

# Centennial

A Century of South African Art  
from the Sanlam Art Collection  
1918 – 2018



“Great nations write their autobiographies in the three manuscripts: the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last.”

- John Ruskin (1819 – 1900)

## Foreword

The Sanlam Art Collection has been part of the Sanlam Group for more than half of its existence. Founded in 1965 the collection holds more than 2000 items associated with more than 500 South African artists whose works cover more than a century. Sanlam actively shares its collection with all South Africans in exhibitions at the Sanlam Art Gallery in Bellville and the Sanlam Art Lounge in Sandton and in regular collaboration with public museums and private collections on themed exhibitions. This provides the public with unique opportunities to view works which would not normally be easily accessible and to gain a deeper understanding of the value and meaning of art in a broader social and art historical context.

Art provides us with mechanisms to negotiate our differences and to develop idiosyncratic as well as shared visions of the past and the future. Viewed as a barometer of change, art plays a crucial role in the realisation of a democratic and free South Africa. By collecting art and displaying it wherever we can Sanlam, besides being a major role player in the economic growth of South Africa, contributes to the mental sustenance that makes this a truly unique country and nation.

Sanlam is indeed proud to have contributed meaningfully to society for over 100 years and to the development and preservation of the visual arts for more than 50 years. The Sanlam Art Collection stands as physical and symbolic testament to this company's commitment to South Africa its people and its diverse cultures and will continue to do so for the generations to come.

**Johan van Zyl**  
*Chairman: Sanlam Ltd*

# Centennial

## A Century of South African Art from the Sanlam Art Collection 1918 – 2018

The Sanlam Art Collection came into being on 9 March 1965 when the Sanlam Board approved the acquisition of 12 paintings by well-known artists for the production of a prestige calendar in the coming year. The principle motivations contained in the company minutes in support of the proposal at the time were that:

*A large company such as Sanlam had an obligation not only to its policy holders but the society within which it succeeds as a business.*

*The company had already extended itself beyond its core business of life insurance and had already made significant contributions to the church, culture and education.*

*The company had to date contributed little within the sphere of the fine arts where South Africans had already achieved much even internationally and that a number of well-known artists are much sought after today already.*

*The acquisition of artworks would not only encourage artists to produce quality works but also prove a good investment for the company.*

The collection has grown considerably since and has proved to be a good investment, with the current valuation of the collection exceeding twenty times what it has cost to acquire. More importantly the collection is seen not only in Sanlam offices but also in touring exhibitions across South Africa. For many South Africans the Sanlam Art Collection was their first encounter with art and the memory of this persists. It is not surprising then that collecting and showing art has become one of the activities which distinguishes Sanlam from other companies. Sanlam continues to acquire significant images by established and emerging artists in South Africa and with this Centennial exhibition reaffirms its commitment to supporting the visual arts for generations to come.

The most recent acquisition made in 2018, a painting by Richard Mudariki (1985 - ) titled *The Model* 2015 (cat.no. 41), provides the entry point to the selection of works on this exhibition. The triptych presents the viewer with a view into a painting and sculpting studio in which sits a “model” being Cecil John Rhodes. The image of Rhodes is derived from Marion Walgate’s colonial era bronze of Cecil John Rhodes which, after much agitation by students and supporters of the #RhodesMustFall campaign, was removed from the University of Cape Town’s upper campus. Mudariki’s take on the campaign and the symbolism of Rhodes today is to a degree tongue in cheek, as revealed in the various painted and sculpted versions that stand incomplete and apparently abandoned in the studio. Direct reference is made to the “poo-throwing” actions of the #Rhodesmustfall movement and the sculpture’s location on the University campus by the inclusion of a Greek style columned portico and pediment. Deliberately quirky and ambiguous in its spacial arrangement the painting foregrounds some of the crucial issues that South Africans are confronted with today. The legacies of colonialism and Apartheid, symbolised by Rhodes, are still conspicuously present in the daily discourse of all South Africans. The manner in which this discourse is conducted has often been violent and one sided with little scope for a diversity of views and potential for negotiation. Mudariki’s painting reflects on this discourse as Hayden Proud, Curator for Historical Paintings and Sculpture at Iziko South African National Gallery, writes:

*“As such this painting as a whole, seems to stand as a plea for freedom of artistic expression if not a more careful consideration of heritage and the problematic of the past. It appears to underline the importance of a diversity of viewpoints on history, rather than the poverty of a compulsory – and supposedly correct one.”*

Mudariki’s painting marks a time and place in South Africa’s history, the memory of which in people’s minds will become faded and dulled with time, whereas this

painting will continue to invoke and refresh this memory, although in each instance of its viewing this will be quite different. In this manner Mudariki's painting becomes a valuable resource for the mind to contemplate and reconsider the past without the strictures of a particular point of view or interpretation. The great benefit of art is that it permits reinterpretation again and again, generating new insights, building new relationships between objects time and knowledge thereby enriching the lives and the minds of those that wish to engage with it. Here art is a metaphor for freedom. Within the practice and appreciation of art anyone can be free. Free to be oneself, free to think "outside of the box", free to speak, free to consider the impossible and more. It is therefore appropriate that a company such as Sanlam should build an art collection and share it with everyone willing to look and participate. The collection symbolises the company's commitment to those freedoms which secure a better future for all its stakeholders for generations to come.

