



Strauss & Co

Watercolour: Choreography of Chance and Control



May Online Auction
30 May to 6 June 2022

Session 1

WATERCOLOUR

Choreography of Chance and Control

www.straussart.co.za

Lots 1-60



WATERCOLOUR

Choreography of Chance and Control

Watercolour is a fluid, unpredictable and unforgiving medium, but in the hands of such great international artists such as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), William Blake (1757–1827), JMW Turner (1775–1851), Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986), Paul Klee (1926–1879), and South African artists Walter Battiss (1906–1982), Alan Crump (1949–2009) and Joni Brenner (1969–), it sings as no other medium can.

With oil paint, the surface is usually covered with a layer of ground or primer and then further layers of thin glazes or thick impasto. Areas can be painted and overpainted. The oil paint can be built up and scraped off. Mistakes or changes of mind can be hidden or easily adjusted. With watercolour, in contrast, the lightest of touches is necessary. Heavy overpainting would make the surface look dull and muddy. The medium is transparent and the bright white of the paper is best left to shine through, giving the colours a luminosity, freshness and brilliance that is unrivalled.

Although the medium of water-based paint is extremely old, dating back to palaeolithic cave

paintings, it was only with the invention of small, hard cakes of soluble watercolour in portable paintboxes by William Reeves in 1780, fine-haired, flexible sable brushes, and wove papers with the option of hot-pressed, cold-pressed or unpressed textured surfaces robust enough to stand up to the wet medium, that watercolour really took off for artists as a versatile medium of choice in its own right.

The title of this session, *Choreography of Chance and Control*,¹ comes from a statement by contemporary South African artist Penny Siopis and it highlights the mercurial nature of painting in watercolour. Mastery of the medium is often greatly underestimated, and artists continue to find ways to explore its possibilities and push its limits. In this focused session of 60 artworks executed in the medium of watercolour on paper, Strauss & Co pays tribute to some of the remarkable local artists who have made an immeasurable contribution to the genre.

1. Penny Siopis quoted in Gerrit Olivier (ed) (2014) *Penny Siopis: Time and Again*, Wits University Press: Johannesburg, page 186.



1
Joni Brenner
 ZIMBABWEAN/SOUTH AFRICAN 1969–
Skull Series (I)
 signed with the artist's initials and dated 2022 in pencil in the margin
 watercolour on paper
 19 by 33 cm, unframed
 R15 000 – 20 000

'I have in my possession a book that I borrowed from Alan Crump on the work of another South African artist, Marlene Dumas. It is a book on her watercolours, and I treasure it for the ways it continues to inspire my own practice and thoughts about this medium, and also for the ways it stands as a link to my friendship with Alan, to those hours of looking at and talking about watercolour.

The book is called *Wet Dreams* which speaks volumes about the irreverence of Dumas' attitude to painting and her fierce directness. It also points to the uncontrolled emotional, perhaps even psychological nature of this medium. I recall listening to Dumas speaking about her exhibition *Intimate Relations* at the Standard Bank Gallery in 2008 and I had in my mind that she was like a flood: raging, fast, torrential, all consuming.

Watercolour, flooding, sexuality and force are not usually associated concepts. In her book she writes the following:

For me watercolours used to be associated with failed artists (eg Hitler), retired politicians (eg Churchill) and Sunday painters. It was the most uncritical, non-aggressive asexual thing to do. Then its image changed. Now everyone is doing it. Falling for this seductive, addictive medium, it's hard to stop.'

Possibly both the seduction and the addiction to watercolour is related to the balance of control and collapse; that tension that has to be held, managed, teased and tested.

In my own practice, and I see it in Dumas, and in Crump, also in South African artist Penny Siopis and others who reject the delicate 'non-aggressive asexual' connotations of watercolour, working with watercolour requires a practice of constant letting go and reigning in. Of her engagement with a

medium that spills and pools, Siopis wrote:

I am fascinated by the strangeness, openness and vitality of this choreography of chance and control, what floats, falls, fractures and fixes.²

Art historian Karin Skawran wrote that in Crump's last series of watercolours:

the abstracted images of *Cinnamomum camphora* (*Camphor Trees, Vergelegen*), appear as though their forms are governed by their own laws. The apparent spontaneity of his approach, however, did not preclude careful planning and control, deliberation and forethought.³

There is control and there is submission, or risk. One afternoon when, as a young staff member at Wits University, I visited Alan I was shocked to find he had submerged a painting in the swimming pool to scrub it down. I always think of him when I take my own disastrous watercolours to the bathtub and erase them with the hand shower.

To make art is to engage in an encounter with the medium, and watercolour is perhaps one of the more unpredictable and feistier of mediums; powerful when unleashed.'

