C A T A L O G U E R A I S O N N É O F
M A G G I E L A U B S E R ' S W O R K
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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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I, ELIZABETH DELMONT, declare that this Dissertation is my own unaided work and has not been submitted to any other university.

To my parents - for my educational and cultural background - - - -

and to my husband, Eric - for his encouragement, endurance and moral support.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation comprises a catalogue raisonné of Maggie Laubser's works (in all mediums) from 1900 until 1924, when she returned permanently to South Africa. The primary intention is to establish the correct dates and sequence of the early works, a task considerably complicated by the fact that many of her paintings and drawings are either not dated or are incorrectly dated. Thus critical evaluation is directed not at a qualitative assessment of individual paintings but rather at attempting a logical and systematic organization of the works of the early period.

Dating of works is based on visual evidence (style, signature, motif, sketches, etc.) with supporting documentation such as written and verbal information from owners of paintings, from friends and acquaintances of the artist, and from Laubser herself. An examination of her passports has made it possible for the first time to establish the exact dates of her movements overseas, as have other documents, particularly those in the University of Stellenbosch archives.

The fully illustrated catalogue of 451 works, which includes factual information about each work (viz., description, exhibitions, literature references, provenance etc.), is accompanied by a text in which stylistic and iconographic developments are examined within the context of source material and influences, both direct and indirect, local and international.

In both the text and catalogue, Laubser's chronological development has been divided into chapters according to her geographic whereabouts. The first period covers her early years in South Africa, during which she took lessons with Roworth for a brief time. Her art developed within the conservative tradition of 'romantic-realist' landscape and portrait painting. In 1913 she left for overseas sponsored by her friend and patron, J. H. A. Balwé. After a brief stay in Laren, Holland, she moved to London where she registered at the Slade School of Art. Her drawing style and subject

matter reflect the conservative teachings of her teachers and her paintings show an increased interest in plein-air-ism. From 1919, when she went to Antwerp in Belgium, she had increasing contact with the artist Arnold Balwé, J. H. A. Balwé's son, and perhaps even took occasional classes at the Antwerp Academy where he was a student. She continued with life drawing and landscape painting and it was only when she travelled to Italy in 1920 that a radical change in style can be seen. During her stay in Italy she concentrated on painting scenes of Lake Garda, and still lifes emerge as a prominent theme for the first time. There are a variety of styles during this year, indicating that it was a period of experimentation for her. There is a significant development towards a simplification of form accompanied by a lightening and brightening of her palette. Her return to South Africa in 1921, after J. H. A. Balwé's death, led to a concentration on portraits of Coloured and Malay women, which show a consistent stylistic development. After her return to Berlin in November 1922 the overt influence of German Expressionism can be seen in the majority of her works - in the palette, brushwork, simplification of form and a move towards a more 'modern' symbolistic interpretation of motifs. In conclusion, the relevance and influence of her overseas study period for her subsequent development is briefly examined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit for granting me access to material on Maggie Laubser, without which this documentation could not have been undertaken. I was employed by the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council, from April 1973 to November 1977, on an extensive and continuing documentation project on Maggie Laubser, directed by Prof. E. P. Engel, head of the Departement Kunsgeskiedenis at the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit. I am therefore equally indebted to the Human Sciences Research Council.

I would also like to express my gratitude to other members of staff at R.A.U. who assisted with the initial collection of data and illustrations, particularly Mr. E. Wesselo, his assistant Mr. C. Pekter, and the photographic department at the R.A.U.

I am also indebted to the Departement Kunsgeskiedenis of the R.A.U. for secretarial and clerical assistance and would like to express my appreciation to the 'typing pool', Marlene von Durkheim and the various student helpers. Amalie von Maltitz was employed on the documentation project of South African art, which included some material on Laubser, viz., the processing and documenting of data on works shown on the 1969 retrospective exhibition which were photographed by Mr. D. Arden. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Departement Kunsgeskiedenis who helped me at various times with translations from German, Italian and/or Afrikaans, viz.: Dalene Marais, Leoni Schmidt, Gerhard van der Waal, Max von Durkheim and Amalie von Maltitz.

In compiling the catalogue and writing the accompanying text, I have obviously based the majority of my interpretation on the close and repeated study of the works themselves. However, this would not have been possible without the help and co-operation of the many private collectors throughout the country, who not only allowed their works to be photo-

graphed by Mr. E. Wesselo, but also sometimes passed on valuable information about the artist and her work, and answered circulars sent out during 1976 to confirm details already recorded during 1974-1976. Those with large collections such as Dr. H. K. Silberberg and Mr. B. Trakman, obviously had to devote proportionately more time and the aid of these collectors, and of all the other collectors, both private and official institutions (e.g. the South African National Gallery, the Pretoria, Johannesburg and Durban Art Galleries, the Universities of Pretoria and the Witwatersrand, as well as the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys and the Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit) is greatly appreciated.