**Centennial consists of a selection of 70 works which cover a period between 1918 and 2018. It showcases some of the collection's most celebrated works, historical depth, diversity of media and range of subject. This represents a small proportion of the collection's holdings yet it provides a representative sample of the collection and an insight into the history of South African art over a century.**

John Ruskin's declaration that art is the only trustworthy document which reflects a nation's history becomes materially and visually manifested through these art works directly and often indirectly by inference and suggestion. The text which follows elucidates some of works on the exhibition while also referring to additional works in the collection which are illustrated alongside.

In contrast to Mudariki's political commentary, early twentieth century of South African art was concerned with very different issues. The paintings of Pieter Wenning (1873 – 1921) and Hugo Naudé (1869 – 1941) on this exhibition are exemplary of how South African art had begun to take on a character of its own yet was still firmly committed to a European idiom. Until a little more than half century earlier, painters who had made South Africa their home applied established aesthetic conventions of the *sublime* and the *picturesque* upon their representations of a landscape they had not encountered before. The results in many instances presented the viewer with a Southern African topography in European tones and a stylisation of form which at

points emulates the formalised garden architecture which had become popular in Europe almost a century before. Wenning's landscape *Transvaal Evening, Nelspruit* (cat. no. 69) still retains traces of this European romantic tradition yet the landscape is quite distinctly South Africa in its ruggedness. This painting was probably painted around 1916 /17. A year later 1918 was a significant year for Wenning, as at an especially organised auction of his works in Cape Town, he failed to make any significant sales. Ironically little more than 50 years later this painting would become the star attraction of an exhibition of 100 paintings by Wenning organised by Dr Helmut Silberberg in 1968, where prices for his work attained unheard-of levels. The collection of Dr Helmut Silberberg was acquired by Sanlam in 1989 augmenting the collection by more than 1000 items by South African artists.

Naudé's painting, *Malay Quarter Cape Town* (cat. no. 42) is in the same idiom as Wenning's. The small avenue is presented as a romantic vignette placing the viewer at the advantage of being unseen, observing the "simple" life of the Malay population on an urban street. As much as Naudé's painting provides a view of the life of others as a calm and amicable relation with the environment, it belies the much harsher circumstances of what living in this area was like at time.

South African art up to the early 1950s remains dominated by the established genres, of landscape, still life and portraiture. The approach adopted by most practitioners followed European models promoted and supported by established art schools and academies. Whilst European artists at the start of the twentieth were experimenting with ever more radical approaches in the visual arts - exemplified by movements such as Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism and Cubism, South African artists remained committed to the traditions of Realism and Naturalism. Although South African artists were not entirely unaware of these artistic developments, few artists dared to adopt such daring aesthetic breaks with past. There were notable exceptions (Harry Trevor (1922 – 1970) (ill.1), Wolf Kibel (1903 – 1938) (ill.2), Moses Kottler (1890 – 1977) (cat. no.25) and Lippy Lipshitz (1903 – 1980) (ill.3.) to name a few), but most prominently celebrated today are Maggie Laubser (1886 – 1973) and Irma Stern (1894 – 1966). Maggie's sojourn in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy and Germany between



ill. 1



ill.2



ill.3



ill.4



ill.5

1913 and 1926 had a profound affect on her approach to painting and her outlook on life. Her deliberate use of colour and compositional daring in her early works from the 1920s show her at an expressive high point in her career. Returning to South Africa to exhibit, her expressive paintings were vilified and rejected by the general public and prominent critics. This did not deter her and she continued to produce daring landscapes, *Poplars - Italy*, (circa 1920) (cat. no. 28) and remarkable portraits such as her "Self Portrait" (cat. no. 29) of 1928, which defied the established norms promoted by prominent critics and museum directors such as Edward Roworth (1880 – 1964) (ill. 4) then director of the South African National Gallery, whose steadfast insistence on English styled naturalism dominated the official art scene into the 1940s as the reigning aesthetic orthodoxy.

Laubser drew her subject matter from the rural locales she inhabited and visited. Her painting seemingly naive and expressive interpretations of the here and now were often pregnant with symbolism of life's toil, loss and salvation. In many respects her paintings planted the aesthetic seeds that would later flourish in the works of Alexis Preller (1911 – 1975) (ill. 5) and Johannes Meintjes (1923 - 1980) (ill. 6).

Irma Stern an artistic companion and for some time close friend of Laubser's, presented a different character of artistic independence. Educated in Germany, Stern's outlook on art was more cosmopolitan. Her choice of subject matter influenced by German expressionists such as Max Pechstein (1881 – 1955) focussed on the unusual and different with a preference for the exotic when it came to the human subject, whom she actively sought on her travels through Africa and Southern Europe. At the pinnacle of her career in the late 1930s and early 1940s her portraits of Arab dignitaries in Zanzibar and locally in Cape Town set her apart. *Portrait of Young Malay Girl* 1939 (cat. no. 56) is one such painting showing off Stern at her best in capturing the delicate exotic youthfulness of her model.

Whilst Stern and Laubser can be seen as pursuing their aesthetic endeavours within the realm of the exotic and the expressive symbolic imagination, artists such as Gerard Sekoto (1913 – 1993), JH Pierneef (1886 – 1957), Dorothy Kay (1886 – 1964) and Gerard Bhengu (1910 – 1990) were focussed on recording their everyday experience. Sekoto's *Indaba* (cat. no. 51) is an expressive, tense image of a family group in discussion outside their cramped living quarters made of typical red brick walls, corrugated iron roofing,

where windows are closed up with boards and the yard remains barren. Sekoto's vision is of the urban present where the men are attired in Western suits and collared shirts and the woman wear the requisite domestic uniform of an apron and head scarf. A tenuous connection to rural life is alluded to by the small grain mortar standing in the left foreground. Gerard Bhengu's painting (cat. no. 4) of a green verdant landscape with a sole Zulu woman carrying a pot on her head, presents an idyllic vision of rural life which continues without change, seemingly unaffected by modern technology or the political dispensation of the time.

