

***Donation and Trust:
The Bloemfontein Group and the
Free State Art Scene, 1950-1989***

Yolanda de Kock
948158

MA Research Report
Submitted in fulfilment of
the Degree of Master of Arts (Heritage Studies)
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg

Supervisor
Ass Prof Rory Bester

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the Degree of the Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and has neither been submitted before to any other degree or examination at any other University, nor prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body or organisation or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Name

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Research Report would not have been possible was it not for the dedicated contribution of the following individuals and institution:

Firstly, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor Prof Rory Bester, Head of the Department History of Art and Heritage Studies, University of the Witwatersrand. I am extremely grateful for his professional support and guidance throughout this process. Prof Bester consistently allowed this Research Report to be my own work but steered me in the right direction whenever he thought I needed it.

Secondly, my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Fred Scott, Professor Louis Scott and Willem Scott for their endless hospitality and assistance with this research project. I truly appreciate their input and assistance despite their personal commitments.

I would like to thank both Mr Rick Nuttall (Director of the National Museum, Bloemfontein) and Mrs Ester le Roux (Curator of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein), not only for allowing me to pursue this research but also for their open-minded attitude towards the importance of this research. Their constant encouragement and support have been inspiring and have motivated me to take this research even further. Sincere thanks to Mrs Linda Malan (Principal Conservator of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein) for providing and assisting me with relevant records, photographs and documents.

Special thanks to my partner, Chris and daughter, Emme Robyn. Your continuous support and patience meant a lot. Lastly thank you to all my friends and family for your constant love, support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This research report is a critical analysis of the Free State¹ art scene from 1950-1989, conducted primarily through an account of the Bloemfontein Group. It argues that this period is a significant indicator of a shift in the city's art scene, from an earlier, formalist focus to a more conceptual orientation in the art scene in Bloemfontein. An important aspect of this research is the significance of the formation of the Bloemfontein Group, and the extent of their role and influence during this period, which together can be seen as a key catalyst in the shift to conceptual art.

Through extensive archival research, I have constructed a visual timeline of the art scene in Bloemfontein, including significant events in the wider Free State region. The construction of the timeline is a crucial part of the unravelling and interrogation of undiscovered conceptual developments relating to museum practices in the Free State. This is in turn informed by conversations and debates about the history of exhibitions, the origins of an art collection, and more specifically, how an art phenomenon such as the Bloemfontein Group not only contributed to a contemporary artistic identity in the Free State, but was also the driver behind the establishment of the Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein.

The methodology in this research report is based primarily on archival research and interviews:

- The Free State archives (newspaper clippings from the *Friend* newspaper were the most useful);
- Oliewenhuis Art Museum research library (where invaluable information was found on the Group itself, including more newspaper clippings, information on the individual artists, with specific emphasis on Professor Fred and Mrs Dora Scott);
- William Humphrey's Art Gallery's research library where I found additional archival documents on the Group's exhibition at the gallery in 1966.
- The Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery archives at the University of the Free State² and
- Louis, Willem and Fred Scott's personal archives

¹ Formerly known as the Orange Free State.

² Formerly known as the University of the Orange Free State.

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals with the aim of gathering further insight into the timeline. The interviewees were selected on the basis of either their involvement during the timeframe under question, their being descendants of the Scott family, or a surviving member of the Bloemfontein Group:

- Rina Lubbs (surviving member of the Free State Art Society, Social Committee and *Volksblad* art critic from 1969-1984);
- Anna-Rosa Witthuhn (surviving member of the Free State Art Society and Social Committee);
- Doctor Fred Scott and Professor Louis Scott (sons of the belated Doctor Frik and Dora Scott);
- Eben van der Merwe (surviving member of the Bloemfontein Group);
- Stefan Hundt (former curator of Oliewenhuis Art Museum from 1993-1997) and
- Professor Suzanne Human (Head of Department of History of Art and Image Studies, University of the Free State).

Throughout the Research Report I refer to different terminology that enabled me not only to construct a consistent discussion but also to demonstrate the systematic methodology I formulated to conduct the research. By using archival documentation such as newspaper clippings as primary resource to enable research on a time frame, which had never been researched before, I was prompted to apply the terminology to categorize and sort the archival material and also to explain to the reader the methodology to some extent.

Visual map: I commenced the Research Report with a visual map of artworks made by the Bloemfontein Group. I used the word ‘map’ deliberately to outline/map/illustrate visual examples of the Bloemfontein Group’s artworks. The function of the visual map is to introduce the reader to artworks produced by the Bloemfontein Group on a whole without limiting the artworks to 24 pieces that were donated to Oliewenhuis Art Museum. The works are not placed in a particular order as the map merely serves to visually introduce the reader to the nature of the artworks of the Bloemfontein Group.

Timeframe: Primary resources used to conduct the research were archival material. This mostly included newspaper clippings, photographs, letters, official museum records, exhibition invitations and press releases. Therefore my methodology included a large amount of ordering, numbering and systematising archival material sourced. This enabled me to order the research in different timeframes e.g. 1950, 1960, 1970 and 1980. The timeframe assisted me in examining the archival material intently and to uncover a narration of the Bloemfontein art scene within the specific timeframe. I realised that this specific timeframe indicated the majority of the art-related progression in Bloemfontein and was a crucial process as the ordering of the records lead me to design a chronological timeline within the timeframe.

Chronological timeline: The methodology and my process further progressed as I ordered the timeframe into a chronological timeline that included exhibitions held in the timeframe, important progressions of art related events and important individuals that steered the mind-set of artists, art patrons and art supporters. By ordering and systematising the events and exhibitions within a specific timeframe, I was aided in my understanding of the narrative that emerged within the timeline I designed. The unravelling of the exhibitions and happenings held within a timeframe also assisted me to illustrate the timeline.

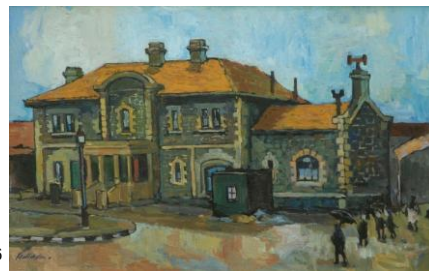
Illustrated timeline and exhibition timeline: By illustrating the timeline I attempted to add imagery viz: artworks produced for specific exhibitions or illustrations of artworks produced that align with the timeframe, exhibitions or exhibition openings, exhibition invitations and photographs of leading societies or individuals. This was vital as the newspaper clippings very rarely offered imagery of artworks or exhibitions that took place. This extremely time consuming task was an essential part of the research as it enabled me to understand the timeline better and to initiate visual debates about the local art environment versus national art-related debates. Due to the lack of imagery available, some illustrations were repeatedly used also to emphasise a statement or to make the image emblematic of developments specific to the Bloemfontein region.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ABSTRACT	4
VISUAL MAP OF ARTWORKS	8
INTRODUCTION.....	12
1. THE ORIGINS OF AN ART COLLECTION	18
1.1 Collections and the Museum	18
1.2 The Collection and the Collector	25
1.3 Utilising Archives as Primary Sources.....	27
2. TIMELINE OF AN EMERGING ART SCENE	31
3. BLOEMFONTEIN ART SCENE: A TIMELINE	78
3.1 The “National” Art Scene in South Africa.....	78
3.2 Understanding the Bloemfontein Group	79
CONCLUSION.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90
APPENDIX 1: EXHIBITION INVITATIONS AND CATALOGUES	94
APPENDIX 2: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.....	109

VISUAL MAP OF ARTWORKS

This is a visual map of the artworks by members the Bloemfontein Group that are discussed in this dissertation. More than a list of figures, it is an attempt to provide an overview of the visual research, and introduce the reader to some of the visual thinking, visual narratives and visual arguments that will be explored in the dissertation in relation to the Bloemfontein Group.



³ Le Roux, R, *Abstract*, Water colour on paper, 16 x 35 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁴ Van der Merwe, E, *Autumn landscape*, Oil on board, 78 x 61.5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁵ Ampenberger, I, *Young Couple*, Oil on board, 60.5 x 45.5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁶ Claerhout, F, *Die Oes*, Oil on board, 61 x 51 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷ Podlaschuc, A, *Stasiegebou*, Oil on board, 50.5 x 76cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸ Podlaschuc, M, *Siekevervoer*, Oil on board, 77 x 101 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹ Edwards, M, *Embrace*, Soapstone, 16 x 11 x 7.5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁰ Varney, N, *The River*, Oil on board, 61x 78.5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹¹ Cantrell, A, *Abstract*, Oil on board, 78 x 135 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹² Varney, F, *Abstract*, Oil on board, 31 x 48 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21



22



23



24



25

¹³ Ampenberger, S, *Kloof*, Oil on board, 60 x 70 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴ Westbrook, W, *Landscape*, Oil on Canvas, 100 x 146 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵ Ampenberger, I, *Stillewe met blomme*, Oil on canvas, 50,5 x 60,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁶ Podlashuc, M, *Siësta*, 1960, Oil on board, 65,5 x 45,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷ Podlashuc, M, *Market*, Oil on board, 135 x 104cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection

¹⁸ Ampenberger, S, *Vrystaatse Landskap*, Watercolour on paper, 55,8 x 37,8cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁹ Ampenberger, I, *Wagtende*, Oil on board, 50,5 x 60,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁰ Varney, F, *Ek Self*, 1966, Mixed media on board, 77 x 105cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²¹ Van der Merwe, E, *Stillewe met melkbeker*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 45,5 x 60,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²² Le Roux, R, *Abstract*, Oil on paper, 38 x 28cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²³ Cantrell, A, *Abstract*, Oil on canvas, 59,5 x 39,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁴ Claerhout, F, *Woman with umbrella*, Oil on canvas, 30,5 x 66cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁵ Le Roux, R, *Die rooi rok*, Oil on board, 38 x 28cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.



26



27



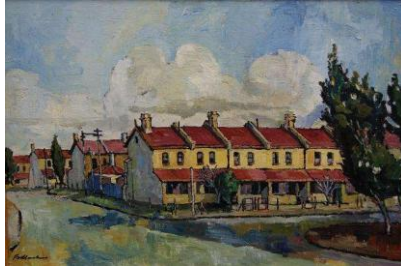
28



29



30



31



32



33



34



35



36

²⁶ Podlashuc, A, *Die tekenles*, 1967, Woodcut print, 59 x 39cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁷ Van der Merwe, E, *Portret van Harry Creamens*, 1966, Acrylic on paper, 167 x 122cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁸ Podlashuc, A, *Bloemspruit*, Oil on board. 81 x 56,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

²⁹ Claerhout, F, *Church*. Oil on board. 59 x 50 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³⁰ Le Roux, *Abstract*, 1970, Oil on paper, 71,4 x 51cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³¹ Podlashuc, A, *Dubbeldekkers*, Oil on board, 75 x 49cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³² Podlashuc, M, *Baakensvalei*, Oil on board, 91,5 x 75,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³³ Van der Merwe, E, *Abstract*, 1964, Acrylic on paper. 65,1 x 44,9cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³⁴ Podlashuc, A, *Night Shift*, Oil on board, 56 x 74,5 cm. William Humphreys Permanent Collection.

³⁵ Podlashuc, M, *Ars Brevis vita longa*, Pen on tracing paper, 29 x 69cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

³⁶ Le Roux, R, *Seebamboes*, 1962, Oil on board, 44 x 48cm, Artist private collection (Photograph was taken by George Hugo at Renée le Roux's Retrospective exhibition at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 2007).



37



38



39



40

³⁷ Van der Merwe, E, *Composition-Ochre and brown*, 1968, Acrylic on board, Willem Scott private collection (Photograph was taken and provided by Willem Scott).

³⁸ Ampenberger, I, *The Meal*, 45.5 x 60cm, Oil on board. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

³⁹ Claerhout, F, *Slagveld Dewetsdorp*, 1980, Oil on board, 93 x 77 cm. Oliewenhuis permanent collection.

⁴⁰ Podlashuc, M, *Herderseun met Bokke*, Oil on board, 58 x 68cm. Willem Scott private collection.

INTRODUCTION

Artists' groups, in South Africa and elsewhere, are not a new idea or an unfamiliar historical development. This study about the Bloemfontein Group (c.1950–1989), therefore aims to reveal its particular character in comparison to other artists' groups that existed in South Africa at the same time. Esmé Berman suggests that art groups formulated during the course of South African art history as a result of:

The distance between urban centres and the wide dispersal of the art producing community have been uncondusive to the formation of active art groups in South Africa. Occasionally a handful of kindred spirits would band together for exhibition purposes but there has been nothing in the nature of art movements equivalent to the modern European phenomenon. There are no art colonies and most artists have felt the lack of stimulating dialogue and the catalysis that occurs in rubbing shoulders with others similarly orientated (1994: 42).

Like the Bloemfontein Group, other important art groups evolved in South Africa like the Everard Group, New Group, International Art Club and the Contemporary Art Society, to name a few (Berman 1994: 43). In his curator's message for *Stylistic Links*, an exhibition on the Bloemfontein Group held at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 2012, Fred Scott suggests that artist groups are made up of known, as well as unknown, artists in order to pool their resources towards a collective goal. He further pointed out that these groups tended to be small and that the sharing of insights from diverse creative minds and disciplines promotes the cross-fertilization of ideas.

Although artists' groups in their own capacity are often not considered as important artistic 'movements' in the charting of an art history, I believe that the Bloemfontein Group played a vital role in establishing an artistic environment in the Free State. I also propose that the formation of the Bloemfontein Group shifted the conservative mindset of the Bloemfontein art scene by presenting artworks with conceptual emphasis, as well as revealing European influences in the form of abstract and expressionistic techniques to local viewers. This can be seen in the work of Reneé le Roux (1927), Eben van der Merwe (1932), and Iris Ampenberger (1916–1981)

below. These techniques were not often practised in the Free State and were quite unfamiliar to Bloemfontein art enthusiasts and artists.



41



42



43

The significance of the Bloemfontein Group can also be attributed to the fact that it not only influenced local attitudes towards art in general but also crystallised early ideas about opening an art museum in Bloemfontein, to which the Bloemfontein Group's work was eventually donated, becoming the museum's first collection of artworks.

This research allows me to explore different aspects and concepts about the history of exhibitions and, more specifically, how an art phenomenon like the Bloemfontein Group (as well as the Free State art scene) was archived and remembered. I came to the conclusion that there are several shortcomings within the archive itself as very little information on the group was available, as well as any photographic material of any other artists, working in Bloemfontein during this time frame. The lack of photographic material hindered me for drawing comparisons and providing me with necessary perspective on the general artistic environment and how the Bloemfontein Group's work was distinguishable from other individually practising artists.

However, the information gathered in the archive enabled me to design a timeline that encapsulates the early development of the Free State art scene by means of a chronological timeline. This timeline provides invaluable insight into drawing possible conclusions about the Bloemfontein art scene in particular. By ordering the gathered information chronologically, some concepts emerged, such as whom for example, were the avant-garde leaders in the community that steered the mind-set about art, and the possibility of recording undiscovered practising artists within

⁴¹ Le Roux, R, *Abstract*, Water colour on paper, 16 x 35 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

⁴² Van der Merwe, E, *Autumn landscape*, Oil on board, 78 x 61.5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

⁴³ Ampenberger, I, *Young Couple*, Oil on board, 60.5 x 45.5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

the Free State. The timeline, therefore, provided the opportunity to write this research paper in order to unfold questions and concepts relating to an undiscovered past of artistic events within the Free State art scene.

The timeline also revealed various limitations I had to encounter as most of my resources were archive material. Media resources per se are convoluted by nature and the information recorded is often distorted by the reporter's personal (and often ignorant) perception and criticism about art during the early days of the Free State art scene. An article, 'Artistic talent overcrowded', written by a reporter named 'ED' of the *Friend* newspaper, seems to reinforce the view. This review referred to an exhibition hosted by the Orange Free State Art Society's members' exhibition during 1974. The writer had an undeniable preference towards the bronze sculptures by Daniella Geldenhuys's (1918–2005) cockerel *Koe-ke-re-koe* and Ann Miller's work, *Oom Hansie*, whilst referring to Sophia Lückhoff's paintings as "rather chaotic" in her use of colour, and that the 'blotches of paint confuse the eye'. When referring to Iris Ampenberger's painting the writer indicated that she "achieves tranquillity with bold colours" and claimed that Fayettea Varney's (1922–1974) *River Valley* "flows monotonously downhill instead of sweeping skywards in generous brush strokes".

The illiterate nature of commentary on how exhibitions and artworks were described in the archival material together with the lack of visual material pertaining to the specific artworks described, somewhat limited my general perception of the art scene. This matter was to some extent resolved by collecting other reference material available in the archive to support the discussion.

The main motivation for doing this research is the lack of substantial information on the Bloemfontein Group as a whole, its role in the Free State art scene from the 1950s to 1989, and the impact of the donation of the group's work during the formative years of the Oliewenhuis Art Museum. Very little research has been conducted on the formation of regional artistic identities, especially in the Free State. Since the Bloemfontein Group donation belongs to Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection, this research will hopefully provide a new understanding of the Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection –

specifically how the Group fits into the broader collection and the impact of the donation on subsequent additions to the collection. Furthermore, while Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection has been digitised and catalogued, it has never been researched. Part of this research will include a comprehensive analysis of the 24 artworks in the Bloemfontein Group donation in order to understand why these artworks were characterised as "conceptual" and distinctive from the work of other Free State artists. This analysis will extend the research already done by Dr Fred Scott on the *Stylistic Links* exhibition and catalogue.

The research provides an opportunity to investigate the nature of the museum's acquisition policy, the thinking and rationale of former curators,⁴⁴ and how a permanent collection might be imagined as reflecting a regional identity relating to artistic practices. While the artworks of the Bloemfontein Group have been exhibited previously – the latest being the *Stylistic Links* exhibition – these exhibitions have rarely sought to understand the role and significance of the Group in the evolution of the Free State art scene. Their importance and this history are worth investigating, and raise questions about the history of museum collections in general and how a foundation collection such as the Bloemfontein Group may be used as an indicator of a regional art identity.

This Research Report consists of three chapters. The first chapter gives the reader a broader understanding of museum collections and examines the possibility that the origins of both Oliewenhuis Art Museum and its founder collection were a unique happening in the Free State. I contend that this uniqueness is also based on the fact that the origins of both the art museum and founding collection were built on both the enthusiasm and fund raising efforts of the art-loving citizens in Bloemfontein.

I also argue that the origins of Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection, which mainly consisted of three important donations: the Bloemfontein Group, acquisitions of the Social Committee under the leadership of Dora Scott (1913–2013) and the A.C White collection, reflects a cultural identity specific to the Free State.

⁴⁴ Oliewenhuis Art Museum had three former curators: Johan Coetzer (1988-1992), Stefan Hundt (1993-1997), Sharon Crampton (1997-2009), and Ester le Roux (2009-present).

This chapter, also aims to explore notions about the art collector. I look into the possibility that the collector is influenced by his/her immediate surroundings, and are influenced by the biased opinions of individuals within his/her community. This is relevant as Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collection was initiated and implemented by art loving citizens in Bloemfontein. Different influential leaders steered the mind-set about the notions of 'good' and 'collectable' art suited for a museum.

In the conclusion of the first chapter, I examine the archive. A large portion of this report is based on archival research as a primary source. I express my frustrations about the archives due to the fact that they are somewhat restricted as a result of limited information available. Therefore, I re-examined the archive as an institution and speculate that although it is an incomplete entity it is also a continuous development. Regardless, I also explore the possibility that with its constraints, the archive can also be considered as a wealth of information that enabled me to compile an undiscovered timeline of the Free State art scene. I believe my contribution with this research report is invaluable as it builds on the future functions and relevance of the archive.

In the second chapter, I outline the emerging art scene of the Free State from the 1950s to 1989 by means of a chronological timeline. This timeline was specifically selected as I believe a steady onset of a livelier art scene commenced during the 1950s in Bloemfontein. The emergence of the Free State art scene has not recently been researched therefore most of my findings were based on interviews, newspaper clippings, museum records, exhibition invitations and catalogues. I regard this as the essence of the research as it visually narrates important events and highlights important role-players in the Bloemfontein art scene. The timeline enabled me to unravel the conservative nature of the art scene and understand the driving forces of two art societies: Orange Free State Art society and the Free State branch of the South African Art Society, which steered the mind-set of the Bloemfontein audiences about art. More importantly, the timeline visualises the impact of the Bloemfontein Group's formation and the important role their careers played to improve the standard of the Free

State art scene. Lastly, the timeline narrates the anticipation amongst Free State citizens and artists of the opening of an art museum.

With the last chapter, I put my findings of the timeline into perspective by comparing the Free State art scene with the broader national art scene. It became clear that Bloemfontein was quite secluded from the bigger cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg as a result of its geographical setting. This undoubtedly had an impact on local artists, promoting to pursue their careers as artists in a national context. The lack of an art museum and tertiary education within the arts increased the isolation which local artists faced.

Different layers of isolation are investigated in this chapter – the isolation that the country experienced during Apartheid, and the geographical isolation the Free State as a province. I continue to emphasise that the Bloemfontein Group constituted the avant-garde leaders in the Free State art community under the leadership of their patrons, Frik and Dora Scott. I demonstrate in this chapter how these artists became friends because of their shared vision, and how they resisted the local exhibition polemic. They further resisted this isolation by expanding their individual careers and had numerous prestigious group exhibitions in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria.

1. THE ORIGINS OF AN ART COLLECTION

1.1 Collections and the Museum

The origins of the Oliewenhuis permanent collection are seen to be located with the Bloemfontein Group donation. As a result of this, the history of museum collections, the reception of art collections and exhibition histories need to be analysed.

An important aspect of the formation of Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection is the fact that the collection was built without any independent or government funding.

The founding collection was comprised of the Bloemfontein Group and A.C White donations, together with the artworks bought with funds generated by the Social Committee under the guidance of Dora Scott. This is an indication that the collection was built from the initiative of devoted art enthusiasts. I believe therefore that the origins of Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection are unique and that it reflects a cultural identity specific to the Free State. I content that Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collection comprises the Bloemfontein Group's donation as the 24 donated artworks were kept safe in the Scott trust until a formal art museum opened in Bloemfontein. However, the A.C White donation cannot be overlooked as it was donated to Oliewenhuis Art Museum subsequent to the Bloemfontein Group donation.

To put the latter into perspective I have researched other founding collections, but focussed specifically on Johannesburg Art Gallery⁴⁵, as its founding collection and the formation of this gallery was also seen as a unique happening during the early 1900's.

In her book, *Uplifting the Colonial Philistine: Florence Phillips and the Founding of the Johannesburg Art Gallery* (2006), Jillian Carman indicated

⁴⁵ Jillian Carman stated that "The Johannesburg Art Gallery collection opened to the South African public on 29 November 1910. It had been initiated in April 1909 after the meeting in Britain between Florence Phillips, wife of the gold-mining magnate Lionel Phillips, and Hugh Lane, a prominent Anglo-Irish art dealer. At this stage the collection was housed in the South African School of mines in Eloff Street, Johannesburg, until it moved into its Lutyens building in Joubert Park towards the end of 1915". (Carman 2006: 1).

that the founding of this gallery and its founding collection was also referred to as unique. She clarified that:

The founding of the gallery was indeed 'quite unique', although it was not the first art gallery or museum in South Africa, nor the first venue to exhibit art made by living artists. The uniqueness to which Lane refers lies in the nature of the collection, the way it came to be housed in a custom-designed building, and the newness of the urban community into which it was placed. The collection was started at a significant time in the development of modern art in Britain. Lane was renowned for collecting French Impressionists paintings which he placed in the collections he founded in Dublin (1908) and Johannesburg (1910) before such items appeared in British public collections (Carman 2006: 1-2).

There is a vast difference between the beginnings of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Firstly, Oliewenhuis was a house built in 1941 that served as a residence for the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa and his wife when they visited Bloemfontein. Its purpose was never to serve as an art museum. It was only on 19 July 1985, after prolonged campaigning for an art museum by the art loving citizens of Bloemfontein, that former State President P.W. Botha released the residence to the National Museum for the purpose of converting it into an art museum.

In contrast, the Johannesburg Art Gallery was from its foundation intended as such by Florence and Lionel Phillips and an Irish art dealer, Hugh Lane to specifically design a building to serve as an art gallery. The importance of pointing out the differences between these two institutions is the fact that both the beginnings of these institutions are seen as a 'unique happening'. Using Johannesburg Art Gallery as reference point helps me to put the origins of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and its founding collections in perspective, but also to point out possible similarities and differences between these institutions.

In their article, *Becoming Historic*, Jillian Carman and Sheree Lissoos, provide insight into Johannesburg Art Gallery's founding collections where they specifically focus on the first 50 years of collecting in an attempt to "not only understand the nature of the collections but also the nature of

Johannesburg citizens, visitors and stakeholders” (Carman, J & Lisssoos 2010: 43). Although the Johannesburg Art Gallery’s collection was initiated in 1910, it was temporarily housed in the South African School of Mines and Technology until the official building was completed during 1915 in Joubert Park. According to Carman and Lisssoos, that this collection, even in London, was seen as being “more avant-garde than any public collection in Britain at that time, and was described by the Duke of Connaught at its opening in Johannesburg on Tuesday 29 November 1910 as the first notable art collection in South Africa” (*The Transvaal Leader*, 30 November 1910) (Carman, J & Lisssoos 2010: 43).

The founding collection was initiated by Hugh Lane, who was also the first curator of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. With his influence, he persuaded Florence Phillips to collect modern art for Johannesburg and within days the first acquisitions were made: three works by Philip Wilson Steer (1860 – 1942) (Carman, J & Lisssoos 2010: 43). Steer’s *A Chelsea Window* that represents as an example of Johannesburg Art Gallery’s permanent collection, and conveys insight into its founding collection.



46



47



48

I am comparing two works of Oliewenhuis Art Museum’s permanent collection to represent its founding collections, a *Portrait of Harry Creamens* (1966) by Eben van der Merwe that will represent the Bloemfontein Group together with the work of Gwelo Goodman (1871–1939), *Snow storm* (date unknown) by Philip Steer, which will represent the A.C White donation. It is interesting that these three correspond on a visual level and adhere to the genres of impressionism and realism, although the work was produced in different timeframes for different purposes.

⁴⁶ Steer, P., *A Chelsea Window*, 1909, Oil on canvas. 121 x 90 cm. Johannesburg Art Gallery permanent collection.

⁴⁷ Goodman, G., *Snow scene in Scotland*, (date unknown), Oil on canvas, 128 x 189 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁴⁸ Van der Merwe, E., *Portret van Harry Creamens*, 1966, Acrylic on paper, 167 x 122cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

The three artworks by Phillip Steer, Eben van der Merwe and Gwelo Goodman all qualify for the purpose of serving as an avant-garde, modernist founding collection on which further acquisitions could be built. The main difference between these two institutions' founding collections was that Johannesburg Art Gallery was constituted of European artists whilst Oliewenhuis' comprised only of South African artists and to some extent, Free State artists.

Johannesburg Art Gallery's founding collection started with the influence of two to three individuals whilst in the case of Oliewenhuis, different committees like the Orange Free State art society and individuals like the Scotts, had opinions about art that should belong in a museum collection. As a result, different forces attempted to steer and determine notions about what and who should be considered as ground-breaking art and artists during the time frame under scrutiny.

Simultaneously both founding collections were seen as unique and avant-garde, with specific origins. I believe that Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collection is exceptional, in that it comprises only of South African artists. The collection is sewn together by different individual fundraising efforts and patronage of the Free State citizens, and was not supported by the financial wealth of a Randlord when compared to Johannesburg Art Gallery.

I am also proposing that the decisions made about which artworks meet the standards of a founding collection, in the cases of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and Johannesburg Art gallery, are partly a result of the biased opinions of individuals while their decisions are arguably based on personal preference, taste and background. This to some extent also reflects the cultural identity of the specific individuals who made the collection possible and also the immediate environment and geographical setting where the collection was initiated.

Using the Bloemfontein Group and the A.C White donations as founding collections as examples I would like to clarify the latter statement. Firstly, the artworks in these specific collections represent elements of the Free

State landscape that reflect either the origins of Bloemfontein as a city or important buildings or landmarks that are of lasting historical significance.

Secondly, after I re-examined both collections (Bloemfontein Group and A.C White), I determined that the artworks echo geographic conversations of the distant past and more recent past of Bloemfontein. It is apparent that Bloemfontein or the Free State remained a dominant concern when these collections were compiled. For example, the A.C White collection includes two artworks of Bloemfontein depicted by Thomas Baines (1820-1875) during the 1850s – *Bloemfontein vanaf Naval Hill 1851* and *Bloemfontein about 1850* – and more recent depictions of Bloemfontein – Alexander Podlashuc's *Bloempspruit*, and Bertha Everard's *Gesig op Tweetoringkerk*.



These four examples appear to support this argument. The subject matter of these paintings, *Naval Hill*, *Bloempspruit* and the *Tweetoring kerk* are historical landmarks in Bloemfontein. The historical significance of all three landmarks adds to the early development of Bloemfontein as a town. Therefore, its appearance in the founding collections of the first art museum in Bloemfontein lends significance to the founding collections of Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

⁴⁹ Baines, T, *Bloemfontein about 1850*, Oil on canvas. 37,5 x 60,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁵⁰ Baines, T, *Bloemfontein vanaf Naval Hill*, 1851, Oil on canvas. 78,5 x 132 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁵¹ Podlashuc, A, *Bloempspruit*, Oil on board. 81 x 56,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁵² Everard, B, *Gesig op Tweetoringkerk, Bloemfontein*, Oil on canvas. 68,7 x 40cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

The *Bloemspruit* or fountain has interesting historic significance in relation to the origins of name 'Bloemfontein'. Bloemfontein's history dates back to 1822 and it was believed that the fountain was one of the reasons why this town evolved. Apparently, this was the source of water for wild animals and Bushmen before the arrival of the first white farmer, Rudolph Marthinus Brits in 1822. Shortly after Rudolph's arrival, his nephew, Johan Nicolaas Brits, and his family joined them. It was allegedly Johan who started to name this location 'Bloemfontein' as a result of the 'fountain' and 'Bloem' deriving from the wild clover that bloomed in the marsh surrounding the fountain. For years Bloemfontein received its water supply from this fountain, which supplied more than 450 000 litres of water per day (Oberholster 1972: 203-206). Therefore, *Bloemspruit* is an important historical pointer and could possibly be a reason why Eben van der Merwe used this landmark as a reference for his painting.



53

Oberholster further explains that after the formation of the Republic of the Orange Free State in 1854, the town developed rapidly and the centre of the town surrounding the fountain developed towards Naval Hill (Oberholster 1972: 203). Naval Hill is a big tourist attraction site in Bloemfontein as one has a panoramic view of Bloemfontein city and is literally the highest hill in Bloemfontein. Naval Hill holds a rich history as the British Wiltshire regiment was stationed on the hill during the Anglo-Boer war.

⁵³ A photograph of Bloemspruit, renovated after the Great Flood in 1904 (Schoeman 1980: 180).



54

This photograph of the panoramic view from Naval Hill in 1852 illustrates the town's development towards Naval Hill. On right the *Tweetoring* church, the first Dutch Reformed church in Bloemfontein towers prominently above the other buildings. The *Tweetoring* church holds a rich historical significance in Bloemfontein.



55



56

In conclusion to the discussions above it becomes obvious that the paintings of Thomas Baines, Bertha Everard and Eben van der Merwe have a deeper historical significance relating to the geographical setting of Bloemfontein. This also supports the argument that Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collections reveal elements of a cultural and geographic identity.

⁵⁴ Panoramic view from Naval Hill in 1892. In the background to the left the scattered houses of the Black township Waaihoek and in the centre the *Tweetoringkerk*. (Schoeman 1987: 66).

⁵⁵ The *Tweetoring* church before its consecration in 1880 (Schoeman 1987: 39).

⁵⁶ In most early photography of Bloemfontein, the *Tweetoring* church has a significant presence. This church is situated in the centre of Bloemfontein as was seen for decades as the symbolism of the Afrikaans church life in Bloemfontein. (Schoeman 1980: 183)

1.2 The Collection and the Collector

In his book, *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford analyses the act of collecting, and the status of collections in public and private museums. His chapter, 'On Collecting Art and Culture', is particularly insightful as Clifford focuses on two areas that are relevant to this study: the historical approach to collecting, and the exploration of ideological and institutional system in which the "cultural description is presented as a form of collecting" (Clifford 1988: 215). Clifford defines the basis of how we collect objects and that our cultural histories and background can influence the act of collecting by stating that "in the West, collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture and authenticity" (Clifford 1988: 218).