Joni Brenner – May 2022

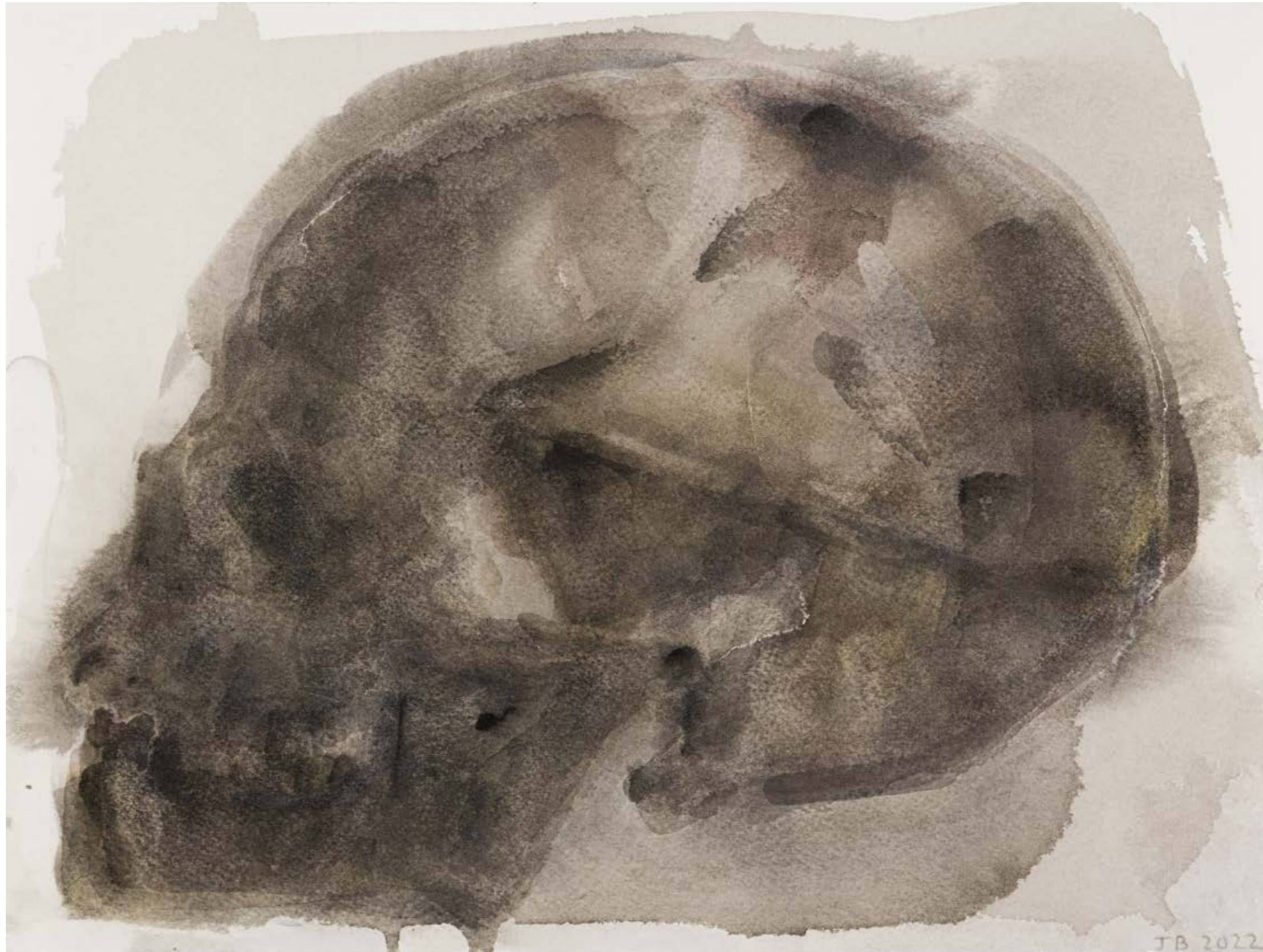
1. Marlene Dumas (2003) quoted in Thomas Knubben and Tilman Osterwold (eds) *Marlene Dumas: Wet Dreams*, Städtische Galerie Ravensburg / Hatje Cantz: Germany, page 78.

2. Penny Siopis quoted in Gerrit Olivier (ed) (2014) *Penny Siopis: Time and Again*, Wits University Press: Johannesburg, page 186.

3. Karin Skawran in Federico Freschi (ed) (2011) *Alan Crump: A Fearless Vision*, Johannesburg Art Gallery: Johannesburg, page 49.



2
Joni Brenner
 ZIMBABWEAN/SOUTH AFRICAN 1969–
Skull Series (II)
 signed with the artist's initials and dated 2022 in pencil in the margin
 watercolour on paper
 15 by 30 cm, unframed
 R15 000 – 20 000



3

Joni Brenner

ZIMBABWEAN/SOUTH AFRICAN 1969-

Skull Series (III)

signed with the artist's initials

and dated 2022 in pencil

in the margin

watercolour on paper

23 by 31 cm, unframed

R15 000 – 20 000

4

Alan Crump

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–2009

Untitled 4, Artifact Series

2001

signed and dated '01
watercolour on paper
sheet size: 57,5 by 76 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



5

Alan Crump

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–2009

Untitled 5, Artifact Series

2001

signed and dated '01
watercolour on paper
sheet size: 57 by 76,5 cm

R20 000 – 30 000



6

Alan Crump

SOUTH AFRICAN 1949–2009

Composition with Standing Forms

signed and dated '84
watercolour and pastel on paper
68 by 64 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



Alan Crump distinguished himself as a watercolourist with an unrivalled mastery of this notoriously difficult medium. He was driven by a fearless vision of excellence and his watercolours are a testament to his unwavering vision and consummate skill as an artist.

Crump is perhaps best remembered as an important and influential arts administrator in the South African art world and as Professor of Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he had a significant influence on generations of students. A major retrospective of his work was held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and at the National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown in 2011.



7

Senzo Shabangu

SOUTH AFRICAN 1985-

Horse and Rider

signed and dated 17
watercolour and charcoal on paper
72,5 by 71,5 cm, unframed

R8 000 – 12 000



8

Senzo Shabangu

SOUTH AFRICAN 1985-

Woman and Man with Cityscape

signed and dated 17
watercolour and charcoal on paper
unframed

R8 000 – 12 000

9

Patrick Makumbe

ZIMBABWEAN 1978-

Two Seated Figures

ink and watercolour on paper
92 by 63 cm

R4 000 – 6 000



10

Braam Kruger

SOUTH AFRICAN 1950–2008

The Rape of Europa

signed and dated 90
watercolour on paper
51 by 72 cm

R5 000 – 8 000

The present lot references the paintings by Titian (Isabella Stewart-Gardner Museum, Boston) and Rubens (Prado Museum, Madrid) of the same Greek myth.