An *Arcadia* of sorts is what JH Pierneef also conjures up with his landscape of *Leadwood Trees Northern Transvaal*, 1944 (cat. no. 45) presenting the rural *bushveldt* as open and free for occupation even if for that moment, this is only achievable by the imagination and by the eye. Dorothy Kay presents a different image of current circumstance in her etching *The Song of the Pick*, 1938 (cat. no. 22). This ubiquitous image of a form of black labour in South Africa of a group of men wielding picks take on a monumental proportions from the low perspective of the viewer, giving them a type of heroic poise.

By 1948 South Africa had gone through a significant transformation socially, economically and politically. The bitterness between "Boer and Brit" still lingered as the yoke of British hegemony over the economy tightened. South Africa stood at a turning point. With the election victory by the National Party at the polls in May that year, the policy of what was to become Apartheid was to be introduced and shape the history of the country for the next 43 years. The visual arts would not directly experience the consequences of this policy until the 1960's when racial segregation pervaded almost all aspects of social and working life and South Africa became politically ostracised and culturally boycotted.

The 1950s and 1960s presented South African artists with opportunities to explore and study overseas and many travelled to established art institutions in Europe to hone their skills becoming acquainted with a diversity of emerging art movements devoted to a variety of forms of abstraction. Abstraction manifested in South Africa in many permutations yet never achieved the prominence of a movement such as Abstract Expressionism in United States and Pop Art in the United Kingdom. Artists such



ill.6



ill.7



ill.8



ill.9

Nel Erasmus (1928 - ) (ill. 7), Douglas Portway (1922 - 1993) (ills. 8, 9), Larry Scully (1922 - 2002) (ill. 10), Christo Coetzee (1929 - 2000), Cecily Sash (1924 - ) (ill. 11), Cecil Skotnes (cat. no. 54) and Kenneth Bakker (ill.12) represented in the Sanlam Art Collection became notable proponents of Abstraction. In this exhibition Christo Coetzee's early painting *Still Life with Face*, 1948 (cat. no.13), is exemplary of artist's emerging interest in abstracting forms yet retaining figurative elements which would later find elaborate expression in his *Tubular Series* (ill. 13) of 50 paintings in the Sanlam Art Collection. This elaboration of tubular formed objects would continue to fascinate Coetzee well into the late 1970s when he returned his attention to the human head, flowers and still-lifes.

Abstract painting with no reference to the visually objective world found few serious exponents in South Africa. For the artists mentioned above abstraction still meant working off some visually concrete reference. Kenneth Bakker's (1926 – 1988) painting such as *Abstract Landscape* (cat. no.2), 1963, although seemingly without external reference to anything in the real world is derived from the close observation of coastal rock formations near the artist's home. Rather than a landscape with horizon this one seen from above.

Sculpture up to late 1950s in the South African art-world was predominantly figurative. Following on from the refined naturalist figure studies by Anton Wouw (1862 - 1945) such as *The Dagga Smoker* 1907 (ill.14) and *Bushmen Hunter* 1902 (ill. 15); Moses Kotller's (1896 - 1977) *Girl with Plaits* (cat. no. 25) and Willem de Sanderes Hendrikz's (1910 - 1959) *Tama Morena* (cat. no. 21), 1950, are examples of bronze sculpture that enjoyed wide spread appreciation in South Africa at the time. By the late the 1950s and well into 1960s abstraction which was already well established amongst painters started to manifest in sculpture. Similarly these abstractions still drew from a visual objective world as source such as in the works of Edoardo Villa (1915 - 2011) *Woman* 1964 (cat. no. 66), and Sydney Kumalo's (1969) *Man on a horse* 1969 (cat. no.27). Only in rare instances such as in the sculptures of Edoardo Villa (ill. 16) does a complete development and manipulation of abstract forms emerge. With Ezrom Legae (1938 - 1999) (cat. no.32) Sydney Kumalo, Edoardo Villa would become South Africa's most celebrated exponents of modernist sculpture.

Younger artists such Johan van Heerden (1930 - ), Neels Coetzee (1940 - 2013) and Gavin Younge (1947 - ) would follow on from these exemplary sculptors. Van Heerden's *Untitled* 1979 (cat. no. 59) seems entirely abstract yet the verticality of the form and its organic shape invites seeing a dancing human figure. His experimentation with properties of flowing metal as in this instance aluminium, was for and in itself sufficient to develop forms that in their ambiguity engage both the eye and the mind. Neels Coetzee's *Judas XIII*, 1984 (cat. no.11) presents the viewer with a bronze plane upon which a skull-cum figure stands between trees. The title and form of the sculpture invokes the narrative which follows from Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ for the sum of 30 pieces of silver. According to Matthew 27:1-10, after learning that Jesus was to be crucified, Judas attempted to return the money he had been paid for his betrayal to the chief priests and committed suicide by hanging. The priests used the money to buy a field to bury strangers in, which was called the "Field of Blood" because it had been bought with blood money. According to the Book of Acts 1:18, Judas used the money to buy the field himself and, as he was walking through it, he "[fell] headlong... burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