I find it interesting that Clifford further indicates that the collection cannot be separated from its official founder and that "the history of collections (not limited to museums) is central to an understanding of how those social groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meanings" (Clifford 1988: 220-221). Clifford's statement confirms that collections and their founders cannot be separated and that the collector is influenced by his/her immediate surroundings, culture and upbringing. This is particularly relevant when one examines Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collection as it was built by individuals within Bloemfontein. The fact that the town was isolated, geographically, did not stand in their way. In a sense, this argument grapples with the notion that the collection and the collector are inseparable from their immediate surroundings (geographically and culturally). Susan Pearce points out that the process of collecting needs to be further analysed and indicates that:

Our relationship with the material world of things is crucial to our lives because without them our lives could not happen, and collecting is a fundamentally significant aspect of this complex and fascinating relationship. There is a need to open up the study of collecting to a range of interpretations, and to bring investigations of its significance into the mainstream, as part of our understanding of social life as a whole (Pearce 1995: 3).

Using Clifford and Pearce as a measure I believe the founding collections of Oliewenhuis Art Museum represent a cultural identity that reflects the characteristics, tastes and preferences of the individuals who made the collection possible. The Bloemfontein Group's donation of artworks to Oliewenhuis Art Museum, with the influence of the Scotts, further emphasise that this founding collection reflects a specific cultural identity.

I am also interested in how acquisitions may have been affected as it could be argued that the Bloemfontein Group's donation was considered as a measure of what a permanent collection of art for the Free State had be in both visual and conceptual terms.

Another aspect of my research is drawn from concepts about museum studies, specifically in relation to the Bloemfontein Group's donation to the Oliewenhuis Art Museum. This is supported by concepts outlined by James Clifford, Tony Bennet and David Carrier. Clifford questions not only the act of collecting but the institution or museum that performs the function. He raises questions about the global significance and authority of labelling a group's identity and culture (which so often happens within the museum environment). It is a fact that the origins of Oliewenhuis Art Museum are closely knit with the involvement of the Free State citizens, with cultural setting playing a role. Therefore, the museum, audiences and collection cannot be separated. The local setting of the Bloemfontein Group itself and the immense differences they made throughout the timeframe which I examine is thus a core discussion in this research as these factors reflect receptiveness to change, and to the development of their surroundings. This in itself adds to the argument that the origins of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and its founding collection are unique.

Bennet's concepts around the origins of the museum, the public role of the museum and its collections, and how narrative is conveyed in the museum environment is of significance to my own understanding of the origins of the Oliewenhuis Art Museum.⁵⁷ A theorisation of narrative, in particular, is important to the ways in which I constitute and convey a history of the

⁵⁷ See Tony Bennett. 1994. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge; and Tony Bennett. 2007. *Class, Culture, Distinction*. Malden: Blackwell. The latter is a re-evaluation of the work of Pierre Bourdieu on class and culture, notably *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1986), *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993), *The Love Of Art: European Art Museums And Their Public* (1991), and *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1995).

Bloemfontein Group. This narrative is supported and illustrated in the first chapter, which deals with how the Bloemfontein Group, and other groups and individuals played an immense role in the development of an art museum in Bloemfontein. A large portion of my findings is situated in interviews and discussions I had with these role players, which enhances the notion that narrative and memory plays a vital role in this research.

According to Susan Crane, museums and memory are two inseparable concepts when examining the museum. She explores how museums and memory influence one another in her book *Museums and Memory*. Crane stated that:

Memory is an abstract concept and has many forms. The mental process of memory takes on corporeal form in the brain, but this physical form is invisible to the naked eye: memory becomes sensible and visible through imaginative recollection and representations, as we seek to hold onto our fleeting sense of its meaning. Memory is not a passive process: it evokes emotions and desires, positively or negatively charged; memory is also driven by a desire to remember or forget (Crane 2000: 1).

As the history of the Bloemfontein Group's formation and role within the Free State artistic community, as well as the founding collections of Oliewenhuis Art Museum have never been researched, I rely mainly on interviews by surviving members of the Bloemfontein Group, art societies and influential role players' descendants, like the Scott brothers to assist me in narrating this time frame and historical area. Newspaper clippings provided me with an understanding of how the time frame developed and enabled me to illustrate important exhibitions and happenings in Bloemfontein. Although these narratives and newspaper reports provide invaluable information I also acknowledge that the nature of this information, and recollections, are subjective.

1.3 Utilising Archives as Primary Sources

One of the issues that have to be dealt with in this research is the lack of published information about the Bloemfontein art scene and the Bloemfontein Group. In her Masters dissertation, Arinah Smit already indicated in 1980 that there was a lack of published information available

about the Bloemfontein art scene from 1940-1978 and that she had to rely mainly on unpublished sources such as minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, and council interviews. Since 1978 not many contributions were made by researchers, except for the independent research by Dr Fred Scott. The Scott family's aim was to keep all records of their parents' endeavours and contributions of the Bloemfontein Group and the Bloemfontein art scene. While research by the likes of Smit, Meyer and Scott has shed some light on the time period focussed on my research, the lack of published information persists. For the purpose of own research, posing theoretical questions around the archive became important to this study. As Jillian Carman observes about her research on the Johannesburg Art Gallery's collection: "The challenge of my research was to try and retrieve the lost archive, to reconstruct some sort of institutional memory" (Carman 2010: 188).

The core of this research evolved from a timeline I constructed; with mainly archival material of the Bloemfontein art scene from 1950s – 1989. This was a fundamental part of the research as the timeline provided insight into unpacking a new set of theoretical concepts relevant to the Bloemfontein art scene. The latter was only possible with the constitution and use of archives. The timeline enabled me to obtain a concrete idea of the happenings in the Bloemfontein art scene. However, I was also constrained to some extent as some of the information was absent which resulted in some of my findings being based on my own theories by comparing artworks and exhibitions of artists who dominated the particular timeframe. Therefore, not all the results can be regarded as factual. I came to the conclusion that the archive itself is an incomplete entity. Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook provided insightful contributions towards the constitution of the archive and the recording of the past:

Archives as institutions and records as documents are generally seen by academic and other users and by society generally, as passive resources to be exploited for various historical and cultural purposes. Yet archives are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society. Through archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalised. And the archivist is an integral part of this story-telling (Schwartz and Cook 2002: 1).

I am particularly interested in the ‘story-telling’ aspect which Schwartz and Cook refer to, as an integral part of this research relies on narrative, memory and story-telling. I support the view expressed by these authors that through the archive, the memory of the past is preserved, but also controlled. This was a perceptible problem which I encountered with this research report. I realised that as a result of this controlled past I was compelled to identify the shortcomings in the archive. This in turn compelled me to offer visual arguments regarding the Bloemfontein art scene. Therefore, one can suggest that with the collection of archival material, the archivist is also in a sense biased about what information should be collected. Schwartz and Cook also criticise the latter by stating that:

In the design of record-keeping systems, in the appraisal and selection of a tiny fragment of all possible records to enter the archive, in approaches to subsequent and ever-changing preservation of the archive, and in its patterns of communication and use, archivists continually reshape, reinterpret and reinvent the archive. This represents enormous power over memory and identity (Schwartz and Cook 2002: 1).

In their contributions in *Refiguring the Archive*⁵⁸ both Carolyn Hamilton and Achille Mbembe raise the same concerns as Schwartz and Cook about preserving memory and how to rethink and question current archiving systems. Hamilton expresses a concern that our current archiving systems are a product of prejudice, and explains that “historians and other scholars are increasingly concerned to understand how knowledge of the past is produced” (Hamilton 2002: 9). She further states that “previously historians ‘mined’ the archives for ‘nuggets of fact’ in a manner conscious of problems of bias in the record” (Hamilton 2002: 9).

Membe further adds that the archive has both power and limitations, and that “archives are the product of a process which converts a certain number of documents into items judged to be worthy of preserving and keeping in public place” (Mbembe 2002: 20). He further stated that the archive is a product of judgment, the result of a specific power and authority that involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as

⁵⁸ Hamilton, C. et al. 2002. *Refiguring the Archive*. Cape Town: David Philip.

others are discarded. “The archive is, therefore, a matter of discrimination...which in the end results in the granting of a privileged status. The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status” (Mbembe 2002: 20).

In his book, *Archival Fever*,⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida deconstructs the archive further by suggesting that the archive is not only an indicator of the past but also the future. These theorizations of the archive, as self-reflective of its role in history, remembrance and possibly the future as Derrida indicates, are critical to the ways in which my research on the Bloemfontein Group is attempting to grapple with an aspect of cultural memory and identity.

I am interested in Derrida’s finding that the archive is also an indication of the future. I related to some extent with this as I believe I contributed towards the future of the archive, specific to the Bloemfontein Group and the Bloemfontein art scene. Although the lack of information, in the archive prevented me from gathering factually based outcomes regarding the timeline, I believe it is important to emphasise that this study also benefits because of this inadequacy. Since Smith and Meyer’s dissertations in the late 1970’s, this will be the first time that a researcher has re-examined and combined all the available information about six different archives, viz: the Free State archives, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, William Humphreys Art Gallery, The Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery’s archives and the personal archives of the Scott brothers and René le Roux to add and build the existing archive. All this gathered archival research is now, for the first time combined and accessible to the public at Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

⁵⁹ Derrida, J. 1996. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2. TIMELINE OF AN EMERGING ART SCENE

This chapter will outline the Bloemfontein art scene from 1950-1989 through an account of an exhibition timeline, including important events and significant figures in the art scene. Interviews were conducted with various individuals who were either a member of the remaining Bloemfontein Group artists, a former and current curator of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, previous members of the two art associations relevant to the timeframe, a descendant of the Scott family or a member of the current or past Free State art scene and academia. The Orange Free State Art society and the Free State branch of the South African Art Society were two active societies within the timeframe and could be seen as driving forces in Bloemfontein. They attempted to steer and determine notions about what and who should be considered as ground-breaking art and artists in Bloemfontein. By taking the exhibition timeline and the outcomes of the interviews into account, I was able to investigate the apparently conservative nature of the Bloemfontein art scene and the influences of various individuals and societies that determined and steered the artistic scenery in the Free State.

On a national scale, the art scene developed and grew significantly, while in the Free State a very embryonic conservative art life occurred and was shaped by two art societies, some passionate individuals and practising artists, very few exhibition venues, and different but self-established groups. According to Rina Lubbs (surviving member of the Orange Free State Art Society, Social Committee and *Volksblad* art critic),

Different forces steered by dominant individuals determined the artistic environment in Bloemfontein from 1950-1980. The Orange Free State Art Society dominated the art scene in regards of a selection committee determining which artists formed part of their annual exhibitions in the Bloemfontein City Hall. This led to dissatisfaction amongst local artists, like the Bloemfontein Group, as the general feeling was that the selection committee based their choices of artists on favouritism and not from an educated artistic viewpoint. Different groups like the Bloemfontein Group, Museum Group (they hosted the exhibitions at the National Museum), Social committee (which was also the first group of the *Friends of Oliewenhuis*) hosted different exhibitions in the A.C White gallery and in the National Museum's art hall to the objection of the Orange Free

State Art Society as the society believed more exhibitions in different venues will influence the attendance and sales of their annual exhibitions (Lubbs, R. 2015. Interview with R. Lubbs on 16 October 2015. Bloemfontein. The data of the interview is in the possession of Y. de Kock).

Nationally the art scene appeared more sophisticated. On a local level, of both finding an artistic identity in Bloemfontein and nationally, seemed to be an ongoing objective.

A limited a number of artists settled in the Free State and Bloemfontein was isolated from bigger capitals such as Cape Town or Johannesburg. Nevertheless, the 1950s were an important time frame in the development of the Free State art scene as some thriving developments occurred and could be seen as the inception of the Bloemfontein art scene.

In 1956, important art patrons, Professor Frik Scott and his wife Dora, relocated to Bloemfontein from Pretoria. Their arrival in the Free State and the significance of their positive influence in the Free State art scene brought new insight to the surroundings of Bloemfontein. Not only did the Scotts influence and support the establishment of the Bloemfontein Group since its formation in 1958, but in their involvement in the regional artistic scene about the notions of art as a result of their European background and surroundings, were significant contributing factors. Their input seemed invaluable to some of the artists and art supporters in Bloemfontein as it seemed as if the different art societies of the time, in general, were quite naive and conservative.⁶⁰

Professor Scott became a dominant figure in the Free State art scene. Many believed that he and his wife were the centre of the artistic scene as they were consulted about art acquisitions and negotiators between the public and the municipality about a future art museum in Bloemfontein. He was also appointed as an advisor on the purchases of artworks for the City Council in 1961. It was a dream for many individuals, including the Scotts

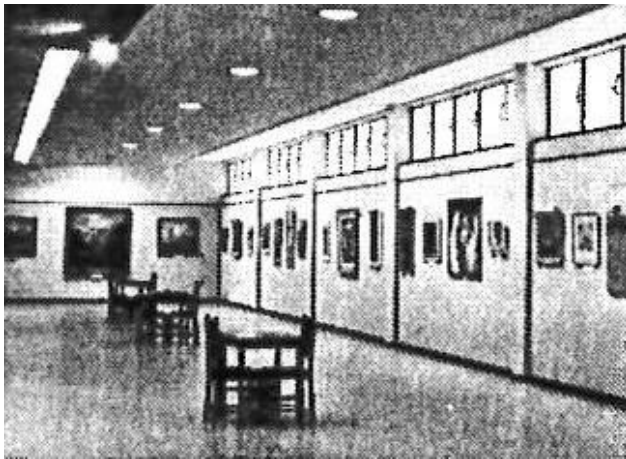
⁶⁰ Professor Scott was born in Winburg in 1915. As a young boy, living in a small Free State town, he had very little exposure to art. After completing his schooling in 1938, the young Scott settled in Groningen in the Netherlands to complete a medical degree. It was during this time that his interest and love for art was nurtured. The friendship between Scott and the artist Sebastian Galis (expressionist painter, sculptor and silversmith) during the Second World War strengthened his fascination and interest in art. Scott became actively involved in art activities in Groningen and when finances allowed, he would purchase graphic works and Japanese prints for his own collection. In 1943, while still living in Groningen, Frederick Scott met and married Miss Dora Bossart (Smit 1980: 72-73).

that a proper art museum should open in Bloemfontein. Professor Scott became a leading figure in the art scene as he was responsible for the selection of artworks of the A.C. White and the Municipal collections and in 1974, together with Dr J. J. Oberholster (Dept. of History, University of the Orange Free State) for the selection of works for the National Museum collection. Together these works formed a fairly representative collection of South African art. The collection was housed in the A.C. White Gallery and officially opened to the public in May 1976. Between 1959 and 1968 Professor Scott was an art critic for *Volksblad* (wrote under the alias 'Petrus') and he was elected as Honorary Curator for the permanent collection of the National Museum (Smit 1980: 72-74).

With this chapter, I introduce the reader to the Free State art scene from 1950-1989 by means of a coherent timeline which I was able to construct through a comprehensive archival researching process. Through my findings, I was able to determine that very little academic or published information was to be found within this specific artistic timeframe in the Free State, or specifically on the Bloemfontein Group. The archival research sources I consulted were the following:

- The Free State archives (newspaper clippings from the *Friend* newspaper were the most useful);
- Oliewenhuis Art Museum research library (where invaluable information was found on the Group itself, including more newspaper clippings, information on the individual artists, and information on Professor Fred and Mrs Dora Scott);
- William Humphrey's Art Gallery's research library where I found additional archival documents on the Group's exhibition there in 1966.
- The Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery archives at the University of the Free State and
- Louis, Willem and Fred Scott's personal archives

The opening of the A.C White Gallery in 1958 was a big breakthrough in the history of the art scene as this was the first gallery of its kind and provided the Bloemfontein audience with an impression of South African art. The A.C White Gallery was opened in the Municipal Civic Theatre Building (which is currently used as a small-claims court). A.C White came to South Africa in the early 1900's and was a former mayor of the Free State who provided the funds to the municipality to build the A.C White Gallery. He collected South African art and donated his collection of South African paintings to the Municipality. After that, the municipality continued to purchase one South African artwork per year.⁶¹



62

With the establishment of the A.C White Gallery, the debate concerning an Art Museum for Bloemfontein subsided for a few years. In an article published in *Die Volksblad* of 4 November 1958, titled 'Bloemfontein het nou die kern vir 'n goeie kunsversameling', the author reviewed a few of the works on exhibition in the Gallery. In addition, he stated that a number of the artworks on exhibition were of inferior quality and content and did not belong in an art gallery. Although there had been talk of gaining specialist advice on the purchase of artworks for the municipal art collection by former mayors, it would appear that personal preference had been the

⁶¹ An interview was conducted with Mr and Mrs Goedhals. A.C White was the great uncle of Mrs Goedhals. Mr Goedhals is the brother of the late artist, Neil Goedhals (Goedhals, L. 2014. Interview with Mr and Mrs Goedhals on 3 March 2014. Bloemfontein. The data of the interview is the property of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and available in the Research Library).

⁶² Installation photograph of paintings on display in the main hall of the A.C White Gallery. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Archive.

norm. This viewpoint supported the narrow-mindedness of some of the supposed 'art critics' of the late 1950's. Although the A.C. White Gallery housed the city's first permanent collection, various problems surrounding travelling exhibitions and accommodation still prevailed and it could this not serve as a substitute for an art museum, although I believe that the importance of this collection was more dominant as it proved to be the foundation of a well-established South African art collection in the Free State. It is ironic that some critics of the 1950's believed that this collection was not worth exhibiting in an art museum.

The A.C White collection of 32 artworks was donated to Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 1990 and includes some of the museum's most valuable artworks today. Its collection comprises works by Maggie Laubser (1886–1973), J.H Pierneef (1886–1957), Gwello Goodman, Thomas Baines, Gregoire Boonzaaier (1909–2005), Maud Sumner (1902–1985) and Eleanor Esmonde-White (1914–2007). Today, this collection plays a colossal role in Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection, for its value and educational purposes as some of the works were created by South Africa's leading artists and some refer to a historical aspect of Bloemfontein or the Free State. Maggie Laubser's *Landscape*, Robert Gwelo Goodman's *Snow scene in Scotland*, J.H Pierneef's *Rustenburgkloof* and Thomas Baines's *Bloemfontein from Naval Hill in 1851* are permanent features in the permanent exhibition area of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and are viewed daily by numerous museum visitors and school groups.



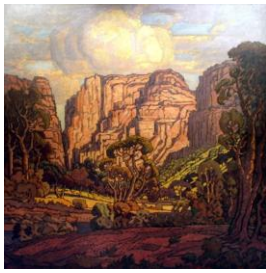
63



64

⁶³ Laubser, M, *Landskap*, Oil on canvas, 39.8 x 49.5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

⁶⁴ Baines, T, *Bloemfontein vanaf Naval Hill 1851*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 132 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum



65



66

The painting of Thomas Baines represents a panoramic view of Bloemfontein in 1851 from Naval Hill.⁶⁷ Baines's obsession with capturing his travel experiences in his photorealistic and detailed style is also evident in this painting. Thomas Baines was born in England in 1820 and left for South Africa in 1942. Baines undertook several journeys in South Africa, his first was to the Orange River (1848), beyond the Key River over the Winterberg (1949) and he attempted to reach the Okavango Swamps in 1850. He also became South Africa's first official war artists and recorded the Eight Frontier War (1850–1853) (John Thomas Baines 2015). When Baines left for the Free State to paint this particular landscape has not been recorded, but it could be assumed that it was painted in between these specific excursions.

The value of J.H. Pierneef's *Rustenburg Kloof* in the Oliewenhuis Art Museum is self-evident. This landscape painting, *Rustenburg Kloof* with its monumental and simplistic forms is one of Oliewenhuis Art Museum's biggest attractions and is seen by many visitors. The Rustenburg Kloof site was one of J.H. Pierneef's favoured sites. Another *Rustenburg Kloof* painting forms part of the J.H. Pierneef Station Panels series, painted from 1929-1932.

Robert Gwelo Goodman's *Snow scene in Scotland*, in contrast with the two South African landscapes of J.H. Pierneef and Thomas Baines, depicts a rather dramatic view. This artist was born in England and moved to South Africa with his family in 1886, but undertook excursions throughout Europe,

⁶⁵ Pierneef, J.H., *Rustenburgkloof*, Oil on board, 136,5 x 187 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁶⁶ Goodman, G., *Snow scene in Scotland*, Oil on canvas, 128 x 189 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁶⁷ Naval Hill is until present day a popular landmark in Bloemfontein. Naval Hill holds a rich history as the British Wiltshire regiment was stationed on the hill during the Anglo Boer war. Today it is still a popular tourist attraction. In 2012, a bronze statue of Nelson Mandela was erected on the hill, the figure facing the direction of the Methodist Church in Waaihoek, which was the location where the ANC was established in 1912. Different fables accompany the hill as well as the carved white horse, believed to be laid by the members of the Wiltshire regiment (South African History Online 2015)

visiting Scotland, Spain, and Italy, as well as the Lake region of England. He also travelled to South Africa on several occasions, and twice to India, in order to gather reference material for his paintings (Johans Borman Fine Art 2015).

Despite the general feeling of art critics in the 1950s, A.C White Gallery brought a noteworthy collection to the Free State and introduced groundbreaking South African artists to the platform. Even today, its contribution and donation has had a lasting impact and influence on the Free State art scene and its viewers. The fact that this donation holds the names of some of the South African Master painters like J.H Pierneef, Thomas Baines and Maggie Laubser, makes Oliewenhuis Art Museum one of the very few museums or places in the Free State where art enthusiasts, artists and students can view the works of South African pioneer artists. With the A.C White donation, together with the Bloemfontein Group's donation, the foundation was laid to build a collection of art for the Free State. The A.C White donation reflects a national impression of South African artistic development during that time (including artists of European origin), while the Bloemfontein Group shows a more regional development and identity. The rest of the A.C White donation includes the following artworks:



68



69



70



71



72



73

⁶⁸ Andersen, N, *Rough seas*. Oil on canvas. 91,5 x 61 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁶⁹ Andersen, N, *The rhino horn*. Oil on canvas. 77, 5 x 61,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁰ Baines, T, *Bloemfontein about 1850*, Oil on canvas. 37,5 x 60,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷¹ Boonzaaier, G, *Simonstad, Kaap*, 1948, Oil on board. 55 x 45cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷² Claerhout, F, *Church*. Oil on board. 59 x 50 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

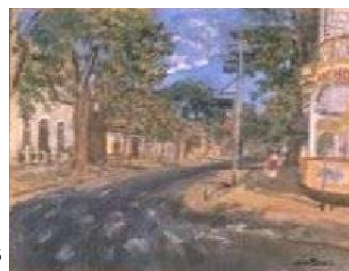
⁷³ Coetzer, W.H, *Landskap*, 1945, Oil on canvas, 122 x 76cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.



74



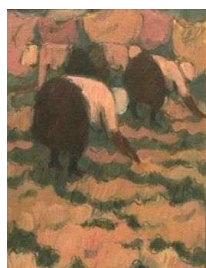
75



76



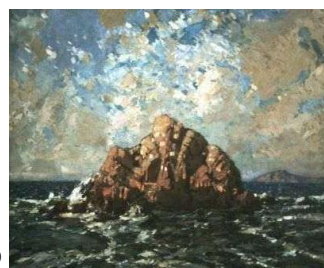
77



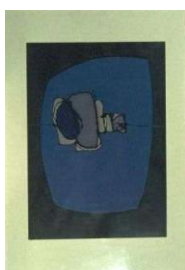
78



79



80



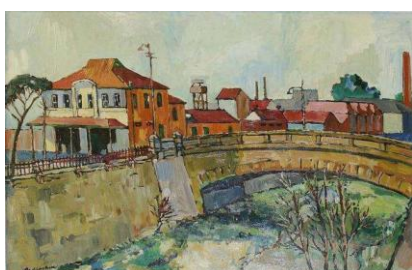
81



82



83



84



85



86

⁷⁴ Desmond, N, *Veldwagter met bokke*, Oil on canvas, 61 x 45,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁵ Dickson, E, *Kiss*, 1966, Etch, 56,2 x 43,2cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁶ Du Plessis, E, *Straattooneel*, Oil on canvas, 51 x 40,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁷ Du Toit, P, *Landskap*, Oil on canvas, 50,5 x 35,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁸ Esmonde-White, E, *Washer women*, Oil on canvas, 46 x 61cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁷⁹ Everard, B, *Gesig op Tweetoringkerk*, Oil on canvas, 68,7 x 40cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸⁰ Goodman, G, *The Rock*, Oil on canvas, 76,5 x 63,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸¹ Le Roux, *Abstract*, 1970, Oil on paper, 71,4 x 51cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸² Mayor, E, *Kremetartboom landskap*, 1950, Oil on canvas, 82,5 x 122,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸³ McCaw, T, *White Church, Wynberg, Cape Town*, Oil on canvas, 91,5 x 71cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸⁴ Podlashuc, A, *Bloemspruit*, Oil on board, 81 x 56,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸⁵ Podlashuc, A, *Dubbeldekkers*, Oil on board, 75 x 49cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

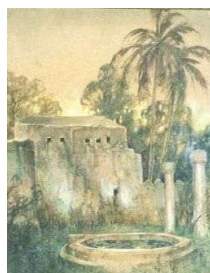
⁸⁶ Podlashuc, M, *Baakensvalei*, Oil on board, 91,5 x 75,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.



87



88



89



90



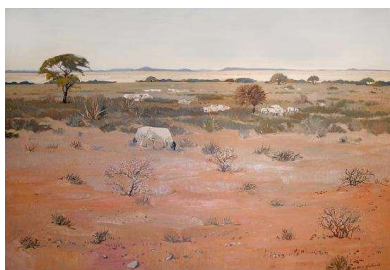
91



92



93



94



95

As previously indicated in 1958 the Bloemfontein Group was formally established under the leadership of Professor F.P Scott. According to Dr Fred Scott:

The impetus to create the Group originated following the rejection of artworks of artists living in and around Bloemfontein by the conveners of a national exhibition, which was held annually in the Bloemfontein City Hall during the 1950's. This initiative was aimed at establishing a group of artists who could work together under their own management in order to live out shared aims as well as to exhibit their works without

⁸⁷ Roworth, E, *The valley of Constantia*, Oil on canvas, 91,5 x 71cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸⁸ Sumner, M, *The road to Carisburgh Castle*, Watercolour. 62,3 x 46,4cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁸⁹ Timlin, W, *A ruined palace in Zanzibar*, 1932, Watercolour. 54,4 x 71,6cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹⁰ Van der Merwe, E, *Abstract*, 1964, Acrylic on paper. 65,1 x 44,9cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹¹ Van der Merwe, E, *Portret van Harry Creamens*, 1966, Acrylic on paper. 167 x 122cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹² Volschenk, J, *The Mozambique Mountain, Riversdale*, 1921, Oil on canvas. 20,2 x 37,7cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹³ Volschenk, J, *Flowery fields of Eve along the Langerbergen Riversdale*, 1922, Oil on canvas. 20,5 x 37,7cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹⁴ Westbrook, W, *Landscape*, Oil on canvas. 146 x 100cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

⁹⁵ Volschenk, J, *Going down the Homtini*, 1897, Oil on canvas. 33 x 43,3cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

interference from ill-equipped adjudicators and selectors of fine art (Scott 2012: 8).

Berman indicated that during the 1950s the Free State was “almost totally out of touch with the contemporary mood; it was not until 1958 a few kindred spirits at issue with the prevailing hyper-conservatism in that province attempted to remedy the situation by establishing the Bloemfontein Group” (Berman 1994: 14-15). This is one of the very few indications of the awareness of the work done by the Bloemfontein Group. According to Professor Louis Scott (son of F.P and Dora Scott):

The art that was produced locally before the appearance of the Bloemfontein Group did usually not include modern trends like expressionism, satire or abstraction. It included mostly still lifes or sentimental stereotypical farm or mountain landscapes or conservative portraits. Therefore, the works of the Bloemfontein Group were rejected for local exhibitions of the Bloemfontein art societies. This was a stimulus for the artists to get together to form the group (Scott, L. 2015. Interviewee completed a questionnaire compiled by the researcher. Bloemfontein. Email correspondence in possession by Y. de Kock)

In their frustration with the narrow-minded art scene, the Bloemfontein Group mocked their environment sarcastically, for example, Marianne Podlashuc (1932–2004) made satirical comments in the form of a cartoon of society members with the title *Ars Brevis, vita longa*. It is interesting that Marianne Podlashuc reversed the original Latin aphorism, *Ars longa, vita Brevis* when translated “art is long, life is brief” to “art is brief, life is long”.

It could be speculated that she purposefully wanted to emphasise that their narrow-minded surroundings misinterpret the lasting impact of art and that the society’s opinions about art are more important than the art or the artists themselves. With this image, the artist satirises the Orange Free State art society that was clearly dominated by older, “sophisticated” or “upper class”, conservative ladies. The way Podlashuc portrayed the group of women, mockingly with enlarged facial features and body parts, all being addressed by one lady, who is obviously leading the society, is evident that the artist felt conflicted about society’s intentions. Society seems to be steered by pretentiousness and ignorant individuals.



96

She also made a mock paint-by-numbers set with an outline of Dr Hoffman's (director of the National Museum and involved in the local art societies) face on a dinosaur.

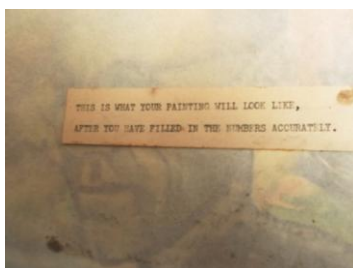
Both the drawing and the painting are preserved in a box Podlashuc titled *Paint your own prehistoric monster*. Dr Hoffman, being referred to as a 'prehistoric monster' is an indication that Podlashuc mocked with Hoffman's involvement at the National Museum and that his perspectives on art were viewed as archaic or 'prehistoric'. She degrades the importance of Hoffman even more, by placing Hoffman's portrait on a dinosaur and makes a 'paint by numbers' painting that resembles that of a children's colouring book and possibly referring to the painting techniques of her fellow artists in the Bloemfontein region that were ironically acceptable to the art societies.



97



98



99



100

⁹⁶ Podlashuc, M, *Ars Brevis vita longa*, Pen on tracing paper, 29 x 69cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

⁹⁷ Podlashuc, M, *Untitled*, Carton box of the series of paintings, 35 x 42cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

⁹⁸ Podlashuc, M, *Untitled*, Pen on paper, 35 x 42 cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

⁹⁹ Podlashuc, M, *Untitled*, Typed instructions by Podlashuc, 23 x 26.5cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

Scott further commented on the diversity of the Bloemfontein Group and their unique artistic approaches by stating that:

Since the individual members all worked in their own diverse styles it is difficult to see a trend that differed from the wider pattern in the country as a whole, except that much of the subject matter were local, e.g., landscapes of the Free State and Northern Cape by Stefan Ampenberger (1908-1983) and Walter Westbrook (1921-2015), township scenes around Thaba’Nchu by Claerhout (1919-2006), the Ampenbergers and Marianne Podlashuc or a look at Bloemfontein’s railway workers or buildings often loaded with satire by Alexander Podlashuc. Iris Ampenberger used to visit the waiting room of Doctor Katz in *Tweespruit*, where she sketched the patients who came from poor township homes. The abstract works by van der Merwe, Athur Cantrell (1917-1998), Varney and Rene le Roux were all according to the artists own individual styles (Scott, L. 2015. Interviewee filled in a questionnaire compiled by the researcher. Bloemfontein. Email correspondence in possession by Y. de Kock).

By taking the latter statement into account and by exploring their environment and views one can speculate that the Bloemfontein Group’s approach was unique. These depictions can also be seen as an indication of the Free State artist’s isolated environment. By depicting scenes like for example, Iris Ampenberger’s scene of underprivileged people waiting for medical help, in *Tweespruit*, the artist is showing a scene specific to an area in the Free State and making the environment the concept of the painting. Stefan Ampenberger also often used the landscape as a vantage point. Marianne Podlashuc also painted similar themes, as evident in her painting, *Siekevervoer* (1959).



101



102



103

¹⁰⁰ Podlashuc, M, *Untitled*, Acrylic paint on paper, 35 x 42 cm. Willem Scott private art collection.

