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FOLLEY'S HOTEL

Strauss & Co



## JH PIERNEEF: IN/SIGHT

**A single-artist auction dedicated  
to a modernist master**

Monday, 26 July 2021, 6:00 pm  
Strauss & Co, Johannesburg

Virtual Live Auction  
[www.straussart.co.za](http://www.straussart.co.za)

Lots 1–69

PAGE 1  
Church Square, Pretoria, south-east corner, date unknown.

LEFT  
Lot 33 *Swakop Rivier* (detail)



## JH PIERNEEF: IN/SIGHT

Henk Pierneef is arguably the most beloved and iconic painter of the South African landscape. His deep affection for the soil, his keen sense of balanced design, and his flair for the dramatic and monumental make his pictures at once familiar and enthralling. While depicting vast and breath-taking vistas, lonely farmhouses, architectonic cloudbursts, and moving bushveld silhouettes, Pierneef has always struck an emotional chord with fellow South Africans.

By most accounts, Henk, the man, was warm, dedicated,

gentle and a little mischievous. He was a skilful and proud craftsman, passionate and knowledgeable about his natural surroundings, and usually alert to international trends. He was fond of willows, his pipe, and fishing alone.

The selection of works here includes paintings, drawings, linocuts and an etching made through the first half of the twentieth century, a period of significant cultural, industrial and socio-political change in South Africa. *JH PIERNEEF: IN/SIGHT* is a first-of-its-kind, single-artist auction dedicated to a modernist master.







Gerrit and Neeske Pierneef lived in a house in Pretoria's Church Street West when their first child, Jacobus Hendrik, was born in September 1886. Gold had been discovered nearby on the Witwatersrand and, in that same year, Gerrit, a Dutch-trained master builder, erected the first building of wood and corrugated iron in what would become the city of Johannesburg. Along with his younger brother Cornelis, Jacobus Hendrik, or Henk, to many, attended the Staatsmodelschool in Pretoria. With his friends Fanie Eloff and Gordon Leith – both of whom would become leaders in their own artistic fields – he enjoyed drawing classes with JF Hondius.

British forces took Pretoria in early June

1900. In September, Paul Kruger, the Boer leader, who young Henk knew as a kind, mint-gifting neighbour, fled into exile. Being sympathetic to the Boer cause, Gerrit Pierneef took his family, now of eight, back to the Netherlands. They sailed in April 1901 and settled in Hilversum. During this period the teenage Henk attended night classes in architectural drawing. He also worked part-time at Cornelis de Nooy's paint shop, where he gained a technical understanding of pigment and medium. The Pierneefs moved to Rotterdam in April 1902. Henk was exposed to the Dutch Masters in the Boymans van Beuningen Museum, and he took August Allebé's drawing classes, informally, at the Academia Erasmiana.



LEFT  
The Pierneef children in Hilversum, Netherlands, 1901:  
Hendrik, Sija, Elizabeth, Cornelia, Susanna and Cornelis.  
PHOTOGRAPH: NATCO MUSEUM, PRETORIA

RIGHT  
Frans Oerder, *Mounted Colonial Soldier*, 1901.



1

### *Man Digging*

signed and dated 1901  
on the reverse  
oil on canvas  
19 by 28 cm

**R70 000 – 100 000**

#### PROVENANCE

Estate the Late Stephan Welz.

Very few examples from the young artist's exile in the Netherlands have survived. A number of architectural drawings are known, but paintings are exceedingly rare. The present lot shows a debt to French Realism, and particularly the more gritty pictures by Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet. This humble

subject of a man digging also calls to mind similar rustic vignettes by Vincent van Gogh (below).

With the war over, the Pierneef family returned to Pretoria, travelling down the east coast of Africa, late in 1903. They were living on Lewis Street, just east of the zoo, when Kruger died in Switzerland in July 1904.

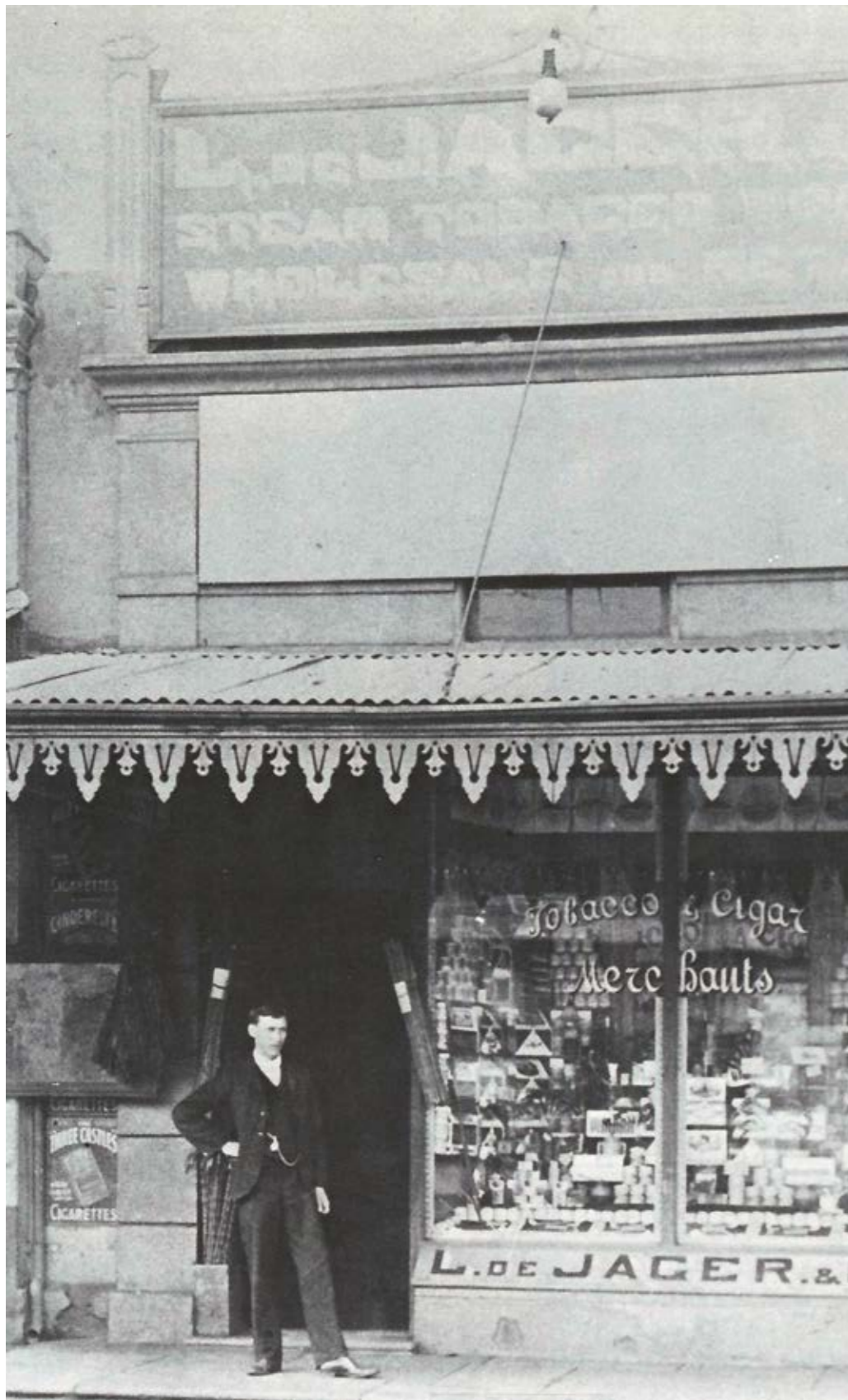


Vincent van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters*, 1885.  
PHOTOGRAPH: VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM



Vincent van Gogh, *Peasant Man and Woman Planting Potatoes*, 1885.  
PHOTOGRAPH: KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND





Back in Pretoria, and after finishing his schooling, the teenage Pierneef was expected to make a living. He wanted nothing more than to become an artist, but financial realities, and cautious parents, made this impossible. In 1906 he began working at Lodewijk de Jager & Co, a tobacconist on Church Street West. While he had little interest in the position, a number of remarkable watercolours of the interior offer charming evidence of his early

talent, characterised by a controlled sense of line and keen observation. Pierneef joined the State Library in 1908, where he had access to books on art history. He continued to work in his free time, and in the same year exhibited some drawings through the Pretoria Savage Club. He married Agatha Delen, twelve years his senior, in 1910, and the couple moved into a house together on De Waal Street, with a large willow tree in the garden.



LEFT  
Agatha Pierneef (née Delen).  
PHOTOGRAPH: P VAN DEN BURG

MIDDLE  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Lodewijk de Jager & Co Tobacconist Shop*, 1907.

FAR LEFT  
Lodewijk de Jager & Co, Church Street West, Pretoria.

PAGE 6  
A still from the intervention *The Silver Lining*, Cool Capital Biennale, October 2014, Church Square, Pretoria,  
PHOTOGRAPH: LIAM PURNELL



Pierneef was guided by a number of outstanding artists working on the Highveld in the first years of the twentieth century. Anton van Wouw, Frans Oerder, Eduard Frankfort, Pieter Wenning and George Smithard, all trained in Europe, encouraged his early efforts. Van Wouw, Oerder and Wenning were particularly influential during this period, accompanying the younger artist on sketching and painting trips on the outskirts of Pretoria.



Frans Oerder, *View of Pretoria*, undated.



Pieter Wenning, *Clouds, Pretoria*, undated.

LEFT Anton van Wouw's studio c.1896, with the sculptor working alongside his great friend, the painter Frans Oerder.  
PHOTOGRAPH: ANTON VAN WOUW ARCHIVE, PRETORIA.



2

### *Camp Tent*

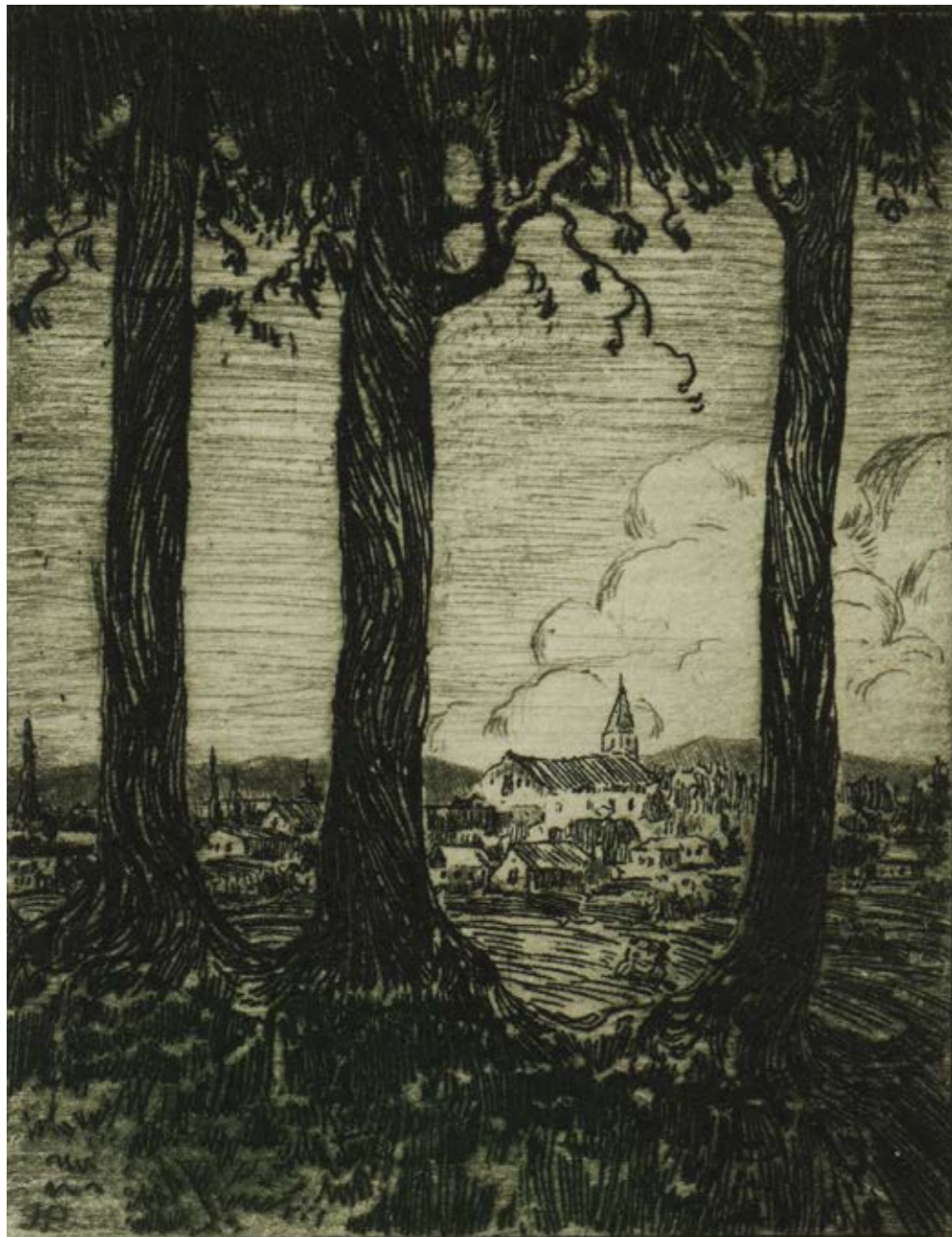
signed and inscribed  
with the artist's initials  
oil on canvas laid down  
on board  
17 by 27 cm

R150 000 – 200 000

Pierneef's early *plein-air* paintings owe much to the gently impressionist canvases of Oerder and Wenning. These older artists were ever-intrigued by the Highveld's harsh and shifting light. Pierneef captures a quiet campsite moment in the present lot: the thick canvas hangs heavily in the heat, the taut guy ropes glint in the sun, and the lively green bushes hint at summer.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *At Pienaars River (Rooiplaat), Transvaal, Bushveld*, 1918.



