

https://dspace.org/

Aspects of South African art criticism

Schmidt, Leoni

2015-09-11
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18618

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ASPECTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN ART CRITICISM

Leoni Schmidt

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the degree of Master of Arts in Fine Arts

Johannesburg 1976

ABSTRACT

Current art critical practice in South Africa has not been investigated previously. Statements have been made with regard to the low standard of art criticism in this country (see the Introduction to this dissertation). However, such statements have not been motivated by an analysis of examples of work contributed by South African art critics. This fact partly determined the decision to investigate current art critical practice in this country.

Possible podia for South African art critics are investigated in Chapter 1.2. From this investigation it is evident that podia for South African art critics are limited and inadequate. Newspapers emerge as the only podia for the regular contribution of art criticism in this country. However, an analysis of work by critics who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers (see Appendix I), and replies to questionnaires contained in Appendices B and H, underline the inadequacy of the newspaper as a podium for the art critic. Conclusions reached in Chapter 1.3 with regard to typical examples of work by writers who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers, bear out previous statements with regard to the low standard of South African art criticism.

An investigation of critical contributions by Esmé Berman, Director of the Art Institute South Africa, member of the International Association of Art Critics and the South African critic who has contributed most regularly and consistently to the various possible podia for the art critic in South Africa, is contained within Chapter 1.4. From this investigation and from replies by Berman to a questionnaire (see Appendix E), it is evident that the South African critic who attempts a serious critical investigation

and assessment of works of art, is hampered by the necessity of adapting to the ill-informed art public in South Africa. This possibly explains to some extent, the eclectic nature and educational function of art criticism, as practised by Berman.

An investigation of work by writers who have contributed sporadically to the possible podia for South African art critics, is contained within Chapter 1.5. Aspects considered most important with regard to the work of six chosen critics, are isolated and illustrated by reference to specific sources. This investigation makes it evident that, on the whole, those characteristics of newspaper criticism which are isolated in Chapter 1.3, are also characteristic of criticism contributed on a sporadic basis in South Africa. The conclusion can thus be arrived at that current art critical contributions, whether of a regular or sporadic nature, are indeed of a very low standard in South Africa. The common characteristics of South African art criticism which can be isolated, are contained within Chapter 1.6. The negative evaluation of South African art criticism is deduced from these characteristics.

Theoretical aspects of art criticism which can be considered as relevant to art critical practice in South Africa, are discussed in Chapter 2. The nature of, and relationships between aesthetics, art history and art criticism are discussed. The origins, components and validity of critical terms, critical method, the possible functions of art criticism and the status of art criticism are discussed. These theoretical aspects are of necessity discussed very briefly in the relevant chapter. The assessment of current art critical practice in South Africa, rests on an ideal of art criticism as postulated in Chapter 2. From Chapters 1 and 2 in conjunction, it is evident that South African art criticism

does not conform to this ideal of art criticism.

Those factors which can be considered as possible determinants of the low standard of current art critical practice in South Africa, are discussed in Chapter 3. Views on South African art criticism which are included in the Appendices to this dissertation, are taken into account. It is postulated that the podia available to South African art critics; lack of adequate educational facilities for South African art critics (see Appendix A); the ill-informed art public in South Africa; and, the derivative and eclectic nature of South African art, possibly give rise to an art criticism which cannot conform to the nature and possible functions of art criticism as postulated in Chapter 2.

I thank Mr. Robert Hodgins
for his invaluable assistance

I thank Mrs. Esmé Berman
for allowing me access to
personal documents

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been submitted to any other university

---

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... iv

DECLARATION..... v

INTRODUCTION..... 1

Aim and scope of the dissertation..... 1

Previous research on South African art criticism..... 4

System of reference..... 7

References..... 8

CHAPTER 1

Current art critical practice in South Africa..... 9

1.1 Introduction..... 9

1.2 Podia for South African art critics..... 10

1.2.1 South African newspapers..... 10

1.2.2 South African art periodicals..... 12

1.2.3 Other South African academic periodicals..... 17

1.2.4 South African popular periodicals..... 18

1.2.5 South African radio and television..... 18

1.2.6 South African public lectures..... 19

1.2.7 South African exhibition catalogues..... 20
1.2.8 South African unpublished theses and dissertations..... 21
1.2.9 South African anthologies on the visual arts..... 22
1.2.10 Individual publications on aspects of South African art..... 22
1.2.11 Publications on the nature of South African art criticism..... 24
1.2.12 Conclusion..... 25

1.3 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by writers who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers..... 25
1.3.1 Introduction..... 25
1.3.2 Richard Cheales, critic for The Star (Johannesburg)..... 27
1.3.3 H.E. Winder, critic for The Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg)..... 28
1.3.4 Elza Miles, critic for Die Rapport (Johannesburg)..... 29
1.3.5 Joyce Ozynski, critic for The Sunday Express (Johannesburg)..... 30
1.3.6 E. Mesman, critic for Die Burger (Cape Town)..... 31
1.3.7 Johan Bruwer, critic for Die Beeld (Johannesburg)..... 32
1.3.8 Jill Gowans, critic for The Daily News (Durban)..... 33
1.3.9 Conclusion..... 34

1.4 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Esmé Berman..... 34
1.4.1 Introduction..... 34
1.4.2 Discussion and conclusions..... 36
1.4.3 Conclusion..... 49

1.5 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by some writers who have contributed sporadically..... 51
1.5.1 Introduction..... 51
1.5.2 F.L.Alexander..... 53
1.5.3 A.J. Werth..... 56
1.5.4 N. Dubow..... 59
1.5.5 C. Eglington..... 63
1.5.6 M. Hitge..... 69
1.5.7 N. Knight..... 71
1.5.8 Conclusion..... 72

1.6 Conclusion..... 73

1.7 References..... 75

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical aspects of art criticism relevant to current art critical practice in South Africa..... 79

2.1 Introduction..... 79

2.2 Aesthetics, art history and art criticism..... 79

2.2.1 Aesthetics..... 79

2.2.2 Art history..... 81

2.2.3 Art criticism..... 82

2.2.4 Relationships between aesthetics, art history and art criticism..... 84

2.3 Art critical terms..... 87

2.3.1 The origin of critical terms..... 89

2.3.2 The components of the critical terminology..... 91

2.3.3 The validity of critical terms..... 92

2.4 Art critical method..... 94

2.5 Possible functions of art criticism..... 104

2.5.1 Exegetical criticism..... 105

2.5.2 Educational criticism..... 107

2.5.3 Autobiographical criticism..... 112

2.5.4 Conclusion..... 114

2.6 Art critical status..... 115

2.7 Conclusion..... 117

2.8 References..... 117

CHAPTER 3

Determinant factors of current art critical practice in South Africa..... 122

3.1 Introduction..... 122

3.2 Podia for South African art critics..... 123

3.3 Education of South African art critics..... 126

3.4 The art critic's audience in South Africa..... 131

3.5 South African art..... 134

3.6 Conclusion..... 136

3.7 References..... 137

CONCLUSION..... 140

APPENDIX I

Analysis of typical examples of work by writers who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers..... 141

APPENDIX II

Abstracts from broadcasts by Esmé Berman..... 203

APPENDIX A

Education in art criticism at South African universities..... 210

APPENDIX B

Viewpoints of art critics contributing to South African newspapers..... 242

APPENDIX C

The policy of the SABC on art criticism..... 289

APPENDIX D

Christo Coetzee : An artist's view of South African art criticism..... 291

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire and replies by Esmé Berman, Director of the Art Institute South Africa..... 298

APPENDIX F

Clement Greenberg's visit to South Africa..... 307

APPENDIX G

An interview with Prof. Walter Whall Battiss..... 322

APPENDIX H

Questionnaire and replies by editors of South African newspapers..... 324

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 339

South African Sources..... 339

Books..... 339

Unpublished Works..... 342

Periodical Articles..... 344

Art periodicals..... 344

Other periodicals..... 345

Newspaper Articles..... 351

Additional Sources..... 352

Exhibition catalogues..... 352

Broadcasts..... 355

Other Sources..... 361

Books..... 361

Periodical Articles..... 370

INTRODUCTION

Aim and scope of the dissertation

This dissertation contains no attempt at an investigation of the history of art criticism in South Africa. Most of the South African sources referred to, have been published or broadcast during the previous fifteen years. A study of art critical contributions published in South African newspapers, has been confined to those contributions in issues published since February, 1974.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate and assess the nature and conditions of current art critical practice in South Africa. Other sources listed in the Bibliography, have been studied in order to arrive at a necessarily brief and simplified ideal of criticism, as postulated in Chapter 2. On the basis of this ideal, the dissertation constitutes an attempt at contributing to the establishment of art criticism as an appreciated field of inquiry in South Africa. This aim also motivated the attempt at substantiated assessment of current art critical practice in this country.

Current art critical practice in South Africa is investigated and assessed in the dissertation with regard to: organisation; contexts established; terms used; method adhered to; and, possible functions fulfilled. No argument is advanced with regard to a specific aesthetic philosophy or critical criteria. This is due to the fact that an aesthetic philosophy and critical criteria are seldom recognisable in art critical contributions in this country. The nature of South African art criticism thus does not warrant comparison with specific aesthetic philosophies or critical criteria which have emerged from art criticism produced elsewhere.

INTRODUCTION

Aim and scope of the dissertation

This dissertation contains no attempt at an investigation of the history of art criticism in South Africa. Most of the South African sources referred to, have been published or broadcast during the previous fifteen years. A study of art critical contributions published in South African newspapers, has been confined to those contributions in issues published since February, 1974.

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate and assess the nature and conditions of current art critical practice in South Africa. Other sources listed in the Bibliography, have been studied in order to arrive at a necessarily brief and simplified ideal of criticism, as postulated in Chapter 2. On the basis of this ideal, the dissertation constitutes an attempt at contributing to the establishment of art criticism as an appreciated field of inquiry in South Africa. This aim also motivated the attempt at substantiated assessment of current art critical practice in this country.

Current art critical practice in South Africa is investigated and assessed in the dissertation with regard to: organisation; contexts established; terms used; method adhered to; and, possible functions fulfilled. No argument is advanced with regard to a specific aesthetic philosophy or critical criteria. This is due to the fact that an aesthetic philosophy and critical criteria are seldom recognisable in art critical contributions in this country. The nature of South African art criticism thus does not warrant comparison with specific aesthetic philosophies or critical criteria which have emerged from art criticism produced elsewhere.

Furthermore, a discussion with regard to aesthetic assumptions and critical criteria would presuppose an investigation of South African art. Such an investigation falls outside the scope of this dissertation. South Af ican art criticism is thus assessed in terms of general standards which can be advanced as being fundamental to a systematic, balanced and substantiated contribution to the field.

Many writers have contributed to South African art criticism. While regular contributions have been mainly confined to those contributed to South African newspapers, a great number of contributions have been published on a sporadic basis. Investigation has made it evident that a number of common characteristics can be isolated with regard to these contributions. It can be noted that, on the whole, current art criticism in South Africa does not illustrate a variety of attitudes, neither with regard to theoretical assumptions manifested, nor with regard to terms, method and possible functions. On these grounds rests the decision to discuss only: typical examples of work by critics who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers; the art critical contribution by Esmé Berman, who has contributed most consistently and regularly; and, typical contributions by six critics who have contributed sporadically. The work of these six critics has been chosen for discussion, as their contributions are considered to be either of importance or as typical of criticism published in South Africa (see Chapter 1.5).

Analysis of critical contributions by all the critics who have contributed to art criticism in South Africa, is too lengthy and repetitive to be included in the dissertation. Furthermore, th: analysis and discussion included, are considered to be adequate in order to illustrate the nature of current art critical practice in

South Africa. This is due to the generally homogeneous nature of this criticism. It should also be kept in mind that only the critic who contributes regularly is in a position to establish an aesthetic philosophy, critical criteria, a frame of reference and an art critical terminology. This also determined the decision to limit discussion on criticism contributed on a sporadic basis.

While Chapter 1 is devoted to the investigation and assessment of current art critical practice in South Africa, Chapter 2 consists of discussion with regard to theoretical aspects of criticism which are considered to be relevant to art critical practice in this country. The nature and possible functions of art criticism are of necessity discussed very briefly. An ideal with regard to art criticism is postulated. This forms the theoretical basis for the assessment of South African art criticism. In Chapter 3, possible determinant factors of current art critical practice in South Africa, are discussed. The question is raised whether South African art criticism can in fact, conform to those standards advanced in Chapter 2. It should be noted here, that empirically verifiable statements with regard to possible determinant factors of South African art criticism, can seldom be advanced.

A number of appendices are included in the dissertation. Analysis of typical examples of work by critics who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers, is contained within Appendix I. This detailed analysis is not included in the text as it would interrupt the course of argument in the relevant section. Conclusions reached in Chapter 1.3 are, however, deduced from this analysis.

Appendix II contains abstracts from broadcasts by Esmé Berman, which are considered to be relevant to the discussion in Chapter

1.4. These abstracts are included as the transcribed broadcasts are not readily available.

Appendices A to H contain: replies to letters of inquiry sent to art departments at South African universities; replies to a questionnaire sent to newspaper critics; replies to a questionnaire sent to the SABC; replies to a questionnaire sent to Christo Coetzee, who destroyed some of his work, partly in protest against South African art criticism; replies to a questionnaire sent to Esmé Berman; reactions to the recent (June/July, 1975) visit of the American art critic, Clement Greenberg, to South Africa; a transcribed interview with Prof. Walter Battiss on the subject of art criticism; and, replies to a questionnaire sent to the editors of nineteen major South African newspapers. Views expressed in these appendices are referred to in the text of the dissertation.

Previous research on South African art criticism

Previous publications on South African art criticism have two characteristics in common. Firstly, adverse criticism is voiced on art critical practice in this country; secondly, no analysis of examples of work by South African art critics, substantiate these opinions. The following are notable examples:

a) "Kunskritiek in Suid-Afrika in ons tyd,"[1] was published by A.J. Werth in 1969. Werth states: "Geen land se kuns kan gesond groei sonder dat grondige kunskritiek openbaar op daardie kuns uitgeoefen word nie. Dit is hoog tyd dat ons in Suid-Afrika vir onsself rekenskap gee van hoe dit met ons kunskritiek gesteld is."[2] Werth inserts collated replies from a group of RCA* students who were questioned on aspects of art criticism. (These replies were

* "Royal College of Art, London"

originally collated by the editors of Studio International). Werth also inserts the reactions of the South African art critic, F.L. Alexander, to the views advanced by the group of students. Werth concludes his article by stating: "Dat daar in Suid-Afrika soms 'n Babelse verwarring in die kunskritiek, soos dit in die daaglikse pers tot uiting kom, heers, is sekerlik algemeen bekend...Ek haal hieronder enkele sinne aan uit kunskritieke wat onlangs in die pers verskyn het...ek meen dat die onsinnigheid, swak taalgebruik en verwardheid van hierdie aanhalings duidelik uit hulself straal"[3] (underlining my own). No attempt is made to substantiate adverse criticism. Alexander's view on criticism and Werth's adverse criticism on South African art criticism, remain arbitrary because it is unsubstantiated.

b) Kunskritiek[4] is the publication of an inaugural lecture delivered by F.G.E. Nilant during 1971. Nilant states: "Ons kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat die opmerking wat mens so dikwels hoor, nl. dat kunskritiek in Suid-Afrika op 'n lae peil sou staan, beskou moet word as onjuis. Die feit is dat, behoudens 'n aantal gunstige uitsonderings...daar geen kunskritiek in Suid-Afrika bestaan nie."[5] No attempt is made to substantiate this statement by an analysis of art critical contributions in South Africa.

c) Criticism was one of the themes for a series of cursory seminars delivered at the annual meeting of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Kuns en Wetenskap, held in Bloemfontein during 1972. Six seminars on criticism form the contents of the publication, Kritiek.[6] Although these seminars deal with criticism on different forms of art, with the critical disposition of the Afrikaner and with censorship, they have the plea for an investigation of

South African criticism on the arts, in common. The seminar, "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika",[7] delivered by Werth, contains a plea for the investigation of criticism on the visual arts in South Africa. Unsubstantiated evaluation of South African art criticism is also contained within the seminar. Werth states: "Dit wil vir my voorkom asof die meeste kunskritici wat vir ons Suid-Afrikaanse pers skryf mense is wat òf voorheen studente in die beeldende kunste was en sodoende die terminologie van kunskritiek luk-raak 'opgetel' het, òf op die een of ander wyse deur gereelde kontak met kunstenaars en kunssake hulle geroepe gevoel het tot die taak van kritiekbeoefening."[8] No further investigation substantiates this statement.

d) Statements on South African art criticism are contained within a number of publications on South African art and its environment. Only a few of these statements will be quoted here. During 1949, L.B. Kreitner stated: "Here the art critics are to be blamed... These 'critics' conceal their lack of knowledge and proper understanding behind a veil of catch phrases and technical terms... Real and sound criticism, based on knowledge and understanding, is what the South African artist needs most."[9]

The South African artist, Armando Baldinelli, states: "Here, critics are too kind, so every time anyone buys a canvas and splashes some paint on it, his friends advise him to have an exhibition. So, he does."[10] Another artist, Larry Scully, states: "In South Africa there is hardly a critic of standing..."[11]

Esmé Berman adds: "The trouble with local art criticism is that it is almost exclusively complimentary. The fatuousness of such reviews serves merely to intensify the apparent maliciousness of the few exceptions."[12]

None of these statements quoted is substantiated by analyses of art critical contributions in South Africa. It is evident from these sources referred to, that no systematic investigation of South African art criticism has previously been attempted. This partly motivated the decision to investigate current art critical practice in South Africa. It is believed that a substantiated assessment of current art critical practice in South Africa, may contribute to improvement with regard to future art criticism in this country.

System of reference

References are listed after the Introduction to the dissertation, after each chapter and after Appendix I.

Those periodicals of which all issues have been studied and those newspapers of which all issues, which appeared during the period, February, 1974 to February, 1976, have been studied, are merely listed in the Bibliography. Therefore, specific references to articles contained within these periodicals and newspapers, are not abbreviated.

In Chapter 1.2, references are included in brackets within the text. This is due to the fact that the various podia for publication, themselves form the object of the discussion in this section.

Asterisks contained within Chapter 1.4, designate statements made by Berman during interview.

References

1. A.J. Werth, "Kunskritiek in Suid-Afrika in ons tyd". Bulletin van die Pretoriase Kunsmuseum, 3 no. 3, Jul. 1969. pp. 18-29.

2. Ibid., p. 18.

3. Ibid., p. 25.

4. F.G.E. Nilant, Kunskritiek.

5. Ibid., p. 8.

6. W.E.G. Louw, et al, Kritiek.

7. Werth, "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika". Kritiek, pp. 39-47.

8. Ibid., p. 45.

9. L.B. Kreitner, What is wrong with South African art?". Trek, p. 30.

10. A. Baldinelli, In : J. Keill, "Artists vs critics in word battle". The Rand Daily Mail, Nov. 21, 1975, p. 23.

11. L. Scully, In : J. Keill, Ibid.

12. E. Berman, In : J. Keill, Ibid.

CHAPTER 1

Current art critical practice in South Africa

1.1 Introduction

A distinction, in part determined by available podia for South African art critics, can be made between the following:

a) Reports on exhibitions;

b) art criticism published in newspapers by writers who have contributed irregularly;

c) art criticism published in newspapers by writers who contribute regularly;

d) art criticism published in periodicals by writers who have contributed irregularly;

e) art criticism published in periodicals by writers who have contributed regularly,

f) art critical broadcasts;

g) art critical statements contained within public lectures;

h) art critical statements contained within exhibition catalogues;

i) art critical statements contained within unpublished theses and dissertations;

j) art critical statements contained within anthologies on South African art;

k) art critical statements contained within individual publications on South African art, and

l) publications on the nature of South African art criticism.

This chapter is devoted to:

a) Discussion on podia currently available to South African art critics;

b) conclusions reached with regard to current art criticism by writers who contribute regularly to South African newspapers (analysis of articles is contained within Appendix I);

c) discussion and conclusions with regard to art critical contributions by Esmé Berman (transcribed abstracts from art critical broadcasts considered relevant to this discussion, are contained within Appendix II);

d) discussion and conclusions reached with regard to art criticism published in South Africa by some writers who have contributed sporadically.

1.2 Podia for South African art critics

1.2.1 South African newspapers

A study of a cross-section over the period February, 1974 to February, 1976, of all issues of the nineteen South African newspapers with the largest circulation, over the period January to June, 1975 (according to the Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa Ltd.), forms the basis for the table on the following page. (Average circulation numbers for Saturday issues are given within brackets). Frequency of contribution has been established on the following basis:

a) regularly - once a week

b) fairly regularly - once a fortnight

c) sporadically - less than twice a month

d) seldom - less than four contributions a year.

NEWSPAPER	CITY	AVERAGE CIRCULATION PER ISSUE	FREQUENCY OF CRITICISM PUBLISHED	CURRENT CONTRIBUTORS (CHIEF)
Argus	Cape Town	117117 (143594)	seldom	———
Beeld	Johannesburg	33069 (———)	fairly regularly	J. Bruwer
Burger	Cape Town	66830 (76699)	fairly regularly	E. Mesman
Cape Times	Cape Town	72415 (101586)	sporadically	J. Stock
Daily Despatch	East London	26254 (———)	sporadically	M. Chapman
Daily News	Durban	86242 (41672)	fairly regularly	J. Gowans
E.P. Herald	Port Elizabeth	28878 (28878)	sporadically	E. Forster
Hoofstad	Pretoria	19040 (6767)	regularly	L. Schmidt
Natal Mercury	Durban	67344 (———)	sporadically	(several)
Oggendblad	Pretoria	8269 (17301)	fairly regularly	(several)
Pretoria News	Pretoria	24898 (14773)	sporadically	(several)
Rand Daily Mail	Johannesburg	131574 (———)	regularly	H.E. Winder
Rapport	Johannesburg	478736 (———)	regularly	E. Miles
Star	Johannesburg	171225 (124757)	egularly	R. Cheales (and) (others)
Sunday Express	Johannesburg	175153 (———)	.egularly	J. Ozynski
Sunday Times	Johannesburg	490874 (———)	seldom	———
Transvaler	Johannesburg	48779 (41721)	regularly	L. Schmidt
Vaderland	Johannesburg	59483 (28469)	sporadically	D. Meerkotter
Volksblad	Bloemfontein	30243 (25963)	seldom	———

Based on replies to questionnaires (see Appendices B and H) and a study of these nineteen newspapers since February 1974, the following can be noted with regard to South African newspapers as podia for art critics:

a) No full-time critic of the visual a[illegible] is employed by any South African newspaper (critics contributing regularly do so on a part-time basis);

b) available space is limited (the average printed length of critical articles, published during the period studied, is thirty-six centimetres), and

c) more printed space is available to criticism on entertainment, films, theatre, books and music.

The art critic contributing to a South African newspaper is limited further by the following:

a) Inadequate financial remuneration of an average of R10 for an artic[illegible]hirty-six centimetres;

b) lack of financial support with regard to travelling;

c) a heterogeneous and indefinable audience; and

d) the news-orientated nature of the newspaper.

A discussion on other podia for the art critic in South Africa will, however, make it clear that South African newspapers provide the only podia for critics who wish to contribute regularly. (Regular contributions to News/Check and Trek and regular SABC broadcasts by Esmé Berman (see Appendix E) formed exceptions to this rule).

1.2.2 South African art periodicals

South African art periodicals devoted in their entirety to the visual arts are: De Arte (published by the University of South Africa), Artlook (published commercially) and the Bulletin of the

Pretoria Art Museum. Three issues of Fontein were published during 1960 but the periodical did not survive beyond these three issues.

Eighteen bi-annual issues of De Arte have been published since 1967. Contributions to De Arte are mainly of an art historical nature. "Die hout- en linosneë van J.H. Pierneef" by F.G.E. Nilant, is an example (De Arte, 14 : 19 - 25, Sept. 1973). "Walter Whall Battiss", by D.R. Beeton, is an example of a tribute to an artist published in the periodical (De Arte, 14 : 3 - 7, Sept. 1973). "Fantasy fixed in form", by Margaret Hitge (De Arte, 18 : 55 - 62, Sept. 1975), is an example of art critical work which is seldom published in the periodical. Apart from "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika", by A.J. Werth (De Arte, 13 : 33 - 40, Apr. 1973), no discussion on the theoretical nature of art criticism or the nature of South African art criticism, has been published in De Arte.

The infrequent publication of De Arte and the few examples of writing which can be considered as art critical, make it clear that the periodical does not provide a podium for the art critic who wishes to write regularly about the art presented to the South African public.

Ninety-eight issues of Artlook have appeared since 1966. The contents of these issues consist of the following:

a) Advertisements;

b) reports on art news and exhibitions;

c) interviews with artists (e.g. "Interview between Christo Coetzee and Linda Goodman", Artlook, 27 : 11, Feb. 1969);

d) tributes to artists (e.g. "Bettie Celliers-Barnard, by Jenny Basson, Artlook, 92 : 2 - , Oct/Nov. 1974);

e) statements by artists (e.g. "Painting by John Bratby", Artlook, 88 : 13, Mar. 1974);

f) biographies of artists (e.g. "What kind of a man is Guiseppe Cattaneo?", by Natalie Knight, Artlook, 67 : 14, Jan. 1972);

g) reviews of books, entertainment, films, theatre and the applied arts (e.g. "Art and artists of South Africa", by C. Eglington, Artlook, 49 : 38, Dec. 1970);

h) general articles on aspects of the visual arts (e.g. "The new clichés", by Jack Lewsen, Artlook, 12 : 10 - 11, Oct. 1967);

i) brief reviews of exhibitions (e.g. "Anna Vorster", by Eldred Green, Artlook, 81 : 12, Aug. 1973 and "Berenice Michelow" by Natalie Knight, Artlook, 82 : 2, Sept. 1973);

j) a critical viewpoint by Anton Hansen in three issues (Artlook, 11 : 19, Sept. 1967; Artlook, 12 : 16, Oct. 1967; Artlook, 13 : 17, Nov. 1967);

k) isolated articles on art criticism (e.g. "What is in a work of art today?", by Lola Watter, Artlook, 24 : 6 - 7, Oct. 1968 and "Are critics useful?", by Joan Stock, Artlook, 73 : 21, Dec. 1972) and

l) editorial statements of policy (e.g. Artlook, 80 : 4, Jul. 1973).

Since the beginning of 1973 Artlook has reported on a wide range of subjects such as entertainment, films, books, theatre and the applied arts. Its coverage of the visual arts has been depleted by this change.

The following editorial statement was published : "We are on dangerous ground. ARTLOOK is being critical and this is a luxury we can seldom afford. The last time we were critical it lost us certain adverts and adverts are our livelihood..... ARTLOOK's function is to observe and to show. The readers can themselves

decide what is good, bad or worse" (Artlook, 80 : 4, Jul. 1973).

From a study of the contents of Artlook and from the above-quoted editorial statement the following can be deduced:

a) Artlook is the only existing South African art periodical which is ..ished frequently;

b) due to its dependence on advertisements, Artlook is limited in its art critical activities; and that

c) the only South African art periodical published frequently cannot provide a podium for a regular contribution to art criticism.

Thirty-six quarterly issues of the Bulletin of the Pretoria Art Museum have been published since 1967. The Bulletin is the official publication of the museum and the contents of its issues consist of the following:

a) Miscellaneous art news;

b) reports on exhibitions in South Africa and elsewhere;

c) editorial statements on art activities in South Africa;

d) historical interpretations of works from the municipal collection (e.g. "Kremetartboom, Tshipise deur Erich Mayer", by Riena van Graan, Bulletin, 6 no. 1 : 7, Jan. 1972);

e) critical interpretations of works from the municipal collection (e.g. "The Delegates" of Cecil Skotnes, by Riena van Graan, Bulletin, 6 no. 2 : 1 - 2, Mrt. 1972) and

f) articles of general or theoretical interest which conclude each issue (e.g. "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika", by A.J. Werth, Bulletin, 6 no. 3 : 33 - 34 Sept. 1972).

Members of the museum staff contribute to the Bulletin. Two exceptions to this rule can be noted: "Art I don't like", by Frieda Harmsen (Bulletin, 9 no. 1 : 25 - , Jan. 1975) and "Kuns

waarvan ek nie hou nie", by N.O. Roos (Bulletin, 8 no. 4 : 27 - 34, Okt. 1974).

From the above the following can be deduced:

a) Only works from the municipal collection form the objects of critical interpretations published in the Bulletin; and

b) due to its infrequent publication and almost exclusive contribution by museum staff, the Bulletin does not provide a podium for South African art critics.

Three issues of Fontein were published during 1960. The following editorial statement was published : "'Fontein' aims to show how art has grown up in Southern Africa; to demonstrate by means of good colour and monochrome reproductions and authoritative articles what our artists have done and what they are doing; and to assess critically their vision of the world in which they live" (Fontein, 1 : 3, Winter 1960).

The contents of the three issues of Fontein consisted of:

a) Editorial statements on art life in South Africa (e.g. in Fontein, 2 : 3, Spring 1960);

b) discussions between South African artists (e.g. "Dilemmas of the artist in South Africa - a discussion between Edoardo Villa and Guiseppe Cattaneo", Fontein, 1 : 41 - 43, Winter 1960);

c) historical articles on movements in South African art (e.g. "Abstrakte rigtings in die Suid-Afrikaanse skilderkuns", by Anna Vorster, Fontein, 1 : 37 - 39, Winter 1960);

d) reviews of exhibitions (e.g. "Bettie Celliers-Barnard", by A.W., Fontein, 3 : 53, Somer 1960) and

e) critical articles on the work of South African artists (e.g. "Georgina Ormiston", by Charles Eglington, Fontein, 3 : 53, Summer 1960).

Despite its infrequent publication the three issues of Fontein provided a short-lived podium for South African art critics during 1960. However, no further issues appeared.

From the foregoing it is apparent that while art critics in Britain, Europe and the United States of America can contribute regularly to periodicals devoted in their entirety to the visual arts (e.g. Studio International, London 1964 —; Art International, Lugano 1968 —; Avant Garde, New York 1969 —), this is not the case in South Africa.

1.2.3 Other South African academic periodicals

Articles on South African art have been published in academic periodicals devoted to the human sciences. These articles are mainly of an art historical nature. The following are examples:

a) "Die kuns van 'n kwart eeu", by M. Bokhorst (Standpunte, 9 no. 3 : 37 - 51, 1956);

b) "Painting in South Africa — 1954", by M. Hillhouse (Standpunte, 9 no. 2 : 22 - 26, 1956);

c) "Kunsbewegings in Suid-Afrika vandag", by Walter Battiss (Standpunte, 18 no. 6 : 18 - 27, 1965) and

d) "Hedendaagse skilderkuns in Suid-Afrika", by H.M. van der Westhuysen (Historia, 9 no. 1 : 34 - 43, 1964).

Art critical work is rarely published in such periodicals. "Round the Galleries", published regularly by L.B. Kreitner, is an example of an exception to this rule (e.g. Trek, 14 no. 3 : 39, 1950).

A study of the contents of South African academic periodicals makes it clear that these periodicals do not provide a podium for the critic of the visual arts.

Under the editorship of Joyce Ozynski, art critic for the

Sunday Express, four issues of Snarl have been published. This periodical provides a critical review of the arts. No critic of the visual arts contributed regularly to the four issues of Snarl and articles included are brief. At this stage no evaluation of Snarl as a podium for South African art critics can be attempted.

1.2.4 South African popular periodicals

Popular periodicals entertain and inform the South African reader. Such periodicals are of a journalist nature and as such do not provide a podium for the critic of the visual arts. The fairly regular contribution of criticism to News/Check formed an exception to this rule.

1.2.5 South African radio and television

Esme' Berman was regular art critic and adviser for the SABC programmes Arts Review, Connoisseurs' Evening and Comment, from 1962 to 1967. She broadcasted weekly. Since 1967, when she began work on a book (Art and Artists of South Africa. Cape Town : Balkema, 1970.) she has not broadcast as regularly. However, she has contributed a fair number of talks, both critical reviews and brief lectures, since that date. During the period when Esmé Berman was regular art critic for the SABC, no other contributions of an art critical nature were broadcast. Furthermore, she is the only South African art critic who has broadcast consistently over an extended period of time.

The nature of a radio and television broadcast is ephemeral. No intensive study can be made of the broadcast which is heard only once. Only when the broadcast is published can it have a lasting influence on art attitudes. When unpublished,the broadcast is studied intensively only from a transcription, by the student or

art criticism and does not reach a wide public. Very few art critical broadcasts have been published in South Africa. An example of a published broadcast is "Tribute to Maggie Laubser", published in Artlook, (6 no. 6 : 5, Jun. 1973) from the broadcast by Esmé Berman for the SABC's programme, Comment (23rd May, 1973).

Concerning the policy of the SABC with regard to art criticism, Dr. J.H.T. Schutte, Vice-Director-General of programmes at the SABC in Johannesburg, has stated: "Die kunstoneel word so volledig moontlik weerspieël. Dit sluit in nuus ten opsigte van die beeldende kunste en kritiek...Bydraers is hoofsaaklik deskundiges van buite...Besprekings ten opsigte van die beeldende kunste word periodiek gereël. Polemiek as sodanig word nie doelbewus nagestreef nie...Die SAUK beskou dit as deel van sy taak om mee te help om die standaard van kunskritiek so hoog as moontlik te ontwikkel...Om 'n podium te skep is nooit 'n doel op sigself nie - om die beste moontlike kritiek te lewer, wel...Daar sal vaste teleVisierubrieke wees waarin die beeldende kunste gehuisves sal word" (see Appendix C, pp. ~~292-293~~ 289-299).

At this stage no comment can be made on television as a podium for art critics in South Africa. Despite its ephemeral nature television can, however, become a functional podium for South African art critics, due to its combination of verbal and visual media and the wide audience which it reaches.

1.2.6 South African public lectures

As is the case with radio and television, public lectures of an art critical nature are ephemeral, being limited to the space and time of their delivering. Lectures can have a lasting influence on art attitudes and can reach a wide audience only when published. Few South African lectures of an entirely art critical

nature are published. Art critical statements are, however, contained within some public lectures delivered and published in South Africa. Art critical statements are contained within lectures of a predominantly art historical nature or within lectures on South African art attitudes. "Whither the fine arts?", an introductory lecture delivered by Esmé Berman to the National Art Congress, held in Pretoria during 1972 and published in De Arte (12 : 51 - 55, Oct. 1972), is an example.