¹⁰¹ Ampenberger, I, *Wagtende*, Oil on board, 50.5 x 60.5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁰² Ampenberger, S, *Landskap*, Oil on board, 55.8 x 37.8 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection

¹⁰³ Podlashuc, M, *Siekevervoer*, 1959, Acrylic on board, 77 x 101 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

Then again, artists like Eben van der Merwe and Reneé le Roux brought their abstract painting techniques, rarely performed in the Free State, to Bloemfontein, and made their technical abilities the concept of the artwork.



104



105

1959

In 1959, a turning point occurred as the art scene made some progress with some art activities and exhibitions. The Bloemfontein Group exhibited for the first time as a unit at the National Museum's Art Hall in Bloemfontein.

Newspaper clippings from the time reveal the conflicted nature of the press and the politics within the arts during the 1950s. The reporter of the *Friend* newspaper was extremely critical of the Bloemfontein Group's first exhibition at the National Museum's art hall, stating that an exhibition of "any new group willy-nilly arouses suspicion of something too new, too ultra, too imaginary and too esoteric for any ordinary appreciation". In contrast, the reporter of the *Volksblad* newspaper stated that the Group was excelling with their talents and that their exhibition was a reflection of their fresh approach, by producing innovative and original artworks.

In 1959, the Orange Free State art society held an enormous exhibition at the City Hall, with 98 locally and nationally selected artists. Some of the participating artists included Gregoire Boonzaaier, Frans Claerhout, Bruce Hancock (1912–1999), Otto Klar (1908–1994), Fayettea Varney, Maureen Quin (b 1934) and Laura Rautenbach (1932–1998), Daniella Geldenhuys, Fayettea Varney and Terrenc McCaw (1913–1978). As there is no official photographic documentation of this exhibition one of the difficulties I

¹⁰⁴ Le Roux, *Abstract*, Watercolour on paper, 16 x 35 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁰⁵ Van der Merwe, E, *Autumn Landscape*, Oil on board, 78 x 61.5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

encountered while compiling the timeline, was that no photographic documentation of these exhibitions was archived.

Consequently, I had to find artworks of artists who participated in this exhibition that was produced in a similar time frame. This not only enabled me to draw an assumption about how these exhibitions visually appeared, but also allowed me to undertake a visual analysis about what the society regarded as acceptable, displayable art.

Another difficulty I encountered was that some of the artworks of artists like Bruce Hancock and Nils Anderson (1897–1972) were rarely dated. However, with thorough research I managed to speculate an estimated date of production that serves as a possible indication that the work was produced during 1950. Hancock's *Houses and Table Mountain* and Andersen's *Rough Seas* are two examples of these undated artworks.

Artworks of Laura Rautenbach and Danielle Geldenhuys were rarely documented, but archival material allowed me to get an indication of work which these two sculptors typically produced throughout their careers. These were mainly portrait busts of officials. The archival images of these two sculptors reproduced below focussed specifically on the work they produced during the course of 1950. The following images represent some of the artists' work featured during this group exhibition in 1959, as organised by the Orange Free State Art society:



106



107



108

¹⁰⁶ Boonzaier, G, *Koranna Vrou*, 1953, Charcoal, watercolour and ink on brown paper, 38,7 x 57,4cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹⁰⁷ Boonzaier, G, *Vrystaatse landskap*, 1954, Watercolour and pencil on paper, 56 x 38,2cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹⁰⁸ Hancock, B, *Houses and Table Mountain*, Oil on board, 51.3x38,2cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection. Although this painting is not dated one could make the assumption that it was produced in the 1950's. According to his website, <http://www.brucehancock.co.za/bruce-hancock-biography.html>, it is indicated that the artist started to experiment with oil paints from 1952, whilst painting in water colours earlier in his career.



109



110



111



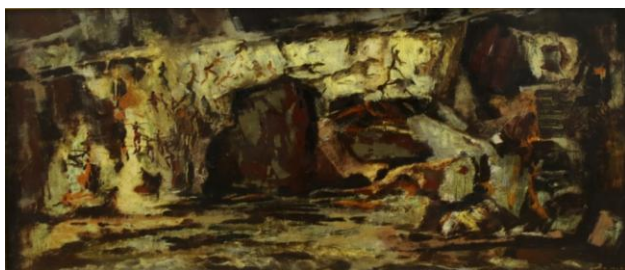
112



113



114



115

These images gave me an indication of how this exhibition appeared in 1959, and enabled me to reconstruct this exhibition visually. This allowed me to analyse the vision of the Orange Free State Art society's exhibition policy. Only a limited number of the participating artists were selected to visually explain the exhibition, rendering it is challenging to find examples of the artworks. Some of the artists' work like those of Otto Klar, Terrance McCaw and Maurice van Essche, were drawn from 1941 and 1960 as it was quite difficult to find examples of work produced specifically in the 1950's.

¹⁰⁹ Andersen, N, *Rough Seas*, Oil on Canvas, 91,5 x 61cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection. Although this specific work is not dated, it could be assumed that it was produced during the 1950's as this seascape painter became ill in 1966 and produced very few works since then and passed away in 1972. His career reflected that his earlier work consisted mostly of water colours and produced oil paintings later in his career (Berman 1994: 36). *Rough Seas* is a good example of Andersen's work produced in oils.

¹¹⁰ Klar, O, *Composition - Creative Impulse*, Oil on board, 1959, 62x31cm. Durban Art Gallery Permanent Collection. <http://www.art-archives-southafrica.ch/KLAR.htm>

¹¹¹ Artist, Laura Rautenbach, busy with clay model of Mr Justice A v d S Centlivres (Smit 1986: 11).

¹¹² Van Essche, M, *Harlequin*, 1960, Oil on board, 28,5cm x 22cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹¹³ McCaw, T, *White church Wynberg, Cape*, 1940, Oil on canvas, 92 x 71,65cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹¹⁴ Klar, O, *Seetoneel*, Oil on board, 78 x 53cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹¹⁵ Klar, O, *Bushmen Freeze*, 1960, Oil on board, 39 x 74,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

Evidently, the Orange Free State Society's vision and preference prompted the exhibition of classic and popular genres of the time like landscapes, seascapes, portraits still life painting and portraiture sculpture. This is also evident when one looks at the photographic imagery of recorded artworks in newspaper articles of the 1950s, such as sculptures of Daniella Geldenhuys and Laura Rautenbach. With continued analysis of the timeline, it becomes clear that some of the artists were repeatedly invited to participate in the Orange Free State art societies' exhibitions. These recurring names were also part of the 1959 exhibition. Laura Rautenbach, Daniella Geldenhuys, Gregoire Boonzair, Otto Klar, Bruce Hancock, Terrance McCaw and Maurice van Essche (1906–1977).

It came to my attention that some of these artists were part of the New Group, established in 1938 under the leadership of Gregoire Boonzair with the assistance of Terrence McCaw and Freida Lock (1902–1962) (Bekker 1990: 26).



116

The New Group worked together for 16 years, approximately until 1954. The Group's vision was to some extent similar to that of the Bloemfontein Group. Berman indicated that:

¹¹⁶ Foundation members of the New Group in Gregoire's studio in 1938. From left to right: Joyce Ord-Brown, Maurice Hughes, Gregoire Boonzair, René Graethz. Terrene McCaw, Jeanette Pope—Ellis, Lippy Lipshitz, Florence Zerffi and Freida Lock (Bekker 1990: 26).

The New Group was not linked by adherence to any specific aesthetic attitude – other than a shared and publicly expressed contempt for the amateurism prevailing in South African art. Their common cause was to the conquest of popular inertia and the promotion of public appreciation for their work. Membership was drawn from all over the country but was restricted by severe election procedures. For 15 years the Group fulfilled its stated aims: it organised lectures and exhibitions throughout South Africa and generally did much to make the community aware that there were valid alternatives to the romantic picture-postcards to which it was addicted (Berman 1994: 10).

According to his website, it was indicated that Bruce Hancock and his wife, Hazel, were joint secretaries of the Orange Free State art society and that they assisted with the organisation of its exhibitions. More importantly, it emerged that they were good friends with Terrence Mc Caw, Gregoire Boonzaier, Don Madge (1920–1997), Father Frans Claerhout, Brian Wiles (1932–1993), Lucy Mullins (1920–2008), Errol Boyley (1918–2007), Piet van Heerden (1917–1991) and many others. It may be possible that because of Hancock's relationship with some of the New Group members whilst the secretary of the Orange Free State art society, these artists were repeatedly selected for these exhibitions. Their work was seen as ground-breaking, and favoured over the Bloemfontein Group's work.

1960–1964

According to the archival material, the 1960s indicated a livelier art scene, but local disagreements and politics involving exhibition policies kept the art scene conservative. The Bloemfontein Group started to explore other cities to which to take their work, and started to take their work to galleries in Pretoria. Archival proof indicated that the Bloemfontein Group exhibited together at the Vorsters Gallery in Pretoria (1961) and Rodericks Gallery in Bloemfontein (1962) (see Appendix 1).

According to the reporter, 'P.A.K' (see Appendix 2), the work of the Bloemfontein Group was positively received at the Vorster Gallery in Pretoria in 1961. The exhibition was opened by Mr J.B Braaksma, the Cultural Attaché to the Netherlands Embassy, giving the exhibition some degree of stature. The reporter valued the Group's work by stating that the success of the Group's approach lay in the fact that the artists had a strong

individualistic take on social and political situations, and a bold use of abstraction and patterns.

Another important development of the early 1960s was that the size of the Bloemfontein Group expanded. Mike Edwards (b 1938), Fayette and Neville Varney (1926–1966), Authur Cantrell and Walter Westbrook joined in 1961, Stephan and Iris Ampenberger in 1963.

A newspaper report in the *Volksblad*, 1963 (see Appendix 2) confirms the Ampenbergers incorporation into the group and explained that the couple undertook extensive travels throughout South Africa. They travelled the country in a caravan and produced art wherever they situated themselves for a period of time. When this report was written, the couple was residing in Bloemfontein for a week, in a caravan park outside Bloemfontein, until they left to permanently reside in Thaba N'chu. 'Petrus', or rather Professor Frik Scott, the author of this report, did not officially announce that these two artists will officially join the Bloemfontein Group, but promoted the work of these two artists vigorously amongst the Free State art circles.

Forgotten slides, donated by Miemie Pienaar (a close friend of the Ampenbergers and Scotts who resided in *Tweespruit*), of some of the Ampenbergers' excursions (available at the research library of Oliewenhuis Art Museum), allowed me to understand the art which the Ampenbergers produced. One could literally see how their immediate environment influenced the themes and concepts in their artworks. Also, some of these slides confirm that the Ampenbergers and the Scotts were good friends, possibly also one of the main reasons why these two artists were invited to join the Bloemfontein Group. Unfortunately, no dates were indicated on the slides, but one could assume that some of these photos of the landscapes were taken during their excursions from 1946 to 1964 until they settled in Thaba N'chu. The photos with Dora and Frik Scott were presumably taken after the Ampenbergers settlement in 1964. With the assistance of Louis Scott, I was able to identify some the individuals and places in the slides.



117



118



119



120

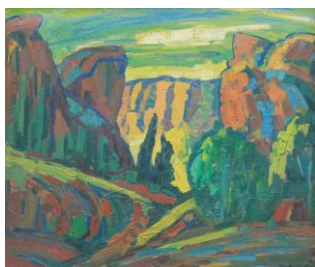


121

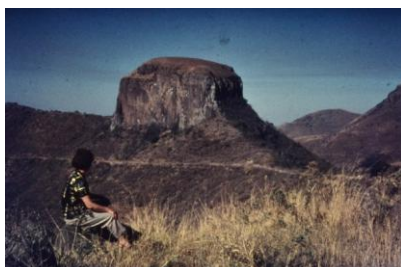


122

Evidently, throughout his career, Stefan Ampenberger was mostly concerned with the landscape. Most of his paintings depict the landscape in an expressionistic way. On viewing these slides, I realised the importance of their travels in building their art careers, and one can draw a comparison on the documentation of the landscape with his paintings whilst Iris focussed more on figures and portraits. The images below illustrate the latter.



123



124



125

¹¹⁷ Iris Ampenberger in their signature vehicle in an unknown caravan park. Oliewenhuis Art Museum archives.

¹¹⁸ Dora Scott at Boesmansrivier. Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

¹¹⁹ Iris Ampenberger relaxing in front of their caravan. Apparently did Stefan build the caravan himself and renovated the inside to function as both a living area and little studio they worked in. Oliewenhuis Art Museum archives.

¹²⁰ Miemie Pienaar, Iris and Stefan Ampenberger. Apparently was Miemie Pienaar a good friend of the Ampenbergers and lived in *Tweespruit*. Miemie Pienaar also donated all the slides of the Ampenbergers to Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

¹²¹ Unidentified man with a painting of Stefan Ampenberger. Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

¹²² Frik and Dora Scott with Iris Ampenberger at coast. Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

¹²³ Ampenberger, S, *Kloof*, Oil on board, 60 x 70 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹²⁴ Unknown location of Stefan and Iris's journeys. Oliewenhuis Art Museum archive.

¹²⁵ Figure 115. Ampenberger, I, *Untitled*. This image was found amongst the slides in Oliewenhuis Art Museum archive. No title or date is indicated.



126

The Bloemfontein Group artists expanded their individual careers and when not exhibiting together as a group, they broadened their careers by participating in several solo and group exhibitions in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Quadrennial exhibitions in South Africa, and Sao Paulo Biennales. This in itself is an indication that these artists started to flourish and made prioritised the expansion of their professional careers as artists. A proper analysis of these exhibitions was restricted, as very few catalogues, photographs, newspaper clippings were available in the archives I consulted.

In 1961 Eben van der Merwe participated in the *Second quadrennial* exhibition of South African Art. Iris Ampenberger had her first solo exhibition in Cape Town. Alexander Podlashuc had a joint exhibition with Marianne Podlashuc in Cape Town. An article in the Volksblad (see Appendix 2), written by 'Petrus' (Frik Scott) and titled, *Uitstalling was groot sukses*, this exhibition was opened by Maurice van Essche and received high praise from the Cape Town art critics.

According to Petrus, this exhibition contained paintings of railway workers, police - agents, judges and prisoners which is an indication of realism with a strong sense of comedy. Petrus further stated that by contrast, Marianne's work differs from that of her husband, although it also contains a strong social factor. Her work is richly imbued with a humanistic sense and great solemnity. Her untainted painting technique does not reflect a propagandised idea of her surroundings. Petrus ended this article by stating that "it is doubtful that there is any other artist in our country who has portrayed social issues like Marianne". The content of the exhibition described by Petrus in a local Free State newspaper is both an indication of the Scott's loyalty to the Group, but also of a possible biased viewpoint

¹²⁶ Unknown figure of a woman, taken by the Ampenbergers on one of their excursions. Possibly in the Thaba N'chu area. Oliewenhuis Art Museum archives.

on the Group's individual artistic careers, specifically aimed at the Free State audiences which did not approve their work in local exhibitions.

Unfortunately, no photos of this specific exhibition were available. But within Oliewenhuis and William Humphreys Art Galleries, artworks by these artists, in permanent collections produced approximately in this timeframe, provided me with a clearer sense of the type of commentary produced by Petrus.



127



128

In 1962 Renée le Roux had a solo exhibition at the Rodericks Gallery in Bloemfontein, opened by Frik Scott, and at the Egon Guenther Gallery in Johannesburg, opened by Bartho Smit. Unfortunately, very little photographic information is available in the archives. What was available was an exhibition invitation together with some newspaper clippings, in Renée le Roux's personal scrapbooks (see the exhibition invitation in Appendix 1 and some newspaper clippings in Appendix 2).



129



130



131

Petrus reported in the *Volksblad* (see Appendix 2) on Renée le Roux's exhibition by stating that it seemed as if the artist made use of an

¹²⁷ Podlashuc, M, *Siësta*, Oil on board, 65,5 x 45,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

¹²⁸ Podlashuc, A, *Night Shift*, Oil on board, 56 x 74,5 cm. William Humphreys Permanent Collection.

¹²⁹ Renée le Roux standing with her artwork, *Son god*, with her solo exhibition at the Rodericks gallery in Bloemfontein.

¹³⁰ From left Professor Scott, Renée le Roux and possibly Walter Westbrook with one of the artworks on exhibition at her solo exhibition at the Rodericks gallery in Bloemfontein. Source: Renée le Roux's personal scrapbooks.

¹³¹ One of Renée le Roux's artworks on exhibition at her solo exhibition at the Rodericks gallery in Bloemfontein. Source: Renée le Roux's personal scrapbooks (newspaper clipping from the Friend newspaper).

assemblage technique in combination with abstract art. This was a unique characteristic of Renée le Roux's style and quite a new concept to the Free State audiences. Petrus specifically refers to one artwork in this exhibition, titled, 'sun god' or a superior being and wanted to demonstrate that found objects can be used in an artwork to convey a message to its viewer.

In 1963 Eben van der Merwe and Renée le Roux both participated at the Sao Paulo Biennale together with renowned artists like Jean Welz (1900–1975), Maurice van Essche, Pranas Domsaitis (1880–1965), Alfred Krenz (1899–1980), Erik Laubsher (1927–2013), Walter Battiss (1906–1982) and Bettie Cilliers-Barnard (1914–2010). This was evidently a great accomplishment for these two Free State artists. Dr Frik Scott was part of the selection committee where only 31 artworks were selected to represent the country on this international exhibition.

This specific report by Petrus in the *Volksblad* in 1963 (Appendix 2) gave me some insight into the nature of the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1963. The aim was to relocate and validate the specific works he refers to by Eben van der Merwe; *Stillewe* and *Sittende meisie* and Renée le Roux's *Seebamboes* and to compare them with favourably with the work of the more established artists, on exhibition. Renée le Roux had three more artworks, which Petrus referred to as 'non-figurative untitled paintings'. The lack of more information on these artworks made it difficult to relocate them as a result of missing titles. However, *Seebamboes* was exhibited at the Renée le Roux Retrospective at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 2007. This enabled me to make some visual comparisons.



132



133



134

¹³² Cilliers-Barnard, B, *Metamorphose*, 1962, Oil on canvas, 112 x 112cm, Artist private collection (Ballot 1996: 46).

¹³³ Battiss, W, *Untitled*, 1963, Oil on canvas, 31 x 41,5 cm, Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹³⁴ Domsaitis, P, *Three Figures*, 1960-1963, Oil on board, 65,5 x 50,5cm, Public collection (Verloren van Themaat 1976: 49).



135



136

From all the examples above, only the work of Pranas Domsaitis, *Three Figures* (1960-1963), and Renée le Roux's work *Seebamboes* (1962) are the exact examples of the artworks that were on display at the Sao Paolo Biennale in 1962. Because of a lack of photographic documentation of artists' work, I could not discover images of Eben van der Merwe's two entries, '*Stillewe*' and '*Sittende meisie*'. Renée le Roux had further solo exhibitions: in the SAA of Arts Gallery in Cape Town, and the South African *Quadrennial* exhibition in Pretoria.

During 1964, the *Third Quadrennial* Exhibition of South African Art seemed to provide further exposure for local Free State artists such as Eben van der Merwe, Iris Ampenberger, Mike Edwards, Walter Westbrook, Stefan Ampenberger and Author Cantrell.

According to his artist profile in Grania Ogilvy's *The Dictionary of South African Painters and Sculptors* (1988), Eben van der Merwe took part in the Venice Biennale exhibition in 1964, but no official archival documentation of the artworks exhibited was found. I assume it is partly due to the fact that in essence, very little archival information is available on Eben van der Merwe's career probably because the artist himself did not find it useful to archive his own career, unlike Renée le Roux. Her private scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and catalogues really enabled me to get a clear understanding of her career and how she developed as an artist.

I believe the greatest achievement for the Bloemfontein Group's history of exhibitions in 1964, is the joint exhibition with a group of artists from Pretoria at Gallery One in Bloemfontein. The title of this exhibition, *Progressive painters*, already gave one the impression that the Group's work was seen as avant-garde (see Appendix 1) and that their work met

¹³⁵ Krenz, A, *Flowers*, 1963, Oil on canvas, 66 x 90cm, Private Collection (David-Mesman 1998: 75).

¹³⁶ Le Roux, R, *Seebamboes*, 1962, Oil on board, 44 x 48cm, Artist private collection (Photograph was taken by George Hugo at Renée le Roux's Retrospective exhibition at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 2007).

the standard of nationally known artists such as Bettie Cilliers-Barnard, Walter Battiss, Alexis Preller (1911–1975), Leo Theron (1926–2012), Joan Templer (1929–2005), Gunther van der Reis (b 1927) and Anna Vorster (b 1928).

1965–1969

In the timeframe 1965 – 1969, the Bloemfontein Group had developed their individual careers by participating in some pioneering exhibitions. During 1965, noteworthy examples include Eben van der Merwe at the Sao Paolo Biennale, Iris Ampenberger in the *SA Women Artists* exhibition at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, and Neville Varney who had a solo exhibition at the National Museum in Bloemfontein. Unfortunately, most of these exhibitions are merely recorded in newspaper articles, with little information on the work or the exhibitions themselves. A newspaper article published in the *Volksblad*, written by Petrus, gave me some insight into Varney's solo exhibition at the National Museum in Bloemfontein (see Appendix 2).

According to Petrus, Varney's solo exhibition was a big success due to the artist's refreshing "atmospheric approach, characteristic of the Free State landscape". Petrus noted further he has an ability to represent the landscape as both realistic and surrealistic. With *Oerwoud Toneel*, the image in the newspaper article, the artist took his style a step further by doing embossing on a copper plate.

Important developments of 1966 reveal that the Bloemfontein Group had two exhibitions at William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley and at the National Museum in Cape Town.

The joint exhibition of Marianne and Alexander Podlashuc at Gallery Shear in Cape Town is also an indication that the Group developed their artistic careers by being actively involved in the national art scene. During 1967, Iris Ampenberger held a solo exhibition at the National Museum in Bloemfontein

Again, an article by Petrus in the *Volksblad* newspaper (see Appendix 2) revealed his enthusiastic preference for the Group's artistic careers. In this article, he specifically focussed on how Iris Ampenberger's painting style developed. He even claimed that her work contains stylistic similarities comparable with a Flemish expressionist, Gustave de Smedt.

An exceptional exhibition occurred in 1968: Stefan Ampenberger celebrated his first Retrospective exhibition at the Saayman Hall of the Free State Technical College. According to the exhibition catalogue, the artist exhibited 60 artworks spanning of a 40-year painting career.

Sixty artworks exhibited in a retrospective exhibition of his 40-year-long painting career was, without a doubt, an accomplishment for this self-taught artist. The fact that this exhibition is meticulously recorded with a proper exhibition catalogue and marketing material, helped me to understand the importance of this achievement for the artist, and in particular, his career (see Appendix1).

Unfortunately, no images of the artworks that were on exhibition are available. This would have given me more clarity on whether the artist's style had progressed, and enabled me to draw comparisons between his works to other national artists working within the timeframe. In his foreword to Stefan's exhibition catalogue, Frik Scott indicated that with this exhibition it is evident that the artist was influenced by his immediate environment in his artistic practice, as a result of the 18 years of travelling throughout South Africa with his wife, Iris.

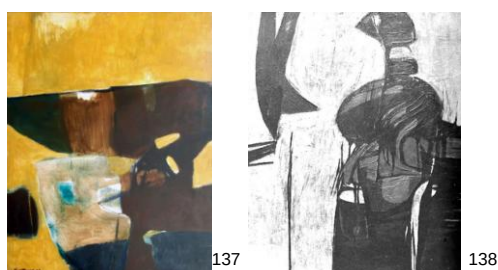
In a report in the *Volksblad* newspaper (see Appendix 2) Petrus indicated that Stefan had a unique expressionistic style of portraying the landscape and that it is difficult to compare his style to the exotic art of Irma Stern or the romantic expressionism of Maggie Laubser. Instead, Petrus suggested that his work is visually more related to the late Wulf Kibel. According to both archival material and catalogue, it seemed that Stefan did in a sense progress in his technique because he worked in different media such as printmaking and watercolours and also depicted humans (which was a new tendency as the landscape was more of a signature subject matter for him).

He also had three-dimensional works made from concrete, stone and sandstone on display.

For both the artist himself and the Bloemfontein art scene, this retrospective exhibition was a remarkable milestone. These 60 artworks could have been an indication to Free State audiences that this artist was worth investing in. In his foreword, Professor Frik Scott indicated that the fact that Stefan joined the Bloemfontein Group in the 1960's, had helped to promote his art career, and being part of the Group made him more renowned and significant.

Another very important exhibition occurred in 1968. The Bloemfontein Group had its first-anniversary exhibition, commemorating working together for ten years, at the National Museum in Bloemfontein. This event is however also confirmed in some writings about the Bloemfontein Group, as well as in Fred Scott's curator's message in the *Stylistic Links* exhibition catalogue. But, unfortunately, I was unable to find any archival material relating to this exhibition, such as newspaper reports, catalogues or photo documentation.

Lastly, another noteworthy happening in 1968 was that artworks of Eben van der Merwe, *Composition-Ochre and brown* (1968) and *Ritual* (1967) were selected to be part of the Venice Biennale exhibition.



No specific archival material was available on the specific paintings which Eben van der Merwe produced which were selected for the Venice Biennale. I was very fortunate that *Composition-Ochre and brown* (1968) was part of Willem Scott's private collection. This enables me to enrich the archive with valuable information that contributes towards establishing the

¹³⁷ Figure 127. Van der Merwe, E, *Composition-Ochre and brown*, 1968, Acrylic on board, Willem Scott private collection (Photograph was taken and provided by Willem Scott).

¹³⁸ Figure 128. Van der Merwe, E, *Ritual*, 1967, Acrylic on board (Berman 1994: 464).

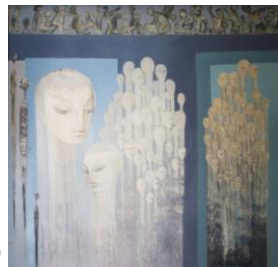
importance of this artist. The back side of this painting, with Italian courier stickers still attached to the board, can be seen above. *Ritual* (1967) is a black and white image of the other work selected for the Biennale, reproduced in Esmé Berman's book, *Art & Artists of South Africa* (1994).

This outline reflects some of the Bloemfontein Group's artistic achievements during the course of the 1960s. As artists, their careers were starting to develop. They participated in numerous exhibitions, nationally and abroad. Some members of the Group had solo exhibitions and one could consider that the outline is also an indication that the Group desperately wanted to compete and be recognised on a national and international level.

The local Orange Free State Art society also brought numerous exhibitions to the Free State. A total of six exhibitions were held in the Bloemfontein City Hall. These exhibitions included both locally and nationally recognised artists such as Alfred Krenz, Maggie Laubser, Barbara Burry (1909–2010), Terence McCaw, Bettie-Cilliers Barnard and Erich Fleishmann (1899–1970). Local artists that were mostly invited to these exhibitions were the two sculptors Daniella Geldenhuys and Laura Rautenbach.



139



140



141



142



143

¹³⁹ Laubser, M, *Portrait of a woman*, Oil on board, 55 x 44.5 cm. William Humphreys Art Gallery permanent collection.

¹⁴⁰ Cilliers-Barnard, B, *Totem Bepeinsing*, 1975, Oil on canvas, 121 x 121cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴¹ Burry, B, *Flowers*, 1965, Oil on board, 86 x 55cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

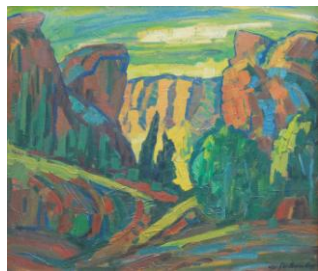
¹⁴² Meerkotter, D, *Abstract landscape*, 1967, 22.5 x 30 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴³ Rautenbach, L *Dodi*, 1971, 30 x 15 x 12 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

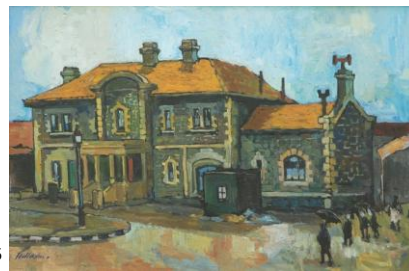
This was due to the selection committee's criteria of acceptability, which the Bloemfontein Group failed to meet. (Lubbs, R. 2015. Interview with R. Lubbs on 16 October 2015. Bloemfontein. The data of the interview is in the possession of Y. de Kock. Rina Lubbs is a surviving member of the Orange Free State Art Society, Social Committee of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and *Volksblad* art critic. She wrote articles for the *Volksblad* from 1969 to 1984). By exception were Iris and Stefan Ampenberger, Alexander Podlashuc and Fayettea Varney invited for these exhibitions.



144



145



146



147

Although the Bloemfontein Group was rarely invited to participate in these exhibitions, one could speculate that the art societies also attempted to bring artists from other cities to display their work in Bloemfontein with the aim of setting an acceptable standard of quality and excellence. Perhaps the societies believed that the Bloemfontein art viewers, collectors and artists should be educated by looking at the work of different, nationally renowned artists?

However, it seems like the Bloemfontein artistic community was constantly battling to measure itself against a national standard. Local art societies did not recognise that the Bloemfontein Group was actually starting to measure itself on a national level by exhibiting their work in other cities, and the plea

¹⁴⁴ Fayettea Varney, *Ek self*, 1966, Mixed media on board, 77 x 105cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴⁵ Ampenberger, S, *Kloof*, Oil on board, 61 x 71cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴⁶ Podlashuc, A *Stasiegebou, Bloemfontein*, 50.5 x 76 cm, Oil on board. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁴⁷ Ampenberger, I, *The Meal*, 45.5 x 60cm, Oil on board. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

for an art museum was not forgotten. In 1966, a committee incorporating various patrons of the arts (which included Professor Scott) was formed, and once again the campaign for an Art Museum was initiated. Although there were times when the establishing of an art museum seemed absolutely improbable and the fight seemed to be both worthless and never-ending. Professor Scott, however, dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the cause throughout the remainder of his life.

Nationally, black and white artists had different struggles and aims regarding their artistic identity within their societies. The struggles which the Bloemfontein artists faced were not that unique, as the rest of the country was also searching for an artistic identity. Another contributing factor to the Free State struggle was their physical geographical setting, which somewhat handicapped these artists preventing them from forming part of a bigger artistic environment. Anitra Nettleton, in *A Visual Century*, wrote that:

While black artists like Legae, Kumalo, Arnold and Sithole were using primitivist stylistic strategies to make a statement about their identity...throughout the 1960's, white artists were using the same strategies to formulate their own claims of belonging on the continent and to establish their credentials as members of the avant-garde. Artists like Hannes Harrs, Guenther van der Reiss, Larry Scully and Bettie Cilliers-Barnard developed abstract painting that recalled aspects of Africa through motifs. It is important to remember that an educated audience for modern art was severely lacking in South Africa in the 1960's and abstraction was consequently considered highly avant-garde. The Africaness of these abstract paintings like that of Villa's sculpture set them apart from European forms (Nettleton 2011: 157).

The Bloemfontein Group's aspiration to find their artistic identity locally, nationally and abroad, and to imagine themselves as part of a bigger artistic world was almost a constant feature within the period of 1960 to 1970. However, the search for artistic identity was not exclusive only to the Free State. As Nettleton wrote, some artists like Ezrom Legae (1938–1999), Sydney Kumalo (1935–1988) and Lucas Sithole (1931–1994), used their artistic techniques to emphasise their individuality, and white artists used similar strategies to form part of the avant-garde. The difference between the struggles in the Free State towards inclusion in the national

artistic scenery is that nationally artists and galleries were striving to compete on an international level, while in the Free State artists and the art community were aiming to maintain a unique regional artistic environment.

It appears that the 1960s showed a platform that was created for national artists to exhibit in the Free State, while individual members were fighting and striving for the creation of an art museum and were totally isolated from the tendencies Nettleton is referring to. Nationally, the art world revealed a different nature and it seemed as if the Free State was isolated from national trend where it seemed like artists and galleries were desperate to show the world they were creditable to compete on an international level, while South Africa struggled through political obstacles and international interferences in terms of sanctions, rebelling and the continuous burdens of apartheid. The biggest struggle the Free State faced was to establish a solid artistic environment for artists while different art associations and individuals bickered about the notion of good art and art worthy being exhibited in the early stages of its exhibition-orientated society.