3

***View of Pretoria through Trees***

signed and numbered 'no 1/1' in pencil  
in the margin  
etching on paper  
9 by 7cm

**R50 000 – 60 000**

Thanks to Gerard de Kamper  
for his assistance with  
cataloguing this lot.



4

***Bloekombome (Nilant 77)***

signed, dated 1920 and inscribed  
with the title in pencil in the  
margin  
linocut on paper  
33 by 21 cm

**R25 000 – 35 000**

In 1911 and 1912, with the construction of Sir Herbert Baker's symbolic Union Buildings continuing on Meintjeskop, Pierneef exhibited a range of paintings, drawings and etchings with The Individualists, or the Society of Pretoria Artists, in the Pretoria Town Hall. He had earlier been introduced to printmaking – etching and wood engraving in particular – by George Smithard, whose own principles were aligned with the Arts and Crafts Movement. He also benefitted from the guidance of Oerder, Wenning and Erich Mayer in the medium. The date of the artist's earliest known etchings is uncertain, but is believed to have been between 1908 and 1911. Lot 3, a rare, fine and exquisite view of early Pretoria from Eloff's plantation through trees, was most

likely made in 1912 with a photograph as an aide-mémoire since the old church had been demolished by then. Pierneef's earliest linocuts, the printing form for which he remains best known, are from 1914 and 1915. No linocuts were exhibited with The Individualists, and none appeared in the artist's first solo show at JH de Bussy late in 1913. Pierneef kept the majority of his plates and blocks – nearly 150 were in his studio at his death – and pulled impressions on demand. This goes some way to explaining the inconsistent dates often inscribed in the margins: Pierneef would occasionally mark impressions with the date of printing – as the ink dried – or retrospectively, to note the year in which the plate was etched or the block cut.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Union Buildings under Construction*, 1912.



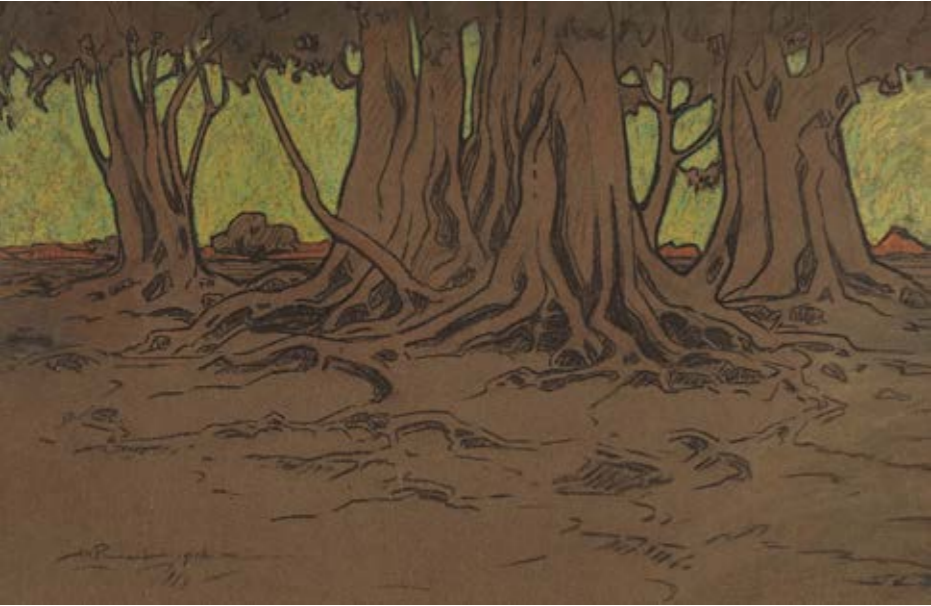
The Individualists at the time of their second annual exhibition in the Pretoria town hall, 1912, with Pierneef in the middle and Wenning on the right.

*I have studied the tree to the point of exhaustion. I know every bend in its trunk or its heavy branches. I could draw by heart every gnarl in its bark. The willow is the most beautiful tree I know in South Africa, especially in winter.*

— PIERNEEF



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Green Sky with Brown Willows*, 1914.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Tree Roots*, 1916.



5

*Willow Tree*

signed and dated 1915; inscribed with the artist’s name, the date, the medium and the title on a label adhered to the reverse  
pastel and pencil on paper  
29 by 24 cm

**R100 000 – 150 000**

PROVENANCE

Acquired from the artist by the current owner’s father.

Pierneef had an early passion for the willow tree, so common on the Highveld. The artist was enthralled by the tree’s ever-changing silhouette, its seasonal transformations, and its decorative potential. The motif allowed him to work in a daring and avant-garde spirit, experimenting with negative spaces, sinuous line and startling colour combinations. The present lot is part of a remarkable group of works from the 1910s that threw caution to the wind. It shows lithe branches, heavy with leaves, like golden and shimmering festoons, hanging above beautifully gnarled, meandering roots.



6

*Wilgerboom, Fonteine,  
Pretoria (Nilant 84)*

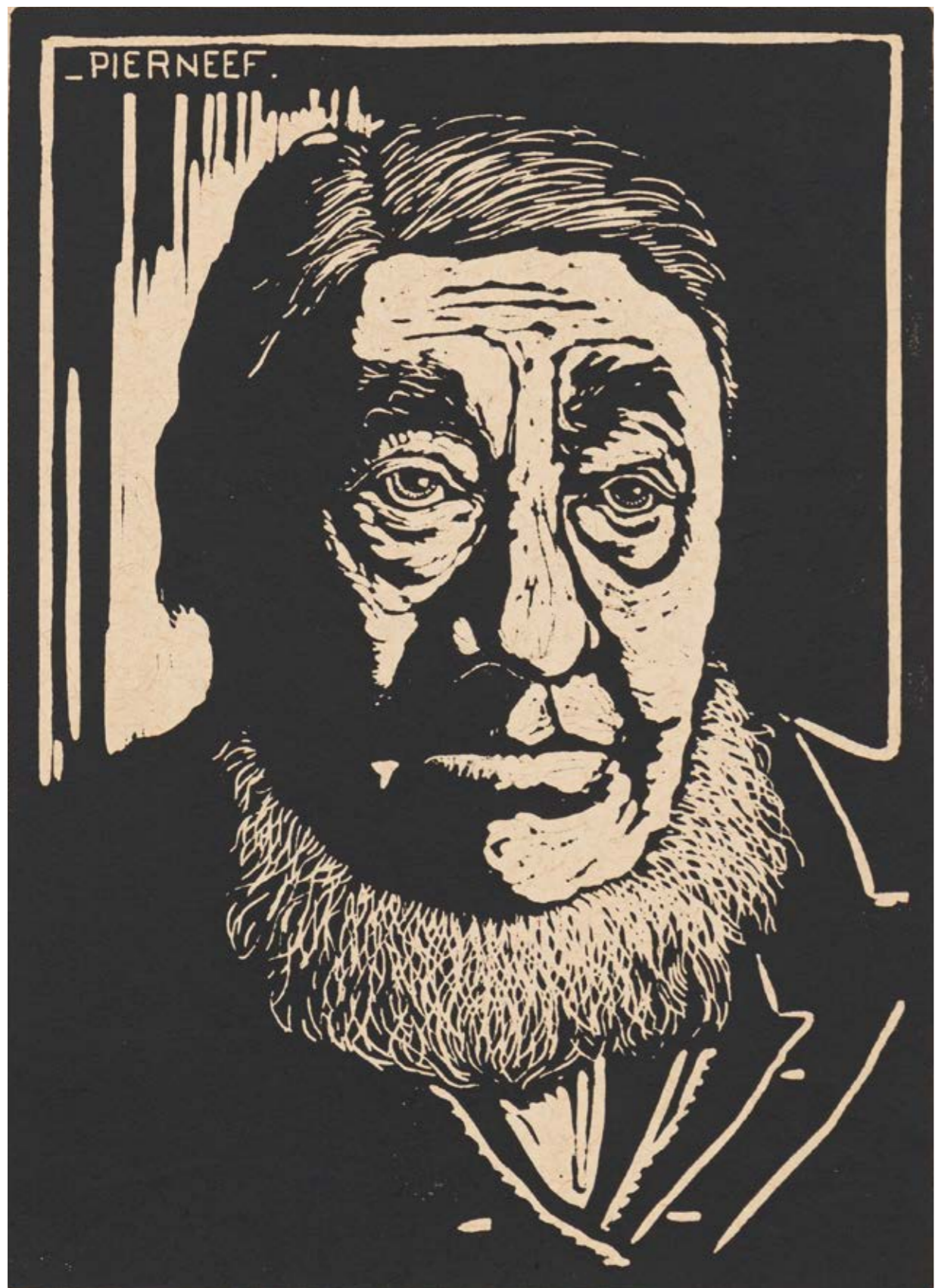
signed and dated 1929 in  
pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
19,5 by 30 cm

R20 000 – 30 000

In 1913, on the back of his first and successful solo show at JH de Bussy, Pierneef applied to the Council of Education for a bursary to travel to Europe to study etching and woodcarving, amongst other techniques. Although he received glowing references from his fellow artist George Smithard, as well as from RW Heaton, the State's Chief Librarian, Pierneef was unsuccessful. Despite this disappointment, he clearly kept a close eye on European trends. The linocuts he produced during this period certainly owe something to the Arts and Crafts Movement, as well as Symbolism and Art Nouveau. Many examples, characterised by a serpentine line and offbeat patterning, bring to mind contemporary designs by the Indo-Dutch artist Jan Toorop, as well as Piet Mondrian and Jacoba van Heemskerck.



Jacob van  
Heemskerck, *Tree*,  
1915.



7

**Paul Kruger (Nilant 120)**

signed and dated 1924 in pencil  
in the margin; inscribed with  
the artist's name in the plate  
linocut on paper  
34,5 by 25 cm

R18 000 – 24 000

More than a decade after Paul Kruger's death, Pierneef published the first of four linocut portraits of the Boer leader. While executed in 1915, this initial version, of which lot 7 is a fine impression, only appeared in *Die Burger's* New Year edition in 1921. Although Pierneef had known Kruger in Pretoria before both went into exile in Europe, the artist would have worked primarily from photographs. This version shows an elderly and heavy-hearted Boer leader, with soft folds of skin under his sorrowful eyes, and his intricately-tangled,

8

**Paul Kruger (Nilant 122)**

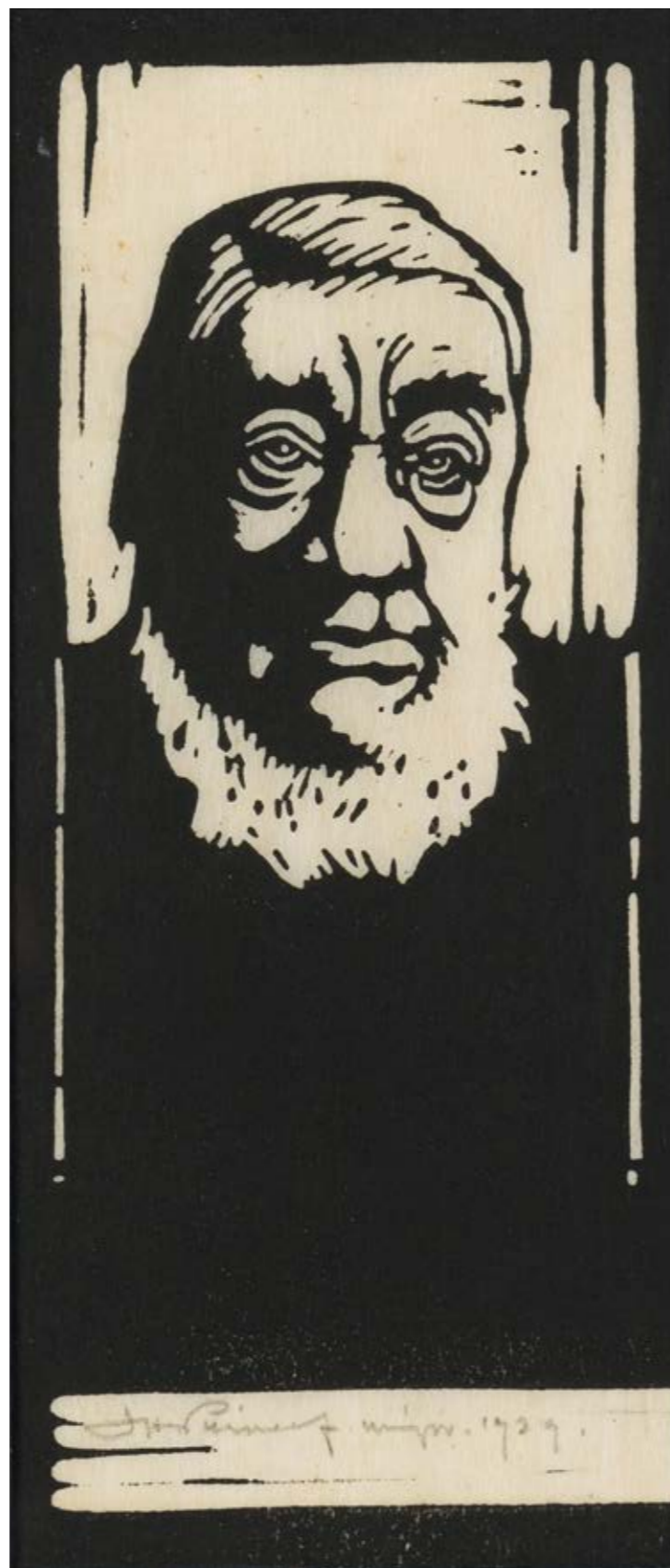
signed and dated 1929  
in pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
20 by 9 cm

R12 000 – 18 000

ubiquitous chin-strap beard.

The second portrait (lot 8) was made in 1929 for the Afrikanerkring, a cultural organisation closely linked to the Afrikaans language movement. It was used on a menu cover in October 1929 (below).

The other two portraits of Kruger (not illustrated) were published in 1930, one to mark the occasion of the Transvaal University College being renamed as the University of Pretoria, and the other appearing in that university's Kruger Festival brochure.