The following art critical statement is contained within this lecture on South African art attitudes: "And whom does the Akademie see fit to honour as the current laureate of South African painting? None other than Enslin du Plessis - a man aged 78, who had never painted before he left this country 50 years ago to settle permanently in England; who has had little contact with South Africa since then; who paints in a derivative Impressionist style and who has been artistically inert for almost 20 years. This gesture crowns all gestures of contempt for current local art..." ("Whither the fine arts?", De Arte, 12 : 54, Oct. 1972).

1.2.7 South African exhibition catalogues

Texts included within exhibition catalogues are generally in the form of a tribute or introduction to the work of the artist. As such, these texts are of an art historical and biographical nature. It must be kept in mind that it is usually not the intention of the writer contributing to an exhibition catalogue to investigate work critically. Although art critical statements are included in some cases, the exhibition catalogue does not provide a podium for art critics in South Africa.

The following is an art critical statement written by A.J. Werth and contained within the exhibition catalogue of the Pretoria

Art Museum for an exhibition of work by Cecil Skotnes, held during March and April, 1972 : "Van al die Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars is Cecil Skotnes die een wie se werk seker die duidelikste spreek van die gees van Afrika. Natuurlik het hy die inspirasie van die klassieke kuns van Afrika ondergaan..... maar daarby moet ons ook dadelik besef in hoe 'n mate hy hierdie inspirasie verwerk het..... Soos alle meesters van die kuns, boei Skotnes ons deur sy kragtigheid en helderheid, en tegelyk sy subtiliteit en fynheid van konsepsie." This statement is in part critically interpretive and in part a tribute to the artist. This dual nature is characteristic of critical statements contained within the texts of exhibition catalogues in South Africa.

1.2.8 South African unpublished theses and dissertations

No art critical thesis or dissertation has been published in South Africa. Unpublished theses and dissertations are available only in university libraries and are used solely for academic purposes. Thus such theses and dissertations do not reach the general public and fulfil no function other than the academic. Theses and dissertations on aspects of the visual arts, submitted to South African universities, are generally of an art historical nature. The curriculae of university art departments may account for this (see Appendix A).

Art critical statements are, however, in some cases included within the text of theses and dissertations. The following statement is an example: "Battiss het deur die jare sy styl so behou dat hoewel dit deur baie fases gegaan het en verander het, dit nogtans eg Afrika-gebonde gebly het..... Die grafiese kuns wat Walter Battiss gelewer het is deurgaans van uitmuntende gehalte" (Schoonraad, M. "Die lewe en werk van Walter Battiss

met besondere verwysing na sy grafiese kuns". M.A. Univ. Pret., 1974. p. 212).

Due to its purely academic function, the unpublished thesis or dissertation does not create a podium for the art critic.

1.2.9 South African anthologies on the visual arts

Anthologies, containing essays on the work of South African artists, have been compiled (e.g. Nienaber, P.J. (Red.) Skone Kunste in Suid-Afrika. Deel I. Johannesburg : Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, 1951 and Ons Kuns. Deel I en II. Pretoria : Lantern en SAUK, 1959 en 1961). Essays contained within these anthologies are generally of an art historical or biographical nature. Art critical statements are, however, included in some cases. These statements appear isolated, sporadically and unrelated to an art critical context. Anthologies containing art critical essays have not been published in South Africa.

1.2.10 Individual publications on aspects of South African art

The individual publication is the only choice available to the South African art critic who wishes to investigate the work of an artist or artists without journalist pressures, and without limitations with regard to available printed space.

Individual publications on the work of South African artists have appeared. Such publications have been devoted to an investigation of the work of a single artist (e.g. Eglington, C. Maud Sumner. Cape Town and Johannesburg : Purnell, s.a.) or to an investigation and documentation of South African art in general (e.g. Berman, E. Art and Artists of South Africa. Cape Town : Balkema, 1970).

Individual publications on the work of South African artists

are generally of an art historical and biographical nature. Critical statements are, however, included within the text of such publications. The following is an example:

"FLYNN Alma (born Haarhof)

1917 —. b Germiston

STUDIED. 1933-36 : P E Tech Art School under F. Pickford Marriott, James Gardner and John Muff Ford (NATC).

SUMMARY BIOGRAPHY. Moved to P E as a child; while a student won numerous awards and prizes; taught for a while then entered advertising. 1940 : married Ken Will; participated on numerous group exhibs; prepared illuminated addresses, commissioned portraits. No one-man exhib before 1970.

EXHIBITIONS. 1939/40 : S A Acad Exhibs 1953 : Royal Soc of Br Artists, London. 1966 : Rep Fest Exhib, Pta.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS. King George VI Gal, P E; Hester Rupert Mus, G.R.

Alma Flynn has proved her competence in several artistic media, but with the passing years her interest began to focus on the field of portraiture. Her eye and hand received their practice in innumerable pastel-vignettes of a conventional, descriptive order before she acquired the spontaneous assurance evident in the large-scale oil commissions of the Sixties.

She works in a conservative, impressionistic style and aims at capturing the spirit of her sitters. 'Peter Wilson - Master of the Rand Hunt Club' is a colourful and lively painting, which effectively portrays the man,

without becoming tedious in its descriptive features."
(Berman, E. Art and Artists of South Africa. Cape Town : Balkema, 1970, : 120. Underlining inserted to indicate art critical statements as opposed to art historical and biographical information).

Newspapers provide the art critic in South Africa with the opportunity to comment regularly on exhibitions open to the public. The individual publication is, however, incompatible with regular critical comment on available works of art. In the case of the individual publication, critical investigation is either limited to the work of a single artist or to a superficial critical survey of South African art in general. Current exhibitions are not commented on by the author of an individual publication.

1.2.1[1] Publications on the nature of South African art criticism

Previous research on South African art criticism has been published as sporadic manifestations of such research in De Arte, Bulletin of the Pretoria Art Museum, Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe and in one instance as a publication of the University of Pretoria (see Introduction to this dissertation). Sporadic statements on South African art criticism have appeared in newspapers (e.g. "Art survey critical to the critic", by Joyce Ozynski, Sunday Express : 22, Feb. 15, 1976). Sporadic statements on art criticism as a field of inquiry have been published in Artlook (e.g. "Are critics useful?", by Joan Stock, Artlook, 73 : 21, Dec. 1972).

However, there exists no podium for regular discussion on the theory of art criticism nor for regular discussion on the nature of South African art criticism.

1.2.12 Conclusion

A survey of possible podia for art critics in South Africa proves that critics have been, and are, currently dependent on newspapers for the publication of regular critical comment on the art available to the South African public. This factor partly determines the nature of South African art criticism. Lack of available podia for discussion the theory of art criticism and investigation of South African art criticism, is another factor which determines art critical practice in this country (see Chapter 3.2).

1.3 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by writers who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers

1.3.1 Introduction

Only by publishing regularly can the critic establish a critical philosophy and subsequently, critical criteria, recognisable to his reader. A distinction can thus be made between the possible functions attributable to regular contributions as against sporadic contributions by critics. This distinction has prompted the decision to analyse the work of critics who contribute regularly and fairly regularly to South African newspapers and to omit an analysis of work published in newspapers on a sporadic basis.

Articles chosen for analysis are typical of the work contributed by:

a) Richard Cheales, critic for The Star (see analysis in Appendix I.1);

b) H.E. Winder, critic for The Rand Daily Mail (see analysis in Appendix I.2);

c) Elza Miles, critic for Die Rapport (see analysis in Appendix I.3);

d) Joyce Ozynski, critic for The Sunday Express (see analysis in Appendix I.4);

e) E. Mesman, critic for Die Burger (see analysis in Appendix I.5);

f) Johan Bruwer, critic for Die Beeld (see analysis in Appendix I.6); and

g) Jill Gowans, critic for The Daily News (see analysis in Appendix I.7).

The work of these critics has been analysed with regard to the following:

a) Organisation;

b) contexts established;

c) critical terminology;

d) critical method; and

e) possible critical functions (see Chapter 2).

Conclusions reached with regard to the critical contributions by the above-listed critics are included in this chapter (1.3). The analysis of typical examples of work by these critics is contained within Appendix I.

1.3.2 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Richard Cheales, critic for "The Star" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Unstructured in all cases b) No progression from analysis to synthesis c) Irrelevant information d) Wastage of printed space
Context :	a) No discussion of artist's oeuvre and development b) No art historical context established c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) No art critical criteria forthcoming
Terminology :	a) Emotive terms used b) Arbitrary terms used c) Unspecified terms used d) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used e) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) No progression from analysis to synthesis b) No substantiation for evaluative statements
Possible functions:	a) Journalist reporting b) Tribute to artists c) Biographical d) Autobiographical e) Promotion of avoidance of critical analysis

*See Appendix A, pp. 141-151 for analyses.

1.3.3 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by H.E. Winder, critic for "The Rand Daily Mail" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Unstructured in all cases b) No progression from analysis to synthesis c) An arbitrary list of works mentioned and praised d) Wastage of printed space
Context :	a) No discussion of artist's oeuvre and development b) No art historical context established c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) No art critical criteria forthcoming
Terminology :	a) Emotive terms used b) Arbitrary terms used c) Unspecified terms used d) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used e) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) No progression from analysis to synthesis b) No substantiation for evaluative statements
Possible functions:	a) Journalist reporting b) Tributes to artists c) Autobiographical d) Promotion of avoidance of critical analysis

*See Appendix A, pp. 151-155 for analyses.

1.3.4 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Elza Miles, critic for "Die Rapport" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Some articles are structured b) Progression from analysis to synthesis in some articles
Context :	a) Mention but no investigation of artist's oeuvre and development in most articles b) Reference to but no investigation of art historical context in most articles c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) Formalist criteria forthcoming in some articles
Terminology :	a) Contradictory terms of reference used in some articles b) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used sporadically c) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) Progression from analysis to synthesis in some articles b) Sporadic arbitrary interpretive statements c) Sporadic unsubstantiated evaluative statements d) Inconsistent investigatory procedure
Possible functions:	a) Descriptive in some articles b) Substantiated interpretation and evaluation in some articles c) Informative with regard to art historical references in some articles d) Autobiographical in some articles

*See Appendix A, pp. 155-165 for analyses.

1.3.5 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Joyce Ozynski, critic for "The Sunday Express" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Some articles are structured with regard to context b) No progression from analysis to synthesis
Context :	a) Art historical references but no systematic investigation b) Mention but no systematic investigation of artist's oeuvre c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) No art critical criteria forthcoming
Terminology :	a) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used b) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) No progression from analysis to synthesis b) Unsubstantiated evaluations c) Nature of works condemned, not sufficiently established
Possible functions:	a) Attack on South African art attitudes b) Informative with regard to art historical references in some articles c) Journalist report

*See Appendix A, pp. 166-174 for analyses.

1.3.6 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by E. Mesman, critic for "Die Burger" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Differentiation between aspects discussed b) No progression from analysis to synthesis c) Secondary aspects discussed at length d) Wastage of printed space
Context :	a) No investigation of artist's oeuvre and development b) No art historical context established c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) No art critical criteria forthcoming
Terminology :	a) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used b) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) No progression from analysis to synthesis b) No substantiation for evaluative statements
Possible functions:	a) Journalist report b) Isolated description c) Autobiographical

*See Appendix A, pp. 174-185 for analyses.

1.3.7 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Johan Bruwer, critic for "Die Beeld" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Correlation between analysis and synthesis b) Distinctions are made between different aspects and different works discussed
Context :	a) Reference to but no systematic investigation of [illegible]ist's oeuvre and development in most articles b) No art historical context established c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) Formalist criteria forthcoming in some articles f) Emotional identification with work stressed in some articles
Terminology :	a) Use of substantiated evaluative terms b) Attempts to explain and establish terms
Method :	a) Progression from analysis to synthesis b) Evaluation substantiated by description
Possible functions:	a) Journalist reporting in some articles b) Autobiographical in some articles c) Informative and educational

*See Appendix A, pp. 185-197 for analyses.

1.3.8 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Jill Gowans, critic for "The Daily News" *

	Conclusions
Organisation :	a) Art critical articles unstructured in all cases b) No progression from analysis to synthesis
Context :	a) Mentioning but no discussion of artist's oeuvre and development b) No art historical context established c) No art critical context established d) No aesthetic philosophy recognisable e) Idiosyncratic criteria forthcoming in some cases
Terminology :	a) Emotive terms used b) Arbitrary terms used c) Unspecified terms used d) Unsubstantiated evaluative terms used e) No explanation and establishment of terms
Method :	a) No progression from analysis to synthesis b) No substantiation for evaluative statements
Possible functions:	a) Journalist reporting b) Tribute to artist c) Descriptive in some cases d) Autobiographical e) Promotion of avoidance of critical analysis

*See Appendix A, pp. 197-202 for analyses.

1.3.9 Conclusion

With regard to current art critical contributions to South African newspapers, it can be deduced that no systematic body of exegetical or educational (see Chapter 2.5) art criticism is emergent.

Determinant factors of the low standard of art critical contributions to South African newspapers will be discussed in Chapter 3 (see also Appendices B and H).

1.4 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by Esmé Berman

1.4.1 Introduction

The decision to devote a separate section of this chapter to discussion on art criticism as practised by Esmé Berman, was prompted by the following:

a) After 1961, Berman contributed consistently to various possible podia for South African art critics;

b) Berman is Director of the Art Institute South Africa, which was founded by her in June, 1972. Contribution to art critical practice in South Africa, forms part of the services which the Art Institute South Africa provides, insofar as art criticism is incorporated in:

Publication of informative material on art; educational exhibitions; liason between national and international art educational bodies and personalities; international cultural exchange; lectures, demonstrations and conducted tours; and competition and experimentation relating to art;

c) Berman is one of the only two South African members of the

International Association of Art Critics (N. Dubow is the other member - see Chapter 1.5);

d) Berman is at present consultant art adviser to the Rembrandt Foundation and was honorary adviser to other bodies such as the Department of Information;

e) Berman was the non-academic delegate for South Africa at the International Art Congress held during 1971; and

f) Berman has served on juries and selection panels of many national exhibitions and competitions.

Art critical contributions by Berman which will be referred to in the following section, consist of the following:

a) Contributions to South African newspapers;

b) contributions to South African periodicals;

c) contributions to SABC broadcasting programmes;

d) contributions contained within exhibition catalogues; and

e) contributions contained within individual publications by Berman.

Due to their ephemeral nature and the fact that they do not exist in transcribed form, public lectures by Berman cannot be referred to. Transcribed abstracts from broadcasts, which are considered relevant to the discussion in the following section, are contained in Appendix II, as these transcriptions are not readily available. Some statements by Berman on the subject of art criticism are contained in Appendix E, which consists of replies to a questionnaire sent to Berman during 1975. Asterisks within the following section designate statements made by Berman during interview.

Due to the widespread and varied nature of art critical contributions by Berman, a detailed analysis of typical contributions and a tabulation of conclusions (as in Appendix I and Chapter 1.3),

are not feasible. Thus, only those aspects considered most important with regard to art criticism as practised by Berman, are isolated in the following section, illustrated by reference to specific examples and correlated with statements on criticism by Berman.

I.4.2 Discussion and conclusions

a) Berman follows the development of artists' work. While South African newspaper critics seldom refer to previous exhibitions by artists discussed (see Chapter 1.3 and Appendix I), Berman refers to previous work, traces development, discusses work within the context of the artist's oeuvre, and attempts to trace influences on the artist's work. The following quotation can be advanced as an example: "Then he made the acquaintance of Egon Guenther... Guenther was...knowledgeable about contemporary art...and significantly something of an expert on the tribal art of Africa. Behind the semi-abstract forms and earthy colouring of Skotnes' early paintings, Guenther was convinced he could detect the latent promise of a graphic artist. He persuaded the young man to try his hand at woodcuts...It was enlightening to viewers unfamiliar with his phases to observe Skotnes' transition in his woodcuts from a painterly approach toward a linear interpretation of his subjects. His initial analytical projections gave way fairly rapidly to rhythmical formations, abstracted from the contours and accenting features of the object."[1] Also in the following quotation, Berman's concern with discussing work within the context of the artist's development and oeuvre, is apparent: "The show is an impressive history of a sculptor's*development over 18 years. Beginning with traditional portrait-busts in bronze, he moved gradually into the abstract idiom, during a long period of wood-

*Solly Disner

carving, and has now returned to bronze - this time with total abstraction."[2] The following can be quoted as a final example: "But sensitivity and lyricism skate on thin ice above the well of sentimentality; confident handling of paint can so easily become sterile virtuosity, and knowledge of animal habit can be translated into academic description. During the past couple of years, all these pitfalls have opened up before Gordon Vorster, and he has not always avoided falling into them...For me, this show indicates a welcome return to form."[3]

b) Berman attempts to discuss work within the context of the history of art in South Africa and elsewhere. She states with regard to the possible functions of art criticism, that the critic attempts to "...relate the works to their aesthetic context and to present them within the continuum of cultural activity...to detect relationships and to draw parallels between styles, concepts and procedures."[4] The following can be advanced as examples of Berman's attempt to discuss work within the context of the history of art: "Essentially, he* is a 20th century painter, who uses a 15th century convention, for making statements that are timeless. In Quattrocento tradition, he takes meticulous care to define the conceptual identity of his subjects..."[5]; "During the very early years his**compositions bore affinity with the more formal Post-Impressionist styles..."[6]; and "They were the enfants terribles*** of the 20s, when they returned from abroad and exploded expressionistic images before the startled eyes of a public only just beginning to awaken from a calendar-designer's dream of sugar-coated purple mountains...This was a turningpoint in the development of this country's art..."[7]

When discussing aspects of South African art, Berman also

*Alexis Preller **Alexis Preller ***Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser

frequently refers to contemporary art being produced elsewhere. She states for example: "Coming to this show fresh from the galleries of Paris and London, Italy and Greece...one aspect which came home forcibly...was the almost total absence among our artists of the morbid and lonely pessimism which permeates the current painting of Europe and America..."[8]

c) Berman isolates broad tendencies with regard to South African art. She states for example that "With regard to style, it is clear that the bulk of South African artists are today fully in tune with the rest of the world in their acceptance of the more abstract approach."[9] In her individual publications, Berman also attempts to discuss South African art in terms of broad tendencies which can be recognised.[10] From Chapter 1.3 and Appendix I it is clear that South African newspaper critics do not attempt to isolate tendencies in South African art. These critics normally discuss the work of an artist in isolation.

d) In contrast with other South African art critics, Berman attempts to isolate those critical criteria which are fundamental to her evaluation of works of art. For instance, before discussing an exhibition of contemporary French painting, held in Johannesburg during 1963, Berman states: "I should perhaps first clarify the criteria upon which I base my judgment of a work of art."[11] Emerging from her clarification of critical criteria is communication as a criterion for evaluation. She states: "It is when design is used to reflect man's knowledge, emotions and experience as man, and to communicate these through this visual vehicle, that it acquires significance as art...fine decoration demands great skill, it is nevertheless considered to be a minor

art because it lacks this vital ingredient - communication."[12] Berman's negative criticism on manifestations of twentieth-century formalist attitudes with regard to art, bears out her adherence to communication as a standard for critical valuation. She states for example: "...included in this esoteric trend is another, but far less sensitive, group of work...I think more particularly of a panel entitled 'Song of the Earth', by the celebrated artist, Jean Dubuffet. This is textured all-over with sand, and is of similar colouring. No attempt has been made to render shapes upon the surface, and there is no variation in the texture. Of course I can fabricate an impressive-sounding justification for this work... but when I look around the exhibition and ask myself, 'How many paintings here communicate anything of lasting value?' I find that I am lost for an answer"[13] (underlining my own). It can be noted here that "communication" as an art critical criterion is a subjective and unspecified property. Berman, however, admits to the subjective nature of criticism when stating: "...in attempting to arrive at some kind of judgment I must rely upon my training and experience, on the intuitive responses which result from years of earnest looking and on the canons of taste which have been acquired in the course of cultural conditioning."[14] Unlike South African art critics who advance evaluations without substantiation, but who nevertheless never admit to subjectivity and bewilderment, Berman is aware of these conditions of art criticism and states: "I 'admire' people who believe that they can speak with full authority on works of art." *

e) Unlike most South African art critics, Berman writes extensively on secondary aspects related to art. Concerning art criticism in South Africa, she states: "The trouble with local art

criticism is that it is almost exclusively complimentary...The reason for this situation lies partly in the smallness of the South African art community. Where everyone knows everyone else, it is extremely difficult to dissociate the work or comments on it, from the personality concerned."[15] This problem is also suggested in the following statement by Berman concerning her own contribution to art criticism in South Africa: "I myself have spoken up for South African art and have not been highly critical. South African art is too fragile to withstand destructive criticism...There is no excuse to be offered for vicious and destructive criticism. The critic need not applaud but should also not destroy. As there is always a human being behind a work of art who should be considered, the critic should rather ignore than destroy maliciously." * A tolerant attitude is manifest in the following quotation: "...van Essche's greatest problem is the danger of repeating himself, <u>but he is aware of the tendency</u>, and in the present show he provides many variations on his personal theme..."[16] (underlining my own). Also implied by the above quotation is familiarity with the artist himself. This may be fundamental to the tolerant attitude discernible in Berman's art critical work. In only very few cases is Berman's evaluation condemnatory. The following is an example: "As verkopings die bewys is, is die publiek volkome tevrede met Gordon Vorster se jongste werke. Die koerante juig ook daaroor. Ek wou dat ek die geesdrif kon deel...Sy welige dik verf, met die paletmes soos botter aangesmeer, is opgevolg deur dun deurskynende glasure : maar met die terugsakking van die forsheid het soetigheid ingevloei om die plek te vul. Die strakke hoekigheid van sy vroeëre vorms is vervang deur gemaniereerde stilerings en daardie effens banale inboorlingfigure op hierdie uitstalling herinner nouliks aan die rake waarneming van

voorheen."[17]

f) Berman also makes statements with regard to the gap between artists and the public in South Africa. She states for example: "With regard to style it is clear that the bulk of South African artists are today fully in tune with the rest of the world in their acceptance of the more abstract approach. I am not sure whether the public can be said to share their enthusiasm, however. The biggest sales this year, in Johannesburg at any rate, were still made by strictly conservative descriptive painters, and very few abstractionists held successful selling exhibitions in South Africa in 1963..."[18] With regard to the gap between artists and public, Berman also states: "The <u>third class</u> is the <u>general or casual public</u>, which is usually ill-informed and relies upon the critic for explanation and opinions. The critic can assist in informing and possibly directing this class of audience toward more appreciative viewing. However, so much needs to be spelt out that the critic may either be forced into didacticism or reduced to mere reportage. In either case, he will not fulfil a strictly critical function. The last-mentioned problem is a cogent issue in a society such as ours. Circumstances here...almost dictate that the critic should perform a wider function. There is some justification in these circumstances for art criticism assuming a predominantly educational character."[19] Berman also states: "I orientate myself with regard to areas of confusion amidst the public. I consider myself as a missionary of art and try to communicate something of my own joy, enthusiasm and commitment with regard to art." *

With regard to the above-quoted statements, it can be noted that in practice, Berman does consistently attempt to explain

aspects of contemporary art which tend to confuse the general public. The following can be advanced as examples of educational criticism as practised by Berman: "Let me begin by stating that I stand four-square behind the abstract idiom, as the 20th century convention for expressing 20th century artistic ideas. I know of no rule which proclaims that a painting is required to be anything more than an arrangement of colours and shapes upon a surface. But these colours and shapes have to be consciously organised, and this organisation we refer to as design"[20]; and "There have been many occasions when I have wished that this were a request programme, that I might answer your queries...Most of all, I have wanted to add a little to your understanding of art. Understanding is the principle thing..."[21] The art critic's audience in South Africa can possibly be said to dictate the predominantly educational nature of criticism as practised by Berman (see Chapters 2.5 and 3.4).

g) Berman also makes statements with regard to art competitions in South Africa; problems of the artist in South Africa; and on the conditions of art in this country. These statements possibly contribute to measures of reform as far as competitions are concerned; to clarifications for artists as far as their own problems are concerned; and to a wider understanding among the public as far as the circumstances of art in South Africa are concerned. Berman states for example: "It is common cause that neither the sociological nor the cultural climate of South Africa coincide on all counts with circumstances elsewhere in the world. Despite our recent, rapid artistic strides, the local avant-garde still trails behind the international innovators; the environment in which our artists work is also qualitatively different from that

of, say, America or France."[22]

Berman isolates choices with which South African artists are confronted. She states for example: "Now, mindful of potential audiences beyond the borders of South Africa, the much more sophisticated and informed generation of the space-age was firmly convinced that if local artists were to identify themselves with the international scene it must be with the immediate current of the day...The alternative - to pursue their own pace of development regardless of external events - smacked of provincialism...However, a third possibility was gaining adherents..."[23]

Berman attempts to supply reasons for the prevalence of mediocre works on exhibition in South Africa. She states: "There are in South Africa no more than 400 professional artists - this statistic has important implications, for it means that, in direct contrast with the situation elsewhere in the world - where artists are more numerous, and competition fierce, practically any painter, and almost certainly any sculptor, of reasonable skill and imagination can achieve recognition on the strength of a couple of exhibitions. This is fine for the artists, but it also means that a great deal of work which is no more than mediocre wins undeserved acclaim..."[24] Statements such as the above-quoted help create a context within which Berman can discuss works of art being produced in South Africa. As part of this context, Berman keeps the art market in South Africa in mind. She states for example: "It has, however, long been common practice among South African artists to exhibit too frequently and too unselectively. The recent boom on the art market has done nothing to discourage this tendency."[25]

h) Unlike critics contributing to South African newspapers, Berman's decision to discuss certain exhibitions seems to be not

of, say, America or France."[22]

Berman isolates choices with which South African artists are confronted. She states for example: "Now, mindful of potential audiences beyond the borders of South Africa, the much more sophisticated and informed generation of the space-age was firmly convinced that if local artists were to identify themselves with the international scene it must be with the immediate current of the day...The alternative - to pursue their own pace of development regardless of external events - smacked of provincialism...However, a third possibility was gaining adherents..."[23]

Berman attempts to supply reasons for the prevalence of mediocre works on exhibition in South Africa. She states: "There are in South Africa no more than 400 professional artists - this statistic has important implications, for it means that, in direct contrast with the situation elsewhere in the world - where artists are more numerous, and competition fierce, practically any painter, and almost certainly any sculptor, of reasonable skill and imagination can achieve recognition on the strength of a couple of exhibitions. This is fine for the artists, but it also means that a great deal of work which is no more than mediocre wins undeserved acclaim..."[24] Statements such as the above-quoted help create a context within which Berman can discuss works of art being produced in South Africa. As part of this context, Berman keeps the art market in South Africa in mind. She states for example: "It has, however, long been common practice among South African artists to exhibit too frequently and too unselectively. The recent boom on the art market has done nothing to discourage this tendency."[25]

h) Unlike critics contributing to South African newspapers, Berman's decision to discuss certain exhibitions seems to be not

an arbitrary decision. She states for instance: "The two exhibitions which attracted my attention this week differ considerably in character, but are linked by a common denominator : in both cases, the artists concerned are outstanding figures in the field of applied design."[26]

i) Berman also differentiates between hobbyists and professional artists. This differentiation is manifest in the following statement: "There are any number of Sunday painters in South Africa... If, however, there comes a time when the hobbyist achieves a professional level of performance, he enters into a new relationship with the critics...Mrs. Cohen clearly indicated her arrival as a professional artist and if I treat her current work more sternly than before, it is really a salute to this achievement."[27] This differentiation is not always made by South African art critics contributing to newspapers. From work by Richard Cheales and H.E. Winder the reader cannot form an idea as to the professional status of artists discussed (see Appendix I).

j) Berman sometimes announces an exhibition and discusses it later. By doing so she gives her readers or listeners a chance to visit the exhibition before a more detailed discussion is devoted to works on exhibition. With regard to the exhibition of contemporary French painting, held in Johannesburg during 1963, Berman announced the exhibition a week before her actual discussion was broadcast.[28] Berman also broadcast reviews of art events during a specific month on the programme, Connoisseur's Evening.[29]

k) Berman modifies her critical contribution...according to the needs of the medium. For instance, work contributed to News/Check

is slightly satirical, while broadcasts are more straightforward. "The purposes of different media are different, although different people are not necessarily reached." * Adaptation to medium possibly explains the congratulatory nature of introductions to exhibition catalogues, written by Berman. She states with regard to these: "The emphasis is on presenting the work of the artist. This does not necessarily mean that the value of the work is falsified. It does mean a step forward towards the critical selectivity of the audience or reader. Criticism in this case would mean that the courtesy of the role would not be fulfilled." *

1) With regard to critical terms the following can be noted concerning Berman's art critical contributions: She uses emotive and affective terms in an attempt to suggest the meaning of a work of art by means of evocative language. Berman believes "...that a critic can communicate subliminally as words give rise to a certain reaction. The choice of words and the rhythm which can be created by the use of words make subliminal communication possible"* Berman also states: "The live voice makes a crucial difference with regard to broadcasts. The charisma surrounding an individual is communicated by voice. Enthusiasm is communicated and generated by the live voice." *

The following is an example of the evocative use of language by Berman: "Her paintings carry one, on a wave of fantasy, from subterranean caves where centaurs sport, to cool green depths where coral grows."[30] Emotive and affective terms are contained within the following: "This was a sparkling exhibition, alive with sensuously-appealing paintwork and charged with radiant excitement..."[31] (underlining my own). These terms remain unsubstantiated. Berman does, however, convey enthusiasm to her audience

by the use of evocative language.

With regard to art critical language, Berman states: "The subtleties of language place an enormous and frightening responsibility on the critic's shoulders. A word can be construed differently by different readers. For instance, lack of condemnation can be construed as approval." * The lack of substantiation for terms used by Berman, does not coincide with her awareness of this responsibility. She takes little care to define and explain the exact meaning of an evocative word or phrase within its context. Insofar as Berman uses emotive and affective terms, her criticism can be considered autobiographical (see Chapter 2.3 and 2.5).

m) The preceding can be related to critical method as adhered to by Berman. She states that "All a critic can do is to interpret." * She also states that she prefers to regard herself "...as an interpreter, rather than as an evaluative critic."[32] However, in an article published during 1971, Berman accepts the evaluating role of the critic. She discusses the critical process as follows: "This usually entails a process of sequential thoughts, commencing with initial identification...This is followed by consideration of the work's validity...For purely personal requirements, the process of assessment often stops short at this point. But, in my professional capacity, I am usually expected to take the sequence further and to produce some sort of judgment on the value of the work..."[33] (author's underlining)

Berman interprets by relating works to the history of art, to contemporary works produced elsewhere and to the artist's oeuvre. and development. She attempts to interpret the meaning of works of art and often attempts to suggest this meaning by the use of

evocative language. Implicit in Berman's interpretations are, almost always, also evaluations of the work in question. However, a balance between description, interpretation and evaluation is seldom maintained. The reason for this lies in the fact that Berman often disregards critical description. Berman states that "The critic is compelled to describe a work of art in order to create a visual image for the listener." * Berman accepts critical description as necessary with regard to broadcasts. She does not, however, recognise the general necessity for reference to describable properties of a work of art, in order to substantiate interpretation and evaluation. Thus, Berman often does not refer to the describable properties of a work at all. The following can be advanced as an example: "Since his last exhibition here in 1962, Portway has matured immeasurably. Some of his earlier liveliness of style has been lost in the process, but the mystical, introspective quality has deepened."[34] Interpretation and evaluation are not related to specific describable properties of Portway's work (see Chapter 2.4). Berman also states that "Kibel's hand was governed by his intellect and feelings, not only by the factual information of his eyes. He did not simply describe his subject-matter, he identified himself with it."[35] She does not, however, relate this statement to specific works by Kibel, nor to describable properties of his work.

n) Critical terms used and method as adhered to by Berman, result in lack of meticulous care with regard to the substantiation of interpretation and evaluation. Statements by Berman tend to be general, unspecified and unsubstantiated. The following can be advanced as a final example: "Much of her painting style was still tentative - line and solid vying with each other for importance in

evocative language. Implicit in Berman's interpretations are, almost always, also evaluations of the work in question. However, a balance between description, interpretation and evaluation is seldom maintained. The reason for this lies in the fact that Berman often disregards critical description. Berman states that "The critic is compelled to describe a work of art in order to create a visual image for the listener." * Berman accepts critical description as necessary with regard to broadcasts. She does not, however, recognise the general necessity for reference to describable properties of a work of art, in order to substantiate interpretation and evaluation. Thus, Berman often does not refer to the describable properties of a work at all. The following can be advanced as an example: "Since his last exhibition here in 1962, Portway has matured immeasurably. Some of his earlier liveliness of style has been lost in the process, but the mystical, introspective quality has deepened."[34] Interpretation and evaluation are not related to specific describable properties of Portway's work (see Chapter 2.4). Berman also states that "Kibel's hand was governed by his intellect and feelings, not only by the factual information of his eyes. He did not simply describe his subject-matter, he identified himself with it."[35] She does not, however, relate this statement to specific works by Kibel, nor to describable properties of his work.

n) Critical terms used and method as adhered to by Berman, result in lack of meticulous care with regard to the substantiation of interpretation and evaluation. Statements by Berman tend to be general, unspecified and unsubstantiated. The following can be advanced as a final example: "Much of her painting style was still tentative - line and solid vying with each other for importance in

the composition; her vision was frankly youthful and naive. But her approach to visual expression was individual and her coloured graphic-studies well-resolved...Her paintings and graphics exhibited in 1968 were still distinctively hers in style, but there were subtle adjustments in orientation - primarily a more synoptic humanism and a less lighthearted view of life. There were also indications of a development toward greater clarity of formal treatment - a simplifying of images and increased use of straight lines and flat planes : all of which suggested that if her progress continued it would be accompanied by marked developments in style in the years to follow"[36] (underlining my own). The critical description underlined is inadequate substantiation for interpretive and evaluative statements contained within the above-quoted statement. The statements remain general and unspecified.

o) Berman's critical approach is eclectic. She writes and broadcasts on the work of many different artists and on many secondary aspects related to art. This eclectic approach also results in general, unspecified and unsubstantiated statements. Due to her eclectic approach, Berman does not concentrate on the critical interpretation and elucidation of specific tendencies with regard to South African art, nor on the interpretation and elucidation of the work of specific South African artists. Her eclectic approach results in an art critical contribution of superficial character.

p) Related to her eclectic approach, is Berman's tendency to oversimplify. The following can be advanced as examples: "'Pop-Art', that mongrel offspring of the descriptive style..."[37]; and "This exhibition is somewhat erratic in quality, but it is not a show to disturb psychologically, and it provides frequent visual delight."[38]

No attempt is made to explain or substantiate the above-quoted statements. Berman's oversimplification is related to a lack of critical description, lack of reference to specific works or lack of substantiating argument.

q) Berman tends to insert irrelevant information on the artist and his intentions into her critical discussion of his work. The interest in the artist himself, which is characteristic of South African art criticism, thus also manifests itself in Berman's criticism. She states for example: "It is often difficult to reconcile the lyrical painter* of romantic harbour-scenes with the expressionistic exponent of forms-in-space, but both exist behind the dreamy eyes and wispy beard of this unassuming and most un-Bohemian artist"[39] (underlining my own). The underlined statement serves no art critical purpose. It merely serves to camouflage avoidance of critical investigation. No attempt is made to investigate and reconcile the different approaches which are mentioned.

