





© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO

178

Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

Landscape with Trees, recto;
Landscape with Mountains,
verso

verso signed
oil on paper
28,5 by 35 cm

R300 000 – 500 000

179

Maggie Laubser

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1973

Still Life with Flowers and
Fruit Dish, recto; Vase of
Flowers, unfinished, verso

signed
oil on wood panel
50,5 by 45 cm

R300 000 – 500 000



© The Estate of Maggie Laubser | DALRO



180

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886-1957

Autumnal Landscape

signed

oil on board

29,5 by 39 cm

R350 000 – 500 000



181

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886-1957

Distant Storm

signed and dated 30

oil on board

44 by 60 cm

R600 000 – 800 000



182

Anton van Wouw

SOUTH AFRICAN 1862–1945

Coffee Drinker (Sidwane Tokozile)

signed and inscribed 'SA Joh burg' and bears the foundry mark bronze with a brown patina; cast by the Massa foundry, Rome height: 31 cm; width: 13 cm; depth: 12 cm

R350 000 – 450 000

LITERATURE

Joey Ernst (2006) *Anton van Wouw: 'n Biografie*, Vanderbijlpark: Coralis, another cast from the edition illustrated in monochrome on page 63. Alex Duffey (2008) *Anton van Wouw: The Smaller Works*, Pretoria: Protea, other casts from the edition illustrated in colour on pages 74 and 75.

This exquisite and vivid small-scale work was conceived sometime between 1911 and 1912, in the wake of the unification of South Africa, and a few years after Anton van Wouw had received backing from a syndicate of investors that included Abe Bailey, Julius Jeppe and Lionel Phillips. So many of the sculptor's most evocative, intricate and warm-hearted works date from this period of creativity.

Van Wouw's model, Tokozile, was an elderly and noble-



looking Zulu gentleman, with sharp cheekbones and an arrow-shaped beard, who also posed for the rare *Bust of a Zulu*. A soft cloth is tightly knotted around his head in the present lot, and he clasps a hot mug of coffee with his aged fingers. Van Wouw catches him with lips pursed, blowing away the rising steam. It is a wonderful, simple, familiar moment, but tinged with sadness too: the old man is tired, cold, and wears an old shirt ripped open at the shoulder.



183

Hugo Naudé

SOUTH AFRICAN 1868–1941

Eikebos op Laborie et Picardie

signed oil on canvas 35 by 40 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

PROVENANCE

Given by the artist to Henri Louw, who grew up on the farm, as a wedding present in 1931, and thence by descent.

LITERATURE

Henri Louw (1988) *Die Pêrel van die Paarl*, Paarl, illustrated in black and white on page 67.

Hugo Naudé is regarded as the quintessential South African impressionist. He received his professional art education at the Slade School of Fine Art in London (1889–1890) and the Kunst Akademie in Munich (1890–1894) and spent a year amongst the Barbizon painters in Fontainebleau near Paris. He returned to South Africa in 1896 to the Boland town of Worcester, his place of birth.

Naudé's work reflects his intimate affinity for nature and the soul of the African landscape. He captures the light and atmosphere with strong contrasts, an open-air freshness of his work, confident brushstrokes and the use of a brilliant range of colours.

The present lot *Eikebos op Laborie et Picardie* not only encapsulates Naudé's proficiency as an artist but has a very

personal story. From 1897 the current owner's grandfather Henri Louw – who went on to become a well-known architect – and his family regularly visited Onrus River and after a chance encounter with Naudé the family struck up a close friendship with the artist.

Naudé was frequently invited to the family farm Laborie et Picardie in the Paarl valley where the then young Louw would accompany the artist as he explored the farm. He vividly recalled Naudé remarking that it was the most beautiful valley he had ever seen. At the age of 16 in 1908 Louw witnessed the artist capturing this beautiful autumnal scene from the vantage point of the oak-lined stream with a view across the farmstead framed by majestic blue mountains beyond. Many years later in 1931 Louw received this work as a wedding gift from the painter.

184

Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

The Yellow Hat

signed and dated 1938

oil on canvas

65 by 65 cm

R5 000 000 – 6 000 000

LITERATURE

Stephan Welz (1989) *Art at Auction in South Africa: Twenty Years of Sotheby's/Stephan Welz & Co 1969–1989*, Johannesburg: AD Donker, illustrated in colour on page 122.

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's/Stephan Welz & Co, Johannesburg, 31 May 1988, lot 221.

Irma Stern's diverse output includes many studies of coastal hamlets and fisher folk from France, Madeira, Spain, South Africa and Zanzibar. Ranging in ambition from large oils and lyrical gouaches to descriptive works on paper, these harbour scenes are an important part of her mature output and slot into a body of work recording the traditions and labours of diverse seafaring cultures. This particular lot derives from Stern's confident middle period when the graphic styling of her romantically conceived high-expressionistic work of the 1920s had been superseded by a more descriptive form of expressionism in which colour came to play a dominant role.

In the late 1920s Stern became absorbed with colour theory and worked towards building up a new and distinctive palette.¹ A three-month trip to the volcanic island of Madeira in 1931 enabled her to test out these experiments in the field. Despite being produced seven years later, this lot bears striking resemblances to Stern's portrayals of hatted Madeira workingmen, notably in celebrated works like *Fisherman*, *Madiera* and *The Hunchback* (both 1931). Similar to these works, the subject in this lot, a young man with vacant eyes wearing a sou'wester rain hat, is encompassed by a landscape inferring basic industry and fecund nature. This lot is nonetheless

distinguishable from the Madeira paintings by Stern's brushmarks, which are vigorous and instinctual. In this sense, the work is temperamentally more closely aligned with the artist's grand and colour-drunk flower studies of the late 1930s and 40s.

The subject's face in this lot is an accumulation of mostly lateral marks, the colours of which echo the surrounding landscape. Stern's palette of lemon yellow, muddy orange, vegetable green and ocean blue, while faithful to life, also exceeds it. Her approach to colour here is almost fauvist. Stern emphasised the importance of colour on many occasions in the years leading up to this work. In 1935, for instance, she gave a lecture in Pretoria entitled 'The Relativity of Colour and Form in Art'.² The presentation played a crucial role in overcoming resistance to her work in a city that served as a bulwark of official South African culture. The Pretoria council subsequently acquired two oils, including *Fishing Boats, Kalk Bay* (1931), now in the collection of the Pretoria Art Museum.