Many art dealers helped trace works and enabled me to expand the provenance of certain paintings and drawings. To list all by name who have helped and co-operated, would be impossible, but in particular I would like to thank Mr. J. Wolpe of Cape Town and Dr. R. Holtzhausen in Pretoria for their support and assistance. Certain auction houses, particularly Sotheby-Parke-Bernet of Johannesburg and Volks of Pretoria, were most helpful in allowing access to records of sales which facilitated the tracing o works and the confirmation of provenances, and also in giving permission for works on sales tc be photographed. The various branches of the S.A. Asscciation of Arts have also been most co-operative and their help is greatly appreciated.

However, three other sources provided comparative material, illustrations and/or the bulk of the information about Laubser's life and art which enabled the author to establish a more accurate system of dating than has previously been attempted. When the University of Stellenbosch received Laubser's estate in 1973, all the material was organized into a comprehensible system, and each item was given an archive number. (It is this number which is quoted by the author in this study, to enable identification of items in the University's collection.) Not only have many of the paintings, sketches and sketchbooks from

the estate been included in the catalogue, but I have relied heavily on other material in this collection. For instance, personal documents such as passports,[1] her personally handwritten curriculum vitae and even letters written to Laubser,[2] have proved invaluable in establishing the chronology of Laubser's travels. Unfortunately access to the letters is closed for fifty years after Laubser's death and I have therefore not examined them personally.

Radio Talks such as 'What I Remember'[3] and 'Dit is my Kontrei'[4] have supplied details of her life, her friends and impressions, whilst her personal notes, newspaper interviews and talks such as 'On Art'[5] and 'Art',[6] have given added insight into her views on art and religion. Photographs have provided important visual material.

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the University of Stellenbosch, for allowing access to the estate and am particularly grateful for the help and co-operation of Mrs. F. du Plessis, librarian in charge of the archives, and Prof. G. J. Trümpelmann, who was appointed in charge of Laubser's estate. Prof. Trümpelmann not only covered a great deal of the ground-work in organizing the cataloguing and numbering of the material in the estate, particularly the letters, but he compiled the comprehensive list of material in the estate which he made available to me and he devoted several days in helping Mr Wesselo and me photograph and document, respectively, the works in the University collections and the works in private collections in Stellenbosch. The late Prof. Otto Schröder of the University of Stellenbosch also researched Laubser's life and art, and I am

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1. See appendix nos.4 and 5, pp. 418-447.
2. See appendix no.3 pp.409-417.
3. See appendix no.2, pp.404-408.
4. See appendix no.1, pp.399-403.
5. University of Stellenbosch archives no.79/4/3.
6. University of Stellenbosch archives no.79/4/2.

indebted to him, for instance, for contacting Balwé Jnr. in 1975.

I have also referred to Botha's M.A. dissertation[1] and many of the works included in this study were originally traced through Botha's list of owners. In addition, Laubser left several photographs, newspaper cuttings, personal notes and books which Elza Miles (née Botha) very kindly made available to me. Two books particularly, have been most useful: Laubser's anatomy book, used whilst she was at the Slade, includes photographs of typical poses of nudes which provide valuable comparative material in studying Laubser's drawings executed whilst she was at the Slade School of Art, London, from 1914 to 1919. Laubser's copy of Van Gogh's letters, many passages of which she marked, help establish the influence of Van Gogh on her ideas about art and religion. In conversation with me, Elza Miles has also passed on valuable information about Laubser's life and work, and her help and co-operation is sincerely and gratefully acknowledged.

A third source of information has been an interview in 1968 between Laubser and Benita Munitz, a University of South Africa honours student. Benita Munitz kindly made a copy of the tape-recording of the interview and sent it to me. It has provided many important and useful facts and sincere gratitude is extended to Benita Munitz for her interest and trouble.

I would also like to thank Mrs. M. E. Leel-du Toit for her typing of this dissertation and Mr. G. van der Westhuizen for binding the volumes.

Finally, I would like to extend sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Mr. R. Doepel, and my co-supervisor, Prof. E. P. Engel, Departement Kunsgeskiedenis, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit.