1.4.3 Conclusion

Berman contributed more consistently to various possible podia for South African art critics, than any other critic in this country. Due to her respected position as leading art critic in South Africa, she was able to make regular use of podia (i.e. radio) which are not normally available for the regular contribution of art criticism in this country.

With regard to Berman's art critical contributions, the following can be advanced as conclusion:

a) Unlike most South African critics, Berman often discusses work within an art historical context; within the context of contemporary art being produced elsewhere; and within the context of

*Sidney Goldblatt

the artist's development and oeuvre.

b) Unlike most South African critics, Berman attempts to isolate broad tendencies with regard to South African art.

c) Unlike other South African critics, Berman attempts to isolate the critical criteria fundamental to her evaluation of works of art.

d) Unlike most South African critics, Berman writes extensively on secondary aspects with regard to art, thus contributing to clarification of the problems of art in this country.

e) Berman's criticism fulfils an educational function and in some cases an autobiographical function (see Chapter 2.5). Unlike the work of most South African critics, her work does not fulfil a predominantly autobiographical function.

f) Unlike other South African critics, Berman often supplies reasons for her decision to discuss a particular exhibition or exhibitions.

g) Unlike other South African critics, Berman distinguishes between hobbyists and professional artists.

h) Unlike other South African critics, Berman sometimes announces and later discusses an exhibition.

i) Berman uses evocative language in order to communicate subliminally. Unlike other South African critics, Berman uses such language consciously.

j) Berman modifies her approach according to the needs of the medium.

k) Like most South African critics, Berman often does not explain or motivate the terms which she uses.

l) Like most South African critics, Berman often does not substantiate interpretation and evaluation by reference to describable properties of works of art.

m) An eclectic approach is manifest in Berman's critical contributions. This approach results in oversimplification, lack of substantiation and superficial investigation of works of art.

n) Like other South African critics, Berman inserts irrelevant information on the artist himself into her critical work. Berman thereby adheres to the characteristic South African concern with the artist himself.

Unlike most South African art critics, Berman can be said to contribute to the understanding of art among the South African public. This is partly due to her consistent contribution to art criticism in this country and partly due to the educational nature of her criticism. The educational nature of her criticism is possibly largely determined by her reader/listener in South Africa. This may also account for the eclectic approach manifest in her criticism. Her criticism seems to be directed towards the general public, rather than towards the informed reader/listener. Therefore she attempts to explain superficially and cursorily, rather than to investigate specific works or tendencies in depth. It may be noted here that a purely exegetical criticism (see Chapter 2.5), will reach a very small audience in South Africa (see Chapter 3.4).

1.5 Conclusions reached with regard to critical contributions by some writers who have contributed sporadically

1.5.1 Introduction

With regard to those writers who have contributed sporadically to

the various possible podia for South African art critics, the following can be noted:

a) a great many writers have contributed sporadically;

b) none of these writers has established an aesthetic philosophy, critical criteria or an art critical frame of reference;

c) some of these writers have only contributed a few articles;

d) others have contributed many articles although these articles are of little art critical value;

e) in the work of many of these writers, the emphasis is on presenting the work of artists rather than on a critical assessment of their work; and

f) many of these writers have written tributes to artists rather than attempting a critical assessment of the artists' work.

A detailed discussion on art critical work by all South African writers, is too lengthy and repetitive to be included in this dissertation. The contributions of six writers will be discussed cursorily in the following sections. These writers have been chosen on the following grounds:

a) In his book, Art in South Africa since 1900, F.L. Alexander attempts to isolate broad tendencies with regard to South African art and to assess these tendencies and the work of individual artists critically;

b) A.J. Werth has written on art critical practice in South Africa. His own art critical contributions illustrate emphasis on the presentation of the artist's work rather than an attempt at critical analysis and assessment. Like Alexander's Art in South Africa since 1900, Werth's publication, Armando Baldinelli, can be considered as a major publication with regard to South African art, due to the many included reproductions of work by the artist.

c) N. Dubow is one of the only two South African members of the International Association of Art Critics. Dubow has published a monograph on Irma Stern and has contributed many articles.

d) C. Eglington consistently contributed to Fontein and to other periodicals. He has also published a book on Maud Sumner.

e) M. Hitge has only written on the work of one artist, Judith Mason. South African critics normally do not concentrate on the work of one or a few artists. Due to Hitge's concentration of attention on the work of one artist, she avoids the eclectic superficiality characteristic of South African criticism on the whole.

f) N. Knight has contributed consistently to Artlook and The Star. Despite her consistent contribution, Knight's critical work is of little value. Her work will be discussed as being typical of work contributed by a great many minor critical writers in South Africa.

Due to the widespread and varied nature of critical writings by the writers mentioned above, detailed analysis and tabulation of conclusions (as in Appendix I and Chapter 1.3) are not feasible. Only those aspects considered most important, will be isolated and illustrated by reference to specific sources.

1.5.2 F.L. Alexander

a) Alexander attempts to isolate broad tendencies with regard to South African art. He differentiates between different styles, such as Realism, Impressionism and post-Impressionism.[40]

b) Alexander's attempt to give a survey of South African art

results in an eclectic and thus superficial discussion on the work of many artists. He states that "Art in South Africa is of a surprising diversity. If we compare the work of the more than one hundred artists illustrated in this volume, it seems that they speak in different tongues, though all of them belong to the same country."[41] Alexander does little more in his book than to point to this diversity and to group these artists into broad tendencies which are recognisable.

c) It can be noted that Alexander does not accept the validity and dynamism of twentieth century movements in art. He states for example: "At a time when in Europe the numerous movements of modern art were superseding representational art, South African landscape painting began to develop a character of its own. This development, however, was stunted by the influence of modern art"[42] (underlining my own). He also states: "Modern art truly reflects our own times. The spirit of play, or record sport, dominates public life to a much higher degree than we dare admit to ourselves. It is, for instance, not religious faith but the question of national prestige and lust for sensational records rather than sheer necessity which dominates international competition in the conquest of space - to mention just one important instance...Our art still shows weaknesses and that for three reasons: the weakness of contemporary art all over the world; the structure of our art education; and the weakness of our art criticism"[43] (underlining my own). Alexander provides no substantiating argument for his negative opinion of contemporary art. A prejudice against contemporary art and an adherence to naturalist ideals are manifest in statements such as those quoted above. This leads to Alexander's oversimplification of issues and to a prejudiced avoidance

of analysis. The following are examples: "The dehumanisation of modern art cannot be better illustrated than by contrasting Maud Sumner's threadlike road from this picture with the Road to Middelharnis by Hobbema..."[44] (underlining my own); "...the non-figurative painters ... try to describe invisible forces by visible means and are thus invading the realm of other arts. Whether coming generations will regard this invasion as unjustified or hail it as an essential development in the arts, we do not know."[45]; and "This technique replaces the human body by linear forms and corresponds well to the dehumanisation of all visual art."[46] It can be noted that Alexander conforms to the position of the art historian when referring to the decision of coming generations in one of the statements quoted above.

d) Despite the points advanced above, it can be noted that Alexander does attempt to relate South African art to the history of art and to contemporary art being produced elsewhere. He states for example: "The early cubists have had no following in South Africa. It is the watered-down cubism of Lionel Feininger (b. 1871) which we can trace in the work of J.H. Pierneef and lesser South African painters."[47]

e) It can furthermore be noted that in those cases that Alexander analyses a specific painting, he maintains a balance between description, interpretation and evaluation. An example of this balance can be seen in Alexander's discussion of Jean Welz's Earthenware and cupboard door.[48] This balance results in motivated interpretation and evaluation. As such, Alexander's critical analysis of specific works of art can be said to fulfil an exegetical and educational function.

1.5.3 A.J. Werth

a) Werth presents rather than analyses. For example, his book, Armando Baldinelli, consists of reproductions of work by the artist; poems and statements by the artist; a biographical portrait of the artist and a short introduction to Baldinelli's work by Werth himself. Due to the unusual number and quality of the reproductions, this book can be considered to be a major publication with regard to South African art. Discussion on Baldinelli's work consists of only five pages, in which Werth presents the work. In the course of presentation, Werth avoids critical analysis. However, evaluative statements abound. This is true of most contributions by Werth. The following can be noted as examples: "This complex artist has expressed himself in works which were often of a very complex nature. We follow him with interest on his path towards developing a mode of expression which has great clarity, which combines the emotions and the intellect in a manner which can only be that of the mature and experienced artist, Armando Baldinelli."[49] Werth attempts no analysis. The presentation of the artist's work contains evaluations which remain unmotivated. The following, (not from the book on Baldinelli), is another example: "Die samevattende uitstalling van seker ons bekendste Suid-Afrikaanse beeldhouer, Coert Steynberg, was een van die belangrikste gebeure op kunsgebied wat Pretoria vanjaar te beurt geval het...Vir 'n kunstenaar van naam om so eerlik sy ontwikkelingsgang bloot te lê, verg moed, want gewoonlik wil hy nie sy vroeëre, meer onbeholpe pogings ten toon stel nie. In Steynberg se geval hoef hy egter nie hiervoor te vrees nie want van sy vroegste werk toon reeds 'n vaardigheid en 'n waardering van die materiaal waarmee hy werk wat hyself nie maklik sal kan oortref nie...Dan is daar seker ook min Suid-Afrikaanse beeldhouers wat 'n

portret so direk en spontaan kan boetsier as wat hy kan."[50] No description of formal aspects substantiates the evaluative statements made. Steynberg is merely praised and no justification for this praise is forthcoming.

b) Werth writes tributes to artists instead of attempting critical analysis and assessment of works of art. He writes for example: "A passion for life, a passion for art, pouring forth with tremendous vigour - a sensitivity which sometimes leads to melancholy and withdrawal - a fine wit and great gaiety - a sombre introspection and an awareness of the dark forces of life, of the macabre : these are some of the contrasting factors which make up the complex character of Armando Baldinelli. Perhaps one could call him a romantic."[51]

c) Werth attempts to provide a brief survey of Baldinelli's oeuvre and development. In the course of this brief survey, work is lated to movements in art and to the history of art. This is done in a cursory and superficial manner. The following is an example: "When Armando Baldinelli arrived in South Africa in 1953 his art was sober and inclining towards the conservative. His stylised compositions were clearly post-Cubist, inclining towards the decorative...His experience in the field of mosaics and of 'stone painting' led the artist naturally into experiments in 'informal art'. In this he showed remarkable ingenuity, giving everyday objects a startingly" (sic) "new meaning by skilful manipulation and juxtapositioning. His first exhibition of assemblages was held in Johannesburg in 1964. By 1967 these assemblages had reached a stage of refinement and maturity which was most satisfying."[52] (underlining my own). Even in a brief survey of an

artist's development, Werth inserts unmotivated evaluations such as those underlined above.

d) Due to the above, Werth's critical contributions cannot be said to fulfil an exegetical or educational function. Statements remain arbitrary as they are unmotivated. Werth's contributions can also not be considered to be autobiographical as they do not constitute an attempt to verbalise the aesthetic experience of the writer. The only function which these contributions can be said to fulfil is that of the introduction to an exhibition catalogue. Werth merely presents and praises. The reader is provided with a congratulatory introduction to the work of the artist and to the personality of the artist.

e) It can be noted here that Werth has attacked art critical practice in South Africa (see the Introduction to this dissertation). He states for example: "Dit wil my voorkom asof die meeste kunskritici wat vir ons Suid-Afrikaanse pers skryf mense is wat òf voorheer studente in die beeldende kunste was...òf op die een of ander wyse deur gereelde kontak met kunstenaars en kunssake hulle geroepe gevoel het tot die taak van kritiekbeoefening. Hierteenoor wil ek beweer dat kunskritiek, veral vandag, een van die mees veeleisende en moeilikste gebiede is...Nou moet ons egter toesien dat die ware kunstenaars van ons tyd reg geinterpreteer word deur kunskritici wat moeilike kunsbegrippe op eenvoudige wyse en in verstaanbare taal aan die publiek kan oordra. In hierdie opsig... is die kunskritikus eintlik onderwyser."[53] Critical contributions by Werth himself do not, however, conform to that high standard of art criticism in South Africa for which he pleads.

1.5.4 N. Dubow

a) In Dubow's monograph, Irma Stern, a characteristically South African preoccupation with the artist, rather than with the artist's work, can be discerned. Dubow discusses Irma Stern's journal in an attempt to explain the personality and experiences of the artist. Dubow states that "The importance of the journal lies in the light it sheds on the young Irma's aspirations as an artist; and, more specifically, on the rôle which she saw for herself after making the decision to return to Africa to follow her star."[54] Discussing the journal, Dubow states that the drawings "...reveal Irma at her most passionate and most ingenuous...It also contains clear evidence of that other aspect which is not so well known - that vein of melancholy and, at times, self-pity that ran beneath the combative exterior she usually presented to the world."[55] In the foreword to the monograph, Dubow states: "A fair degree of prominence has been given to her aspirations in her formative years as revealed by her own private illustrated journal. This decision has been taken partly because of the inherent interest of the material itself and also because of the extraordinarily interesting light it sheds on her own vision of herself"[56] (underlining my own). What emerges from the monograph is a portrait of the artist rather than a critical analysis and assessment of her work.

b) Dubow attaches great importance to the reactions to Stern's work. He states for example: "Her first Cape Town exhibition at Ashbey's Gallery in 1920 was reportedly dismissed as 'an attempt to startle the susceptibility of Cape Town art lovers', and was marked at one point by a police investigation of alleged charges of immorality. But in the next few years her own persistence and courage were to induce change..."[57] (underlining my own). In

Dubow's discussion of reactions to Stern's work, emphasis is also placed on the artist's personality.

c) Dubow's discussion of Stern's work is of a congratulatory character. He states for example: "The drawings are exquisitely coloured..."[58]; "Her ability to draw rapidly, shrewdly and sometimes exquisitely, is evidenced by the literally thousands of pen and ballpoint sketches that she employed as preparatory notes for paintings..."[59]; "...a closer look reveals a sure grasp of structure and, more significantly, an immediacy of expressive force that will distinguish the later work"[60]; and "...its mood is compelling and the level of painterly intuition it reveals is extraordinarily high."[61] No detailed analyses of works are supplied as substantiation for these evaluative statements. An imbalance between analysis and synthesis thus gives rise to unmotivated statements.

d) Dubow attempts an evaluation of Stern's work in terms of twentieth century painting. He states for example: "Viewed purely on their painting merits, in terms of their vigour, the richness of their imagery and the confidence of their execution, Irma's Zululand and Swaziland studies of the 1920's compare well with comparable work executed anywhere at the time"[62]; "And in fact her pictures were attractive as well as being emotionally and intellectually accessible"[63]; and "...in the period between the First and Second World Wars, Irma Stern's work achieved a peak of excellence that could stand comparison with representational paintings anywhere else in the West. Obviously one is not trying to place her on a level with the great masters of the modern movement; her work never attained the intellectual and innovative qualities that that would imply. None the less, judged purely by the yardstick

of dynamic painting - perceptual and sensual rather than conceptual and intellectual, sheer picture-making in fact - one could claim international stature for her work of the 1940's."[64] Vague and general statements are contained within the above quotations. No attempt is made to point out the specific works with which Stern's work can be compared. Contradictory statements are contained within the last quotation. While praising Stern's work as being of international stature, Dubow does not put her work on a level with that of the modern masters. This contradiction remains unexplained. The "yardstick of dynamic painting" remains a vague and meaningless criterion. A tribute to the artist emerges from these statements. However, Dubow's attempt to assess her work in terms of twentieth century painting, is unsuccessful as no analysis supports this attempt; no motivated critical criteria are forthcoming and no clear statement is made with regard to those works to which Stern's work is compared.

e) Dubow attempts to relate work to art produced elsewhere. However, these attempts remain of a general and unmotivated character. He states for example: "Pechstein's drawings, very much fresher and more direct, are quite clearly the models for a style which one can recognise in the early works...of Irma. It is not that Irma's work imitates Pechstein, it is the spirit animating them which is essentially the same. It is this affinity of stylistic spirit, or the potential for it, to which Pechstein surely responded."[65] The reader remains uncertain as to the meaning of this general statement with regard to style. With regard to the work of another artist, Dubow also states: "...two undigested pop collages illustrating the pitfalls of this medium."[66] No further clarification accompanies this statement. The reader remains unsure as to the

meaning of "undigested"; as to the pitfalls of the collage medium; and as to the manner in which the works under discussion illustrate these pitfalls.

f) Dubow also attempts to relate work to the history of South African art. Also due to the general and unspecified nature of statements, this attempt does not succeed. He states for example: "The comparative vigour of the topographical traveller's art of the 18th and 19th Century had generally declined into a polite and dull pictorialism...The bland impressionism of Wenning and Naudé was one +ning. Irma Stern's overt emotionalism, her expressionist 'distortion' was another."[67] These statements are themselves bland and meaningless due to their unspecified and unsupported nature.

g) General and unmotivated statements abound in Dubow's other critical contributions. He states for example: "Tougher than these is a series of wash compositions, loosely laid brown stains with sepia calligraphic notations, plus frottage, plus collage, reminiscent of America's sharp-penned Saul Steinberg."[68] No attempt is made to explain the meaning of "tougher" nor the link with Steinberg's work. The reader is merely told and not led to understand statements by direct reference to describable properties of works discussed.

h) Dubow's writings on art being produced elsewhere, are also of a general nature. He states for example: "The London art scene is not unlike a re-run of Waiting for Godot. But in what form is the Great Joker likely to materialise? As Art as Language? Art as Performance? Art as Non-Event? Certainly as far as the avant-garde is concerned it will not be in visually seductive

terms, and scarcely in visual terms at all. We are witnessing a curious phenomenon here : a visual art tradition stripping itself bare, divesting itself of the use of its primary organ of sense perception - the eye, no less."[69] In a satirical tone, Dubow points to developments with regard to the international avant-garde. However, no detailed analysis supports these statements. General tendencies are pointed to by Dubow, without reference to specific works and without an attempt at tracing the origins and development of these general tendencies. Furthermore, vague and general suggestions are made by Dubow. He states for example: "WHY ART? Because the artist must continue to ask 'WHY?' And beyond asking he must try to show HOW. Not necessarily by coming up with solutions, but by raising levels of consciousness, by expanding dimensions of visual, tactile and conceptual experience, he must play his unique rôle in leading society through the trauma of change."[70] This statement fulfils no art critical function as it remains a vague, general and rhetorical utterance.

i) Dubow's contribution to art criticism in South Africa is of a vague and superficial nature. His work does not constitute a serious attempt at art critical analysis and assessment, but rather an attempt at presenting the work of artists and at writing tributes to the artists themselves.

1.5.5 C. Eglington

a) In Eglington's critical contributions, a preponderance of general and unmotivated statements can be discerned. Statements are made which remain superficial through lack of supporting

analysis and through lack of reference to describable properties of works of art. The following can be quoted as examples: "Nothing in any of the paintings exhibited denoted the beginner; none of them showed hesitancy or uncertainty. Their technique was as masterly as their subject-matter and treatment were original. Moreover, they showed no trace of any direct influence; and yet they spoke not in terms of hermetic eccentricity, but clearly in the language of contemporary painting."[71] No analysis supports this statement. The evaluations contained in the quotation are not deduced from investigation of the works under discussion but remain arbitrary and unsubstantiated. Eglington goes on to say: "What, precisely, gives Georgina Ormiston's painting their singular distinction and originality? Principally her technique, in which are combined quiet strength, great delicacy, and passionate intensity of imagination; poetic evocation; and the subtle complexity of her symbolism."[72] Here again, no analysis supports synthesis (see Chapter 2.4). Also in connection with Ormiston's work, Eglington states: "For all that, it is Africa that provides her with her strongest emotional and imaginative impulses; her most original themes and her most subtle symbolism. The colours, forms, legends and immemorial associations of Africa are growing more and more to find a place in her work. In the finest of her paintings, she has treated them with an imaginative subtlety and complexity that are quite new."[73] Once again, these evaluative statements are not related to describable properties of specific works of art. The reader is left to wonder about the meaning of "imaginative subtlety" and "complexity that are quite new."

With regard to the work of George Boys, Eglington states: "...he has given them "[the flat planes]" a conceptual significance, in that they direct the attention to more complex and more

significant forms."[74] No further elucidation for this statement is offered and no reference is made to specific works of art. Eglington states furthermore: "To bring such big generalisations down to precise detail, one should also say that George Boys is painting with a remarkable refinement. His sense of texture is excellent, whether he is dealing with strong masses or the most nebulous detail"[75] (underlining my own). No analysis supports the evaluative statements underlined. Eglington does not bring his generalisations down to precise detail but merely makes more general statements.

General, unspecified and unsubstantiated statements abound in Eglington's monograph, Maud Sumner. He states for example: "The paintings that just precede her first one-man show, at Druet's in 1932, show a break-through and 'Cassandra'...is a good example of her position. The paintings that follow that exhibition show where the advice of good teachers and friends, and her own unremitting determination, led her from the achievement of 'Cassandra'. To advice and determination must be added her selective response to the forces of a rich tradition. The advance is exemplified by a number of paintings reproduced here: 'La poupée rose' (Plate 6), 'La poupée jaune', (Plate 7), 'Muse, 72 rue Notre Dame des Champs' (Plate 8) and 'The bathroom' (Plate 9)."[76] Eglington does not explain the manner in which Cassandra designates a break-through. He does not investigate the manifestations of advice, determination and selective response in the other works listed. His statement therefore remains general and unsubstantiated by analysis of the works themselves. Eglington also states: "The two large Venice paintings may seem an emphatic acknowledgement that Maud Sumner had created from her revolt against the past as much as she could hope to create."[77]

No justification for this statement is supplied either.

Unmotivated and general statements abound in Eglington's work. The examples quoted are but a few of the many which can be discerned.

b) Eglington attempts to relate work to the history of art and to trace influences on the artist's work. These attempts are unsuccessful as Eglington merely mentions names and movements without investigating influences on specific works of art. He states for example: "But it is quite clear from her early paintings, in water-colour but chiefly in oils, and indeed from all the best work in oils she did between 1932 and 1940, that her affinity for the values and approach of painters like Bonnar d Vuillard, shaped and helped to bring to full flowering her development as a painter."[78] Eglington makes no attempt to point to the specific influences of Bonnard and Vuillard. The reader is merely told of this influence without being led to understand the nature and importance of this influence with regard to specific works of art by Sumner.

c) Eglington's attempt to trace the development of Sumner's work, remains vague and general. He states for example: "If 'Still life with strawberries' stands as the key painting to her early development, it is because it shows so clearly the painterly attitude which has remained with her."[79] The "painterly attitude" is not investigated sufficiently. The reader thus remains unsure as to the nature of Still life with strawberries as being a key painting in Sumner's oeuvre.

d) Eglington does not investigate form and content and the manner

in which they are mutually determinant. He concentrates on a discussion of subject-matter with regard to Sumner's work. He states for example: "The particular interest of the four paintings mentioned earlier lies in a number of elements. They are all interiors...They are paintings in which the focus shifts : sometimes it is a narrow focus, as in 'La poupée jaune', so that the work has something of the character of a formal still life."[80]

e) Eglington makes general and unmotivated statements with regard to twentieth century art. He states for example: "Today technique has become an end in itself, and to achieve novelty most painters feel obliged to avoid any form of the representational. Thus painting has become more abstract and more dehumanised."[81] No investigation of tendencies, nor analysis of specific works of art, substantiate this statement.

f) Eglington presents the work of an artist and writes a tribute to the artist. He does not attempt a serious critical investigation and assessment of the work itself. He states for example: "They are the work of acute sensitivity, and of the experienced, wise mind of an artist and a human being who looks at man and his world sub species aeternitatis, and finds cause for serenity and peace and harmony"[82]; and "Firstly there are the conceptual qualities : a quick, observant and sensitive way of seeing an actual scene, or of reshaping it imaginatively from memory; the freshness and clarity of her imaginative response to the emotions engendered by a scene; and her ability to transform a visual experience into a painter's imaginative terms."[83] No detailed analysis of describable properties and no substantiated interpretations of specific works of art, support these statements. They function rather as

tributes to the artist herself than as deduced evaluations of her work.

g) The characteristic South African concern with the artist's personality and experiences, rather than with the works of art themselves, can be discerned in Eglington's writings. He inserts irrelevant biographical information into the text. No attempt is made to correlate this biographical information with the character of specific works of art. He states for example: "She liked her teachers and made many new friends among her school companions. She liked school work and games, at both of which she was good"[84]; and "It was not that in South Africa she lived a life of isolation, or repined : she had her family and many friends..."[85] In a few instances, Eglington attempts a correlation between biographical information and the works of Sumner. He states for example: "France and England, in both of which countries she painted a great deal in water-colour before the war, produced quite different emotional effects on her work...The responses to the English scene are strong and almost fierce...In the French water-colours she leaps free from the bonds of a complex emotion..."[86] However, Eglington's evaluation of Sumner's work done in England and France, remains, once again, unsubstantiated and arbitrary. He states: "I can only say that the greatest water-colour by her that I know is one done in England, in 1941...It is also, I think, one of the fine water-colours of its time."[87] Here again, no analysis supports this evaluative statement.

h) With regard to criticism, Eglington states: "The writer on painting should not put up a screen between writer and viewer. The kind of writing into which a critic so easily falls (and for

which the painter is likely to fall for) is an utter waste of time. So the point I want to make about George Boys is simply this: that every failure has been a sign of progress."[88] Eglington's statement on criticism remains obscure. It is possibly implied in his statement that critical exegesis is a waste of time. He thus proceeds to make general and arbitrary statements which cannot be said to contribute positively to art criticism in South Africa. The above-quoted statement on Boys is another example of a st ment which is unsupported by analysis and reference to specific works.

1.5.6 M. Hitge

a) Unlike other South African critics, Hitge concentrates on an investigation of the work of one artist. She thereby escapes a superficial and eclectic approach. She attempts to describe, interpret and evaluate Judith Mason's work. She discusses specific examples of work by Mason and does not merely make general and unmotivated statements. The following can be quoted as an example: "She conceived it as a 'melodic lion', and the transforming power of her imagination has indeed imbued it with a resonance like that of sound waves. This is partly achieved by the simple formal structure, and the animal's apparent movement, as it seems to leap in a rhythmic diagonal out of a background divided into two areas, one light, and one dark. What is remarkable about this abstracted image is the tremendous psychic energy which seems to have flowed into it from the artist's brush, to be captured and compressed in the forms and rhythms of the lines. This is evident in the cursive outline from head to back and extended tail, which

leads the eye out into the background space; in the delicate vertical thrusting lines of the flowers which burst as spots of colour breaking the surface, and in the soft curves of the mane which rise and fall vertically against the main dia[illegible]l."[89]
The first sentence of this quotation points to the artist's intention. Hitge, however, attempts to explain the manner in which this intention has been realised. By referring to describable properties of the work of art, she motivates the evaluation designated by "remarkable".

b) Hitge attempts to isolate "...several special faculties possessed by this artist in highly developed form..."[90] After isolating these faculties, she discusses examples of work by Mason, thereby motivating her isolation of these faculties possessed by the artist.

c) Hitge inserts quotations from the artist in her discussion of Mason's work. These quotations are, however, not merely given, but incorporated into Hitge's own discussion. She states for example: "'The closed door reinforces the closet-like quality of all revelations'. It also acts as a kind of punctuation mark which indicates the limit of the private disclosures, even to the shape of the door knob, which can be read as a full stop."[91]

d) Hitge discusses work by Mason within the artist's oeuvre. She states for example: "Those who are familiar with the artist's work will recall that she used barbed wire as a crown of thorns in her Crucifixion in the National Gallery in Cape Town. It recalls the suffering of the crucifixion in this painting also..."[92]

e) Hitge compares different works with each other. She states for example: "The vulnerable, buffeted quality of Scarecrow II, has become a rich, playfully aggressive vitality in this painting, and the scarecrow's reversed role demonstrates the artist's power of making the image bend to her specific purpose."[93] By means of comparison, Hitge points to development and change in the artist's oeuvre.

f) Despite the above, it can be noted that Hitge sometimes does not motivate statements. She states for example: "The painting, which can be hung at any angle, has a pop flavour, and a strong 'self-transcending quality'."[94]

g) Furthermore, it can be noted that Hitge makes no attempt to relate Mason's work to the history of art or to art being produced elsewhere. No frame of reference is established for the benefit of the reader.

h) It can be concluded that Hitge mostly maintains a balance between critical description, interpretation and evaluation. Furthermore, it can be noted that she does not merely present work and write a tribute to the artist, but attempts a serious critical investigation of Mason's work. Although limited, Hitge's writings on Mason can be considered to be a limited contribution to art critical practice in this country.

1.5.7 N. Knight

a) Knight's articles are characterised by emphasis on the artist's

personality, experiences and intentions. These aspects are not incorporated into and correlated with a critical investigation of the works of art themselves. Knight states for instance: "Olivia Watson is an earthy, hardworking, dedicated artist. Her work reflects her personality and ranges from the ethereal to the earthy."[95] No attempt is made to correlate information on the artist's personality with information on her work.

b) General and unsubstantiated interpretive and evaluative statements are made by Knight. No attempt is made to motivate these statements by reference to the describable properties of works of art. She states for example: "This is not a surrealist nightmare à la Dali but an emotional statement which may be a fear or a presentiment of a future state."[96] No further discussion substantiates this statement. The following constitutes another example: "Her struggle and her loneliness and her joy are reflected in the eerie, dreamlike canvases."[97]

c) It can be concluded that Knight's critical contributions are characterised by concern with the artist, rather than by critical investigation and assessment of works of art. Furthermore, an imbalance between description, interpretation and evaluation, gives rise to unmotivated statements which abound in her work. These qualities also characterise the critical contributions of a great many writers who have contributed sporadically to South African newspapers and periodicals.

1.5.8 Conclusion

It is clear that no body of systematic and balanced criticism emerges from sporadic contributions to art criticism in South Africa.

1.6 Conclusion

With regard to current art critical practice in South Africa, the following can be deduced:

a) Podia for South African critics are limited and insufficient. Newspapers emerge as the only podia for the regular contribution of art criticism. A few exceptions can be noted (see Chapter 1.4). Appendices B and H make it evident that South African newspapers function only as limited podia for South African critics of the visual arts.

b) The standard of current art critical practice in South Africa is low. This evaluation is deduced from the following:

i) An imbalance between the three stages of the critical act (see Chapter 2.4) is characteristic of criticism in this country. Critical contributions are thus unstructured as no progression from analysis to synthesis can be noted.

ii) Critics fail to relate works of art to the history of art and to contemporary art being produced elsewhere (see Chapter 2.2). Critics also generally fail to relate works to the artist's oeuvre and to discuss work in terms of the artist's development. Thus no art historical or art critical context is established.

iii) Emotive, affective and unspecified terms abound in South African art criticism. No attempt is, furthermore, made to establish an art critical terminology.

iv) Critical criteria generally do not emerge from contributions by South African art critics (see Chapter 2.2). To a limited extent, Berman's contribution can be noted as an exception (see Chapter 1.4).

v) An aesthetic philosophy thus also does not emerge from contributions by South African critics (see Chapter 2.2).

vi) South African art critics rather present works of art and write tributes to artists, than attempt a critical investigation and assessment of works of art. An interest in the artist, rather than in works of art, can be noted. Misunderstanding as to the nature of art criticism as a field of inquiry, is thus manifested (see Chapter 2).

vii) Irrelevant and uncorrelated biographical information also manifests misunderstanding as to the nature of art criticism.

viii) On the whole, South African art critics report rather than investigate. The characteristics of the journalist report (see Appendix I.5.2) are combined with the characteristics of an unmotivated autobiographical criticism (see Chapter 2.5).

ix) Only in a few cases can South African art criticism be said to fulfil a limited educational function (see Chapter 1.3.4; 1.3.5; 1.3.7; 1.4 and 1.5.6).

c) In view of the above, it can be noted that no systematic body of art criticism is emergent, as a balanced criticism with regard to critical terms, method and possible functions (see Chapter 2), does not exist in this country. (Those factors which may be considered as determinant of the lack of a systematic and balanced body of art criticism in South Africa, are discussed in Chapter 3).

1.7 References

1. E. Berman, "Cecil Skotnes". Panorama, pp. 22-24.
2. ————, Appendix II. 5.
3. ————, Appendix II.13.
4. ————, Appendix E, p. ~~302~~ 299.
5. ————, Appendix II.17.
6. ————, The Story of South African Painting, p. 115.
7. ————, "The trail-blazers". News/Check, p. 31.
8. ————, Appendix II.14.
9. ————, Appendix II.23.
10. ————, Art and Artists of South Africa and The Story of South African Painting.
11. ————, Appendix II.17.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. ————, "Thinking Aloud". Artlook, Apr. 1971, p. 36.
15. ————, In : J. Keill, "Artists vs critics in word battle". The Rand Daily Mail, Nov. 21, 1975, p. 23.
16. ————, Appendix II. 2.
17. ————, "Vorster se Jongste Werke Stel Teleur". Dagbreek en Sondagnuus, Feb. 28, 1965, II. p. 5.
18. ————, Appendix II.23.
19. ————, Appendix E. p. ~~302~~ 299.
20. ————, Appendix II.17.
21. ————, Appendix II.23.
22. ————, "Whither the fine arts?" De Arte 12, Oct. 1972, p. 51.
23. ————, Art and Artists of South Africa, p. 18.
24. ————, Appendix II.18.
25. ————(Ed.), The South African Art Market, p. 11.

26. E. Berman, Appendix II. 6.

27. ————————, Appendix II.27.

28. ————————, Appendix II.16 ; II.17.

29. ————————, Appendix II.24.

30. ————————, Appendix II. 4.

31. ————————, Appendix II.24.

32. ————————, Appendix E. p. ~~396~~. 303.

33. ————————, "Thinking Aloud". Artlook, Apr. 1971, p. 36.

34. ————————, Appendix II.28.

35. ————————, The Story of South African Painting, p. 75.

36. ————————, Art and Artists of South Africa, p. 77.

37. ————————, Appendix II.23.

38. ————————, Appendix II.14.

39. ————————, "This side of the rainbow". News/Check, p. 34.