11

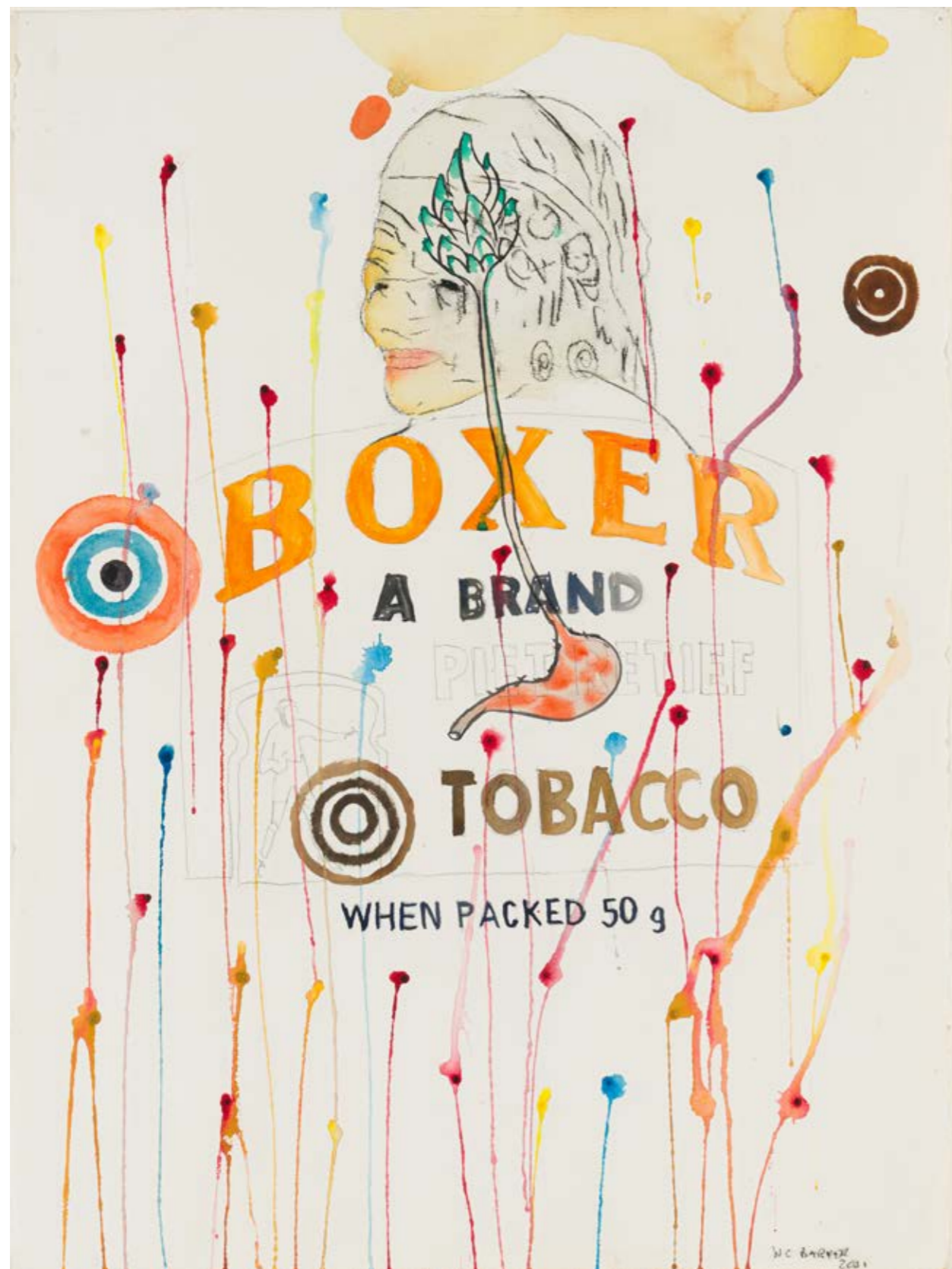
Wayne Barker

SOUTH AFRICAN 1963–

Boxer

signed and dated 2001
watercolour, pencil and
charcoal on paper
sheet size: 77 by 57 cm

R10 000 – 15 000



12

Clare Menck

SOUTH AFRICAN 1969–

Cedarberg Male Bather

signed, dated 2017 and inscribed
with the title in pencil in the margin;
inscribed with the artist's name, the
date and the title on the reverse
watercolour on paper
28 by 38 cm

R4 000 – 6 000



13

Anna Vorster

SOUTH AFRICAN 1928–1990

Abstract Landscape

signed and dated 79
watercolour on card
19,5 by 28,5 cm

R3 000 – 4 000



14

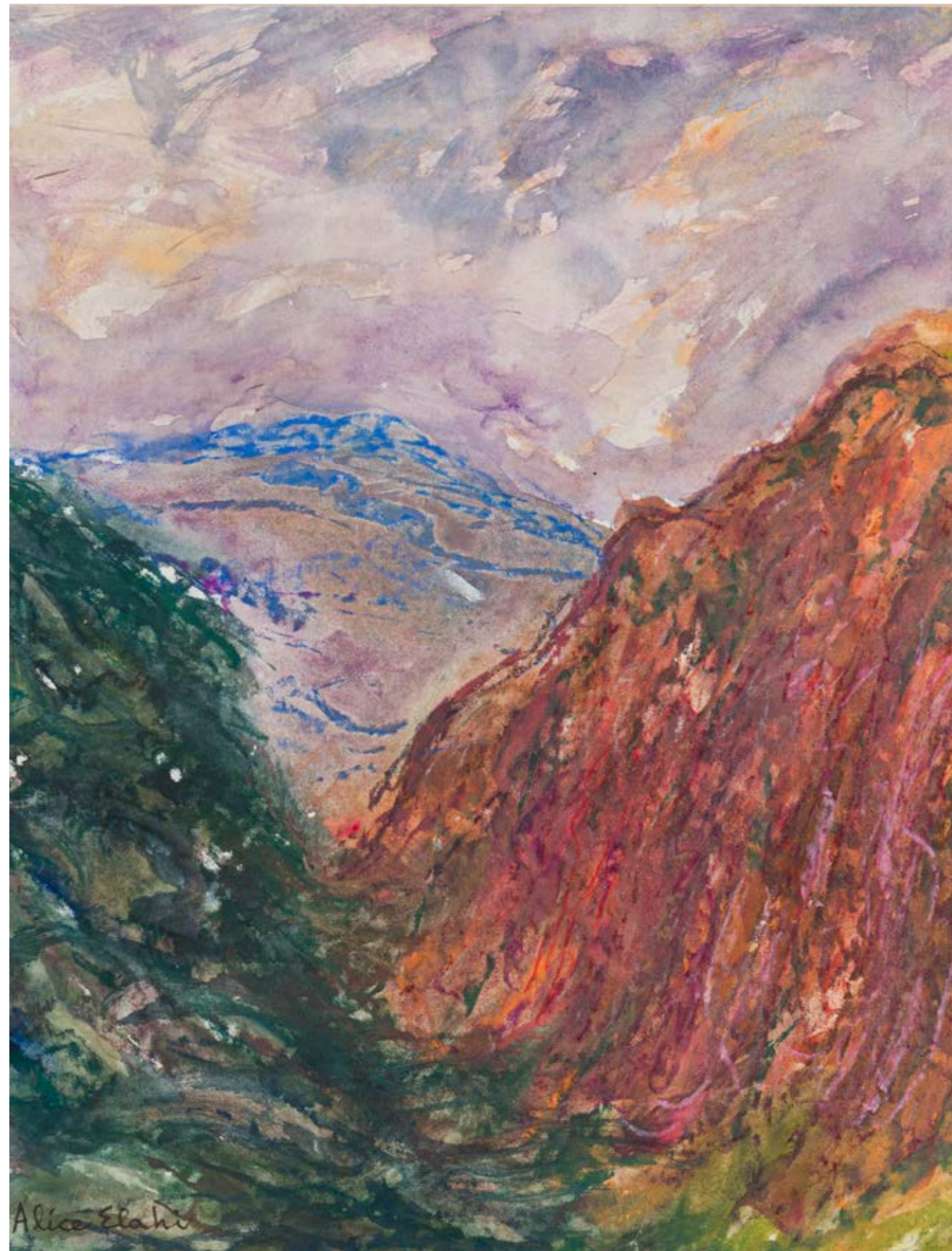
Alice Elahi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2020

Sunset

signed; inscribed with the title
on the reverse of the board
watercolour on artist's
illustration board
27 by 29 cm

R1 000 – 2 000



15

Alice Elahi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1926–2020

*In the Poort,
Seweweekspoort*

signed; inscribed with the title
on the reverse of the paper
watercolour on paper
42,5 by 32,5 cm

R1 500 – 2 000



16
Walter Battiss
 SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982
Seagulls
 watercolour on paper
 30 by 39 cm, unframed
 R20 000 – 30 000
 PROVENANCE
 Estate Walter Battiss.