1. Irma Stern (1933) 'Irma Stern and her Work', *South African Life and the Woman's Forum*, 7 December, <http://www.irmastertrust.org.za/view.asp?pg=biography>

2. Jeanne van Eeden (1988) 'Irma Stern's First Exhibition in Pretoria, 1933', *South African Journal of Art History*, No. 13, page 101.





185

Maud Sumner

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Desert Landscape

signed

oil on canvas

144 by 112 cm

R180 000 – 240 000



186

Maud Sumner

SOUTH AFRICAN 1902–1985

Oasis

signed

oil on canvas

62 by 90 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

PROVENANCE

Acquired from the artist by the current owner, 11 January 1967.

LITERATURE

Charles Eglinton (1967) *Maud Sumner*, Cape Town: Purnell, illustrated in colour on page 31.

187

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef

SOUTH AFRICAN 1886–1957

Study for Klipriviersberg, Alberton

signed
oil on board
52 by 64 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 400 000

PROVENANCE

PL Meyer, and thence by descent.

LITERATURE

PG Nel (1990) *JH Pierneef: His Life and Works*, Johannesburg: Perskor, illustrated in colour on pages 40 and 41

Henk Pierneef returned from his European travels early in 1926. Riveted and inspired by various modernisms, the immediate work he produced back in Pretoria was thrillingly radical: he re-imagined his beloved landscapes according to shard-sharp geometric principles, and enlivened them with a startling, fauvist palette. He also experimented with a personal brand of divisionism, building up an impressionistic effect on his canvas with flashy, expressive daubs of pure colour. While paintings from this period are now fabled and impossibly rare, they were unpopular sellers at the artist's exhibitions from 1926 to 1928. Having to face up to commercial realities, by the end of the decade the artist reverted to his more familiar, monumental, and pleasingly linear aesthetic. This stylistic doubling back – his *return to order* – was also necessitated by a landmark commission he received in July 1929 to paint decorative and grand landscape panels for the newly-built Johannesburg Railway Station.

Pierneef ultimately painted twenty-eight landscapes to decorate the station's main concourse. Criss-crossing the country, he chose beautiful and prominent destinations that could be reached from the city's impressive new transport hub. The breadth of concept, the stylistic harmony, the propaganda power, and the sheer decorative impact of the paintings arguably position the group as the most important state or parastatal commission in twentieth-century South Africa.

The present lot, which shows an old, stone and red-roofed

Transvaal house, is one of the very rare oil studies related to the Station commission. Painted quickly, with confidence and swagger, the surface has a gorgeous and swirling arrangement of olive and lime green, across which cuts streaks of pink, brown and terracotta. The painting is the precursor of the famous *Klipriviersberg, Alberton* panel (fig. 1). The same stables, pavilions and outbuildings are clear in the study, although captured with looser and more spontaneous brushstrokes. This treatment, frankly, is reminiscent of his more successful post-European experiments with divisionism. There are a number of familiar Pierneef design traits here: Henk shaped the landscape in the foreground to create a gentle curving line at the base of the composition, inverting the form at the top with the rounded hilltops and clouds; he also positioned tall trees at the edges of the picture – like columns or stage curtains – to best frame the view towards the old farmhouse, nestled in the treeline.

What is rather special about this farmhouse is that Henk knew it intimately. He was friends with the Meyers – the owners – whose *voortrekker* family had established the farm in the 1840s. There are records of the artist working at the Meyer farm in the early 1920s – that he should return to the scene for his most important commission is heart-warming indeed.

The *Klipriviersberg, Alberton* panel, incidentally, was positioned in the north-west corner of the Station's main concourse, between the *Amajuba* and *Houtbos, Transvaal* panels.



Fig. 1: JH Pierneef, final version of *Klipriviersberg, Alberton*, one of the panels commissioned for the new Park Station Johannesburg, 1929 to 1932.





188

Adolph Jentsch

GERMAN/NAMIBIAN 1888–1977

Evening, Sheepfold

signed with the artist's initials
and dated 1938
oil on canvas
68 by 98 cm

R700 000 – 1 000 000

LITERATURE

Nico Roos (1878) *Art in South-West Africa*, Pretoria: JP van der Walt, illustrated in black and white on page 132.

Adolph Jentsch was born in Dresden in 1888. He was schooled at the famed Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, where he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Max Pechstein, Kurt Schwitters and George Grosz. Unlike these contemporaries, however, who spearheaded major avant-garde movements, Jentsch dedicated himself to a more traditional and introspective style of landscape painting. His flag-bearers were the European Romantics and the Barbizon School, from JMW Turner and Caspar David Friedrich to Théodore Rousseau and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot; he was drawn by their devotion to nature, and moved by the ephemeral and fresh qualities of their painting. A parallel influence was Chinese landscape painting, which resonated with his spiritual approach and inspired his calligraphic mark-making.

Shell-shocked by socio-political changes, professionally stifled, and in the wake of the Nazi's infamous Degenerate Art Exhibition in Munich (July to November 1937), Jentsch left Dresden for the then South West Africa, arriving late in February 1938. He was hosted initially by the Dieterle family – acquaintances from Dresden – on their farm called Kleepforte,

some 100 km from Windhoek. It goes without saying that the artist was intoxicated by his new surroundings. This early sense of awe is evident in the present lot, *Evening Sheepfold*, which was perhaps painted in the first weeks after his arrival. It is a dusky, calm and beautiful painting, showing a vast herd of Karakul sheep settling in their stone-walled pen. Their varying pelts of brown, silver and black gently shimmer in the fading light, while the grassland beyond, bleached and dry, stretches towards a range of low hills. The sky is unforgettable: Jentsch paints a shallow arc of graded blues and a luminous pink halo above the horizon.

Jentsch had produced enough major works by that first August to stage an exhibition in the Blue Room of the Grossherzog Hotel in Windhoek (it ran from 8 to 22 September 1938); with the lack of records one can only imagine the present lot on show there. The critic from the local *Windhoek Advertiser* was certainly impressed: 'His art is true and deep and takes us away and above the petty routine of our materialism!'

1. Olga Levinson (1973) *Adolph Jentsch*, Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, page 42.





189

Lynn Chadwick

BRITISH 1914–2003

Walking Couple, Maquette I

stamped with the artist's symbol and numbered 6/8 and 6825 on the reverse
bronze with a dark brown patina and polished faces
height: 40,5 cm; width: 22 cm; depth: 15 cm

R650 000 – 800 000

A 25,5 by 24 by 4,5 cm polished granite base accompanies the lot.