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1. Botha, E.J. 'Die Lewe en Skilderwerk van Maggie Laubser.' unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to standard abbreviations such as Mr., Mrs., Prof., etc., and the months of the year, as well as accepted Latin contractions, the following abbreviations have been used:

Asso. of Arts	[South African] Association of Arts
b.	bottom
B.	[Delmont] bibliography
bk. (plural bks.)	book (with particular reference to Laubser's sketchbooks (illustrated in volume 2)
cat. (plural cat. nos.)	catalogue number (with particular reference to Botha's catalogue numbers and exhibition catalogue numbers)
D.	Delmont
E.	[Delmont] Exhibition list
f. (plural ff.)	folio (to differentiate between pages/folios in Laubser's sketchbooks and pages in this study)
F.	De La Faille (see bibliography p.314)
fig. (plural figs.)	figure illustration (comparative material)
inv.	inventory number
J. A. G.	Johannesburg Art Gallery
l.	left
m.	middle
n.d.	no date
nc. (plural nos.)	number (with particular reference to Delmont catalogue numbers)
opp.	opposite
P. A. G.	Pretoria Art Gallery
r.	right
R.A.U.	Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit
t.	top
U.S.	University of Stellenbosch

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to establish the correct dating of Laubser's works from 1900 to 1924, and to trace her stylistic and iconographic development during these years, within the context of her life, local environment and sources and influences. In the conclusion, some observations on the importance of her overseas study years for the rest of her *oeuvre* from 1924 until her death in 1973, have been presented. Clearly, however, since the catalogue *raisonné* only covers the period up to 1924, such observations are comparatively cursory, and a complete and definitive assessment will only be possible on completion of a full catalogue *raisonné* of her work. The observations that have been presented therefore focus on the more obvious points of correlation, i.e., form and motif. A full examination of form - content relationship and iconology is outside the scope of this catalogue *raisonné*.

Of necessity, the approach to the dating of works and the tracing of influences etc., is initially perceptual, with supporting documentation provided wherever possible. Conclusions are drawn from particular observations and *a priori* theoretical and philosophical speculations have been kept to a minimum, on the working postulate that generalizations are obviously derived from particular and empirical observations.

The year 1924 is a logical break as Laubser never left South Africa again after that date and, in fact, lived a relatively isolated and withdrawn existence, first at her parents' farm near Oortmanspost, and then, after 1945, at her own home, 'Altyd Lig', in the Strand. The experiences during her early years abroad therefore assume even greater significance.

One of the prime problems encountered in studying Maggie Laubser's art is that of chronological arrangement of works, as there are many inconsistencies in the dating

of works by the artist. For instance, in two prints of the same woodcut, Tablemountain, there is a discrepancy of twenty six years, for one is dated 1924 by the artist and another, 1950.[1] The dating of Self portrait at the age of seventeen to 1922, contradicts the title, for as the artist was born in 1886, if the date of 1922 was correct, she would have been thirty six years old and not seventeen. Furthermore, the Self portrait of the artist at a similar age, is dated to 1940. This introduces the problem of dating by Laubser of her own work. These inaccuracies result from two factors. Firstly, Laubser had a preoccupation with her age and never disclosed her date of birth. Secondly, she dated works years after execution and inaccuracies arose as a result of errors in memory.

no.412

no.6

no.7

Laubser had a phobia in particular about her own age, and in general about the importance laid by society on age. When asked about her age she evaded the issue, and the first person to establish her date of birth was Botha, in 1964.[2] Laubser's preoccupation with disguising her true age can be seen in many documented instances. In one of her passports[3] the date of birth has clearly been changed from 1887[sic 1886?] to 1898, presumably by the artist herself, in order to 'reduce' her age by twelve years. Similarly, in the front of a book[4] listing birthdays of friends and family, Laubser inscribed her birth date as 1899. In a newspaper article entitled 'Everything is Beautiful - Philosophy of Serene Artist' in Star 26th April 1962, left by Laubser in her estate to the University of Stellenbosch, she scratched out the reference to her age (albeit inaccurate): 'She is [79] but is still as active as ever.'[5] In a newspaper article appearing in Eastern

1. One cannot discount that Laubser made a second series of prints twenty six years after the first series.

2. Established by the author in conversation with Elza Miles (née Botha) who traced Laubser's date of birth by looking up the records in the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town (Botha, p.1).