Throughout his life Walter Battiss continued to paint in his favourite medium, watercolour, and he demonstrated a remarkable understanding of the medium and its subtleties. His watercolours originate in a conservative tradition, initially the recording of rock art and an engagement with landscape painting, the latter which he explored in his first years as a teacher at Pretoria Boys' High School in the 1930s. The dry, hot landscape that he at first shied away from was later to be masterfully captured in a bold manner with the use of an adventurous colour palette.

The importance and influence of both landscape and rock art prevails throughout his career. The landscape becomes part of a fresh and intuitive way of engaging with nature and the numerous places, particularly the islands, that he visited in

the course of his life. His landscapes are not topographical paintings but images that become diaries of his travels, diaries of place that form a kind of shorthand, a visual travelogue, and often culminate in both sketchy and highly developed works such as *Seagulls* (lot 16).

Bathers (lot 19) and *Farewell my Son* (lot 20) show the strong influence of rock art reinterpreted in a highly stylised manner – but there is a playfulness that goes far beyond the tradition of rock art recording and documenting. His very early watercolour *African Daisies* (lot 25) and the later *Composition with Seaweed* (lot 17) also illustrate how acutely Battiss was aware of plant forms and how intently he observed the natural world.

Two Nudes (lot 21) is an example of his uncanny ability to transform observations

into stylised, sometimes even child-like representations. In this instance he paints two figures sitting on a birdlike floating tree branch wafting through washes of pinks, apricots, blues and violet. Artist Karel Nel comments, 'this is almost an anti-landscape painting, an internalised fantastical landscape of the mind.'

Battiss's invention of Fook Island stemmed from his intense fascination with the Greek, Indian Ocean and Polynesian islands he visited. He developed postage stamps, passports, birds and animals for the mythical realm. The fantastical calligraphic lexicon, Fook Alphabet, developed from his deep interest in rock art and the visual language and alphabet-like forms of rock engravings. The two delightful watercolours in lot 18 relate to this project.



17
Walter Battiss
 SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982
Composition with Seaweed
 signed
 watercolour on card
 26 by 19,5 cm, unframed
 R6 000 – 8 000
 PROVENANCE
 Estate Walter Battiss.



18

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Fook Alphabet, two

watercolour on paper
each sheet size: 10 by 28,5 cm,
unframed

R8 000 – 12 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.

19

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Bathers

signed, dated 1976 and inscribed

with the title

watercolour on paper

12,5 by 25 cm, unframed

R6 000 – 8 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.





20

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Farewell my Son

signed and inscribed with the title

watercolour on paper

46 by 29,5 cm, unframed

R20 000 – 30 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.



21

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Two Nudes

watercolour on card

36,5 by 51 cm, unframed

R30 000 – 50 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.

22

Nicky Leigh

SOUTH AFRICAN 1966–2017

Seated Nude

signed and dated '91; inscribed with 'catalogue number 21' on the reverse

watercolour on paper
31 by 24 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000