Although this preference for abstraction may appear to have been the dominant avant-garde stream across South Africa, this was not the case. Figuration still remained a significant aspect of the South African art world of the 1950 and 1960s for artists such as Alexis Preller (1911 - 1975), Walter Battiss (1906 – 1982), Stanley Pinker (1924 - 2012) and Gladys Mgudlandlu (1917 – 1979). Each artist was attempting to forge an idiosyncratic visual language to articulate a vision of their time and place in Africa. Alexis Preller had already in 1930s engaged with indigenous African symbolism he encountered in Ndebele and Basotho mural decoration and costume. These he used in combination with simple domestic objects composing elaborate tableaux's reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel. Unlike Bosch and Bruegel, Preller's paintings contain no direct moralising intent. In a painting such as *Primavera*, 1954 (cat. no. 47), Preller achieves a syncretic blend of European stylisation and Africa motifs and symbols which would characterise much of his work from this period. Similarly, Walter Battiss's interest in Bushman painting and his knowledge of and acquaintance with Picasso's eclectic variations of style led to



ill.10



ill.11



ill.12



ill.13



ill.14

his abandonment of established conventions to forge his own painterly languages which in the 1960s became distinctive in his use of flat monotone background punctuated with figures rendered with quick strokes of the brush and palette knife as in *Assignment 1965* (cat. no. 3)

In *Ons Land* (n.d.) (cat. no. 46) Pinker presents an empty landscape occupied by a desolate modernist designed home which seems at places to fall apart. A glowing cross stands inserted in the ground of a stretch of barren land leading up to the house, whilst a snake slithers way in the grass watched over by a mongoose. The foreground is dominated by a grouping of a flowering Aloe, an owl and birds on poles. In the background the repeated disk shaped setting sun or rising indicates the passage of time. Pinker has constructed what appears to be an elusive allegory around the meaning of land – both as an “Eden” and graveyard guarded by the snake and owl. Devoid of human presence and abandoned this painting symbolises the inevitability of the passing of time and the seeming inconsequence of the human effort to manage nature.

Gladys Mgudlandlu's *Birds*, 1962 (cat. no. 39) sees birds as companions and symbolic of freedom. She began to paint seriously in 1957 and achieved significant recognition amongst artistic circles until the early 1970s. As the only recognised black woman artist of her time she stands out monumentally. Her imagery ranged widely from cityscapes of the Atlantic seaboard in Cape Town to dreamlike representations of her rural homeland. She developed a unique naive approach to painting that her critics at times decried as escapist. But not unlike Maggie Laubser and Irma Stern her paintings were assertions of individuality and symbolic of a liberatory vision in a country which at the time was beginning to severely curtail the freedom of the majority black population through its policy of Apartheid.

Although South Africa had by 1960 been moulded into a single country it was a divided nation along racial, political and language lines. As a result of the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March that year, the banning of the ANC and PAC and other hard line policies and laws implemented by the government of day under Dr Hendrik Verwoerd to suppress dissent and exclude the majority of South Africans from meaningful participation in the development of the country, this was no longer to be opposed with passive resistance only. The formation of the ANC's military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe

to embark on an armed struggle against the government in 1961 marked a significant historical turning point. Up to the late 1960s South African artists committed to their art and to collaborating with their black African counterparts successfully navigated around the vagaries of the Apartheid system without demonstrating any overt public dissention. Cecil Skotnes at the Polly Street Art Centre for instance, with the support of fellow artists such as Larry Scully and Fred Schimmel and gallerists such as Egon Guenther, and Fernand Haenggi, managed to provide opportunities for talented black artists to learn and thrive in the mainstream South African and international art worlds despite the exclusionary policy of the Apartheid government. However following the Soweto uprising of 1976 and throughout the 1980s some artists felt compelled to either declare directly their opposition to the current state or to do this more obliquely by providing a social political critique of society in their imagery. This practice by artists was later categorised under the rubric of “Resistance Art” in a book documenting such practices under the same title, published by Sue Williamson in 1989. Sanlam had already acquired a William Kentridge (1955 - ) drawing *Stadium*, 1987 (cat. no. 23) in 1987 and a large triptych by Paul Emsley (1947 - ) titled *The Visit: Arrival, Life and Time, Departure*, 1987 (cat. no. 17) during the same year. Neither work makes any declaratory statement, yet Kentridge's bleak image of an empty stadium seen against a backdrop of growing state repression recalls the use of the national football stadium in Santiago Chile as a detention centre following the coup d'état by General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Emsley's dark and brooding drawing takes on the form of a Christian church altarpiece presenting the accepted sequence of depicting the life of Christ, yet in this instance the identity of the protagonist is not clear. An anonymous figure in the foreground is seen to arrive at an indefinite location dominated by a tower in the first panel. The centre panel is constituted of a central motif of a crucifix surrounded by a police Casspir, with a burning shack in the background. The foreground is dominated by an image of a dwarf borrowed from Velasquez's painting “Las Meninas” while on the left a bride carrying flowers emerges from the dark background. The sky has a dramatic configuration of clouds which in the last panel to the right emulates the cloud formation following the detonation of an atomic bomb while a complex arrangement



ill.15



ill.16



ill. 17



ill.18



ill.19

of figures carry a body towards a helicopter as a form of ascension to heaven. Emsley's triptych presents the narrative of Christ in a contemporary guise for the viewer to contemplate and consider the eventual potential outcome of this sequence of events which promise to be apocalyptic.