3. Left in the artist's estate to the University of Stellenbosch archive no.79/14/2, appendix 5, p.435.

4. Left to Miles (née Botha) by the artist in her estate.

5. Star, 26 April 1962: p.12, col.3.

Province Herald, 2nd August 1965, Patricia Head wrote: 'She seemed relieved that I was not determined to have all the details of her life story. "They always want to know my age" she complained.'[1] During a taped interview with Benita Munitz in 1968 Laubser said: 'When they want to know my age I say: "What has that got to do [with it] - it is not important. It has got nothing to do with my work. It is only a limitation."'[2] Also: '...she won't admit her age, the years are not really important.'[3]

On the one hand Laubser's desire to hide her age may be seen as a consequence of her religious beliefs. Later in life she became very involved in Christian Science philosophy.[4] One of her daily thoughts written on a scrap of paper and left to Miles by the artist in her estate, reads: 'Not to be conscious of time is to live forever.' In the interview with Munitz, Laubser said: 'Everything is now - we are everywhere in no time - time...is instant'; and 'Everything must be evolving - must go on. Nothing is standing still.'[5]

The concept behind these thoughts seems to be that the measurement of time in days, months and years, is an external limitation and system imposed by man on the rhythmical cycle of nature as reflected in night and day, the change of seasons, the tidal patterns, etc.

On the other hand, there is a certain illogicality in Laubser's preoccupation with age in the light of her view that time and age are not important, and indicates that maybe an element of human vanity was involved.

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1. Head, P. 'She Never Lost her Sense of Wonder.' Eastern Province Herald, vol.121, no.181; 2 Aug. 1965: p.12, col.5.

2. Benita Munitz, a UNISA honours student in 1968, made a copy of this taped interview available to the author.

3. 'Pioneer Artist Was Ignored by Cape Town Critics.' Cape Times, Peninsula ed.; 20 June 1969: p.9, col.3. The same article was reproduced virtually word for word under the title 'Grand Old Lady Paints For Happiness.' Rand Daily Mail, Women's Mail; 25 June 1969: p.15, cols.3-7.

4. See p.52.

5. See footnote 2 above.

The second factor relating to the incorrect dating of many of Laubser's works, is her common practice of dating a work years after execution. According to the present owner of Self portrait at the age of seventeen, the artist signed and dated this work during the 1950's. Similarly, in the case of Self portrait, it appears on the basis of the cursive M, that the work was signed during the years 1922-24 or after ca.1945.[1] It is possible that the signature and date were completed at different times as it appears that it was signed in charcoal and dated in pencil.[2] In the case of these two works the incorrect dating was, in all probability, a conscious attempt to disguise her true age. In the many other cases, however, the incorrect dates that occur, result from Laubser not being able to remember accurately the precise year of execution.[3] Her memory was poor as can be verified by the fact that in her curriculum vitae, the dates that she gave for her overseas movements, are incorrect. This is established by examining passport entries for precise dating. In her curriculum vitae she wrote:

no.6

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> After the war I lived a year in Antwerpen, Belgium and 1919 I went to Italy and lived there for a year ... 1920 I returned to S.A. to our farm Oortmanspost where my family had moved to while I was away in Europe. 1922 I returned to Europe this time to Germany and lived in Berlin for 2 years.[4]

On examining her passports[5] the accurate dates of her movements after 1913 have been established as:

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1. Laubser sometimes used a cursive M for her signature whilst in Germany. See nos.364, 383-385; and after the mid-1940's. See figs.139 and 143, pp.286,287.

2. See catalogue entry no.7.

3. In discussion with Munitz during the interview in 1968 (see. p.3, footnote 2) about the discrepancy in dates of some works currently exhibited from the Silberberg collection at the Martin Melck House, Cape Town, Laubser confirmed that she did forget the dates of paintings: 'I don't remember dates and also guess.'

4. Left in her estate to the University of Stellenbosch archive no.79/4/8 page 2. The dates given by Meintjes in his monograph on Laubser published in 1944, are almost certainly based on these dates given by Laubser in her curriculum vitae.

5. See appendices 4 and 5, pp.418-447.

October 1913 - early 1914 Holland,

ca.April 1914 - June 1919 Britain; broken by a visit to South Africa in 1915,

June 1919 - September 1920 Belgium,

November 1920 - August 1921 Italy; broken by a visit to Germany between April and June,

November 1921 - November 1922 South Africa,

November or December 1922 - November 1924 Germany.

It is evident, therefore, that there is confusion about the correct chronology of Laubser's art and one of the main purposes of this study is to establish the correct dating of her works. All documentation for and discussion of dating is reserved for the catalogue itself.