The whole country and the Free State experienced different levels of isolation. The country, being isolated from Europe and because of racial isolation, was deprived of international exposure. The Free State is geographically isolated from bigger cities where more noteworthy artistic development and training were offered. The artists within the Free State were isolated from other national artists because of this lack of artistic development and very little exposure. Furthermore, the Free State was also isolated from proper artistic education as no art schools, centres, museums or galleries existed. As a result of the limited number of art patrons and art specialists, and therefore conflicting views about the notion of 'good' art, the artists within the region (like the Bloemfontein Group) isolated themselves from their own artistic environment because of the local polemic.

Isolation and conflict are therefore evident during the 1960s. Hazel Friedman noted that by the 1960s:

The institutionalised policies of racial segregation had translated into an era of unmitigated oppression and censorship. The escalating oppression, resistance, panic and paranoia culminated in the apartheid

government officially severing its links with the rest of the world (Friedman 2011: 29).

She further noted that the country suffered economically, not only from mass worker action but massive global disinvestments in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre. Friedman further explains that:

It was chiefly the intervention of a consortium of American banks that provided a revolving loan fund to the South African government, which helped to assuage the crisis of the post-Sharpeville economy. From 1968 onwards, South African was prohibited from participation in the Venice Biennale and excluded from the international academic exchange. With some notable exceptions, South African artists' alienation was entrenched by these strategies of exclusion (Friedman 2011: 30).

Nationally the country was politically in distress, which impacted on the arts, especially when considered that South African artists and galleries strove to compete on an international level. But simultaneously it appears that the Free State art scene was distanced from these tendencies as its struggles were more concerned with its artists being recognised on a national level. As indicated local artists, or more specifically, the Bloemfontein Group truly worked hard to be recognised on a national artistic platform.

1970

The 1970s showed greater excitement and progress in the Bloemfontein art scene. This could be the result of the founding of the Department of Art History, at the University of the Free State in 1970, when Fred Teurlinckx was appointed as the first professor of Art History. Teurlinckx was a Flemish immigrant previously associated with North West University where he was Head of the department of French. At this time, no art gallery existed on the University of the Free State campus.

Since Professor Teurlinckx's appointment, the History of Art department has presented more than one hundred art exhibitions in the auditorium of the C.R Swart building, prior to the establishment of the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery in the new library building in 1983, as an initiative of

the Rector, Professor Wynand Mouton.¹⁴⁸ I believe the nature of these exhibitions in the C.R Swart Building changed the dynamics of the Bloemfontein art scene as a different variety of artists both nationally and internationally, were shown and it appears that the contribution of Prof Fred Teurlinckx's expertise brought new perspectives about art to the Free State.

Although this was a positive and important development it also added a fourth component to the Free State art scene that complicated the establishment of an authentic, equal-artist community to some extent. It could be argued that with the establishment of another force, hosting exhibitions of 'high' standard brought an additional level of elitism to the art scene.

The four driving forces dominant in the art community of Bloemfontein during the 1970s and onwards are as follows:

- First, the Scotts contribution towards the art scene by developing a taste for art and the encouragement of art collecting;
- Second, the Bloemfontein Group's contribution to changing the conservatism of the Free State art scene under the leadership of Frik and Dora Scott. At this stage, the Bloemfontein Group already proved their significance with numerous exhibitions locally, nationwide and abroad;
- Third, the Free State Art Society that generally turned down the Bloemfontein Group's artworks for their exhibitions whilst having their own interpretation about what was reputable art and
- Fourth, the establishment of the History of Art department at the University of the Free State that hosted exhibitions hosted under the leadership of Professor Fred Teurlinckx.

¹⁴⁸ Department of Art History and Image studies archive, unreferenced document.



With an analysis of the timeline, it appears that Professor Frik Scott was to some extent involved with the exhibitions at the C.R Swart Building as he was the opening speaker at some of the exhibitions, like the *Exhibition of African Art*, reported in the *Friend* newspaper in 1973 (see Appendix 2). His involvement with the University of the Free State expanded with his involvement in the selection of artworks from the A.C. White and the Municipal collections, and in 1974, together with Dr J. J. Oberholster (Dept. of History, University of the Orange Free State) for the selection of works for the collection of the National Museum.

Together these works formed a fairly representative collection of South African art. The collection was housed in the A.C. White Gallery and was officially opened to the public in May 1976. It seems that Professor Frik Scott was neutral towards the internal polemic amongst the societies, although when he wrote newspaper reviews on the Bloemfontein Group or individual members' exhibitions, one becomes aware of his personal favouritism towards these artists.

I believe the expansion of the Bloemfontein art scene with the extension of the exhibitions hosted in the C.R Swart building at the University of the Free State brought a new dimension to the art scene. Some of the local artists and supporters did not encourage this development. Rina Lubbs gave her opinion on the latter:

¹⁴⁹ This newspaper clipping, shows an image of Professor Fred Teurlinx on left and Dirk van den Berg, at that stage senior lecturer at the University of the Free State's History of Art department at an exhibition opening of Jac Boonen. Source: The Friend Newspaper, Free State archive

The Scotts brought their own opinions to the fore about what good art was. As the University of the Free State's exhibitions also started to feature, another form of superiority toward the art appeared. The underlying politics of all of these forces discouraged artists to exhibit, as it was the general assumption that their work would only be criticised. The South African Art Society was not in favour of any other exhibitions, as they felt their exhibitions would not be supported anymore (Lubbs, R. 2015. Interview with R. Lubbs on 16 October 2015. Bloemfontein. The data of the interview is in the possession of Y. de Kock).

This enabled me to come to the conclusion that the fourth dimension relating to the Free State art community, was that polemic and disagreements persisted although its intention was to contribute to a well-established and nationally comparable art scene.

During 1970, the Bloemfontein Group continued to establish their careers. Both Renée le Roux and Stefan Ampenberger had solo exhibitions at the National Museum's Art Hall. Stefan Ampenberger's solo exhibition was documented perhaps by the artist himself. More significantly, this is the only photographic records of an actually installed exhibition (or any exhibition in Bloemfontein) in the entire archive within the timeframe of 1950-1980. These images were also part of the slides donated by Miemie Pienaar, available in the research library of Oliewenhuis Art Museum (see Appendix 1).

1973–1974

Exhibitions were hosted at the C.R Swart such as the *African Art* exhibition where wood carvings of Bantu artists, Joel Noosi, Michael Mosala and Jacob Tladi, from Thaba 'Nchu, were shown and accompanied by a lecture by Prof Scott on *The Place of Bantu art in South Africa* in 1973.

The *Dutch Landscape of the Golden century* exhibition of etchings and drawings opened by Professor E.M Zinderen Bakker (the Dutch Council of Bloemfontein) also in 1973.

Picasso photographic exhibition on the life and work of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) opened by Magda van Niekerk who also presented a talk titled 'Our responsibility towards Picasso' (1974)

A memorial exhibition of paintings and etchings of Jac Boonen opened by Professor Fred Teurlinckx (1974) showed the diversity of these exhibitions. One could argue that because most of these exhibitions were accompanied by lectures, Teurlinckx hosted exhibitions with the aim of educating and that these exhibitions were suitable for an academic institution.

But again, it appeared that Bloemfontein was secluded from both national artistic crises and trends. Throughout the archival research, influences like apartheid were not mentioned or initiated in the Free State art scene as it seems their artistic environment was more concerned with establishing a noteworthy artistic environment for local artists, and introducing national artists to the Free State viewer. The artistic cultural struggle was thus situated in a different realm when compared to the rest of the country. The positive involvement with Professor Teurlinckx brought to the exhibition scene created a new perspective on the Free State. But when examining the exhibition timeline, one wonders if this dynamism improved opportunities for local artists like the Bloemfontein Group? And why does it not reflect national dilemmas which South Africa's art environment experienced as a result of apartheid and sanctions?

A tendency that correlates with the national art scene is that the Bloemfontein art scene was dominated by white artists and influential individuals. Although some individuals like Frans Claerhout and Frik Scott tried to uplift the community by supporting self-taught artists in Thaba 'Nchu, only two opportunities were provided for local black artists to showcase their work in Bloemfontein from 1970 to 1974 at the C.R Swart Building and the National Museum's arts hall. Once, in 1979, Frans Claerhout offered art education in Thaba 'Nchu for local black talent such as John Seleso.

Mario Pissarra indicated that:

By 1970, any delusions South Africa's art establishment held about being removed from the country's political context, were being sorely tested. The consequences of being cast out of the Venice Biennale were beginning to be felt, and doubts about future participation in the Sao Paulo Biennale were creeping in and that throughout the 1970's, the art

world became increasingly politicised. While artists were influenced by Black Consciousness attempted to develop their own platforms outside the white-dominated art establishment, a handful of community art centres provided a space to cross the race barriers (2011: 7).

1975–1979

The Free State Art Society continued hosting its annual exhibitions and did not show any awareness of the national trends Pissarra refers to. These exhibitions focussed on local and national artists. National artists were not previously as often included in these exhibitions as in the 1970s and perhaps with the modernization of the art scene and introduction of more established artists by Professor Teurlinckx, were inspired to do the same. They hosted nine exhibitions during the period 1975 – 1979. These exhibitions consisted mostly of more influential and renowned national artists such as Christo Coetzee (1929–2000), Pranas Domsaitis, Eleanor Esmonde-White, Adolph Jentch (1888–1977), Cecil Skotness (1929–2009), Ruth Prowse (1883– 1967), Leon de Bliqy (b 1945) and Larry Scully (1922–2002).



150



151



152



153



154



155

¹⁵⁰ Coetzee, C, *Iknakhaton-Pythagaras I-III*, 1979, Oil on canvas, 122,5 x 122,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵¹ Coetzee, C, *Diana as Eva*, 1979, Oil on canvas, 122,5 x 122,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵² Domsaitis, P, *Birth of Christ*, Oil on board, 70cm x 62. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵³ Esmonde-White, E, *Washer women*, Oil on canvas, 46 x 61cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵⁴ Coetzee, C, *"Fruit"-Montanaya 56*, 1975, Enamel and mixed media on paper, 64 x 51cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁵⁵ Schimmel, F *Summernight*, 1970, Serigraphy, 37,3cm x 52,9cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

Some of the local artists were also included in these exhibitions, yet only a few of the Bloemfontein Group artists such as Iris and Stefan Ampenberger, Eben van den Merwe, Mike Edwards and Frans Claerhout appeared. Other Bloemfontein artists that were mostly included in all the Society's exhibitions were Daniela Geldenhuys, Laura Rautenbach and Sophia Lückhoff.



156



157



158



159

In 1976 Iris Ampenberger had a retrospective exhibition at the auditorium of the C.R Swart building at the University of the Free State from 17 – 28 February. This opportunity suggests that her work had matched the expectations and standards maintained by Professor Teurlinckx. Unfortunately, no photographic documentation of this exhibition is available, but a catalogue, signed by Professor Teurlinckx, reveals how this exhibition was perceived (see Appendix 1).

Sadly, the author of the catalogue is not indicated, but Professor Teurlinckx's signature after the foreword might be an indication that the catalogue was written by him. With high praise, he situated her work within a South African expressionistic genre which originated from Germany or Flemish influences, and compared her with artists such as Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907) and Max Pechstein (1881–1955). This

¹⁵⁶ Claerhout, F, *Slagveld Dewetsdorp*, 1980, Oil on board, 93 x 77 cm. Oliewenhuis permanent collection.

¹⁵⁷ Ampenberger, S, *Free State landscape*, Watercolour on paper, 55,8 x 37,8 cm. Oliewenhuis permanent collection.

¹⁵⁸ Van der Merwe, E, *Autumn landscape*, 1961, Oil on board, 61,5 x 78cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent exhibition.

¹⁵⁹ Lückhoff, S, *Portret van 'n vrou: Mej. Mayne Fleck*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 43 x 54,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent exhibition.

exhibition is worthwhile mentioning as this is one of the first exhibitions of a member of the Bloemfontein Group at the University of the Free State, and has clearly well received by the Free State audiences.

Lastly, an important happening of 1978, The Museum Group hosted also the 20th year anniversary exhibition of the Bloemfontein Group in 1978. Even more importantly with this exhibition it was also announced in the *Friend* newspaper on 28 April 1978 (see Appendix 2), that with the passing of Professor Frik Scott a trust had been established by Dora and their sons, where 24 of the Bloemfontein Groups would be treasured donated to the first well-established art museum in Bloemfontein.

This exhibition was opened by Dr J.T van Wyk, secretary for National Education at the Museum Art Hall. In this article the painting, *Kloof*, of Stefan Ampenberger, was pointed out as one of the best paintings in the collection and that some of the paintings on display by the other members were new works and had not been seen by the Free State audiences. The reporter mentioned that Alexander Podlashuc was the group's most talented and distinguished member, as a result of his detailed and decorative painting style.



160



161

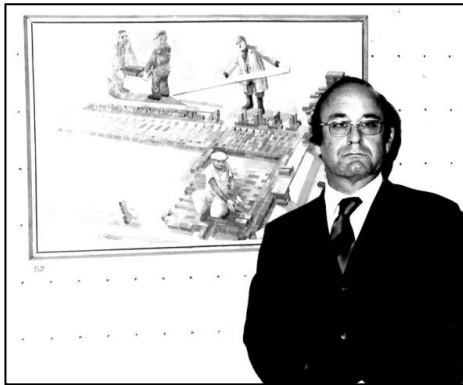
Within the Louis Scott archive, photographs of the Bloemfontein Group's 20-year anniversary exhibition were available. These photos are invaluable for this research as they render the exhibition visible and crystallise or materialise the exhibition by showing the exact paintings and sculptures on display. More importantly, one is able to view the Groups work as an integrated whole. It is, however, difficult to make an assumption about whether the Group's work developed in the two decades of its existence.

¹⁶⁰ Ampenberger, S, *Kloof*, Oil on board, 61 x 71cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

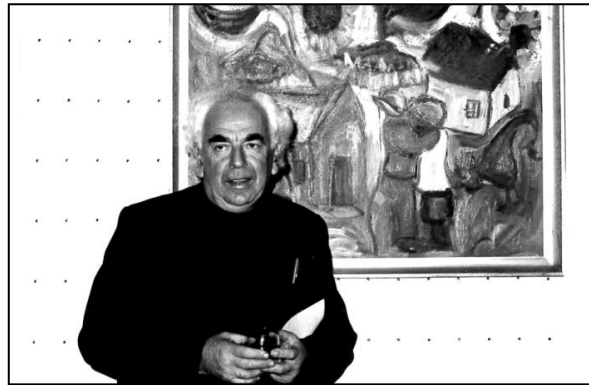
¹⁶¹ Podlashuc, A, *Stasiegebou*, Bloemfontein, 50.5 x 76 cm, Oil on board. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.



162



163



164



165



166

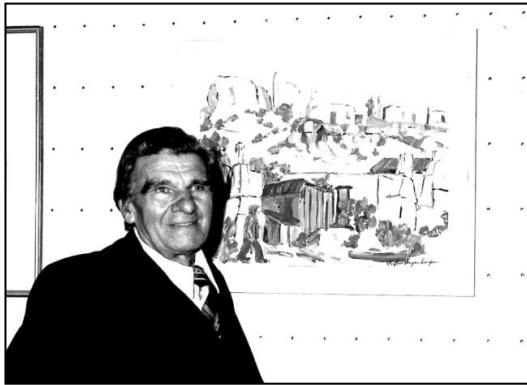
¹⁶² Members of the Bloemfontein Group at their 20 year Anniversary exhibition at the National Museum's art hall in 1978. From left to right: Alexander Podlashuc, Eben van der Merwe, Iris Ampenberger, Walter Westbrook, Mike Edwards, Stefan Ampenberger and Frans Claerhout. Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶³ Alexander Podlashuc. Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶⁴ Frans Claerhout. Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶⁵ Eben van der Merwe. Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶⁶ Iris Ampenberger. Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.



167



168



169

It is quite obvious that the local societies were invested in showcasing local talent alongside more established artists such as Cecil Skotnes, Christo Coetzee and Adolph Jentsch during the 1970s. It is still unclear why some of the Bloemfontein Group members were suddenly accepted into the Free State Art Society's annual group exhibitions. Perhaps their importance and artistic influence were only realised two decades later after their formation? The fact that they received a national acknowledgement from other galleries, like the National Museum in Cape Town¹⁷⁰ (1978) contributed their increased importance.

¹⁶⁷ Stefan Ampenberger: Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶⁸ Walter Westbrook: Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁶⁹ Mike Edwards: Source: Louis Scott personal archive of the Bloemfontein Group.

¹⁷⁰ Today known as the Iziko South African National Gallery.

New exhibition spaces and the beginnings of Oliewenhuis Art Museum and the formation of a permanent art collection during 1980-1990:

1980-1990 was an important decade in Bloemfontein's art history as two major developments occurred: the founding of the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery at the University of the Free State premises in 1983, and the official opening of Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 1989.

Furthermore, happenings such as the donated art collections viz: the Bloemfontein Group and the A.C White art collection were made to Oliewenhuis Art Museum. The opening of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, together with the fact that a permanent collection, unique to the Free State, was now on display in an art museum possibly shifted the dynamics of the local art community.

Most of the art exhibitions in the 1980s were organised by two forces: the History of Art department and the Orange Free State Art society. These exhibitions showcased more established national artists than those showcased in the previous two decades. After the official opening of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, it seems as if the Orange Free State art society tended to merge with Dora Scott and the Friends of Oliewenhuis as their large-scale annual exhibitions did not continue.

The History of Art department organized a total of seven exhibitions at the C.R Swart building, University of the Free State, and consisted of a variety of artists like the 17th century Dutch painter and printmaker, Hercules Pieterzoon Seghers (1589–1638) in 1980, and a group exhibition of Walter Battis, Bettie Cilliers-Barnard, Andrew Verster (b 1937), Judith Mason (1938–2016), Nils Burwitz (b 1940), Alexis Preller, Sydney Kumalo, Leonard Motsotso, Helmut Starck (b 1938), Giuseppe Cattaneo (1929–2015), Johan Clark (b 1946), Sidney Goldblatt (1919–1977), Normane Catherine (b 1949) and Neels Coetzee (1940–2016). Unfortunately, no archival photos of these exhibitions were available. To be able to make visual comparisons

I used other examples by Alexis Preller, Walter Battiss, Judith Mason and Norman Catherine in an attempt to make this group exhibition visible.



171



172



173



174

A noteworthy development in the Free State Art Scene was the establishment of the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery which opened in the new library building of the University of the Free State as an initiative of the Rector, Prof Wynand Mouton in 1983. The first curator of the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery was Marina Hough (1984–1985), followed by Dr Lydia de Waal (1985–1987), Corrie van Rensburg (1987–1993), Jeanne Joubert (1993–2001), Arie Kuijers (2001–2011) and Angela de Jesus (2012–present).¹⁷⁵

The Johannes Stegmann Gallery replaced the exhibitions held in the C.R Swart building and as a result was also the first formal exhibition space affiliated with an academic institution in the Free State. This gallery is still hosting leading, cutting edge, art exhibitions today. From 1983 – 1989 the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery hosted eighty exhibitions comprising a variety of artists and group exhibitions such as Peter Schütz (1942–2008) (1984), Maggie Laubser & J.H Pierneef commemoration exhibition (1986), group exhibition; *Hogarth in Johannesburg: Bell/Hodgins/Kentridge* (1988),

¹⁷¹ Figure 159. Preller, A, *Still life with Mask*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 71 x 60cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷² Figure 160. Battis, W, *Men from space*, 1974, Silkscreen, 45 x 64cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷³ Figure 161. Mason, J, *The Crucifix*, 1971, Mixed media, three pieces of 154 x 123 cm, 60 x 125cm, 50 x 32 x 31cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷⁴ Catherine, N, *Catnap*, 1990, Drypoint etching, 50 x 35,5cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷⁵ Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery archives.

solo exhibition of Leon de Bliqy (1988), Sculpture exhibition of Lucas Sithole, Lucky Sibiyi (1942–1999) and Ezrom Legae (1988) and a joint exhibition of Keith Alexander (1946-1998) and Andre van Vuuren (b 1945) (1989). No catalogues or invitations for these exhibitions are available. This is unfortunate as these could give us an indication of the thinking and dynamism of the Johannes Stegmann gallery.

1985–1989

The opening of Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 1989 remained one of the city's biggest developments for the artist community. In 1985, former State President, P.W Botha released the building as an official residence to the National Museum for the purpose of converting it into an art museum. From 1985 to 1988 a group of enthusiasts, together with Dora Scott monthly hosted fundraising events, together with small-scale exhibitions in the building. This group also referred to themselves as the 'social committee', and later, the Friends of Oliewenhuis committee. Some of these members were also actively involved in the exhibitions hosted in the National Museum's art hall until 1980, where they were known as the Museum Group. Their ultimate aim was to educate the public about art and to raise funds to purchase artworks for the art museum's permanent collection. Fundraising events ranged from exhibitions to performances of string orchestras in the gardens of Oliewenhuis, while Dora and her friends served refreshments.



176

In a *Bloemnuus* newspaper article (see Appendix 2) written by Bibi Vlotman, the public is informed about the activities at Oliewenhuis Art Museum. At this specific event, the Orpheus string orchestra performed in the gardens. It is also indicated that the museum's permanent collection comprised the Scott donation of the Bloemfontein Group's artworks and the municipal donation from AC White-gallery. The reporter interviewed Professor Dirk van den Berg (lecturer at the History of Art department at the University of the Free State and also the chairperson of the Friends of Oliewenhuis at that stage) for this article, in which the latter confirmed that the permanent Oliewenhuis collection also comprised works by Cecil Skotnes and Hardy Botha, which were collected by the Museum Group of the National Museum. Van den Berg further stated that with the current fundraising, more artworks that represent the history of South African art will be purchased. It was also mentioned in this article that Oliewenhuis will be closed from 1988-1989 where structural renovations will be applied to the building to make it suitable for the preservation and exhibition of art.

One of the first artworks purchased by the Social Committee was a work by Leon de Bliqy, *Vitrectomy* (1988). Special reporting about this purchase occurred in the *Volksblad* newspaper in 1988 (see Appendix 2).

¹⁷⁶ The Social Committee and Friends of Oliewenhuis (1987-1988). From left to right back row: Proffesor P. Kleynhans, Mrs El Beckley, Mrs M Fichardt, Mrs M Symington, Mrs Rina Lubbs and Mrs C. Verster. From left to right front row: Mrs D Scott, Mrs I Doubell, Mrs A Witthuhn, Mrs M van Aswegen and Mrs C van Rensburg.



177

This specific De Bliquy work is a significant example of his artistic development as this painting was one of the first paintings by De Bliquy after his eye operation. De Bliquy had severe retinal problems and after an operation, his sight improved considerably and influenced his painting techniques and use of colour which changed remarkably. De Bliquy often used sight and vision as the basis of the conceptual development of his paintings. *Vitreotomy* (1988) also encapsulates the theme of sight as the title refers to the surgical procedure and the repeated depiction of eyes in the painting emphasises the focus on being able to see.

One of the most important exhibitions hosted in the building before its renovations was the 30-year anniversary exhibition of the Bloemfontein Group with a formal announcement that the 24 artworks in the F.P Scott trust would be donated to Oliewenhuis Art Museum. This exhibition was opened by Louisa Botha on 22 March 1988 (see Appendix 2)

From 1988-1989 Oliewenhuis was closed to the public in order to prepare for the renovations inside the building:



178



179



180

¹⁷⁷ Figure 164. De Bliquy, *Vitreotomy*, 1988, Varnished egg tempera on plywood, 148 x 117 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum permanent collection.

¹⁷⁸ The interior of the building under construction. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum archive.

¹⁷⁹ Lizette Giani, Research assistant of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, observing the renovations on the second floor. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum Archive.

¹⁸⁰ Exterior of the building under construction. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum.



181



182

1989

In 1989 Oliewenhuis Art Museum was officially opened as a satellite of the National Museum by J.G Garbers, Director General of National Education. The first official curator of Oliewenhuis Art Museum was Johan Coetzer. With his article, *Oliewenhuis-Kunsmuseum, Bloemfontein* (1992), Coetzer indicated that in the early days of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, its permanent collection consisted of three big donations: Bloemfontein Group (donated to the museum in 1988), the A.C White Municipal works and artworks donated from the National Museum's Museum Group. These works formed the basis of the permanent collection in its early days.

Bloemfontein developed from a rural capital without any harbour or mining industries within its surroundings, therefore also without a magnate who could donate an art collection (as was the case with other big museums in our country, such as Johannesburg Art Gallery) which could lead to the establishment of an art museum. The fact that two of the three donations are inspired by local artists and enthusiasts that believed Bloemfontein should have a proper Free State art collection and museum makes the emergence of Bloemfontein's art community unique and interesting. These three donations, involving not only the artworks but also the dominant individuals who made the donations possible, are therefore of vital importance in the history and establishment of Oliewenhuis Art Museum. Prior to its official renovation into an art museum, Oliewenhuis was utilised for workshops and exhibitions. The first exhibition held at Oliewenhuis was by Free State artist, Frans Claerhout, in November 1986. The building was evacuated in 1988 for its final conversion into an art museum.

¹⁸¹ The end result of the exterior of the building.

¹⁸² The end result of one of the exhibition spaces on the ground floor. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum archive.

After its official opening, Oliewenhuis became the local gathering space for artists and art supporters where workshops, lectures, meetings and exhibitions were held. The top floor was (and still is today) used to exhibit the permanent collection and the ground floor is utilised for important touring exhibitions. Even after its opening, the social committee and Dora Scott (also referred to as the Friends of Oliewenhuis) continued to organise social events for fundraising. Today Oliewenhuis Art Museum still collaborates with its Friends of Oliewenhuis committee on a regular basis for fundraising purposes and funds are still utilised to purchase new artworks for its permanent collection.

As fruitful and positive as the Free State art scene was during the 1980's, the national art scene also revealed positive achievements, but with very different aim. Pissarra indicated that the "1980's generated many landmarks for art, and the development of a more progressive terrain for artists" Pissarro further noted that "by the late 1980's, feminist and women's movements were also increasingly making their mark on South African art. Two streams became apparent, reflecting the legacies of apartheid, particularly apartheid education: white, university –trained artists such as Deborah Bell, Penny Siopis, Sue Williamson; and black artists such as Bongiwe Dhlomo, Noria Mabasa and Helen Sebidi, who either studied at community art centres or were informally mentored" (Pissarra 2011: 8-9).

3. BLOEMFONTEIN ART SCENE: A TIMELINE

3.1 The “National” Art Scene in South Africa

The late 1950s was ostensibly an important developmental period for artistic practices in Bloemfontein as a number of important artistic events occurred which made a fundamental impact on the artistic environment in the Free State. Nationally, the art world was more established and was influenced and changed by the effects of the Second World War in the country. Esmé Berman indicated that:

war had had the effect of cancelling South Africa’s former isolation. It had lifted thousands of servicemen out of a conservative, parochial environment and thrust them into a wider, throbbing world by spending their last days of their service in Italy and while awaiting repatriation they had attended guided tours and study courses in and around Florence and other historic centres of culture (Berman 1994: 14).

In South Africa, a greater cultural self-sufficiency developed as Berman points out, that:

the much-expanded market for art and added source of enthusiasm for contemporary artistic styles developed amongst the cultured pre-war European refugees who had been familiar with the Modern Movements in their homelands and who had begun to integrate themselves into local society (Berman 1994: 14).

The settling of European artists in South Africa contributed towards a changing mindset about art as these artists participated actively and significantly in the country’s artistic evolution. These European artists were Jean Welz (1900–1975), John Dronsfield (1900–1951) who settled in Cape Town in 1939, Maurice van Essche (1906–1966), Edoardo Villa (1920–2011), Pranas Domsaitis (1880–1965) and Alfred Krenz (1899–1980), Armando Baldinelli (1908–2002) and Giuseppe Cattaneo (1929–2015).



183



184



185

Finally artists were included to represent the country in international exhibitions and were all former members of the New Group.¹⁸⁶ Berman noted that the leaders of South African art during 1950 have included New Group stalwarts Walter Battis, Alexis Preller, Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser, Cecil Higgs and Maud Sumner (Berman 1994: 14). Although insightful, Berman does not reflect on the onset of apartheid in 1948, and the significant role which apartheid, along with the end of the Second World War played on South African art with its striving toward an *Afrikanerism*¹⁸⁷ identity during this decade. Art historian Federico Freschi indicated that South Africa went through an ongoing nation-building effort with an increased emphasis on promoting South African art and artists locally and abroad. Freschi and Berman further noted that:

South African artists exhibited at the Venice Biennale for the first time in 1950, with official government sponsorship from 1952 and also the Sao Paulo Biennale between 1957-1963. From 1956 onwards, the South African Association of Arts organised quadrennial exhibitions of South African art, which toured the major South African galleries (Freschi 2011: 15).

3.2 Understanding the Bloemfontein Group

In 1945, Professor Fred Scott and his wife Dora arrived in South Africa from the Netherlands. They initially settled in Edenvale, but later moved to

¹⁸³ Villa, E, *Il Prigioniero III*, 1983. Steel, 3m (h) x 100 cm (b) x 90 cm (d). Oliewenhuis Art Museum

¹⁸⁴ Welz, J, *Woman in pensive mood*, 1970. Oil and charcoal on paper and board, 43,4 x 73 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum

¹⁸⁵ Krenz, A, *Donkeys by a Cottage*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 79 x 64,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum

¹⁸⁶ A movement in the late 1930's in South African painting. This phase reached its peak during the last years of the Second World War, when, owing to restricted investment opportunities, more money became available for art and when the public was compelled by circumstances to depend upon its own cultural resources. A great number of popular South African painters began their careers in the years prior to the Second World War and there was now a growing community of artists who had enjoyed some European training and reflected post-Impressionistic influences (Berman 1994: 9-10).

¹⁸⁷ According to Federico Freschi "during the 1950's, art coverage nonetheless focused largely on the entrenched Afrikaner 'masters': J.H Pierneef, Anton van Wouw, Pieter Wenning, Hugo Naudé, Coert Steynberg, et al" (Freschi 2011: 17).

Pretoria and established close friendships with artists such as Gerard de Leeuw (1912–1985), Gregoire Boonzaaier and Walter Battiss.¹⁸⁸ In 1956 they relocated to Bloemfontein, becoming prominent art patrons, and in 1958 the Bloemfontein Group was formally established under the leadership of Professor Scott, with the support of his wife, Dora.

The founding members of the group were Frans Claerhout (1919–2006), Reneé le Roux (b 1927), Alexander Podlashuc (1930–2009), Eben van der Merwe (1932) and Marianne Podlashuc (1932–2004).¹⁸⁹ Within this ten-year period, the Group also expanded to include Mike Edwards, Fayettea and Neville Varney, Authur Cantrell, and Walter Westbrook (all joining in 1961), and Iris and Stephan Ampenberger, who joined in 1963. These artists created the group with the intention of sharing ideas, producing art together, and expressing their frustrations with what they understood as the narrow-minded and conservative Free State art world.



190

¹⁸⁸ Source: Archival material, Oliewenhuis Art Museum Research Library.

¹⁸⁹ According to Eben van der Merwe, Bruce Hancock was also one of the founding members of the Bloemfontein Group (Van der Merwe, E. 2015. Telephonic interview on 23 September 2015. Bloemfontein. The data of the interview are in possession of Y. de Kock). According to his website, "Bruce and Hazel Hancock were joint secretaries of the Orange Free State Art Society in Bloemfontein for many years, and helped to run the annual Art Exhibition in the Bloemfontein City Hall, the premier Art Show in South Africa. Among the artists who became their good friends were Terrence Mc Caw, Gregoire, Don Madge, Father Frans Claerhout, Brian Wiles, Lucy Mullins, Errol Boyley, Piet van Heerden and many others" (Bruce Hancock 2015). This was the only information that was found on Hancock's involvement in the Free State art scene during the specific time frame; his involvement the Bloemfontein Group was not mentioned. According to Fred Scott "Rosemary Budler (1923) and Bruce Hancock (1912-1990) were present during the Group's inauguration, however they never participated in the future Group exhibitions" (Scott 2012: 8-9).

¹⁹⁰ The Bloemfontein Group in 1988 with their 30-year anniversary exhibition at Oliewenhuis Art Museum. From the back and the left: Eben van der Merwe, Arthur Cantrell, Walter Westbrook and Mike Edwards. Front from the left: Renee le Roux, Alexander Podlaschuc and Frans Claerhout. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum research library.