9

### *Villa Arcadia*

signed  
watercolour and pencil on paper  
59,5 by 45 cm

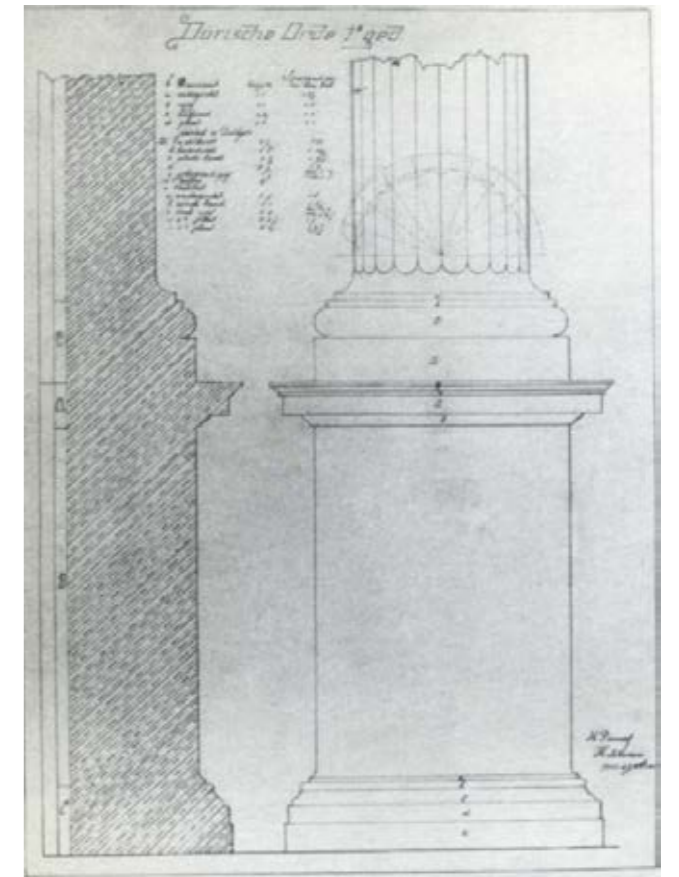
R120 000 – 150 000

Even as a teenager in Hilversum, Pierneef's ability as an architectural draughtsman was impressive, and he maintained a strong interest in the vernacular building styles of South Africa. No surprise then that he found himself on the *stoep* of Sir Herbert Baker's Villa Arcadia, facing east, with the servery and pantry to his right, carefully describing the open lattice of the pergola, its rust-red bougainvillea, and the decorative shadows thrown on the white-washed walls. Another similar drawing has recently come to light

and confirms that the artist sketched at the Villa on the first days of January 1918. The circumstances around his visit remain unclear, but one can imagine the young artist in high spirits at the time: he had resigned from his post at the State Library late in the previous December and had committed to joining the Transvaal Education Department in the upcoming February. He would be obliged to teach only eight hours per week – on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays – so he could look forward to far greater freedom to paint.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef; *Villa Arcadia*, Johannesburg, 1918.



Architectural drawing of the cross-section of a Doric column during Pierneef's training in Hilversum, Netherlands.



10

*Buccaneer's Club, Pretoria*  
(Nilant 27)

signed in pencil in the margin;  
inscribed with the artist's name  
in the plate  
linocut on paper  
14 by 22 cm

R25 000 – 35 000

11

*House, Lydenburg*  
(Nilant 51)

signed and dated 1922  
in pencil in the margin;  
embossed with the artist's  
monogram in the print  
linocut on paper  
7 by 9,5 cm

R10 000 – 15 000

12

*Huis, Oud-Pretoria*  
(Nilant 31)

signed, dated 1920 and  
inscribed 'impr' in pencil  
in the margin  
linocut  
14,5 by 26,5 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



13

*Boomstamme*  
(Nilant 101)

signed and inscribed  
'impr' in pencil in the  
margin  
linocut  
20 by 17,5 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



14

*Tree Trunk and Pine*  
*Trees (Nilant 75)*

signed, indistinctly dated  
1925 and inscribed 'impr'  
in pencil in the margin;  
signed with the artist's  
monogram in the plate  
linocut on paper  
29,5 by 20 cm

R18 000 – 24 000

# *Landscape with Trees and Aloe*

LOT 15







15

***Landscape with  
Trees and Aloe***

signed  
oil on board  
44,5 by 60 cm

**R1 200 000 – 1 600 000**

Evidence of what JFW Grosskopf – Pierneef's first biographer – calls the artist's 'aesthetic equilibrium', is to be found in abundance in the present lot. The fore-, middle- and backgrounds of the work are in perfect harmony with one another and with the motifs placed to the left and to the right of the composition. The stolid aloe on the left balances the group of what appear to be young wild pear trees with their yellow/white blossoms on the right. The row of boulders separating fore- and middlegrounds is echoed in the mountain range in the background. The most remarkable balance, however, is the spectacular unfolding of landscape elements in the middleground: gentle rolling hills form a successive diagonal from the right, only to be balanced by a clump of trees forming a corresponding diagonal from the left, creating a green belt, possibly along a river, that is suggested by their growth in the centre of the work. Typical of Pierneef's compositions, also, is the perceived 'obstruction' in the foreground that the viewer has to overcome in order to access the unfolding landscape in the middle- and backgrounds. A tour de force of beauty in perfect balance with the landscape it portrays.





16

***Still Life with Gourds,  
a Pomegranate and  
an African Clay Pot***

signed  
oil on board  
45 by 60 cm

**R350 000 – 450 000**

**PROVENANCE**

Bonhams, London,  
15 October 2009, lot 45.  
Private Collection, Cape Town.

**EXHIBITED**

Johans Borman Fine Art,  
Cape Town, *Masterpiece*,  
17 September to 15 October 2016.

Still life paintings by Pierneef are certainly rare (see also below). The few known examples, however, conflate a Low Countries formalism and dark palette with a distinctly African identity. In the present lot, Pierneef includes indigenous gourds and a Venda pot on an earthy surface or floor.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Still Life with Apples and Bananas*, indistinctly dated.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Still Life with Pelargoniums*, 1932.



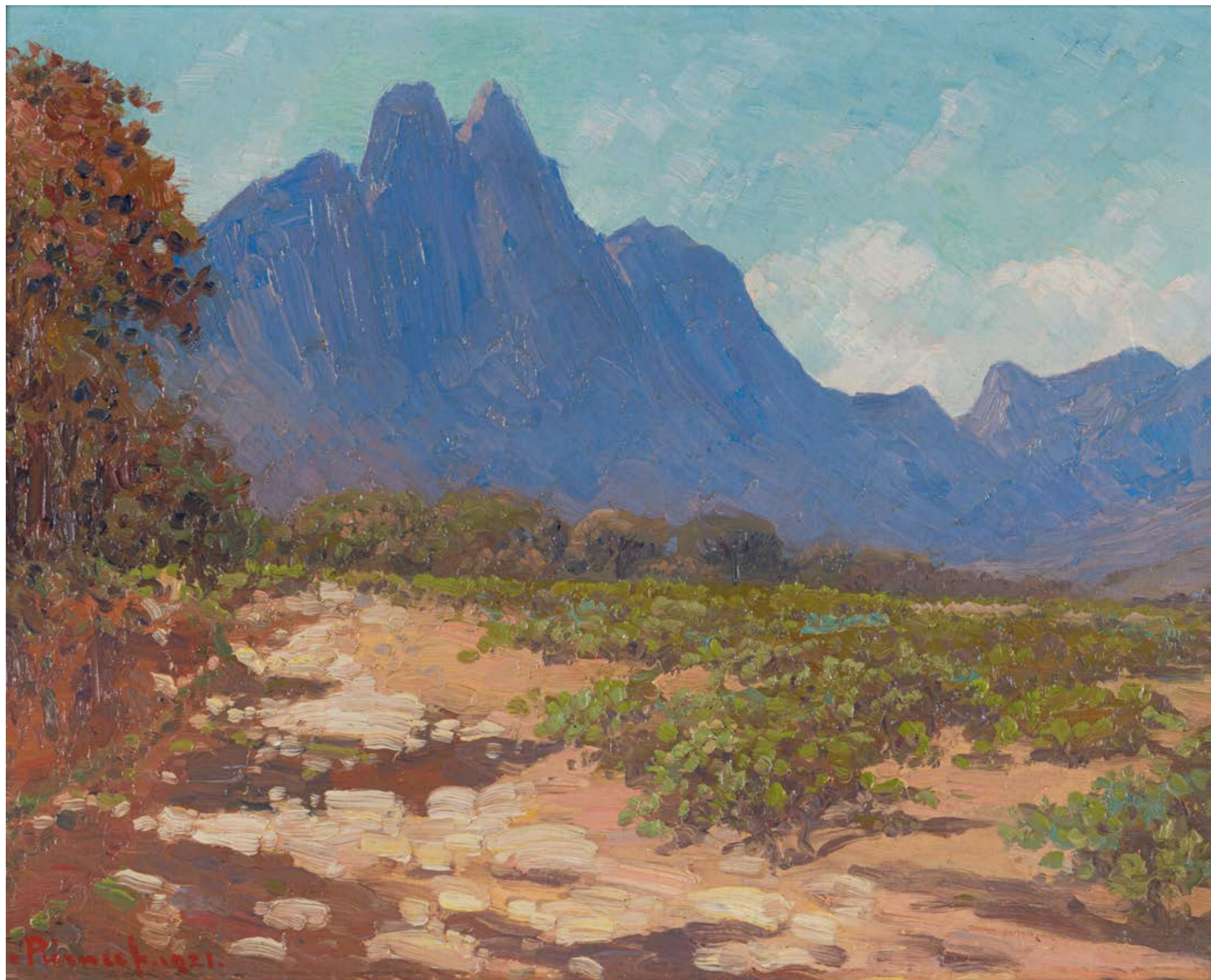
*And many people were amazed to see how successfully the painter captures the vastness and the mystery of the African plains and mountains and the friendly old farmhouses. Pierneef can be very proud of himself. He has given the people of the Cape something new and they have appreciated it.*

— EXHIBITION REVIEWER, *DIE BURGER*, 1921

17  
***Ou Poortjie,  
Stellenbosch (Nilant 14)***  
signed in pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
21,5 by 17 cm  
**R20 000 – 30 000**

18  
***Op die Braak,  
Stellenbosch (Nilant 13)***  
signed and dated 1923  
in pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
21,5 by 15 cm  
**R25 000 – 35 000**

Pierneef first exhibited in the Cape in 1921. He put on a well-received show in the small hall of Die Uitspan, in Stellenbosch, in the April of that year. He returned to Stellenbosch early in October, staying with JFW Grosskopf, his future biographer, before opening an exhibition in Long Street's Ashbey Hall in Cape Town. Critic and public were certainly impressed.



*The air was a wonderful dusky gold and deep in the gorge the warm-dark tints glowed. I just sat there with my hands under my chin and looked. I sat and looked and did not move. And in a few hours I completed that painting ...*

— PIERNEEF

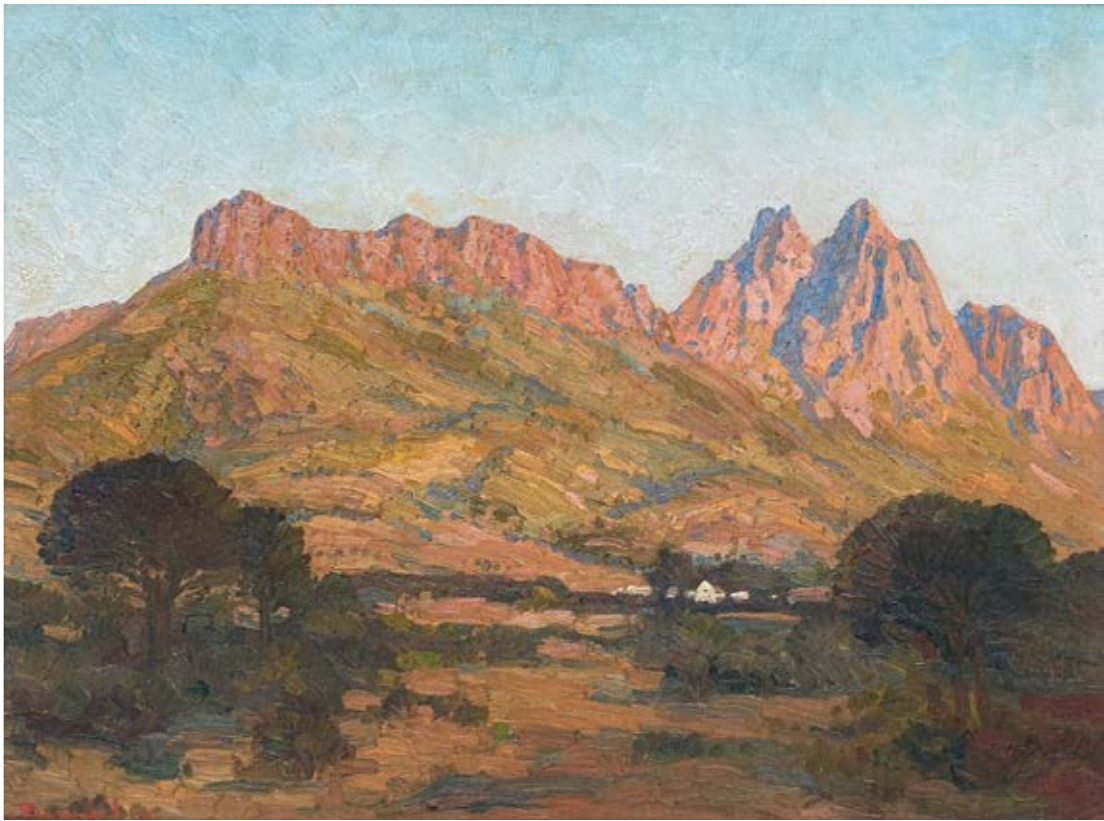
19

***A Vineyard in Stellenbosch***

signed and dated 1921  
oil on board  
31 by 39 cm

**R320 000 – 500 000**

Pierneef made a number of striking, *plein-air* paintings when in Stellenbosch in 1921. The present lot, showing the familiar silhouette of Jonkershoek, is part of this small group (see also below).