190

Edoardo Villa

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Figure with Drapery

1953

signed and numbered 3/6
bronze with a green patina
height: 161 cm; width: 65 cm; depth: 47 cm

R600 000 – 800 000

LITERATURE

Chris de Klerk and Gerard de Kamper (2012) *Villa in Bronze: A Comprehensive Reference to the Castings of Edoardo Villa*, Pretoria: University of Pretoria Museum, number 6 from the edition illustrated in colour on page 34.



The 1950s was a key decade for Edoardo Villa, as this began his turn towards a conceptual sense of form and the exploration of abstraction. In this new light, the linear motifs, rhythmical qualities and negative space of the simplified forms portray inner personality and emotion. The present lot, created in 1953 is characteristic of this period, the sturdy, robust legs planted apart, provide support to the fluid movement of the upper

skeletal form. Depicting complex relationships between linear motifs and sculptural form became a central theme throughout his oeuvre. The form of this work is reminiscent of both Italian Futurist painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) and the French artist Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), echoing their suggestions of movement in space and time.

Alexis Preller and the Mapogga

Lots 191 and 192

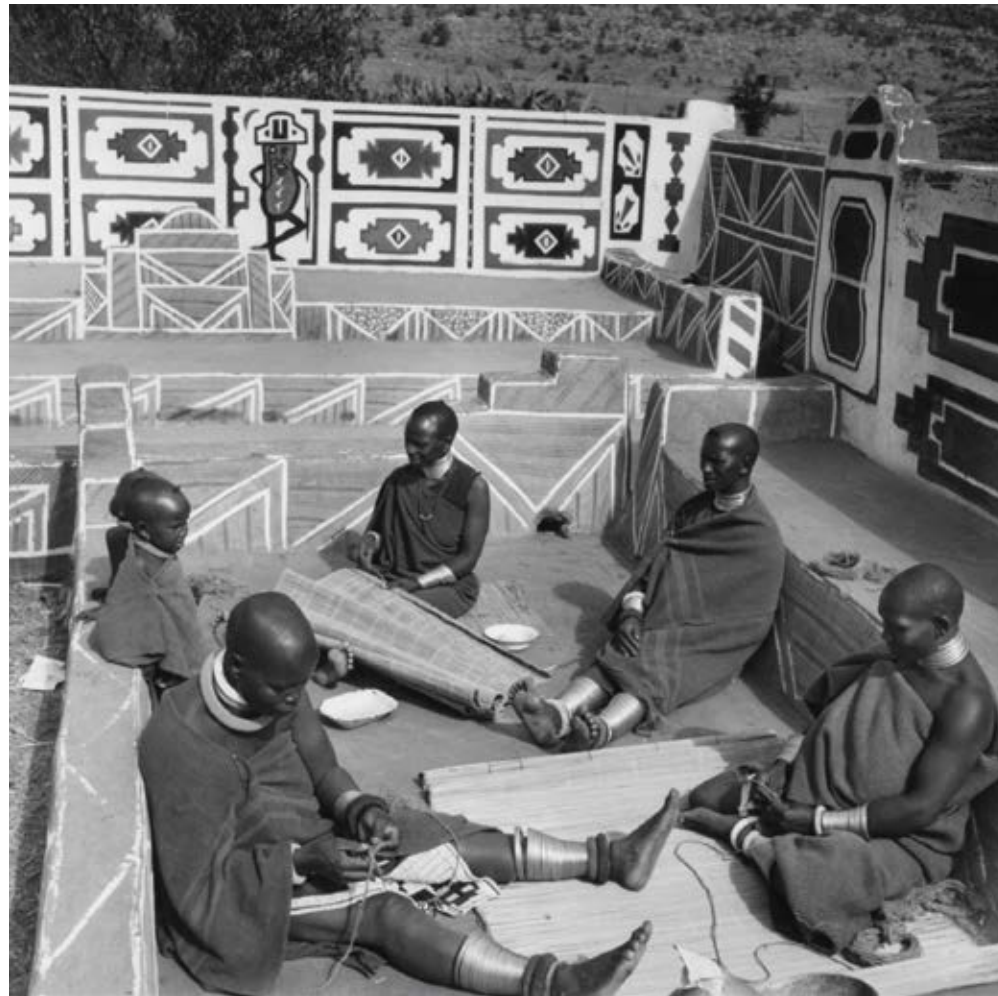


Fig. 1: Constance Stuart, *Mapogga women making mats in the lapa of the kraal*, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art Smithsonian Institution.

In the December of 1935, having recently returned from a year at the Westminster School of Art in London, and shortly after closing his first ever exhibition at Glen's Music Salon in Pretoria, a twenty-four-year-old Alexis Preller, wide-eyed, motivated and curious, came across a group of women labourers on the northern outskirts of town, each of them turned out in dazzling traditional dress. Hammered and weighty brass rings glinted on their necks and ankles, and coloured beads decorated their aprons and armbands. These were Ndzundza-descended women of the Southern Ndebele people, and their village, to which a young Alexis followed them one day, with its stepped terraces, mud huts, enclosed kraals, and joyful, distinctive, painted walls, would become one of the artist's greatest sources of inspiration. His first painting to include these Ndebele figures, or

Mapogga, as they were also called, was *Native Study (Mapogges)* [sic]; it showed them with long and gently cylindrical limbs and conical breasts, and it was one of the 117 paintings, and the only one by Alexis, exhibited at the Empire Exhibition at Milner Park in Johannesburg from September 1936.

In that same year, a young photographer called Constance Stuart, another ambitious artist who had grown up in Pretoria, became drawn to the mystique of the Mapogga too. Having outgrown her Kodak Box Brownie, trained in London between 1933 and 1935 at the Regent Street Polytechnic School of Photography, and thereafter at the Bavarian State Institute for Photography in Munich, Stuart turned her new Rolleiflex on the tribal cultures of southern Africa, and rather memorably, in her straightforward and black and white style, on the

people of the Ndebele (figs. 1 and 2). She and Alexis plainly shared a passion, and they were firm friends by 1938 (Stuart purchased the only Mapogga picture on Preller's fourth solo show, held at the New Group Hall in Queen Street in Pretoria, in October 1938). Consequently, comparing their contemporaneous approaches to their Mapogga subject matter is particularly handy: Stuart's direct and documentary mode helps emphasize the visionary and daring way in which Preller interpreted the same theme. The Mapogga certainly became one of Preller's most iconic, spell-binding and protean motifs, and dominated many of his seminal paintings. Two such examples, both breathtaking and richly symbolic, are featured here (Lots 191 and 192).



Fig. 2: Constance Stuart, *Seated married Ndebele woman*, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art Smithsonian Institution.

Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Grand Mapogga IIsigned and dated 51
oil on canvas
57 by 46 cm**R4 800 000 – 5 800 000****EXHIBITED**Gainsborough Gallery, Johannesburg,
12 to 25 February 1952, catalogue
number 28.**LITERATURE**Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009)
Africa, the Sun and Shadows, volume I,
Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing,
illustrated in colour on page 149.**PROVENANCE**Die Kunsamer, Cape Town.
The Wilbur Smith Collection.
Private Collection, Johannesburg.

Preller's most bewitching early pictures were made in the pursuit of an essential and illusive African spirit. Thanks to his early brush with the Mapogga women, he became enchanted by the Swazi in 1937 (fig. 1), intrigued by figures in the Congo in 1939 (fig. 2), and inspired in 1947 by Constance Stuart's photo-essay of her travels in Basutoland. After his life-affirming trip to the Seychelles at the end of 1948, however, from which he produced a group of vivid and joyful tropical pictures, his imagination inevitably returned to the rituals, the architecture, the traditional dress, and the visual spell of the Mapogga. He sensed in this ancient culture a way to develop his own mythical concept of Africa. In 1949 this came to life in a painting called *The Storm* (fig. 3), a hazy and simplified vision of a Mapogga matriarch, monumental in scale, and beautifully enwrapped in a striped blanket; it was an evocative statement of things to come.

Throughout 1950 and 1951, Preller fixated on the Mapogga women. Dignified, perceptive and imposing, they seemed to embody an archaic and distinctly African spirit. Whether singly, with child, or in small groups, Preller revisited this figure endlessly, usually seated and in conical form, with legs outstretched, hands clasped, and blankets, beads and copper

necklaces on show. While this Mapogga matriarch emerged as the artist's most dominant motif at the time, it undertook continuous symbolic and poetic transformations: *Red Mother* (fig. 4), for instance, seated against an earthen wall, nurtured a son, while *Ritual Mapogga*, her head mysteriously covered by a pink cloth, suggested some impenetrable, ceremonial custom. But the concept reached an initial apotheosis with *Grand Mapogga I*, as well as the gorgeous *Grand Mapogga II*, this sale's remarkable cover lot.

While no doubt related to the *The Storm*, the figure in *Grand Mapogga II* now appears closer to pure icon or symbol. Faceless, distant, still and enigmatic, its traditional blanket has changed to a glorious ivory-gold cloak. Surrounded by a gentle glow, moreover, the figure seems eternal, and far-removed from its everyday kraal. A maize cob appears on the wall behind, presumably an emblem of fertility, and a mark of this matriarch's power, role and influence.

The artist's fluid imagination took the Mapogga matriarch figure further still. After completing the vast and complex *All Africa* mural for the Receiver of Revenue building in Johannesburg, Preller returned to the theme in 1957 with three more epic versions (fig 5).

Fig. 1: Alexis Preller, *Three Bathers*, 1937.Fig. 2: Alexis Preller, *Three Figures, Congo*, 1939.Fig. 3: Alexis Preller, *The Storm*, 1949.Fig. 4: Alexis Preller, *Red Mother*, 1951.Fig. 5: Alexis Preller, *Grand Mapogga III*, 1957.

Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

Mapogga Terracesigned and dated '51
oil on wood panel
51 by 60,5 cm**R3 800 000 – 5 000 000****LITERATURE**Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009)
Africa, the Sun and Shadows, volume
I, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing.
Illustrated in colour on page 146
and 147.**PROVENANCE**Die Kunsamer, Cape Town.
The Wilbur Smith Collection.
Private Collection, Johannesburg.

Late in 1948 Preller conceived *The Kraal* (fig. 1 is the second version), a mad, landmark, multi-figural and Brueghel-esque scene based, rather surprisingly, on a traditional Ndebele village. In search of a distinctly African iconography, the work included a disparate collection of references from the continent: a slit drum, a marabou stork, a Baga carving, to name a few. With its lapas, decorative walls and human action, *The Kraal* became a precursor to a small group of Mapogga village settings executed in the early 1950s. *Mapogga Women* (fig. 2), now in the Pretoria Art Museum, is one such example, and the scene is easy enough to read: while husbands are out at work, the women, swathed in bright blankets, kneeling on woven mats or straight-backed and seated, chat and get on with domestic chores. While the figures are notably stylised, and the palette pleasingly vivid, the scene is rooted in routine and reality, and not too far removed from one of Constance Stuart's documentary photographs. In comparison, however, the breathtaking

Fig. 1: Alexis Preller, *The Kraal II*, 1948.Fig. 2: Alexis Preller, *Mapogga Women*, 1948.

Mapogga Terrace, the current lot, while following a similar theme, strikes a different tone entirely. First of all, a celestial atmosphere is set by the golden and blush light that bathes the ledges, walls and the shallow steps. Secondly, the three Mapogga women, calm, knowing and slow-moving, with their small ovoid heads and resplendent robes, evoke a sense of awe and timelessness.

In Preller's imagination, these women had transcended the humdrum, and appeared to him as prophetesses or devotees moving quietly through a sacred space. Most importantly, they seemed to embody and safeguard their ancient traditions. In this context, the familiar and decorative wall paintings take on extra meaning. The colourful designs symbolise the recording of history and custom. While the patterns fade away with seasonal rains, they are restored and brightened again by the women. The walls thus become beautiful palimpsests of an archaic African civilisation, and the women its scribes and custodians.



193

Irma Stern

SOUTH AFRICAN 1894–1966

Three African Women

signed and dated 1941
oil on canvas
58 by 58 cm

R4 000 000 – 5 000 000

PROVENANCE

Sotheby's/Stephan Welz & Co,
Johannesburg, 4 November 1991,
lot 31

This lot depicts an unknown cohort of women that Stern encountered on a 1941 trip to the Eastern Cape, then known as Pondoland. The work dates from a decade widely considered 'the most fruitful period of her career,' to quote Neville Dubow.¹ Stern was 47 and in full command of her vocabulary. The earlier romantic expressionism that typified especially her figure studies of the 1920s had been updated by a more descriptive style of figure painting characterised by Stern's interest in melding factual report to a vibrant palette and vigorous paint technique. This change was largely underwritten by a number of ambitious painting trips that Stern undertook in the 1930s, notably to Madeira, Senegal and Zanzibar.