Elza Botha's (1938 - ) *Butterfly Box*, 1982 (cat. no. 8), presents the viewer with a wooden school desk transformed into a display box for captured butterflies. The left side of this box is inscribed with list of names. Some of the names are distinctive - Madiba, Timol and Aggett. At the time this work was exhibited the names of persons who were banned, imprisoned for political crimes or under detention without trial, by law could not be published. "Madiba" - Nelson Mandela was still in prison and (Ahmed) Timol (1941 - 1971) and (Niel) Aggett (1953 - 1982), both purportedly committed suicide whilst under detention. The last text at the bottom of the list states "GEEN NAAM VERSTREK" (no name provided) makes this list of names all the more ominous. *Butterfly Box*, directly confronted the art gallery visiting public with the names of the persons the state security apparatus had disposed of, silenced or kept behind bars. As at the time art wasn't subject to the act banning orders and censorship the authorities were powerless to prevent the exhibition of this work by Botha. Similarly Botha's *Manifes*, 1980 (cat. no.9) employs the same strategy of making visible that which was meant to be hidden. In this instance the text of the ANC's Freedom Charter. Further the text is in Afrikaans a tactic employed by Botha to deliberately transcend the popularly held perception that Afrikaans could not become a language of struggle for a free and democratic South Africa.

South Africa in the 1980's, saw a significant change in its understanding of what art in South Africa was about. Following a wave of new art history writing in Europe and America which began to focus on indigenous art and crafts practices as art beyond the established canons of Western art traditions and the widely acclaimed "Tributaries" exhibition compiled by Ricky Burnett in 1985, art historians commenced researching these artefacts of indigenous production previously relegated to the domains of anthropology and ethnography. Although there is no significant indigenous tradition of wood sculpture in Southern Africa, missionaries in some instances in their zeal to convert and "civilise", introduced sculpture as an appropriate artistic activity at their mission schools taking precedence from long traditions of sculpture in other parts of Africa. An established practice of wood sculpture, for ritual purposes in Venda, now Limpopo, had existed for some time. This evolved in 1980s where rural artists developed idiosyncratic approaches to sculpting that appealed to a predominantly white buying public although not necessarily solely intended for that audience only. Artists such Johannes Maswanganyi (cat. no. 36), Albert Munyai (ill. 17), Paul Tavanha (cat. no. 57),

Owen Ndou (ill. 18) and Meshak Rapalalani (ill. 19) combined traditional motifs with western conventions of figurative sculpture producing eye catching, sometimes comical but thought provoking images that pushed the boundaries of acceptable taste. Initially the term "transitional art" was adopted to incorporate these practices but such categorisation only revealed the patronising hierarchy imposed by Western art historical tradition. These sculptors were artists and their works equally worthy of appreciation like their urban based counterparts. Museum and international collections soon acquired significant examples of such sculpture and incorporated these into exhibitions which transcended the established boundaries of Western aesthetic thinking.

The inevitable collapse of the Apartheid regime as result of internal and massive international pressure in 1990 ushered in a new era for South Africa. The unbanning of the ANC and other political organisations, the release of Nelson Mandela and political prisoners was only the beginning of a long road towards establishing a democratic South Africa. The euphoria following the first democratic election in 1994, masked many of the unresolved issues and tensions that plagued the newly formed Government of National Unity established as a result of protracted negotiations at CODESA. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 laid bare the extent of the previous regime's wrongdoing as well as human rights abuses that occurred in some of the liberation movement structures. Coming to terms with the past was a necessity for South African to bring to affect reconciliation. Kim Berman's (1960 - ) large scale mono-print *Fires of the Truth Commission* (cat. no. 5) provides a symbolic expression of this desire and necessity.

For an artist such as CJ Morkel (1960 - ) the "New South Africa" provided the conditions for him to express his disenchantment with compulsory national service and the associated border duty that was inflicted on young white South Africans throughout the period of South Africa's first incursion into Angola in 1975, in his self-portrait *Hotnotsgot and I*, 1992 (cat.no. 40). Similarly Gavin Younge's (1947 - ) *Forces Favourites II*, 2000 (cat. no. 70) takes on South Africa's incursion in Angola. "Forces Favourites" was a Springbok Radio programme hosted by Patricia Kerr on a Sunday which broadcast messages from loved ones in South Africa to soldiers serving on the South West Africa - Angola border accompanied by selected hit songs of the day. The viewer is confronted with a South African Post Office bicycle encased in velum delivering a video monitor on which a video stream plays showing the town of Cuito Cuanavale as it was in 2000, some 13 years after South African forces were confronted by a Cuban backed Angolan army of significant proportion. Military victory of this battle near the town remains contested. The video shows the remnants, mechanical and

human, of the battle still visible in the country side and in the town. Its banal presentation speaks of the futility of the war in Angola and the terrible legacy that it left for the local population to deal with.

For artists the advent of democracy meant the return of South Africa into the international art world and participation in international exhibitions, art fairs and biennials which had been denied to South African since 1968. The first Johannesburg Biennale staged in 1997 brought a large contingent of international artists into South Africa. The experience was ground breaking for artists and the general public as the international participants showed how inward looking the South African art establishment had become over 29 years of cultural isolation. Despite these challenges many South African artists rose to the challenge of showing on the international stage. The use of digital technologies, performance and installation art which had been exceptional and experimental instances in the past, began to shape the nature of contemporary art. In terms of subject matter artists continued to focus on the political and social issue of the day. Diane Victor's series of etchings *Disasters of Peace* documents and comments on issues and crimes which rocked South African society at the start of the new millennium. From the manipulation of the justice system *Blind Justice - Disasters of Peace no.1* (cat. no. 65); the refusal of the state health care system to deal with AIDS, in particular the refusal to provide Niverapine to pregnant mothers and *all hell followed close - Disasters of Peace no.11*, (cat. no.60); family homicide *Kom Vrou en bring die Kinders - Disasters of Peace no.5* (cat. no. 64); crime and violence against women *Why Defy? - Disasters of Peace no. 2* (cat. no. 62) the huge gap between the wealthy and homeless poor in *Mind the Gap - Disasters of Peace no.13* (cat. no. 63) and farm murders *Down on the Farm - Disasters of Peace no.4* (cat. no. 61) are select instances of Victor's imagery which confront the viewer with at times gut-wrenching images which bring home the reality of the country's peace time disasters.