Up until now there has been relatively little research into Laubser's life and work. Brief discussions of Laubser's life and work have been included in all the major books on South African art, e.g. Bouman, A. C. Painters of South Africa; Cape Town: H.A.U.M., n.d. and Kuns in Suid Afrika; 2nd ed., Cape Town: H.A.U.M., 1938; Alexander, F.L. Art in South Africa...Since 1900;Cape Town: Balkema, 1962; Berman, E. Art and Artists of South Africa; Cape Town: Balkema, 1970; Berman, E. The Story of South African Painting Cape Town: Balkema, 1975; inter alia.

Many articles have been written about her in both popular magazines such as Huisgenoot, Huishouding, Naweekpos, etc., and in more academic journals such as Historia, Lantern, Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns, etc.

The first monograph on Maggie Laubser was written by Johannes Meintjes (1923-): Maggie Laubser, Cape Town: H.A.U.M., 1944, when he was a young man.

None of these can be regarded as being comprehensive works, for only a few selected paintings are illustrated and discussed, and the texts are of a very general nature. In 1964 Elza Botha wrote her M.A. dissertation, 'Die Lewe en Skilderwerk van Maggie Laubser' (University of Pretoria), the first academic study of her work. (The monograph written by Van Rooyen, J. Maggie Laubser; Cape Town; Struik,

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1974, relies heavily on Botha's dissertation and contributes very little new factual information.)

Botha's study does not constitute a comprehensive study for several reasons. Firstly, only 350 works from the whole of Laubser's oeuvre are included, of which only twenty are illustrated, and no sketches or sketchbooks are included, determined no doubt by financial considerations.

Secondly, access to Laubser's passports was not possible before 1973. Thus the correct chronology of Laubser's movements abroad could not be established.

Thirdly, four large and important collections were, for various reasons, omitted in Botha's study. Perhaps the most important of these collections was Laubser's estate bequeathed to the University of Stellenbosch on her death in 1973. Not only did this include over 100 paintings, (the majority of which were damaged, unframed canvases found in the back of Laubser's garage), but also many books, magazines and pamphlets on art and religion; copies of speeches, articles and radio talks about and by Maggie Laubser; sketchbooks and individual sketches; invitations to exhibitions; newspaper cuttings; about 340 photographs of people, places and paintings; about 1,240 letters to Laubser; personal documents, e.g., diaries, address books, passports; and scraps of paper and envelopes with sketches and personal notes - mostly religious thoughts. (All her painting material: brushes, easel, paint tubes, etc., as well as various books and personal notes were left to Johannes Meintjies of Molteno in the Cape; whilst various other personal notes and photographs were left to Elza Miles (née Botha) of Johannesburg.)

The other three large collections omitted in Botha's study are Dr. H. K. Silberberg's of Tulbagh, Mr. B. Trakman's of Cape Town, and a private collector's in the

Strand who wishes to remain anonymous. Mr. Silberberg who owns over 250 of Laubser's works had already begun collecting by 1964, but it seemed that Laubser did not want Botha to know of this collection and to include it in her study. Botha only discovered Silberberg's collection when her study was in its final stages, and even then she did not have access to it. His collection is important for the scholar of Laubser's art from 1900-1924, for not only does it include two sketchbooks from the Belgian/Italian period and the Italian period, but also many paintings executed whilst she was abroad. (For instance, Botha only traced one work from Laubser's stay in Britain between 1914 and 1919. Botha catalogue no.9).

bks.4 and 5

Delmont no.62

Mr. Basil Trakman, whose collection exceeds 100 works: paintings, charcoal drawings, sketches, sketchbooks and water colours, only began collecting Laubser's art during the mid-1960's. Some of the individual sketches, particularly those which date to Laubser's study years at the Slade, in Antwerp and in Berlin, are of vital importance for the understanding and dating of the finished paintings from these years. Furthermore, many of these sketches are on the same size and type of paper, and depict similar subject matter as some of the sketchbooks surviving from Laubser's stay abroad. On this basis, it seems that the individual pages were originally part of these books and were only subsequently torn out. Several of the sketchbooks are thus more complete as a result of inclusion of Mr. Trakman's collection.

bks.3 and 8

A private collector in the Strand, although he owns no oil paintings, has gathered numerous sketchbooks, individual sketches, personal notes and documents. These are invaluable for the scholar researching Laubser's life and work from 1900-1924: e.g., her registration papers at the Slade, a Christmas card from a fellow artist in 1921, a bill from a pension in Venice, and sketchbooks pertaining to her study years overseas.

fig.16,p.259
fig.60,p.272
fig.62,p.273
bks.1,2,6

It is hoped that the inclusion of these four collections, and the many paintings, drawings, sketches and woodcuts in private collections, as well as the documentation provided from Laubser's personal notes, documents, mementoes etc., and the information passed on by owners, dealers and Laubser's friends and acquaintances comprise a comprehensive and virtually[1] complete catalogue raisonné of the works by Maggie Laubser from 1900-1924.