This work was produced a year before her first trip to the Belgian Congo. Perhaps due to it being bookended by her celebrated expeditionary trips to Congo and Zanzibar, Stern's 1941 journey to Pondoland barely registers in histories of the artist. This is a shame as Stern produced a number of assured oils. Aside from this lot, other notable works include *Young Xhosa Woman*, *Portrait of a Woman in Lilac Turban* and *Initiation Dance*, the latter a gregarious scene of mass assembly that now enjoys a prominent position in the newly refurbished Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town.

Stern first travelled to Pondoland in 1929, seven years after she inaugurated her long-term project to meet, observe and depict southern Africa's various indigenous inhabitants. Stern's biographer Karel Schoeman has characterised the

artist's journeys of the 1920s as quests to depict 'her private vision of Africa'; it was a vision that melded 'memories, dreams and desires in uneven proportions'.² This is not in dispute, but it bears noting throughout her travels, in Pondoland and elsewhere, Stern demonstrated considerable interest in the affairs and rituals of women. The artist frequently depicted women in pairs or larger groups. Oftentimes her subjects are shown either labouring or engaged in cultural rituals.

This tightly framed composition is more concerned with the external signs of identity than any particular action. Stern is attentive to the elaborate head wraps, face paint, beadwork and covering garments worn by especially amaMfengu (or Fingo) women. While her work possesses socio-cultural value in its depiction of traditional Xhosa customs, this at a time of growing political unhappiness in Pondoland, the work is not reducible to mere anthropological illustration. Stern is not comparable to Barbara Tyrrell, whose studies of Fingo women illustrated brochures of the newly inaugurated SA Tourist Corporation in the 1950s. Rather, the present lot is emblematic of how Stern translated a fragile encounter in the field into a colour-rich statement about the irrefutable place of women in a political society, South Africa, dominated by men.

1. Neville Dubow (1971) 'Irma Stern: An Evaluation', in *Catalogue of the Collections of the Irma Stern Museum*, Cape Town: University of Cape, page 6.
2. Karel Schoeman (1994) *Irma Stern: The Early Years, 1894–1933*, Cape Town: South African Library, page 74.





194

Bernard Buffet

FRENCH 1928–1999

Environs de la Rochepot (La Grande Ferme)

signed and dated 1973; inscribed with the title on the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name, the date, the title and the medium on an Everard Read label adhered to the reverse
oil on canvas
88,5 by 129 cm

R1 400 000 – 1 800 000

Bernard Buffet's *Environs de la Rochepot (La Grande Ferme)* of 1973 is a splendid rendering of a wintery farm scene in rural France. The canvas is bathed in a burst of sunlight breaking through looming dark clouds, momentarily casting a radiant golden hue across the farm. The brightly lit farmstead nestles against the deep emerald and moss tones of the hillside and in the foreground Buffet captures a winding stream, a row of stark pollarded plane trees alongside the tall and spindly trees blowing in the wind.

Buffet, a French painter born in Paris in 1928, was a precocious young talent and at the age of 15 in 1943 he was admitted to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He had his first solo exhibition in 1947 and in 1949 at the age of 19 he was awarded the prestigious Prix de la Critique.

Best known for his representational work he soon

experienced a meteoric rise to celebrity status for his distinctive style of highly structured works of elongated, spiky forms, sombre colours and flattened spaces that communicated the austerity and instability of post-war Europe. Vehemently opposed to abstraction, and at a time of innovation in the contemporary, his critical acclaim eventually began to waver but there remained interest in his work.

In South Africa Buffet's art was represented by the well-known Everard Read gallery in Johannesburg. Everard had met Buffet in Paris at the gallery of the artist's dealer Maurice Garnier and he became good friends with the artist and his actress wife Annabel Schwob. From the early seventies with works sourced from Garnier, Everard Read held regular exhibitions showing the work of Buffet until the artist's death in 1999.