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Jonkershoek Mountains, Stellenbosch*, 1921.



20

*Krommerivier,  
Stellenbosch (Nilant 15)*

signed, dated 1925 and inscribed  
with the title in pencil in the  
margin; signed with the artist's  
initial in the plate  
linocut on paper  
22,5 by 39,5 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



21

*Plaas Kromrivier  
(Niland 16)*

signed and dated 1949  
in pencil in the margin;  
inscribed with the artist's  
initial in the plate  
linocut on paper  
14 by 20 cm

R18 000 – 24 000



22

*Twee Jonggezellen, Tulbagh*  
(Nilant 12)

signed, dated 1933, and inscribed  
'Farm House, Tulbagh' in pencil in  
the margin

linocut on paper

30 by 36,5 cm

R30 000 – 50 000



23

*Kruiskerk, Tulbagh*  
(Nilant 6)

signed, dated 1933 and inscribed  
'Oude Kerk, Tulbagh' and 'impr' in  
pencil in the margin

linocut on paper

30 by 36 cm

R30 000 – 50 000



24

***Hermanus, K.P. (Nilant 5)***

signed and inscribed 'impr' in  
pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
19 by 25 cm

**R30 000 – 40 000**

**LITERATURE**

Esmé Berman (1983) *Art and  
Artists of South Africa*, Cape Town:  
AA Balkema, illustrated in black  
and white on page 330.

Pierneef rendered the old harbour at Hermanus in watercolour on his visit in 1927 and then again for one of the monumental panels commissioned in 1929 for the new Johannesburg Station. He produced almost the same composition in the present lot, one of his most self-consciously graphic linocuts: the zigzagging breakwater leads the eye swiftly into the centre of the scene and the black sea and blocky dark cliffs contrast dramatically with the bleached white harbour buildings.

Pierneef records all the details of a working harbour – fishing boats on the concrete slipway, oars leaning in the sun, gutting tables, and 'bokkom' stands for drying the local delicacy of whole, salted, mullet and snoek.

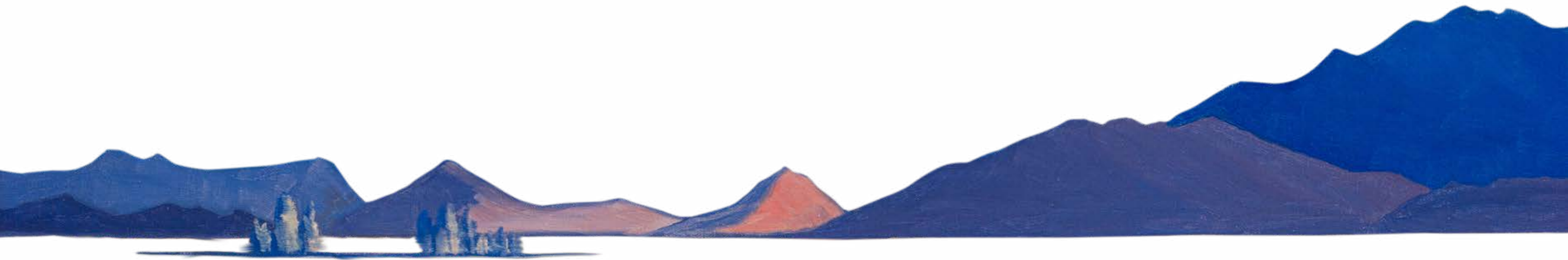


ABOVE  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Hermanus, KP*, 1927.

LEFT  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Hermanus, Johannesburg  
Station Panel*, 1929–1932.

# *Cloudburst Storm*

LOT 25







25

***Cloudburst Storm***

signed and dated 52

oil on canvas

39,5 by 54,5 cm

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

Pierneef's mastery lies in his skill of evocatively capturing the essence of the outspread southern African landscape. The magnificent *Cloudburst Storm*, painted in 1952, showcases the artist's extraordinary ability to interpret atmospheric conditions, and his innate sense of natural drama. Pierneef beautifully illuminates the focal orange and lavender-tinted hill in the midground, which in turn leads the eye to the dramatic ink-blue mountains that are theatrically framed by bursts of rain.



26

*Elim, K.P.*

signed, dated 1950 and  
inscribed with the title in  
pencil in the margin  
watercolour on paper  
36 by 64,5 cm

R40 000 – 60 000



27

*Kaap l'Agulhas*

signed, dated 'Des 1950' and  
inscribed with the title in  
pencil in the margin  
watercolour and pencil on  
paper  
32 by 50 cm

R30 000 – 50 000

# *Clouds over the Karoo*

LOT 28







28

### *Clouds over the Karoo*

signed and dated 53

oil on canvas

39 by 54,5 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 400 000

*His mystic towers and castles in the air  
... are almost legends in themselves,  
they have become symbolic. They hover  
over the veld like mountains and bring  
a dramatic tension to static scenes.*

— GRÉ VAN DER WAAL-BRAAKSMA

Could any South African painter interpret cloudscape quite like Pierneef? This mature painting shows a monumental and architectonic cloud formation high above a moody and stunningly beautiful Karoo landscape. These clouds, painted with a surprising combination of mauve, cream and lavender, attract as much of the artist's attention as the land mass. Moreover, the way they shift in the sky allows for the mesmerising effect of gentle, dappled sunlight hitting the peaks below. It comes as little surprise that Marita Bailey-Pierneef, the artist's daughter, kept a similarly theatrical cloud painting, from the same period, in her own collection (below).



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Wolke*, 1952.



29

*Mimosa, SWA (Nilant 104)*

signed in pencil in the margin

linocut on paper

16 by 21,5 cm

R30 000 – 50 000

While in Stellenbosch in 1921, Pierneef met Hans Aschenborn. The German-trained painter, who had settled in the then South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1909, and who greatly admired Pierneef's work, encouraged him to visit his adopted country, and to paint it. Descriptions of the country by literati then in Stellenbosch, particularly Toon van den Heever and P Bruchhausen, also piqued the artist's interest.



Hans Aschenborn; *Landscape with Eland*, 1920.



Hans Aschenborn, *Ox Cart*, undated.

*I have thought of you so often  
– when the sun goes down, or  
driving through the desert or in the  
mountains in the Karibib area ...*  
– BRUCHHAUSEN



30

***Erongo Mountains  
(South West Africa)***

signed and dated 23; inscribed  
with the artist's name and the title  
on the reverse  
oil on canvas laid down on board  
22,5 by 32,5 cm

**R300 000 – 500 000**

Pierneef arrived in South West Africa late in April 1923, staying initially with Toon van den Heever. He was immediately captivated by the endless horizons, the silence, the clarity and the colours of the landscape. He travelled the country extensively, worked breathlessly, and produced enough pictures over an eight-week period to mount a sell-out exhibition in Windhoek that opened on 20 June 1923. The majority of the pictures were small in scale – his travelling painter's box could only accommodate small boards – and most were characterised by rich, dusky and dramatic pinks



ABOVE LEFT  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Namibian Sunset*, 1923.

ABOVE RIGHT  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Naby Karibib, Sononder*, 1923.



LEFT  
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Near Karibib*, 1923.



31

*Okahandja, SWA*

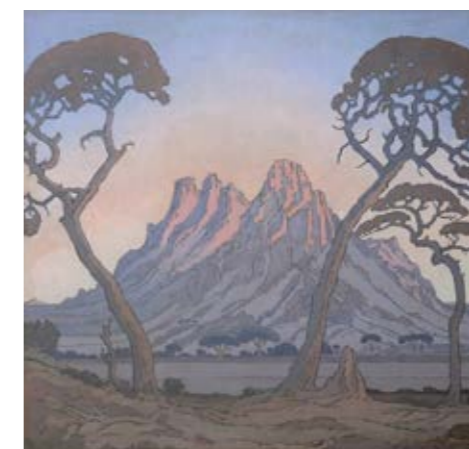
signed and dated 29

oil on board

35,5 by 46 cm

R600 000 – 800 000

Okahandja, some 70 kilometres north of Windhoek, was a favourite subject for Pierneef. He depicted scenes in the area numerous times, perhaps most famously in one of his Johannesburg Railway Station panels, and in the related, landmark etching.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Okahandja, Johannesburg Station Panel*, 1929–1932.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Okahandjaberg*.



32

*Silent Sentinels, Omatako, SWA*

signed and indistinctly dated

oil on board

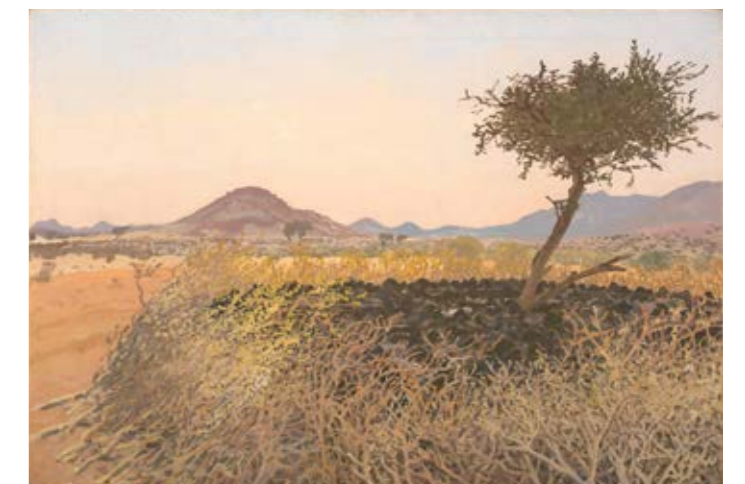
29,5 by 44,5 cm

R400 000 – 600 000

Pierneef's South West African pictures are shot through with an electric glow. He certainly delighted in the shifting colours and patterns over the landscape as the sun arced through a clear, vast sky. The surfaces he painted were expressive and often calligraphic, a trait he shared with Adolph Jentsch – another painter synonymous with the country – who arrived there in 1938, fifteen years after Pierneef's first visit.

*It is a beautiful country, the desert, the drought, the peculiar translucent quality of the light.*

— PIERNEEF



Adolph Jentsch, *Schafpferch am Abend (Sheep Pen in the Evening)*, 1941.



33

*Swakop Rivier*

signed, dated 1923, and inscribed  
with the title in pencil  
charcoal and conté on paper  
36 by 53 cm

R80 000 – 120 000

PROVENANCE  
David Kramer



34

***Usakos, SWA***

signed, dated 'Oct 1924' and  
inscribed with the title  
watercolour and pencil on  
paper laid down on card  
24 by 33 cm

**R40 000 – 60 000**

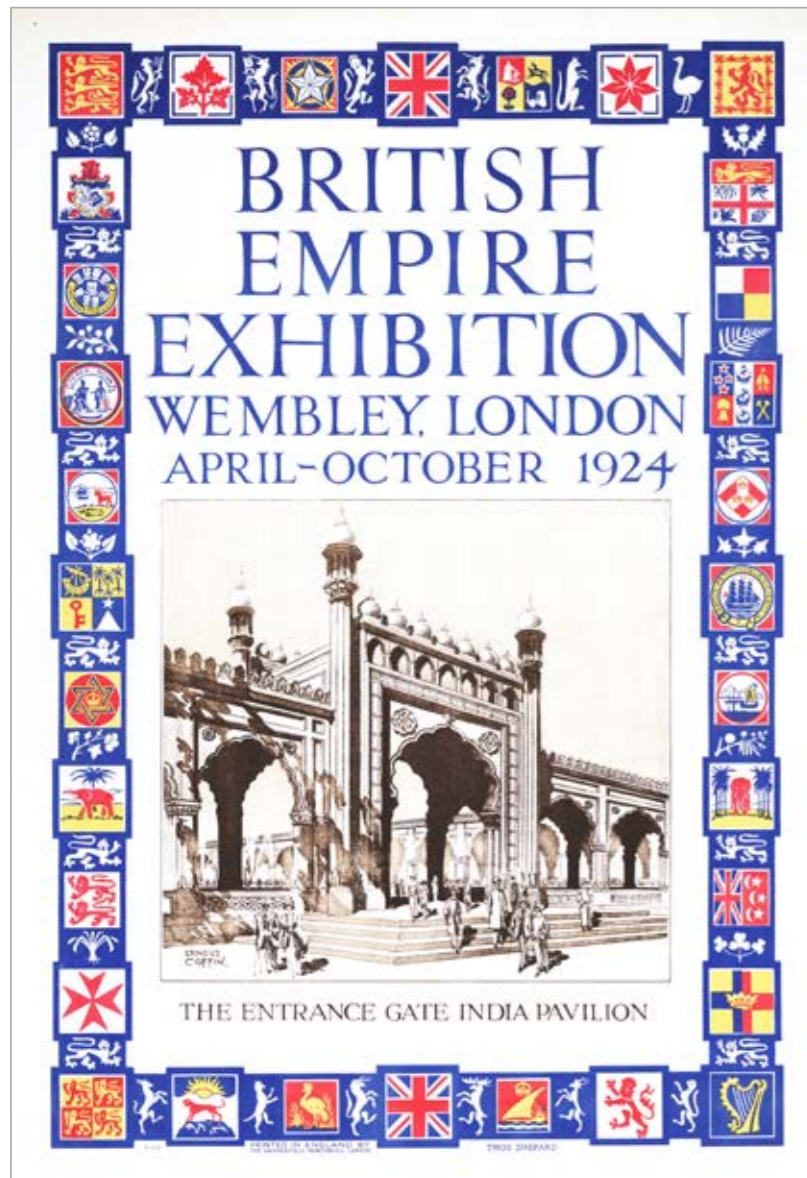
The artist returned to South West Africa in 1924 and spent time in Usakos, nearly 150 kilometres north-east of Swakopmund. In that September and October he produced an impressive group of vibrant drawings and watercolours, of which the present lot is a fine example. The group shows the artist's close observation of nature, as well as his preference for bold compositions (see also below).



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Usakos, SWA*, 1924.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Usakos, SWA*, 1924.