This study consists of three volumes. Volume one is comprised of the text, whilst volume two includes colour plates; sketchbooks and an accompanying index for each; comparative visual material (figure illustrations); index of current owners of Laubser's works; bibliography; list of exhibitions with bibliographic material included; and appendices. Volume three consists of the illustrated catalogue.

In the text Laubser's art has been studied in chronological sequence and in relation to the places where she worked, namely South Africa, Holland, Britain, Belgium, Italy and Germany. The stylistic characteristics, working methods, and iconography - i.e., the variations in subject matter and interpretation of themes, and the development of these within each period, and from one period to the next, is examined. Laubser's stylistic and iconographic development is examined against the background of her own oeuvre, contemporary South African art and twentieth century European styles. Specific and general sources and influences are examined, and the influences of her philosophy and religious beliefs are discussed, where relevant to her stylistic and iconographic development. Laubser's art is thus seen within the context of her life, her world view, specific sources and influences and the general contemporary artistic background, both local and European. In conclusion, the importance of Laubser's study years abroad for the rest of her oeuvre, is examined.

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1. 'Virtually' in the sense that it is as complete as is possible.

CHAPTER 1

JUVENILIA AND EARLY SOUTH AFRICAN WORKS BEFORE 1913

Early biographical details

Maggie Laubser was born Magdalena Maria Laubser on 14th April 1886, the oldest in an Afrikaans family of six children, on the grain farm Bloublommetjieskloof, near Klipheuwel in the Malmesbury district of the Cape.[1] At the age of seven she went to a farmschool, Rocklands, about two miles from Bloublommetjieskloof,[2] where she was a weekly boarder.[3] Her happiest memories from this time are of her outdoor activities with her friends, which involved contact with nature.[4]

Anglicization process

In 1896 she attended the Bloemhof Seminary in Stellenbosch[5] where she was taught art by a Miss Wilson (later Mrs. Rowan)[6] who was a 'very sympathetic art mistress.'[7] According to Botha she was influenced by the 'anglicization process' at Bloemhof,[8] probably further developed by her English-speaking art teacher, Miss Wilson. This process was continued when she came into contact, on leaving school and going to Cape Town, with other contemporary painters who had been trained in England, and again later during her five-year stay in Britain between 1914 and 1919. The majority of Laubser's personal notes such as diary entries, religious thoughts,

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1. Botha, E.J. 'Die Lewe en Skilderwerk van Maggie Laubser', unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1964, p.1. Also: 'I was born on a farm B. B. Kloof Klipheuwel about 20 miles from Cape Town.' Curriculum vitae, University of Stellenbosch archive no.79/4/8, p.1. Hereafter University of Stellenbosch archive no. is abbreviated to U.S. See also p.2,footnote 1 above.

2. ibid. Also: 'I went to school at (Rocklands) a farm two miles from our farm' [author's translation] 'Dit is my Kontrei.' Appendix 1, p.401,par.1.

3. 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.405,par.4.

4. 'Dit is my Kontrei.' ibid. par.1 and 2.

5. 'What I Remember.' ibid. p.406 ,par.2.

6. Botha, p.3.

7. 'What I Remember.' ibid.

8. p.3. Botha gives no documentation to support this statement.

etc., written on her return to South Africa, were written in English.

Art at high school

At Bloemhof, Laubser was taught according to the conventional teaching methods of the time, for she spent most of her art classes copying arrangements of plaster models of fruit.[1] This taught her, if little else, 'the value of line',[2] a tendency further developed during her period of study at the Slade.

Laubser left school at the age of fifteen in order to give her brothers and sister a chance to further their education.[3] There is some doubt as to whether she had begun painting at school as she wrote in her curriculum vitae:

> At 15 years I left school to give [a] chance to my younger brothers and sister to be sent to school. I then had a great longing to do something with my hands and I bought some paints and tried to paint.[4]

Also:

> Even at boarding school - one of the unhappiest periods of my life - I never thought of painting, nor was I encouraged to do so.[5]

However, she recalled in later years her early sensitivity to bright colours.[6]

nos.1,2

no.3

However, according to the present owner[7] of the two works: Flowers, the earliest surviving still lifes, these were painted at the request of his mother whilst the artist was still at school. Furthermore, The Bugler is signed and annotated on the back of the work: Maggie Laubser Bloemhof 18.2.1902. It thus seems that she began experimenting with oils whilst still at school.