© Andrew Verster | DALRO

195

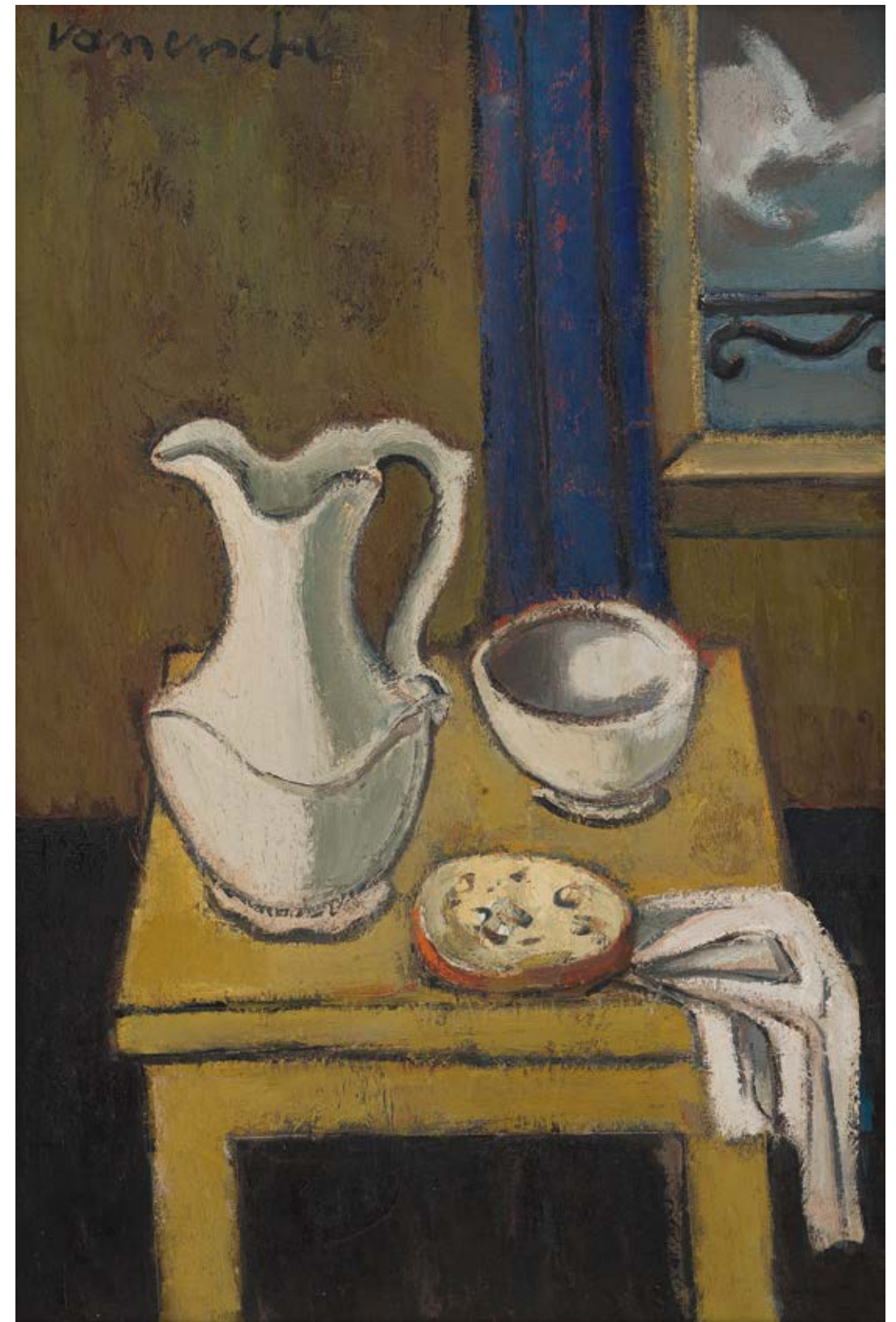
Andrew Verster

SOUTH AFRICAN 1937–2020

Three Views, triptych

signed and dated 82 on the
right-hand panel
oil on canvas on wood panel
each 203 by 75 by 4,5 cm

R220 000 – 280 000



196

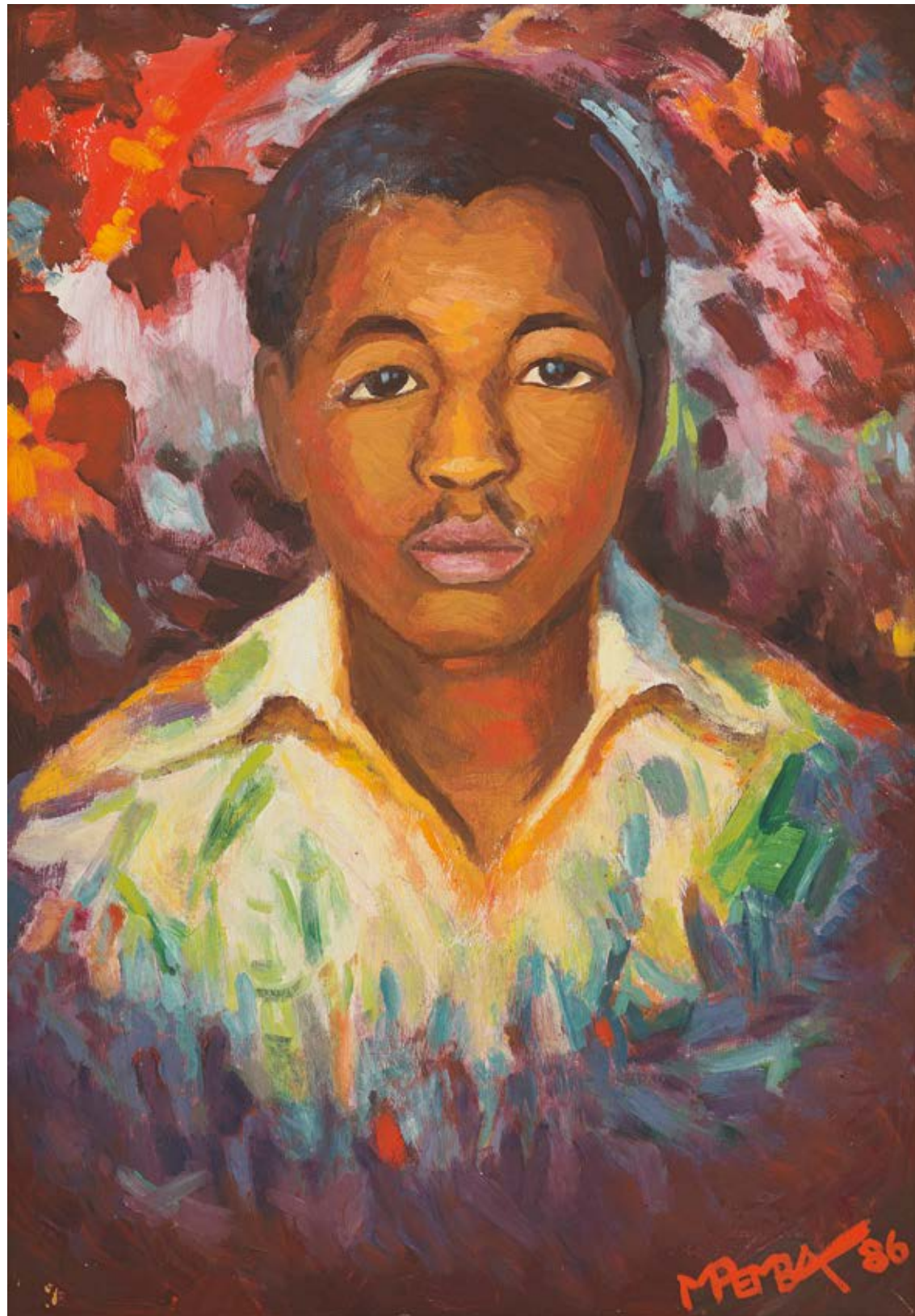
Maurice van Essche

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1977

Blue Curtain

signed; inscribed with the
title on the reverse
oil on board
90 by 58 cm

R350 000 – 450 000



197
**George Milwa Mnyaluza
Pemba**
SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–2001
Portrait of a Young Man
signed and dated 86
oil on board
50,5 by 34,5 cm
R300 000 – 350 000



198
**George Milwa Mnyaluza
Pemba**
SOUTH AFRICAN 1912–2001
Dice Players
signed and dated 91
oil on board
46 by 55 cm
R300 000 – 350 000



199

Dylan Lewis

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964-

Warthog Boar and Piglet

boar: signed, dated 91 and inscribed
IMI 90.38.42; piglet: signed dated and
inscribed IMI 91 90.38.42

bronze with a brown patina

boar: height: 60 cm; length: 95 cm;

width: 30 cm; piglet: height: 28 cm;

length: 50 cm; width: 20 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

PROVENANCE

Everard Read, Johannesburg.