23

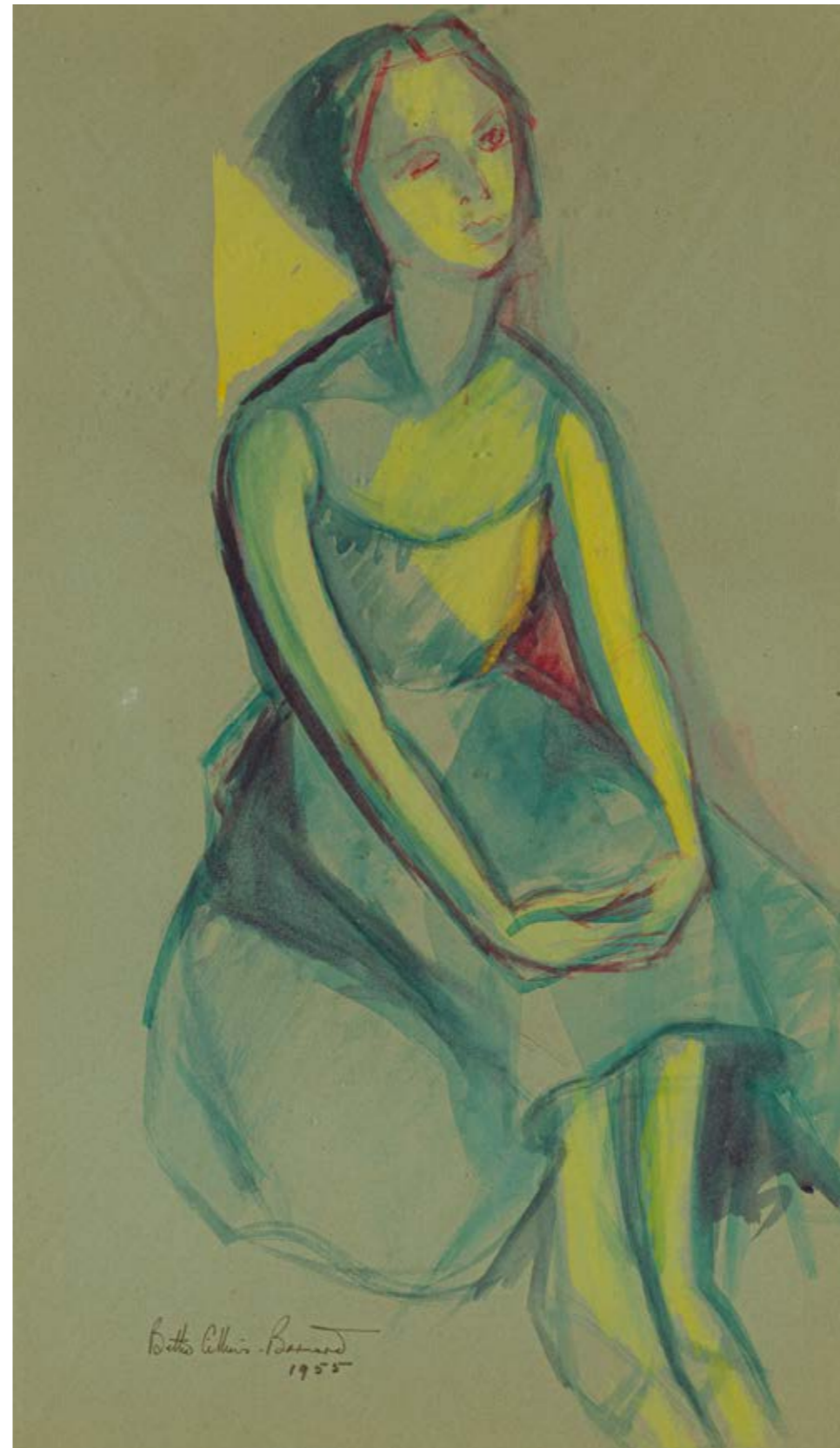
Bettie Cilliers-Barnard

SOUTH AFRICAN 1914–2010

Seated Woman

signed and dated 1955; with a dedication to 'Phillip and Lee' from the artist, dated 1991
watercolour on paper laid down on card
70 by 41 cm

R20 000 – 30 000





24

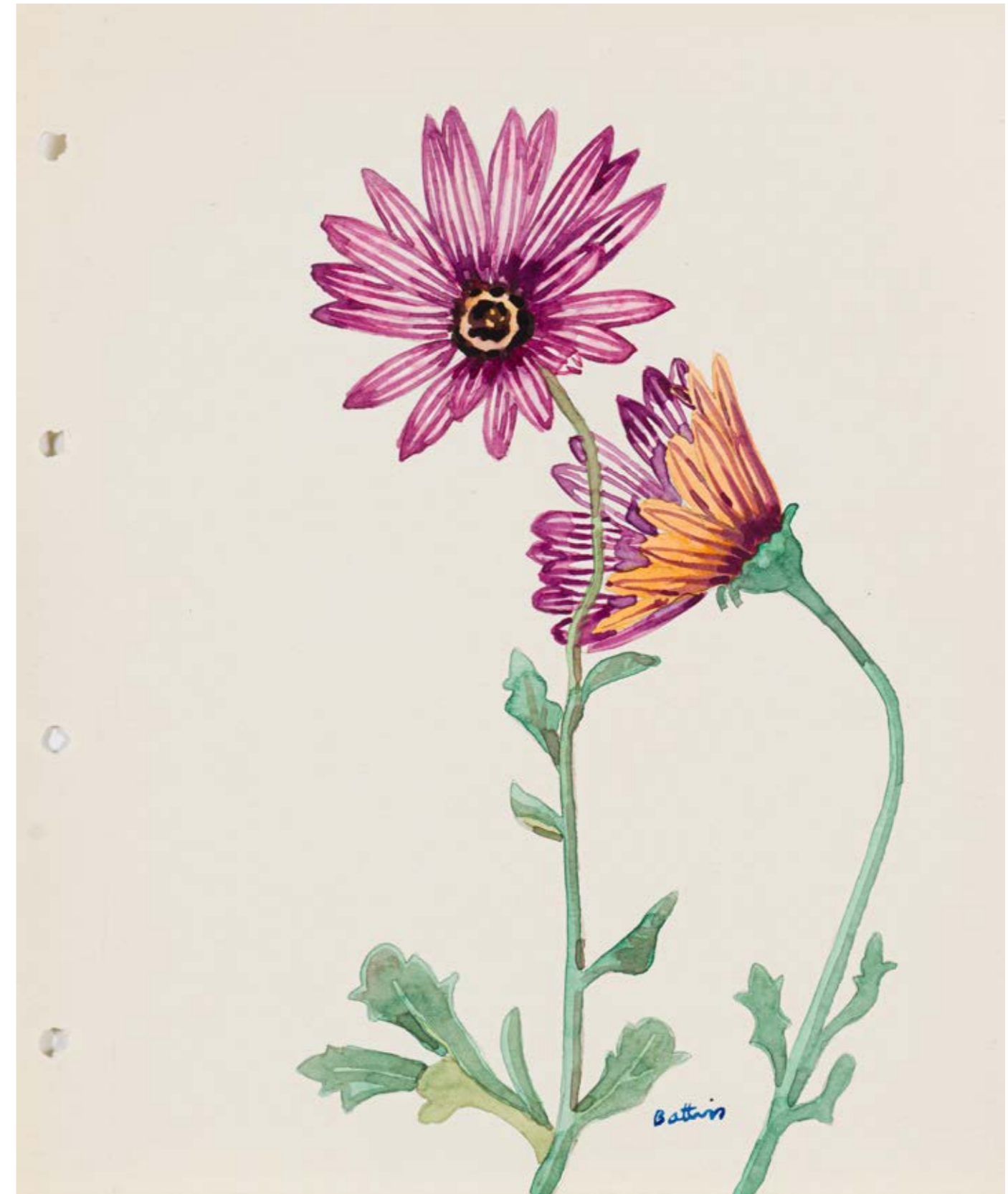
Penny Siopis

SOUTH AFRICAN 1953–

Pinky Pinky (Capture)

signed and dated 2002; signed and inscribed with the title on the reverse; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the medium on a Goodman Gallery label adhered to the reverse
ink and watercolour on paper
23,5 by 32 cm

R25 000 – 35 000



25

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

African Daisies

signed
watercolour on paper
20,5 by 17 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000