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1. Botha, p.3.

2. 'What I Remember.' ibid. p.406,par.2. Unfortunately no works to support this contention have been traced.

3. 'What I Remember.' p.406,par.3.

4. U.S.79/4/8, p.1.

5. 'Pioneer Artist Was Ignored by Cape Town Critics.' Cape Times, Peninsula ed.; 20 June 1969: p.9, col.4. The same article was reproduced virtually word for word under the title 'Grand Old Lady Paints for Happiness.' Rand Daily Mail, Women's Mail. 25 June 1969: p.15.

6. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser.' Interview with Dr. J. Schutte, Afrikaans Service, S.A.B.C, 7.22 p.m. Typescript U.S.79/3/1, p.3.

7. ee catalogue note to no.1.

Juvenilia

These works are, like the arrangements of fruit, simply copies. Whereas it appears that the drawings of fruit were sketched from studio arrangements, the earliest traced works are copies from postcards or illustrations. The Bugler was copied from a postcard as no.3
was Dog in a stable. The two works: Flowers, as well as nos.4;1,2
Swans on a lake and The Happy Mother were probably also nos.5;9
copied from postcards or illustrations. Even as late as
1912, Landscape with mountains, she copied from post- no.23
cards. The Bugler is an ambitious subject for somebody no.3
so young who seems to have had no formal training in the use of oil paint and the complexities of colour. The awkwardness in the foreshortening of the unfinished hindquarter and hoof of the horse, may be seen in this light. Laubser was given a horse when young and was very fond of riding[1] around the farm. Perhaps this factor, as well as the heroic associations with the current Boer War, influenced her choice of subject matter.[2]

On leaving school she continued with her creative activities on the farm by occupying herself with needlework and stencilcraft.[3] She also continued to
copy from picture postcards as is to be seen in Dog in no.4
a stable. The light 'feathery' brushstroke of these
four early works is also characteristic of two later nos.1-4
works, painted after she went to Cape Town in 1903. nos.5,9
These are probably also copies: The Happy Mother 1906, no.9

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1. 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.4. Also 'Dit is my kontrei.' p.400, par.3. Also 'I loved the farm,the landscape and the animals and was given a [?] horse and spent a great deal of time riding which gave me great joy.' Curriculum vitae, U.S.79/4/8, p.1. Also 'I had a horse and loved my horse very much and I could feel my horse could bring me everywhere I wanted to [go].' Taped interview with B. Munitz, a UNISA honours student, in 1968.

2. The war ended in May 1902. Berman, E. Art and Artists of South Africa; Cape Town: Balkema, 1970, p.xiii.

3. 'I made my clothes, and embroidered [and] made patterns on the dresses.' Munitz interview 1968. 'When I got back home I discovered stencilling and spent hours transferring patterns to curtains, dresses and cushions.' 'Pioneer Artist Was Ignored by Cape Town Critics.' Cape Times, Peninsula ed.; 20 June 1969: p. , col.4.

depicting a family of kittens, is comparable in subject matter and interpretation and treatment to the Dog in a stable. It is significant that the cat, a theme developed in her still lifes of the thirties, already interested her. Furthermore, the cat with kittens forecasts the later development of the motherhood theme seen in the post 1924 concentration on sheep suckling their lambs and mothers carrying or breast feeding their babies.[1] The Swans on a lake constitutes an early attempt at landscape, in which the brushstroke, although still light and 'feathery', is slightly broader and a hazy, almost romantic feeling is evoked.

no.4

fig.135,p.286

no.5

Laubser was alone and isolated without contemporaries on the farm.[2] This isolation gave her the opportunity and time to absorb all the different aspects of nature. This early period on the farm had a long-lasting influence on her life evident in her empathetic identification with nature.

Influence of nature and farm life

> These unsaid things speak deepest to me and I remember them longest; a tiny cloud moving in stately measure across the sky; the flash past of a swallow; an almond in blossom and a willow hanging over a dark green pool of water.[3]

Elsewhere she noted::

> I enjoyed so much being out in the freedom and space of nature. I find it such a pity that our children of today do not know enough of nature because to be close to nature is so important for the refinement of the mind and the accentuation of the spirit.[4]

This early period on the farm also influenced her in the themes and subjects which she chose to paint.