200

Harold Voigt

SOUTH AFRICAN 1939-

Bushveld Scene

signed and dated 79

oil on canvas

120,5 by 151 cm

R100 000 – 150 000

Artist Focus: John Meyer

Lots 201–204

John Meyer was born in Bloemfontein in 1942, the same year, incidentally, in which Edward Hopper, the giant of American realist painting, unveiled his extraordinary and instantly recognisable *Nighthawks* (fig. 1). The coincidence is a neat one, as Meyer's impressive body of work, built up over half a century, has made him the doyen of the realist movement in southern Africa. Briefly trained at the Witwatersrand Technical College School of Art in Johannesburg in the early 1960s, and accustomed to long international painting stints, particularly in Britain and the United States, his unique, mature style, typified by striking illusion and rich, dazzling brushwork, has made his reputation among collectors both locally and abroad. Thanks to his long association with the Everard Read gallery (his first solo show there was in 1972), he has consistently exhibited new and distinct bodies of work. While he has elevated the local landscape and portraiture tradition, he has also showed-off his exquisite versatility across still life, narrative and genre painting.

Four fabulous Meyer examples are included here (Lots 201–204). The group might only hint at the artist's vast technical ingenuity, but it certainly gives a sense of his wide-ranging subjects and flair for the dramatic: we see an expansive Golden Gate landscape (Lot 202), a fly-fisherman knee-deep in foaming rapids (Lot 203), a drone-like view across the Olifants River Valley (Lot 201), and a Karoo-*stoep* still life with its tired succulents, sturdy window shutters and its unravelling cane table (Lot 204).

Thanks to the artist and his studio staff for assistance with cataloguing these lots.



Fig. 1: Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, The Art Institute of Chicago.



The artist John Meyer in his studio, 2013.



I have always approached landscape painting with a sense of constructural composition. The wider the picture plane, the more invention needed.



201

John Meyer

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

Into the Olifants River Valley

1987

signed; signed and inscribed

with the title on the reverse

oil on canvas

35,5 by 66 cm

R90 000 – 120 000



This work is about as literal as I get ... Some simplification was needed, so I did away with some trees and other clutter, and I repositioned the road to add to the compositional pull to the centre of the picture plane.

202

John Meyer

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942-

The Golden Gate

signed; dated 1988, inscribed with the artist's name and numbered 8803 on the reverse
acrylic on canvas

122 by 183 cm

R700 000 – 900 000

... I became more interested in the tranquillity and beauty of the place. This work was an attempt to perfect the rendering of looking through water to the riverbed, and the action of playing the fish downstream ...



203

John Meyer

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

A Catch Downstream

1997

signed; signed, inscribed with the title and numbered 7359 on the reverse acrylic on canvas

54 by 77 cm

R350 000 – 450 000

In the 1980s and 1990s, John Meyer embarked on a series of paintings based on solitary fly-fishermen savouring a perfect modern-day lull. Inspired by frequent trips to the highlands between Sabie and Mashishing, where he could sketch beside or wade through the Majubane, Whisky and Spekboom rivers, these pictures caught moments of seclusion, silence and contentment. The present lot, *A Catch Downstream*, is beautifully balanced in its composition: the river moves quickly and diagonally from right to left; a high thicket, shadowy, dark and cool, looms on the far bank, while a deeper pool downstream catches the light from an open sky. The way the

artist has painted the water's surface, moreover, as it eddies, swirls and foams, is quite mesmerising. As sunlight penetrates the shallower sections of river, the colours of submerged stones glimmer and change from brown to liquid orange and back again. The reeds, grasses and treetops are a shifting spectacle too: sparks of yellow, white and crimson fly across much darker background greens. These flashy highlights bring to mind the surfaces of Gwelo Goodman, or even some of Constable's six-footers.

Painted in 1997, *A Catch Downstream* was one of the final works in this hugely popular series.

On a road trip through the Karoo, in Colesberg, I found this dilapidated table with a yellow flower pot and dead plants. It seemed to be asking for new life, so, being unable to do that, I wanted to keep its image alive.

204

John Meyer

SOUTH AFRICAN 1942–

The Yellow Flower Pot

1983

signed; inscribed with a dedication on a plaque adhered to the frame; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium on an Everard Read label adhered to the reverse oil on canvas

148 by 86 cm

R300 000 – 500 000



205

Vladimir Tretchikoff

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

Vase of Chrysanthemums

signed
oil on canvas
121 by 60 cm

R400 000 – 500 000

LITERATURE

Andrew Lamprecht (ed.) *Tretchikoff: The People's Painter*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, other works in the series illustrated in colour on pages 114 and 115.



206

Vladimir Tretchikoff

SOUTH AFRICAN 1913–2006

Stalker (Impala and Leopard)

signed
oil on canvas
60 by 121 cm

R450 000 – 550 000



207

Neil Rodger

SOUTH AFRICAN 1941–2013

*Figures in a Garden
(Bathsheba's Bath)*

signed; inscribed with the artist's name,
the title and the medium on an Everard
Read label adhered to the reverse
oil on canvas
90 by 120 cm

R200 000 – 300 000



208

Neil Rodger

SOUTH AFRICAN 1941–2013

The Champion

signed; inscribed with the artist's
name, the title and the medium
on an Everard Read label adhered
to the reverse
oil on canvas
89 by 120 cm

R200 000 – 300 000

The multi-award-winning artist Neil Rodger studied first at the Michaelis school of art at the University of Cape Town and later at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. He travelled widely in the United Kingdom, Europe and the USA but lived much of his adult life in the Eastern Cape, teaching in the Fine Art departments at both Rhodes University, Grahamstown, and the Port Elizabeth Technical College. He was a member of the Grahamstown Group, founded in 1964 by

Brian Bradshaw, the then head of the Fine Art Department at Rhodes, and he exhibited along with fellow members including Bradshaw, Robert Brooks, Hilary Graham and Noel Hodnett, among others. Rodger's work resists easy classification – his oeuvre includes landscape, animal and figural studies, and his style ranges from naturalism to hyper-realism and surrealism. The pursuit of a universal and timeless harmony dominates his work throughout his career.



209

Dylan Lewis

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

Seated Leopard

signed, dated 96 and numbered 4/8
bronze with a brown patina
height: 94 cm; length: 125 cm;
width: 40 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

PROVENANCE

Afrox Corporate Art Collection.



210

Dylan Lewis

SOUTH AFRICAN 1964–

Standing Leopard

signed, dated 96 and numbered 5/8
bronze with a brown patina
height: 117 cm; length: 144 cm;
width: 85 cm

R500 000 – 700 000

PROVENANCE

Afrox Corporate Art Collection.

LITERATURE

Christie's (2011) *Predators and Prey
II: The Dylan Lewis Bronzes*, London:
Christie's, another cast from the
edition illustrated in black and white
on page 16.