Willem van Konijnenburg, *A Ritual Dance*, 1918, sold at Christie's, 13 June 2017, lot 206.

Pierneef's career had built strong momentum by 1925. Between his two meaningful trips to South West Africa, moreover, he had formally separated from his first wife Agatha, and had begun courting a young Hollander called May Schoep. The two were married in November 1924 (and remained so, happily, until the artist's death in 1957). The new Pierneefs sailed to Europe in July 1925, arriving in London on 10 August. The artist sold a cache of his prints to the Victoria & Albert Museum, and caught the tail-end of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, which had been extended due to popular demand. The exhibition included works by Canada's Group of Seven. Thereafter the Pierneefs travelled on the Continent, visiting, amongst other places, Dusseldorf, Munich,

Berlin, Paris, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Bruges.

In Amsterdam Pierneef met Anton Hendriks, who would later become the director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, and Willem van Konijnenburg, an artist and theorist attracted to geometric and spiritual principles, who would strongly influence Pierneef's subsequent compositional approach.

In London and Europe Pierneef was directly exposed to eye-opening new forms of modernism. He encountered overlapping modes of impressionism, post-impressionism and symbolism; decorative mural painting, Art Nouveau and Luminism also made an impact on his method. Armed with new ideas and ambitions, he returned home, via the east coast of Africa, arriving in March 1926.



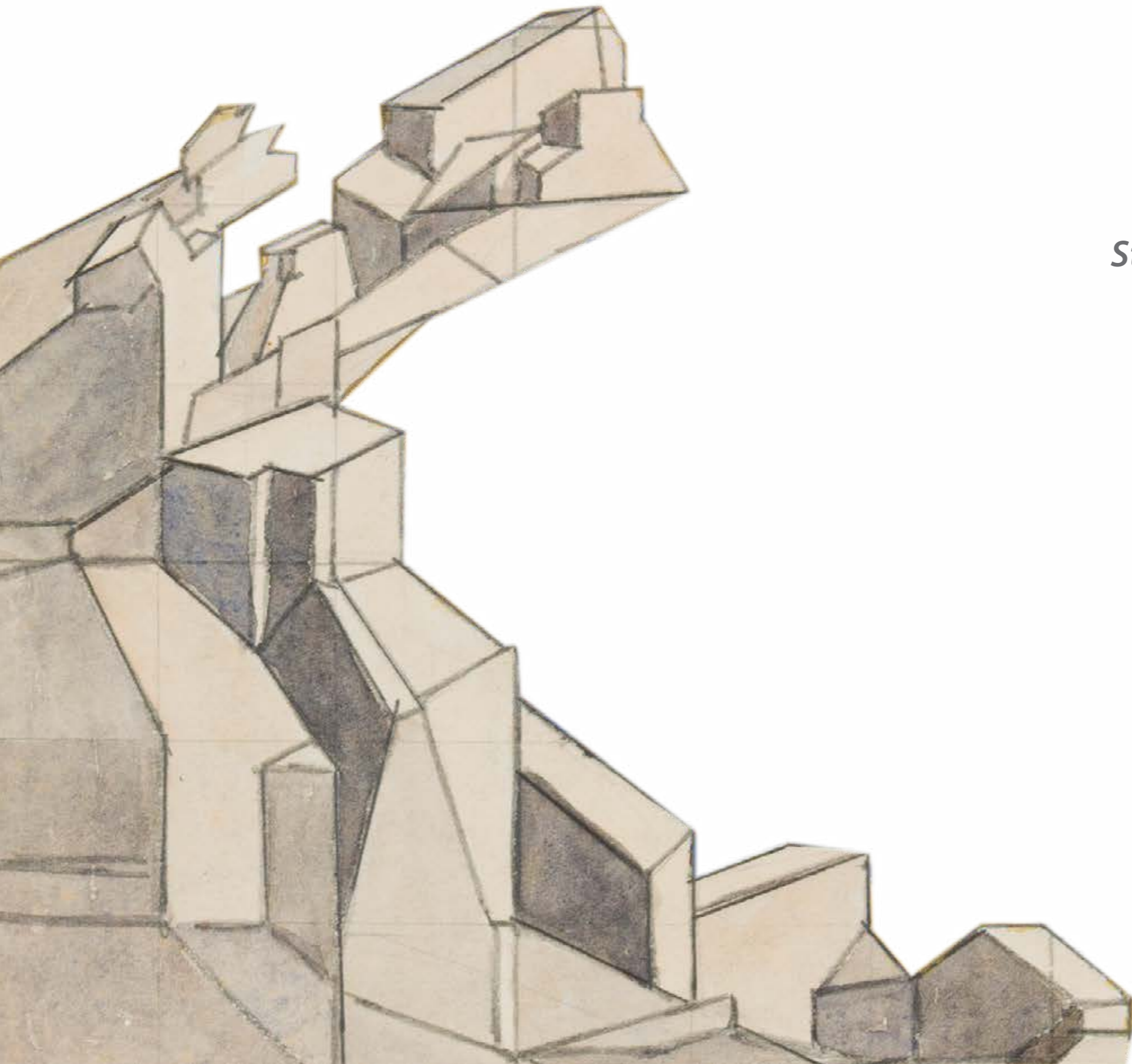
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Boerewoning*, Rotterdam, Holland, 1916.



Franklin Carmichael, *Autumn Hillside*, 1920, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

*We collected a score of catalogues and bought everything regards modern art in the form of books, and feel that I can deliver a heavy blow with them on the Pretoria frontier and shock many an art connoisseur.*

— PIERNEEF



## *Stad in Basotho Land (Ontwerp)*

LOT 35





35

*Stad in Basotho Land  
(Ontwerp)*

signed and inscribed with the  
title in pencil in the margin  
watercolour and pencil on paper  
47 by 32 cm

R250 000 – 350 000

Majestic mountain ranges punctuate and contribute highly dramatic backdrops to JH Pierneef's famous 28 Johannesburg Station panels: the Drakensberg; Table Mountain; Graaf-Reinet; Meirings Poort; Waterval-Boven; Rustenburg Kloof; Lion's Head; Mount-aux-Sources; Swartberg Pass; Amajuba; Twin Peaks, Stellenbosch; and the Malutis, Basutoland. The Malutis form a watershed mountain range, separating the tributaries of the Orange and the Caledon Rivers and creating a natural border with Lesotho, the so-called Mountain Kingdom. Pierneef traversed the area in the early 1920s when he was working on his first public commission, decorating the dining hall of the Ficksburg High School.

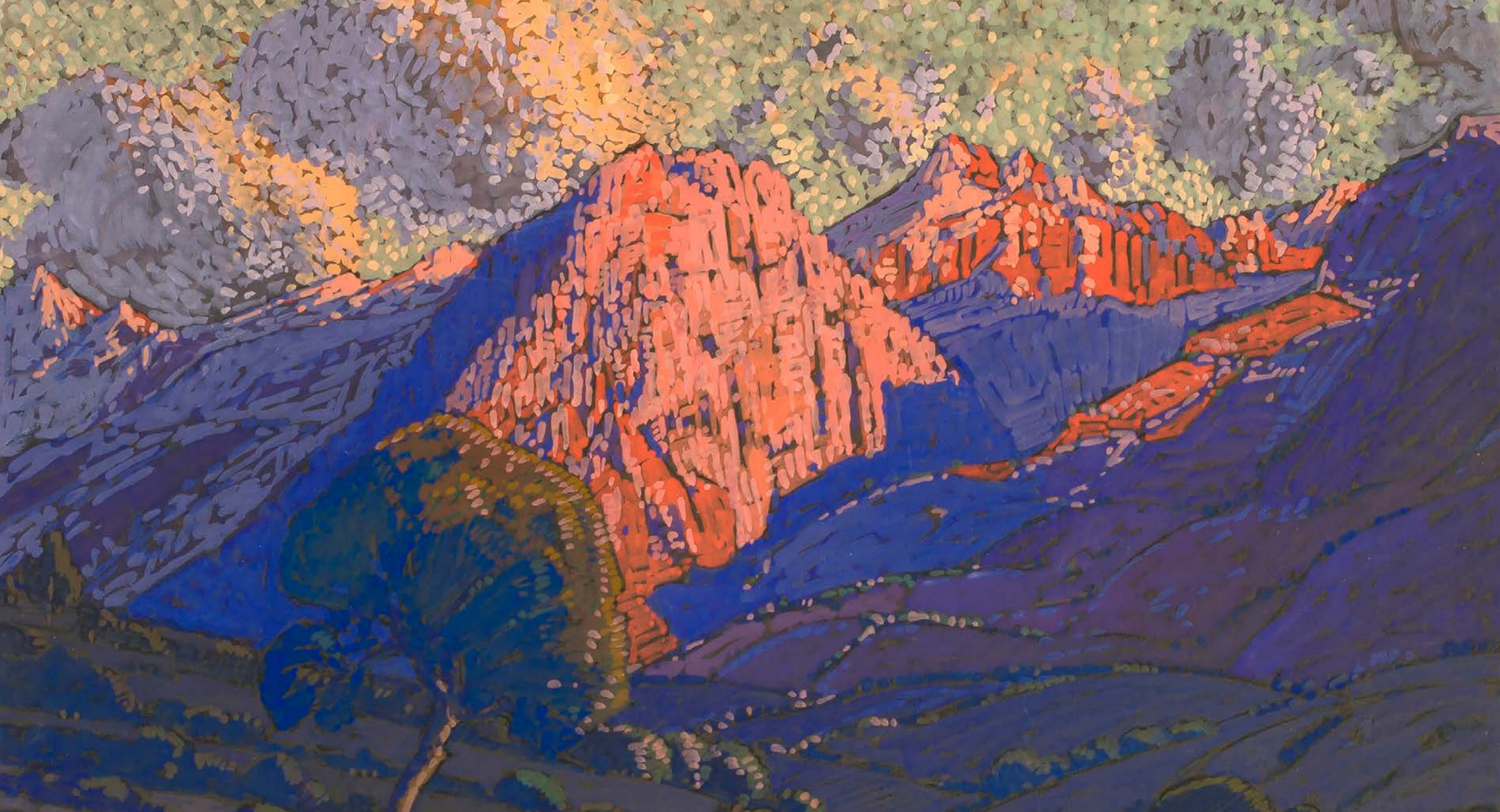
The Maluti station panel shows the mountain range in typical

expanded Renaissance perspective, with vanishing point in the centre and diminishing landscape elements to the back. Pierneef placed a side view of steep-faced cliffs in the middle-ground on the right of that panel. Consider the possibility that the present lot was produced from a vantage point directly in front of those cliffs. Here, the faces jut out dramatically from the centre towards the spectator, instead of receding into the distance.

The present lot may well have been part of the many sketches and studies Pierneef made during his protracted stay in Ficksburg. Executed in dream-like pink and yellow watercolours, it shows the artist experimenting with geometric abstraction, a style he fully committed to after meeting Willem van Konijnenburg in the Netherlands.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Malutis, Basutoland, Johannesburg Station Panel*, 1929–1932.





36

### *Jonkershoek, Stellenbosch*

signed and dated 26; inscribed  
with the artist's name, the title  
and the provenance on the reverse  
casein on card  
26 by 35,5 cm

**R600 000 – 800 000**

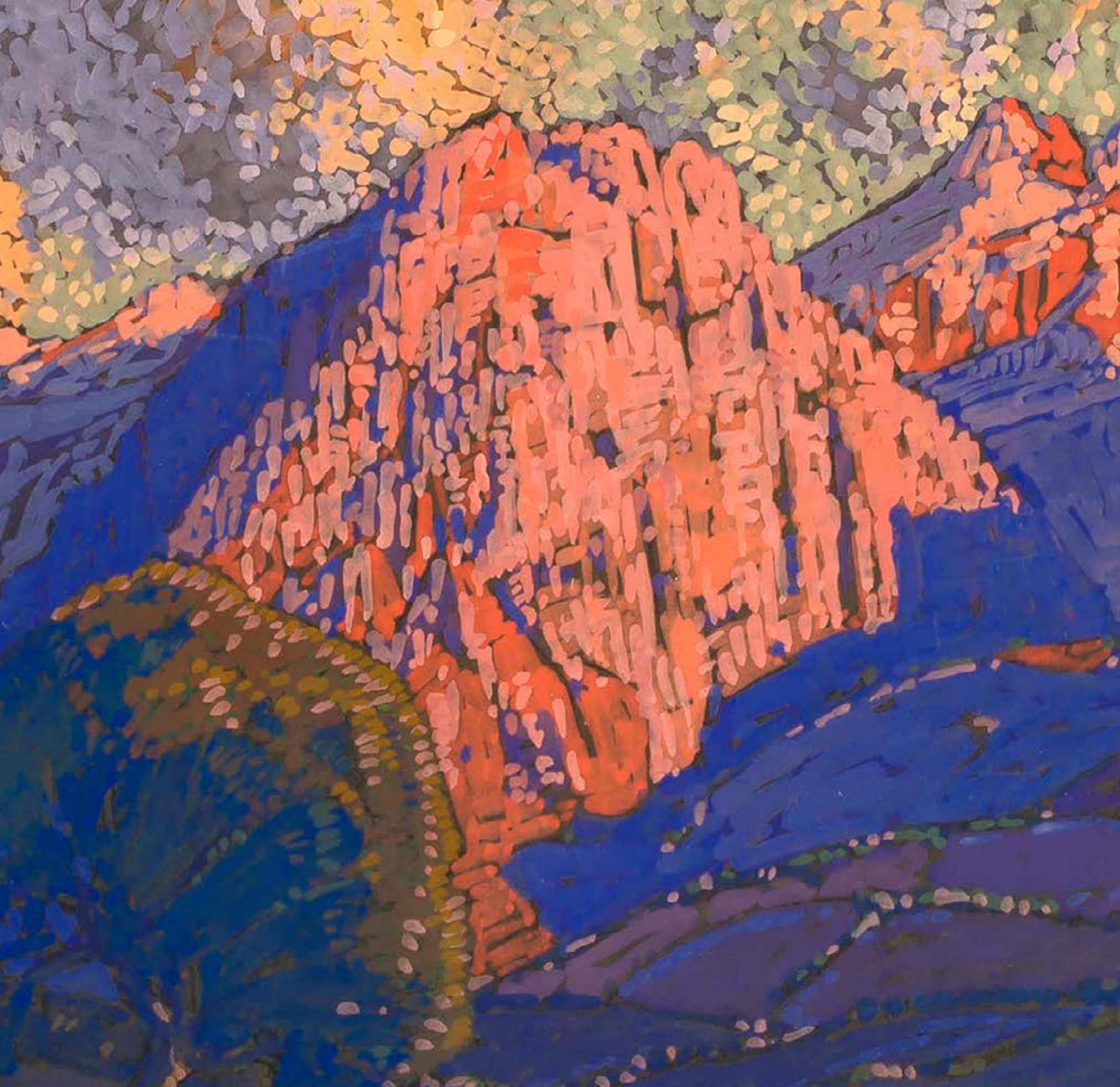
#### PROVENANCE

Dr HG Schweickerdt (brother of Emil Heinrich  
Schweickerdt) and thence by descent.  
Strauss & Co, Cape Town, 16 October 2017, lot 591.  
Private Collection.