The geographical position of Bloemfontein as the central city of South Africa would suggest it as an obvious focal point for national cultural activity. However, art life in the Orange Free State has seldom evinced much dynamism. The art societies operating in the province had tended to be extremely conservative and unadventurous, and the advantages of the situation of the main city were never exploited (Berman 1994: 64). The Bloemfontein Group desired to hold exhibitions that challenged the limitations of Bloemfontein's embryonic art scene. While their individual artworks differed in visual appearance, they shared a modernist sense of painting practice.¹⁹¹ The Bloemfontein Group worked together for approximately ten years (Scott 2012: 9)

It could be argued that Marianne Podlaschuc's painting, *Herderseun en Bokke* (1958), which was rejected by local art societies for exhibition and selling purposes, cemented the final conviction for these artists to function as a group.



192

While her own immediate art surroundings did not appreciate or support Podlashuc's significance as an artist, it seems as if the rest of the art world showed appreciation and value for her works. This is evident by in the review written by a reporter, Neville Dubow, written a review, 'Two aspects of realism show', for the Cape Argus newspaper in 1966 where Marianne and Alexander Podlashuc had a joint exhibition at Gallery Shear in Cape Town (see Appendix 2).

Dubow is writes with high praise about these two artists' work and the fact that he engages with the work. His report added value to the exhibition by

¹⁹¹ This modernist sensibility in the work of the Bloemfontein Group has been explored in *Stylistic Links: The Bloemfontein Group and Other South African Artists*, curated by Dr Fred Scott for the Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 2012. The exhibition sought to draw attention to the stylistic similarities between the works of Boemfontein Group artists and those of well-known South African artists such as Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser and Ephraim Ngatane. In the exhibition, they were also compared to contemporary visual artists such as Karl Gietl and Samson Mnisi.

¹⁹² Podlashuc, M, *Herderseun met Bokke*, Oil on board, 58 x 68cm. Willem Scott private collection.

contextualising the exhibition, making the reader aware of the different interpretations of the social and political issues which the two artists address. He also stated that she is capable of achieving considerable power through her paintings. He ends his review by stating that value of Marianne Podlashuc work is situated in the simplistic way she portrays her surroundings to address deeper social and political issues. Her painting, *Baakensvlei* is a signature example of how she did not depicted her surroundings in a romanticised or idealistic way. Evidently, her approach towards her subject matter was not to paint ‘polite landscapes’ as expected by local art societies.



193

It is quite ironic that the subject matter she chose, to depict social ‘outcasts’, reflects the fact that she and the rest of the Bloemfontein Group were also seen as the social/artistic outcasts in the Free State art circles from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Marianne Podlashuc’s work was rejected by local Free State art societies, who seemed ignorant of the significance and power of her work. In 2006, acclaimed curator, Hayden Proud, assembled a retrospective exhibition of Marianne Podlashuc’s work in the old Town House in Cape Town. He refers to this artist as ‘one of South Africa’s most important realist painters’ in his article, *A Women from Delft*, written for the South African Art Times in 2006. He also stated that with Marianne’s own paintings she ‘opted for a realist approach. The German and Dutch artists of the 1920s, who practised forms of realism that we today associate with “Die Neue Sachlichkeit” continued to influence her for many years’ (Proud 2006: 10). Proud further emphasised the value of Podlashuc’s work by noting that:

¹⁹³ Figure 175. Podlashuc, M, *Baakensvlei*, Oil on board, 91,5 x 75,5 cm. Oliewenhuis Art Museum Permanent Collection.

The old Vrystaat Kunsvereniging was a focal point for local artists who reproduced polite landscapes. Representation of indigenous people was limited to the 'native study' genre, which was usually only anthropological in emphasis. Marianne's realist depiction of what was then disparagingly referred to as an 'unhappy black person', contradicted all these conventions. In many ways, she captured in her work the real Bloemfontein that blinkered whites refused to see (2006: 10).

While doing intensive archival research it is noteworthy that other art critics, outside the Free State, found the work and dynamism of the Bloemfontein Group to be significant. It was much later, during the 1980s that the Bloemfontein Group's work was seen as momentous in the Free State art circles.

The newspaper articles (Appendix 2) support the latter as it is visible how Neville Varney's exhibition that was held in the National Museum's art hall in 1965 was severely criticised by the reporter in the *Volksblad*. The reporter stated Varney's art 'provoked no enthusiasm and it should not be expected from the critic to shed tears of enthusiasm when one observed his art'. In contrast with these harsh comments, a reporter of *Die Burger* who reviewed the Group's exhibition at the National Gallery in Cape Town during 1966 suggested that the Group's work was tasteful and the artworks on view were timeless. Evidently the Free State art society did not appreciate the value of the Bloemfontein Group's work and it became obvious that personal taste and internal politics between art societies' swayed opinions.

The Bloemfontein Group held their first exhibition in 1959 at the National Museum – Bloemfontein's art hall. This was followed by exhibitions at the Egon Günther Gallery in Johannesburg, and the Vosters Gallery in Pretoria. One of the Group's major accomplishments was an exhibition of their work at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town in 1966, suggesting that the Group now measured up to a national artistic standard.

In this catalogue the museum director, Matthys Bokhorst, gave some insight into why the Bloemfontein Group's exhibition was approved to be shown at the National Gallery and revealing the importance of the Group's

art in the Free State, and confirming that their artworks embodied the artistic climate of the Free State (see Appendix 1).

Although the Orange Free State still has no self-contained art gallery, art academy or Fine Arts faculty, the position is to-day much changed, as a result of the emergence of the Bloemfontein Group, which is described in this catalogue by its champion, Dr F.P. Scott. This proves that to-day there is a spiritual climate in the Free State which is conducive to the rise and growth of contemporary art. For this reason, the South African National Gallery decided to include the art of the Orange Free State (as embodied by the Bloemfontein Group) in the series of exhibitions devoted to the art of particular areas of South Africa (Bokhorst 1965: 4).

Bokhorst ended this foreword by stating that 'the fact that several other Art Galleries have already applied for the loan of this exhibition, is proof that there is widespread interest in the art of this Group' (Bokhorst 1965: 4)

According to archival material the same exhibition travelled to the William Humphreys Art Gallery in Kimberley as the newspaper article in the *Diamond fields advertiser, Bloemfontein Group art exhibition to be opened in the City tonight*, (see Appendix 2), refers to two paintings by Fayette Varney and Walter Westbrook which were bought by the South African National Gallery. They were also included in this group exhibition and the exhibition would later travel further to Pretoria.

This newspaper article gives further weight to this exhibition by providing information about the opening speaker of the show, Dr E. M van Zinderen-Bakker, the Netherlands Council of the Free State. The author refers to the importance of the group as ambassadors of the Free State art scene by making statements such as 'today the works of members of the group grace the collections of many galleries and private collections in different parts of the country'.

In 1978, the Group exhibited at the National Museum in Bloemfontein, and their last official opening as a group was held at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in 1988. In the 1978 exhibition review that appeared in the *Friend* newspaper (see Appendix 2), the critic refers to the Bloemfontein Group's exhibition held at the National Museum's art hall as 'interesting' and adds that the exhibition was officially opened by Dr J.T. van Wyk, secretary for

National Education. Some significance was added to this exhibition by the critic's reference to the paintings and sculptures that were included in the exhibition, part of F.P Scott's private collection which has been converted in a trust by Dora Scott and will later be donated to a future permanent exhibition space in Bloemfontein. At last, the Bloemfontein Group received positive recognition in the media regarding the value of their artworks.

However, with the group's 30-year anniversary exhibition at Oliewenhuis Art Museum, a critic from the *Volksblad* newspaper, Dirk van den Berg (also a lecturer at the University of the Free State History of Art department) did not share the previous critic's enthusiasm about the Group's work (see Appendix 2).

In his article, Dirk van den Berg gave some positive acknowledgement to this exhibition, in the fact that this was the second official exhibition opening in Oliewenhuis Art Museum as a museum and that the significance of the works is situated in the fact that the Group was supported by local art supporters, and the donation of the 24 donated artworks revealed a regional artistic identity. Van den Berg also indicated that the individual artists of the Group did not reveal any progression in their personal artistic style since the group separated, implying that the work of the group is conservative. On a more positive note, he ended his article by stating that members that were part of the Bloemfontein artistic development of the last three decades would enjoy this exhibition and that the Bloemfontein Group's artworks could be used as a benchmark to develop the viewer's own personal preference regarding selection and collection of artworks.

Following the death of Prof Scott in 1976, his wife and children established the F.P. Scott Trust. On the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Bloemfontein Group, the Trust donated 24 artworks to the National Museum. (Scott 2012: 9). It was the first collection of Free State artists exclusively and became the first collection of artworks in the Oliewenhuis Art Museum when it was opened in 1989. This research, therefore, focuses on the impact of the Bloemfontein Group on the Free State art scene, and more specifically, on the role played by the donation of the Group's artworks in the establishment and development of the Oliewenhuis Art Museum.

CONCLUSION

Initially, this research report commenced with an introduction about artist groups in South Africa but focussed specifically on the Bloemfontein Group and how its dynamism might have changed the so-called narrow-mindedness of the Bloemfontein art community. While conducting this research I was constantly confronted by the 'narrow-minded art scene' described in the available documents and *Stylistic Link* catalogue written by Fred Scott of Bloemfontein during the 1950-1980 period. As a result of the limitations of the archive I found it challenging to either support or discard this theory, as some of it is based on the subjective opinions of different groups and individuals.

However, after close examination, I can conclude that the Bloemfontein art community was undeniably narrow-minded. I propose that the lack of an official art museum contributed to this conservatism and the fact that the two different art societies within this small artist community guided by the 'elitists' did not add value to this conservatism.

The formation of the Bloemfontein Group and the nature of their artworks clearly did not qualify for the local art societies as they believed that the Group's work was not sellable. The latter became visible when I compiled the illustrated timeline of exhibitions and happenings in Bloemfontein. It is a fact that only during the late 1970s *some* of the Bloemfontein Group members' work was included in the annual exhibitions of the societies. In the introduction, I explained that artist groups did not really qualify as important artistic movements, but the contributions of the Bloemfontein Group to the Bloemfontein art scene, are meritorious enough to be considered as a notable development in the Free State art scene. This group of artists rebelled against the elitist individuals in their environment and fearlessly mocked influential individuals of the local art societies and the National Museum who kept them from expanding their careers. Locally, the Group's work was not seen as noteworthy enough to form part of local exhibitions, but on a national level their work was received with high praise. This in itself is an indication of the influences and inconsistencies of local art societies.

The mockery and satirical images of Marianne Podlashuc provided an understanding of the Group's frustrations, but also expressed the determination of like-minded kindred spirits to change their environment regardless of being further excluded from the art scene.



I propose that this characteristic defined the Bloemfontein Group as the avant-garde leaders in the Bloemfontein art community. *Ars Brevis, vita longa* becomes an iconic image, as it provides insight into the Orange Free State art society, clearly dominated by pretentious, conservative and snooty individuals. The title of this drawing, “Art is brief, life is long” is more like a symbolic stance expressing what the society stood for. The significance of the Bloemfontein Group's work lies in the fact that they addressed social and political themes and presented different techniques like impressionism, abstraction, and expressionism to the conservative Bloemfontein audiences which emphasises the distinctiveness of their work.

These conclusions are drawn from the illustrated timeline which I compiled. The value of the illustrated timeline is that it enabled me to convert mere opinions and theories about the Bloemfontein art scene into a more factual discussion about the specific era or timeframe in question. The timeline provides me with insights to contribute by adding additional information to this Free State timeframe which has rarely been examined.

¹⁹⁴ Podlashuc, M, *Ars Brevis vita longa*, Pen on tracing paper, 29 x 69cm. Willem Scott private art collection

The timeline also initiated an important discussion about museum collections and specifically unravels Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collections that included the Scott trust donation of the Bloemfontein Group. It can be concluded that Oliewenhuis Art Museum's founding collection is indeed unique as it consists of only South African artworks but more importantly of artworks representing the cultural identity of the Free State.

With my contribution as a researcher, I explored and combined undiscovered records and photographic imagery which led to valuable contributions toward the time frame under question, as well as the archive. I believe that with this process, significant contributions were made that add value the future of the archive. I realised that the archive itself is a biased institution and that in using it as a primary source of information one has to be objective and observe and interpret the information carefully. Donald Preziosi articulates this objectivity best and refers to the archive as anamorphic, and should not be observed from only one dimension:

Within the multidimensional environment of the archive is a potential for multi-directional connectivity, not merely morphological, but also thematic. In principle, the entire data mass of the archive is implicated from one unit point and disciplinary practice continually reviews connectivity's so as to elucidate potential genealogical and historical relations. Operating normally through simple juxtapositions of archival material any search may be endless (Preziosi 1989: 75)

Preziosi ended this chapter where he examined the *Panoptic Gaze and the Anamorphic Archive* by stating that 'the modern discipline of art history operates as an anamorphic archive, keyed to an anamorphic gaze (1989: 79).

I want to conclude this research report with the following: as indicated earlier, the Bloemfontein Group donation belongs to Oliewenhuis Art Museum's permanent collection and with this research I was able to examine the impact of this donation on the inception of an art museum in Bloemfontein. Also its impact on subsequent additions to the collection. I came to the conclusion that the Bloemfontein Group's donation is an indicator of a regional art identity. This research also contributes to the fact

that it is not only the Bloemfontein Group's collection that could be seen as the foundation collection of Oliewenhuis Art Museum but also the A.C White donation. With this research, I understand Oliewenhuis Art Museum's establishment and its founding collection more comprehensively. I have also realised that as its permanent collection has never been researched before, this report could be seen as a stepping stone to a broader, historically informed understanding of the collection as a whole.

I do not believe that this research can be viewed in isolation, as the archive played an enormous role in constructing the narratives, theories and concepts I addressed in this report. The archive is an institution that is expanding daily and is an ever-changing entity which has the capability of contributing to this research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ballot, M. 1996. *Bettie-Cilliers Barnard: bowêreldse perspektiewe*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- Bekker, M. 1990. *Gregoire Boonzair*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- Bennet, T. 1995. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Bennett, T. 2007. *Class, Culture, Distinction*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Berman, E. 1994. *Art and artists of South Africa: an illustrated biographical dictionary and historical survey of artists since 1875*. South Africa: Southern Book publishers.
- Boym, S. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bruce Hancock. "Bruce Hancock, 1912-1990, Classic South African historic Landscape Painter". Online. URL: <http://www.brucehancock.co.za/bruce-hancock-biography.html>. Date accessed: 08/10/2015.
- Carman, J. 2006. *Uplifting the colonial philistine: Florence Phillips and the founding of the Johannesburg Art Gallery*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Carman, J. 2010. *1910-2010 One hundred years of collecting: the Johannesburg Art Gallery*. Pretoria: Creda Communications.
- Carman, J & Lisoos, S. 2010. *Becoming Historic*. In Carman, J. *1910-2010 One hundred years of collecting: the Johannesburg Art Gallery*. Pretoria: Creda Communications.
- Carrier, D. 2006. *Museum skepticism: a history of the display of art in public galleries*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Coetzer, J.V. 1992. Oliewenhuis-Kunsmuseum. *Lantern* 41 (2): 49-52.
- Crane, S. 2000. *Museums and Memory*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Clifford, J. 1998. *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature and art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Davis-Mesman, E. 1998. *The colourful palette of Alfred Krenz*. Cape Town: Ellen Davis-Mesman.

- Derrida, J. 1996. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eglington, C. 1961. Art group was formed out of friendship. *S.A Art News* (1): 7.
- Freschi, F. 2011. Afrikaner Nationalism, modernity and the changing canon of 'High Art'. In Robbroeck, L. *Visual century: South African art in context. Volume 2 1945-1976*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Friedman, H. 2011. Beauty, Duty and dissidence. Ideology and art in the heyday of apartheid. In Robbroeck, L. *Visual century: South African art in context. Volume 2 1945-1976*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Goedhals, L. 2014. Interview with Mr and Mrs Goedhals, A.C White was the great uncle of Mr Goedhals, Dr Louis and his wife Goedhals, on 03/04/2014. Bloemfontein, Oliewenhuis Art Museum.
- Hamilton, C. et al. 2002. Introduction. In C. Hamilton et al (eds). *Refiguring the Archive*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Johans Borman Fine Art. "Robert Gwelo Goodman (1871-1839)". Online. URL: <http://www.johansborman.co.za/artist-biographies/goodman-robert-gwelo/>. Date accessed: 21/10/2015.
- Karp, I & Lavine, S. 1991. Museums and Multiculturalism. In Karp, I & Lavine, S. *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lubbs, R. 2015. Interview with Rina Lubbs, a former member of the South African Arts Association and Volksblad art critic on 16 October 2015. Bloemfontein.
- Mbembe, A. 2002. The Power of the Archive and its Limits. In C. Hamilton et al (eds). *Refiguring the Archive*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Meyer, A.M. 1983. *Bloemfonteinse Nasionale kunsmuseum voorgeskiedenis en beplanning*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Nettleton, A. 2011. Primitivism in South African Art. In Robbroeck, L. *Visual century: South African art in context. Volume 2 1945-1976*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Oberholster, J.J. 1972. *Die historiese monumente van Suid-Afrika*. Cape Town: Die Kultuurstigting van Rembrandt van Rijn.

- Oliewenhuis Art Museum, 1988. *Bloemfontein Group: a heritage and destination, 30th Anniversary exhibition*. Brochure. 1st ed. Author: S. Crampton. Bloemfontein.
- Ogilvie, G. 1988. *The dictionary of South African painters and sculptors*. Johannesburg: Everard Read.
- Art Archives South Africa. "Otto Klar" Online URL: <http://www.art-archives-southafrica.ch/KLAR.htm>. Date accessed: 24/11/2016
- Pearce, S. 1995. *On Collecting: An investigation into collecting in the European Tradition*. London: Routledge.
- Pissarra, M. 2011. Recovering critical moments. In Pissarra, M. *Visual century: South African art in context. Volume 3 1973-1992*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Preziosi, D. 1989. *Rethinking Art History: Mediations on a coy science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Proud, H. 2006. A Woman from Delft. *South African Art Times* (8), August: 10
- Schwartz, J.M & Cook, T. 2002. Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory. *Archival Science* 2: 1-19.
- Schoeman, K. 1987. *Portrait of Bloemfontein 1860-1910*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau.
- Schoeman, K. 1980. *Bloemfontein: die ontstaan van 'n stad 1846 – 1946*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau.
- Scott, F. 1960. A history of Art in South Africa II: The Bloemfontein Group. *Fontein* 1 (2): 20-24.
- Scott, F. 1964. Die kuns van Frans Claerhout. *Lantern* 13 (3): 40-47.
- Scott, F. 1971. Fayette Varney. *Artlook* 54: 46-48.
- Scott, F. 1966. *Bloemfontein tentoonstelling*. Unpublished catalogue. South African National Gallery.
- Scott, F. 2012. *Stylistic Links: The Bloemfontein Group and other South African Artists*. Unpublished catalogue. Oliewenhuis Art Museum.
- Scott, L. 2015. Interview with Louis Scott, son of the deceased Dr F.P Scott on 13 November 2015. Bloemfontein.
- Smit, A. 1980. *Die Kunslewe in Bloemfontein 1940 – 1978*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State.
- Smit, K. 1986. *Laura Rautenbach: a Photobiography of a sculptress*. Bloemfontein: Clayson Printers.

South African History Online. "The White Horse Stone, Naval Hill, Bloemfontein". Online.

URL: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/places/white-horse-stone-naval-hill-bloemfontein#sthash.cqZZKN6V.dpuf>. Date accessed: 20/10/2015

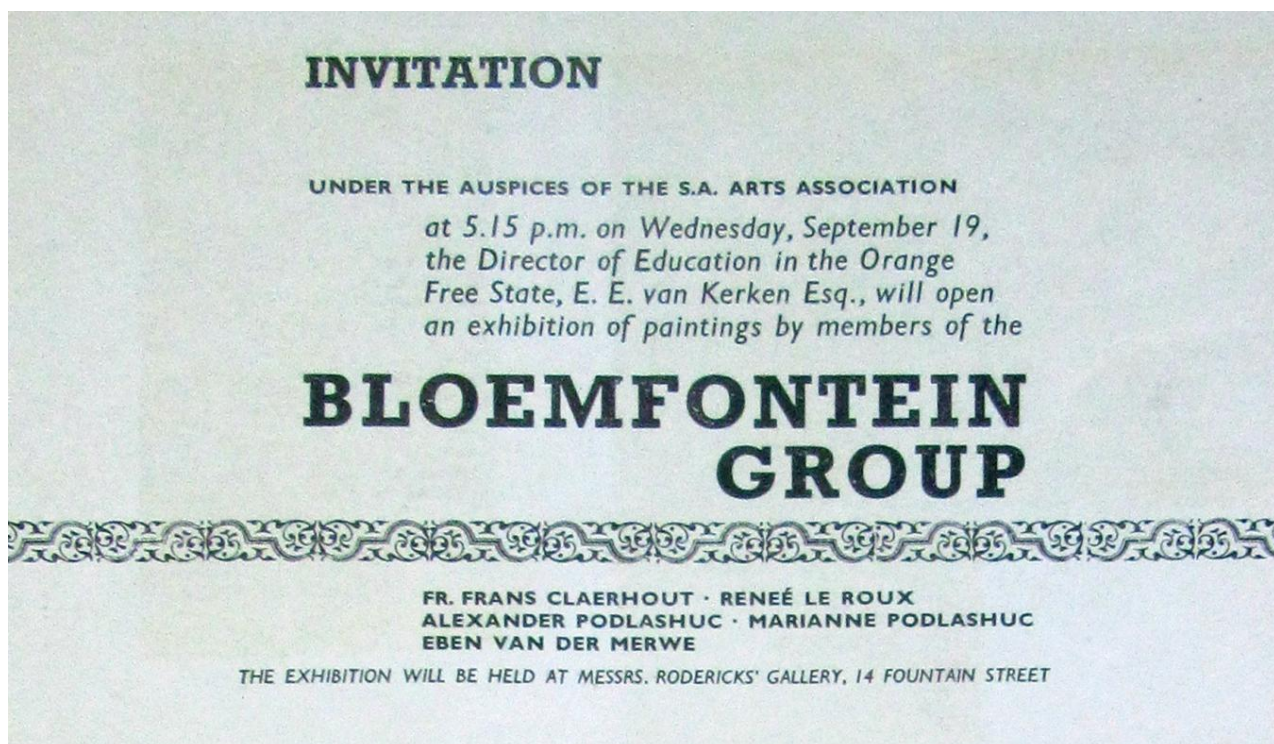
South African History Online. "John Thomas Baines". Online.

URL: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/john-thomas-baines>. Date accessed: 21/10/2015

Van der Merwe, E. 2015. Interview with one of the remaining Bloemfontein Group members, Eben van der Merwe, on 23/09/2015. Oliewenhuis Art Museum. Telephonically.

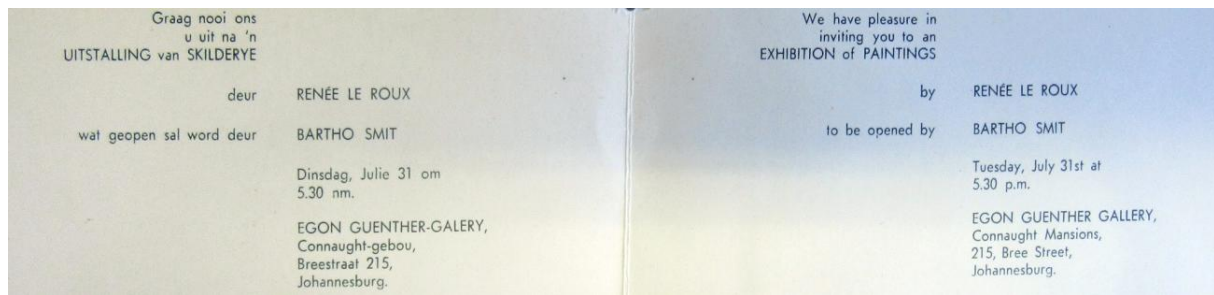
Verloren van Themaat, E. 1976. *Pranas Domsaitis*. Cape Town: Struik.

APPENDIX 1: EXHIBITION INVITATIONS AND CATALOGUES



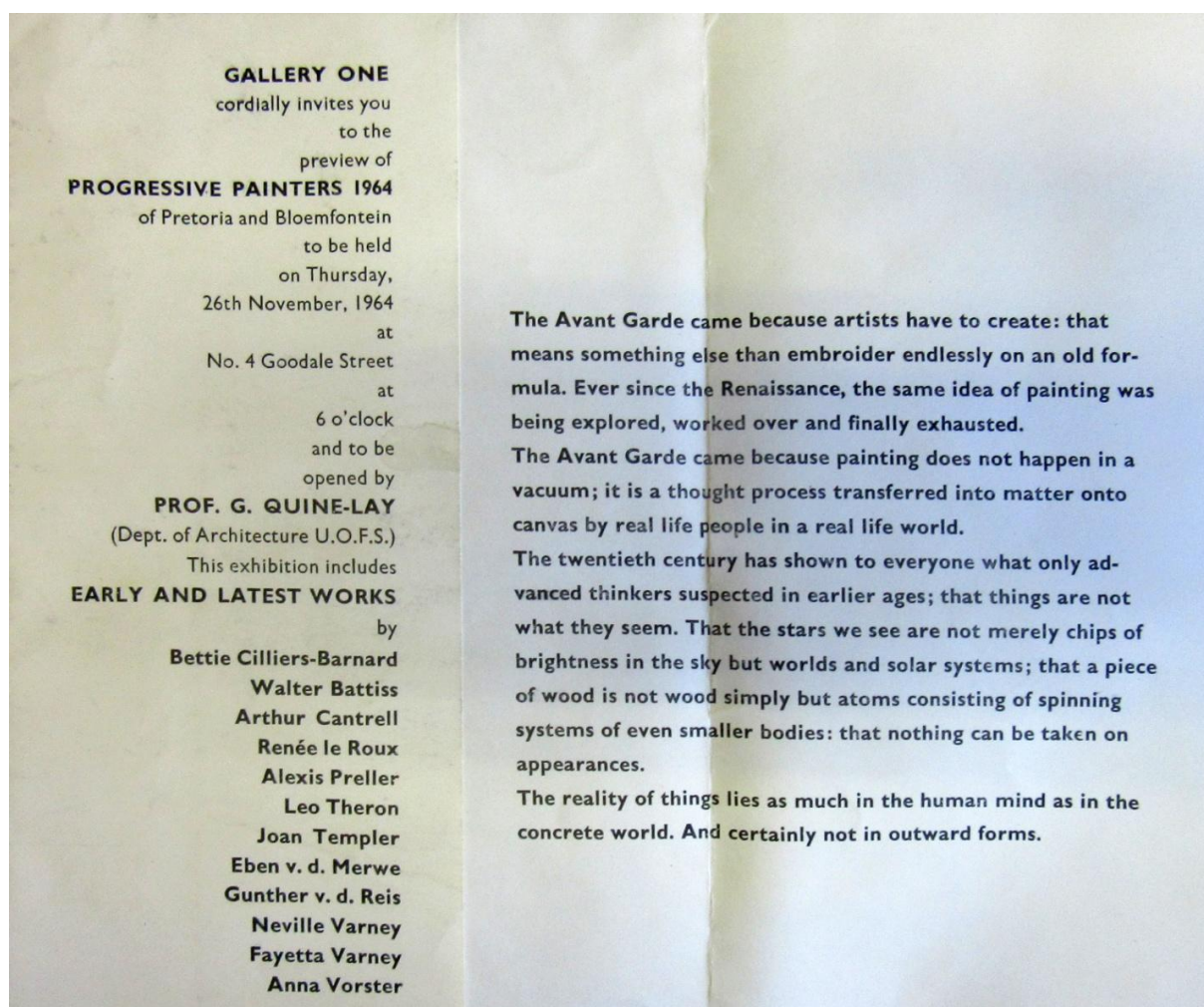
195

¹⁹⁵ Exhibition invitation of the 1962 Bloemfontein Group exhibition at the Rodericks Gallery in Bloemfontein
Renée le Roux's personal archive albums.



196

¹⁹⁶ Exhibition invitation. Renée le Roux's personal archive albums.



197

¹⁹⁷ *Progressive Painters* exhibition catalogue at Gallery One in Bloemfontein. Renée le Roux's personal archive albums.



198

¹⁹⁸ Hand drawn exhibition poster by Stefan Ampenberger. Louis Scott personal archive.



Stefan Ampenberger



No. 45: WOOD CATHERERS 1965

STEFAN AMPENBERGER
RETROSPEKTIEWE UITSTALLING
RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION
TEGNIËSE KOLLEGE
TECHNICAL COLLEGE
BLOEMFONTEIN 1968

Die groot respek en agting wat sy vriende vir Stefan AMPENBERGER as mens en kunstenaar het, word bewys deur hierdie retrospektiewe tentoonstelling van sy werk as huldeblyk met sy sestigste verjaardag.

Stefan Ampenberger is in 1908 naby München in Duitsland gebore. Hy is 'n swerwersnatuur wat dit nie lank in sy geboortedorpie kon uithou nie. As jong seun het hy as matroos sowat alle wêrelddele besoek. Na sy aankoms in Suid-Afrika het hy gou hier tuis gevoel en die nodige ruimte gevind om sy swerwersdrang te bevredig.

In Johannesburg waar hy aanvanklik as bouer van seiljagte gewerk het, het hy met die bekende skilder Amschwitz kennis gemaak. Van hom het hy sy eerste en enigste paar skilderlesse ontvang.

In die skilderkuns het Stefan 'n metode tot selfuitdrukking gevind. Sy onrustige natuur het hom steeds na nuwe indrukke laat soek. Hiervoor het hy saam met sy vrou Iris ons land vir jare in 'n selfgeboende karavaan deurkruis. Dit was veral ons landskap met sy wisselende stemminge wat Stefan steeds geboei het. Hy skilder met 'n onstuimige vaart. Vir sy vriende bly dit altyd 'n wonder dat hierdie goedaardige, stil en teruggetrokke man in helder kleure met groot vaardigheid en gedurfde kwashale die een doek na die ander kan voltooi.

Van weë sy groot beskeidenheid het dit baie jare geneem voordat Stefan erkenning ontvang het. Dit was eers na sy vestiging in Thaba 'Nchu en na sy aansluiting by die Bloemfontein Groep dat sy werk aandag begin trek het.

Sy werk is verteenwoordig in belangrike publieke en private versamelings in Suid-Afrika en selfs in die buiteland. Nieteenstaande dit bly Stefan nog dieselfde beskeie stil mens wat homself nooit op die voorgrond sal dring nie.

Saam met Iris en vader Claerhout het Stefan Thaba 'Nchu tot 'n belangrike kunssentrum omskep waar talle besoekers van orals uit ons land en uit die buiteland van hulle gulle gasvryheid kan geniet.

Namens sy vriende wat met die reëlings gehelp het is dit vir my aangenaam om hierdie tentoonstelling vir die publiek van Bloemfontein aan te bied.