Similarly Pauline Gutter's (1980 - ) *Their Last Supper: Unfinished*, 2007 (cat. no. 20), is a contemporary reworking of the baroque Dutch and Spanish "vanitas" paintings of opulent and lavish displays of food which on closer inspection reveal decay as insects and rot invade reminding the viewer of their own eventual death and decay. Gutter presents on a monumental scale a roasting pan with a roast and vegetables – the last supper – an unfinished meal of a murdered farmer and his wife. Gutter grew up on a farm in the Free State and this subject is derived from her experiences in this community. At the time this painting was completed the statistics around farm murders were not published making this image and its meaning more trenchant in its symbolism. The murder of farmers remains a significant problem in South Africa still today.

Jan van der Merwe's (1958 - ) installation, *Gaste*, 2000 (cat. no. 58) presents the viewer with a dressed dinner table and four chairs encased in rusted metal. The guests are absent but have left behind personal items. Encased in the table, where the dinner plate would be, are 4 video monitors which show the repeated image of a discharging pistol every minute. The discharging pistol is served up as dinner for the evening. South Africa has an extended history of domestic violence and the occurrence of family murders have occurred perennially even recently. Van der Merwe's installation is a poignant reflection on a problem in South African society still today.

This exhibition provides a selection of significant objects and images which capture in instances the spirit of the aesthetic thought of the time; reflect on a point of history or on aspects of the social dispensation of the time. There are many narratives that could be constructed tying these objects together. This text provides an introduction as points of departure for the construction of such narratives and some insights into specific works on display. Viewers of the exhibition are of course free to construct the stories they wish and enrich these with personal histories. For every South African this exhibition will hopefully provide an opportunity to identify with and reflect on the past and how they are part of this transformation of the country, its art and how this art speaks to us today and will do so in generations to come.

**Stefan Hundt**

*Curator: Sanlam Art Collection  
Bellville, June 2018*

# List of works on exhibition

- 1** Stefan Ampenberger  
(1908 - 1983)  
*The Red Sun*  
not dated  
oil on board
- 2** Kenneth Bakker  
(1926 - 1988)  
*Abstract Landscape*  
1963  
gesso and oil on board
- 3** Walter Whall Battiss  
(1906 - 1982)  
*Assignment*  
1965  
oil on canvas
- 4** Gerard Bhengu  
(1910 - 1990)  
*Zululand Landscape*  
circa 1948  
watercolour on paper
- 5** Kim Berman  
(1960 - )  
*Fires of the Truth Commission*  
1999  
monoprint on paper
- 6** Willie Bester  
(1956 - )  
*Blue Truck Cross Roads*  
1992  
mixed media on board
- 7** Willem Hendrik Adriaan Boshoff  
(1951 - )  
*City Book*  
2007  
various wood types
- 8** Elza (Josephine Elizabeth) Botha  
(1938 - )  
*Butterfly Box*  
1982  
lino cut prints on paper, wooden  
school desk and perspex
- 9** Elza (Josephine Elizabeth) Botha  
(1938 - )  
*Manifes*  
1980  
lino cut on paper
- 10** Wim Botha  
(1974 - )  
*Pros and Cons*  
1997  
official paper documents, neon  
lights and steel
- 11** Neels (Johannes Cornelius) Coetzee  
(1940 - 2013)  
*Judas XIII*  
1984  
bronze
- 12** Christo Coetzee  
(1929 - 2000)  
*Xtobal*  
1978  
mixed media on paper
- 13** Christo Coetzee  
(1929 - 2000)  
*Still Life with Face*  
1948  
oil on canvas
- 14** Jacques Coetzer  
(1968 - )  
*Cluster Park*  
2006  
digital video
- 15** Dumile (Zwelidumile Jeremiah Ngxaji) Feni  
(1942 - 1991)  
*Dedication to Ruth First and Lilian Ngoyi*  
n.d. 1980  
ink on paper
- 16** Ricky Ayanda Dyaloyi  
(1974 - )  
*Untitled*  
2004  
acrylic and oil on canvas
- 17** Paul Emsley  
(1947 - )  
*The Visit: Arrival, Life and Times, Departure*,  
1987  
charcoal on paper
- 18** Leora Farber  
(1964 - )  
*Beauty Bar*  
1998  
wax, surgical instruments and  
perspex display unit
- 19** Jacques Renée Fuller  
(1960 - )  
*Die Mollevangers*  
1999  
welded copper and brass
- 20** Pauline Gutter  
(1980 - )  
*Their Last Supper - Unfinished*  
2007  
oil on canvas
- 21** Willem de Sanders Hendrikz  
(1910 - 1949)  
*Tama Morena*  
1950  
bronze
- 22** Dorothy Kay  
(1886 - 1964)  
*The Song of the Pick*  
1938  
etching on paper
- 23** William Joseph Kentridge  
(1955 - )  
*Stadium*  
1987  
charcoal and pastel on paper
- 24** David Mathubu Koloane  
(1938 - )  
*Moon over Squatter Settlement*  
1993  
acrylic on canvas
- 25** Moses Kotller  
(1892 - 1977)  
*Girl with Plaits*  
circa 1950  
bronze
- 26** Sydney Alex Kumalo  
(1935 - 1988)  
*Woman with a Dove (Peace)*  
1964  
bronze
- 27** Sydney Alex Kumalo  
(1935 - 1988)  
*Man on a Horse*  
1969  
bronze