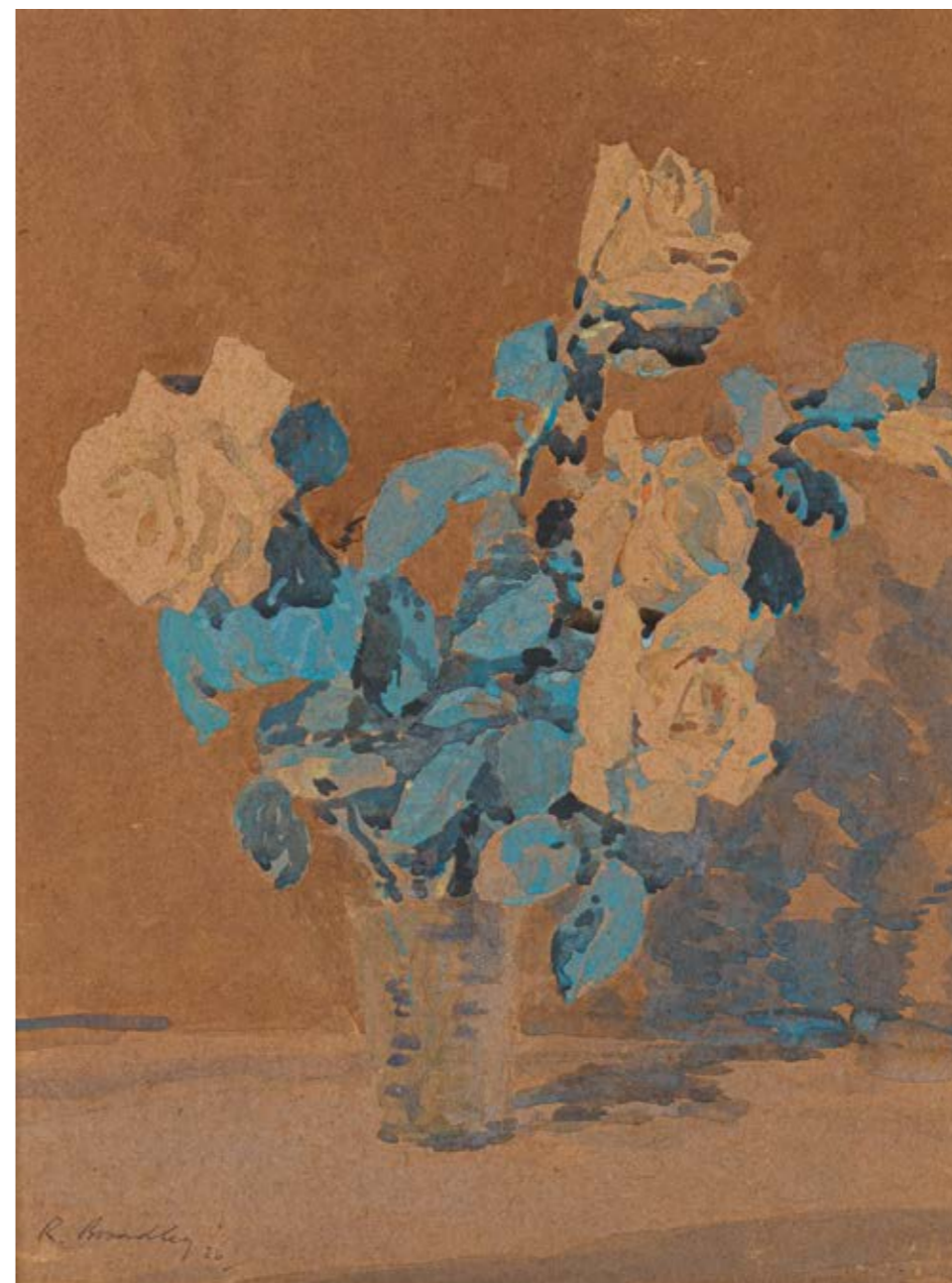
PROVENANCE
Estate Walter Battiss.



26
Maud Sumner
SOUTH AFRICAN 1902-1985
Jug of Mixed Flowers with Tulips
signed
watercolour and ink on card
55,5 by 37 cm
R20 000 – 30 000



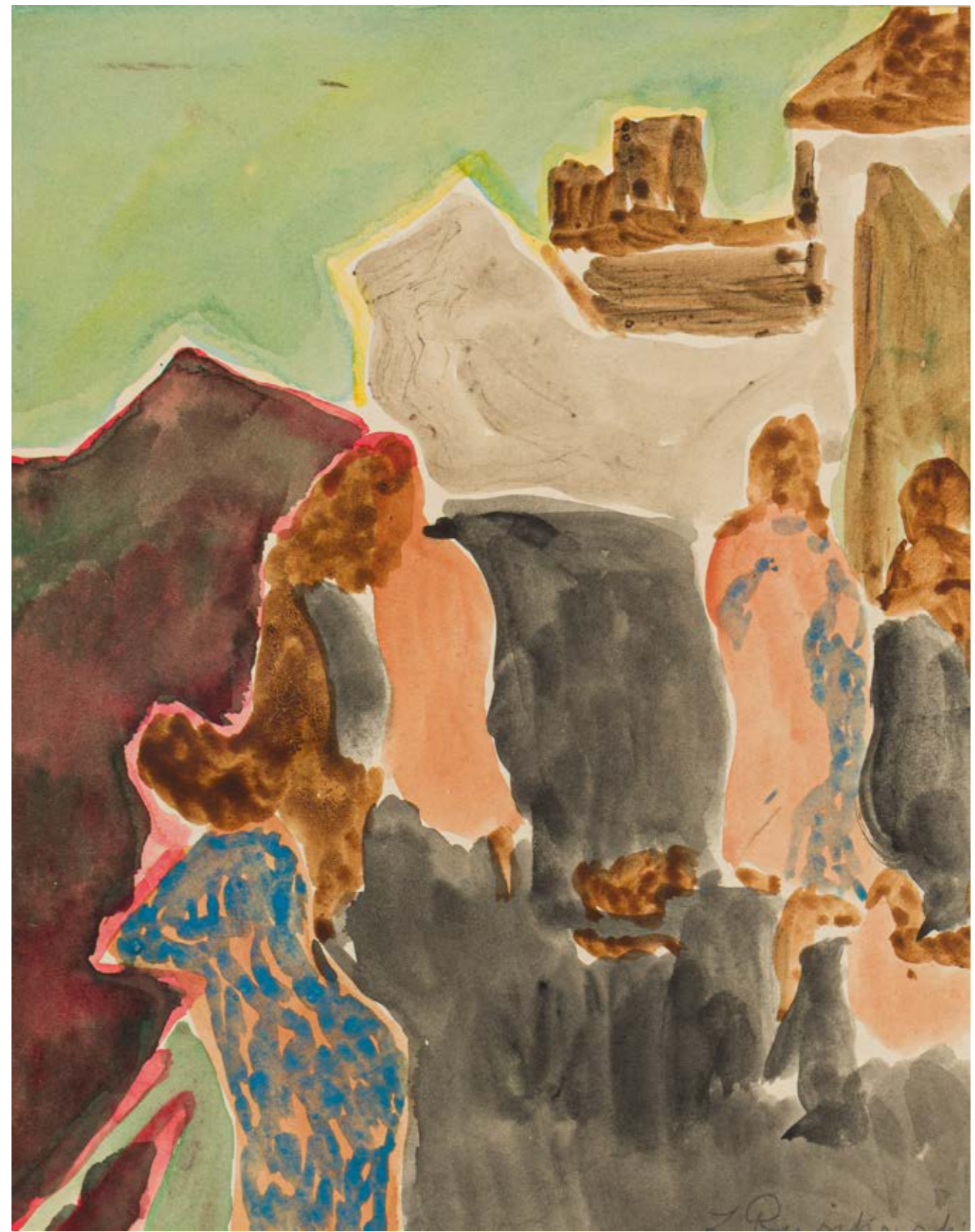
27
Robert Broadley
SOUTH AFRICAN 1908-1988
Vases of Flowers, two
signed and dated 36 and 37
watercolour on card laid
down on board
35 by 27 cm
R2 000 – 3 000