F. P. Scott.



No. 44 DIE SON 1968

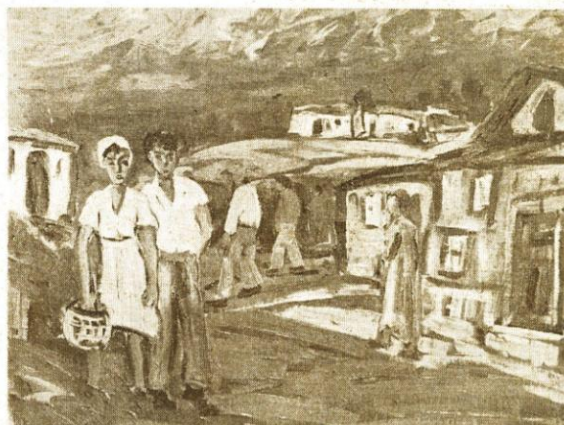
LIST OF WORKS

1. CALEDON RIVER, 1963
2. HARTEBEEPOORT, 1964
3. THE ACTORS, 1967
4. DIE DANSERS, 1968
5. SATURDAY, 1966
6. HUISWAARTS, 1968
7. WATER CARRIERS, 1966
8. TWEESPRUIT, 1966
9. SKAAPWAGTERS, 1968
10. OUR GARDEN, 1968
11. DIE KRUIWA, 1967
12. THABA NCHU, 1967
13. LOURENCO MARQUES, 1967
14. DIE STRAAT, 1967
15. VRYSTAAT, 1967
16. SNOW ON THE MALUTIS, 1967
17. AAND, 1967
18. RED HOUSES, 1967
19. DIE WIT BOK, 1968
20. ANNA, 1967
21. SELF PORTRAIT, 1967
22. VLAKTES, 1967
23. HUISIES MET DONGA, 1966
24. DIE DONKIE, 1968
25. KOEIE, 1968.
26. FLUTE PLAYER, 1968
27. STEEL WORKS, 1967
28. NABY WESTMINSTER, 1967
29. MASERU, 1966
30. TWILIGHT, 1968

31. PASSING BY, 1968
32. DISTRICT SIX, 1968
33. STUDY, 1968
34. ROKKE MAAK, 1968
35. THE BATHERS, 1968
36. OP DIE HOEK, 1968
37. REGATTA, 1968
38. STAD, 1968
39. LOCATION, 1963 on loan from Mr. en Mrs. M. Hersch.
40. THE SPRUIT, 1965. On loan from Dr. E. Katz.
41. SINGERS, 1968
42. SONSONDERGANG, 1968
43. THE PROPHET, 1967
44. DIE SON, 1968
45. WOOD GATHERERS, 1968
46. DIE KARRETJIE, 1968
47. THE WALK, 1968
48. GENADENDAL, 1947
49. PATERNOSTER, 1947
50. VRYHEID, 1949. Geleen deur dr. en mev. F. P. Scott.
51. TRANSVAAL LANDSCAPE, 1938. On loan from Dr. & Mrs. Rex Busschau.
52. VRYSTAAT LANDSKAP, 1965. Geleen deur dr. en mev. Koos Theron.
53. WATERVAL BOVEN, 1964. Geleen deur prof. dr. en mev. D. F. Malherbe.
54. DROUGHT, 1964. On loan from The William Humphreys Art Gallery.

SCULPTURE

55. MOTHER AND CHILD — Wonder stone
56. DIE PAARTJIE — Wonder klip
57. LIGGENDE NAAK — Sandklip
58. PERD — Sement (Geleen deur Dr. E. Katz)
59. PORTRET — Sement
60. SPANISH BULL — Cement (On loan from Dr. and Mrs. Jurie Wessels)



No. 42 SONSONDERGANG 1968



No. 43 THE PROPHET 1957

BIOGRAPHY OF STEFAN AMPENBERGER

Stefan Ampenberger was born in a farming village called Gallenbach, Germany in 1908. He is a self taught painter, and except for his friendship with J. Amschewitz who advised and encouraged him, was a lone wolf in his first struggling years of painting. Ampenberger came to South Africa via Lourenco Marques in his late teens and tramped Mocambique, South Africa and Rhodesia for three years before settling down in the Transvaal. After the last war he met and married Iris Vining. They travelled for seventeen years in a self-built caravan and held joint exhibitions in various country towns and villages.

In 1963 the Ampenbergers came to the Free State and subsequently settled in Thaba 'Nchu. Stefan has exhibited with group exhibitions in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg and other centres. He was represented on the 1964 S.A. Quadrennial with two landscapes. Cape Town National Art Gallery acquired one of his landscapes in 1965; Pretoria Municipal Art Gallery one in 1966 and William Humphrey Art Gallery one in 1966.

Stefan is predominately a landscape painter and has become known for his Free State scenes. During the last few years he has begun painting people and brought figures into his landscapes and a marked expressionistic style has developed. Stefan also successfully sculpts in cement, wonder-stone and sandstone.

In January this year Stefan celebrated his 60th birthday and also some forty years of painting . . .

Iris Ampenberger.



200

200 Front cover of the catalogue of Stefan Ampenberg's solo exhibition at the National Museum's art hall: a lino cut landscape scene by the artist. Louis Scott personal archive.

Ampenberger 70

Watercolours

1. Slipway - Veldrif	..	1951	N/F/S	19. Veld O.V.S.	..	1975	R 70
2. Paternoster	..	1978	R120	20. Vlaktes	..	1970	R 70
3. Free State	..	1977	R120	21. Suidwes	..	1970	R 90
4. Herfs	..	1976	R120	22. Trees and Rocks	..	1977	R100
5. Windy Day	..	1976	R100	23. Die Baai - Weskus	..	1978	R 80
6. Bloemfontein	..	1963	N/F/S	24. Onrust Cape	..	1953	N/F/S
7. Hanky	..	1954	R100	25. Bome	..	1976	R 80
8. Huisies	..	1978	R 80	26. The Park E.P.	..	1954	R 90
9. Rocks	..	1978	R 80	27. Joubertina	..	1955	N/F/S
10. Brickmans Kloof P.E.	..	1955	R100	28. Die Wolk	..	1976	R 50
11. Fishermans Houses	..	1978	R100	29. The walkers	..	1976	R 70
12. Humansdorp	..	1954	N/F/S	30. Aand	..	1975	R 60
13. Weskus	..	1978	R 90	31. Morning	..	1977	R 60
14. Storm	..	1977	R 80	32. Sonop	..	1976	R 50
15. Blue Gums East Cape	..	1954	R 90	33. Mirage	..	1977	R 50
16. Port Edward Camp	..	1955	N/F/S	34. Die Dam	..	1977	R 60
17. Aan die Strand	..	1978	R 90	35. Clouds	..	1975	R 50
18. Thaba 'Nchu	..	1963	R 80	36. Pandokkies	..	1974	R 50

2

Oil Drawings

37. Still Life	..	1968	On Loan	59. Verkeerdevlei	..	1977	R450
38. Thaba 'Nchu	..	1964	R 60	60. Die Bergpad	..	1978	R500
39. Dorp	..	1956	R110	61. Thaba 'Nchu	..	1978	R160
40. Fouriesburg	..	1970	R120	62. Wit Huisies	..	1978	R130
41. Cape Cottages	..	1966	R 80	63. Rocks and Cottages	..	1978	R150
<u>Drawings</u>				64. West Coast	..	1978	R150
42. Fisherman	..	1959	R 40	65. Rocky Ridge	..	1978	R110
43. Melbostrand	..	1959	R 50	66. Golden Veld	..	1978	R100
44. Baakens River Valley P.E...	..	1956	N/F/S	67. Grass Land	..	1977	R120
45. Kimberley	..	1964	N/F/S	68. Bush and Grass	..	1977	R100
46. Old Kimberley	..	1964	R 50	69. Tweespruit	..	1963	N/F/S
47. Old House - Kimberley	..	1964	R 55	70. South O.F.S.	..	1978	R900
48. Trees	..	1972	R 50	71. Malay Quarter	..	1975	R140
49. Kimberley Districts	..	1964	R 40	72. Fishermen	..	1978	On Loan
50. Saldanha	..	1954	N/F/S	73. Thaba 'Nchu Berg	..	1978	On Loan
51. Die Nek	..	1963	N/F/S	74. Pulling in the Net	..	1978	R120
52. Doorenbome	..	1969	R 40	75. Evening	..	1965	N/F/S
<u>Oils</u>				76. Misty Day	..	1972	R200
53. Die Rivier	..	1978	R250	77. The Kraal	..	1953	On Loan
54. Vlake	..	1978	R230	78. Mossel Bay	..	1947	On Loan
55. Coming Storm of Rain	..	1977	R200	79. Self Portrait	..	1964	On Loan
56. Paternoster	..	1978	R240	80. Caledon River	..	1965	On Loan
57. Picnic	..	1975	R300	81. Reflection	..	1978	On Loan
58. Austria - Landskron	..	1974	R280	82. Landskap	..	1978	On Loan



202

²⁰² Stefan Ampenberg's solo exhibition at the National Museum's art hall in 1970: installation views. Oliewenhuis Art Museum research library.

IRIS AMPENBERGER 60

Ouditorium van die President C.R. Swart-gebou
van 17 tot 28 Februarie 1976



Die Departement Kunstgeskiedenis en Beeldende Kunste
van die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat
en die Vriende van Iris Ampenberger
Bloemfontein 1976



IRIS AMPENBERGER is op 1 Januarie 1916 in Kaapstad gebore. Haar nooiensvan is Vining. Sy studeer deelyds in die Beeldende Kunste aan die Tegniese Kollege in Port Elizabeth en vervolgens voltyds aan die Tegniese Kollege van Johannesburg. Haar leermeesters was Eric Byrd, Maurice van Essche, Phyllis Gardner, Phyllis Evans en May Davies.

In 1947 ontmoet sy Stefan Ampenberger en vanaf 1948 trek die kunstenaarspaar met 'n karavaan deur die land om uiteindelik, in 1964 tot rus te kom in Thaba 'Nchu.

Vanaf 1948 het sy in Vrede, Ermelo, Vryheid, Bethal, Waterval-Boven, Veldrif, Langebaan en

Saldanha uitgestal. In 1952 is sy verteenwoordig op die Van Riebeeck Driehonderdjarige Feesttentoonstelling waarop in 1961 'n eenmanstentoonstelling by die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging in Kaapstad volg. Agtereenvolgens neem sy deel aan die Derde en Vierde Vierjaarlikse Tentoonstelling van Suid-Afrikaanse Kuns (1964 en 1968) en die eerste Vyfjaarlikse Tentoonstelling van Suid-Afrikaanse Kuns in 1969.

Na haar vestiging in Thaba 'Nchu vertoon sy elke jaar haar werk op die kunsuitstallings van die Oranje-Vrystaatse Kunsvereniging. Met die Bloemfonteinse Groep stal sy uit in Bloemfontein en Kaapstad (1968), terwyl haar werk, saam met dit van Stefan te sien was in Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Ficksburg, Thaba 'Nchu, Tweespruit, Port Elizabeth, Maseru en Kaapstad.

Iris Ampenberger is verteenwoordig in die Pretoriase Kunsmuseum en in die William Humphreys-Kunsmuseum in Kimberley.

IRIS AMPENBERGER 60

Dit is vir die Departement Kunstgeskiedenis en Beeldende Kunste van die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat en die Vriende van Iris Ampenberger 'n groot voorreg om hierdie uitstalling in die Ouditorium van die President C.R. Swart-gebou te kan aanbied.

Bowendien gaan dit hier om 'n daad van eenvoudige regverdigheid teenoor 'n kunstenaar wie se simpatieke beskeidenheid gunstig afsteek teen die hinderlike aanmatiging van sommige dames-kunstenaresses in die land. Buite-artistieke middelle om haar kuns te propageer is Iris Ampenberger volkome vreemd. Die artistieke kwaliteit van haar werk doen dit.

Die retrospektiewe karakter van hierdie uitstalling laat die Vrystaatse kunshistorici toe haar werk te lokaliseer en te situer in die breë panorama van die Suid-Afrikaanse kunstgeskiedenis.

Is sy binne die grense van ons eie Suid-Afrikaanse ekspressionisme wat afwiesend Duits of Vlaams van oorsprong is, ons Paula Modersohn-Becker of ons Max Pechstein? Omnia comparatio claudicat, ook in die kunshistorie wat so lief is vir vergelykings.

Ten opsigte van die beskaafde Iris Ampenberger is Pechstein se primitivisme te gewild-barbaars en Paula Modersohn (ook getrou met 'n kunsskilder) se humanisme te humanitaristies en te miserabilisties.

Iris Ampenberger se primitivisme (en is dit wel primitivisme?) is die van 'n beskawingsmondige en haar humanisme getuig van 'n fyn sensibele en nooit van 'n voos sentimentalisme nie. Opstandigheid teen die Owerheid en teen die Skepper soos dit by Brücke- en Neue Sachlichkeit-kunstenaars kan voorkom ken sy nie en waar dit by haar tot 'n aanklag kan kom, temper 'n gevatte humor die onstoke gemoed, dink aan die wit skoene aan 'n swart bene onder 'n bruin kerkbank.

Die figuurstudies en gevoelige stillewens van haar olieverfskilderye kom ook in haar waterverfwerke voor. Waar die kleur van ander akwarelliste te troebel kan word bly die waterverf van Iris Ampenberger ongewoon suiwer. Sy wend dit aan in vry en los hale. Bygevolg vertoon haar waterverfskilderye lewendig, vars en helder. Ongedwonge werk wat makliker vertoon, maar nie makliker is nie, as haar olieverfwerk.

Iris Ampenberger was en is 'n getroue lid van die Bloemfonteinse groep, ook die Scott-groep genoem volgens die naam van die diepgetroude stigter wat ons onlangs ontval het. Saam met Stefan Ampenberger en Frans Claerhout maak Iris Ampenberger van Thaba 'Nchu 'n tweede Laren, Worpsewede of Sint-Martens-Latern waarvan geen enkel buitelandse besoeker verbygaan nie. Sy is in alle stilte ook 'n vriendin en weldoener van die Departement Kunstgeskiedenis en

Beeldende Kunste van die Vrystaatse universiteit en saam met haar man 'n mooi voorbeeld vir die kunststudente.

En die feit dat sy nou — haar jeugdigde verskyning ten spyt — 'n respektabele ouderdom bereik het, was wel die aanleiding maar geensins die dwang tot hierdie tentoonstelling wat reeds lank beplan was.

Frans Claerhout

1. STEFAN	Pastel	1953	N.T.K.
2. PENSTEMMENS	Olíe	1973	R190
3. WOMAN WITH DOEK	Oil drawing	1976	R 45
4. SEUNTJIE	Olíe	1951	N.T.K.
Uit die Van Riebeeck Driehonderdjarige Feesttentoonstelling 1952			
5. GIRL READING	Oil	1966	R250
6. MOEDER EN KIND	Olíe	1964	R300
7. TEENAGERS	Oil	1965	N.T.K.
8. GIRLS WITH CAT	Oil	1968	N.F.S.
9. OU VROU	Olíeverftekening	1969	R 50
10. SHOWING THE WAY	Water colour	1974	N.F.S.
11. DIE KABINET VAN DIE TRANSKEI	Olíe	1973	N.T.K.
12. THE PREACHER	Water colour	1965	R 90
13. SPREEKKAMER	Akwarel	1964	N.T.K.
14. DANSENDE BANTOE	Olíeverftekening	1975	R 45
15. DIERE (ONS VRIENDE !)	Olíeverftekening	1965	N.T.K.
16. DIE VLUG	Akwarel	1974	R 60
17. DIE SKATTEJAGTERS	Olíe	1963	N.T.K.
18. THE ARIA	Oil	1959	N.T.K.
19. BROER EN SUSTER	Olíe	1964	R250
20. STEFAN	Olíe	1961	N.T.K.
21. GROEP	Akwarel	1973	R 80
22. KALBAS EN POTTE	Olíe	1969	N.T.K.
23. KONFYTMAKERS	Olíe	1949	R130
24. STUDYING	Water colour	1968	R 80
25. KAT IN DIE MAANLIG	Olíe	1967	N.T.K.
26. THREE WOMEN	Water colour	1973	R 80
27. BLOMSTUDIE UIT DUTSLAND	Akwarel	1974	N.T.K.
28. VROU	Akwarel	1964	N.T.K.
29. THE NEW COAT	Oil drawing	1975	R 40
30. SKOFFEL	Akwarel	1974	R100

31. DANCING GIRLS	Water colour	1973	R100
32. GOSSIPERS	Water colour	1973	R 80
33. RED HAT	Oil drawing	1975	R 40
34. GESPREK	Tekening	1975	R 35
35. STEFAN	Potloodtekening	1974	N.T.K.
36. STEFAN	Linoleumsnee	1963	N.T.K.
37. YDELHEID	Pentekening	1965	R 60
38. MISERY	Pen and ink	1965	R 68
39. FRANS CLAERHOUT	Olieverftekening	1965	N.T.K.
40. DRIE FIGURE	Linoleumsnee	1963	N.T.K.
41. OLD AGE	Monotype	1968	R 40
42. MEISIE	Linoleumsnee	1963	N.T.K.
43. AUDIENCE	Lino cut	1963	N.T.K.
44. DIE OUDERDOM	Pentekening	1965	R130
45. VERWORPELINGE	Olieverftekening	1963	R 70
46. DIE OUE EN DIE NUWE	Olie	1965	N.T.K.
47. BLOMME	Olie	1972	N.T.K.
48. TWEE MEISIES	Akwarel	1974	N.T.K.
49. ON THE SOFA	Olie	1966	N.T.K.
50. HEMELSE GESPREK	Olie	1965	N.T.K.
51. WAGKAMER	Olie	1964	R220
52. DIE ARMSALIGES	Olie	1970	R400
53. MINE TRAGEDY	Oil	1972	N.F.S.
54. VROU MET SIEK KIND	Olie	1968	R200
55. OUMA MET KIND	Olie	1964	R200
56. HOUTKAPPER	Olieverftekening	1968	R 60
57. FAMILY	Water colour	1974	N.F.S.
58. DAME MET ROOS	Olie	1964	N.T.K.
59. VOOR DIE VENSTER	Olie	1966	R400
60. RED OVERALLS	Oil	1976	R120
61. APPELETERS	Olie	1949	R150
62. TENTOONSTELLING OP ERMELO	Olie Uit die Van Riebeeck Drie- honderdjarige Feesttentoon- stelling 1952	1951	N.T.K.
63. WAGTENDE	Olie	1966	N.T.K.
64. SWEMMERS	Olie	1948	N.T.K.
65. MEISIE OP DIE STRAND	Olie	1971	N.T.K.
66. ZINNIAS	Olie	1972	N.T.K.
67. GARDEN PARTY	Water colour	1961	N.F.S.
68. THE ANNUNCIATION	Icon	1964	N.F.S.
69. HAAN	Seepsteen	1968	N.T.K.

Die Departement Kunsgeiedenis en Beeldende Kunste van die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat en die Vriende van Iris Ampenberger spreek graag hulre dank uit teenoor al diegene wat kunswerke vir hierdie tentoonstelling geleen het.



suid-afrikaanse nasionale kunsmuseum 1966
south african national gallery 1966

bloemfontein groep tentoonstelling bloemfontein group exhibition

Dit is vir mev. du Plessis en vir my 'n voorreg om die Vrystaatse kunstenaars van wie die kunswerke in Kaapstad uitgestal word, van harte geluk te wens met die hoop dat die uitstalling hul tot groter hoogtes sal inspireer.

Na ek vernem is ons Vrystaatse groep tans baie aktief en ek verwag dat nog baie van hierdie groep in die nabye toekoms gehoor sal word.

Die kunst in Suid-Afrika is baie jonk en ons kan die werk van ons handjlewer kunstenaars beswaarlik met die Europese kunst vergelyk.

Uitstallings soos hierdie kan egter meehelp om ons kunst te verbeter en om ons kulturele lewe verder uit te bou.

Graag wens ek u alle sukses met die uitstalling toe.

23 Februarie 1966

Boodskap deur sy Edele J. W. Du Plessis,
Administrateur van die Oranje-Vrystaat

Message by the Hon. J. W. Du Plessis,
Administrator of the Orange Free State



ADMINISTRATEUR
ADMINISTRATOR

For Mrs. du Plessis and me it is a great privilege to convey our warm congratulations to the Free State artists whose work is being exhibited in Cape Town. We trust that the exhibition will inspire them to attain still greater heights.

I understand that our Free State group is very active at present and I expect that much will be heard of the group in the near future.

Art is young in South Africa: we can hardly compare the work of our small handful of artists with the art of Europe.

Exhibitions such as this can help, however, to improve our art and to widen our cultural life still more.

I have much pleasure in wishing you every success for the exhibition.

23rd February, 1966

foreword

When, in 1948, South Africa showed its art to the world for the first time, there were four artists from the Orange Free State represented in the exhibition. None of them, however, had lived there longer than their childhood, and no measurable Free State art existed at that time.

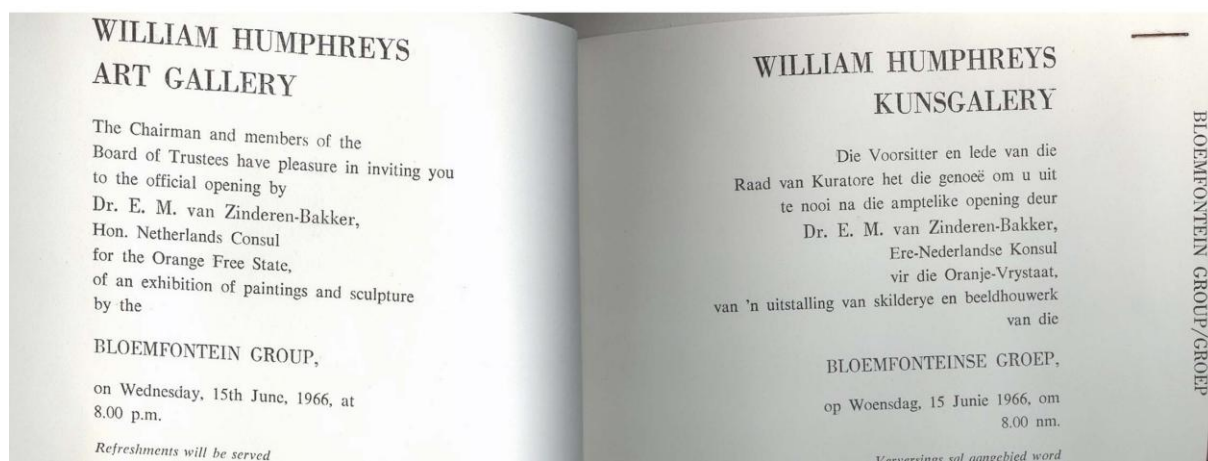
Although the Orange Free State still has no self-contained art gallery, art academy or Fine Arts faculty, the position is to-day much changed, as a result of the emergence of the Bloemfontein Group, which is described in this catalogue by its champion, Dr. F. P. Scott. The twelve artists of this group, represented in our present exhibition, have all (with the exception of Westbrook) worked for a long time in the Free State, although (with the exception of Van der Merwe) they were not born in the province.

This proves that to-day there is a spiritual climate in the Free State which is conducive to the rise and growth of contemporary art. For this reason the South African National Gallery decided to include the art of the Orange Free State (as embodied by the Bloemfontein Group) in the series of exhibitions devoted to the art of particular areas of South Africa.

We owe many thanks to Dr. and Mrs. F. P. Scott of Bloemfontein, who made their home available as a reception centre, and enabled us to make our selection from a large number of works of art. Our thanks are also due to the owners, who made their works readily available for our exhibition.

The fact that several other Art Galleries have already applied for the loan of this exhibition, is proof that there is widespread interest in the art of this Group. We leave it to visitors to the exhibition to decide for themselves how and where the influences of light and climate, man and nature, of the Orange Free State, have manifested themselves in the work of these artists.

Matthys Bokhorst
DIRECTOR,



205

²⁰⁵ The official invitation of the Bloemfontein Group's exhibition at William Humphreys Art Gallery in 1966. Source: William Humphreys research library archive.

APPENDIX 2: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

ARTISTIC TALENT OVERCROWDED

7 MAY 1974
National Museum, Upper Arts Hall: Orange Free State Art Society's members' exhibition.

THIS magnificent show of artistic talent is perhaps slightly overcrowded, thus drowning some of the truly impressive works in the sea of profusion.

First mention must be made of the sculptures which, although numerically overshadowed by the paintings, form the finest part of the exhibition. Who can resist smiling when confronted with Daniella Geldenhuys's triumphant cockerel Koe-ke-re-koe? Ann Miller has Oom Hansie on show, proving that she can produce an extremely fine character study. The three works by Kate Marais convey a sense of strong harmony in a beautifully flowing line. Gustav Kaltenbrun's abstract expressions in soapstone are most impressive and one would certainly like to see more of his work.

CHAOTIC

Coming to the painting section one easily recognises Stefan Ampenberger's bold colours and stroke and Frans Claerhout's happy simplicity in blending Free State colours: yellows, bronzes and browns. Some of his simpli-

city could perhaps bring a sense of direction into Sophia Luckhoff's rather chaotic use of colour. The colours as such are good but to subdivide them into blotches confuses the eye. In contrast stands Iris Ampenberger's work, achieving tranquillity in bold colours.

It is a pity that some of the artists were not more selective but instead show the bad with the good. This applies particularly to Rowena Bush, Stuart L. Deane, Paul Lavender, Unie Jonson, Louis Holtzhausen and Fayette Varney. Varney's River Valley flows monotonously downhill instead of sweeping skywards in generous brush strokes. Dorothy M. Spreadborough and Gerda Meuleman should try to take distance instead of giving a close-up of their subjects: in doing this they might well achieve more depth.

CAN DO BETTER

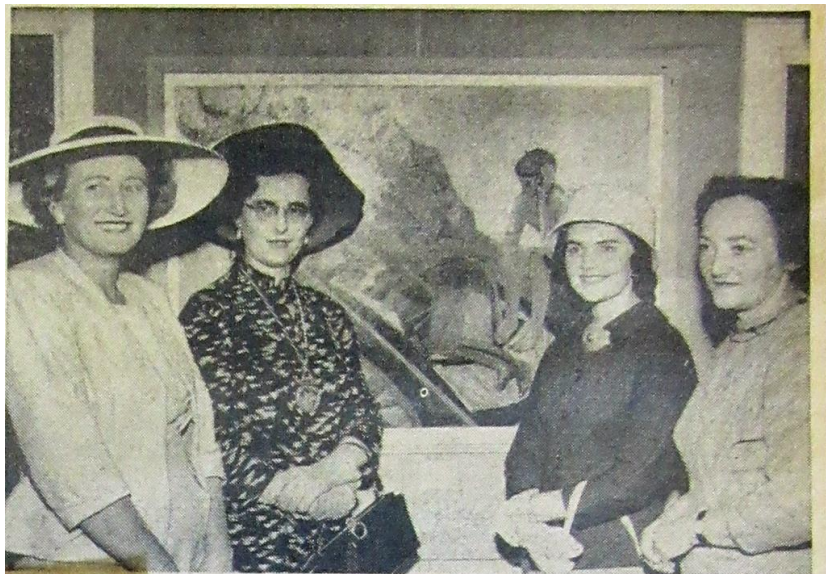
Zenobia Botha and Jeanette Buys have some difficulty in translating the language of flowers but their other work shows that they can do better.

Claude Nezar's Misty Morning is silently mysterious and most attractive. Impressive, too, are the works by Lourens de Bruyn, Dale Elliot — his light fall is delightful — and Kobus Kotze, who all have the courage to use colours boldly. Casper Steenkamp's lino prints are strangely sad but very attractive indeed. In contrast Philip Nel's work is happy and gay though perhaps slightly superficial. And then last but certainly not least comes Gerhard Olivier with his three very fine pencil drawings.

All in all a very attractive and interesting exhibition which will be open daily from 10 am until 9 pm. It closes on May 11 at 1 pm.

ED.

206



DIE VOLKSBLAD.

Op die opening sta van die skildery-uitstalling van die Bloemfonteinse Groep in die museumsaal, was hierdie dames teenwoordig (v.l.n.r.): mev. O. Duthie, sekretaresse van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging, mev. (prof.) C. A. van Rooy, mev. Renée le Roux, een van die kunstenaresses en skoondogter van oud-minister S. P. le Roux en mev. D. Scott. Mev. Scott se eggenoot, dr. F. P. Scott, het 'n leidende rol gespeel in die stigting van die Bloemfonteinse Groep verlede jaar in September. Die skildery op die foto is „Siekevervoer” van Marianne

„Skildergroep Het Met Talente Gewoeker’

’n Baie geslaagde uitstalling van skilderye deur die Bloemfonteinse Groep is gistermiddag deur prof. C. A. van Rooy van die Vrystaatse Universiteit in die Museumsaal geopen. Hierdie uitstalling staan onder die beskerming van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging en dit is duidelik dat hierdie groep, wat nog nie eers die eerste verjaardag van hul bestaan kon vier nie, die afgelope paar maande nie alleen met hul talente gewoeker het nie, maar terselfdertyd met iets nuuts en skoons in hul weergawes voor die dag gekom het.

In sy openingsrede het prof. Van Rooy daarop gewys dat feitlik al die moderne kunstenaars ekspressioniste is. Hul hoofdoel is nie ’n realistiese weergawe van die natuur nie, maar hulle maak slegs van voorwerpe uit die natuur gebruik om hul eie, innerlike gewaarwordinge uit te beeld. So het Vader Frans Clearhout in sy „Familiegroep” alle realistiese wette verbreek om slegs die tragiese asook patetiese in die Bantoelewe uit te beeld.

In Marianne Podlashuc se vrolike stillewes met hul skerp kleurkontraste is daar heelwat meer realisme te bespeur. Bruce Hancock is egter beslis die grootste realis van die sewe lede van hierdie nuutgestigte groep. Sy „Uitsig van Olive Hill” is ’n pragtige werk.

Waar Bruce Hancock se werke ’n vrolike, opgewekte stemming vertolk, vind ons in Alexander Podlashuc se skilderye weer iets aawaarmoe-digs. In Eben van der Merwe se impressionistiese „Rangeerwerwe,” sy figuurstudies en sy stillewes merk ons hierdie belowende jong kunstenaar se gevoeligheid vir kleur, lyn en komposisie.

Baie interessant is ook die uitbeelding van lig en skaduwee in Rose-Marie Budler se „Lokasie.”

Hoewel Renée le Roux se werke die abstrakte rigting verteenwoordig, spreek sy nogtans ’n taal wat elkeen maklik behoort te verstaan. Haar „Herfs” is seker een van die beste en kleinvolste werkies op die hele uitstalling.

ESF

Art exhibition by local group

ANY EXHIBITION of paintings by any new group willy-nilly arouses suspicions of something too new, too ultra, too imaginary and too esoteric for ordinary appreciation. It would be folly to dismiss the current exhibition of the recently-formed Bloemfontein group of seven artists in the Arts Hall of the National Museum as broadly falling under those categories.

The group is "new" only as far as existence is concerned, for, in the main, tradition still runs broad and deep and there is little, if any, of the cold snowy veil that abstraction has cast over the whole landscape of art.

Roughly, the exhibition may be categorised as abstract, modern and traditional, with each sub-division overlapping the other to capture the style and mood of the artist. In fact, some of it is downright old-fashioned —by modern standards—while the great bulk of the canvases are more representational than abstract.

Nearest approach to the abstract is Renee le Roux, but even here the coherence of expression, mostly colourfully diagrammed, is so clearly evident that there is nothing of the dumb acting in pictures where the artist has failed to find a theme.

All her works are strongly representational, particularly in the formalistic "Frieze", perhaps her most successful, and in the rhythmic attractions of "Flotsam", which, although somewhat more sombre, is none the less pleasing.

CUBISTIC

Marianne Podlachuc has forsaken her gay yellows and daisies-pied for the more faintly cubistic, though often grotesque browns, but these are always alleviated by her use of blue, of which "The Watercart" is a good example. Brighter and more successful are the two still-lives, "Coffee-Pot" and "Copper Kettle", which, although perhaps too sharply etched, have a pleasant use of red as a basic colour instead of brown or blue.

Sombre almost to excess are the canvases of Father Frans Claerhout, in which only the semi-luminosity of the often-restricted backgrounds serve to relieve the central composition. Here he relies mostly in abstract expressionism, as in "Milk-in, Time", "Cart" and "Family", but even the application of greys does not tend to lessen the mood of shadowy dejection.

In brighter mood, but less adroit in composition, are the oils of Rose-Marie Budler. In "Indaba" and "Water-Carrier" the flatness of background neglect is evident, which makes "Location", with its fine perspective and gayer colour-use, as titillating as her subject allows her. Far more joyous is the still-life, "Sunflowers", in which bright colour cadences dispel the other shortcomings.

Eben van der Merwe has two portraits — "Woman With White Scarf" and "Nude", and although in the latter study his use of yellow light is appealing, the execution of the figure itself is not wholly happy. Far more interesting are his still-lives, which show much improved care and composition, and, better still, his "Shunting Yards", a canvas

of easy application and resultant harmony.

Alexander Podlachuc seems to have become a painter fascinated by old buildings, brown and moody, as in his "Old Power Station" and "Station Building". There is a volte-face in his still-life, "Sprats" which, with its whites, is almost gay in comparison.

Then, too, there is the greater simplicity of "Sammy Cart" — a simple reason why I found this the most appealing of his work.

With a bump right into saner reality, there are Bruce Hancock's landscapes which give an almost disconcerting, but wrong photographic impression.