40. F.L. Alexander, Art in South Africa since 1900, pp. 14-33.

41. Ibid., p. vii.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 47 + 49.

44. Ibid., p. 68.

45. Ibid., p. 126.

46. Ibid., p. 127.

47. Ibid., p. 25.

48. Ibid., p. 52.

49. A.J. Werth, Armando Baldinelli, p. 14.

50. ————————, "Coert Steynberg". Fontein, 3, Summer 1960, p. 9.

51. ————————, Armando Baldinelli, p. 9.

52. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

53. ————————, "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika". Kritiek, pp. 45-46.

54. N. Dubow, Irma Stern, p. 7.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p. 6.

57. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

58. Ibid., p. 7.

59. Ibid., p. 11.

60. Ibid., p. 12.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 17.

63. Ibid., p. 18.

64. Ibid., p. 20.

65. Ibid., p. 13.

66. ————, "Two Newies on the Scene". News/Check, p. 23.

67. ————, Irma Stern, p. 15.

68. ————, "Two Newies on the Scene". p. 23.

69. ————, "This Bird Bites". Srarl, p. 14.

70. ————, "Why art?" De Arte, 14, Sept. 1973, p. 35.

71. C. Eglington, "Georgina Ormiston". Fontein, 3, Summer 1960, p. 22.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., p. 25.

74. ————, "George Boys". Artlook, Sept. 1970, p. 32.

75. Ibid.

76. ————, Maud Sumner, p. 29.

77. Ibid., p. 34.

78. Ibid., p. 25.

79. Ibid., p. 26.

80. Ibid., p. 29.

81. Ibid., p. 30.

82. Ibid., p. 42.

83. C. Eglington, Maud Sumner, p. 47.

84. Ibid., p. 5.

85. Ibid., p. 17.

86. Ibid., p. 22 + 25.

87. Ibid., p. 25.

88. ————, "George Boys". op. cit.

89. M. Hitge, "Fantasy fixed in form". De Arte, 18, Sept. 1975, p. 56.

90. Ibid., p. 55.

91. Ibid., p. 57.

92. Ibid., p. 60.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., p. 61.

95. N. Knight, "Olivia Watson". Artlook, Mar. 1970, p. 43.

96. ————, "Esmin Barolsky and Babette Kanareck". Artlook, Apr. 1974, p. 12.

97. Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical aspects of art criticism relevant to current art critical practice in South Africa

2.1 Introdurtion

Aspects will be discussed in this chapter which are theoretical bases for analysis and evaluation of current art critical practice in South Africa. Because they are interrelated, the disciplines of aesthetics and art history must be discussed as well as that of art criticism. The field is necessarily very wide and as evident in Chapters 1 and 3, the generalities of this chapter can be applied only in detail and not in entirety to art criticism in South Africa, whether considered in actual practice or considered in potentiality and possibility.

2.2 Aesthetics, art history and art criticism

It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that aesthetics, art history and art criticism are interrelated disciplines. Furthermore, the demarcation between these disciplines is not absolute. The following constitute attempts at defining these disciplines, followed by an attempt to point out the relationships and possible common denominators between them.

2.2.1 Aesthetics

Francis Coleman attempts to isolate the main questions with which the aesthetician is concerned. Coleman arrives at the following useful categories into which the main questions can be grouped:

" 1. What is an object of art?...

2. What is an aesthetic experience?...

3. What are the branches of the fine arts?...

4. In what sense is art expressi 'e?...

5. ...Can the aesthetic and the cognitive be clearly distinguished?...

6. Is an object of art simply given, or must it be interpreted before it can be appreciated?...

7. What does it mean to say that an object has or does not have aesthetic value?...

8. What are aesthetic judgments? How are they to be verified?...

9. What is the purpose of art?...

10. What sort of inquiry is aesthetics itself?..." [1]

From these categories it can be noted that the aesthetician strives to answer these questions by a series of postulates with regard to the nature of art and aesthetic experience, which would be, ideally, absolutes. It follows as a corollary that he also strives towards formulation of the philosophical bases for an art critical investigation of art.

The philosophical nature of aesthetic discussion excludes empirical deduction : the aesthetician does not investigate historical fact nor the work of individual artists or specific works of art. Aesthetic argument within a given period may, however, be determined by and partly determinant of the nature of art within a given period Some late nineteenth[2] and early twentieth century[3] aestheticians for instance, discuss the autonomy of the work of art. This discussion was related to and possibly determinant of the rise of abstract art during this period. Aesthetic argument and works of art can both be considered as embodiments of the Zeitgeist of a given period in history.

2.2.2 Art history

As against the general (i.e. non-particularised) investigations of aesthetics, art history is a field of inquiry aiming at reconstructing an historical situation in its totality, in order to investigate the work of art within, and also as an embodiment of, a spatial and temporal context.

The art historian concerns himself with the works of the past and embarks on an hermeneutic and scientific investigation. It follows that, as the lack of historical perspective on the contemporary situation excludes the possibility of an hermeneutic approach, the art historian evades investigation of the contemporary work of art.

Interpretation of the aesthetic nature of the historical work of art forms, however, part of the art historian's investigation. Through this interpretation the aesthetic potential of the work of art is realised anew and creatively by the art historian and made accessible and meaningful to his contemporaries. This function of the art historian is, however, only part of his total function of investigating the work of art as an embodiment of the spatial and temporal context within which it was created. The total function of the art historian incorporates also the investigation of the non-aesthetic (i.e. the functional) and the historical determinants of the work of art.

Insofar as the historian decides what is valid for discussion and insofar as evaluation is implicit in his interpretation, an art historical investigation is determined, as well as by the accumulation and assessment of fact, by philosophical assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience. With regard to the incorporation of such assumptions, art history cannot be considered as

a purely scientific field of inquiry.

2.2.3 Art criticism

Art criticism, as against aesthetics and art history, is less defined as to material, function and purpose. While the art critic is mainly concerned with contemporary art, he may be compelled to examine art of other epochs, in for example, the examining of exhibitions of such art or in the examination of books on such art. He is, unlike the historian or the aesthetician, thus compelled somewhat to be a reviewer. However, the distinction between the reviewer and the critic is that the critic relates the work of art which he examines to both some general aesthetic consideration and to the history of art. Thus he may attempt to, or succeed in, contributing to both aesthetics and the history of art.

The art critic aims mainly at recognition, identification, description, interpretation and evaluation of the contemporary work of art, seen as an embodiment of the context within which it is created.

The art critic points out relevant connections and divergences between past and present works of art. The contemporary work of art forms the primary object of an art critical investigation. Past works of art are thus discussed by the art critic insofar as such discussion illuminates aspects concerning the contemporary work of art.

The art critic's concern with the present excludes the possibility of a scientific and hermeneutic investigation. More emphasis is placed on an investigation of the aesthetic value of the work of art and less on an investigation of the historical determinants of the work. Exceptions can be noted. The

critical work of, for instance, Harold Rosenberg, manifests a historio-sociological determinism (see Bibliography).

Critical description is of an empirical nature and can be correlated by recourse to the work of art itself. Critical interpretation needs to be compatible with the describable properties of the work interpreted. Contradictory interpretations of the same work result from divergent assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experien Critical evaluation is a manifestation of critical criteria sometimes rooted in philosophical assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience. The critic's decisions as to the history of art and particularly as to aesthetics may lead him to interpret new work in the light of these. However, these decisions are fundamentally based on his personal and emotional biases with regard to the nature of art and aesthetic experience.

Critical interpretation and evaluation remain tentative, although supported by empirical analysis of the work of art. This tentative nature is determined by the subjective assumptions giving rise to critical criteria. Furthermore, critical criteria cannot be scientifically formulated as "...art...has no set of necessary and sufficient properties..."[4] (see Chapter 2.4).

Due to its tentative and non-scientific nature, art criticism as a field of inquiry has been attacked. Albert Setola, a contributor to the Flemish periodical, Vlaanderen, distills attacks on art criticism to the question: "...waarom doen zij "[critics]" het eigenlijk?"[5] (Engl. trans.: ...why do they [critics] really do it?)

The critic brings his personality to bear in his investigation of the work of art. The concept of critical objectivity excludes critical creativity, with regard to the realisation of the

potential of the work of art. While the art historian cannot reasonably deny an element of subjectivity inherent in his investigation, the critic in fact, relies on his own perception and taste when dealing with the new and sometimes, inexplicable work of art. In defence of his alleged arbitrariness the critic endeavours to explain and substantiate his subjective statements.

Art critical statements can be considered as manifestations of an initial response to the work of art. The critic acts as catalyst, initiating the continuous process through which the potential of a given work of art is continuously being realised by its viewers. In this dynamic process, art critical statements finally "...become in their expression themselves 'things' subject to evaluation and explanation, and they are not exempt from the relativity of art objects and evaluations." [6]

2.2.4 Relationships between aesthetics, art history and art criticism

In an attempt to reconstruct the aesthetic context within which a given work of art was created and thus the possible philosophical determinants of the work, the art historian undertakes an historical study of aesthetics. Aesthetic problems, discussion and formulation within a given period, are regarded as existing and historical facts by the art historian. The hermeneutic nature of an historical study of aesthetics excludes the critical investigation and evaluation of aesthetic statements.

Aesthetics draws on the results of an historical study of art insofar as such a study illuminates past assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience. The aesthetician may also reconstruct such assumptions by recourse to past works of art. The study of past works of art thus forms a common denominator

between aesthetics and the history of art. However, while the aesthetician is concerned with the past work of art as a manifestation of past philosophical attitudes, in order to determine his own position with regard to aesthetics as a field of inquiry, the art historian is concerned with the work as an embodiment of the total context within which it was created.

Lionello Venturi points out that "...the relation between aesthetics and art...is art criticism."[7] Aesthetics formulates the philosophical bases for art critical practice. Harold Osborne maintains that it "...does not lie within the province of criticism, which is a practical craft, to justify the assumptions which it takes over from aesthetics; but to the extent to which these assumptions are false, irrelevant or contradictory, criticism will result profitless and vain."[8] From the statements quoted from Venturi and Osborne it becomes obvious that there is a constant interplay between aesthetics and art criticism. From aesthetic discussion and formulation the critic takes over assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience. Partly on these assumptions are based his interpretation and evaluation of the contemporary work of art. From the categories, isolated by Coleman as the main concerns of the aesthetician, it can also be noted that the aesthetician concerns himself with the theoretical formulation of art critical method and functions (see categories 6, 7 and 8 on page 80). Rossario Assunto states that "Every esthetic theory presupposes a body of criticism, and is expected to be applied practically in criticism, just as every criticism puts an esthetic theory into practice, and in doing so, reinvigorates and modifies it...Art criticism, on the one side, and esthetics and the philosophy of art, on the other, form a unified

body, and it is, therefore, very difficult to find a criticism, an esthetic, or a philosophy of art in isolation"[9] (It should be noted here that the function of the philosopher of art, as defined by Assunto in his article, coincides with the combined functions of both the aesthetician and the art historian).

Art criticism can be considered as an inquiry which precedes an historical investigation of works of art. In order to point to relevant connections and divergences between past and contemporary works of art, the critic relies on the historical study of art. The contemporary work of art is approached as being part of the continuous process of artistic creation. Art criticism is thus never divorced from the history of art. As novel art often constitutes an attempt by artists to contradict past art, the critic relies on his knowledge of the history of art in order to recognise these contradictions. While contemporary art sometimes expands on earlier movements and sometimes constitutes an attempt at contradiction of earlier movements, this may tend to confuse the art historian and the aesthetician, as their decisions are founded on the works of the past. The tentative and experimental nature of art criticism as a non-scientific field of inquiry enables the critic to investigate expansion or contradiction of earlier movements in art. (It may be noted here that the South African critic is rarely confronted with art which constitutes an attempt to contradict earlier movements. The South African artist tends to build on, rather than contradict, earlier South African art. See Chapter 3.5).

In the process of defining and redefining critical terms, methods and aims, the critic takes into account the historical study of art, in order to determine his own position with regard to art criticism as a field of inquiry. An historical study of

aesthetics points to past assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience and thus clarifies for the critic, his own position with regard to such assumptions. The results of an historical study of art and aesthetics are thus relevant to the art critic.

Consciously or unconsciously, the art historian takes into account the investigation of the critic, which precedes his own investigation. Mainly those works of art valued by the critic, become the objects for an art historical investigation. The art historian also undertakes an historical study of art criticism in order to illuminate the art critical context within which a given work of art was created. Such a study, like an historical study of aesthetics, is of an hermeneutic nature and excludes critical investigation and evaluation of critical statements.

It is clear that aesthetics, art history and art criticism are distinct but interrelated disciplines. Aesthetics, art history and art criticism take into account all other fields of inquiry of which the results may illuminate aspects concerning the nature of art, aesthetic experience, the context within which works of art were and are created and the various determinants of visual works of art.

2.3 Art critical terms

A lack of literary education may hamper the critic in expressing his views. The critic wishes to communicate information to his readers and to reach this aim he has only conventional language at his disposal. Max Kozloff states that "One among its limitless problems has always haunted me about art criticism - namely, that its formulation of issues can be announced and resolved only in verbal terms...In literary criticism, judgment and the work judged

operate on the same plane of thought, partaking roughly of a comparable structure in language. But language and visual image do not coexist in a mutual market of meanings. There can be no natural exchange or objective equivalence between our perceptions in these two media...for the art critic, since he is dealing initially with appearances and sensory effect, cognates, if imaginable at all, can be nothing more than invocations, allusions. Agreement on them, therefore, is more tenuous, dependent on a kind of empathy or, at least, good will."[10]

Other critics have pointed to the inadequacy of the terminological apparatus of the art critic. Barbara Rose mentions that "...we do need new terms, and they have to be given definitions and we have to give them the definitions. That there isn't a wide currency of understanding of terms that deal with abstract art is one of the crucial problems of art criticism today."[11]

Harold Osborne maintains that "In the presence of works of art we can talk anecdotally about the artists, we can discuss technique and subject-matter and details of iconography, we can find means of indicating superficial resemblances of style and we can express our own feelings in exclamation marks. But when we wish to communicate something about the work of art itself and the qualities which make it a work of art we can only point and grunt...We need to clarify and elaborate our own aesthetic vocabulary while overhauling our language of criticism. For without words in which to clothe them our ideas lack coherence and our thinking and apprehension are muddled."[12] Osborne suggests that a "...study of the background of our ideas and assumptions will help to pinpoint what it is we are lacking..."[13] For his reinvestigation of the critical terminology with regard to origins, components and validity, the art critic is dependent on the history of art, an historical

study of aesthetics and an historical study of art criticism. Also in this respect,an interrelationship between art history, aesthetics and art criticism can be pointed to.

2.3.1 The origin of critical terms

The relationship between art history and art criticism (see Chapter 2.2.4) determines the use of art historical terms by the art critic. The terms "linear" and "painterly" are examples. The linear / painterly polarity was recognised in the battle between the Poussinists and Rubenists during the seventeenth century. The struggle was taken up by the exponents of Neo-Classicism and Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century. Heinrich Wölfflin discusses this polarity in his Principles of Art History (1932). These terms are again used by Clement Greenberg, discussing the alternation between the linear and the painterly in twentieth century painting.[14]

While descriptive and interpretive terms used by the art critic may be rooted in the history of art, evaluative terms are rooted in aesthetics. When stating that a work of art is "good" the critic relies on philosophical assumptions as to the nature of "good" with regard to works of art. While the aesthetician formulates the general and unspecified nature of "good", the art critic uses such terms with direct reference to specific works of art. The critic will also correlate his use of such evaluative terms with previous usage of these terms. In this respect the art critic takes into account the history of, art, aesthetics and criticism.

The art critic may draw terms from other fields of inquiry. Kozloff states that "...Picasso escapes two of the outstanding clichés of twentieth century sculpture: the archetypal gestalt and the timeless reference..."[15] (underlining my own). Kozloff here,

uses terms formulated respectively by psychology and philosophy

One of the problems peculiar to art criticism is that the critic is required to go beyond description of the work of art into description of its effect on the spectator, even if that effect is on the sole spectator, the critic himself. Both emotive and affective terms used by art critics originate in the endeavour to explain this experience rather than the work of art itself. Emotive and affective terms are not rooted in the history of art, aesthetics and criticism. These terms cannot be objectively correlated as they designate aspects of personal and not fully communicable experience. In an attempt to describe the emotional experience engendered by the work of art, emotive terms are used. Examples of such terms are: "Much of the work has that delightful charm...the most delicate, sensitive use of lovely rich colours"[16] (underlining my own). Affective terms are used in an attempt to describe the way in which the work of art affects the viewer. In: "Cynthia Ball has some striking, near-silhouette scenes..."[17] (underlining my own), an example of an affective term is contained. These examples of emotive and affective terms are taken from critical work contributed by South African art critics. Such terms abound in South African art criticism (see Chapter 1 and Appendix I).

Cliché expressions often form part of the critic's vocabulary. Such expressions originate in an inability to explain the nature and meaning of a work of art. Kozloff points out that "The terminology is constantly in flux and what you use in this field, as well as in others, is a vogue for certain expressions. The vogue passes and others come into effect. What I'm concerned about is to try to avoid as much as possible cliché expressions and words that sum up the experience too easily. For instance, one thing

that concerns me right now as a word to avoid is the word 'ambiguity'. It's something that applies to maybe ninety percent of the works of art that are displayed in the galleries. If you say of a work of art that it is ambiguous, you are simply saying that which everyone knows, but what you really want to know is in what way it is ambiguous."[18]

2.3.2 The components of the critical terminology

Critical terms which communicate aspects concerning the work of art itself are either descriptive, interpretive or evaluative (see Chapter 2.4). These terms coincide with the different stages of the critical act.

Descriptive terms are used to designate the describable properties of the work of art. Examples of such terms are contained within the following: "...consists of an inverted obelisk balanced on the point of a pyramid, its top edge a ragged silhouette..."[19] (underlining my own) and "In his last period he bunched value intervals together at the light end of the color scale, to show how the sky's light or any brilliant illumination tended to obliterate half tones and quarter tones of shading and shadow"[20] (underlining my own).

Interpretive terms are those used by the critic in an attempt to interpret or explain that which is embodied in the describable properties of the work of art. Examples of such terms are contained within the following: "It is doubtless as a comment on the way we receive news of the outer world, on how we have automated all communications as mechanised after-images...that Rauschenberg presents these works..."[21] (underlining my own), "It is, predominantly, the colours in this remarkable painting which evoke so significantly the passionate symbolism of fire: the fire of autumn

vegetation or of combustion: quintessential fire"[22] (underlining my own) and "The bird's head is given sharp definition while its body and feathers are merely suggested. The beautiful predatory bird becomes a symbol of terror..."[23] (underlining my own).

Evaluative terms are those used by the critic to express praise or condemnation. Examples of such terms are contained within the following: "Rauschenberg takes advantage of this comfort but refreshes and vivifies it...this Rauschenberg exhibition is a tribute to the insights of all the great movements of twentieth century art, but it is also a remarkable extension of them"[24] (underlining my own), "...the artist's precise and individual way of viewing and selecting an image..."[25] (underlining my own) and "A fine balance is struck between what is symbolically implicit and what is explicit..."[26] (underlining my own). Interpretive terms may contain evaluation implicitly (see Chapter 2.4). In such instances these terms may be regarded as both interpretive and evaluative. The following is an example: "The cruciform figure is invested with symbolical power..."[27] (underlining my own.

2.3.3 The validity of critical terms

Descriptive terms are valid insofar as they describe the formal nature of the work of art (see Chapter 2.4). The validity of such terms can be correlated by recourse to the work of art itself. Descriptive terms rooted in the history of art are valid insofar as they conform to traditional usage or insofar as their usage within a novel context are elucidated and redefined.

The validity of interpretive terms are dependent on the validity of the interpretation itself. Valid critical interpretation can be correlated with the describable properties of the work of

art itself (see Chapter 2.4). The validity of interpretive terms are thus also dependent on this correlation. Terms such as "expressive" or "decorative" may be used descriptively or interpretively. The use of these terms has precedence in the history of art. They are valid insofar as their specific meanings within a given context are elucidated.

Evaluative terms are sometimes rooted in aesthetics, as critical evaluation is partly a manifestation of philosophical assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience (see Chapter 2.4). Evaluative terms are thus valid insofar as evaluation itself is substantiated by analysis of the work of art (see Chapter 2.4).

Descriptive and interpretive terms are not valid if ambiguous, if left unexplained when used within a novel context or if irreconciliable with the describable properties of the work of art itself. Evaluative terms are not valid if the praise or condemnation which they designate is left unsubstantiated. Emotive and affective terms are not valid as components of the critical terminology as their meanings cannot be objectively accounted for. The personal connotations inherent in such terms exclude correlation by recourse to the work of art itself. Cliché expressions are not valid as components of the critical terminology as they function to disguise an avoidance of critical analysis (see the examples quoted in 2.3.1).

Art critical terms drawn from fields of inquiry other than art history or aesthetics, are incorporated within the critical terminology as interpretive terms (see the examples quoted in 2.3.1). Such terms depend for their validity on correlation with the describable properties of the work of art itself and on explanation of, or concensus as to, their meaning.

The question arises whether art critical terms are only valid insofar as the reader understands their meaning and thus, whether the critic has to explain his use of terms to his reader. Sidney Tillim maintains that "...when you say a picture is obscure spatially, there is an emotional corollary or a meaning corollary to that formal obscurity. The problem is that the anti-intellectual audience...fails to understand it because they lack the knowledge. It's not our fault if we know this and they do not."[28] Lucy Lippard states that "...Art Education and criticism geared...to the formation of its audience's taste, rarely meets the intellectual standards necessary to stimulate ideas of any profundity and endurance..."[29] Edward Lucie-Smith states that "To a large extent the reviewer has to rely on a kind of consensus among the readership; not so much a consensus as to what art is about, as one at what language is about."[30]

The critic's views concerning the elucidation of terms, are dependent on his readership, his views as to the possible functions of criticism and on his attempt to fulfil one or more of these functions. However, Thomas Hess points out that criticism is "...compelled to resort to metaphors and symbols in order to translate visual data into words."[31] Verbal metaphors and symbols used by the critic are of an interpretive nature. As such, these terms cannot be elucidated any further. Other than analysis of the formal nature of the work itself, no other elucidation for critical interpretations and evaluations, which are of a subjective nature, can be given by the critic (see Chapter 2.4).

2.4 Art critical method

The literary theorist, Frank C. Maatje defines scientific method as follows: "Wetenschap bedrijven is het op systematische wijze

doen van verifieerbare uitspraken over de werkelijkheid. EEN wetenschap bedrijven is het op systematische wijze doen van verifieerbare uitspraken over EEN DEEL van de werkelijkheid. Dat deel van de werkelijkheid wordt het OBJECT van de betreffende wetenschap genoemd. Het doel van een wetenschap is te geraken tot een geordend geheel van kennis omtrent het object...Om op systematische wijze verifieerbare uitspraken te kunnen doen is het nodig dat een wetenschap...beskikt over een THEORIE."[32]

(Engl. trans.: Scientific inquiry results in statements which be proven empirically. A specific scientific inquiry results in empirical statements concerning ONE PART of reality. That part of reality forms the OBJECT of the specific scientific inquiry. A scientific inquiry aims at an integrated body of knowledge concerning the object. In order to arrive at empirical statements in a systematic manner a scientific inquiry needs to be based on a THEORY). According to Maatje, scientific method will have as its result, statements which are: constant; communicable; exactly formulated; conscious; simple; predictive; and logical. A lack of scientific method will give rise to statements which are: variable; incommunicable; inexactly formulated; unconscious; complicated; unpredictive; and not purely logical.[33] The question arises whether it is possible for the critic of the visual arts to work according to a scientific method and tu produce the empirical results as formulated by Maatje.

While critical description can be verified empirically by recourse to the work of art, this is not the case with critical interpretation and evaluation. According to Roman Ingarden, the work of art, or artistic object, possesses the potential to give rise to the concretion of numerous aesthetic objects.[34] Margolis draws attention to the point that in the plastic arts, there exists

no clear agreement about what is actually in a painting and what is only plausibly imputed to it.[35] Concretion of the aesthetic object is variable as it is dependent on the viewer. More than one interpretation of the same artistic object may be defended, although differences may be resolved to some extent by recourse to the work of art and thus to empirically describable properties. However, despite clear agreement as to describable properties, these properties may embody contradictory contents for different viewers. Viewer-variables with regard to: experience; character; knowledge; environment; and philosophical assumptions as to the nature of art and aesthetic experience, result in variable concretions of the artistic object and thus in various aesthetic objects.

As critical evaluations are based on philosophical assumptions these evaluations cannot be <u>proven</u> right or wrong. Critical evaluation can be supported by analysis but variables with regard to this analysis exclude the empirical support of evaluative statements. All critical statements are not empirical and thus art criticism does not conform to the first requirement for scientific inquiry as defined by Maatje.

Denis Dutton states that"...implicit in any method are always rules for what is to count as relevant to the end in question."[36] That which is relevant to criticism cannot be isolated from that which forms the objects of other fields of inquiry. Determinant factors of the work of art are: variable; incommunicable; inexactly formulated; unconscious; complicated; unpredictive and not purely logical. Moreover, the results of any other field of inquiry may be relevant to art criticism. No ONE PART of reality can be isolated as that part with which art criticism deals. Art criticism thus does not conform to the second requirement advanced

by Maatje. With regard to this Margolis states: "...the object is initially 'there', produced, but we annot say with precision what its boundaries are..."[37]

Concerning the third part of Maatje's definition it can be stated that "Art criticism, not being an objective branch of knowledge, cannot rely on collective learning - on techniques for harnessing many minds to deal with information, and even with concepts which are too large for one."[38] Visual experience of works of art cannot be transferred from one individual to another. Due to the variables with regard to interpretation of a work of art, criticism is not an objective branch of knowledge. While different attitudes and interpretations complement each other, criticism cannot be considered as aiming at the compilation of an integrated body of objective knowledge and fact.

Art criticism as a field of inquiry is not based on a theory. As mentioned, Morris Weitz points out that "...art...has no set of necessary and sufficient properties."[39] Art is constantly in the making and the formulation of a theory may already be antiquated at its conception. Differing critical attitudes complement one another, but no one theory as to the nature of art can be isolated. Discussing the position of the literary critic, Maatje points out that "...dit gezag, dat berust op professionaliteit, "[is]" een zeer betrekkelijke zaak, want dit veronderstelt, dat deze opinion leaders en-makers zouden beschikken over een objectieve theorie, of op zijn minst over een algemeen aanvaardbare maatstaf, en dat is juis niet zo."[40] (Engl. trans.: ...the authority which relies on a professional attitude is a very relevant matter as it implies that these opinion leaders and makers possess an objective theory or at least a generally acceptable standard, while this is exactly what they do not have). T.A. van Dijk states that "...ten aanzien

van de 'praktijk' is een teorie geen handleiding voor de zg. 'interpratie' van individuele literaire teksten. De teorie beperkt zich in prinsipe tot een ondubbelzinnige en systematiese formulering van de relevante eigenschappen die meerdere literaire teksten gemeen hebben."[41] (Engl. trans.: in practice, theory does not function as a guide for the so-called 'interpretation' of individual literary texts. Theory limits itself in principle to an unambiguous and systematic formulation of the relevant characteristics which most literary texts have in common). These quotations from Maatje and van Dijk are also applicable to criticism of the visual arts. The formulation of the characteristics of art in general, falls within the area of aesthetics and does not constitute a theory on which an objective interpretation of works of art can be based in practice.

Art criticism is thus not a scientific field of inquiry. Attempts to render criticism scientific will remain at odds with the complexity and variability of art and with the nature and possible functions of criticism itself. However, valid criticism on the visual arts results from systematic procedure. Systematic procedure with regard to art criticism is constituted of the balance maintained between three stages in the act of criticism (see the following paragraph).

When maintaining this balance the critic communicates and formulates consciously and logically in spite of a lack of scientific method as defined by Maatje. Interpretive and evaluative statements remain, however, variable and unpredictive. Concerning the above, the following can be advanced as elucidation.

James S. Ackermann distinguishes between an empirical, analytical and synthetic stage in the act of criticism.[43] Description, interpretation and evaluation constitute these three stages.

When interpretation can be correlated with empirical description and when evaluation is substantiated by description and analysis, critical procedure results in statements which are logical, conscious, formulated and communicable. When the balance between the three stages of criticism is disturbed the following may result from this imbalance:

a) Avoidance of, or insufficient, empirical description: The critic and his reader lose sight of the work of art itself and transfer attention to secondary aspects surrounding the work of art. No clear idea as to the physical appearance of the work is formed and idiosyncratic or arbitrary interpretations are advanced as a result.

b) Avoidance of, or arbitrary, analytical interpretation: Although the critic and his reader may have formed a clear idea as to the physical appearance of the artistic object, insight into the content and meaning of the work is deficient. The work of art remains unrelated to other works of art. No conscious or communicable aesthetic object is thus created.

c) Avoidance of, or arbitrary, synthetic evaluation: The critic avoids his function as arbitrator and fails to recognise that analytical interpretation implies evaluation of the validity of that which is embodied in the work of art and the success with which it is embodied in the work. Furthermore, unsubstantiated evaluations are advanced.

The subjectivity of critical interpretation and evaluation does not invalidate these stages in the act of criticism. John Dewey maintains that while rules are general, objects of art are individual and "...reliance upon rules is a weakened, a mitigated version of a prior, more direct, admiration..."[44] Despite the existence of more than one interpretation of a given work of art, diverging

interpretations are valid if supported by analytical argument as to the meaning of empirically describable properties. Bernard C. Heyl accepts that "...opposed approbations will remain since they are founded upon basically different attitudes toward art which are seldom changed merely by increased understanding."[45] Dewey blames the "Desire for authoritative standing "[as the cause why]" the critic "[speaks]" as if he were the attorney for established principles having unquestionable sovereignty."[46] Jules Lemaître maintains that criticism "...whatever be its pretensions, can never go beyond defining the impression which, at a given moment, is made on us by a work of art wherein the artist has himself recorded the impression he received from the world at a certain hour."[47] These quotes from Dewey, Heyl and Lemaître represent an argument for and acceptance of the subjectivity, variability and limitations of art criticism as a non-scientific field of inquiry.

Art changes continuously as it is an embodiment of a spatial and temporal environment which itself does not remain constant. This change is illustrated in a statement made by the American Pop artist, Robert Indiana: "Pop is everything art hasn't been for the last two decades...It springs newborn out of a boredom with the finality and oversaturation of Abstract-Expressionism which, by its own aesthetic logic, <u>is</u> the END of art, the glorious pinnacle of the long pyramidal creative process. Stifled by this rarefied atmosphere, some young painters turn back to some less exalted things..."[48] No art critic can predict the spatial and temporal environment and determinant factors of future art. Thus no critic can predict the future course, nature, aim or meaning of art. (Perhaps even very few critics can react to the continual development of the environment which gives rise to new

works of art).

In view of the preceding the following can be reiterated: The art critic may communicate and formulate consciously and logically although criticism as a field of inquiry remains variable and unpredictive.

Art critical practice may be correlated with the choice between two fundamental and divergent attitudes with regard to critical method. Leo Steinberg points out that "One way to cope... is to rest firm and maintain solid standards. The standards are set by the critic's long-practised taste and by his conviction that only those innovations will be significant which promote the established direction of advanced art. "[Works are judged]" for 'quality' and for an 'advancedness' measurable by given criteria."[49] This is the choice made by formalist criticism. This attitude results in the negation of those works of art which do not conform to given criteria and which do not promote the established direction of advanced art. On the basis of formalist criteria alone, Clement Greenberg criticises Pop art because "...not one of these artists has taken a chance with color or design that the Cubists or the Abstract Expressionists did not take before them."[50] Concerning the attitude pointed out by Steinberg, Lucie-Smith draws attention to the phenomenon that "...even the most gifted critic, in some cranny of the subconscious becomes tired and even perhaps frightened, of being constantly at risk in the way that his profession demands and involuntarily takes measures to protect himself."[51] Defence measures taken by the critic are in part constituted of a solidification of critical attitudes and criteria.

Steinberg points to another attitude with regard to critical method: "A second way is more yielding. The critic interested in a novel manifestation holds his criteria and taste in reserve.

Since they were formed upon yesterday's art, he does not assume that they are ready-made for today. While he seeks to comprehend the objectives behind the new art produced, nothing is a priori excluded or judged irrelevant. Since he is not passing out grades, he suspends judgment until the work's intention has come into focus and his response to it is - in the literal sense of the word - sym-pathetic; not necessarily to approve, but to feel along with it as a thing that is like no other."[52] This attitude may result in:

a) The equation of the art critical act with personal and incommunicable response to the work of art;

b) the inability to establish criteria, even if experimental; and

c) an avoidance of critical evaluation. However, adherence to this attitude will result in avoidance of set and stagnant criteria.

Discussion on aesthetic assumptions which are embodied in twentieth century criticism, on the various modes and techniques of criticism and on those subconscious expectations of art, which determine adherence to certain aesthetic assumptions and critical modes, lies outside the aim and scope of this dissertation. A summarised division of these aspects is provided by Osborne.

(Osborne attempts to "recapitulate the main aesthetic assumptions which are embodied in modern criticism."[53] He makes a distinction between the following:

"1. The Realist assumption "[which]" makes the excellence of any work of art dependent upon the veracity with which it copies or symbolises something not itself...

2. The Emotional assumption "[which]" makes the excellence of any work of art depend upon the intensity or the

pleasantness of the emotion which it arouses in an observer...

3. The Expressionist assumption "[which]" makes the excellence of a work of art dependent upon the exactness with which it causes to be reproduced in the observer an experience which previously occurred in the mind of the artist...

4. Transcendentalism..."[as]" a special type of Emotional assumption, which makes the excellence of any work of art dependent on the intensity with which it evokes the special type of mystical emotion which we have called Revelatory...

5. The Configurational assumption "[which]" makes the excellence of any work of art dependent upon the compactness with which it is organised into an organic unity..."[54]

Osborne also makes a distinction between different personality-types, for whom art serves different functions. These functions determine art critical practice to some extent, as critical criteria are consciously or unconsciously based on them. Osborne distinguishes between personality-types for whom art functions as follows:

1. Art as substitute-gratification...
2. Art as Compensation...
3. Art as Cathartic... "[and]"
4. Art as Reality..."[55]

Osborne also distinguishes between:

a) Psychological Criticism;

b) Historical Criticism;

c) Exegetical Criticism; and

d) Impressionist Criticism.[56]

Osborne attempts to correlate his distinctions between aesthetic assumptions, personality-types and the various modes and techniques of criticism).