In this dazzling, small-scale work, caught in a moment with flash-drying casein, Pierneef focused on the harsh, magnificent peaks of Jonkershoek rather than the cultivated vineyards in the valleys below. Painted in 1926, with his European trip fresh in mind, the work relies on pure dabs of luminous colour *à la* the Divisionists he then so admired. By 1928, when the artist painted what is perhaps now his most famous view of Jonkershoek (below), Pierneef was returning again to a more familiar, monumental style.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Farm Jonkershoek with Twin Peaks Beyond*, Stellenbosch, 1928.



It is worthwhile comparing Pierneef's work to the contemporaneous pictures by the Canadian Group of Seven. These landscape artists, inspired by Tom Thomson's bold paintings of the wild corners of the Algonquin Park in Ontario, recorded the rugged Canadian wilderness in a form of neo-impressionism characterised by sinuous line, emotive surfaces,

and daring colour combinations. Their pride in and devotion to their local landscapes was not dissimilar to Pierneef's own weakness for the veld. That their styles often overlapped should not be considered a coincidence. Importantly, Pierneef saw a selection of these Canadian paintings at the British Empire Exhibition in London in 1925.



Tom Thomson, *The Pointers*, 1916–17, Hart House, University of Toronto, Canada.

Pierneef in the little grass studio he built for himself on the Pienaars River





37

### *Rooiplaat*

signed  
oil on board  
24,5 by 29 cm

R400 000 – 500 000

This small jewel of a picture shows the variety of Pierneef's painterly practice, and his spirit of experimentation after his return from Europe in 1926. His stylistic range in the late 1920s and early 1930s is quite astonishing: he painted architectonic, shard-faced pictures; flashy, breathtaking caseins; and gentle, expressive, Divisionist works. The current lot, likely a view of his beloved Rooiplaat, falls into the latter set. The painting's surface pulsates with short, simple, wriggling strokes of pure colour. The foreground is a real treat: dabs of lime, pink, ivory and peach suggest the grasses and reeds moving in the wind.

Rooiplaat, as it was known in Pierneef's day, is on the Pienaars River in Gauteng, north of Pretoria. It is now known as Roodeplaat Dam.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef; *Gold and Green, Rooiplaat, N.T.*



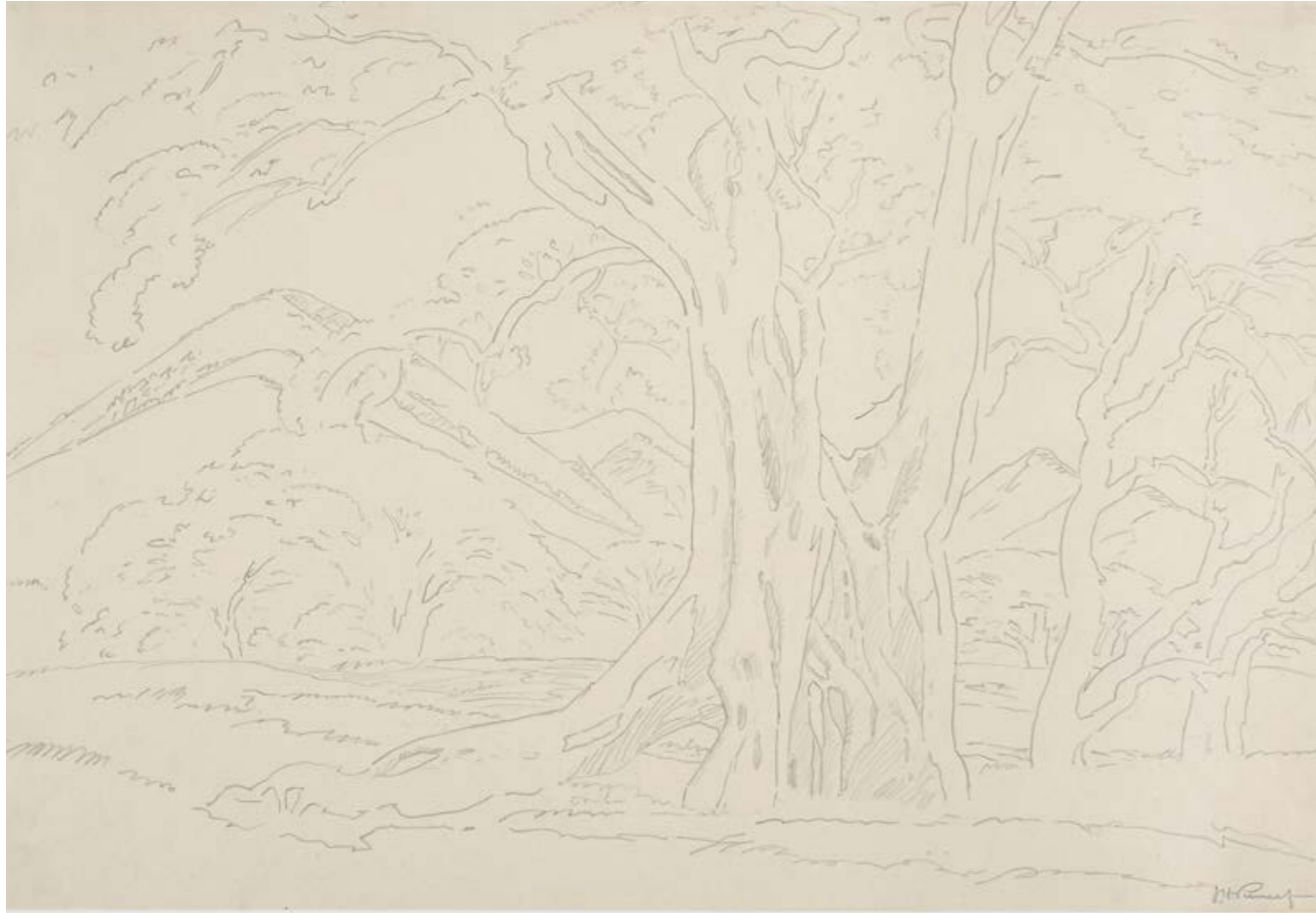
38

***Baviaanspoort:  
Landscape with Trees***

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

oil on wood panel  
30 by 40 cm

**R300 000 – 400 000**



39

### ***Tree Trunks***

stamped with the artist's  
signature  
pencil on paper  
37,5 by 54 cm

**R30 000 – 50 000**

*Pierneef's pencil drawings are a highlight of his talent. He loved the trees (for their forms) and the stones (for their colouring) of the Bushveld with an almost religious fervour. He drew them exquisitely ... They are poetry.*

— JUSTICE JF MARAIS



40

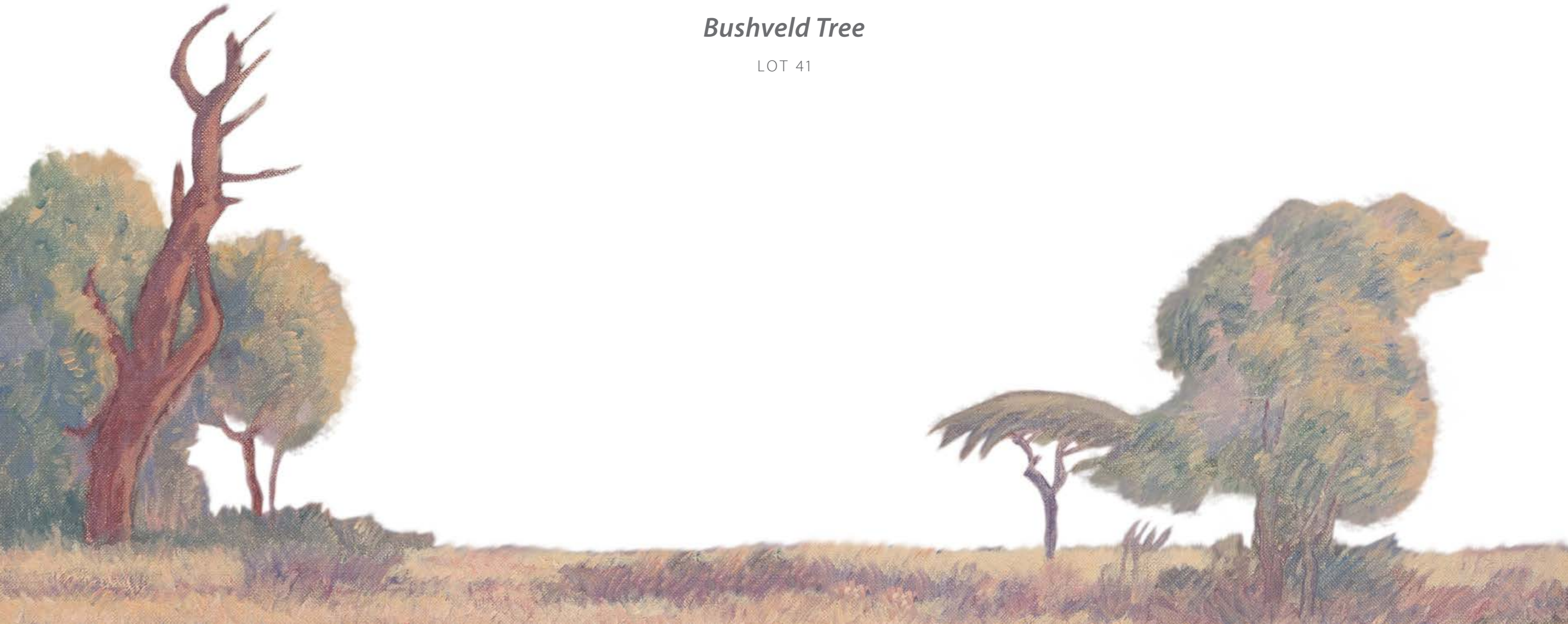
### ***Uitspan by Soutpan***

signed, dated 44 and inscribed  
with the title in pencil in the  
margin  
pencil on paper  
20 by 33,5 cm

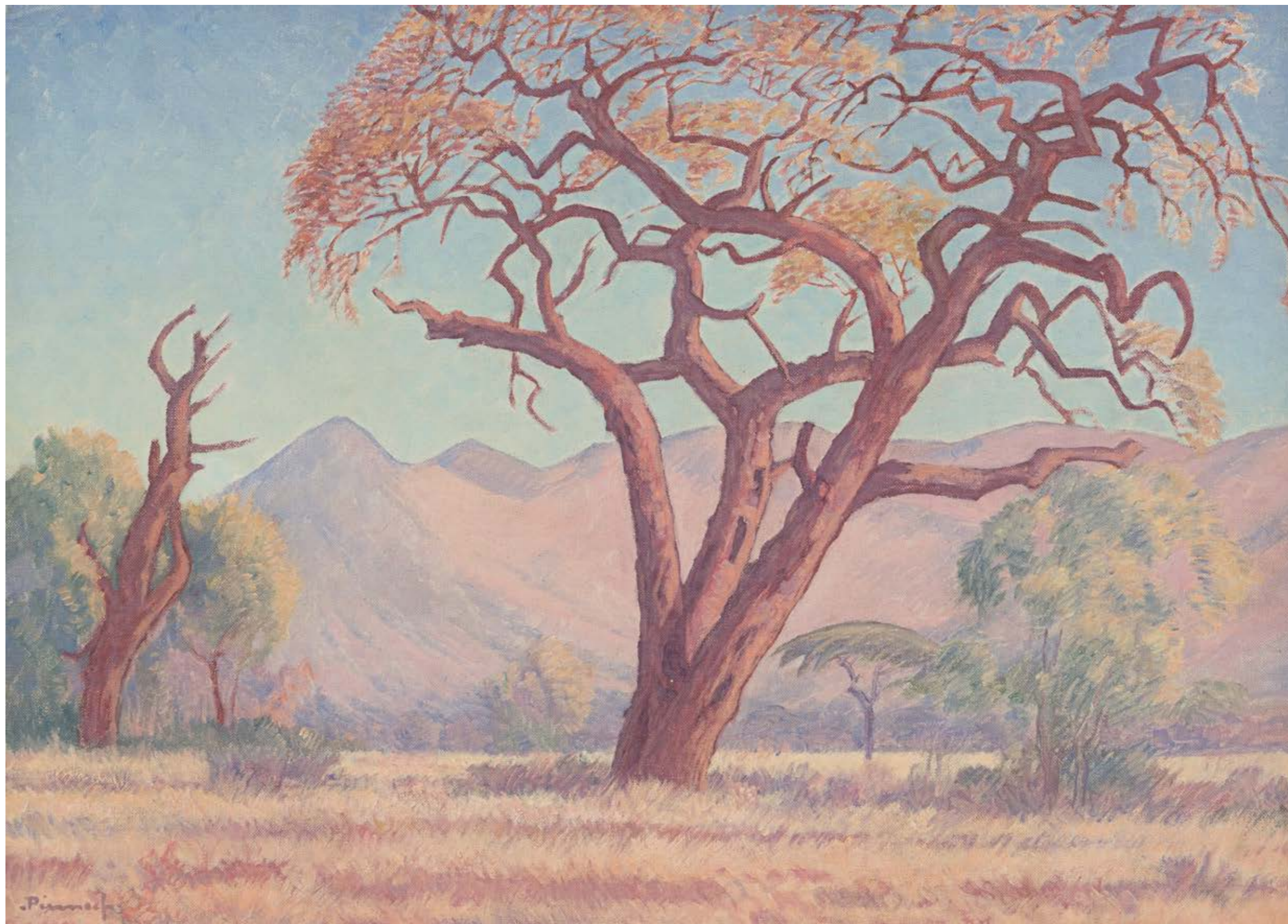
**R20 000 – 30 000**

## *Bushveld Tree*

LOT 41







41

### ***Bushveld Tree***

signed  
oil on canvas  
39,5 by 55 cm

**R1 000 000 – 1 500 000**

No gallery-goer ever doubted Pierneef's deep love of the bushveld, and it was the iconic, sky-fanning acacias and wild syringas that became his favoured motifs from these landscapes. A majestic, stylised acacia dominates the composition here, its deeply-rooted trunk leaning over gently, and its simplified upper branches forming a beautiful, natural latticework in front of a cloudless sky. Serene colour harmonies define the grassland, which is bathed in a warm and wintry light. A similar work, *Near Thabazimbi, TvL*, painted in 1943, appeared recently in Strauss & Co's Cape Town salerooms.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, *Near Thabazimbi, TvL*, 1943.