What impresses most is his striving after depth, often gained by the clever sacrifice of some foreground, but compensatory in his discovery of perspective, gained mostly through subtle cloud effects.

All his works show maturer signs of painstaking striving after "distance" and, as such, make them the more enjoyable.

His "View From Olive Hill", his best work, is a fine example of this care in workmanship and design.

You may not care for all this exhibition has to offer, but like hot-dogs and cokes in our modern world, there is also other nourishment to offer.

Z.M.



This is one of the modern paintings on exhibition at the National Museum this week. The painting is called Composition in Blue and was painted by Renée le Roux, one of the Bloemfontein Group of Artists exhibiting.

THE FRIEND

Borsbeeld Van Skrywer



'n Borsbeeld is vir ons altyd 'n herinnering aan iemand wat ons reeds vooruitgegaan het. Hierdie borsbeeld sal egter 'n deeltjie van my lewe met my meemaak: het dr. D. F. Malherbe, die gevierde Afrikaanse skrywer, gisteraand gesê tydens die oorhandiging van 'n borsbeeld van hom wat deur 'n groep van sy oud-studente aan hom geskenk is. Op die foto verskyn dr. en mev. Malherbe saam met

VERRASSING

Die oorhandiging van die borsbeeld was vir dr. Malherbe 'n verrassing. Die aantal oud-studente wat oorgekom het vir die plegtigheid, het dit 'n geheim gehou.

Prof. B. Kok het met die oorhandiging daarvan die hoop uitgespreek dat dr. Malherbe se intrek in 'n nuwe woning nog 'n vrugbare fase in sy lewe sal inlei. Hy het hom die versekering gegee dat dit vir baie oud-studente 'n voorreg was om tot die fonds vir die aankoop van die beeld by te dra.

Die borsbeeld is deur Daniëlla Geldenhuys gemaak. 'n Lys van die

oud-studente wat bygedra het om dit te koop, is ook aan dr. Malherbe oorhandig.



The Friend, Bloemfontein, Thursday, Nov. 18, 1954

**SAW ARTIST'S
EXHIBITION**

Her Excellency, Mrs E. G. Jansen, viewed an exhibition of painting and sculpture by Miss Danniella Geldenhuys at the library of the University of the Orange Free State yesterday morning. She is photographed here with the artist looking at a bust of Dr S. H. Pellissier.

210

²¹⁰ 1954.11.00—*Friend* newspaper. *Saw Artist Exhibition*: anon. Source: Oliewenhuis Art Museum research library archive.

THE PRETORIA NEWS.
(Wed May 24 1961)

Bloemfontein Group Exhibits

FIVE BLOEMFONTEIN ARTISTS — the Bloemfontein Group — show a collection of their paintings at Vorster's Gallery. The exhibition, which features lively work ranging from pure pattern to bold social commentary, was opened yesterday afternoon by Mr. J. B. Braaksma, Cultural Attaché to the Netherlands Embassy.

The artists are Frans Claerhout, Renee le Roux, Alexander Podlashuc, Marianne Podlashuc and Eben van der Merwe. There is no danger of mistaking the work of any one of these artists for that of another — all are highly individual in their approach.

Marianne Podlashuc and Frans Claerhout, for instance, are both concerned to show the Native, but Marianne Podlashuc concentrates on poverty and suffering, while Frans Claerhout shows the vitality and rhythm, the warmth and humanity.

Marianne Podlashuc has a markedly realistic approach in her concern for African poverty and the dumb patience behind it. Her children as hospital patients wring the heart and her "Pieta," too, is a moving interpretation of suffering quietly accepted. There is strength in the almost threatening attitude of the "Onlookers." The artist keeps her colours pure and the impact of these boldly presented figures is considerable.

Humour

Alexander Podlashuc has a more detached and objective approach. His "Night Shift" is a lively study, well drawn and composed, and not without its humour. The humour is more marked in "Salvation in the Suburbs" — a Salvation Army group in action. "Parking Lot" has something of poetry in its suggestion of work and rest in the open, somewhat barren South African landscape.

Frans Claerhout is bolder in his approach: the brush strokes strong and broad, the figures solidly planted, statuesque in repose, rhythmic in motion. The drawing is strong, the presentation dramatic.

"Abba" is a striking work showing the Native mother with her sleeping baby nestling on her back, and "Engaged Couple" is an extremely lively impression of a couple (the back view) moving along with linked arms, in easy, companionable intimacy, utterly carefree and probably talking at the tops of their voices.

Eben van der Merwe is concerned with shapes and patterns, blocks of colour, completely non-figurative. There is not a great deal of difference whether he calls a painting "White Walls" (and concentrates on colour) or simply "Formal Composition" or "Landscape."

Renee le Roux, though her work is also non-figurative, manages to suggest far more. Her "Witches Sabbath" and "Purgatory" are both a burst of colour and fine patterning, a suggestion of wild movement and abandon — whether to some sort of ecstasy or pain. Her "squall" is a most expressive and evocative suggestion of wind and rain or a sudden blowing

rust, the colours in curved, moving lines.

Perhaps her most interesting work, and, indeed, one of the best on the show, is "Subway," which brilliantly suggests the maze of lines, the rush and adventure of travelling by train.

Her work is sensitive in its presentation of the pattern and suggestion of buildings, the architectural line, in paintings called "Illusion" and "Residential Area."

The very variety of this work, the strongly individualistic approach, makes for a vital and more than ordinarily interesting exhibition. — P.A.K.

CITY GROUP ARTISTS



Four painters of the Bloemfontein Group — who are exhibiting at Roderick's Gallery—were photographed with the Director of Education in the Free State, Mr E. E. van Kerken, when he opened the exhibition. From left to right are Mr and Mrs A. C. Podlashuc, Mr Van Kerken, Mrs R. le Roux and Father Frans Claerhout.

212

²¹² 1962.09.21-- *Friend* newspaper. *City Group artists*: Anon. René le Roux's personal archive albums. In this photo, the Bloemfontein Group artists were photographed with the Director of Education in the Free State, Mr E. E. Van Kerken who also opened the exhibition. From left to right: Alexander Podlashuc, Marianne Podlashuc, Mr van Kerken, René le Roux and Frans Claerhout.



Uitstalling:
**LOOF
GROEP**

Die uitstalling van skilderye van die Bloemfonteinse Groep is van baie hoë gehalte en die kunstenaars hou groot belofte vir die toekoms in, het mnr. E. E. van Kerken, Direkteur van Onderwys in die Vrystaat, gister in Bloemfontein gesê.

Hy het 'n uitstalling van skilderye van die Groep in die Rodericksaal geopen.

'n Uitstalling van skilderye van die Bloemfonteinse groep is gistermiddag in die Rodericksaal in Bloemfontein geopen. Mev. Marianne Podlashuc, 'n lid van die groep, die Direkteur van Onderwys, mnr. E. E. van Kerken, wat die opening waargeneem het, en mev. W. Rhodes-Harrison, voorsitter van die Vrystaatse tak van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging, staan hier by een van die skilderye van mev. Podlashuc. (Berig hierby).

²¹³ 1962.09.20—*Volksblad* newspaper. *Uitstalling: Loof Groep*: Anon. René le Roux's personal archive albums. In this photo Bloemfontein Group artist, Marianne Podlashuc is standing on the left next to the Director of Education in the Free State and the chairperson of the South African arts association, Mrs W. Rhodes-Harrison.



Iris en Stefan Ampenberger by 'n skildery van Iris. Die skilder-egpaar wat al deur die hele land getoer het, sal moontlik 'n week in Bloemfontein vertoef. Daarna is hulle van plan om na Thaba Nchu te gaan. Hulle sal egter later na Bloemfontein terugkeer om 'n uitstalling van hul skilderye te hou. (Berig onder).

Skilderpaar toon uiteenlopende talent

'N INTERESSANTE skilderpaar besoek tans Bloemfontein. Hierdie egpaar is Stefan en Iris Ampenberger. In hul selfgebooue en goed-ingerigte karavaan het hulle reeds vir jare die hele land deurreis en 'n groot vriendekring opgebou.

Stefan Ampenberger is van Duitse afkoms. Hy het aanvanklik in Johannesburg as skrynwerker gewerk waar hy seilbote ontwerp en gebou het. In hierdie tyd het hy goed bevriend geraak met die bekende Afrikaanse skilder Amschwitz, van wie hy ook sy eerste skilderlesse ontvang het.

Hy het hom vir baie jare veral toegelê op die skilder van berglandskappe in olie- en waterverf. Die afgelope paar jaar het hy hoofsaaklik met waterverf gewerk.

Sy natuurlike teken- en skildertalent maak dit vir hom moontlik om met groot vlotheid landskappe op die doek te bring. Sy werk is sterk van lyn en goed van komposisie. Hy skilder dikwels bome en bostonele, en af en toe straattonele. Daar kom

min figure in sy werk voor, en dit is duidelik dat hy veral geïnspireer word deur die skilderagtige van die natuur.

Emosies

By sy vrou Iris staan die uitbeelding van menslike emosies weer op die voorgrond. Sy het 'n deeglike kunsopleiding ontvang en teken vlot. Haar mediums is olie- en waterverf. Sy het 'n besondere talent vir die skilder van seunsportrette. Sy is ook lief om groepe mense uit te beeld. Haar werk is nooit sonder humorsinnie.

In die verlede het sy in Bloemfontein op die jaarlikse uitstalling van die Vrystaatse Kunsvereniging uitgestal. Met die Van Riebeeckfees is een van haar werke vir uitstalling aangeneem. 'n Paar Bloemfonteinse versamelaars besit van haar werke.

Dit sal kunstiehebbers die moeite loon om die Ampenberger-egpaar in die karavaanpark te besoek.

— PETRUS.

Verfraai U Vel
Met Suurlemoen

Podlashucs presteer UITSTALLING WAS GROOT SUKSES

TWEE Bloemfonteinse kunstenaars, Alexander en Marianne Podlashuc, het groot sukses behaal met 'n kunsuitstalling in Kaapstad. Die uitstalling, wat deur Maurice van Essche, een van Suid-Afrika se bekendste kunstenaars, geopen is, het groot belangstelling gewek en uitmuntende kritiek van Kaapstadse kunskritici gekry.

Albei is lede van die bekende Bloemfonteinse groep. Alexander is die krag in hierdie groep wat by 'n onlangse uitstalling in Johannesburg groot lof ingeoos het.

Alexander Podlashuc het verskillende voorgangers gehad. Die sterkste het waarskynlik die groot kunstenaars van „Simplicissimus“ op hom ingewerk, veral Thöny, Schutz, Paul, Schilling en Gulbransson. Aan Lowry van Engeland en Buffet van Frankryk het hy ongetwyfeld ook iets te danke — veral die vermoë om te vereenvoudig. Dat hy instaat was om uit dergelike uiteenlopende bronne nogtans tot 'n oorspronklike sintese te kom pleit vir sy sterkte van gees en oorspronklikheid van visie.

Sy skilderstukke van spoorwegarbeiders, polisie-agente, registers, gevangenes en heilskerlede getuig van 'n realiteitsbesef, gemeng met 'n sterk sin vir die komiese. Hierdie sin vir die komiese red hom van die bitterheid wat dikwels in die werke van sy bogenoemde groot voorgangers te bespeur is en wat vermoedelik verantwoordelik is vir die feit dat hierdie uitstekende kunstenaars in die vergeetheid geraak het. Hy probeer nie om 'n klagskrif namens sekere groepe in te dien nie — eerder leef hulle vir hom in 'n vreemde byna Oostoievskaanse omgewerktheid.

TEKSTUUR

Sy vermoë om tekstuur uit te beeld is veral duidelik in sy ouderwetse woonhuise wat aansienlik bydra om die sosiale stand van sy karakters uit te beeld. Die laaste tyd het hy palet verryk deur 'n nuwe tegniek benadering waardeur sy vroeëre te gedurfd ekspressionistiese kleur heelwat getemper is. As portretskilder weet hy hoe om psigologiese karakteristiek met skilderkunstige skoonheid te verenig.

Marianne Podlashuc se skilderswerk verskil in baie opsigte van die van haar eggenoot sietesaaande die sterk sosiale faktor wat

by beide op die voorgrond is. Sy skilder die half-verwesterde Bantoe met realisme en krag wat getuig van 'n suiwer aanvoeling van die sosiale nood van hierdie mense.

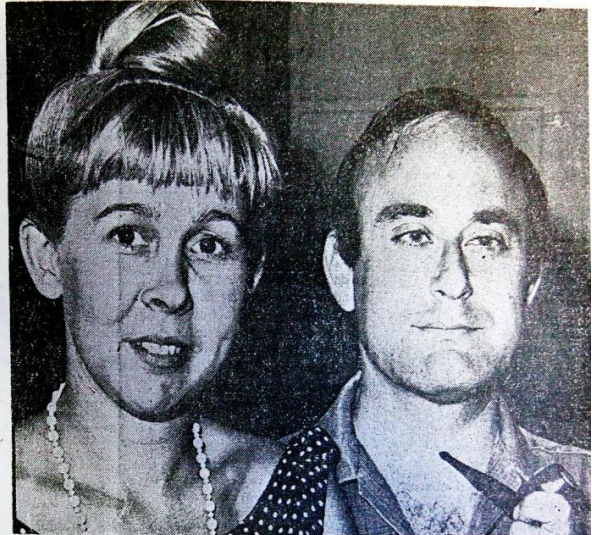
Met die eerste oogopslag sou 'n mens Ben Shahn en die Meksikaanse kuns in haar werk bespeur — haar oorsprong is egter heeltemal verskillend en eerder geleë in die nuwe saaklikheidsstyl van haar Nederlandse stamgenote, veral Willink en Charlie Toorop.

KLEURRYKHEID

Aan haar Nederlandse afkoms dank sy ook haar kleurrykheid. Sy is goed onderleg in die moontlikhede wat die skildertegniese, sowel as die moontlikhede wat die moderne skildersrigtings aanbied. Wanneer haar werk soms as te glad of afgelek bestempel word, berus dit alleen op 'n totale gebrek aan waardering van haar doedibewuste tegniek by die beoordelaar.

Marianne se werk is ryk aan menslikheid en seker nie sonder 'n sosiale aanklag nie. Haar suiwer skilderkunstigheid red haar egter van propagandisme. Dit is te betwyfel of daar nog 'n kunstenaar in ons land is wat 'n sekere aspek van ons sosiale lewe met soveel skilderkunstige oorspronklikheid uitgebeeld het.

— (PETRUS).



MARIANNE EN ELEXANDER PODLASHUC

Kan „songod” heet



„Noem dit maar 'n songod", het Renée le Roux op die foto aan Die Volksblad gesê toe aan haar gevra is wat die skildery hierbo voorstel. Renée hou tans 'n uitstalling van haar werke in die Roderick-saal in Bloemfontein. Vol-

gens mev. Le Roux is die hoofdoel van die skildery egter om aan te toon hoe afval-materiaal en ou motoronderdele deur die regte rangskikking en aanwending van die nodige kleure aantreklike voor-

KLEURHANTERING IS KENMERK VAN UITSTALLING

DIE eerste eenman-uitstalling van Renée le Roux, 'n lid van die bekende Bloemfontein-groep, vind nou in die Roderick-saal in Bloemfontein plaas onder beskerming van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging. Hierdie ruim saal is 'n uitstekende uitstillingsgeleentheid en bied 'n ekstra gerief aan vir voornemende kunsuitstallers in Bloemfontein. Die uitstalling word vanmiddag om 5.15 geopen.

Die moontlikhede van die abstrakte kuns word in hierdie uitstalling uitstekend aangetoon. Die belangrikste kenmerk van die kunstnare is haar buitengewone kleurhantering. Die ritmiese groepering gee aan haar skilderye 'n besondere gevoelswaarde.

In abstrakte werke soos *Winter*, *Suid-Vrystaat in Janee* vind 'n rekonstruksie van die natuur plaas waar die atmosfeer en kleure van ons landskap met sy bome, plante, diere en mense ongetwyfeld herkenbaar is. Met haar abstrakte benadering het sy daarin geslaag om van die gebondenheid van die natuur los te kom en met die hulp van kleur en vorm alleen 'n skoonheidsontroering op te tek.

Suiwer op intuïsie gebaseer, skilder sy haar komposisies met groot vryheid. Die uitgangspunt van natuurlike voorwerpe af is in sommige skilderye maklik herkenbaar (*Anemone*, *Windgewaal*), terwyl 'n mens die indruk kry dat die uitdrukking van 'n sekere emosie weer primêr was in ander werke en dat die titel

agterna aangepas was weens 'n oppervlakkige gelykenis soos by *Golf*, *Nagied* en *Oordeelsdag*.

RYK

Sekere skilderye is so ryk aan liriese en dramatiese aanvoeling dat die titel 'n mens volkome koud laat, bv. *Ballonne* en *Fluitspelers*.

Daar word ryklik gebruik gemaak van die skildersmetode van die Tachiste waarby verfspatsels en toevallige effekte opsetlik gebruik word om die komposisie te voltooi.

Ongewoon en vir Bloemfontein iets nuuts is die komposisies opgebou uit afval-materiaal van trekkers en ander masjiene, deurslote, drade, klippies ens. Indien 'n mens jou nie deur die alledaagse van hierdie voorwerpe laat aflei nie is dit merkwaardig tot wat 'n mate die kunstnare in staat is om deur 'n juiste komposisie die skoonheid van hierdie voorwerpe te laat uitkom.

Hierdie uitstalling is iets vir die fynproewer wat met gevoel en smaak in staat is om die seldsame uitdruktingswyse van 'n uiters begaafde kunstnare te waardes.

PETRUS

²¹⁶ 1962.06.08— *Volksblad* newspaper. *Kleurhantering is kenmerk van uitstalling*: Petrus. Renée le Roux's personal archive albums. On the left Renée le Roux is standing with one of her paintings on this exhibition, *Son god* at the Roderick gallery in Bloemfontein.

Dit Sal Ons Eer Aandoen, Al Is Dit Nogal Konserwatief

DIS vanselfsprekend dat, ten einde die koste van deelname aan die Biennale in Sao Paulo te regverdig, slegs die beste werke deur ons kunstenaars goed genoeg is om daar ten toon gestel te word.

Ongelukkig is die kunstenaar self nie altyd die beste beoordelaar van sy eie werk nie. Voorwerpe op 'n Tafel deur Jean Welz sou as voorbeeld kan dien. Dit het één voordeel: dit is in 'n hoë mate oorspronklik. Nietemin ly dié komposisie aan 'n oordosis soeterige ligroos, en die motief leen hom nie daartoe om die mooi liniere kwaliteit van Jean Welz se werk te demonstreer nie.

Twee ander kunstenaars kon na my mening ook deur werke van hoër gehalte verteenwoordig gewees het: Maurice van Eesche en May Hillhouse. As sodanige werk in private besit is, behoort dit tot hul beskikking gestel te word, nie slegs in hul eie belang nie, maar ook in dié van die hele tentoonstelling.

Carl Büchner se *Goëlaar* verleen iets van verligting aan die origens hoogs abstrakte of nie-figuratiewe tentoonstelling.

Die werk van Frank Spears is van 'n nogal veranderlike gehalte. Dis goed om op te merk dat hy hier op sy allerbeste verteenwoordig word deur *Nikodemus*, 'n skildery van mistieke aard in baie ingetoe kleure uitgevoer. Die byna wit mantel van die sentrale figuur is baie goed geskilder.

VARIASIE

Die *Drie figure* deur Franas Domaitis is 'n interessante variasie op 'n tema waarvoor dié kunstenaar baie lief is en wat reeds goed bekend is. Dis moeilik om 'n mens voor te stel hoe 'n internasionale publiek wat nog nooit 'n enkele skildery van dieselfde hand gesien het nie, op so 'n eenvoudige komposisie sal reageer.

Alfred Krenz se jongste vlug in die abstraksie lyk my ly aan 'n voorkeur vir nogal ruwe kleur. Aan die ander kant bewys *Neergolwende Rots* deur Anna Verbeke dat dié jong skilderes in

hierdie goeie geselskap haar man kan staan. In die vlak lig van die S.A. Nasionale Kunsmuseum lyk dit of die krytagtige wit en die groenerige kontoere van *Herfskomposisie* deur Erik Laubscher lewenskragtigheid mis.

Hou u van Lawrence Scully se *Maletsenydne*? Sy skerp kleure word slegs deur die geel en swart aksente gebind. Hierdie gebrek aan gevoeligheid vir kleur word voor die hand liggend as ons dit vergelyk met Stephen de Villiers se *Hoë Altaar*, 'n skildery wat ryk en lewendig is, en glad nie ingetoe van kleur nie.

TRANSVAAL

En wat van Transvaal? Walter Battiss se *Onderdeel van 'n Liefdesbrief aan die Koningin van Skeba of Dankoffer aan 'n Hittitiese God* bly te speels.

Baie knap nie-figuratiewe werk — selfs al mis dit oorspronklikheid — word bygedra deur Elsa Marshall.

E. Leibbrandt se goeie *Sons- ondergang* herinner aan die grafiese kuns van die Skool van Parys. Cecily Sash se *Afrikaanse Abstrak* in swart, wit en rooierige bruin maak indruk deur sy gevoeligheid van lyn en sy dekoratiewe kwaliteit — dekoratief in die goeie sin van dié woord.

In Betty Cilliers-Barnard se *Skildery no. 2* bly agtergrond en voorgrond te seer geskei. Die glansryke *Skildery no. 1* maak 'n sterk indruk op die toeskouer. Haar *Suspensie* is 'n knap skildery, selfs al is party besonderhede wat kleur betref nie geheel en al opgelos nie.

Twee jong kunstenaars op die tentoonstelling verdien besondere lof: Eben van der Merwe, met sy *Sittende Meisie* en *Stillewe*, albei met egte gevoel vir kleur en toon geskilder, en René le Roux, met haar *Seebamboes* en haar drie

ander naamlose nie-figuratiewe skilderytjies.

Besonder voortreflik onder die beeldhouwerke is Lippy Lipshitz se emosionele groep *Twee in Een*.

Eduardo de Villa se *Indrukke van die Winter* en *Indrukke van die Somer* is goed, maar verteenwoordig m.i. nie hierdie kunstenaar se beste werk nie.

Die *Kristalvorme* deur Zelda Nolte lyk my ooreenvoelig en daarom sonder veel belang.

Die syaansig van Bruce Arnott se *Komposisie in Klip* is nogal verwaarloos. Andersins is dié nie-figuratiewe komposisie helder van lyn en indrukwekkend.

June te Water se houtsnijwerk *Vrugbaarheid van Afrika* is 'n tragiese aanduiding van die behoefte van hierdie vasteland aan voorbehoedsmiddele. Hoewel dié naaktfiguur sterk geabstraher is, bly dit vir my smaak te grof.

Ten slotte wil ek dit duidelik maak dat dié hoegenaamd nie my bedoeling is om die beoordelaars te blameer nie as ek sê dat 'n kunstenaar beter verteenwoordig kon word. Die beoordelaars kan slegs beoordeel wat aan hulle voorgelê word.

In die algemeen is die tentoonstelling van 'n behaaglik hoë standaard en behoort dit ons kuns eer aan te doen in Sao Paulo, selfs al word dit daar as nogal konserwatief beskou.

Uitstalling is verfrissend en vol verrassings

gtuig is
anding
kadig

3. — Binne vier dae is van die Krommings sikk bekadig toe hulle i het.Vandag het die gies laat weet dat 'n e plaas Lucerne op set en dat dit bekadig

bekend wie die vlieg- hoeverd daarmee ge- m persoon moes be- ly aan skok.

k is die klub se ander m van die voorsitter, e, ook erg bekadig nachkraap aan die s toe die vliegtuig op locolan geland het. Iersook die voorval op stiale Berig.

DIT is aangenaam om weer 'n cenman-uitstalling in Bloemfontein te kan besigtig, waar dit die laaste tyd op die kunstfront besonder stil was. Die uitstalling van Neville Varney in die Nasionale Museum is verfrissend en vol verrassings. Dit bly altyd 'n kenmerk van 'n goeie kunstenaar dat hy in staat is om nie net sy eie gemoedstemming nie, maar ook die atmosfeer en stemming van sy omgewing weer te gee.

Vir 'n Vrystaalse kunstenaar is haagsmoende altyd 'n moeilike taak. Die Vrystaalse landskap is een van die moeilikste onderwerpe om te skilder en dit het in die verlede nog maar baie min kunstenaars geluk om dit geslaag te doen.

Neville Varney het, ná ongeveer 'n jaar se verblyf in die Vrystaat, aangetoon dat hy in staat is om die atmosferiese stemming van hierdie eenzame en verlate landskap juis uit te beeld.

Sy klein skilderwerk in waterverf

van 'n Vrystaalse plaas, en Naby Spitskop is voorbeelde hiervan. Deur middel van groen en bruin gee hy die sagtheid van 'n winterlandskap weer.

GRONDEROSIE

Naby Rouxville is 'n toweragtige landskap geskep deur gronderosie en oorspoel met die pragtige kleure van 'n Vrystaalse sonsondergang. Die verlateheid van die landskap word byna surrealisties uitgebeeld in Stofstroom.

Varney verlaat die werklikheid nooit heeltemal nie. Hy het egter ooggetyfeld veel van die abstrakte kuns geleer, wat nie alleen uit die afwykende vorm van sommige van sy doekke blyk nie, maar veral uit sy kleuraantreng.

Ondanks 'n vermenigvuldiging van style is daar tog geen tweedaghtigheid in sy werk nie, omdat hy in staat is om uiters sensitiwe kleure naas 'n realistiese voorstelling so te rangskik dat dit 'n eenheid vorm, soos byvoorbeeld in Rankkies.

Sy menslike figure is nie met spanning belaa nie, maar is veel meer romanties met 'n weinig spot daarby, byvoorbeeld Remote en Vrou en kinders in die Vrystaat, Neville Varney se skil-

derwerk is ongeloofliker en direk, en dit skyn asof hy hoofsaaklik met sy medium worstel om aan sy uiters gevoelige stemminge vorm te gee. In hierdie soek na verfyning is hy nie soos 'n abstrakte ekspressionis nie, maar eerder aan 'n skilder soos Francis Krige verwant.

UITSTEKEND

Behalwe olie- en waterverve vertoon Neville Varney ook koper ponewerk. Dit is 'n gevaarlike medium wat maklik goedkoop kan lyk. Dit skyn egter of Varney hier 'n medium gevind het waarvoor hy op 'n besonder gevoelige wyse uiting aan sy voorliefde vir lynvormige komposisies kan gee. In sy ponewerk behandel hy hoofsaaklik die menslike figuur en veral die moeder-kind-motief. Deur die kind aan die voete van die moeder te plaas, maak hy uitgerichte komposisies wat behalwe groot emosionele uitbeelding, ook uitstekende dekoratiewe waarde besit.

Die uitstalling wat onder bekerning van die S.A. Kunervereniging plaasvind, duur tot Saterdag en 'n besoek sal kundeliefhebbers en versamelaars die moeite loon.

— PETRUS.



'N WARBOEL van tropiese plantegroei, vroeë en volities verskyn op hierdie uitbeelding in koper van 'n oerwoudtoneel deur Neville Varney. Dit is een van verskeie kunstwerke in olieverf, waterverf en koper by Neville Varney se uitstalling in die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein. Varney is ook een van die min kunstenaars wat daarin slaag om die Vrystaal se eenzame landskap uit te beeld.



Skilderye almaal onlangse werke



TWEE VAN DIE VRY-STAATSE kunstenaars, Iris Ampenberger se skilderye wat op die oomblik in die Nasionale Museum in Bloemfontein uitgestal word. Die skildery links heet **BOOM VOOR DIE VENSTER** en die een regs **SMART BOY**.

TOONVERSKIL KENMERK UITSTALLING

MEISIES met katte, kinderportrette, moeders en kinders, met Iris se werk kennis maak, sal sonder twyfel 'n sterk persoonlike element daarin ontdek.

groepies wagtende mense, 'n fietsryer en stillewens vorm die hoofemas van Iris Ampenberger se uitstalling wat nou in die Nasionale Museum in Bloemfontein gehou word. Die skilderye is almal onlangse werke en die persoon wat vir die eerste keer

Wie haar vroeëre werk ken, sal verbaas wees oor die toonverskil in hierdie nuwe werk. Die vroeëre na-impressionistiese kleure het plek gemaak vir meer pasteltigte, gedempte skakerings — skakerings wat groot verfyning met 'n ryk skakering van gevoelige tinte vertoon.

Iris Ampenberger, lid van die Bloemfontein Groep en geen ongekende in Bloemfonteinse kunsringe nie, toon werke wat verrassend in rykheid en skilderkunste kwaliteit toegeneem het, 'n Voorloper in haar vroeëre werke vir die komiese is nog in enkele stukke te sien byvoorbeeld in „Smart Boy.“ In die meeste werk is die onderwerp eerder ernstig met selfs hier en daar iets surrealisties soos byvoorbeeld in die skildery „Boom voor die Venster.“

kwaliteite

Vir Iris is vereenvoudiging en abstraksie 'n belangrike uitdrukkingsmetode. Danky 'n uitstekende visuele herinnering is sy in staat om sonder 'n model waargenome episodes op die doek weer te gee. Die gebrek aan 'n

model en direkte waarneming onderwyl sy skilder, stel Iris in staat om van hierdie sterk vereenvoudiging en abstraksie een van die belangrikste kwaliteite van haar skilderkuns te maak.

By haar werk berus die komposisie in die eerste plek nie op kleur nie maar op vorm en hierin is sy nader aan die Vlaamse ekspresioniste De Smedt en Tytgat verwant as aan die Duitse of Franse ekspresionisme.

houtschool

Haar buitengewoon sensitiewe houtskooltekeninge met effe bruin tinte daarin is ook 'n nuwe ontwikkeling waar haar vaardige tekkentalent tot uiting kom en wat haar in die klas van ons beste skilders plaas.

Met die uitstalling van Iris Ampenberger word die jaar se kunshedriging in Bloemfontein op 'n hoër noot van stapel gestuur. Kunsteliefhebbers, maar veral kunststudeerders behoort hierdie uitstalling nie mis te loop nie. Dit duur tot aanstaande Saterdag.

PETRUS

pyn, (s), (-e) smart,
onaangename gewaarwording.
Pynstillers, geneesmiddel wat
pyn stil maak, pynstillend,
Snellerin. pynlik, -e; -er; -ste;
seer, smart veroorsakend.
-heid; -loos. Snellerin
bring vinnige en veilige
verligting van pyn.

H&A 1126/78A

Ampenberger toon in O.V.S. vol spelende mense'

'N **R**ETROSPEKTIEWE tentoonstelling van die werke van Stefan Ampenberger, bekende skilder van Bloemfontein word nou in die Saayman-saal van die Vrystaatse Tegniese Kollege gehou.

Die resultaat van veertig jaar se skilderkuns word hier aangebied. Dit toon 'n geleidelike ontwikkeling van tradisionele landskapskilderkuns (No. 51, Transvaalse landskap) tot gedurfde ekspressionisme (No. 6, Huiswaarts).

Ná baie jare se omswerwinge in 'n woonwa het die Ampenbergers hulle nou in die rustige Vrystaatse dorpie Thaba Nchu gevestig. Sedert sy aankoms in die Vrystaat het Stefan ou vriendskappe hernu en baie nuwes gemaak. Kontak met geesverwante skilders soos die Podlashucs en Vader Claerhout het hom laat besluit om hom permanent in die Vrystaat te vestig.

Los van die sorge van voortdurende verhuising het hy homself in die skilderkuns gevind en met onstuimige haas die warmte van menslike kontak in sy skilderye gebring. Hy is lief om spelende, dansende en werkende mense uit te beeld. Sy kleure is fel en gedurfd en laat 'n mens onwillekeurig aan Fauves dink.

HEMELSBREED

Dit is nie so maklik om Stefan in 'n juiste verhouding tot die Suid-Afrikaanse kuns te plaas nie. Hy skilder volgensse beproefde metodes en is dus geen vernuwer nie. Hy is ekspressionis en tog verskil sy werk hemelsbreed van die eksotiese kuns van Irma Stern, of van die romantiese ekspressionisme van Maggie Laubser. Miskien staan hy veel nader aan 'n ander eenling, die vroeg gestorwe Wulf Kibel.