One other aspect concerning critical method remains to be mentioned here. Tillim forestalls understanding of the work of art by assuming "...that you don't want to do justice to this painting, but you want to build a logical destructive argument."[57] Kozloff differs in approach as he never wants to "...establish an a priori destructive argument logically."[58] Tillim's viewpoint excludes analysis of the work of art. If a critic's valuation of a work of art results from a need or from outside pressure to praise regardlessly, the same exclusion of analysis is a result. Praise or condemnation arrived at in such a manner is not valid as unsupported by analysis and as it is the result of non-critical motivations. Karl Aschenbrenner maintains that the critic can only "...give reasons for his decisions commensurate with his experience. This is all that any judge can do."[59] However, the attitude manifested in the statement by Tillim, negates aesthetic experience itself.

2.5 Possible functions of art criticism

Osborne states that "...critics are in dispute not only about the methods which are legitimate to the conduct of their craft but about the very functions which criticism exists to fulfil; and amidst the confusion of purposes by which they are variously moved one can detect no sign or symptom of ultimate concurrence in a coherent system of cumulative and progressive knowledge."[60] Osborne furthermore, points to the problems generated by confusion as to the functions of criticism: "...criticism is differentiated from a number of kindred studies which it partially

incorporates into itself not by a difference of subject-matter but, if at all, by a difference of interest and purpose...We can only agree about a definition which would discriminate criticism from, say, the history of art when we can agree about the true nature and function of criticism."[61]

Three possible main functions of art criticism may be isolated tentatively. A distinction between these three functions rests on the distinction between criticism as revolving around the work of art itself, as directed towards a public and as extension of the critic himself. Criticism adhering to any of these purposes cannot be isolated from criticism adhering to the other two purposes in any watertight separation.

2.5.1 Exegetical criticism

Criticism revolving mainly around the work of art itself, may be tentatively defined as exegetical criticism. The function of exegetical criticism is to investigate the work of art empirically and analytically. This investigation may be followed by judgment as to the value of the work of art. However, some critics maintain that judgment does not form a principal part of the critic's function. Lippard maintains that "On a fundamental level, the critic's right to set himself up as judge should be questioned... For he records rather than reforms, discusses rather than disposes...Categorisation, placement, attribution, and the stabilisation of universal criteria are secondary to constant adjustment, immediate recognition of change within the art itself."[62]

Exegetical criticism concerns itself with the explication of the nature and meaning of a work of art and is not directed to specific readers. With regard to the public, exegetical criticism possibly only performs a function in relation to those

individuals who possess a specialised knowledge of aesthetics, the history of art, the criticism of art and a visual experience of works of art.

Exegetical criticism rests on the assumption that "...a work of art requires an agent existing outside itself, that is an observer, in order...to render it concrete."[63] Ingarden maintains that "Through his co-creative activity in appreciation, the observer sets himself as is commonly said to 'interpret' the work or, as I prefer to say, to reconstruct it in its effective characteristics, and in doing this as it were under the influence of suggestions coming from the work itself, he fills out its schematic structure, plenishing at least in part the areas of indeterminacy and actualising various elements which are as yet in a state of potentiality."[64] H.D. Aiken points out that "Great criticism may not be judicial but creative...can raise a work to new levels of significance and value which then become inherent in it."[65] Furthermore, exegetical criticism rests on the assumption that the work of art has no static and clearly definable boundaries. As mentioned, Joseph Margolis points out that, "In the plastic arts - there is no clear agreement about what is actually in a painting and what is only plausibly imputed to it...The object is there but we cannot say with precision what its boundaries are...Criticism then is methodologically treated as interpretive - always with caution that the work may be construed in alternative ways."[66]

With regard to the above-quoted statements by Ingarden, Aiken and Margolis, the function of exegetical criticism of the visual arts may be tentatively defined as: the explication of and the concretisation of the potentialities inherent in the work of art itself. Exegetical criticism is not adapted to the level of understanding of any specific public and is, furthermore, not an

attempt to reconstruct or verbalise aesthetic experience. It revolves primarily around the work of art itself. Exegetical criticism may, however, serve an educational function, and aesthetic experience may direct the exegetical critic with regard to his choice of those works of art isolated for investigation.

2.5.2 Educational criticism

Criticism directed towards a specific type or class of audience or readership may be defined as informative and educational. Such criticism will be adapted to the level of expectable understanding of the audience or readership. Robert D. Hume maintains that "All methods of criticism are ultimately concerned with effect - that is with making the subject comprehensible to the audience. The difference lies in the way this is done. Basically the critic may talk about construction - the way in which a work is put together and what is in it - or he may consider its genesis, the particulars of time and viewpoint which made it come out as it did."[67]

Educational criticism is in part exegetical, as it investigates the nature and meaning of the work of art. It is, however, less directed towards explication and concretisation than towards elucidation and the supplying of information. Peter M. Bode sees the art critic as follows: "Der Kunstkritiker nimmt also immer noch eine Schlüsselstellung im magischen Dreieck der Beziehung 'Kunstwerk - Interpretation - Publikum' ein. Er ist ein Makler, ein Vermittler. Versteht er sich so, dann hat er meistens eher das Publikum auf seiner Seite als den Künstler...Die Leute sind... unsicher geworden. Sie wissen nicht mehr, ob sie einem Betrug oder dem'wahren Schönen' aufsitzen. Alle diese Vorgänge lassen eine isolierte Kunskritik nicht mehr zu, die sich allein mit Bildformen

und Bildinhalten beschäftigt. Das Ambiente, die Umgebung, die Umwelt, der soziologische Standart kommen hinzu...Und der Kunskritiker versieht sein Amt nicht mehr als ein Wanderer durch die Säle der Kunsthallen, sondern als der Rezensent von Belegexemplaren"[68] (Engl. trans.: The art critic occupies a key position in the magical, relational triangle constituted by work of art - interpretation - public. He is a broker, a mediator. If understood as such, the critic usually has the public rather than the artist on his side...People have...become insecure and do not know any longer whether they are confronted with fraud or with 'true beauty.' This does not allow for an isolationist criticism, which occupies itself solely with the form and content of works of art, any more. The ambience, the environment, the background, the sociological condition becomes important...And the art critic considers his position no longer as that of a wanderer through art museums but as that of reviewer for documentary issues). Albert Dresdner maintains that "Alles Kunstleben baut sich auf zwei Grundfaktoren und ihrer Wechselwirkung auf: Künstler und Publikum, und die Kritik entsteht als das Organ eines dieser beiden Faktoren, als Organ des Publikums. Die Verhältnisse bringen es mit sich, das sie sich zu einer Zwischeninstanz zwischen Künstler und Publikum ausbildet...sie reguliert das Verhältnes zwischen ihnen...sie ist also nicht nur ein ästhetisches, sondern auch ein kunstpolitisches, ein soziales Phänomen."[69] (Engl. trans.: All art life is built on two fundamental factors and the relationship between them: artists and the public, and the critic arises as the organ for one of these factors, as organ for the public...he regulates the relation between them...and is thus not only an aesthetic, but also an art-political, a social phenomenon). Edward Lucie-Smith sees the art critic "...as a kind of filter...in fact a populariser."[70]

Arnold Isenberg maintains that "If communication is a process by which a mental content is transmitted by symbols from one person to another, then it is the function of criticism to bring about communication at the level of the senses, that is to induce sameness of vision."[71] R.P. Blackmur agrees when maintaining that criticism makes "...bridges between the society and the arts... "[as]" the audience needs instruction in the lost skill of symbolic thinking."[72]

In contrast with the above-quoted statements, other writers disagree with the educational function of criticism or even with the possibility of criticism being educational. Karl Aschenbrenner points out that "It has been a commonplace of aesthetics to agree with the view of Kant, Wordsworth, and many others that it is idle to try to reason or argue a person into approbation or disapprobation of a work of art."[73] Lippard states that "How much the non-professional art audience gains from the most thoroughly considered discussion of specialised issues is another story. For, like the making of art, criticism is basically self-indulgent...The responsibility of even the most casual art observer and reader of criticism to think, to look thoughtfully, is practically unacknowledged. The burden is left on the critic's shoulders, and if the critic shrugs it off in order to settle down to serious work, he cannot be blamed."[74]

Possibly the strongest argument against the informative and educational functions of art criticism is put forward by Albert Setola. Concerning the informative function of criticism, Setola writes of criticism: "...dit is het verstrekken van een inzicht in de feitelijke toestand. De feitelijkheid van een toestand verschilt van individu tot individu omdat in de kunst geen proef op die som gemaakt kan worden. Bijgevolg beperkt zich de echte

informatie tot het aanwijzen van de verschillende Stijlen en evenementen.[75] (Engl. trans.: ...it is the supplying of insight into a factual condition. The factualness of a condition varies from individual to individual as, in art, no proof [in the sense of empirically verifiable data] is forthcoming. Thus real information is limited to the drawing of attention to difference in style and events). Concerning the educational function of criticism, Setola states: "Kijk, en dat is nu juist wat hij "[the critic]" NIET hoeft te doen en wel om de volgende redenen a) De kunstenaars zelf kan men met geen smoesjes om de tuin leiden. Men kan ze alleen vleien en dat is niet edukatief. b) Door kunstwerken en bijgevolg kunstenaars de voorrang te geven als zijnde eigentijds, maken zij zich schuldig aan diskriminatie tegenover die zij persoonlijk niet waarderen noch begrijpen. Dit is evenmin edukatief. c) Zij beïnvloeden daardoor op een dirigistische manier verschillende kategoriëen mensen: eventuele kopers, officiële aankooporganismen, kunsthandelaars en ook de jeugd. Dit is tendentieuze edukatie. d) Kunskritische waardeschatting die gebeurt zonder een stevige vakkennis is steeds gesteund op welbepaalde belangen. Dus kapitalistische edukatie...De edukatiewe kunstkritiek bestaat voorlopig nog in kunstscholen en onder vakmensen die in staat zijn fouten aan te wijzen en te assisteren bij de evolutie van menses die daartoe vrijwillig de wens hebben uitgedrukt."[76] (Engl. trans.: Look, that [educating] is just what he [the critic] does not have to do and for the following reasons a) Artists themselves cannot be fooled. They can only be flattered and this is not educational. b) By pointing out certain works of art and thus artists as being truly contemporary, the critic is guilty of discrimination against those whom he cannot value or understand. This is also not educational. c) By the

above-mentioned, the critic influences, in a directional manner, various categories of people: prospective buyers, official buying committees, art dealers and also the young. This is promotional education. d) Art critical evaluation which is not based on sound knowledge of the subject is based on definite interests. This is capitalist education...Educational criticism exists at present only in art schools and amongst professional people who are capable of indicating faults and who can assist in the education of people who voluntarily wish to be educated). Setola's complaint against informative and educational criticism, centres around the subjectivity of art criticism.

An objective criticism is impossible and even undesirable as it negates the critic's creative concretisation of the work of art's inherent potential (see Chapter 2.4). Subjective views, if reasonably argued can, however, be informative and educational. Argument concerning the validity of critical statements as being subjective, may be founded on the false assumption that people seeking information, read the work of one critic only and read one article only. In practice personal subjective bias is mitigated by: a) The fact that reading one critic's work soon reveals his strengths, weaknesses, blindnesses and acuities to the reader; and b) reading one critic's work in conjunction with other critics' work is what inflates or extends the reader's experience of works of art.

If the educational and informative functions of criticism are accepted as possible and valid, it is implied that the critic is aware of the class of audience or readership, towards whom his criticism is directed. The South African art critic, Esmé Berman, makes a distinction between three classes of audience. She

states that "In the case of the first class, the artist, it "[criticism]" is possibly a valueless exercise. The critic, in his very nature, is no more than a commentator: he can only observe that which has been produced; he cannot dictate, nor even predict the future course of art."[77] Berman isolates a "...second class of audience "[as]" the informed and interested public to whom the critic can effectively address his observations and reactions..."[In this case exegetical and educational criticism may possibly be considered as one. Berman also isolates a]"...third class "[of audience as]" the general or casual public, which is usually ill-informed and "[which]" relies upon the critic for explanation and opinions."[78] Berman points out that "The critic can assist in informing and possibly directing this class of audience toward more appreciative viewing. However, so much needs to be spelt out that the critic may either be forced into didacticism or reduced to mere reportage. In either case, he will not fulfil a strictly critical function"[79] (see Chapter 3.4).

2.5.3 Autobiographical criticism

With regard to function, a third type of criticism may be defined as being autobiographical, or functioning as an expression of the critic's aesthetic experience. In this case, criticism is neither exegetical nor educational. The critic attempts to verbalise his own, personal experience of the work of art. His criticism thus revolves around aesthetic experience itself, rather than around the work of art. This type of criticism depends for its value on such factors as the width of the critic's experience of art, his ability to see relationships and his ability to perform accurate analysis and assessment of his own reactions.

The use of emotive and affective terms characterise the attempt at verbalising personal experience. Autobiographical criticism abounds in South African newspapers. With regard to this, the following articles can be isolated as characteristic examples: a) "Simpson : a master show", by Richard Cheales, published in The Star, Sept. 25, 1975 : 7, and b) "Delightful work in Unusual Medium", by H.E. Winder, published in The Rand Daily Mail, Dec. 18, 1975 : 19 (see Appendix I, pp. ~~143 + 153~~ 141 + 151).

Partial and passionate criticism is not necessarily autobiographical, but may be exegetical or educational. Harold Rosenberg points to "...Baudelaire's conception of the artist and critic as 'discoverers of the present'...in opposition to the kind of criticism that deals with art objects as belonging to a realm sealed off from the space-time of the human condition."[80] Rosenberg also refers to "...Baudelaire's notion of the obligation of the critic in regard to the present, which compels him to gamble his judgments of works of art on a general intuition of his time, a factor about which it is impossible to be certain...He is thrown into the arena of conflicting interests and philosophies, and in order to make its way, his criticism will have to become...'partial, passionate and political'."[81]

Pleading for an impassioned criticism, Barnett Newman, an artist and not a practicing critic, states: "I wish to plead for passionate criticism...because a bond between artist and critic is created by the passionate in each...To write passionately, the critic must invent, or, to use a more accurate word, he must create his criticism so that it reveals a work of art, through the critic himself. In that sense, art criticism becomes a parallel work of art."[82] Both Baudelaire and Newman allow for the creativity and subjectivity of criticism. However, in order

to reveal the work of art, the passionate critic has to supply reasons for his statements. Critical reasoning distinguishes partial and passionate criticism from autobiographical criticism. Partial and passionate criticism can thus be exegetical or educational, while autobiographical criticism merely informs the reader of the critic's unreasoned response to the work of art.

2.5.4 Conclusion

A balanced view of the possibilities with regard to critical functions is inherent in the following statement by Lippard: "Probably the best criticism for 'everybody' would be a well-informed and well-informing criticism which provides new and unique information for both the specialist and the general audience; which is provocative, at least occasionally enthusiastic, and readable, as well as intelligent. Ideally this would not be too lengthy and would appear daily in mass media. ...criticism should be, as I think it should, not an arcane discipline for a few specialists... but a mine of insights and questions raised that move the viewer back into the work of art from other angles than those he/she might have conceived of alone. Criticism shouldn't be 9/10 value judgment from on high and 1/10 suggestion that you might just want to go look at the art in flesh...Criticism that is mainly theory and judgment exists aside from the work of art and lends itself perfectly to the current situation, where a very small percentage of the readers have seen the work discussed. While it might as well exist, as dessert or something, it won't make the bridges between audience, art and artist that is criticism's real function. Best, of course, would be a beautifully written, beautifully readable mixture of all this, which would capture the imagination of everybody who ever read it, whether they 'liked' it, or agreed,

or not."[83] Assimilated within this statement by Lippard is the plea for a balanced exegetical, educational and reasoned autobiographical criticism.

2.6 Art critical status

Attacks on the validity of criticism arise due to the confusion as to the nature and possible functions of art criticism. Arguments against the validity of criticism mainly centre around the following:

a) The non-scientific nature of criticism;

b) the lack of a clearly defined critical method;

c) the lack of a wide understanding of art critical terms; and

d) confusion as to the possible functions of art criticism.

T. S. Eliot condemns professional criticism as a "...Sunday park of contending and contentious orators, who have not even arrived at the articulation of their differences."[84] Criticism is, however, not a group enterprise, due to its subjective nature and the fact that visual experience of works of art cannot be transferred from one individual to another. Herbert Read lodges the complaint against criticism that it has "...reached no agreed definition of its boundaries, and until it does it has no serious claim to be considered as a science."[85] No agreed definition of the boundaries of criticism will probably ever be forthcoming as no agreed definition of the boundaries of art will probably ever be forthcoming. Criticism can thus never be considered as a science. The statement quoted from Read manifests a misunderstanding as to the nature of art criticism (see Chapter 2.4).

Philip Leider expresses his contempt for the critic "...with his baggage of lunatic distinctions, judgments, significant and insignificant forms, 'second guesses', killing doubts, museum

mentality."[86] Leider's view manifests misunderstanding as to the tentative nature of art critical statements and a negation of the complexity and inexhaustibility of works of art.

South African writers also attack the validity of criticism. Lola Watter, a sporadic writer on art and contributor to Artlook, expresses the view that critics of the visual arts, being practitioners of a pseudo-science, feed like lice on the life-blood of art. She juxtaposes an image of contemporary art as alive, exuberant, exciting and experimental with an image of art criticism as stagnant, mechanical, boring and predatory.[87] The misunderstandings manifested in the quoted statements from Read and Leider, are also manifested in Watter's view. However, Watter is possibly referring to South African art criticism only, which is indeed often stagnant, mechanical, boring and predatory (see Chapter 1 and Appendix I).

Lionel Abrahams, another sporadic writer on art and contributor to Artlook, despairs "...of all those terrifyingly fruitless efforts to say the unsayable! All that obtrusive insistence on interpreting what can only speak for itself."[88] An obscurantist attitude is manifested by this statement. It is implied that the work of art can only be responded to intuitively and that any attempt at communication between individuals, with regard to aspects of the work of art, is fruitless and redundant. This attitude furthermore, implies that no-one may even fruitfully talk about art. Confusion between attempts to communicate aspects of the work of art and aspects of the aesthetic experience, lies at the heart of Abrahams' viewpoint. While insights into the nature of the work of art are communicable, aesthetic experience remains partly incommunicable as it is never fully knowable on a cerebral level. Being South African, Abrahams is possibly referring to

those attempts at verbalising aesthetic experience, which abound in South African art criticism (see Chapter 1 and Appendix I).

2.7 Conclusion

Ideally, the art critical terminology will constantly be in a process of expansion and redefinition. Ideally, art criticism should manifest systematic procedure i.e. a balance between description, interpretation and evaluation. Furthermore, the ideal criticism should perform an exegetical, educational as well as an autobiographical function. To restate Lippard's viewpoint: "...criticism should be...not an arcane discipline for a few specialists... but a mine of insights and questions raised that move the viewer back into the work of art from other angles than those he/she might have conceived of alone."[89] Ideally, criticism should create bridges between art, the artist and the observer. Chapter 1 constitutes an attempt at investigation of the degree to which current South African art criticism conforms to this concept of an ideal criticism.

2.8 References

1. F.J. Coleman (Ed.), "Introduction". Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics, pp. 2-3.

2. See for example : C. Bell, Art, chs. 1 and 3.

3. See for example : R. Fry, Vision and Design, pp. 231-236.

4. M. Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics". In : Coleman (Ed.), op. cit., p. 85.

5. A. Setola, "What is in a word?". Vlaanderen, p. 191.

6. R. McKeon, "The Philosophic Bases of Art and Criticism". In : R.S. Crane (Ed.), Critics and criticism, pp. 465-466.

7. L. Venturi, History of Art Criticism, p. 25.

8. H. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 7.

9. R. Assunto, "Criticism". Encyclopaedia of World Art, pp. 114-115.

10. M. Kozloff, Renderings, p. 9.

11. B. Rose, In : B. Glaser (Interviewer), "Modern Art and the Critics : A Panel Discussion". Art Journal, p. 157.

12. Osborne, Aesthetics and Art Theory, pp. 5-6.

13. Ibid., p. 6.

14. C. Greenberg, Art and Culture, pp. 192 + 226.

15. Kozloff, op. cit., p. 190.

16. R. Cheales, "Simpson : A Master Show", The Star, Sept. 15, 1975, p. 7.

17. H.E. Winder, "Delightful Work in Unusual Medium". The Rand Daily Mail, Dec. 18, 1975, p. 19.

18. Kozloff, In : Glaser, loc. cit.

19. L. Lippard, Changing, p. 241.

20. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 222.

21. Kozloff, Renderings, p. 213.

22. C. Eglington, "Georgina Ormiston". Fontein, 3, Summer 1960, p. 24.

23. M. Hitge, "Fantasy fixed in form". De Arte, 18, Sept. 1975, p. 59.

24. Kozloff, Renderings, pp. 214-215.

25. Hitge, loc. cit.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. S. Tillim, In : Glaser, loc. cit.

29. Lippard, op. cit., p. 33.

30. E. Lucie-Smith, "Problems of the Working Critic of the Modern Visual Arts". British Journal of Aesthetics, p. 239.

31. T. Hess, In : H. Rosenberg, Artworks and Packages, p. 172.

32. F.C. Maatje, Literatuurwetenschap, p. 3.

33. Ibid., pp. 6-9.

34. R. Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values". British Journal of Aesthetics, p. 199.

35. J. Margolis, "Describing and Interpreting Works of Art". In : Coleman (Ed.), op. cit., p. 186.

36. D. Dutton, "Criticism and Method". British Journal of Aesthetics, p. 233.

37. Margolis, op. cit., p. 188.

38. Lucie-Smith, op. cit., p. 246.

39. Weitz, loc. cit.

40. Maatje, op. cit., p. 21.

41. T.A. van Dijk, Moderne Literatuurteorie, p. 9.

42. Coleman, loc. cit.

43. J.S. Ackerman, In : J.S. Ackerman and R. Carpenter, Art and Archaeology, pp. 147-148.

44. J. Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 301.

45. B.C. Heyl, New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism, p. 98.

46. Dewey, op. cit., p. 299.

47. J. Lemaître, In : H. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 16.

48. R. Indiana, In : J.P. Hodin, et al, Figurative Art since 1945, p. 326.

49. L. Steinberg, Other Criteria, p. 63.

50. Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism". In : H. Geldzahler (Ed.), New York Painting and Sculpture, p. 361.

51. Lucie-Smith, op. cit., p. 245.

52. Steinberg, loc. cit.

53. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 292.

54. Ibid., pp. 292-293.

55. Ibid., pp. 308-312.

56. Ibid., pp. 303-320.

57. Tillim, In : Glaser, loc. cit.

58. Kozloff, In : Glaser, loc. cit.

59. K. Aschenbrenner, "Critical Reasoning". Journal of Philosophy, p. 664.

60. Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 6.

61. Ibid., p. 9.

62. Lippard, op. cit., p. 25.

63. Ingarden, loc. cit.

64. Ibid.

65. H.D. Aiken, "A Pluralistic Analysis of Aesthetic Value". In : Coleman (Ed.), op. cit., p. 128.

66. Margolis, loc. cit.

67. R.D. Hume, "The Personal Heresy in Criticism : A New Consideration". British Journal of Aesthetics, p. 390.

68. P.M. Bode, "Die Stellung der Kunskritik heute-ihre Chance und ihre Krise". In : A. Dresdner, Die Entstehung der Kunskritik, pp. xii-xv.

69. A. Dresdner, op. cit., p. 12.

70. Lucie-Smith, op. cit., p. 238.

71. A. Isenberg, "Critical Communication". In : Coleman (Ed), op. cit., p. 151.

72. R.P. Blackmur, "A Burden for Critics". In : E. Coleman (Ed.), Lectures in Criticism, p. 199.

73. Aschenbrenner, op. cit., p. 654.

74. Lippard, op. cit., p. 34.

75. Setola, op. cit., p. 190.

76. Ibid., pp. 190-191.

77. See : Appendix E, p. ~~304.~~ 298.

78. Ibid., pp. ~~304-302.~~ 298 - 299.

79. Ibid., p. ~~302.~~ 299.

80. H.Rosenberg, Artworks and Packages, p. 171.

81. Ibid., p. 172.

82. B. Newman, "For impassioned criticism". Studio International, p. 214.

83. Lippard, In : J and C.F. Walker (Interviewers), "Activity of Criticism", Studio International, p. 186.

84. T.S. Eliot, In : Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism, p. 5.

85. H. Read, In : Osborne, Ibid.

86. P. Leider, In : Kozloff, Renderings, p. 307.

87. L. Watter, "What is in a work of art today?" Artlook, 2 no. 12, Dec. 1969, pp. 6-7.

88. L. Abrahams, "Ruth Levy". Artlook, 42, May 1970, p. 9.

89. Lippard, In : J. and C.F. Walker (Interviewers), loc. cit.

CHAPTER 3

Determinant factors of current art critical practice in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

As postulated in Chapter 2.7, an ideal art criticism is not purely self-indulgent. It fulfils an exegetical, educational and auto-biographical function. Chapter 1.6 makes it clear that a body of such art criticism does not exist in South Africa. The question arises whether it is possible for South African art critics to produce criticism which would conform, even in part, to the ideal of criticism as postulated in Chapter 2. In order to advance a tentative answer to this question, the possible determinant factors of current art critical practice in South Africa have to be taken into account.

Art criticism cannot be seen as being divorced from its environment. It is dependent upon a number of factors. The following can be advanced as main determinant factors of art criticism produced in any part of the world:

a) Art criticism is dependent upon the podia available to the art critic.

b) Art criticism is dependent upon the knowledge, experience and insight of art critics. Therefore, educational facilities for the art critic influence, in part, the standard of criticism produced.

c) Art criticism which is, in part, educational, is dependent upon the level of knowledge, experience and understanding of its audience.

d) Art criticism is secondary to and dependent on the art around

which it revolves. The art produced within a specific environment thus determines, in part, the nature of its criticism. N.P. van Wyk Louw states: "Wanneer 'n mens redelik nadink oor enige gebied van die natuur of van die menslike lewe, word jou metode in sekere mate deur die geaardheid van die stof bepaal..."[1] He also goes on to make the point, which is relevant to this dissertation (see INTRODUCTION, para. 3), that: "Dus word ook die metode van die kritiek oor kritiek bepaal deur die geaardheid van die kritiek self."[2]

The following constitutes an attempt to discuss the above-mentioned factors with regard to the South African situation.

3.2 Podia for South African art critics

Podia for South African art critics have been discussed in Chapter 1.2. It need only be reiterated here that newspapers provide the only podia in South Africa, for the regular contribution of art criticism.

The following statements emphasise the inadequacy of the South African newspaper as podium for the art critic. Christo Coetzee states: "Dit is onmoontlik vir een persoon om vir 'n koerant alle kunsuitstallings te dek. Kunsredakteurs behoort te besef dat die gehalte van sulke werk bra swak moet wees en ook dat Jan Publiek vas glo wat hy daar lees. Die koerant self is eintlik onverantwoordelik."[3] Berman states: "There are no prestigious critical journals "[in South Africa]" and persons who write under the designation 'art critic' in the daily or periodical press are grossly underpaid for their services."[4] W.E.G. Louw adds: "Ons stedelike bevolking, behalwe miskien in die groot kompleks Johannesburg - die Rand - Pretoria, is so klein dat koerante dit blykbaar nie kan bekostig om spesialiste teen mededingende salarisse aan te stel

nie. Bowenal is die ingeligte publiek, d.w.s. diegene wat werklik prys stel op goed geïnformeerde leiding oor dié sake "[kunssake]" en in staat is tot intelligente debat, as dit nodig is, oral so klein dat selfs die bes versorgde kunsblad as sg. 'sirkulasiebouer' blykbaar hoegenaamd nie met die beriggewing oor moord en doodslag, diefstal en verkragting kan meeding nie."[5] This statement is borne out by most of those replies by editors, contained within Appendix H.

Some South African newspaper critics replied to questions with regard to available space in newspapers, both for art criticism and for pictorial matter related to it. Cheales answered: "Cropped? Chopped? OF COURSE! What is sent in is certainly not what comes out...The Star starts a new page as from Monday for theatre, art etc. It is not much : only incidental"[6] (see Chapter 1.3.2 and Appendix I.1). Joan Stuck answered: "I can use a six inch double column, twice a week...Photographs are usually printed with a general art editorial. Sometimes a photograph of the artist is included with a criticism on his work"[7] (underlining my own). E. Forster states: "As much as there is to spare but seldom more than one picture."[8] M. O'Connor replied: "Space is frequently limited. Three hundred words is the absolute maximum...Photographs are occasionally possible, but are a great concession on the part of the newspaper."[9]

These statements emphasise the incompatibility of a balanced art criticism with the journalist nature of the newspaper. Insofar as the journalist nature of the newspaper forces the newspaper critic to merely report or announce, or to provide popular and sensational reading-matter, the critic cannot produce a balanced criticism. Dependence upon editorial policy also excludes the possibility of such a criticism. During 1949, Errol Wilmot,

erstwhile critic for The Rand Daily Mail, stated: "...the newspapers print far more news of sport, murder, stock exchange and the fatuous platitudes of politicians than they do of the arts. Over that I have no control...I have eliminated the 'worst' by going to my editor and asking his permission to ignore exhibits of the most blatant incompetence and charlatanism"[10] (underlining my own).

The journalistic demands of the newspaper and the low status of art criticism in South Africa, which gives rise to inadequate financial remuneration to art critics, at present partly determine the impossibility of improvement with regard to newspaper criticism in South Africa. H.M. van der Westhuysen sums up the situation as follows: "Wat ons wel interesseer, is om te soek na faktore verantwoordelik daarvoor, dat die kunskritiek van ons tyd in meer as een opsig soveel te wense laat...dit is duidelik dat die meeste beoefenaars van die 'hedendaagse' kuns nie daarin slaag om die publiek van die waarde, insonder estetiese betekenis, van hulle werke te oortuig nie. Dit is net so duidelik dat die meeste beoefenaars van die populêre kunskritiek in ons tyd nie kan onderskei tussen eerlike hedendaagse kuns en oneerlike modieuse namaaksel nie...Albei (dagblaaie en gewone tydskrif) is bedoel vir die breë publiek; hoe meer lesers hoe groter is die sirkulasiesyfer; hoe groter sirkulasie hoe meer advertensies van besigheidskant; hoe meer advertensies hoe groter die winste uit die hele onderneming. En waar die winsmotief die diensmotief eers verdring het, is daar min kans vir 'n gesonde kunskritiek. Ongelukkig is dit byna die enigste soort kunskritiek waarmee die breë volkslae in Suid-Afrika kennismaak..."[11]

It is believed that art criticism is influenced to such an extent by the nature of available podia for art critics, that no systematic body of balanced art criticism can emerge in South

Africa, before an adequate podium for art critics is established here. The adequacy of a podium for art critics can be said to be dependent upon the following:

a) a reasonable amount of available space for individual articles;

b) provision for the insertion of colour reproductions;

c) freedom from pressure due to the policies of the editor or the advertising manager;

d) reasonable financial remuneration for contributions published;

e) frequent and regular publication; and

f) a wide circulation encouraged by a low price.

It is clear that such a podium can currently only be made possible in South Africa if initially sponsored, preferably by critics, artists, art lovers and educational bodies.

With regard to newspapers, at present unfortunately the only alternative to an adequate podium for the regular contribution of art criticism, Berman states: "Until newspaper editors appreciate that no single critic can responsibly review on deadline fifteen to twenty exhibitions a week; nor provide intelligent evaluations in two paragraphs...Until it is acknowledged that top quality critical writing cannot conform with mass readership objectives...Until it is accepted that merely to wield a brush oneself, or even to be a first-rate journalist, is by no means qualification enough to practise as a professional art critic...Until then, the best qualified individuals will continue to be lost to the field, the public will continue to be confused by timid, ignorant or arrogant, reviews and artists will continue to collect the complimentary clippings and condemn the rest."[12]

3.3 Education of South African art critics

Visual experience of works of art can be considered to be of vital

importance with regard to the formation of the art critic's aesthetic assumptions, critical criteria and intuitive responses. Knowledge of aesthetics, art history and art criticism can likewise be considered to be of vital importance (see Chapter 2.2). Chapter 1.6 makes it clear that South African criticism manifests a misunderstanding as to the nature and possible functions of art criticism. Experience of works of art and education with regard to aesthetics, art history and art criticism can be said to determine, in part, the standard of art criticism produced. The visual experience and the education, with regard to aesthetics and art criticism, of South African art critics can be said to be inadequate on the following grounds:

a) Nilant states: "Ons studente het 'n agterstand by hul kollegas in Europa. Hulle groei nie op tussen Gotiese katedrale en Barokpaleise nie, hulle het geen uitgebreide museums van ou en moderne kuns tot hul beskikking nie. By 'n besoek aan Europa moet hulle in 'n kort tyd die meeste probeer inneem : daar is altyd haastigheid en nouliks geleentheid tot dieper ondersoek of besinning."[13] Concerning available works in South African art galleries, Heather Martienssen states that these galleries abound "...in collections of the nineteenth century, most of them hypocritical or ignorant nostalgias of our grandparents, from which it is impossible to learn standards of judgment."[14]

The South African critic lives within an environment in which historical and contemporary works of art, of international stature, do not abound. Therefore, his visual experience of works of art cannot develop to the same extent as that of critics in the major art centres of the world. It can also be noted that even the history of art has by force of circumstance to be taught by way of colour reproductions in South Africa.

With regard to visual experience, Cecily Sash makes another vital point: "Visual education is the training and development of the faculty of seeing - sight - a faculty that up to the present time has been stunted through lack of use and an almost complete neglect of its development in our educational history."[15] She goes on to say that "When we first start to learn, in any formal sense, we are taught the three r's..* As to our visual education - what have we been <u>taught</u> that in any way corresponds to the <u>careful grounding</u> and <u>slow progression</u> we have had in the verbal field?"[16] Insofar as these statements are relevant to visual education in the community, they are also relevant to the formal visual training of the art critic.

b) No adequate educational facilities for South African art critics are available with regard to education in aesthetics and art criticism. Letters of inquiry sent to university art departments have elicited replies which make this clear (see Appendix A).

G.M. Ballot (University of Potchefstroom) states: "<u>Kunskritiek word tot hede egter nog nie as afsonderlike dissiplinêre kursus binne ons curriculum elhier aangebied nie</u>...'n Teoretiese handleiding vir vormtaalontleding soos deur my opgestel (sien eksemplaar hierby aangeheg) dien...as 'n vertrekpunt vir sover dit kunshistoriese en kritiese-praktiese toepassing met behulp van ligbeelde, afdrukke en oorspronklike kunswerke uit ons Permanente Kunsversameling kry. Soos u sal merk, speel die ontwerp, handhawing en uitbou van 'n kunsterminologie in hierdie opsig 'n baie belangrike rol..."[17] (underlining my own).