211

Edoardo Villa

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Man and Wife

bronze with a green-brown and copper-coloured patina on a Perspex base
height: 15 cm; width: 33 cm;
depth: 24 cm, excluding base;
height: 18 cm; width: 39 cm;
depth: 31 cm, including base

R60 000 – 90 000

PROVENANCE

Afrox Corporate Art Collection.



212

Edoardo Villa

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–2011

Reclining Figure

signed, dated 1968 and numbered 3/6
bronze with a dark brown patina on a wooden base
height: 19 cm excluding base;
25 cm including base;
width: 40,5 cm; depth: 20 cm

R70 000 – 90 000

PROVENANCE

Mr and Mrs H Berman, and thence by descent.



213

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Mr Icarus, I Presume

signed
oil on paper laid down on board
35 by 50 cm

R180 000 – 240 000

Artist Focus: Keith Alexander

Lots 214–217



A tribute to Keith Alexander, one of South Africa's greatest realist artists, is long overdue. Over a relatively short career of 25 years, the artist created an impressive oeuvre of over 500 immediately recognisable photorealist and surrealist paintings. Specific memories from his life experiences were used as motifs in his work throughout his career, beginning with memories of the 10 000-acre farm his family owned in his country of birth, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He attended boarding school in London where the damage sustained during war-time bombing raids still lingered, and upon returning to southern Africa, he became increasingly aware of the contradictions inherent in his deeply colonial and political fraught upbringing. His decision to study art at the University of Natal was based on the affordability of the books for the course, and he majored in sculpture in his undergraduate Fine Arts degree. In his Honour's thesis, he explored Surrealism and studied the work of Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Max Ernst and René Magritte. After university, he attempted to make a living as a sculptor with minimal success. In 1974, he started painting instead. 'My perception of what art should be had begun to change. In fact, I came to the realisation that I wasn't a sculptor at all. Gradually, my thoughts turned towards putting paint on canvas, and also to the Surrealism I had researched for my honours thesis.'

A key aspect to understanding the life and work of Keith Alexander is the love story between him and his wife Elizabeth White. They met in 1972 when Elizabeth purchased a sculpture from him at an exhibition and commissioned a second one. She immediately recognised his potential and became both his muse and his business manager.

Keith lived in White River when they met, but after getting married, the couple moved to Johannesburg. On their honeymoon they travelled to the quiet towns in southern Namibia, which was a turning point for the artist as he fell in love with the desert. On annual visits, Keith and Elizabeth continued to explore the Namib desert and it became the central focus of his work. A series of paintings on the story of the Eduard Bohlen, a German-built vessel that had been wrecked off the Skeleton Coast in 1909, brought him immediate fame both locally and internationally. Keith and Elizabeth continued to travel throughout Africa, and although a visit to Madagascar was influential, it was the desert that enabled him to create a language of his own, through which he could articulated his personal vision. 'There's a sadness in my paintings, I use Namibia as a medium for the colonial collapse, the transition, as in South Africa today, from the old order to the new. The physical language is so aggressive and hostile. At the end of it all, though, Africa will be there forever. Long after all the schemes and dreams have passed, it remains the ultimate winner.' Elizabeth successfully handled the business side of Keith's career, including public relations, marketing and promotion, while also managing their household affairs so that he could be free to concentrate on his painting. Sadly, Elizabeth was diagnosed with colon cancer, and during her treatment, Keith himself fell ill with a brain tumour. The couple supported each other, side by side, until Keith's untimely demise on 17 November 1998. Elizabeth passed away six months later.

1. David Robbins (2000) *Keith Alexander: The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, page 16.

2. *Ibid*, page 24.



214

Keith Alexander

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

The Distinguished Guest

signed and dated 94; inscribed with the title and the date on the reverse
oil on canvas
86,5 by 139 cm

R300 000 – 500 000

LITERATURE

David Robbins (2000) *Keith Alexander: The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, illustrated in colour on page 158. The title inscribed on the back of the work is *The Distinguished Guest*, but in the monograph by David Robbins, the title is given as *The Honourable Guest*.



215

Keith Alexander

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946–1998

Epitaph

signed and dated 89-96; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the date on a plaque adhered to the frame; inscribed with the artist's name on the reverse
oil on canvas
90 by 151,5 cm

R800 000 – 900 000

This large and impressive work contains a number of themes and motifs common in the artist's oeuvre – ruined Corinthian columns of an ancient Roman past, paving slabs lifting and cracking, clouds clearing after a storm and exposing the distant landscape, and a gemsbok appearing at the centre of destruction in the apocalyptic scene as a trophy on a pedestal. While surrealism represented imagined realities and Freudian psychology, Alexander states that his 'painting has generally been a very conscious thing, yet the pictures often convey a form of mysteriousness.' Ruined structures and falling masonry was a theme Alexander kept going back to as it continuously

reminded him of the bomb sites seen during his schooling in London after WWII, and the gemsbok perhaps represents the loss of the Rhodesia of his childhood during the bush war of the 1970s. The subtle details such as the shadows on the left side suggesting the sun's position, the reflections in the water and the blue sky with clouds being chased from the absent sun are conveyed with a masterful use of the medium. The subject matter of the present lot, and its large scale, are an epitaph to the loss and destruction of a once beautiful imaginary land.

1. David Robbins (2000) *Keith Alexander: The Artist in Retrospect*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, page 28.



216

Keith Alexander

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946-1998

The Pier

signed and dated 92; inscribed with the artist's name,
the date and the title on a plaque adhered to the frame;
inscribed with the artist's name and the title on the reverse
oil on canvas

76 by 89 cm

R400 000 – 500 000



217

Keith Alexander

SOUTH AFRICAN 1946-1998

Kolmanskop, Namibia

signed and dated 86

oil on canvas

29 by 59,5 cm

R80 000 – 120 000

PROVENANCE

Toy Mostert Collection.

218

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Living Bush

c.1963
signed
oil on canvas
50,5 by 40 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

PROVENANCE

Mr and Mrs H Berman, and thence
by descent.

LITERATURE

Karin Skawran and Michael
Macnamara (1985) *Walter Battiss*,
Johannesburg; AD Donker, illustrated
in colour as plate 39 on page 161 as
Animated Bush.
Susan Isaac and Jillian Carmen
(2005) *Walter Battiss: Gentle Anarchist*,
Johannesburg: Standard Bank Art
Gallery, illustrated in colour on
page 114.



© The Estate of Cecil Skotnes | DALRO

219

Cecil Skotnes

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2009

Four Figures

signed
incised and painted wood panel
90 by 153 by 6 cm

R350 000 – 500 000