- 28** Maggie (Maria Magdalena) Laubser  
(1886 - 1973)  
*Poplars - Italy*  
circa 1920  
oil on cardboard
- 29** Maggie (Maria Magdalena) Laubser  
(1886 - 1973)  
*Selfportrait*  
1928  
oil on cardboard
- 30** Maggie (Maria Magdalena) Laubser  
(1886 - 1973)  
*Red Fisherman's Cottage*  
circa 1953  
oil on canvas on board
- 31** Ezrom Kobokanyo Sebata Legae  
(1938 - 1999)  
*Point of Departure*  
1989  
bronze
- 32** Ezrom Kobokanyo Sebata Legae  
(1938 - 1999)  
*Horse and Rider*  
1998  
bronze
- 33** Adam Letch  
(1968 - )  
*Perpetuum*  
2008  
digital video (45 min.)
- 34** Johann Louw  
(1965 - )  
*Karel se Uur van die Engel*  
2005  
oil on panel
- 35** Speelman Mahlangu  
(1958 - 2004)  
*The Spear*  
n.d.  
bronze
- 36** Johannes Maswanganyi  
(1949 - )  
*Family Tree*  
circa 1988  
polychromed wood
- 37** Leonard Matsoso  
(1949 - )  
*Warrior and Beast*  
1979  
pastel on paper
- 38** Shepherd Mbanya  
(1965 - )  
*Working for Peace*  
2013  
wood
- 39** Gladys Nomfanakiso Mgudlandlu  
(1917 - 1979)  
*Birds*  
1962  
gouache on paper
- 40** CJ (Coenrad Johannes) Morkel  
(1960 - )  
*Hotnotsgot and I*  
1992  
airbrushed duco on board
- 41** Richard Mudariki  
(1985 - )  
*The Model*  
2015  
oil on canvas.
- 42** Pieter Hugo Naudé  
(1868 - 1941)  
*Malay Quarter Cape Town*  
circa 1920  
oil on canvas
- 43** Ndikhumbule Ngqwinambe  
(1977 - )  
*Walk of Numbers*  
2010  
oil on canvas
- 44** George Mnyalusa Pemba  
(1912 - 2001)  
*Harvesters*  
1976  
oil on canvas
- 45** Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef  
(1886 - 1957)  
*Lead Wood Trees - Northern Transvaal*  
1944  
oil on canvas
- 46** Stanley Faraday Pinker  
(1924 - 2012)  
*Ons Land*  
circa 1959  
oil on canvas
- 47** Alexis Preller  
(1911 - 1975)  
*Primavera*  
1954  
oil on canvas
- 48** Tracey Rose  
(1974 - )  
*L'Annunciazione after Fra Angelico*  
2004  
light jet print on paper
- 49** Peter Schütz  
(1942 - 2008)  
*Window*  
n.d.  
polychromed gelutong
- 50** Helen (Mapula Makgoba) Sebidi  
(1943)  
*Running on the Eastern Side*  
1984  
oil on canvas
- 51** Gerard Sekoto  
(1913 - 1993)  
*Indaba*  
1946  
oil on canvas
- 52** Cyprian Mpho Shilakoe  
(1946 - 1972)  
*Totem*  
circa 1971  
teak
- 53** Penelope Siopsis  
(1953 - )  
*Salon*  
1987  
pastel on paper
- 54** Cecil Edwin Frans Skotnes  
(1926 - 2009)  
*Visit to a Battle Site*  
1975  
oil on canvas on panel
- 55** Irma Stern  
(1894 - 1966)  
*Flowers*  
1949  
oil on canvas
- 56** Irma Stern  
(1894 - 1966)  
*Portrait of a young Malay Girl*  
1939  
oil on canvas

- 57** Paul Tavanha  
(1949 - )  
*Sangoma and Snake*  
circa 2000  
polychromed wood
- 58** Jan Lodewijk van der Merwe  
(1958 - )  
*Gaste*  
2000  
found objects rusted metal, vcr and television monitors
- 59** Johan van Heerden  
(1930 - )  
*Untitled*  
1979  
cast aluminium
- 60** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*And All Hell Followed Close*  
(*Disasters of Peace no.11*)  
2002  
etching on paper
- 61** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*Down on the Farm*  
(*Disasters of Peace no. 4*)  
2000  
etching on paper
- 62** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*Why Defy*  
(*Disasters of Peace no. 2*)  
2002  
etching on paper
- 63** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*Mind the Gap*  
(*Disasters of Peace no. 13*)  
2002  
etching on paper
- 64** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*Kom Vrou en bring die Kinders*  
(*Disasters of Peace no. 5*)  
2000  
etching on paper
- 65** Diane Veronicque Victor  
(1964 - )  
*Blind Justice*  
(*Disasters of Peace no. 1*)  
2000  
etching on paper
- 66** Edoardo Daniele Villa  
(1915 - 2011)  
*Woman*  
1969  
bronze
- 67** Jean Max Friderich Welz  
(1900 - 1975)  
*Du Plessis se Dam*  
n.d.  
oil on board
- 68** Pieter Willem Frederik Wenning  
(1873 - 1921)  
*Keerom Street Cape Town*  
circa 1917  
oil on canvas
- 69** Pieter Willem Frederik Wenning  
(1873 - 1921)  
*Evening Transvaal*  
circa 1916  
oil on canvas
- 70** James Gavin Forrest Younge  
(1947 - )  
*Forces Favourites 2*  
2000  
post office bicycle, vellum, vcr and monitor
- Illustrations:**
- 1** Harry Trevor  
(1922 - 1971)  
*The Beggar*  
1941  
oil on board
- 2** Wolf Kibel  
(1903 - 1938)  
*Interior*  
n.d.  
oil on canvas
- 3** Lippy Israel Lipshitz  
*Self Portrait*  
1948  
monoprint on paper
- 4** Edward Roworth  
(1880 - 1964)  
*The Outeniqua Mountains, George*  
cica 1931  
oil on canvas
- 5** Alexis Preller  
(1911 - 1975)  
*Still Life with Pierot and Book*  
1947  
oil on canvas
- 6** Johannes Petrus Meintjes  
(1923 - 1980)  
*Self-portrait with cigarette*  
n.d.  
oil on board
- 7** Nel Erasmus  
(1928 - )  
*Nude*  
circa 1958  
oil on canvas
- 8** Douglas Portway  
(1922 - 1993)  
*Abstract*  
1965  
charcoal and pastel on paper
- 9** Douglas Portway  
(1922 - 1993)  
*Four Black Squares*  
1974  
oil on canvas
- 10** Larry (Laurence Vincent) Scully  
(1922 - 2002)  
*Rhodesian Chevron*  
1963  
oil on canvas
- 11** Cecily Sash (1924 - )  
*Untitled*  
1969  
screen print on paper
- 12** Kenneth Bakker  
(1926 - 1988)  
*Divine Cormorant*  
1960  
oil on canvas
- 13** Christo Coetzee  
(1929 - 2000)  
*Tubular Series No. 3*  
1973  
mixed media on paper