A.A.F. Teurlinckx (University of the Orange Free State) states: "Ons beleid is in elk geval om kunshistorici - en nie kunskritici nie - op te lei. In die algemeen gesproke kan gesê word dat die

*i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic

sentrale probleemkader van ons leergange nie deur kunskritiek gestel word nie, maar deur die hermeneutiek, d.w.s. die interpretasie van kunsverskynsels...en die wetenskaplike interpretasie wat ons by die studente wil aankweek is 'n historiese interpretasie."[18]

R. Streuber (University of Stellenbosch) replied: "In die vierde jaar sentreer die studie om die analiseer van verskeie kunsestetici...maar inhoeverre dit prakties toegepas word, bestaan nie. Dit word hier eerder as 'n bewusmaking/wording van bg. twee konsepte "[kritiek en estetika]" in die kunsgeskiedenis hanteer."[19]

At the Rand Afrikaans University an historical interpretation of works of art is required from the pre-graduate student (see Appendix A.4.7). Furthermore, no post-graduate course in aesthetics and criticism can be followed by the student. A study of aesthetics as part of the BA Honours course is limited to the cursory study of writings by Herbert Read.

From the above it can be deduced that the fundamentals of aesthetics and art criticism are not studied, at the universities mentioned, as being distinct from those of art history. Although these three disciplines are interdependent, important differences between them necessitate directed attention to each of these, with regard to the education of the potential art critic.

B. Bradshaw (Rhodes University) states: "It is difficult to see how a case can be made for the education of art critics...Criticism would involve personal philosophy...and this may only be achieved through personal research, personal experience, personal achievement...It is beyond the capacity of departments to educate art critics. Since it is beyond the capacity of departments to truly educate anyone except in academic terms."[20] Despite acceptance of this statement by Bradshaw, it can, however, be stated that due to those characteristics of South African art criticism

isolated in Chapter 1.6, an academic and formal education as to the nature and possible functions of art criticism, is exactly what is necessary in South Africa. The characteristics of South African art criticism manifest a fundamental misunderstanding as to the nature and possible functions of art criticism.

At the University of the Witwatersrand and at the University of South Africa (see Appendix A.4.5 and A.4.6), pre-graduate students study the writings of a few major twentieth century art critics. However, R. Hodgins states: "The function of the course is not, as might appear, the producing of critics. The calibre of critical thinking and writing that we expect from students has, as we well know, simply no platform in South Africa... with the exception of a handful of Honours students, the students who take Practical Criticism in this Department are all students practising an art, most of them being painters. If my outline seems to indicate too little weight towards aesthetics and the philosophies of ar s is intended : I aim to have students find this course as relevant as possible to their main work."[21]

No basic course with regard to the nature and possible functions of art criticism can be followed in South Africa. The same applies to a basic course with regard to aesthetics. As those characteristics of South African art criticism isolated in Chapter 1.6, manifest lack of education with regard to the fundamental nature and possible functions of art criticism, it is believed that a basic and academic education in aesthetics and art criticism is necessitated. Such an education would centre around the distinctions and relationships between aesthetics, art history and art criticism; art critical terms; art critical method; and the possible functions of art criticism. Such an education would follow an education in art history and would be aimed at correlation in

art critical practice between aesthetics, art history and art criticism. The lack of educational facilities adequate to precede the balanced contribution of art criticism, can be advanced as being partly determinant of the low standard of current art critical practice in South Africa. The question arises whether a study of art criticism produced elsewhere, can be fruitful with regard to art critical practice here, if not preceded by academic training with regard to the nature and possible functions of art criticism and aesthetics in general. Furthermore, the notion can be advanced that training in aesthetics and art criticism would imply that the specific environment within which criticism is to be practised, be taken into account.

3.4 The art critic's audience in South Africa

In order to attain a balance between the exegetical, educational and autobiographical functions of art criticism, the art critic keeps his audience in mind. The question arises to what extent the critics' audience in South Africa can be said to determine the low standard of South African criticism.

A few points can be advanced with regard to the above-mentioned question:

a) With regard to visual education in the community, Sash states: "Have we been taught what the alphabet of a visual language is? What is the underlying form behind the plot or story in a painting or piece of sculpture? Have we been taught what we are doing when we draw or paint? Are we taught what it is all about - this activity of making copies of seen images or the making of new images? Have we been taught the different kinds of structure - made aware of the intention, argument, polemic, philosophy behind the seen image?"[22] As far as South African art critics are concerned, it

can be noted that their failure to describe and interpret works of art adequately or at all, implies a negative answer to Sash's questions quoted. By implication, the South African art public, from which the art critic emerges as a "specialist" with regard to the description, interpretation and evaluation of works of art, also lacks insight as to "the alphabet of a visual language".

Sash goes on to say that at "...school we have dabbled with paint...depending only upon our manipulative skill...We have also been shown some great works of art of the past and been told that they are beautiful...We are told...We are given no yardsticks, no standards, no education in fact. We are not taught to look and even less what to look for."[23] It is stated in Chapter 1 and Appendix I that South African art critics merely tell their readers that a work of art has merit. They do not lead their readers to understand why the work of art is valued. This may be correlated with visual education at South African schools, as explained by Sash.

As is the case with South African art critics, the critics' audience is not in a position where it can become conversant with historical and contemporary works of art of international stature. Lack of visual education in the community and lack of experience of works of art of international stature, imply that the critics' audience in South Africa is generally "...the general or casual public, which is usually ill-informed and relies upon the critic for explanations and opinions. The critic can assist in informing and possibly directing this class of audience toward more appreciative viewing. However, so much needs to be spelt out that the critic may either be forced into didacticism or reduced to mere reportage. In either case, he will not fulfil a strictly critical function."[24] By merely announcing an exhibition; by inserting

information which remains uncorrelated with aspects of works of art mentioned; and by merely telling the reader that a work is valuable, the South African critic produces a didactic criticism or merely reports.

b) Werth states: "Die waarnemer van 'n kunswerk is egter nie 'n geïsoleerde individu nie, maar vorm deel van 'n gemeenskap van waarnemers : en by elke waarnemer en waarneming speel kondisionering deur sosiale en kulturele agtergrond en ondervinding 'n rol."[25]
A number of social and cultural factors can be said to influence art attitudes within a given environment. In the following statements some of these factors with regard to the South African public, are isolated.

W.E.G. Louw states: "Een van die ernstige belemmeringe vir die ontplooiing van 'n werklik vrye, openhartige en kritiese gedagtewisseling in ons land is m.i. ...dat ons so 'n heterogene bevolking is, met soveel botsende, onderling verskillende afkomste en tradisies, dat 'n werklike 'onder-onsie' onmoontlik is."[26]

L.B. Kreitner isolates "The racial division of the comparatively small number of whites..."[as]" a handicap on a sound cultural development "[and the]" distribution of the white population "[as]" an additional cause of the unhealthy art climate."[27]

Bruce Arnott states that "Throughout its history the art "[and by implication the total culture]" of South Africa has been greatly affected by the various migrations of its peoples...The English severed any direct contact with the development of British art... the emergent Afrikaner nation was reactionary and introspect, was intolerant of foreign cultural influence...When the group finally felt the need of a cultural and artistic identity of its own, it could barely draw from the atrophied cultural resources it had

preserved...The migrations of the Bantu speaking group...reduced contact between the migrants and other stable cultures..."[28]

The above-quoted statements isolate some of the possible cultural and social factors which can be said to have atrophied cultural resources in South Africa.

c) The conclusion may be advanced that lack of visual education; lack of experience of works of art of international stature; and atrophied cultural resources may account for the South African public's apparent meek acceptance of an art criticism of low standard. On the other hand, limited reaction from its audience (see the last question in Appendix B); lack of knowledge and insight of its audience; and interest of its audience in the artist himself, may account in part for common characteristics of South African art criticism (see Chapter 1.6).

3.5 South African art

An investigation of South African art falls outside the scope of this dissertation. However, as criticism is secondary to, and therefore determined by, the art which it revolves around, a few tentative points need to be advanced here:

a) Arnott isolates essentials for the effective production of art in any society. The following essentials isolated, pertain to the South African situation to a limited extent or not at all: "That there is an historical artistic tradition from which it can draw, but which it can also positively reject; that the society is in contact with, and receptive to, external cultural influences; that there is social unity."[29]

b) With regard to South African art, Sash states: "It seems that

in South Africa the artist has become something of a grocer : he is making works to sell and this is the thing uppermost in his mind."[30] Berman states: "South Africa, despite her small population, can take pride in her high percentage of fine artists, artists who, at their best, can hold their own in the world arena. However, I must emphasise that phrase, 'at their best', because far more frequently than is excusable are we confronted in public exhibitions with less than best..."[31] It can be noted here that there are forty art galleries in Johannesburg alone. An average of plus-minus seven hundred exhibitions are mounted each year. Taking into account the size of our population, the number of professional artists and the number of critics contributing regularly, this number is disproportionately high. The argument may be advanced that too many mediocre works are exhibited; that critics are mostly confronted with mediocre works; and that the six critics currently contributing regularly to Johannesburg newspapers (see Chapter 1.2) cannot cover all these exhibitions.

c) With regard to the derivative nature of South African art, Sash states: "...from the galleries, I think it is pretty evident that the artists are still not conversant with the great major changes in art. They haven't really got the great mutual heritage. In fact, many of the young artists still believe that they are producing something new, whereas in fact it has been old hat for thirty years."[32]

Martienssen asks the question whether it is "...possible with the size of our professional artistic community, our small group of artists, that work can be produced, <u>is</u> being produced, that is of any kind of international standard? By which I don't mean work that necessarily hits the international headlines, but work which

is equal to the quality of work goin on in the best centres?"[33]

The argument can be advanced that, due to its different environment and isolation from the major art centres of the world, South African art cannot possibly attain international status. Furthermore, it may be suggested that South African art is still groping towards a national identity. The art critic in South Africa is not called upon to identify new movements as art in this country tends to build on, rather than react to, past art. Possibly due to its attempt at international affiliation and general lack of a recognisable South African character, South African art illustrates an eclectic approach by its artists.

d) If the above-stated can be accepted, it might explain the phenomenon noted by May Hillhouse on her return from Europe in 1954 and still recognisable today. She states: "Perhaps the most disturbing factor I found on my return was the very evident deep-rooted belief taken by the art critics that this is a 'second-rate' country, in that the reviews were carefully tempered to suit a lower level of production and taste and that frankly bad exhibitions were treated with quite serious attention out of all proportion to their merit."[34]

3.6 Conclusion

Some of the arguments advanced in this chapter, are of a tentative and unverifiable nature. It can thus also only be concluded tentatively that the following factors determine the nature and possible functions of South African art criticism:

a) Inadequate visual experience of critics and their audience;

b) inadequate visual education of critics and their audience;

c) social and cultural factors which have determined art attitudes

in South Africa; and

d) the current nature and possibly limited possibilities of South African art.

These factors may in turn be advanced as being determinant of art critical status in South Africa (see Chapter 2.6). The low status of art criticism in South Africa may be considered as determinant of the lack of an adequate podia for South African art critics and the lack of adequate, academic educational facilities for art critics in this country. The standard of current art critical practice may thus be considered as being partly determinant of the factors which influence it.

While it is stated in Chapter 1 that current art critical practice in South Africa does not conform to an ideal of criticism as postulated in Chapter 2, it may be suggested here that it cannot conform to such an ideal. Ironically, the nature of South African criticism may be said to contribute to this situation.

3.7 References

1. N.P. van Wyk Louw, Lojale Verset, p. 79.
2. Ibid.
3. C. Coetzee, Appendix D, p. ~~296.~~ 293.
4. E. Berman, Appendix E, p. ~~304.~~ 301.
5. W.E.G. Louw, "Die kritiese ingesteldheid van die Afrikaner". Kritiek, p. 14.

6. R. Cheales, Appendix B.2.1.

7. J. Stock, Appendix B.2.3.

8. E. Forster, Appendix B.2.7.

9. M. O'Connor, Appendix B.2.8.

10. E. Wilmot, In : M. Schoonraad, "Die lewe en werk van Walter Battiss met besondere verwysing na sy grafiese kuns", p. 119.

11. H.M. van der Westhuysen, In : M. Schoonraad, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

12. Berman, In : J. Keill, "Artists vs critics in word battle". The Rand Daily Mail, Nov. 21, 1975, p. 23.

13. F.G.E. Nilant, Kunskritiek, p. 8.

14. H. Martienssen, et al, "Civic Art and You". South African Architectural Record, p. 27.

15. C. Sash, "Visual education in the community". Artlook, Jan. 1970, p. 14.

16. Ibid., p. 15.

17. G.M. Ballot, Appendix A.4.1.

18. A.A.F. Teurlinckx, Appendix A.4.2.

19. R. Streuber, Appendix A.4.3.

20. B. Bradshaw, Appendix A.4.4.

21. R. Hodgins, Appendix A.4.5.

22. Sash, op. cit., p. 16.

23. Ibid.

24. Berman, Appendix E, p. ~~302.~~ 299.

25. A.J. Werth, "Die kritiek van die beeldende kunste in Suid-Afrika". Kritiek, p. 40.

26. W.E.G. Louw, op. cit., p. 10.

27. L.B. Kreitner, "Round the Galleries". Trek, Jan. 1951, p. 40.

28. B. Arnott, "Art and Society in South Africa". Groote Schuur, pp. 32-33.

29. Ibid., p. 32.

30. Sash, In : R. Hodgins (Interviewer), "Southafrican Art : Has It Made It?" News/Check, p. 13.

31. Berman, Appendix II.12.

32. Sash, In : R. Hodgins, loc. cit.

33. Martienssen, In : R. Hodgins, loc. cit.

34. M. Hillhouse, "Painting in South Africa - 1964". Standpunte, p. 23.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding, the following can thus be concluded:

a) Art criticism published regularly in South African newspapers and contributed sporadically to other possible podia for South African critics, can be said to be of low standard. From a number of common characteristics (as isolated in Chapter 1.6), this negative evaluation can be deduced.

b) Art criticism as practised by Berman (see Chapter 1.4) manifests an attempt at critical investigation and assessment. However, Berman's critical contribution shares a number of those characteristics isolated in Chapter 1.6. Furthermore, it can be noted that Berman's criticism fulfils at best, an educational and not an exegetical function (see Chapter 2.5).

c) Current art critical practice in South Africa thus does not conform to an ideal of criticism, as postulated in Chapter 2.

d) Previous adverse criticism on South African art criticism (see the Introduction to this dissertation) is thus borne out by an investigation of typical examples of work contributed by South African art critics.

e) A number of factors can be advanced as being determinant of the standard of current art critical practice in South Africa. It follows that it is currently impossible for South African art critics to produce criticism which conforms to an ideal of balanced and reasoned criticism.

f) It may therefore be suggested, that the standard of South African art criticism can only improve if determinant factors of its current nature and functions, are changed or eliminated.

APPENDIX I

An analysis of articles by critics who currently contribute regularly to South African newspapers

This analysis functions as motivation for conclusions reached in Chapter 1.3.

I.1 An analysis of typical examples of work by Richard Cheales, critic for "The Star"

I.1.1 "Simpson : a master show", The Star, Sept. 15, 1975 : 7.

"THE EXHIBITION: John Churchill Simpson - oils and watercolours (Pieter Wenning Gallery, Fox Street and Loveday Street).

Because the exhibition is so pleasant it would be easy merely to use such words as 'delightful' and 'charming' to sum it up.

Yet the complexity of draughtsmanship that forms the basis of all the paintings - many of which will obviously be, or are, Africana - constantly make one pause, realising how much really has gone into John Churchill Simpson's work. A word like 'delightful' could never aptly describe his work.

The oils, of course, are much more ambitious. Views of the Carlton Hotel when it was being built (some superb brushwork here), a large study of St. Paul's (with flats going up in the foreground) and a dramatic panorama of the Verwoerd Dam give an idea of the drawing ease this truly talented artist shows in highly tricky subjects.

It is only 10 years ago that the 60-year-old architect

decided (about the time he was elected president-in-chief of the Institute of South African Architects) to make painting a major activity in his life.

His delightful watercolours, a newer facet of his still-young art career, allow his more poetic nature to assert itself. When an architect is talented one finds that rare blend of superlative drawing and freedom in the use of paint.

This is a faultless show where John Churchill Simpson concentrates either on sorting out the most complicated architectural detail or goes to an almost opposite (simple) extreme.

In the latter style (that is characteristic of his gracious, tasteful watercolours), he seeks more evocative atmosphere - a breaking down of the detailed work, at which he is a master."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The article is not structured. Paragraphs are not devoted to the discussion of distinct aspects of the exhibition (this may, however, be due to sub-editing). Biographical information is inserted within the body of the discussion. There is no progression from description to interpretation and deduced evaluation. Evaluations appear at random throughout the text. These evaluations are not substantiated by description and interpretation (see Chapter 2.4).

b) The reader cannot form a visual image of the works under discussion as no empirical description is attempted (see Chapter 2.4). Cheales informs the reader that a "...complexity of draughtsmanship... forms the basis of all the paintings"

(paragraph 2). However, he does not explain what he means by this "complexity", how this forms the basis of all the paintings and what the functions of this draughtsmanship are. Cheales mentions subject-matter : "...Views of the Carlton Hotel when it was being built ... a large study of St Paul's (with flats going up in the foreground) and a dramatic panorama of the Verwoerd Dam..." (paragraph 3). However, no attempt is made to describe the handling of the subject-matter in the works themselves. The reader is informed that the study of St Paul's is "large". The meaning of this term is not explained. Within the South African context a painting of six feet square may be large while this is a small format within the context of twentieth century American painting. The function of the format is not explained by Cheales. Cheales states that the artist "...concentrates either on sorting out the most complicated architectural detail or goes to an almost opposite (simple) extreme" (paragraph 6). This statement is not explained further. The reader is thus left with no idea as to the formal nature of the works on exhibition.

c) The artist's use of different media is not discussed. The reader is informed that oils and watercolours are on exhibition. Cheales states that in the oils, Simpson concentrates "...on sorting out the most complicated architectural detail... (paragraph 6) and that "...he seeks more evocative atmosphere - a breaking down of the detailed work..." (paragraph 7) in the watercolours. The reader is merely informed about the subject-matter of the oils and watercolours. The artist's handling of these media and possible reasons for his choice of media are not discussed. The reader learns that the water-

colour medium is " ... a newer facet of his "[the artist's]" still-young art career..." (paragraph 5). Cheales does, however, not inform the reader whether the use of the new medium has led to a development in the work of the artist.

d) No attempt at critical interpretation is made. Cheales cannot interpret the work of Simpson as he does not establish an empirical basis for interpretation (see Chapter 2.4).

e) The article is autobiographical. Emotive terms such as "delightful" (paragraph 5) connote aspects of the writer's personal experience. Such a term cannot be accounted for objectively as its meaning is variable and personal. "Delightful" may be praising or pejorative (see Chapter 2.3). The autobiographical critic utters personal impressions without analysing these impressions. Such utterances have no art critical function (see Chapter 2.5).

f) Meaningless terms are used by Cheales. Without further explanation, words and phrases such as "pleasant" (paragraph 1), "ambitious" (paragraph 3), "superb", "dramatic" (paragraph 3), "superlative drawing", "freedom in the use of paint" (paragraph 5), "faultless" (paragraph 6), "gracious", "tasteful" and "evocative" (paragraph 7), cannot be objectively accounted for. These adjectives connote praise but no reasons are given for this praise (see Chapter 2.3). Cheales states: "Because the exhibition is so pleasant it would be easy merely to use such words as 'delightful' and 'charming' to sum it up" (paragraph 1) and "A word like 'delightful' could never aptly describe his work" (paragraph 2). Nevertheless, Cheales uses "delightful" to sum up the nature of the watercolours on exhibition (paragraph 5). Cheales uses "delightful" and "ambitious" as antonyms. He states: "The oils, of course,

are much more ambitious" (paragraph 3). The question arises whether a painting can be ambitious and what Cheales means by this term. The artist is said to seek "evocative atmosphere" in his watercolours (paragraph 7). The reader is left to wonder of what this atmosphere is evocative.

g) Cheales evaluates the artist as being "truly talented" (paragraph 3) and in command of "drawing ease" (paragraph 5). Manifestations of these attributes in the works themselves, are not discussed. These statements, as well as the whole of paragraph four, are of a biographical nature and do not fulfil an art critical function.

h) Cheales avoids interpretation by stating that much has gone into the work of Simpson (paragraph 2). Emotive terms are substituted for empirical description. The reader is thus left with no idea of form and content and the manner in which these are mutually determinant.

i) The above-mentioned lack of analysis render the recurring evaluations meaningless as they remain unsubstantiated (see Chapter 2.4).

j) The exhibition is not discussed within a context. The reader is informed that "It is only 10 years ago that the 60-year-old architect decided ...to make painting a major activity in his life" (paragraph 4). No reference is made to work done previous to these ten years or during these ten years. The reader is not informed whether previous exhibitions have been held. No development in the work of the artist is traced. A distinction is made between oils and watercolours without tracing such a development. The exhibition is not discussed within the context of South African art or art produced elsewhere. The reader is thus left without a field of reference

within which to place the work on exhibition.

k) The article can be said to report in the journalist sense of the word as it merely informs the reader of the venue of an exhibition ; that Simpson uses oil paint and watercolour paint ; of the subject-matter of a few works on the exhibition ; of biographical information on the artist ; and of the personal and arbitrary reactions of one member of the artist's public (Cheales).

I.1.2 "What of the future?", The Star, Aug. 6, 1975 : 15.

"There were no fanfares before Paul Bosman's first solo show - held about two years ago - of animal studies in pastels.

By the time the 10-day exhibition closed, Bosman was one of the most sought-after exponents of animal life in South Africa.

His delightful and beautiful handling of pastels had an appeal to a far wider circle than normally pays attention to wildlife depictions.

He says he held the show with fear and apprehension. Yet it established him as one of the finer realistic interpreters of wildlife in South Africa today, with some studies of world class.

In an age when learning is made to seem of prime importance, Bosman perhaps foolishly admits he knows nothing about art.

There are people who cannot conceive it possible that anyone can paint well without studying art or reading the vast amount of literature devoted to it. Microscopic analysis on art often seems more important than the art

itself.

Bosman is one of those natural artists that makes a hodge-podge of the idea that all good art must automatically go hand in hand with knowledge of art.

For at least 20 years it has been made to seem that without studying art, there can be no art. A few natural artists, such as Bosman, have again and again disproved this theory; yet it dies hard in a country with a new culture that is obsessed with knowledge.

When you meet Bosman, he has that cautious facelessness so typical of South Africans when they think they might make fools of themselves.

Talk to him about his pastels, his ideas for simplifying (to please himself), yet retaining enough realism (to satisfy his admirers), and you see another being.

You sense immense sensitivity beneath the South African conservatism. Sensitivity is a characteristic that we South Africans, with our boisterous, rugby-playing natures (when we are at ease), foolishly think should be sliced right out of the national character.

Knowing Bosman's work and his at times exquisite touch, and realising that his basic sensitivity hasn't been trampled flat, leaves you feeling this is a man with a great future - if the sensitivity is not crushed either by intellectuals or the predilection for lousy work (just as long as the subject matter is right) that much of the public shows.

Still young, Bosman has exhibited in the USA and will hold a show in Germany next year.

"But I have a wife and three children to support," he

murmured. The implication was that, to keep the pot boiling (and to continue working full-time at his art, as he has done only for a few months) who could say what the future would hold - to exploit fully the talent, or to pander slightly to the sertion of the public that knows (and cares) nothing about technique.

Whatever Bosman's decision, you feel it will come after much thought and rumination."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) Concerning the work of Paul Bosman the reader is informed that he does animal studies in pastels; that he simplifies form while retaining a degree of "realism" (paragraph 10) ; that he held his first show two years ago ; that he has exhibited in the United States of America and will exhibit in Germany; and that his work is popular with the public (paragraph 2). This is the only information provided about the artist's work. Subject-matter is mentioned without further discussion of the manner in which it is given form by the artist. Bosman's use of pastels is not discussed. Cheales does not explain the manner in which the artist simplifies his work nor what he means by "realism", nor the manner in which this is retained in the work of the artist. Although reference is made to a previous exhibition and to a forthcoming exhibition, Bosman's work is not discussed within the context of his oeuvre, nor within the context of South African art or art produced elsewhere. Cheales does not specify a reference public when mentioning the popularity of Bosman's work.

b) A number of unsubstantiated evaluative statements are to be found in the article. The reader learns that some of Bosman's

studies are of "world class" (paragraph 4). No specification of this "class" is attempted. Cheales informs the reader of Bosman's "...delightful and beautiful handling..." (paragraph 3), of his "...exquisite touch..." (paragraph 12) and that Bosman is "...one of the finer realistic interpreters of wild-life in South Africa today..." (paragraph 4). No explanation for these statements are offered and these evaluations appear at random throughout the unstructured text. Cheales furthermore supports one evaluation with another in stating: "His delightful and beautiful handling of pastels had an appeal to a far wider circle..." (paragraph 3) (underlining my own). Synthesis is thus not supported by analysis (see Chapter 2.4).

c) The reader is informed of Cheales' personal pleasure in the works of Bosman. As such the article is autobiographical. Superlative terms such as "exquisite" (paragraph 12) are used to attempt the communication of personal experience. These terms cannot be objectively accounted for. No reasons are provided for Cheales' emotional response (see Chapter 2.5).

d) Evaluative statements are made concerning the artist's personality. The reader is informed that Bosman is "...one of those natural artists..." (paragraphs 7 and 8), that he has "...immense sensitivity..." (paragraph 11) and that he has "talent" (paragraph 14). Manifestations of these personal attributes are not investigated in the works themselves.

e) Biographical information on the artist is provided (paragraphs 5 and 14). This information does not serve to illuminate Bosman's choice of themes, nor his limitations. It does not serve to illuminate any aspect of the work on exhibition. Such information merely serves as a tribute to the artist himself.

f) Irrelevant discussion on the unimportance of knowledge (paragraphs 5 to 8) and the disposition of the South African public (paragraphs 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14) is included in the article. This discussion does not contribute to an understanding of the artist's work. The unsubstantiated and generalised nature of this discussion also prevents it from illuminating the environment within which the artist works. The artist's financial dilemma is mentioned and hopes are expressed for his future. Hopes are not expressed with regard to his future work but with regard to his future financial position. The relevant paragraphs are thus not of an art critical nature.

g) Cheales unwittingly unmasks a tacit agreement between artist and public (paragraph 10). Furthermore, the artist's willingness to compromise with popular demand by retaining a degree of "realism", while "...simplifying (to please himself)..." is condoned and even praised by Cheales (paragraph 10).

h) This article also merely reports in the journalist sense of the word. Irrelevant information and unsubstantiated and arbitrary personal opinion are included within the journalist report.

I.1.3 The following comments can be made concerning Cheales' replies to the questionnaire in Appendix B.2.1:

a) Cheales states that "Space counts more than method" when contributing to a newspaper. In the articles discussed as typical of work contributed by Cheales, space has been wasted by repetitive evaluation, irrelevant argument, autobiographical information.

b) Cheales states that the critics walks "...a tightrope (on a newspaper) attempting a kind of critical tact". Repeated

praise in articles by Cheales may be attributed to an attempt at pleasing by being tactful.

c) Cheales regards a brief appraisal of a show to be the main aim of criticism published in newspapers. His appraisals are, however, not substantiated by analysis of the works on exhibition.

d) The following statement is made by Cheales: "...because I paint I always seem (perhaps wrongly) aware of the feelings of the artist concerned". This awareness may account for the repeated evaluations and irrelevant biographical information included in articles written by Cheales.

e) Cheales maintains that it is "...essential to have as balanced as possible comment on work". On analysis of his work it is clear that Cheales does not achieve a balance between analysis and synthesis.

I.2 An analysis of typical examples of work by H.E. Winder, critic for "The Rand Daily Mail"

I.2.1 "Delightful work in unusual medium", The Rand Daily Mail, Dec. 18, 1975 : 19.

"The fascinating papier maché sculpture which her fertile mind and her skilful fingers have produced once again shows Nina Campbell-Quine employing a somewhat unusual medium in a most delightful fashion.

Her 'Mother and Child' hasn't the religious significance that the title might suggest, but is nevertheless a charming piece of work and the family of cats is quite

intriguing.

Apart from this quite enchanting work, the artist is showing a number of small paintings in an enamel-like medium.

'Late Summer' and especially 'The Babe' are really attractive studies.

In addition there are a number of works by other artists. Cynthia Ball's 'Salt pans, Bloemhof,' a very good composition in line and wash, has been very well observed and executed.

Shirley Robertson's painting of 'White Roses' is very pleasant, even though the flowers seem a little awkwardly arranged, but her study of donkeys along a dusty road is excellent.

Her appreciation of movement, particularly in the drawing of the donkeys, is most commendable.

There are two very sound landscapes by Maisie Waite, that entitled 'Sunlight and Shadows' being especially strong and confident.

Hanson's simple 'Coastal scene with rocks' is also very satisfying.

In the inner gallery there are several very good etchings by Amos Langdown, a Cape Town artist who seems to have a flair for this particular medium, and Nick Garwood's 'Cape Valley' is the best of several paintings.

His work has the suggestion of painting by formula, but that should be corrected quite easily."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) Eighteen words and phrases are used to praise work on the

exhibition. These are the following:

a.1) "Fascinating" (paragraph 1);

a.2) "fertile" (paragraph 1);

a.3) "skilful" (paragraph 1);

a.4) "delightful" (paragraph 1);

a.5) "charming" (paragraph 2);

a.6) "quite intriguing" (paragraph 2);

a.7) "enchanting" (paragraph 3);

a.8) "really attractive" (paragraph 4);

a.9) "very good composition" (paragraph 5);

a.10) "very well observed and executed" (paragraph 5);

a.11) "very pleasant" (paragraph 6);

a.12) "excellent" (paragraph 6);

a.13) "commendable" (paragraph 7);

a.14) "very sound" (paragraph 8);

a.15) "especially strong and confident" (paragraph 8);

a.16) "very satisfying" (paragraph 9);

a.17) "very good" (paragraph 10); and

a.18) "the best" (paragraph 10).

b) Three instances of adverse criticism can be isolated. These are the following:

b.1) "Her 'Mother and Child' hasn't the religious significance that the title might suggest..." (see paragraph 2).

b.2) "...the flowers seem a little awkwardly arranged..." (paragraph 6); and

b.3) "His work has the suggestion of painting by formula..." (paragraph 11).

c) No description and interpretation and thus no analysis of the works on exhibition substantiate praise or adverse criticism in this article. Words such as "delightful" and "charming"

are emotive and cannot be accounted for objectively. Praising terms such as "commendable", "good", "best" and "sound" are meaningless as the criteria by which the critic arrives at these conclusions are not forthcoming. Reasons for adverse criticism are not supplied. Winder does not explain why Mother and Child has no religious significance, why the flowers seem awkwardly arranged and what he means by "painting by formula". Winder merely goes on to say that this last defect "...should be corrected quite easily" (paragraph 11).

d) The artists mentioned in this article are not generally known to the South African public. However, Winder does not establish a context within which the reader can place the artists. No mention is made of previous work or exhibitions by these artists. Relationships between the work of these artists and South African art in general are not pointed out. No reference is made to art produced elsewhere either. The reader is left without a frame of reference within which to place the work on exhibition.

e) The article is a report in the journalist sense of the word. It informs the reader of an exhibition and of the names of artists exhibiting. The remainder of the statements fulfil no art critical function as the statements are mere personal opinions unaccounted for by lack of substantiating argument (see Chapter 2.4 and 2.5).

I.2.2 Winder has contributed no reply to the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Only one example of work by Winder is analysed here as no variation between his different articles can be noted. Information with regard to venue and names of artists differ from one

instance to another. However, despite this difference, no alteration in the formula which Winder follows can be noted.

I.3 An analysis of typical examples of work by Elza Miles, critic for "Die Rapport"

I.3.1 "Dis 'n Wit Kaap va[illegible]nna Vorster", Die Rapport, Apr. 28, 1974 : 18.

("DIS die [illegible]kaap van die sewentigerjare wat Anna Vorster in haar jongste werke onder die titel 'Skilderye van die Suide 1973-74' in Pretoria aan die publiek ten toon stel.

Sy toon in van dié werke onder meer dat die klassistiese vormmiddele haar as skilder geensins inperk nie. Inteendeel, sy wend juis dié middele aan om dinamiese komposisies in werking te stel.

Só skryf ons kunskritikus ELZA MILES, in hierdie resensie oor die pas afgelope Vorster-tentoonstelling in die Galery van die S.A. Kunsvereniging in die Ou Nederlandse Bank-Gebou aan die Kerkplein in Pretoria.

Die werke kan nog 'n ruk lank in die voorraad-lokaal in dieselfde gebou besigtig word.")

"Kenm[illegible]end van Anna Vorster se huidige versameling is die tweeledige karakter van die onderwerpkeuse: die land en die see.

Die land vind verteenwoordiging in die volkse huisies van die Kaapse platteland, turksvy, kruindenne en duine. Die see bied hom as 'skelet' (nr. 11) en as ruimte vir

seiljagte en bote.

Die leser van so 'n inventaris kan natuurlik nie help om onmiddellik Maggie Laubser se huisies en vissersbootjies op te roep nie. Maar dié ooreenkoms is net onderwerp-diep. En Anna Vorster wys ons die Wit Kaap van die sewentigerjare.

Die mooi, argitektoniese vorms word Wit monumente in 'n ontvolkte gebied. Op dié werwe is geen lewende wese te bespeur nie en die skoorstene wat in Maggie Laubser se stukke altyd 'n rooksuil uitstoot, is nou rookloos en veral 'n mooi vorm.

Die seilbootjies van vroeër, tekens van die leeftog op see, is nou die duur seiljagte van die Kaap-Rio-vaarders.

Dit is wat my die eerste opval van hierdie versameling 'Skilderye van die Suide 1973-74.'

Ten tweede is daar die boeiende ratwerk van die skilderye. Hoekom het die huisies so gou die koper se hart gewen? Sekerlik nie omdat hulle vandag deur 'n ander volksgroep bewoon word nie.

Al is die omgewing onbewoon, het die huisies elkeen 'n kwaliteit wat hulle menslik maak. Telkens soek 'n opvallend eensame element iewers aanklank. So kry 'n hekpilaar, 'n sygewel of 'n skoorsteen 'n maat aan die oorkant van die werfpad of verderaan in die ruimte. Of twee vlerke van 'n plattegrond kruis (Huise van vroeër) of twee halwe palmkruine vorm 'n wiel (Perspektief in die Klein Karoo).