28
Zdzislaw Ruszkowski
POLISH 1907-1991
Doorstep
signed
watercolour on paper
47 by 29,5 cm
R4 000 – 5 000



29
Zdzislaw Ruszkowski
POLISH 1907-1991
Abstract Figures
signed in pencil
watercolour on artist's
illustration board
29 by 23 cm
R3 000 – 4 000



30

Giuseppe Cattaneo

SOUTH AFRICAN 1929–2015

Death of Franzy

signed and dated 1991; inscribed
with the artist's name, the title,
the date and the medium on the
reverse

watercolour on paper
60 by 42 cm

R12 000 – 15 000





31

David Mogano

SOUTH AFRICAN 1932–2000

N Tvl Rain Prayers

signed and dated 1984; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the date on the reverse watercolour on paper 56,5 by 76,6 cm, unframed

R7 000 – 9 000

Upon completing his schooling in Pietersburg (now Polokwane), David Mogano left for Johannesburg and found a job in a hotel as a cook. Blessed with a natural ability to draw, he began to study art at the Polly Street Art Centre in 1959 under Cecil Skotnes and Sydney Khumalo.

He painted exclusively in the medium of watercolour and is best known for his detailed, naturalistic narratives of township life. The three watercolours on our current auction (lots 31, 32 and 33) capture the minutiae of peri-urban life, with all the details of boys running, men on bicycles, groups of Methodist churchgoers in their distinctive red and white Sunday uniforms, and the smoky chimneys of Pimville in the Greater Soweto area, still unelectrified in the apartheid-era 1980s.

A large retrospective exhibition of works by David Mogano spanning a period of 25 years was held at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in 1999.



32

David Mogano

SOUTH AFRICAN 1932–2000

Pimville

signed and dated 1987; inscribed with the artist's name, the title and the date on the reverse watercolour on card 50 by 75 cm, unframed

R6 000 – 8 000



33

David Mogano

SOUTH AFRICAN 1932–2000

*Sunday Church Service
(Presbyterian) (sic), Pietersburg
Township, N Tvl*

signed and dated 1986; inscribed
with the title on the reverse; inscribed
with the artist's name and the title
'Thursday Prayers' on the reverse of
the paper

watercolour on paper

33,5 by 50 cm

R5 000 – 7 000



34

Gregoire Boonzaier

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

*Die Pad na die Malutis vanaf
Kestell, Oos Vrystaat*

signed and dated 1983; signed and
inscribed with the title on the reverse

watercolour on paper

34 by 54 cm

R15 000 – 20 000



35

Gregoire Boonzaier

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

Cape Cottages

signed and dated 1964

watercolour and ink on paper

36 by 54 cm

R15 000 – 20 000

36

Sidney Goldblatt

SOUTH AFRICAN 1919–1979

Initiation

signed
watercolour on paper
31 by 46,5 cm, unframed

R12 000 – 16 000



38

Gregoire Boonzaier

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

Pruimtabakraaier, Oudtshoorn, K.P. (Chewing Tobacco Winder)

signed and dated 1957; inscribed with
the title on the reverse
watercolour on paper
37 by 52 cm

R5 000 – 7 000



37

Gregoire Boonzaier

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

Workers Winding Chewing Tobacco

signed and dated 1962
watercolour and charcoal
on paper

36,5 by 54,5 cm

R15 000 – 20 000



39

Gregoire Boonzaier

SOUTH AFRICAN 1909–2005

Sorting Tobacco Leaves

signed and dated 1961
watercolour on paper
36 by 52 cm

R5 000 – 7 000





40

Alexander Rose-Innes

SOUTH AFRICAN 1915–1996

Rocks at Onrust, Cape Province

signed, dated 66 and inscribed with the title; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on the reverse
watercolour and ink on paper
35,5 by 55 cm

R12 000 – 16 000



41
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef
SOUTH AFRICAN 1886-1957
Landscape with Trees and Mountains
signed and dated 1944
watercolour and pencil on artist's illustration board
26 by 36,5 cm
R40 000 – 50 000



42
Jacob Hendrik Pierneef
SOUTH AFRICAN 1886-1957
Landscape with Farmstead
signed with the artist's initials
watercolour on paper laid down on card
22,5 by 33 cm
R50 000 – 70 000



43

Grace Anderson

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1975

Street Scene, Cornwall

signed and dated 1925
watercolour on card
25,5 by 27 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.

The four rare architectural watercolours by British-born artist Grace Anderson, painted in Cornwall before she emigrated to South Africa, are a wonderful addition to this focus on the exacting medium of watercolour.

Anderson was a peripheral member of the Bloomsbury Group in London between 1910 and 1920 before accepting the post of inspector of art for the department of education in the Transvaal.

Walter Battiss was born in Somerset East and came to Johannesburg in 1929 to study art, initially at the Johannesburg Technical College in Braamfontein. In 1936 he began teaching art at Pretoria Boys' High School and enrolled for a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts at Unisa. Anderson had been one of his examiners. In March 1940, Anderson and Battiss were married and a year later they moved into their Norman Eaton-designed house in 20th Street, Menlo Park, Pretoria. By all accounts the couple had a close and loving relationship and Battiss was devastated by Anderson's death in 1975.



44

Grace Anderson

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1975

Houses, Cornwall

signed
watercolour on paper
25 by 35 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.



45

Grace Anderson

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1975

St Ives, Cornwall

signed with the artist's initials and dated 1919; inscribed with VII and the title on the reverse
watercolour on paper
25,5 by 35,5 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.



46

Grace Anderson

BRITISH/SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1975

Crooked Chimneys, St Ives, Cornwall

signed; inscribed with the title on the reverse
watercolour on paper
35 by 24 cm, unframed

R4 000 – 6 000

PROVENANCE

Estate Walter Battiss.



47

Durant Sihlali

SOUTH AFRICAN 1935–2004

*Old Kliptown; 13th Avenue
Alexandra Township; The Donkey
Cart; Ema Domini in Kliptown*

each signed and inscribed with the title
in pencil in the margin
watercolour and monotypes
two sheet sizes: 28 by 21 cm; the other
two: 21 by 28 cm

R3 000 – 5 000

Four individual works framed as one.