**14** Anton van Wouw  
(1862 – 1945)  
*The Dagga Smoker*  
1907  
bronze

**15** Anton van Wouw  
(1862 – 1945)  
*Bushman Hunter*  
1902  
bronze

**16** Edoardo Daniele Villa  
(1915 – 2011)  
*Envelopment*  
1975  
steel

**17** Albert Munyai  
(1956 - )  
*Cruxifixion*  
n.d.  
wood

**18** Owen Ndou  
(1964 - )  
*Sangoma divining the cause of Death*  
1999  
wood

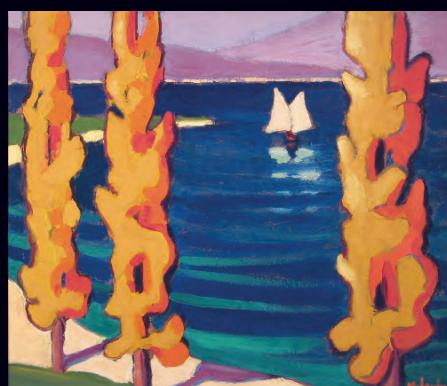
**19** Meshak Raphalalani  
(1950 - )  
*Rugby Players*  
1997  
wood

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48



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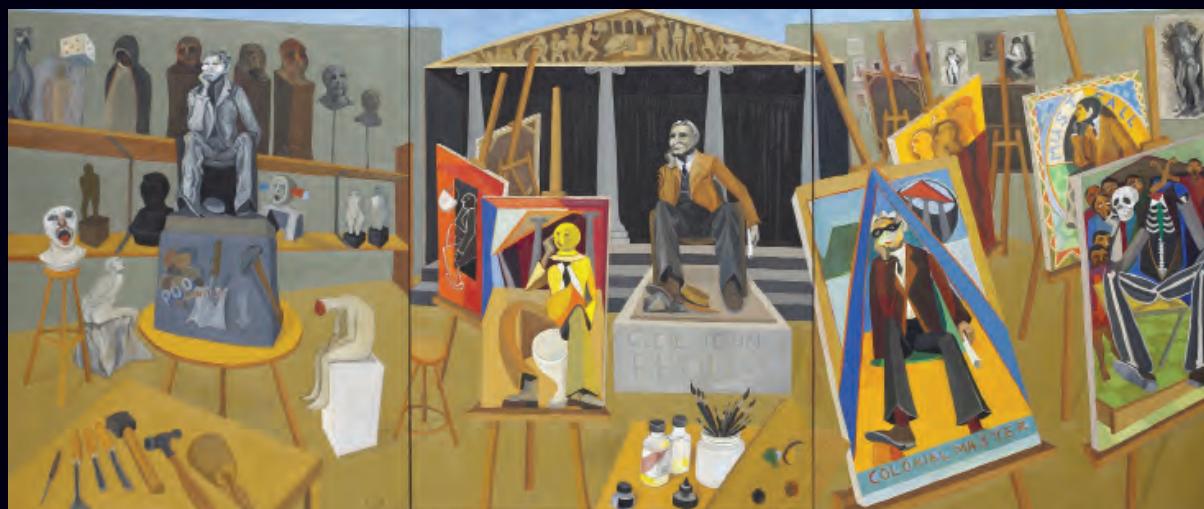
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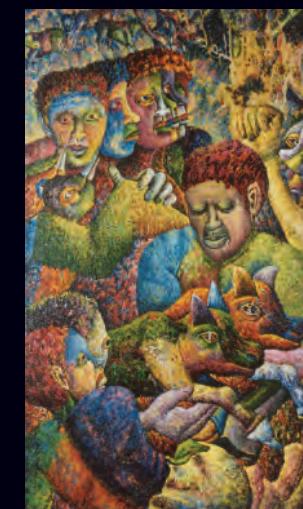
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8



2



23



17



1



24



5



70



25



27



11



66



21



52



36



59



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