Hierteenoor staan die briljante waterskappe, waaraan die koper nie so geredelik wou byt nie. In dié stukke word 'n koel, blougroen palet deurgaans gehandhaaf. Waar die huisies in hul soeke 'n intimiteit stel, word die

waterskappe gekenmerk deur 'n klassistiese presiseri[illegible] van ruimte deur middel van beweging.

In Sunlight and reflections, Tafelbaaihawe en Westward first word hoogte bepaal deur middel van vertikale maste en weerkaatsings. Illusionêre diepte word bewerk deur die bootvorms self en die oënskynlik terloopse verspreiding daarvan.

Onder die waterskappe is Op die lang blou pad, opties 'n kragtoer. Met die eerste kennismaking flous die vaartrykheid van die stuk jou. Eers by 'n ontleding besef jy dat al die beweging deur 'n vernuftige aanwending van die statiese driehoek geskied.

Die basiese struktuur is driehoekig. Verder is elke boot wesenlik 'n driehoek en die seile bewegende variasies daarvan. Sodra die reguit lyne van 'n driehoek geboë raak, kom die vlak in beweging. Uiteraard gebeur daar visueel iets, met 'n geometriese vlak wat beweeg, 'n verwringing van die vorm is onvermydelik.

Saam met hierdie tegniese aspek van 'n bewegende, geometriese vlak word ook die tradisionele tekens van beweging aangewend, naamlik diagonale en golwende lyne (vgl. die touwerk en maste, en land- en berggloeiinge).

Die duidelike kontraswerking tussen die wit seile en die blougroen omgewing laat die oog weer van vlak tot vlak spring.

Benewens al dié tegniese elemente is daar ook nog 'n subtiele drie-slag-ritmisering wat deur die verspreiding en groepering van die seile bewerk word.

Al wil dit voorkom of elke pikturale element in Op die lang blou pad oorwoë is, boet die werk niks aan vitaliteit

in nie. Inteendeel, dit word 'n korrektief op werke soos Die duine kronkel, Ritme kronkel, Ritme van die duine en Come unto these yellow sands. Vergelyk in dié verband die sekelvormige ligspeling op die seile met die blou winkelhaak-skaduwees in die duine-tonele. In laasgenoemdes is die blou winkelhake leë stopvorms en verloor hulle die visuele seggingskrag van die dinamiese sekelvorms.

Anna Vorster demonstreer in hierdie waterskappe dat die klassistiese vormmiddele haar as skilder geensins inperk nie. Inteendeel, sy wend juis dié middele aan om dinamiese komposisies in werking te stel."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The article is structured insofar as the mentioning of subject-matter is followed by an investigation of the two themes in Anna Vorster's work.

b) Reference to the work of Maggie Laubser draws attention to the history of South African art (paragraph 3). An attempt is thus made to establish an art historical context. However, Miles merely mentions Maggie Laubser and does not attempt to discuss the work of Anna Vorster within an art historical context.

c) Description and interpretation are attempted. The landscapes are described (paragraph 8). The first two sentences of this paragraph are interpretive and followed by description. The interpretations are thus substantiated. Paragraphs nine to seventeen contain description and interpretation of the waterscapes. Miles states that the waterscapes "...word...gekenmerk deur 'n klassistiese presisering..." (paragraph 9). The

remainder of the article is devoted to substantiation and explanation of this characterization. Illusionary depth is discussed and the manner in which this depth is created (paragraph 10). Movement and the means by which it is suggested are discussed (paragraphs 11, 12 and 13). Contrast is discussed (paragraph 14). Rhythm in Anna Vorster's work is discussed (paragraph 15). Miles points out these aspects and investigates the manner in which they are created.

d) The article thus contains an investigation of the formal and classicist nature of the work on exhibition. Emphasis on formal aspects suggests that Miles considers these as the only material for analysis.

e) In view of the above-mentioned emphasis on formal aspects it can be considered as a defect that Miles does not establish a relationship between the work of Anna Vorster and formalist tendencies in twentieth century art.

f) The meaning of "...'n klassistiese presisering van ruimte deur middel van beweging" (paragraph 9) is obscure. Space cannot be explicated by movement,as movement is suggested as a result of relationships between line, plane and space. Movement and classicist explication are not synonymous as the sentence, quoted above, seems to suggest.

g) Some evaluations remain unsubstantiated. The word "mooi" is used twice in paragraph four. No reasons for the use of this term are offered. Other evaluations are, however, substantiated by empirical description. Miles explains why she calls these waterscapes "...briljante waterskappe" (paragraph 9); why she maintains that "...al die beweging deur 'n vernuftige aanwending van die statiese driehoek geskied" (paragraph 11); how a "...subtiele drie-slag-ritmisering" is created

(paragraph 15) and why "...klassistiese vormmiddele "[Anna Vorster]" as skilder geensins inperk nie" (paragraph 17 with reference to paragraphs 9 to 16).

h) Reference made to the buyers of the paintings (paragraph 7) is irrelevant to an investigation of the works.

i) Miles describes empirically, attempts interpretation (paragraph 8) and substantiates her final evaluation (paragraph 17) by empirical analysis. Formalist criteria are recognisable from the emphasis on formal aspects of Anna Vorster's work. However, this approach is not developed to its full consequence (see e).

j) The report announcing the exhibition (the heading to the article) was contributed by the art editor of the newspaper and remains separate from the critic's contribution. The functions of the report and the art critical contribution are thus not confused in this case.

I.3.2 "Dit is wat hierdie Picasso vertel", Die Rapport, Jan. 27, 1974 : 21.

"Van 1900 af kan 'n mens praat van die naar as 'n konstant terugkerende motief in Picasso se werk. Die karakters Harlekyn en Pierrot uit die Commedia dell' Arte word telkens opnuut deur die meester bekyk en dit wil voorkom asof hy veral gedurende sy laaste werkjare na hulle kyk as gekweldes. Dit is nie slegs die uiterlike kwelling van twee vir mekaar soms lastige figure op die verhoog nie, maar gekweldes self.

Uit hierdie tyd dagteken Johannesburg se Tête d' Harlequin II, 10.1.71, 'n kop wat noue aansluiting vind in vorm en seggingskrag by die Gellerie Louise de Leiris se

(paragraph 15) and why "...klassistiese vormmiddele "[Anna Vorster]" as skilder geensins inperk nie" (paragraph 17 with reference to paragraphs 9 to 16).

h) Reference made to the buyers of the paintings (paragraph 7) is irrelevant to an investigation of the works.

i) Miles describes empirically, attempts interpretation (paragraph 8) and substantiates her final evaluation (paragraph 17) by empirical analysis. Formalist criteria are recognisable from the emphasis on formal aspects of Anna Vorster's work. However, this approach is not developed to its full consequence (see e).

j) The report announcing the exhibition (the heading to the article) was contributed by the art editor of the newspaper and remains separate from the critic's contribution. The functions of the report and the art critical contribution are thus not confused in this case.

I.3.2 "Dit is wat hierdie Picasso vertel", Die Rapport, Jan. 27, 1974 : 21.

"Van 1900 af kan 'n mens praat van die nar as 'n konstant terugkerende motief in Picasso se werk. Die karakters Harlekyn en Pierrot uit die Commedia dell' Arte word telkens opnuut deur die meester bekyk en dit wil voorkom asof hy veral gedurende sy laaste werkjare na hulle kyk as gekweldes. Dit is nie slegs die uiterlike kwelling van twee vir mekaar soms lastige figure op die verhoog nie, maar gekweldes self.

Uit hierdie tyd dagteken Johannesburg se Tête d' Harlequin II, 10.1.71, 'n kop wat noue aansluiting vind in vorm en seggingskrag by die Gellerie Louise de Leiris se

Pierrot en Harlekyn III, 7.1.71, waarin die twee in jukstaposisie gestelde karakters optree, die een naïef en soms tragies dommerig (Pierrot), die ander skerpsinnig en rats.

Wat dié kop ikonologies so uniek in Picasso se oeuvre maak, is dat die aanbod ook hier inderdaad 'n dubbelportret is.

Hier word die skerpsinnige, rats Harlekyn afgetakel deur die naïewe onskuldige by (Pierrot) vlak teen sy linkeroor.

Vernietigend is die kurktrekkerspore wat hierdie by (n tradisionele vrugbaarheidsteken) laat.

Die by se aanslag op die kop, sentrum van die waarnemingsmeganisme, word baie helder bewerk.

Die narrekraag isoleer die kop as't ware van die lyf sodat geen ekstremiteit op 'n impuls kan reageer en die kop in hierdie moment van finale aanslag verweer nie.

Die gehoor, die gesig, reuk, smaak en gevoel is weerloos oopgevlek en die by kan enige oomblik finaal indring.

Dit is opvallend dat roos en groen, wat Gertrude Stein die 'gelukkige kleure' uit Picasso se jeug noem, ook in hierdie portret voorkom. Maar wat het daar nie intussen plaasgevind nie! Die konvergerende spiraalgange wis die rustige groen agtergrond uit. Die roos word bekrap tot 'n beseerde perserige opgehewendheid.

Die stryd wat hier verbeeld word, is ontsenuend.

Die verwronge mond kan nie die roep om hulp formuleer nie.

Deur die donker masker, gewaande waarborg vir anonimiteit, peul die ontgogelde oë wat in hierdie moment voor die finale ineenstorting die betekenis van dié Orfiese

gezoem met ontsteltenis herken.

Hiermee word die kop ook die portrettering van die kunstenaar in sy stryd tussen die Apolliniese en die Orfiese, 'n kragmeting wat Picasso altyd bly boei het.

Picasso bewys hiermee dat hy tot in sy laaste jare, en dit ná bykans 'n driekwart eeu se werk, met 'n jeugdige varsheid 'n teenwoordigheid op die skildertoneel bly."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) Reference is made to the harlequin as motif in Picasso's work since 1900 (paragraph 1). However, the importance of the motif in Picasso's oeuvre is not investigated.

b) Two works are mentioned (paragraph 2), Tête d' Harlequin II and Pierrot and the Harlequin III. Reference is made to one of these works in paragraph three but the reader cannot establish the identity of the work discussed.

c) The writer maintains that there is a similarity between the two works with regard to "...vorm en seggingskrag..." (paragraph 2). The nature of this similarity is not investigated in the article.

d) The writer maintains that a double portrait is presented. This assumption is not substantiated. Tension generated by the corkscrew lines, contrasting colours and the presence of an insect (type unidentifiable) suggest conflict. There are, however, no formal grounds on which to assume that the insect is a bee, that a double portrait is presented or that the insect designates the presence of the Pierrot-figure.

e) There are no formal indications that the harlequin presented is the figure from the Commedia dell' Arte.[1]

f) A contradiction can be noted in paragraph four. How can the

agile and clever harlequin be destroyed by the naive and innocent Pierrot? Why would the innocent attempt such a destruction? Miles leaves these questions unanswered.

g) In paragraph five, reference is made to the corkscrew lines visible in the painting. A destructive function is attributed to these lines. No further investigation is attempted. Another contradiction can be noted. While Miles points to the destructive function of the Pierrot as designated by the "bee", she also refers to the "bee" as a symbol of fertility. These two contradictory interpretations remain irreconciliable through lack of further investigation.

h) Paragraph six contains an evaluation: "Die by se aanslag op die kop, sentrum van die waarnemingsmeganisme, word baie helder bewerk." (underlining my own). This evaluation is supported by paragraph seven. Miles points out that the harlequin's collar isolates the head from the limbs which might protect it when attacked. As the attack itself was not established (see d to g) these paragraphs remain, however, meaningless.

i) In paragraph eight the notion that the harlequin is attacked by the Pierrot is repeated. Here again, no support for this assumption is provided.

j) The last two sentences of paragraph nine are attempts to answer the rhetorical question : "Maar wat het daar nie intussen plaasgevind nie!" The reader is told that the peaceful green background is destroyed and that the rose is transformed to a "...beseerde perserige opgehewendheid." The original nature of rose and green as "gelukkige kleure" from Picasso's youth is not established. An attack is again implied by the verbs used in paragraph nine. However, the existence and nature of the attacker was not established previously (see d to g).

k) Paragraphs ten and eleven are repetitive. The writer merely stresses the effect of tension without investigating its causes.

l) Arbitrary interpretation is contained in paragraph twelve. The "ontgogelde oë" are mentioned. No attempt is made to investigate the formal factors which determine the nature of the eyes. Knowledge and personality are arbitrarily attributed to the portrait. The activity of the insect is arbitrarily called "Orfiese gezoem" in contradiction with the information concerning the bee as a symbol of fertility and the information on Pierrot as being naive and innocent.

m) In paragraph thirteen "Orfiese" and "Apolliniese" are suggested to be opposites. The tension generated in the painting is attributed to the tension between the Orphic and the Apolline. While there are no formal grounds for this assumption (the existence of an attacker, (whether bee or Pierrot) was not established) the Orphic and Apolline can, furthermore, not be considered as clear opposites. "The character of Orpheus, particularly his lyre-playing and song, makes him an Apolline figure, a missionary of the Hellenic spirit...The Orphics worshipped Dionysus, but modified the concept of divine possession by Apolline notions of purification (katharsis) and regimen. The combination of Dionysiac and Apolline connections, therefore, may account for his adoption by the sectarians."[2]

n) Paragraph thirteen contains a shift from interpretation of the work itself to an interpretation of the artist's conflicts. While the "...stryd tussen die Apolliniese en die Orfiese..."is arbitrarily attributed to the painting it is also arbitrarily accepted as a conflict of the artist. Miles furthermore

maintains that this conflict fascinated Picasso all his life. No support for this statement is provided.

o) The concluding paragraph is a tribute to the artist. He is praised for his "...jeugdige varsheid...". No support for this statement can be found in the article. The statement itself is arbitrary as it is not related to a norm according to which it can be measured. Furthermore, no reference is made to the nature of the "skildertoneel" which is mentioned and the Tête d' Harlequin II is not discussed within Picasso's oeuvre nor within the context of the "skildertoneel".

p) The describable properties of the painting by Picasso do not support the interpretations advanced by Miles. While the article on the work of Anna Vorster contains empirical description, the formal nature of Picasso's work is not sufficiently investigated. The formalist criteria recognisable in the article on work by Anna Vorster are not recognisable in this article. However, no other critical criteria are substituted.

I.3.3 In Appendix B.2.4 Miles states: "Elke kunswerk bied sy eie besprekingsmoontlikhede. Ek kan net nie by 'n vaste metode bly nie... Ek probeer slegs die enkele implikasies van 'n kunswerk wat ek raaksien, toelig. My doelstelling is dus baie persoonlik."
This attitude may account for the difference in critical procedure manifested in the two articles analysed. The seemingly flexible approach suggested by the statement quoted above is, however, not manifested in a systematic investigation of the Tête d' Harlequin II. While formal analysis serves to illuminate the essentially formalist nature of Anna Vorster's work, the avoidance of formal analysis leads to an arbitrary interpretation of the Tête d' Harle-

quin II.

I.4 An analysis of typical examples of work by Joyce Ozynski, critic for "The Sunday Express"

I.4.1 "Still life landscapes", The Sunday Express, Feb. 22, 1976 : 22.

"LANDSCAPE painting has always been prominent in the brief history of South African art.

It has been left to the photographers to register the existence of the city and urban life. The reason for this is easy to see - the city by its very nature, resists the kind of romantic lyricism that has always been dominant in our art.

The American development from the realism of the ash-can school to the sophisticated irony of pop art, indicates the kind of radical development needed for the artist in order to assimilate and express the harsh complexities of urban life.

Kenneth Clark notes: 'We may also count landscape painting as a sympton of quietism,' and indeed the concentration of our painters on landscape is certainly indicative of an unwillingness to involve themselves in the social issues that burn beneath their feet.

The Akis Gallery exhibition, entitled 'A Summary of South African Landscape Artists' demonstrates what a cul-de-sac this area is in South Africa.

The examples chosen are random and of poor quality, and some necessary names are absent, like Pierneef.

Mr. Akis commented: 'We haven't had a revolutionary evolution in landscape painting.' This sums up the situation very well.

The lessons of Impressionism have been taken over superficially, while the underlying radical new world view that precipitated the Impressionist movement has scarcely been absorbed.

Similarly, Cubism has been degraded into a method of decorative patterning, as in the Van Essche.

To a large extent, our landscape artists paint like European tourists. In their confrontation with the reality of Africa they retreat into decorative solutions based on European-formal conventions.

The simplicity of the little Jentsch watercolour stands out for its austerity of colour and originality of composition among the mauve mountains and fruity colours.

The exhibition unsuccessfully attempts to give an historical view of landscape painting.

Essentially this is the kind of exhibition that should be mounted by a national gallery. To gather examples of landscape painting which would indicate the stylistic development through the best works is a task quite beyond the resources of a private gallery."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The article is structured. At the outset reference is made to the history of South African art. Ozynski mentions the prominence of landscape painting in the history of South African art and the reticence of South African artists in registering urban life. Romantic lyricism in South African art is

mentioned as being dominant. The rural character of South Africa is implied in the statements. In contrast, American art with regard to the urban situation is mentioned. The quotation from Kenneth Clark (paragraph 4) serves to indicate the nature of landscape painting in general for the benefit of the reader. Relevant points of reference are thus established by Ozynski.

b) Stringent criticism on South African artists is contained in paragraph four. Ozynski points to "...an unwillingness to involve themselves in the social issues that burn beneath their feet." The assumption that the artist has an obligation with regard to social issues is, however, not investigated and motivated.

c) After paragraph four, Ozynski discusses an exhibition of South African landscape painting. By this stage the reader is orientated towards this discussion by the preceding paragraphs.

d) Adverse criticism is contained in paragraph five. The remainder of the article is an attempt to substantiate this evaluation.

e) Ozynski states that landscape painting is a cul de sac in South Africa and that the examples on exhibition are of poor quality (paragraphs 5 and 6). She agrees with the statement quoted from Mr. Akis: "We haven't had a revolutionary evolution in landscape painting." (paragraph 7).

f) Paragraphs eight to ten contain further adverse evaluations of the work on exhibition. Paragraph eleven consists of praise with regard to the work by Jentsch.

g) Ozynski criticises the exhibition with regard to its aim. She mentions that the exhibition attempts to give "...an historical view of landscape painting", (paragraph 12). She points

out that the "...examples chosen are random" and that "...some necessary names are absent, like Pierneef." (paragraph 6). In the concluding paragraph Ozynski criticises the undertaking of such an exhibition by a private gallery. Preceding evaluations of the works on exhibition and the organisation of the exhibition substantiate the concluding paragraph.

h) Ozynski points to broad tendencies in South African landscape painting and refers to tendencies with regard to art produced elsewhere. The reader is confronted with a number of evaluations. Ozynski mentions derivative Impressionist and Cubist tendencies in South African landscape painting and she points to "...decorative solutions based on European-formal conventions." (paragraph 10). She isolates the watercolour by Jentsch for praise. Evaluations are implicit in these statements. However, specific works related to broad tendencies are not discussed as examples. Furthermore, no formal analysis of specific works are attempted, with the exception of paragraph eleven. Available printed space is thus used by Ozynski to discuss South African landscape painting cursorily within its context. The exhibition at the Akis Gallery is merely utilised as a point of departure.

i) The article is limited insofar as formal analysis of specific works does not substantiate the isolation of broad tendencies.

j) The article functions as a generalised statement with regard to tendencies in South African painting. As such it provides the layman with a tentative frame of reference from which to approach the work on exhibition. Its generalised nature prohibits the article from functioning as an investigation informative to the informed reader (see Chapter 2.5).

I.4.2 "Middle class art for the middle classes", The Sunday Express, Feb. 22, 1976 : 22.

"LIDCHI gallery is currently showing an exhibition of 36 artists who have studied with George Boys.

Most were students at the Visual Arts Centre, which Boys started some years ago. He is now planning to open a new studio in Parktown, where he will promote the work of some of the artists on show.

His teaching theory, he told me, was not to impose any style of thinking or painting on the student, but to allow them to develop their own attitudes. Personally, he feels 'more aligned with the more adventurous artists' among them. Boys selected all the works himself.

However, a lack of adventurousness is perhaps the one common factor in this very varied exhibition. Styles range from Louis le Sueur's surrealism to Hennie Potgieter's op-art paintings, from abstraction to flower studies, bearing out Boys' emphasis on allowing his students to develop according to their own needs.

There is an overall bent for butterflies, plants and flowers - perhaps one might call it the Johannesburg Pollen School of Painting.

The discretion in the choice of subject-matter is matched by a tasteful competence of technique. These paintings typify the elegance of South African painting - a matter of concern rather than satisfaction. Pablo Neruda wrote: 'To be afraid of bad taste is to be frostbitten.'

This doesn't mean that bad taste is a guarantee of aesthetic quality, just that the artist should feel free to try anything and explore.

An example of the power to be derived from going beyond contemporary 'good' taste can be seen in Geoffrey Armstrong's work.

It has energy and excitement quite absent from most of the works on display. Unfortunately the three of his paintings shown give no more than a hint of his originality and power.

Some of the exhibitors are professional artists, others not. However this bears no relation to the standard of work.

Rhona Gorvy, a veteran of several one-person exhibitions, is showing a suave, sentimental, stylistically enervated sculpture called Family . Someone should give her R.D. Laing to read. Or maybe David Cooper.

There's a penetrating portrait by Ann Sassoon, and Stephanie Watson's works have a good deal of verve.

But basically, these are paintings by the comfortable middle-class for the comfortable middle-class."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The work on exhibition is discussed as a unit. Ozynski points to a common denominator between the artists exhibiting: "...an exhibition of 36 artists who have studied with George Boys." (paragraph 1). Some of these artists are mentioned in the remainder of the article.

b) The unit of work discussed is not placed within the context of South African art or art produced elsewhere. No art historical or art critical context is established.

c) Venue, names of artists and subject-matter are mentioned.

The functions of the report are thus fulfilled. However, no

attempt is made to discuss the artists' handling of subject-matter.

d) Ozynski mentions surrealism, op-art and abstraction (paragraph 4). No explanation for these stylistic characterisations is supplied.

e) Evaluative statements are contained within the article. The reader is told that the paintings are "elegant" (paragraph 6); that the works on exhibition lack "...energy and excitement" (paragraph 9); that Geoffrey Armstrong's work shows a "...hint of originality and power " (paragraph 9); that Rhona Gorvy's work is "...suave, sentimental, stylistically enervated sculpture" (paragraph 11); that Anne Sasscon's portrait is "penetrating" (paragraph 12); and that Stephanie Watson's works "...have a good deal of verve " (paragraph 12). None of these statements are substantiated (see Chapter 2.4).

f) Ozynski uses terms such as "elegant", "tasteful" and "competence" (paragraph 6). These terms normally connote praise. However, within the context of the article, these terms are used pejoratively. The shift in meaning, from praise to condemnation, is not explained or motivated by Ozynski.

g) A sarcastic statement is contained in paragraph five. The pun on the Polly Street Art Centre ("Pollen School of Painting") serves no art critical function within the context of the article. Needlessly sarcastic and vicious are also the last two sentences of paragraph eleven.

h) The article consists of an attack on "...a lack of adventurousness" (paragraph 4) with regard to the work on exhibition. The attack is also launched against the South African art public (paragraph 13). Ozynski reiterates this attack by quoting from Pablo Neruda (paragraph 6). Ozynski qualifies

this quotation: "This doesn't mean that bad taste is a guarantee of aesthetic quality, just that the artist should feel free to try anything and explore." (paragraph 7). While not guaranteeing the aesthetic quality of bad taste Ozynski nevertheless implies its possible aesthetic quality. Good taste and bad taste are not qualified by Ozynski and bad taste and artistic freedom are equated arbitrarily.

i) Ozynski's attack on artists and the public remains arbitrary and meaningless as no attempt is made to motivate this attack by reference to the formal nature of works on exhibition, by systematic analysis of the works, by establishing the criteria on which the attack is based, nor by clarifying the terms which are used in the article.

I.4.3 In Appendix B.2.6 Ozynski states her aims: To give the reader background information and a context into which he can fit the work; to stimulate the reader...; to protect the art-buyer...; to break down the precious, snobbish attitudes associated with art appreciation...". With regard to the standard of art criticism in South Africa Ozynski maintains that it is: "Shockingly, unbelievably low. Art critics here (in Johannesburg, on the English papers and in Artlook) are ignorant, stupid, smug, lazy, dishonest, servile and insensitive (and terribly conservative)."

From an analysis of contributions by Ozynski it can be noted that this critic attempts to attack malpractices in South African art and art criticism. These attacks may function to disturb the complacency of South African artists, gallery-owners and the public. Ozynski's attacks are, however, unsubstantiated by systematic analysis of works condemned.

It can be noted that Ozynski aims at the establishment of a

context within which the reader can place the works discussed. Reference is made to South African art and art produced elsewhere. No art critical context is, however, established. It may be noted that Ozynski and Miles (see I.3 and I.4) are the only critics contributing regularly to South African newspapers, who attempt to establish a context within which to discuss works on exhibition. Awareness of the importance of such a context (see Chapter 2.2) is not manifested in the work contributed by other critics, who contribute regularly or fairly regularly to South African newspapers.

I.5 An analysis of typical examples of work by E. Mesman, critic for "Die Burger"

I.5.1 "Treffende werk van Skotnes", Die Burger, Mrt. 2, 1974 : 6.

"DIE S.A. Nasionale Kunsmuseum in Die Laan het onder die leiding van sy nuwe direkteur, mnr. C. du Ry, taamlike veranderinge ondergaan. Die huidige verdeling van sale is besonder bevredigend en stimuleer 'n mens om weer eens die rondte van die sale te doen. 'n Mens hoop dat met die reëlmatige verwisseling van werk, en met die tentoonstelling van geleende werke, soos nou die geval is, die publiek meer begerig sal wees om die Museum te besoek, selfs wanneer daar geen spesifieke tentoonstelling te sien is nie.

Op die oomblik is daar egter wel 'n baie spesiale rede vir 'n besoek aan die Museum en dit is Cecil Skotnes se Tsjaka-reeks, wat ten toon gestel word. Die reeks van

werke, wat in 'n houer bewaar kan word, is een van die nuutste aanwinste van die Museum.

Die reeks is gemaak om in 'n houer te pas, maar om dit ten toon te kan stel, is die werke, tesame met die teks van Tsjaka se geskiedenis, geraam. Eintlik moet 'n mens die werke in die houer sien om dit werklik tot hul reg te laat kom, want die rame neig om 'n beklemmende atmosfeer daaraan te verleen. Myns insiens is dit noodsaaklik om die tekstuur van die papier en die kwaliteit van die afdrukke te sien, maar soos die werke ten toon gestel word, is dit uiteraard die enigste manier waarop dit aan die publiek gewys kan word.

Die tentoonstelling is goed saamgestel. Die hoogtepunt vir my is die triptiek - die drie houtpanele, wat die beste is wat ek in 'n lang tyd van Skotnes gesien het. Op die uitstaltafels is onder meer enkele voorstudies, met verskillende oplossinge hiervoor, te sien. Na aanleiding hiervan kan 'n mens 'n goeie indruk kry van hoeveel werk die eindproduk voorafgegaan het en dit dra grotendeels by tot die sukses van die triptiek.

Die drie figure is in die komposisie goed teen mekaar gestel: die twee hande met spiese aan die buitekant trek die werk saam; die figuur links, wat na die middelste paneel gekeer is, en die uitgestrekte arm van die eksplosiewe middelfiguur, bind die panele onderling. Dan is daar verder 'n goeie balans in feller kleurdele en in die meer getinte liggame.

Onder die voorstudies is enkele interessante punte waar te neem. 'n Mens kry daar 'n aanduiding van hoe Skotnes tot sy stilering van vorm kom, wat dan in die

panele en afdrukke tot dekoratiewe en gelyksprekende oplossinge lei.

Só kan 'n mens bv. in die tekeninge van die skouer en torso die latere oplossing van gebuigde lyn in die skouerarm sien. Uit die tekeninge blyk ook hoe die tweeledigheid in sy werk tot stand kom. Kyk byvoorbeeld na die hand met die spies, wat 'n duidelike voorbeeld is van die gesofistikeerde ten opsigte van die Afrika-motiewe, waarin hy dikwels probeer om rou te bly.

Vergelyk dié tekening met die triptiek. Dit lei tot 'n visuele ambivalensie wat in verskillende werke in die reeks nie altyd die juiste balans bereik nie. Vir my is byvoorbeeld die oplossing van die seilskip beslis nie in styl met die res nie en buitendien swak illustrasiemateriaal. Verder is die afgebreekte arms en bene in 'n mindere of meerdere mate steurend. Ook is daar soms oorgekompliseerde kriskras lynwerk.

Onder die beste werke wil ek enkeles noem: Shaka's regiment in horn formation (perspektiwiese formasie van swart figure in 'n rooi horingvorm teen 'n donker agtergrond); Shaka defeats Zwide (die swart en wit arsering en swart skilde maak 'n interessante komposisie); Dingiswayo dies (blou afstraling van die liggende figuur op halfmaanvormige lyne en stil figure); Shaka defeats Shoshangane en Shaka kills an heir.

As 'n goeie voorbeeld van druk en teks wil ek Shaka the king noem. Hier is 'n dekoratiewe werk van 'n maskeragtige kop waaruit geel lyne straal. Die kop en lyne is in die komposisie verwerf met 'n boomvorm. Die kleure is geel, oranje en geelbruin en donker waar dit oor mekaar gedruk

is. Die teks daarby lui:

Like a great fig tree
i stand over the earth
my roots are calcium
there is more blood in my stem
than an elephants's
my branches cover the sky
I carry protection and my
head is in the sun.

Die tekste is nie vir my om te beoordeel nie, maar dit wil vir my voorkom asof dit besonder goed by die styl van Skotnes pas. Die woordkeuse het vir my dieselfde atmosfeer as Skotnes se werk. Albei is gestileer en gee estetiese uiting aan heldeverering, wat deel is van die Afrika-omgewing. Die magiese onsterflikheid word dikwels uitstekend deur woord en beeld uitgedruk.

Die enkele swakhede wat ek genoem het, is onvermydelik in 'n groot reeks soos dié en is myns insiens betreklik onbelangrik in verhouding tot die hele prestasie, wat 'n groot verskeidenheid van oplossings en mooi kleursamestellings laat sien.

Só wil 'n mens hierdie reeks vir eers as 'n geheel beskou, soos dit bedoel is, en as sodanig wil ek lof uitspreek oor hierdie belangrike bydrae wat Cecil Skotnes saam met Stephen Gray gelewer het. Die algehele gemoeidheid en inlewing met die onderwerp, maak dit 'n intellektuele en visuele gebeurtenis."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) An attempt at structuring is noticeable. The exhibition is

announced (paragraph 2). The environment within which the works are exhibited is mentioned (paragraph 1). The accompanying text is discussed last as being secondary to the graphic work (paragraph 11). An evaluation and tribute conclude the article. However, despite this attempt at structuring there is no art critical structuring noticeable (see d to 1).

b) Discussion on the South African National Gallery and announcement of Skotnes' work as a recent acquisition of the museum (paragraphs 1 and 2), function to establish a context. Decisions made by curators of museums carry the seal of official approval. The reader may transfer this official approval to statements made by Mesman. Despite the cultural context thus established, no art critical or art historical frame of reference is established.

c) Discussion on the framing and exhibiting of Skotnes' work (paragraph 3) is relevant to art criticism, as the manner in which works are presented influences the visual impact on the viewer.

d) Mesman evaluates the triptych : "Die hoogtepunt vir my is die triptiek...wat die beste is wat ek in 'n lang tyd van Skotnes gesien het" (paragraph 4). The following statements are offered as justification for this initial evaluation:

i) "...'n mens "[kry]" 'n goeie indruk...van hoeveel werk die eindproduk voorafgegaan het en dit dra grotendeels by tot die sukses van die triptiek..." (paragraph 4). An impression of the amount of preliminary work cannot enhance the success of the completed work. It can merely provide the viewer with insight into the process of creation. Thus the statement quoted above cannot function as substantiation for evaluation.

ii) "Die drie figure is in die komposisie goed teen mekaar gestel..." (paragraph 5). This statement forms another evaluation and as such it cannot substantiate the initial evaluation. The reader merely learns that there are three figures in the composition. This description does not serve to explain the meaning of the evaluative term, "goed" (paragraph 5).

iii) "...die twee hande met spiese aan die buitekant trek die werk saam; die figure links, wat na die middelste paneel gekeer is, en die uitgestrekte arm van die eksplosiewe middelfiguur, bind die panele onderling" (paragraph 5). The reader is told that the work is compositionally integrated. The effects of this integration are not discussed. The term, "eksplosief" is used to describe the visual impact of the central figure. This term cannot be accounted for objectively. "Explosiveness" is a quality which the writer imputes to the central figure of the triptych. As no attempt is made to explain the formal origin of this quality, it remains an arbitrary statement.

e) The attempt at correlation between preliminary work and the triptych is not successful as the reader is merely <u>told</u> that, "'n Mens kry daar 'n aanduiding van hoe Skotnes tot sy stilering van vorm kom..." (paragraph 6). Progression from preliminary drawings to the final work is not investigated by Mesman.

f) Paragraph eight contains four instances of adverse criticism. These are the following:

i) "Dit lei tot 'n visuele ambivalensie wat in verskillende werke in die reeks nie altyd die juiste balans bereik nie." The meaning of visual ambivalence is not explained. Works in which this ambivalence can be noted are not pointed

out. Lack of balance and the reasons for this lack are not discussed but merely mentioned.

ii) "Vir my is byvoorbeeld die oplossing van die seilskip beslis nie in styl met die res nie en buitendien swak illustrasiemateriaal." This sentence is meant as illustration for the preceding statement. It does not succeed as such because the reader is again merely told and not provided with an explanation. The writer does not explain why the "...seilskip"[is]" beslis nie in styl met die res nie..." nor why it can be considered as "swak illustrasiemateriaal."

iii) "Verder is die afgebreekte arms en bene in 'n mindere of meerdere mate steurend." No explanation is offered for this statement. The reader is informed that the degree to which the arms and legs are disturbing, differs. The following question arises: When and to whom is it more or less disturbing? Mesman discusses the effect of the work on the viewer and not the work itself. Such discussion is only valid if justified by analysis of the work itself (see Chapter 2.4).

iv) "Ook is daar soms oorgekompliseerde kriskras lynwerk." Reasons why Mesman finds line too complicated are not provided. The works in which line is considered to be too complicated are not mentioned. The vagueness of this statement centres around the word, "soms".

g) Paragraph nine contains a list of works considered by the writer to be the best on exhibition. Short descriptions of these works are provided within brackets. No correlation between these descriptions and an evaluation, with which the paragraph commences, is attempted. The descriptions within brackets supply the reader with a fragmented impression of subject-matter but do not function as descriptive or

interpretive substantiation for evaluation. A further evaluation is contained in the following description: "...die swart en wit arsering maak 'n interessante komposisie." Praise is connoted by the term, "interessant". However, no explanation for the use of this term is offered.

h) Lack of correlation between description and evaluation characterises paragraph ten. Shaka the king is evaluated as being "...'n goeie voorbeeld van druk en teks..." This evaluation is followed by description of the work and a copy of the text accompanying the work. Evaluation, description and text remain isolated. Description is not utilised to justify evaluation. The relationship between text and graphic work is not discussed with reference to the specific work in question.

i) In paragraph eleven the relationship between text and graphic work is mentioned. However, no reasons for the supposed integration between them are supplied. The reader is merely told that the text "...besonder goed by die styl van Skotnes pas."

j) Mesman maintains that both text and graphic work are stylised in the service of hero-worship and embodiments of magic immortality. These attempts at interpretation are not rooted in empirical description.

k) In paragraph twelve the importance of those aspects criticised adversely in paragraph eight, is diminished by the following statement: "Die enkele swakhede wat ek genoem het, is onvermydelik in 'n groot reeks soos dié..." The rest of the paragraph contains praise to the whole series on exhibition: "...'n groot verskeidenheid van oplossings en mooi kleursamestellings..." No justification for praise nor any explanation for the diminished importance attached to criticised aspects, is offered. Furthermore, critical tolerance and a

complimentary attitude are implied in "Die enkele swakhede wat ek genoem het is onvermydelik in 'n groot reeks soos dié..."

l) Paragraph thirteen is a tribute to the artists. The concluding sentence contains praise to the entire exhibition as being an "...intellektuele en visuele gebeurtenis." Lack of justifying argument throughout the article renders this final tribute and evaluation meaningless. As meaningful synthesis relies on analysis, such a final paragraph can only be valid if preceded by description and interpretation (see Chapter 2.4).

m) Fragmented description, interpretation and evaluation are contained within the article. No correlation between these aspects of criticism is attempted. Terms remain unexplained and thus meaningless. No progression between the different stages of the art critical act can be noted (see Chapter 2.4). The article functions as a report and as a statement of personal and arbitrary opinion (see Chapter 2.5).