42

*Doringboom,  
Warmbad (Nilant 61)*

signed and inscribed 'impr'  
in pencil in the margin  
linocut  
10,5 by 12,5 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



43

*Wilde Sering Boom, NT  
(Nilant 98)*

signed and dated 1922 in pencil  
in the margin  
linocut on paper  
12,5 by 16 cm

R15 000 – 20 000

# *Acacia in the Veld*

LOT 44





*Throughout his life he longed for this:  
winter in the bushveld, when the trees  
lost their leaves and changed colour,  
exposing the rocks and the moss and  
the sun streaming at an angle through  
the winter grasses conjuring up endless  
fresco hues.*

— GRÉ VAN DER WAAL-BRAAKSMA



44

*Acacia in the Veld*

signed and dated 1940

oil on board

44 by 60 cm

R1 500 000 – 2 000 000

*Op die Pad na Nelspruit*

LOT 45







45

***Op die Pad na Nelspruit***

signed and dated '43; inscribed  
with the title on the reverse  
oil on board  
28,5 by 38,5 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

**PROVENANCE**

The Donald Levin Collection.  
Whalerock Auctioneers,  
Durbanville, 1 January 2010.  
Private Collection, Cape Town.

Pierneef's sense of colour is ever-surprising. In the present lot, beneath a cloudscape so typical of the artist, gorgeous shades of lavender, copper and dull mustard make up a quilted, agricultural landscape. Small, gently-undulating hills lead the eye towards a jagged horizon, while sections of flat paint are intersected by winding ribbons of colour. The almost Fauvist palette is striking, and brings to mind the similar landscapes by Erik Laubscher, painted in the Cape, some half-a-century later (below).



Erik Laubscher, *Storm Oor die Land van Waveren*, 1993.



Erik Laubscher, *Ploughed Lands, Overberg*, 2002.



*Pierneef himself believes in hard work and patient preparation ... When he puts our South African trees, particularly our bushveld trees that he loves, into one of his more decorative pictures in a somewhat formalised manner, those that know him also know that he has made hundreds of drawings from nature, of all those trees with punctilious detail. He has drawn the roots gripping the earth, leaves and thorns, blossoms or curled seed pods, with the accuracy of a botanist.*

— JMF GROSSKOPF

Pierneef's studio at his home in Villieria, Pretoria, date unknown.



46

*Fouriesburg, OVS*

signed and dated 1953;  
inscribed with the title  
on the reverse  
watercolour on paper  
37,5 by 50 cm

R80 000 – 120 000



47

*Landscape with Trees*

signed and dated 36  
watercolour and pencil on  
paper laid down on card  
26,5 by 35,5 cm

R50 000 – 70 000



48

*Hartbeesfontein*

signed, dated 1927 and inscribed  
with the title in pencil in the margin  
watercolour and pencil on paper  
laid down on board  
28,5 by 44,5 cm

R25 000 – 35 000

*Landscape with Rocks and Trees*

LOT 49





*He is teaching us to see, understand  
and appreciate the rolling miles  
of veld with the blue mountains  
in the distance, the strange  
almost fantastic trees that dot the  
landscape and the innumerable  
beauties of our land.*

— TIELMAN ROOS



49

*Landscape with Rocks  
and Trees*

signed and dated 44

oil on board

53 by 64,5 cm

R1 800 000 – 2 400 000



50

*By Brits*

signed, dated 'Tue 1924' and  
inscribed with the title in  
pencil in the margin  
watercolour and pencil on  
paper

12 by 41 cm

R30 000 – 50 000



51

*Fouriesburg, O.V.S.*

signed and inscribed  
with the title  
watercolour and pencil  
on paper

16,5 by 24 cm

R30 000 – 40 000



52

*Landscape with  
Distant Mountains*

signed and dated 43  
oil on canvas laid down  
on board  
44,5 by 59 cm

R600 000 – 900 000



53

*The Sphinx,  
Fouriesburg (Nilant 58)*

signed and inscribed 'impr' in  
pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
13 by 16 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



54

*Plaashuis, Rustenburg  
(Nilant 49)*

signed, dated 1928 and  
inscribed 'impr' in pencil in  
the margin  
linocut on paper  
image size: 10 by 12 cm

R15 000 – 20 000



55

*Matlala, Pietersburg  
(Nilant 64)*

signed, dated 1951 and  
inscribed 'by Pietersburg, TvI'  
in pencil in the margin  
linocut on paper  
22 by 26,5 cm

R30 000 – 50 000

*Middelfontein Mission near  
Nylstroom*

LOT 56







56

***Middelfontein Mission  
near Nylstroom***

signed and dated 41; inscribed  
with the title on the reverse  
oil on board  
44 by 59 cm

**R500 000 – 700 000**

Pierneef frequently focused on modest domestic dwellings and clusters of farm buildings. He depicted his own house Elangeni, near Pretoria, with its separate, interconnected buildings, both in close-up and sometimes with views of the garden and surrounding hills. Similarly, his view of the mission at Middelfontein, Limpopo, locates the little settlement in its particular place, geographically. The mission, in the shadow of the iconic Modimolle mountain, was established by the Berlin Missionary Society in the late 1800s when the local Sesotho-speaking community requested help to set up a mission. A church, parsonage, three school buildings and various outbuildings were built, and the 350 families who lived in the area each paid 12 head of cattle to purchase the surrounding farms and extend the settlement. It was good, well-watered agricultural land and the community grazed cattle and grew wheat, maize, peanuts, and watermelons.

The mission began to decline after conflict in 1948 over payment of taxes and, especially, after 1957, when the area was declared for 'Whites Only' under the apartheid government's Group Areas Act. In 1965, after the local community was forcibly relocated to Bophuthatswana, the mission station was finally abandoned.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef,  
*Elangeni*, 1944.



57

***Kremetartboom,  
Bosveld, N.T. (Nilant 73)***

signed, inscribed with the title  
and 'impr, Druk 1941' in pencil in  
the margin

linocut on paper

28,5 by 40 cm

R30 000 – 40 000

*The Kremetartboom has become famous, a giant watchman  
of the North, a beacon in the veld ... The ancient shape of  
a tree became a formula for neatly organising the surface  
area, the heaviness of the trunk offset by the light laciness  
of its crown. The long horizontal skyline, the strong vertical  
element and the arch of open sky form the basic pattern of  
the composition, which can also be interpreted symbolically.*

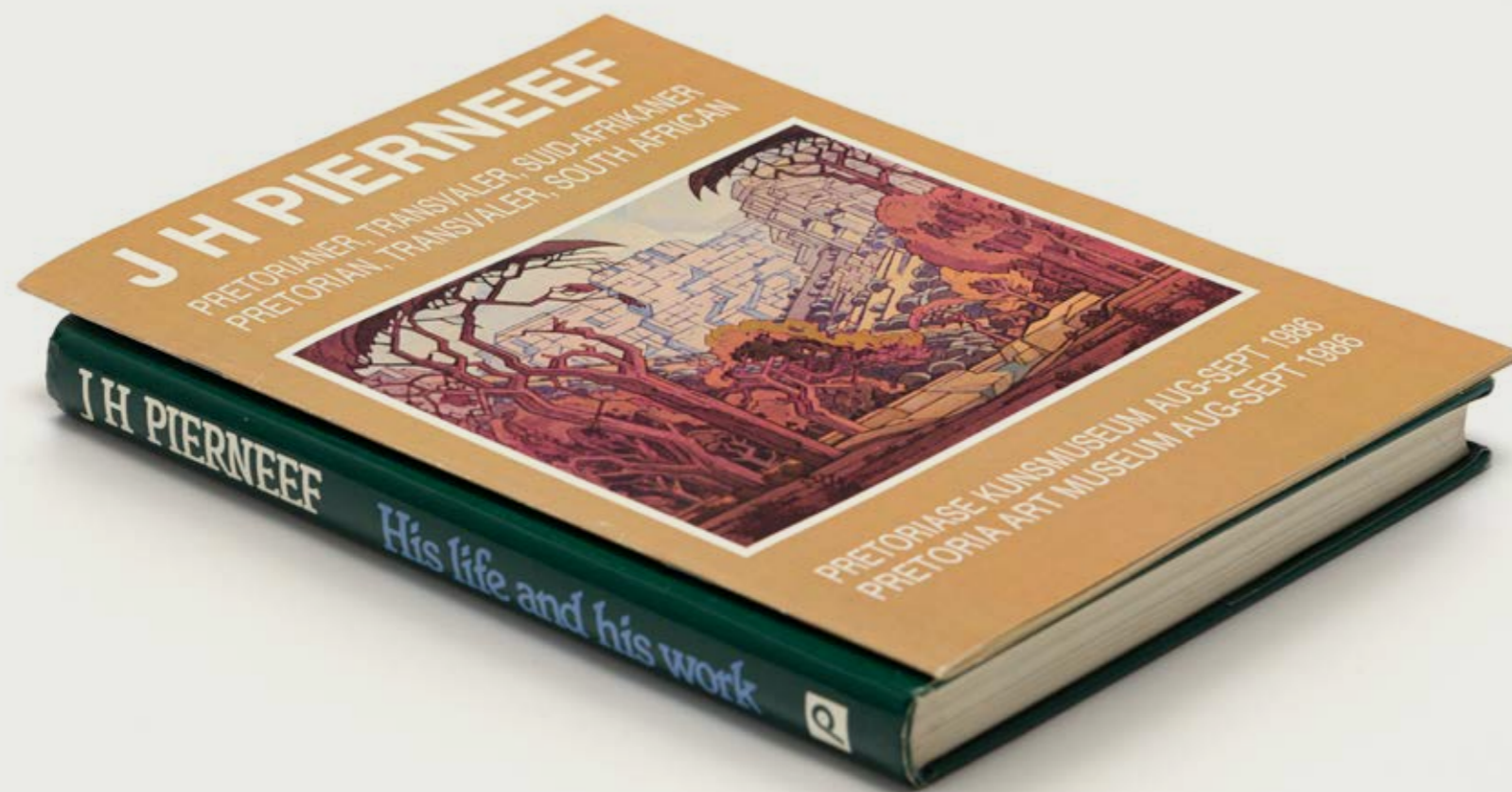
— GRÉ VAN DER WAAL-BRAAKSMA



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef; *Baobab Tree*, 1946.



Jacob Hendrik Pierneef; *Baobabs*, 1952.



## Books

In order to appreciate the art of JH Pierneef more fully, the autodidact may well consider reading some of the important books on his life and his work. Following in the early tradition of publishing monographs on important South African modernists (Joseph Sachs (1942) *Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa*, Johannes Meintjes (1944) *Maggie Laubser*), JFW Grosskopf, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Pretoria and close friend and champion of the artist for a good 30 years, wrote *Pierneef: Die Man en Sy Werk* in 1947. Grosskopf's monograph centres on what he considers to be the most important aspect of Pierneef's art, his 'aesthetic equilibrium', pointing out 'the rich experience, the mature technique, the elaborate composition and the controlled use of paint of the man who for more than forty years has thought about his art, continually experimenting with his brush.'

The next important publication, FEG Nilant's *Die Hout- en Linosneë van JH Pierneef* (1974), appears almost 30 years later, a standard reference, documenting the bulk of the artist's graphic output with regard to the relief printing process. Nilant's pioneering work has been significantly augmented by the publication of Gerard de Kamper and Chris de Klerk's *JH Pierneef in Print* (2014), adding 13 previously unseen linocuts, as well as 34 etchings and 6 aquatints. PG Nel's, *JH Pierneef: His Life and His Work* (1990), essentially compiled a cultural and

historical study of the artist, containing a wealth of information about the artist's life as well as important information about the manner in which he related to South African architecture, and the literary writers of his day. One of the most sought-after books on Pierneef is NJ Coetzee's controversial *Pierneef, Land and Landscape: The Johannesburg Station Panels in Context* (1992), a publication commissioned by the Johannesburg Art Gallery when it acted briefly as custodian of the panels, which are now housed at the Rupert Museum in Stellenbosch. Coetzee argues that Pierneef's work can best be understood as legitimizing an Afrikaner nationalist desire to enact an exclusive claim to the land. The La Motte publication, *A Tribute to the Life and Work of Jacob Hendrik Pierneef, 1886–1957* (2016) not only includes good images of the station panels, but also excellent examples of Pierneef's early work that now form the core of the La Motte collection, thanks to his daughter, Marita Bailey. Wilhelm van Rensburg's catalogue, *A Space for Landscape: The Work of JH Pierneef*, accompanying the retrospective exhibition with the same title at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 2015, broadly challenges Coetzee's argument, and, innovatively, introduces Pierneef 'iconoclasts' – a group of contemporary artists deconstructing the artist's work – to the debate.