48

Walter Battiss

SOUTH AFRICAN 1906–1982

Goal Posts

signed
watercolour on card
28 by 25 cm, unframed

R6 000 – 8 000

PROVENANCE
Estate Walter Battiss.

49
Sydney Carter
SOUTH AFRICAN 1874–1945
Nocturnal Street Scene
signed
watercolour on paper
36 by 25,5 cm
R3 000 – 5 000



50
Sydney Carter
SOUTH AFRICAN 1874–1945
*Wine Cellar, Vergelegen,
Somerset West*
signed; inscribed with the title on
a label adhered to the reverse
watercolour on paper laid down
on backing board
26,5 by 38 cm
R4 000 – 6 000



51
Nils Andersen
SOUTH AFRICAN 1897–1972
Cape Farmhouse
signed
watercolour on paper laid
down on board
30 by 46 cm
R5 000 – 7 000



52

Gordon Vorster

SOUTH AFRICAN 1924–1988

Herd of Zebra

signed

watercolour on paper

52,5 by 72,5 cm

R5 000 – 7 000



53

Ulrich Schwanecke

SOUTH AFRICAN 1932–2007

In the Kaap Valley (Near Barberton)

signed and dated 81; inscribed with

the title on the reverse

watercolour on paper

45 by 66 cm

R2 500 – 3 500



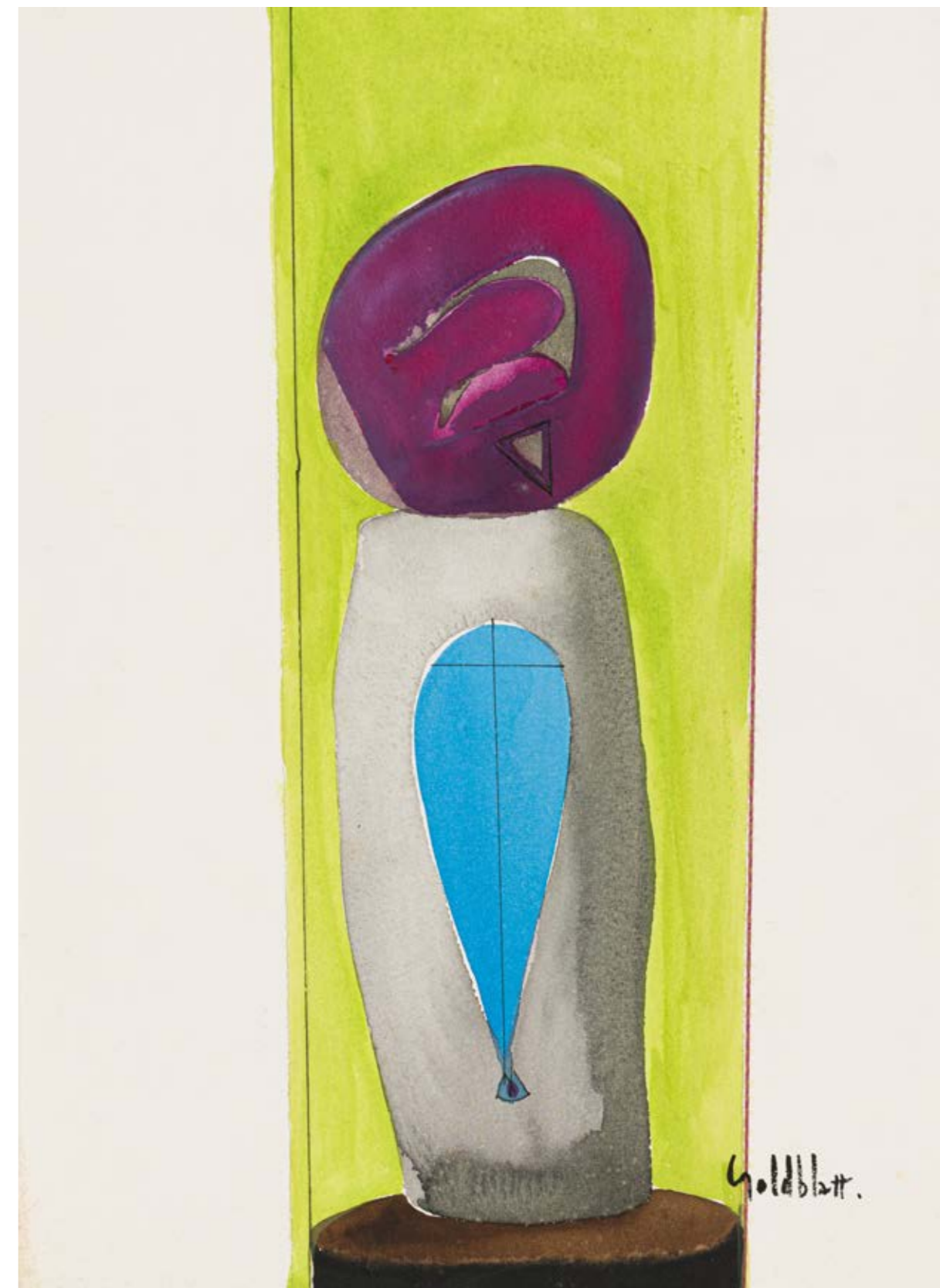
54
Sidney Goldblatt
SOUTH AFRICAN 1919–1979
Composition in Turquoise
signed
watercolour and ink on paper
28 by 38 cm, unframed
R8 000 – 12 000



55
Sidney Goldblatt
SOUTH AFRICAN 1919–1979
Abstract Composition in Brown
watercolour on paper
38 by 56 cm, unframed
R12 000 – 16 000



56
Sidney Goldblatt
SOUTH AFRICAN 1919–1979
*Abstract Composition in Black
and Brown*
signed
watercolour on paper
32 by 50 cm, unframed
R10 000 – 15 000



57
Sidney Goldblatt
SOUTH AFRICAN 1919–1979
Sculptural Form
signed
watercolour on paper
38 by 28,5 cm, unframed
R8 000 – 12 000



58

William Timlin

SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1943

The Witch

signed, dated 1939 and inscribed
with the title in the margin
watercolour on artist's board
49,5 by 27 cm

R10 000 – 15 000



59

William Timlin

SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1943

The Witches' Cats

signed and inscribed with the title
and the artist's owl emblem
watercolour on paper laid down
on card
30 by 45 cm

R40 000 – 60 000



60

William Timlin

SOUTH AFRICAN 1892–1943

The Gift

watercolour on paper
18 by 18 cm

R12 000 – 16 000