I.5.2 "Goeie werke in kunskamer", Die Burger, Mrt. 4, 1974 : 8.

"DIE KUNSKAMER in Kerkstraat streef altyd na 'n hoë kwaliteit in sy groepstentoonstellings, en soos voorheen, is die huidige tentoonstelling vir die gereelde besoeker die moeite werd om te sien.

'n Aantal werke uit vorige tentoonstellings is te sien, maar ook heelwat nuwe werke.

Die vroeë Maggie Laubser-werk - blomme in 'n gemmerpot - is interessant gesien vanuit die oogpunt van haar ontwikkeling. 'n Verdere interessantheid is die terugkeer van Andrew Murray. Menigeen sal nog sy werke onthou, want hy was slegs 'n paar jaar in Engeland.

In die twee werke van hom wat op die tentoonstelling te sien is, toon hy nog 'n humorsin in sy primitiewe styl waarmee hy vertellende, ligverteerbare, plesierige kuns lewer. In sy vlakke gebruik hy 'n goed gebalanseerde kleurtoonaarde. Die eenmanstentoonstelling wat hy vir later vanjaar beplan, sal 'n beter indruk van sy huidige werk gee.

Die Kunskamer toon voorts 'n werk van Frits Krampe, wat in sy subtiele skets van die hawetoneel miskien nie in die geselskap van Uranovsky, Domsaitis en Preller heeltemal tot sy reg kom nie.

Verder is daar ook 'n groot verskeidenheid van werke van onder andere Domsaitis, Stern, Coetzee, Buys, Welz, Skotnes, Vorster, Du Toit en Sumner."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The article fulfils the function of a report. The venue of the exhibition is announced and the names of exhibiting artists are listed.

b) Not characteristic of the journalist report is the fact that the reader is informed that the exhibition is worthwhile seeing (paragraph 1) and the inclusion of a number of evaluative words and phrases. These are the following:

   i) "Interessant" (paragraph 3);

   ii) "Plesierige" (paragraph 4);

   iii) "Goed gebalanseerde kleurtoonaarde" (paragraph 4); and

   iv) "Subtiele" (paragraph 5).

c) No description or interpretation of the works is offered. The evaluations thus remain arbitrary because unsubstantiated (see Chapter 2.4).

d) No art critical or art historical context is established.

e) The following statement by Prof. A.A.F. Teurlinckx, of the University of the Orange Free State, can be quoted as being relevant to the article by Mesman: "Kunsbesprekings van die soort wat in koerante voorkom, beskou ons nie as kunskritiek nie, maar as kunsresensies wat nie aan kunshistories - wetenskaplike vereistes hoef te voldoen nie, maar volgens die norme van die joernalistiek beoefen moet word" (Appendix A.4.2). Concerning the report G.J. Joubert states: "Na regte behoort dit dan 'n berig te wees wat die noodsaaklikste inligting bevat...Indien die berig pretensieloos aangebied word, het dit wel 'n funksie, naamlik die van inligting aan die lesers. Die meeste joernaliste oortree in die opsig...Ongenuanseerde 'kritiek' is die gevolg - met ander woorde dis die opinie wat elke gewone lid van die gehoor het..." [3] Joubert discusses theatre-criticism. The above quotation is, however, also applicable to the article by Mesman.

I.5.3 In Appendix B.2.5 Mesman (Mrs. E. Davis) states that "...beredeneerde kritiek, 'n gebalanseerde idee omtrent die kunswerke en objektiwiteit..." characterises good art criticism. She maintains that the critic must have "...die kritiese vermoë om te analiseer." Concerning her critical method, Mesman states: "Die goeie en/of swak punte in die werke word uitgelig op so 'n beredeneerde wyse as moontlik." From the preceding analysis of typical contributions by Mesman the following can be noted:

i) Favourable and adverse criticism are not substantiated by analysis; and

ii) Analysis and synthesis remain uncorrelated.

Mesman also states that art criticism is valuable as it serves as "...voorligting oor die ontwikkeling van verskillende kunstenaars." Analysis of typical contributions by Mesman points to an inability with regard to the establishment of an art critical or art historical context. Works are not discussed in relation to the artist's oeuvre and development.

Concerning the limitation of available space in Die Burger, Mesman states that all the arts need "...op die oomblik meer spasie." Mesman, however, uses space for discussion on the National Gallery and the framing and exhibiting of the work. The length of discussion on these secondary aspects is out of proportion to the length of discussion on the actual works themselves. Disproportion in space with regard to evaluation and supporting analysis can also be noted. Repetitive evaluation, unrelated and fragmented description and the meaningless final evaluation and tribute to artists, waste space which could be utilised functionally for systematic analysis. The reader is offered an arbitrary and unsubstantiated personal appraisal of the work on exhibition. Adherence to critical method cannot be noted in contributions by Mesman. Terms are employed without explanation of their meaning or justification for their use within the context.

I.6 An analysis of typical examples of work by Johan Bruwer, critic for "Die Beeld"

I.6.1 "Alles in Wording", Die Beeld, Mrt. 21, 1975 : 12.

"'n HAASTIGE besoekie aan Thijs Nel se huidige tentoonstelling in die Gallery 101, Jeppestraat, sal nòg die

moeite van die besoekers, nòg die moeite van die skilder loon. As visuele ervaring is hierdie skilderye betreklik fragiel. Hulle tref nie onmiddellik nie, maar lewer eers ná rustige kontemplasie 'n vertraagde impak.

Hoewel ek sekere voorbehoude oor die kwaliteit van die uiteindelike impak het, is dit nietemin die moeite werd om daarvoor te wag.

Met die eerste oogopslag doen die werke ligtelik dekoratief, oppervlakkig en uniform aan. Teen 'n ligte blou agtergrond is eenvoudige vorms geplaas wat solied aandoen en die effek van rots- of juweelsegmente skep.

Hierdie segmente kontrastreer met die ligte agtergrond omdat hulle met donkerder kleure soos olyfgroen, donkerblou en soms oker geskilder is.

'n Mens se aanvanklike teleurstelling is daaraan te wyte dat jy eers slegs die eenvoudige rangskikking van groot vorms raaksien en dat die komposisionele opset dan simplisties lyk. Dit is omdat 'n mens van nature 'n sintetiese geheelbeeld sien voordat jy analities ondersoek.

Maar as jy langer kyk, ontdek jy dat die segmente opgebou is uit talle lae deursigtige verf. Elke laag dui vaagweg verskillende vorms aan, wat soms abstrak en dubbelsinnig is en soms realisties soos gesigte of duiwe.

Die oorheenliggende vorms vorm 'n wolkerige visuele legkaart waaruit 'n mens jou eie, en telkens nuwe, vormpatrone kan opbou. Dit herinner nogal aan die ervaring van die kind wat op sy rug lê en gesigte en diere in die wolke sien.

Die vorms wat 'n mens ontdek, wissel gedurig en Thijs Nel sê dat hy daarmee wil uitbeeld dat niks staties is nie, maar dat alles gedurig in wording is.

Dis 'n aangename visuele spel, maar een waarby ek nie sterk betrokke kon raak nie. 'n Mens mis 'n bietjie vonk en krag in die kleurgebruik.

Die kleure is beperk tot koel kleure, wat min emosionele trefkrag besit en neig om die dekoratiewe aspek van die werk ten koste van die inhoudelike te beklemtoon. Die kontraste is ook so subtiel dat dit soms oormatig verfyn aandoen.

Ek meen ook dat dit die gevoel van ruimtelike vlakheid in die meeste van die werke is wat die aanvanklike indruk van oppervlakkigheid van inhoud wek.

'n Mens ervaar wel die ruimtelike in die spel van oorheenliggende vorms in die groot segmente, maar die plat, effekleurige blou agtergrond lok 'n mens nie ruimtelik na binne nie sodat die tweedimensionele patroonagtigheid van die segmente na vore tree. Dit lyk uiteindelik nie asof die groot vorms in die ruimte swewe nie, maar asof hulle teen 'n soliede blou agtergrond gemonteer is.

Die heel beste werke is dus myns insiens die enkeles waarin die agtergrond met atmosferiese skakering en diepte geskilder is en skerper kleurperspektief gebruik is soos no. 75/183, no. 75/176 en die groot skildery no. 75/147, waarin die wit breuk in die blou 'n aanloklike effek van dieper ruimte na agter skep."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) Paragraph one contains an attempt to persuade the reader to look more closely at the works on exhibition than what he might otherwise have done. An approach to the works is suggested.

b) Reservations concerning the quality of the visual impact

initiated by the works are given in paragraph two. While an approach to the works is suggested in paragraph one, reservations with regard to the rewards for such an approach are thus contained in the following paragraph. The first two paragraphs suggest that the critic has arrived at these reservations through prolonged confrontation with the works. However, while making reservations Bruwer maintains that it is "...nietemin die moeite werd om daarvoor te wag." Contradictory evaluations are thus contained within paragraph two. This contradiction is, however, resolved in the remainder of the article (see c).

c) Paragraph three commences with adverse criticism: "Met die eerste oogopslag doen die werke ligtelik dekoratief, oppervlakkig en uniform aan." This evaluation is followed by substantiating description: "Teen 'n ligte blou agtergrond is eenvoudige vorms geplaas wat solied aandoen en die effek van rots- of juweelsegmente skep."

d) Further substantiating description is contained in paragraph four.

e) The viewer's initial visual experience is described in paragraph five. This description is at the same time adverse criticism on the works themselves. The last sentence of paragraph five is an attempt to explain the viewer's response in terms of his unconscious assimilation of visual stimuli. This is a field which lies beyond the boundaries of art criticism. As such the statement remains isolated and meaningless.

f) In paragraph six Bruwer attempts a description of those elements which are only noticed after prolonged confrontation with the works of Nel (see a).

g) Two art historical terms are used in paragraph six. Bruwer attempts to explain the meaning of "realisties" by adding "soos gesigte of duiwe." Hereby the meaning of the term is vaguely suggested. No explanation for its specific meaning within the context of Nel's work is attempted. By treating "realisties" and "abstrak" as opposites,"abstrak" is also only explained vaguely.

h) Further description is contained in paragraph seven. The viewer's contribution to the creation of an aesthetic object is mentioned implicitly.

i) The artist's intention is mentioned in paragraph eight and correlated with the describable properties of the works on exhibition (see Chapter 2.4).

j) The first sentence of paragraph nine contains praise ("Dis 'n aangename visuele spel...") followed by ad[illegible]e criticism ("...maar een waarby ek nie sterk betrokke [illegible]on raak nie. 'n Mens mis 'n bietjie vonk en krag in die kleurgebruik."). These evaluations are substantiated by preceding description of formal aspects (see paragraphs 3, 4, 7 and 8).

k) Paragraph ten commences with a description of colour, followed by an investigation of the effects reached by the use of this colour. Reference is made to the viewer's emotional response to colour. This reference is arbitrary as this response is arbitrary and cannot be correlated objectively. Paragraph ten also contains adverse evaluation ("...neig om die dekoratiewe aspek van die werk ten koste van die inhoudelike te beklemtoon. Die kontraste is ook so subtiel dat dit soms oormatig verfynd aandoen."). This evaluation concerning decorativity and content remains meaningless as it is not supported. The arbitrary statement concerning the viewer's emotional response to

colour does not serve as supporting argument. The last sentence, quoted in brackets above, functions as substantiated evaluation as the meaning of the term, "subtiel", within the context of Nel's work is explained by "oormatig verfynd."

l) In paragraph eleven, reference is made to the use of "oppervlakkig" in paragraph three. "Ruimtelike vlakheid" as describable property is offered as justification for "oppervlakkigheid" as adverse evaluation. Suggested space and illusionary depth as describable properties emerge as formal criteria for evaluation in paragraphs eleven and twelve.

m) Lack of suggested space and illusionary depth is offered as justification for adverse evaluation in paragraph twelve. Bruwer thus establishes formal criteria and does not merely evaluate arbitrarily.

n) Favourable evaluation in paragraph thirteen ("Die heel beste werke..."), is justified by description related to the formal criteria mentioned above. Bruwer states: "...waarin die agtergrond met atmosferiese skakering en diepte geskilder is en skerper kleurperspektief gebruik is..." The justification for evaluation is at the same time formal description of the works. However, Bruwer confuses "atmosferiese skakering", "skerper kleurperspektief" and "diepte". He does not point out that the first two create and determine the third. Nevertheless, no isolated and uncorrelated description is contained within the article.

o) Specific works are mentioned as examples of work considered successful by Bruwer (paragraph 13). The reader can thus correlate Bruwer's statements while confronted with the works themselves. The contradictory evaluations contained in paragraph two (see b) are resolved by Bruwer's differentiation

between works in which space and depth are suggested and those in which they are not (paragraphs 12 and 13).

p) The article is structured insofar as description and evaluation are correlated.

q) Although the aesthetic experience is described, it is correlated by description of the formal properties of the works on exhibition (see Chapter 2.4).

r) No art historical or art critical context is established. The reader is thus not supplied with a frame of reference within which to place the work on exhibition.

s) No reference is made to the artist's oeuvre or development. The reader can thus not place the work of Nel within the context of his previous work and possible development.

I.6.2 "Klimaks vir Skotnes", Die Beeld, Mrt. 17, 1975 : 11.

"SKILDERYE oor 'n Besoek aan 'n Slagveld, 'n reeks olieverfskilderye op Cecil Skotnes se huidige tentoonstelling in die Goodman-Kunssaal, boei nie net onmiddellik nie, maar laat 'n mens ook met 'n gevoel van aangename verrassing. In hierdie tien skilderye bereik dié kunstenaar, wat met sy houtsneë en gekleurde houtpanele bekend geword het, waarskynlik vir die eerste keer 'n hoogtepunt in die skilderkuns.

Die grootste lof wat 'n mens dié skilderye kan toeswaai, is dat hulle geen geskilderde houtsneë is nie, maar skilderye in hul eie, skilderkunstige reg. En dat nie almal van hulle dit is nie, is bloot 'n bewys van die ontsaglike stilistiese stryd wat die kunstenaar in die oliemedium moes voer, asook van die verdienstelikheid van sy uiteindelike oplossings.

Die drie skilderye wat - as skilderye - nie heeltemal wil slaag nie hang ook in 'n afsonderlike vertrek. Hulle is waarskynlik die vroegste geskilder, want hier vind die kunstenaar dit nog duidelik moeilik om die gr ·e stilisering van sy houtpanele aan te pas by die meer ruimtelike atmosferiese medium van die skilderkuns.

Die doek van die skildery is in nommers 9 en 7 nog benader soos die tweedimensionele oppervlak van 'n houtpaneel. Ruimtelike diepte ontbreek en die stormagtige, gejaagde kleurgebruik verraai Skotnes se onsekere soektog om dimensie langs dié weg te bereik. Die poging tot ekspressiewe diepte in die wolkerige kleur word egter gefnuik deur die houterige liniêre strakheid van die figure wat almal in een statiese vlak langs mekaar ingeskets is.

nes maak self 'n byna wanhopige verwysing na die dominering van die houtsneestyl in hierdie werke wanneer hier en daar hy 'n figuur uit hout gekerf tussen die geskilderdes monteer. Dit verteenwoordig 'n onsuksesvolle poging om deur middel van fisieke reliëf en kontras 'n effek van ruimtelike diepte te bereik.

In no. 8, wat in die groot lokaal hang, is dit asof Skotnes 'n keerpunt bereik en die stilistiese oplossing in sig het. Die oplossing is grootliks gebaseer op 'n meer oortuigende gebruik van ruimtelike en kleurperspektief. Die figure is nie meer in 'n enkele vlak vasgeknel nie. Kleintjies staan agter en groteres voor om ruimtelike diepte aan te dui. Hulle is nou ook nie meer net liniêre raamwerke nie, maar meer bevredigend opgebou deur middel van kleurkontraste.

Hier is ook nog 'n uit hout gekerfde figuur gemonteer,

maar hier werk die beter perspektiefgebruik mee om die skerpheid daarvan meer aanvaarbaar te maak, aangesien die figuur illusionêr nader aan die aanskouer staan as die ander.

Daar is nog 'n mate van ruimtelike en komposisionele onsekerheid in hierdie werk, maar dit verdwyn in die res wat in die groot lokaal hang. Kleurvlakke word by hul omlynings subtiel vervaag om die indruk van liniêriteit op die agtergrond te stoot. Die omgewing waarin die figure staan is nou met 'n gesofistikeerde aanvoeling vir geskilderde ruimte aangetoon.

Die invloed van die houtsnee is nog merkbaar in die abstrakte vereenvoudiging van die figure en die landskap, maar dit het nou 'n positiewe uitwerking. Die vereenvoudiging laat nie die soliditeit van die figure verlore gaan nie, maar gee aan hulle 'n gevoel van indrukwekkende monumentaliteit en terselfdertyd ook, soms, stille bewoënheid.

Op dieselfde tentoonstelling is die kunstenaar se nuwe reeks houtsneë oor die heldedaad van Wolraad Woltemade, met bypassende verse deur Stephen Gray, ook te sien.

Dit is 'n aangename reeks, maar vertoon myns insiens 'n tweespalt tussen die drang tot ekspressiewe illustrasie en die drang tot dekoratiewe ontwerp. Dit lei tot wisselvallige kwaliteit.

Vreemd genoeg is van die kragtigste houtsneë dié wat Woltemade se alledaagse lewenspatroon uitbeeld (nommers 2 en 3), terwyl die dramatiese gebeurde van die skipbreuk en die reddingspoging soms oppervlakkig en komposisioneel slordig uitgebeeld word (nommers 6 en 9)."

The following remarks can be made concerning this article:

a) Paintings by Cecil Skotnes are discussed in paragraphs one to nine while woodcuts are discussed in paragraphs ten to twelve. In this sense the article is structured.

b) Bruwer traces Skotnes' attempt to break away from the engraved panel as medium towards the medium of oil-painting (paragraphs 1 to 9).

c) In order to trace the above-mentioned development, Bruwer isolates characteristics of the wood-engraving and woodcut by the following:

   i) "stilisering" (paragraph 3);

   ii) "die tweedimensionele oppervlak van 'n houtpaneel" (paragraph 4);

   iii) "houterige liniêre strakheid van die figure" (paragraph 5);

   iv) "figure wat almal in een statiese vlak langs mekaar ingeskets is" (paragraph 5);

   v) "figuur uit hout gekerf" (paragraph 6);

   vi) "fisieke relief" (paragraph 6);

   vii) "figure in 'n enkele vlak vasgeknel" (paragraph 7);

   viii) "liniêre raamwerke" (paragraph 7);

   ix) "indruk van liniêriteit" (paragraph 8); and

   x) "abstrakte vereenvoudiging" (paragraph 9).

d) Characteristics of the painting are also isolated by Bruwer:

   i) "skilderkunstige" (paragraph 2);

   ii) "die meer ruimtelike atmosferiese medium van die skilderkuns" (paragraph 3);

   iii) "Ruimtelike diepte" (paragraphs 4 and 5);

   iv) "kleurperspektief" (paragraph 6); and

   v) "die indruk van liniêriteit op die agtergrond"

(paragraph 8)

e) Although the above-mentioned characteristics (see c and d) are not always maintained with regard to these different media (e.g. painting may be linear or painterly), Bruwer points to the possibilities inherent in each medium. He thus establishes the nature, within the context of Skotnes' work, of the two contraries and traces a development from the one to the other in his article.

f) Bruwer discusses works in which adherence to the characteristics of the wood-panel is markedly noticeable (paragraphs 3 and 4) and discusses works in which Skotnes has achieved a painterliness indicative of a breaking away from the wood-panel. Bruwer thus differentiates between two categories with regard to the work on exhibition.

g) A critical criterion emerges in paragraph two. Adherence to the nature of the medium is suggested as a standard for evaluation in: "Die grootste lof wat 'n mens die skilderye kan toeswaai, is dat hulle geen geskilderde houtsneë is nie, maar skilderye in hul eie, skilderkunstige reg."

h) Bruwer attempts to trace the process of creation. He mentions those paintings which partly adhere to characteristics of the wood-panel as "...'n bewys van die ontsaglike stilistiese stryd wat die kunstenaar in die oliemedium moes voer..." (paragraph 2).

i) Description is contained in paragraphs four to nine. This description substantiates evaluations based on formal criteria (see g). The fact that some of the works adhere to the nature of painting serves as validation for Bruwer to maintain: "Die <u>oplossing</u> is grootliks gebaseer..." (paragraph 6, underlining my own) and "Hulle is nou ook nie meer net liniêre

raamwerke nie, maar meer bevredigend opgebou..." (paragraph 6, underlining my own).

j) The article is structured insofar as description and evaluation are correlated and insofar as a development in the work of the artist is traced.

k) Reference is made to previous work by Skotnes (paragraph 1). Furthermore, the development traced from wood-panel to painting implies the importance of the wood-panel in the artist's oeuvre prior to the exhibition discussed. Readers are thus supplied with a frame of reference with regard to the artist's work.

l) No art historical or art critical context is, however, established.

m) The last three paragraphs of the article contain discussion on a series of woodcuts by Skotnes. Bruwer evaluates the woodcuts favourably as being "...'n aangename reeks" (paragraph 11). However, he points to a duality between "ekspressiewe illustrasie" and "dekoratiewe ontwerp" (paragraph 11). He points out that this duality results in "wisselvallige kwaliteit" (paragraph 11). No supporting description is offered for these instances of favourable and adverse criticism. The statements thus remain arbitrary and meaningless.

n) In paragraph twelve a distinction is made between "kragtigste houtsneë" and those woodcuts which are "...oppervlakkig en komposisioneel slordig..." Bruwer mentions the specific works to which he refers. However, no analysis of the works is offered in order to substantiate these evaluations. The distinction between woodcuts 2,3 and 6,9 thus remain arbitrary and meaningless.

o) While description and evaluation are correlated in Bruwer's

discussion on Skotnes' oil-paintings, this correlation is absent with regard to discussion on the woodcuts. The last three paragraphs thus merely fulfil the functions of the journalist report and that of autobiographical criticism. The first nine paragraphs are, however, an attempt at exegetical and educational critical writing (see Chapter 2.5).

I.6.3 Bruwer did not reply to the questionnaire (see Appendix B) sent to critics contributing to major South African newspapers.

I.7 An analysis of typical examples of work by Jill Gowans, critic for "The Daily News"

I.7.1 "A sensitive search for new expression", The Daily News, Feb. 13, 1976 : 15.

"DURBAN artist Andrew Verster's latest exhibition at the Walsh Marais Gallery confirms his continuous, sensitive search for new expression in various media.

Here, he has studied Durban's beaches at different sun stages and in some large panels has captured the loneliness of its wide open spaces as empty, and the flurry and bustle of human paraphernalia when occupied.

In the foregrounds, heaps of colourful bundles suggest the shapes of their recent occupants and this suspended movement, so to speak, is contrasted with the shimmering, undulating sand and the mystery of the sea beyond.

Verster has always seemed to use images in lonely isolation. This and his superb drawing ability are combined

in ink drawings of palms, searingly beautiful in their solitariness, standing as visual statements to be purely enjoyed.

But three drawings of personal doodles and graffiti are too undeliberate to have any artistic validity.

In Beach Situation, images like a chair, a dog, several men are used in isolation within an obviously limited framework to suggest the make-up of beach scenes, normally seen as a profusion of shapes.

The appeal of Verster's subtle understatement and sheer technical skill makes this exhibition a delight."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) In paragraph one, Gowans maintains that the exhibition confirms Verster's "...sensitive search for new expression in various media." No attempt is made in the article to substantiate this evaluative statement.

b) The reader is informed of Verster's subject-matter (paragraphs 2 to 6). This information does not substantiate paragraph one (see Chapter 2.4).

c) Concerning the content of the work, interpretive statements are made with regard to "loneliness" (paragraph 2); "human paraphernalia" (paragraph 2); "suspended movement" (paragraph 3); "mystery of the sea beyond" (paragraph 3); "lonely isolation" (paragraph 4); and "solitariness" (paragraph 4). No formal description of the works substantiate these interpretive statements.

d) Doodles and graffiti are dismissed as too "undeliberate" (paragraph 5) to be artistically valid. No justification for "deliberateness" as a critical standard is offered by Gowans.

e) Unsubstantiated evaluations are to be found in the article. Gowans points to "superb drawing ability" (paragraph 4) without investigating the manifestations of this ability in the works themselves. The palms are noted to be "searingly beautiful" (paragraph 4). These emotive and evaluative terms remain meaningless because they are unexplained.

f) In paragraph six, subject-matter is mentioned but not correlated with description, interpretation or evaluation.

g) The concluding paragraph contains a reiteration of the initial evaluation in paragraph one. The written matter between paragraphs one and seven neither serves to justify "sensitive search" nor the final evaluation in paragraph seven.

h) No justification for the following evaluations can be found in the text:

i) "sensitive" (paragraph 1);

ii) "captured" (paragraph 2);

iii) "superb drawing ability" (paragraph 4);

iv) "beautiful" (paragraph 4);

v) "visual statements to be enjoyed" (paragraph 4);

vi) "too deliberate" (paragraph 5);

vii) "appeal" (paragraph 7);

viii) "subtle" (paragraph 7);

ix) "technical skill" (paragraph 7); and

x) "...this exhibition a delight" (paragraph 7).

These evaluations thus remain arbitrary and meaningless.

i) The article is not structured as no progression from analysis to synthesis is recognisable. No differentiation between the works is made, except the distinction in paragraph five. No development in the work of the artist is traced.

j) No art historical or art critical context is established. No

reference to previous work by Verster is made, apart from the following two instances:

i) "...his continuous, sensitive search for new expression in various media..." (paragraph 1); and

ii) "Verster has always seemed to use images in lonely isolation" (paragraph 4).

The first statement quoted above is not substantiated and the second statement merely refers to subject-matter and not to describable properties or content embodied in these properties.

k) The article by Gowans merely states an arbitrary, personal opinion with regard to the work on exhibition. No critical exegesis is attempted and no justification for "new" (paragraph 1) and "undeliberate" (paragraph 5) as critical criteria is offered. The article is thus merely autobiographical and fulfils only this function and those of the journalist report.

I.7.2 "Durban artist on show", The Daily News, Feb. 16, 1976 : 18.

"DURBAN artist Andrew Verster is exhibiting his latest works, which include drawings, etchings and paintings, at the Walsh Marais Gallery, Fenton Road. It deals mainly with his impressions of Durban beaches, and closes on Friday. Verster is also exhibiting in Cape Town after which he will be touring South America and the United States, returning at the end of April.

Tom Phillips, the British artist who first visited South Africa two years ago, has recorded his impressions of the country in an exhibition now at the Durban Art Gallery. He says: "Almost all the works in this exhibition deal with South African themes and show my reaction to the beauties of its landscape, climate and peoples as

well as to the bewildering paradoxes of its politics."

NSA members will be taking part in an exhibition of landscape painting which opens tomorrow at 5.30 p.m. Some members recently visited the Umgeni Valley Ranch at the invitation of the Wild Life Society and the exhibition includes paintings done there. John Frost will open it.

'Our Floral Wealth' is the theme of this year's Santam Exhibition of Child Art which is open to schoolchildren of all races in South Africa, South West Africa and Rhodesia. Selection of works to be included on the exhibition will take place in Pretoria in June. The 1974 exhibition entitled 'Wildlife in our National Parks' is at present on a tour of Europe organised by the South African Department of Information."

The following comments can be made concerning this article:

a) The article is a proper journalist report. It merely reports the names of exhibiting artists, venues and subject-matter. As such it conforms to the nature of the journalist report as put forward by Joubert (see I.5.2). The article can thus not be considered as an art critical contribution.

b) It may be noted that Gowans refers to an exhibition by Andrew Verster. Gowans attempted an art critical contribution with regard to the work of this artist (see I.7.1).

c) While some articles by Gowans can be considered as proper journalist reports, some articles illustrate an attempt at the contribution of art criticism.

I.7.3 Gowans did not reply to the questionnaire (see Appendix B), sent to critics contributing to major South African newspapers.

I.8 References

1. M. Sand, The History of the Harlequinade I, pp. 59-101.

2. Encyclopaedia Brittanica, XVI, p. 1116.

3. G.J. Joubert, "Rigtings en Figure in die toneelkritiek van Suid-Afrika", p. 18.

APPENDIX II

Abstracts from broadcasts by Esmé Berman

II.1 "What is the criterion for acclaim in the world of art?...we do not ask for competence alone, we also seek creativeness...He has traversed new territory and tried an unfamiliar palette, but the main statement was previously expressed in his earlier South African themes." ("Walter Battiss". Arts Review, Apr. 8, 1962.)

II.2 "...van Essche's greatest problem is the danger of repeating himself, but he is aware of the tendency, and in the present show he provides many variations on his personal theme, both in colour and composition...in only one, a smaller sketch, does the paint match the conception...For the rest, some fine still-lifes and a well-conceived composition of fishermen drinking, round out an excellent display of good design, sound paintwork and very pleasing colour." ("Maurice van Essche". Arts Review, Apr. 29, 1962.)

II.3 "It is not easy to penetrate the intricacies of painting of this kind. No mere pattern-making, it does not derive - or abstract - from actual visual experience either. It begins with a certain state of mind, which I can, perhaps, best describe by quoting a fragment of ancient Chinese philosophy that I am sure Douglas Portway would endorse...Portway's brush-work is masterly, and his colour has superb refinement ; the results are impressive." ("Douglas Portway". Arts Review, Jul. 29, 1962.)

II.4 "...the most significant function of art is to communicate, to crystallise in visual form the experience and understanding which

their heightened sensitivity provides...Georgina Ormiston is at her best when she retains a certain ambiguity of image, promising that further revelations lie beyond the first impression. She has a rare and resourceful talent, and her unashamedly romantic vision infuses a necessary touch of poetry into the brittle stylisation and frequently esoteric intellectualism of present-day South African art...Her paintings carry one, on a wave of phantasy, from subterranean caves where centaurs sport, to cool green depths where coral grows..." ("Georgina Ormiston". Arts Review, Oct. 21, 1962.)

II.5 "The show is an impressive history of a sculptor's development over 18 years. Beginning with traditional portrait-busts in bronze, he moved gradually into the abstract idiom, during a long period of wood-carving, and has now returned to bronze - this time with total abstraction...Among the carvings are his most powerful and important works. Alongside these, his recent bronzes appear heavy-handed, almost clumsy. They too, are concerned with movement, but they lack the organic quality of the earlier carvings, and the tensions which make the yellow-wood sculpture he calls 'Wave' a continuously moving thing, are nowhere to be seen..." (Solly Disner". Arts Review, Oct. 28, 1962.)

II.6 "The two exhibitions which attracted my attention this week differ considerably in character, but are linked by a common denominator: in both cases, the artists concerned are outstanding figures in the field of applied design, and the two shows share the immaculate craftmanship which makes such achievement possible...it is in the few examples where he "[Ernst de Jongh]" avoids virtuosity, and taking his skill for granted, draws upon his deeper self for

inspiration, that his work is enriched with a communicative quality that far exceeds its obvious decorative appeal. For this reason it is to be hoped that his successful career in advertising art, with its frequent demands for slick solutions to visual problems, will not eclipse the promise of his private work." ("Jo and Ernst Ullmann/Ernst de Jongh". Arts Review, Nov. 18, 1962.)

II.7 "Preller is not interested in originating new techniques, nor in the current scramble for novelties and gimmicks. For him, style is not an end in itself; only a language, through which to say the things he has to say. Essentially, he is a 20th century painter who uses a 15th century convention for making statements that are timeless. In Quattrocento tradition, he takes meticulous care to define the conceptual identity of his subjects : no shadow falls to blur the tight-edged precision of his forms : they are crisply moulded in brilliant, luminous colour, and bathed in all-pervasive light. However, though his images are figurative, the relationship between them is highly abstract, and the effect of unreality is heightened by the absence of landscape or any common physical surroundings." ("Alexis Preller". Arts Review, Nov. 25, 1962.)

II.8 "If one has to judge from art alone, it is often difficult to believe that the Transvaal and the Cape are but arbitrary divisions of one and the same country...Viewed from Johannesburg, the Cape has appeared to dwell with few exceptions, on die-hard impressionism and figurative painting." ("May Hillhouse". Arts Review, Dec. 2, 1962.)

II.9 "There can surely be no more devastating a comment on modern art than the often repeated 'Good Heavens, a child can do better than

Author Schmidt L
Name of thesis Aspects of South African Art Criticism 1976

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.