All these books are extremely rare, as all were printed in very small editions, mostly of only 200 copies each.

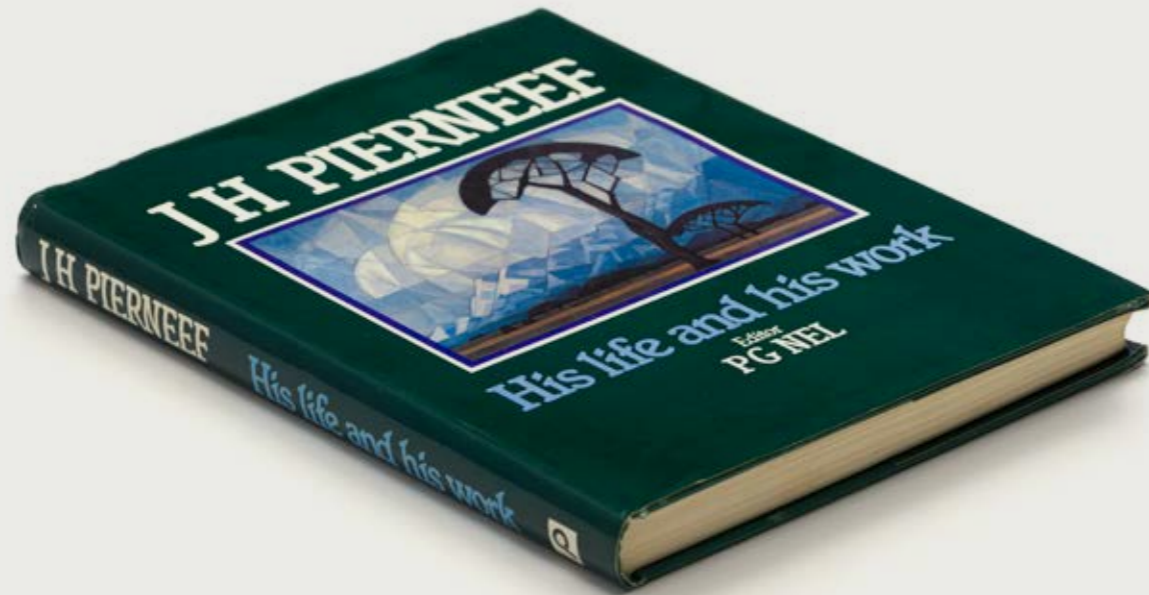
58

**PG Nel**

*JH Pierneef: His Life  
and His Work*

Cape Town: Perskor, 1990

R1 000 – 2 000



60

**FEG Nilant**

*Die Hout- en Linosneë  
van JH Pierneef*

Kaapstad: Balkema, 1974

R1 500 – 2 500



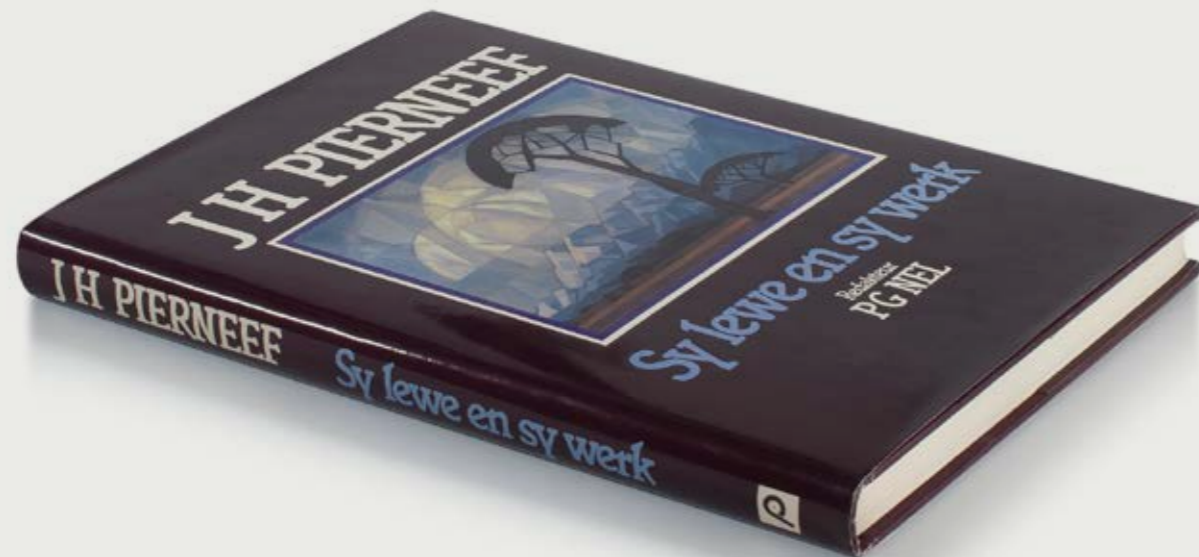
59

**PG Nel**

*JH Pierneef: Sy Lewe  
en Sy Werk*

Cape Town: Perskor, 1990

R1 000 – 1 500



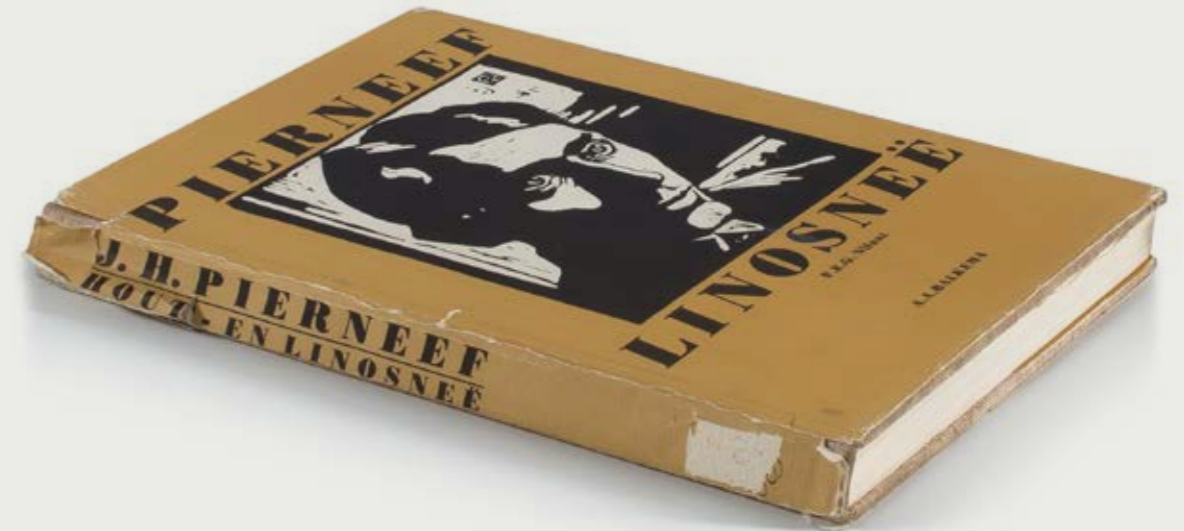
61

**FEG Nilant**

*Die Hout- en Linosneë  
van JH Pierneef*

Kaapstad: Balkema, 1974

R1 500 – 2 500



62

**Gerard de Kamper and  
Chris de Klerk**

*JH Pierneef in Print*

Bela-Bela: Dream Africa, 2014  
number 156 of a standard edition  
of 200, signed by both authors

R1 500 – 2 500



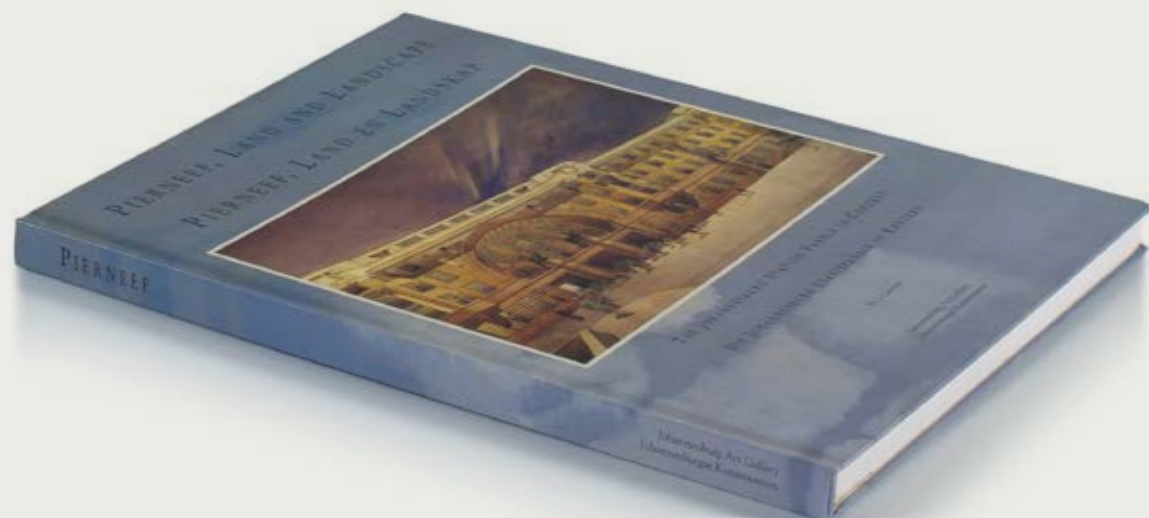
63

**NJ Coetzee**

*Pierneef, Land and  
Landscape: The  
Johannesburg Station  
Panels in Context*

Johannesburg: CBM Publishing, 1992

R3 000 – 5 000



64

**NJ Coetzee**

*JH Pierneef: Die Stasiepanele/  
The Station Panels (Exhibition  
Catalogue)*

Stellenbosch: Die Rupert-Kunststifting,  
2010.

**Wilhelm van Rensburg (ed);**

*A Space for Landscape:  
The Work of JH Pierneef  
(Exhibition Catalogue)*

Johannesburg: The Standard Bank  
Gallery, exhibition catalogue, 2015;

R2 000 – 3 000

The first publication accompanied  
the exhibition, *JH Pierneef – The  
Johannesburg Station Panels: Long  
term loan from TRANSNET Foundation*  
Curated by Roy George and Deon  
Herselman, 2010 to present.

The second publication accompanied  
the exhibition, *A Space for Landscape:  
The Work of JH Pierneef* at the  
Standard Bank Gallery, 8 July to  
12 September 2015.



65

**La Motte**

*A Tribute to the Life and  
Work of JH Pierneef  
(Exhibition Catalogue)*

Franschhoek: La Motte Museum,  
2017

R800 – 1 200

This exhibition catalogue  
accompanied the exhibition, *A  
Tribute to the Life and Work of JH  
Pierneef*, held at La Motte Museum.



66

**JFW Grosskopf**

*Hendrik Pierneef:  
Die Man en sy Werk*

Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1945

R800 – 1 200



68

**JFW Grosskopf**

*Pierneef: Die Man en  
Sy Werk*

Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1945  
numbered 149/250 and  
signed by JH Pierneef and  
JFW Grosskopf

R1 000 – 2 000



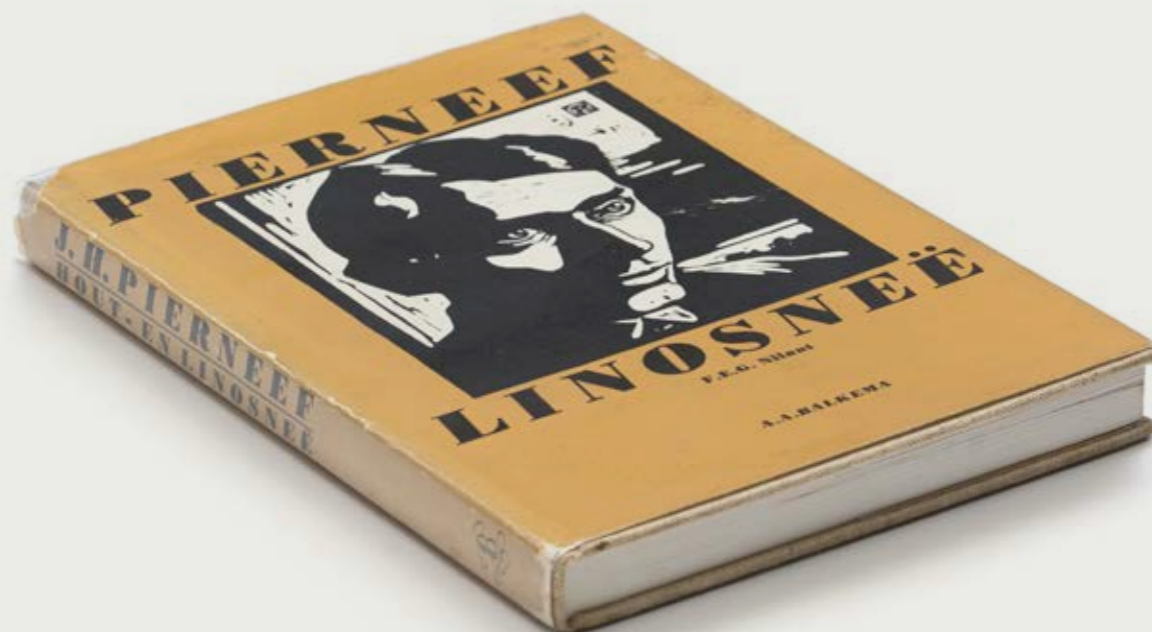
67

**FEG Nilant**

*Die Hout- en Linosneë  
van JH Pierneef*

Cape Town: AA Balkema, 1974

R1 200 – 1 800



69

**Pretoria Art Museum**

*Pretorian, Transvaler,  
South-African (Exhibition  
Catalogue)*

Pretoria: Pretoria Art Museum, 1986

**PG Nel**

*JH Pierneef: His Life and His  
Work; JH Pierneef*

Cape Town: Perskor, 1990

R1 200 – 1 600