Stefan het 'n eie uitdrukkingsmetode in 'n eie styl. Sy weergawe van mens, dier en landskap berus op noukeurige waarneming. Wie hiervan

nie oortuig is nie, hoef maar na sy betonbeeld van 'n perd te kyk om te sien met hoeveel gevoel hy 'n rustende dier kan uitbeeld.

Die groot tegniese vaardigheid van Stefan word bewys deur sy beheersing van verskillende media. Naas olie verf is daar beeldhouwerke in klip, beton en sandsteen op hierdie tentoonstelling. Dit is bekend dat hy ook uitstekende werk in linoleumsnee, waterverf en monotipe lewer.

WARMTE

Die Vrystaatse landskap in sy wisselende stemminge van droogte met fel sonlig, oorfloedige reëns met welige plantegroei en romantiese dorpstonele met spelende mense, oorlaai hy met 'n kleurrykheid en warmte soos geen skilder dit nog voor hom gedoen het nie.

Die hoë waardering wat sy vriende vir hom het, word bewys deur die feit dat hulle hierdie oorsigstentoonstelling vir hom gereël het. Sy werk lewer 'n belangrike bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van kuns in die Vrystaat.

— PETRUS.

19 MAY 1973 Exhibition of African art

An exhibition of African sculpture, to be opened by Professor F. P. Scott, in the Auditorium, C. R. Swart Building of the University of the Orange Free State on Wednesday at 8 pm, will comprise works by Michael M. Gikhi, Joel Notsi, Michael Mosale and Jacob Tladi. Professor Scott will give a lecture on The Place of the Bantu in South African Art.

The exhibition, which will be under the auspices of the department of art history of the UOFS, will be open until June 2.

221

²²¹ 1973.19. 05—*Friend* newspaper. *Exhibition of African art*: Anon. Free State archive.

20 APR 1978

Interesting works

Museum Art Hall: Exhibition.

THE 20th anniversary exhibition by members of the Bloemfontein Group was opened yesterday evening by Dr J. T. van Wyk, secretary for National Education at the Museum Art Hall.

Of particular interest is the fact that included in this exhibition are paintings and some sculpture bought over a period of years by the late Professor F. P. Scott which have been converted by Mrs Scott into a trust. Later the works will be donated to Bloemfontein and included in the Museum's collection of paintings, for which it is hoped a suitable and permanent venue will eventually be found where they can be on display and where other exhibitions can be held.

One of the best works in the Scott collection is Stefan Ampenberger's oil entitled Kloof. It has good depth and atmosphere.

In the Art Group's display are some interesting new works by members and also quite a few paintings that have been seen in other Bloemfontein exhibitions.

Alexander Podlashuc is definitely the group's most distinguished and talented member. His oils, painted in a detailed and decorative style, have individuality but it is his lino cuts that show the hand of the master. They are outstanding. One regrets that only three are on view. Gallery 82 however, has a set which are for sale individually.

I liked Arthur Cantrell's No 33, Bedroom. This is a refreshing piece of colour.

Renee le Roux's two sepia nudes also catch the eye. Iris Ampenberger is exhibiting three effective little watercolour figure compositions. One would like to see something new from Father Claerhout.

MB

Deur
Bibi
Vlotman

Oliewenhuis, eertydse
Presidentswoning en
nou kunsmuseum, is
die ideale plek om 'n
ontspanne Sondag-

middag deur te bring.
Daar is 'n permanente
uitstalling in die
leeflike ou woning met
sy groot tuine, en daar
word ook gereeld die
werke van bekende
kunstenaars op 'n
geleentheidsbasis uit-
gestal.

Die Vriende van
Oliewenhuis is 'n organisasie
wat ontstaan het omdat
die staatsmuseum nie uit
hulle eie mag handel dryf
nie, sê prof. Dirk van der
Berg, voorsitter van die
Vriende. Hulle doel is dan
om die museum bekend te
stel aan die publiek, by te
dra tot die bestaande

Presidentswoning skitter as kunsmuseum

versameling en om geld in
te samel. Mev. Dora Scott
organiseer die verkoops-
uitstallings, waarvoor
hulle dan vergoed word
met van die kunstenaars se
werke, of kontant. Mev.
Lups organiseer die sosiale
aktiwiteite, soos 'n
Sondagmiddag-tee met 'n
spesiale aanbieding, soos
byvoorbeeld die Orpheus-
strykorkes wat verlede
Sondag opgetree het. Vir 4
Oktober sal die optrede by
die tee deur die Carmina
sangers gedoen word met
Sheila Fox. Mev. Doubell
beharig die fondsinsame-
lingsafdeling.

Die Oliewenhuis-
kunsmuseum word vroeg
in 1988 gesluit vir
binnenshuise verhuings
om die uitstalling met
temperatuurbeheer toe te
rus en om die sekuriteit
verder te verbeter. Geen
verandering sal van buite
aangebring word nie. Die
permanente versameling
in die Kunsmuseum
bestaan uit die Scott-
skenkings, wat die eiendom
van oorlede prof. Frickie
Scott was en wat bevat
van kunstenaars wat
gedurende die sestigerjare
in en om Bloemfontein
bekendheid verwerf het,
soos Vader Claerhout en
die Ampenbergers. Nadat
die A.C. White Munici-
pale gallery gesluit is, het
werke met kunswaarde,
soos van Pierneef en
Laubscher, ook na die
museum gekom. Volgens
prof. van der Berg het die
eertydse Museumgroep,
bestaande onder andere
uit v.v. Scott en Pepler as

'n groep werke versamel
van Scotness en Hardy
Botha wat aan die
Nasionale Museum
geskenk is en nou ook aan
Oliewenhuis oorgedra is.
Daar word nou aankope
gedoen om die teemtes aan
te vul in die historiese
ontwikkeling van kuns in
Suid-Afrika en veral die

14h00 tot 17h00.

Volgens mev. Rina Lups
wil die Vriende van
Oliewenhuis die betrok-
kenheid van alle kunst-
hebbers stimuleer. Lede
van die Vriende sal
gereelde nuusbriewe en
uitnodigings na die
uitstallings ontvang. Hulle

is welkom om idees te gee
omtrent uitstallings en kan
ook help met die
organisasie, alhoewel dit
geensins verpligtend is nie.
Aansoekvorm is beskik-
baar by Oliewenhuis self,
en alle kulturele groepe is
welkom.



Die Orpheus Strykorkes van die Musicon het onlangs by Oliewenhuis werke van Tartinì
(simfonie in D) en Vivaldi (concerto vir twee viole en tjello) uitgevoer onder leiding van
mnr. Hans Vonk, senior instrumentalis by die Musicon. Orpheus gaan ook in Oktober by
die Nasionale Eisteddfod in Rooiepoort optree.

Vrystaatse kuns, ook van
jonger kunstenaars.

"Bloemfontein is nie,
soos Johannesburg en
Kimberley, 'n industriële
stad wat sy kunsgrate het
om groot skenkings te
maak nie. Ons is dus
afhanklik van privaatver-
samelaars en die betrok-
kenheid van die publiek",
sê prof. van der Berg.
Oliewenhuis is ook die
enigste Nasionale Kunsmuseum
in die streek, en is
weksde oop vanaf 10h00
tot 17h00 en Sondag vanaf



RINA LUPS, Anne-Rose Withuhn en Sharon Crampton by Leon de Bliqy se werk, Vitrectomy wat Sondag deur Vriende van Oliewenhuis aan die kunsmuseum se permanente versameling in Bloemfontein geskenk word. Die werk is aangekoop suiwer met die geld wat uit teeverkope op Sondagmiddae verdien is tydens uitstallings by Oliewenhuis-kunsmuseum. Hierdie Sondag sal die laaste openbare geleentheid wees totdat die galery volgende jaar heropen ná ombouings wat dit in 'n moderne galery sal omskep. Die skildery sal by die geleentheid — van 14h00-17h00 — te sien wees.

Geskenk
VOLKSBLAD
vir
20-5-88
museum

224

²²⁴ 1988.05.20—*Volksblad* newspaper. *Geskenk vir museum*: Anon. The archival photo in the *Volksblad* of Rina Lubbs, Anne-Rose Withuhn and Sharon Crampton with the De Bliqy painting.

Bloemnuus 18-3-88

Belangrike uitstalling in Oliewenhuis

OLIEWENHUIS, in samewerking met die Direktoraat Onderwys en Kultuur, Administrasie — Volksraad bied van 22 Maart tot 10 April die 30-jarige herdenkinguitstalling van die Bloemfontein-Groep in Oliewenhuis, Harry Smithstraat aan.

Sowat tagtig skilderye, van agt van die lede van die groep, naamlik Alexander en Mariaane Podlashuc, Reneé le Roux, Mike Edwards, Frans Claerhout, Eben van der Merwe, Arthur Cantrell en Walter Westbrook sal te besigtig wees.

Inspirasie en aanmoediging van wyle Dr. TP Scott, en die geesdrif en belangstelling wat tussen die stigterslede geheers het, het gelei tot die stigting van die Bloemfontein-Groep in Oktober 1958.

Opening

Die uitstalling wat getuig van hul groei en rypheid, word geopen deur die Administrateursvrou, mev Louisa Botha, op Dinsdag 22 Maart om 19h00.

Die TP Scott-Trust wat bestaan uit 24 kunswerke, twee van elk van die lede van die Bloemfontein-Groep, sal tydens dié geleentheid deur William Scott aan Oliewenhuis oorhandig word. Noudat Bloemfontein permanente huisvesting het vir die kunswerke, sal die Trust as 'n geheel aan die gemeenskap bekend gestel kan word.

Die uitstalling is geborg deur die Standard Bank van SA en die Bloemfonteinse Stadsraad.



Groep vier 30j

DIE Bloemfontein-Groep het gisteraand hul dertigjarige herdenking by Oliewenhuis in Bloemfontein gevier. Die groep is in 1958 deur verskeie kunstenaars in Bloemfontein gestig, maar intussen het sommige van hulle Bloemfontein verlaat. Van links agter is Eben van der Merwe, Athur Cantrell, Walter Westbrook en Mike Edwards, wat almal nou in Johannesburg woon. Van links voor is Renee le Roux (Kaapstad), Alexander Podlashuc (Port Elizabeth) en Frans Claerhout (Tweespruit). Alexander se vrou, Marianne Podlashuc, se kunswerke is ook uitgestal, maar sy kon die herdenking ongelukkig nie bywoon nie. Die uitstalling is deur mev. Louisa Botha, Administrateursvrou van die Vrystaat, geopen en duur tot 10 April.



Two aspects of realism shown

By Neville Dubow

THOSE two stalwarts of the Bloemfontein Group, Alexander and Marianne Podlashuc, are currently exhibiting at Gallery Shear.

It is a comparatively small show, a little over 20 works between the two of them, but its personality emerges engagingly and clearly. Since they always show together and since both deal directly with social situations, with people in an everyday environment, a comparison between the two is inevitable. Maybe also instructive.

To bring it down to its basic terms, Alexander takes an incident and particularises it while Marianne generalises a situation and allows something larger to flow from it. Alexander draws his world from the White working class with a particular fondness for the railway yard environment — the world of the shunter, the guard and the signalman. It is perfectly valid subject matter and his observation is precise, his recording faithful.

Yet there is a strong strain of irony that runs through it all.

These men controlling their giant hissing toys are writ small. In charge of the objects in their environment they are nevertheless dwarfed by them. With Marianne we have exactly the opposite. Her subjects are drawn from the depressed classes, the socially underprivileged — both Black and White. Yet these social outcasts dominate their environment. They loom larger than the world that has rejected them.

If one wants to be very serious about it, and I think her work warrants it, these paintings can be regarded as essentially concerned with the ultimate victory of human dignity. Out of the trivial (a girl holding a white mouse, two men against an empty street) she attains the monumental. Here in simplified terms shorn of all side issues lies the value of her work.

Podlashuc show



ABOVE: 'Guard and Train' — by Alexander Podlashuc.
RIGHT: 'Muisies' — by Marianne Podlashuc.

By die S.A. Kunsvereniging

Neville Varney se Kuns Wek Geen Geesdrif

NEVILLE VARNEY stel nie-figuratiewe olie- en waterverfskilderye in die saal van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunsvereniging ten toon. Sy werk kan ruweg in drie groepe verdeel word: in die eerste plaas sal 'n mens baie komposisies vind wat deur rooi, geel en swart oorheers word en wat lyk of hulle in ontelbare vertikale strepe of klein hale van bo na onder reën, of soms lyk of hulle van onder na bo styg.

Daar is geen toespeeling op enige beelde nie. Daar word geen poging aangewend om vorm by te bring nie. Slegs kleure wat in wisselende digtheid aangebring is en die wisselende tekstuur van die verf word gelaat om lig en beweging te suggereer.

Te veel skilderye behoort tot hierdie groep, bv. nos. 4, 5, 20, 21, 32, en 38 van die katalogus. Gevolglik ly die tentoonstelling aan eentonigheid.

Of een van die skilderye nou geneig is om meer gelerig aan die onderkant of rooierig aan die bokant te wees, maak nie saak nie. Dit maak ook nie saak nie of dit nou donkerder word aan die linkerkant of aan die regterkant nie.

Hulle kan nietemin op 'n sekere standaard aanspraak maak.

Swakker lyk vir my die skilderye van die tweede groep wat nog baie dieselfde karakter het, maar ligweg figure of gesigte agter 'n reën van warm kleure suggereer. Stygende Vorm 11 (no. 3) en Abstrak '64 (no. 32) behoort tot hierdie groep.

Die werke van die derde groep lyk vir my persoonliker van aard, bv. die klein skilderytjie Vorm II (no. 29). Abstrak '63 (no. 36) suggereer 'n palimpses van vernietigde simbole.

Die vroeëre Deurbraak, Londen '62 (no. 12), het kwaliteit, selfs al is dit 'n mengsel van ekspressionistiese vorme en 'n sulwer dekoratiewe behandeling van die agtergrondpatrone.

Moet asseblief nie van die kritikus verwag om trane van geesdrif te stort as hy na hierdie werk kyk nie. Moet asseblief ook nie van hom verwag om dit met skuim om sy mond af te keur nie. Hy kan nie een van die twee doen nie.

Dit is nie altyd moontlik om Openbaring 3: 15 en 16 ter harte te neem nie!

F.L.A.

BLOEMFONTEINSE GROEP

Smaakvolle Tentoonstelling Sit Lang Tradisie Voort

VRYSTAAT! Hierdie keer is dit op 'n geestelike vlak in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum waar twaalf lede van die Bloemfonteinse Groep deur 66 skilderye en 'n viertal beeldhouwerke verteenwoordig word.

Bravo vir die Nasionale Kunsmuseum wat met hierdie smaakvolle tentoonstelling 'n tradisie wat in 1930 begin is, op so 'n betekenisvolle wyse voortset.

Die katalogus gee 'n oorsig van hoe die instaat van Alexander Podiaschuc en vriendskapsbande verantwoordelik was vir die stigting en bestaan van 'n Bloemfonteinse Groep. Dat groepsvorming in die geskiedenis het altyd in verband gestaan met een of ander vernuwing, is goed bekend—Courbet en sy Brasserie, Manet en die Café Guerbois, Kadinsky en der Blaue Reiter, Kirchner en die Brücke—maar dit het altyd te doen gehad met 'n gemeenskaplike ondersoek, in die geval van die Bloemfonteinse Groep het dit 'n vriendskapsbande. En ek glo dat dit uit vriendskapsbande en belangstelling in die individuele vooruitgang van kunstenaars binne die raamwerk van 'n groep is, dat die Raad van Kuratore van die S.A. Nasionale Kunsmuseum, prof. M. Bokhorst en sy personeel hierdie tentoonstelling moontlik gemaak het.

Twee belangrike beginsels het gedurende die afgelope vyftig

jaar baie prominent op die voorgrond getree: ten eerste, dat ontdiens die gewelddadige individuele besittingsreg waarop die Westerse aanspraak maak, iets wat basies is van die moderne lewe, alle individue tog op gemeenskaplike toestande reageer soos bepaal deur die natuurlike en sosiale omgewing; ten tweede is daar die onderskeiding tussen vorm en inhoud.

Klein op die kwaliteit van vorm het reeds sover gevorderd dat sekere kunstenaars aandring op die totale uitakkeling van alle pikareske herkenbare verwysings na die objektiewe wêreld. Dit is interessant om die kragwerking van die verhouding tussen nasional en internasionale omstandighede, en die styl wat dit voortbring, in hierdie Groep te volg.

Min van die kunstenaars wat gewoonlik in sulke kunstenaars-groepe vasgevang is, aanvaar die verantwoordelijkheid om te skep as 'n universele diens en pils.

BESORG

Een ding is seker: die individuele kunstenaars is besorg oor niks meer en niks minder nie as met die onmiddellike, pragmatiese aspekke van hul skeppende probleme, hoewel hulle dieper liggend geraak word deur dieselfde kragte wat verantwoordelik is vir die sosiale ontwikkeling van hierdie tyd.

Die twaalf kunstenaars is Iris Ampenberger, Stefan Ampenberger, Arthur Cantrell, Frans Claerhout, Michael Edwards, René le Roux, Alexander Podiaschuc, Eben van der Merwe, Fayetta Varney, Neville Varney en Walter Westbroek.

Frans Claerhout word verteenwoordig deur sewe werke. Sterk beïnvloed deur die Vlaamse Ekspresionisme, spits hy hom toe op die eenvoudige wat na aan die natuur en sy lewe. Sy komposisies word gekenmerk deur 'n somber, kleurgebruik; dit is of hy die donker gemoedslewe simboliseer. Hy verwerf vrylik en dit voel soos 'n organiese proses wat krim, roek en groei, maar tog kompakt en eenvoudig bly. Die stoflike bly op die vlak van die doek, terwyl die nie-stoflike dieper strek en die belangstelling hou.

Somer (nr. 1) is 'n sterk werk. As hy hierdie tegniek meer wille in sy portret of figuur-studies aan aanwend, glo ek dat dit vir die toekomstige sou sorg van 'n dinge tot sterker ekspresie van 'n gevoel is in sy swart en witte lewende, ook in die swart en witte lewende en swart en witte lewende en swart en witte lewende.

OOGLOPEND

Iris Ampenberger se vyf werke hang langs die van Frans Claerhout. Sy invloed is ooglopend. As dit ten goede is—hoe kom nie? Laat die wat vry is van invloed, die eerste sêen wêre. Haar kleurgebruik is somber en sy waag min. As sy enige vernuwing in haar werk wil ervaar, sal sy voortaan meer aandag moet gee aan vorm as aan inhoud. Cézanne het gesê: „As die kleur ryk is, is die vorm daar in sy volheid.”

Ek hou van haar Blomme met Wit Vaas (nr. 2), maar veral Wagend (nr. 1), met sy goed bekende vlakke wat in sensitiwe verhouding tot mekaar en tot die geheel staan.

In Stefan Ampenberger se werk is dit asof hy al die lig wat weggekeer is van genoemde kunstenaars se werk, in sy werk wou vasvang. Sy werk is 'n stap verder as die Impressionisme. Thaba Nchu-berg (nr. 6) is 'n sterk gewaagde stuk en 'n mens wil se: Bravo vir die mate van sukses! Dit is sterk en seker geveel en laat my aan werk van die „Brücke” dink. Dit is interessant om Huises in Thaba Nchu (nr. 10) met werk in dieselfde rigting van die Kaapse „groep” te vergelyk. Ampenberger se werk is anders. Dieselfde breëte kwasiale soos in nrs. 8 en 7 maak maklik 'n werk vervolg en te illustreer.

TYDLOOSHEID

Die ses werke van Alexander Podiaschuc, met uiteenlopende temas, is interessante werk in die sin dat dit eers 'n herhaalde oorsigting die toeskouer begin boei. Figure is sterk afgeteken in swart lyne, terwyl daar 'n element

Nagskof (nr. 42) en Hoisak (nr. 49) is alledaagse gebeure wat in Frans Claerhout se werk 'n leper waarde kry. In Bloemfontein (nr. 39) is daar te veel detail van geringe ter wille van 'n effek wat nie geslaag het nie. Die hele blou lug laat die res van die werke „onheil” lyk.

As tema, verkies Manana Podiaschuc figuurkomposisies, wat sy op feitlik geometriese wyse in lyn en kleurvakke verwerk. Sy verloor ses werke waarvan Kindersaal (nr. 47) vir my die beste is, veral vanweë die beheerde sensitiwe en beperkte kleurgebruik—beperk volgens haar vermoen, want sy is geen noemenswaardige koloris nie.

Klonkies met Karretjie (nr. 44) is 'n uiters interessante tema wat te hard en koud behandel is en instede van empatie (invoeling), mag simpatie die toeskouer se belangstelling hou. So is haar kleurvakke in ander werke te bereken en te illustreer.

Alene Westbroek se werk staan die mees aan die natuur. Ek hou van haar sensitiewe weergawe van die kleur in die Vrystaats vlaktes, soos in Skoofom (nr. 68) en Geboue, Kimberley (nr. 67) reeds 'n sensitiewe vergestelking en ten volle beheerde afstrahering wat myns insiens 'n aanduiding is van 'n verrassende verdieping. Ek het nog altyd die hoogste respekt vir 'n kunstenaar wat eerlik en logies ontwikkel.

FRAGMENTE

Van die hoogs geabstraheerde nie-figuratiewe werk, is die tien stukke van Eben van der Merwe goed gekies. Sy werk is organiese fragmente wat te midde van balans en spanning groei, terwyl die kleure in elke werk verskuf. Die kleurgebruik is beheers en die basiese kleuraansetings wissel van skildery tot skildery, sonder om in 'n herhaling te vervel—'n kwal waarvoor minder skeppende kunstenaars is. Dit is die verif dits aangewend, soos in nr. 52; en dan weer deursnyend, soos in nr. 53.

Met kleurspektief—moet dit nie verwar met atmosferiese perspektief nie—laat hy vlakke terugtrek en andere projekteer—sy werk haal, by wyse van spreke, asem.

Soms bereik hy sy effek met gedempte lig, ander kere met helder kolle van kleurkontras soos in nr. 55. Eben van der Merwe se werk is skeppende kunst, eerlik en doelgerig.

Renée le Roux se werk is hoofsaaklik geslote komposisies, waarin vorme langs mekaar en soms geteengewerd dui op 'n soort groepsproes—'n organiese artikulasie. Sy waag min met kleur, soos in die mono-drukke, waar dit anders en modderig bly. Ligter is Rood Rotse (nr. 31). Rus en kalmte word goed afgewissel deur die lewering van lyn en vorm.

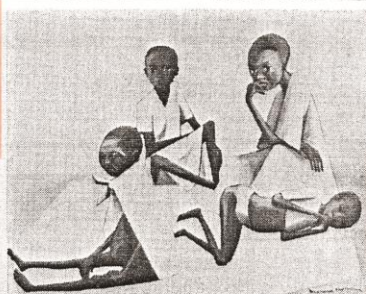
AKADEMIE

Oranje Vrystaats Landskap (nr. 68) deur Fayetta Varney kan myns insiens beskou word as een van die beste werke op die tentoonstelling. Geïnteresseerd vind (nr. 62) van Neville Varney is vir my meer „geïrriteerd”, vanweë die tipe kwasiale wat die op-die-dieks vermenigvuldig verif trill maak. Sy ander werke is sekerder uitgevoer.

Arthur Cantrell se werke word gekenmerk deur 'n wisseling van grafiese lynwerk en kleurvakke wat in 'n soort onopghoudelike spel lewe aan die werk gee. Sy kleursamestelling is sensitiel gekies, maar ek is betreur sy werk mis verskeidenheid—sy vyf skilderye stuur te veel op herhaling af. Kyk net hoe uiteenlopend is Van der Merwe se werk. 'n Goed geïntegreerde verband tussen die grafiese aspek en kleur vind ek in nr. 12.

Michael Edwards se kopiatie in gips en seimant is akademiese trant. Wat eintlik die belangstelling hou, is die impresionistiese tekstuur wat die toeskouer die medium laat ervaar waarin dit uitgevoer is.

In sy geheel gesien, 'n tentoonstelling wat 'n mens laat glo dat, hoe styftrappings mekaar interaksioneel ook al kan beïnvloed, die egte kunstenaar per slot van sake nog 'n produk bly van sy sosiale en natuurlike omgewing.

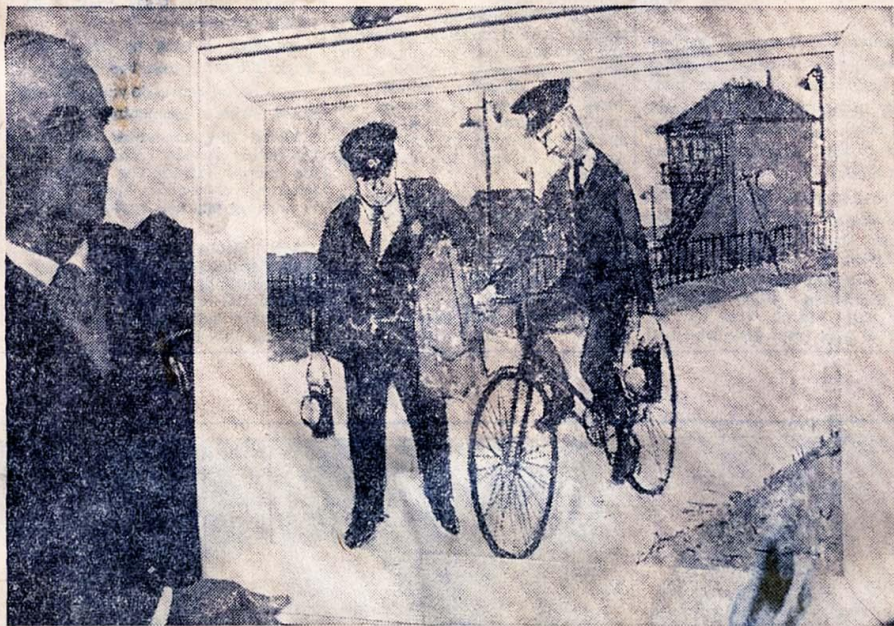


KINDERSAAL (nr. 47) deur Manana Podiaschuc, een van die werke van die Bloemfonteinse groep wat nou in die S.A. Nasionale Kunsmuseum vertoon word.

DIE BURGER, DINSDAG, 3 MEI 1966

BATE

To go on
exhibition



This painting by Alexander Podlashuc of the Bloemfontein Group, is included in the exhibition which opens at the William Humphreys Art Gallery tomorrow evening.

Bloemfontein Group art exhibition to be opened in city tonight

TWO paintings recently bought by the South African National Gallery in Cape Town, are included in an exhibition of works by members of the Bloemfontein Group, to begin in the William Humphreys Art Gallery tomorrow.

The exhibition will be opened at 8 o'clock this evening by Dr. E. M. van Zinderen-Bakker, Netherlands Consul in the Free State.

One of the paintings bought by the National Gallery is by the local artist, Walter Westbrook, and the other is by one of the best-known members of the Bloemfontein Group, Fayetta Varney.

The exhibition has come to Kimberley from Cape Town en route to Pretoria.

The group, a comparatively new one, came into being in 1953. It has been championed by Dr. F. P. Scott of Bloemfontein who was strongly supported by Alexander Podlashuc, a South African artist of high repute.

Today the works of members of the group grace the collections of many galleries and private collections in different parts of the country.

One of the group's most accomplished artists, Neville Varney, died last week. His death in Bloemfontein followed a long

period of suffering from war wounds.

Varney was born in Eshowe, Zululand. He received early technical training in Johannesburg where he exhibited in 1953, 1956 and 1959. He also exhibited in Cape Town (1960) and in London (1961).

He painted murals for the Copper Commission in London and was represented at the Quadrennial in 1960.

He lived for a time in Paris and St. Ives, Cornwall, before returning to South Africa.

He was to have held a one-man exhibition in the William Humphreys Art Gallery in November.

Artists represented in the exhibition are Alexander Podlashuc, Marianne Podlashuc, Iris Ampenberger, Stefan Ampenberger, Arthur Cantrell, Frans Claerhout, Michael Edwards, Renee le Roux, Eben van der Merwe, Neville Varney, Fayetta Varney and Walter Westbrook.

230

20 APR 1978

Interesting works

Museum Art Hall: Exhibition.

THE 20th anniversary exhibition by members of the Bloemfontein Group was opened yesterday evening by Dr J. T. van Wyk, secretary for National Education at the Museum Art Hall.

Of particular interest is the fact that included in this exhibition are paintings and some sculpture bought over a period of years by the late Professor F. P. Scott which have been converted by Mrs Scott into a trust. Later the works will be donated to Bloemfontein and included in the Museum's collection of paintings, for which it is hoped a suitable and permanent venue will eventually be found where they can be on display and where other exhibitions can be held.

One of the best works in the Scott collection is Stefan Ampenberger's oil entitled Kloof. It has good depth and atmosphere.

In the Art Group's display are some interesting new works by members and also quite a few paintings that have been seen in other Bloemfontein exhibitions.

Alexander Podlashuc is definitely the group's most distinguished and talented member. His oils, painted in a detailed and decorative style, have individuality but it is his lino cuts that show the hand of the master. They are outstanding. One regrets that only three are on view. Gallery 82 however, has a set which are for sale individually.

I liked Arthur Cantrell's No 33, Bedroom. This is a refreshing piece of colour.

Renee le Roux's two sepia nudes also catch the eye. Iris Ampenberger is exhibiting three effective little watercolour figure compositions. One would like to see something new from Father Claerhout.

ME

Bfn-groep: toe en nou

KUNSTUITSTALLING (Oliewenhuis) Bloemfontein-groep.

TOT 10 April 1988 kan die 30-jarige herdenkingstentoonstelling deur kunstenaars van die "Bloemfontein-groep" besigtig word.

Aangesien nie een van die groep meer in Bloemfontein woonagtig is nie, moes Oliewenhuis op nasionale skaal organiseer om die uitstalling, wat die museum van hoek tot kant vul, saamgestel te kry. Dit is 'n lofwaardige inisiatief, want die samestelling van die uitstalling is waarskynlik die interessantste aspek van die tentoonstelling.

Eensyds bevat die tentoonstelling die 24 werke van die F. P. Scott-trust. Dit bestaan uit twee ouer werke van elk van die eertydse twaalf lede van die groep. Hierdie beloofde skenking van die Scott-familie aan 'n verwagte Bloemfonteinse kunsmuseum het nou uiteindelik 'n openbare tuiste gevind in Oliewenhuis. Alle eer aan hierdie kunsliefhebbers wat daarmee die kern daargestel het van die openbare kunsversameling van Bloemfontein.

Andersyds bestaan die tentoonstelling uit 'n tiental resente werke van elk van die nog lewende lede van die groep: die alombekende Frans Claerhout, René le Roux wat tans in die Kaap woon, die twee Podlashucs uit Port Elizabeth, die Kimberleyse landskapskilder, Walter Westbrook, en uit die Transvaal, Eben van der Merwe, Mike Edwards en Arthur Cantrell.

Onwillekeurig vergelyk mens die vroeëre en resente werk van die groep en van individuele kunstenaars. Opvallend is die verskil tussen die klein formaat van vroeër en die hedendaagse groter formaat. Die huislike formaat van vroeër was klaarblyklik bestem vir die private versamelaar, terwyl deesdae in die galeryformaat van publieke versamelings gewerk word. Die verandering verrai alreeds die erkenning wat die groep oor die jare te beurt geval het. Terselfdertyd het die individuele lede van die groep egter van die voorhoede van dertig jaar gelede verskuif na die meer konserwatiewe seksie van die nasionale kunsteneel.

'n Gemeenskaplike groepstyl het nooit 'n rol gespeel nie. Soos vroeër vertoon die kunstenaars steeds dieselfde individuele kwaliteite in hul werk. Daar is egter ook 'n negatiewe kant aan hierdie gevolgtrekking verbonde. Dit impliseer immers dat elk van die kunstenaars weinig verandering en ontwikkeling ondergaan het sedert die groep uitmekaar gegaan het, en verklaar waarom die groep as geheel vandag as konserwatief gereken word. Alexander Podlashuc verdien uitsondering as die een wat die grootste individuele groei in sy kunstenaarskap vertoon.

Die lede van die Bloemfonteinse kunstpubliek wat deelgeneem het aan die kunslewe oor die afgelope drie dekades sal die grootste genot uit die tentoonstelling kan put, en kan die uitstalling gebruik om hul eie smaakontwikkeling te peil. — D. van den Berg.