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1. Figs.132-134, pp.285,286.
2. Munitz interview 1968. Also 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.4.
3. 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.5.
4. [Author's translation] 'Dit is my Kontrei.' p.400, par.2.

> I was one of those fortunate children, who are [sic] awakened every morning by the different sounds of nature, and who could watch the animals, come home every night to their kraals; and these are among my earliest recollections and with joy I shall always remember them, for these farm memories have formed the basis upon which I later built up all the visions which constitute my art.[1]

Elsewhere she wrote:

> I always wanted to be amongst birds and animals again and now you can understand why I painted them so eagerly.[2]

It is therefore understandable that animals, being such an important part of her life, should play a major rôle even in the early subject matter of her paintings. As can be expected at this age, a certain sentimentality is in evidence, seen particularly in the romantic heroism of *The Bugler* and the title of *The Happy Mother*, yet this should also be considered with reference to her source material reflecting the limitations of her cultural background, and also her taste.

no.3; no.9

There was, however, an emergent self-awareness. She related that she 'wanted to express [herself] in some form or another.'[3] This period of self consciousness is reflected in the *Self portrait at the age of seventeen*.[4] In this drawing which might have been copied from a photograph, and in *Self portrait*, one is confronted by the direct gaze and quiet brooding intensity reflecting self-contemplation. This evocative quality is later more fully developed, not only in portraits, but also in landscapes.

Self portraits nos.6 and 7

no.6

no.7

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1. 'What I Remember.' p.404, par.2.

2. [Author's translation.] 'Dit is my Kontrei.' p.400, par.3. Refer also to par.2 on the same page.

3. 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.6.

4. For discrepancy in dating see catalogue entry. Refer also to Introduction, p.2.

Stay in Cape Town

Maggie Laubser, at the age of seventeen, finally managed to persuade her parents tc allow her to go to Cape Town once a week to have singing lessons with Mrs. Nancy Vincent.[1] Although she enjoyed painting she was also interested in singing. Her voice 'a mezzo-soprano, was not bad.'[2] Her interest in singing was understandable as her mother was musical - she was a 'good pianist, a [one-time] pupil of Prof. Jannasch of Stellenbosch.'[3] Transport to Cape Town was difficult, however.

> Although not really far away it was difficult to get there [Cape Town]. The cart had to take me to the railway station and from there by train to Cape Town, and the trains did not always run at convenient times.[4]

However, her mother 'did not have too high an opinion' of her voice and after a while her 'desire to sing faded out.'[5]

Probably as a result of the transport problems, the boredom on the farm and the desire for excitement and opportunities of city life, Laubser stayed in Cape Town for long periods with an aunt in Sea Point.[6] She may already have thought of herself as an artist, for she was introduced as such to W. R. Burns, the art and literary critic for The Argus,[7] at a wedding. He further developed her tendency towards anglicization, begun at Bloemhof, by encouraging her interest in English liter-

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1. Botha, p.4.

2. 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.6.

3. ibid. See also 'Dit is my Kontrei.' p.402, par.3.

4. 'What I Remember.' p.406, par.6.

5. ibid.

6. Munitz interview 1968.

7. Botha, p.4. See also 'What I Remember.' p.407, par.1. Refer to letters from W. R. Burns (J.S.79/5/5-79/5/9; 75/5/11, 79/5/14 and 15, and 79/5/36).

ature[1] and introducing her to some of the local contemporary artists who were mostly English-speaking.

Influence of Beatrice Hazell

Through Burns she met Beatrice Hazell (1864-1946), a painter of still lifes, who encouraged Laubser in her desire to paint seriously.[2] Beatrice Hazell's contact with Laubser is of some importance, for she was a woman painter. At this stage, art was not considered a fitting career for a woman. Laubser herself relates:

> ...although painting like music, was always considered a necessary accomplishment for a girl, it was not thought of as a profession for a woman, and the demand for such women was very small.[3]

Beatrice Hazell's relative success in the art field,[4] probably encouraged Laubser in her desire to become a professional artist. Beatrice Hazell was predominantly a flower painter. This could have influenced Laubser in her choice of subject matter evident in the still lifes of flowers painted during her years in Cape Town. Hazell's rich textural paint application could also have influenced Laubser's painting style, particularly evident in Poppies. In these still life paintings, Laubser shows an early preference for large bold flowers in which there is often an emphasis on the stamens and pistils or seeds, e.g., sunflowers, hibiscus and poppies.

nos.14,16-21

fig.1,p.254

no.16

nos.8,14, 16,21

All her life Laubser avoided talking directly of any formal training she had, and more specifically of the influence that such a training might have had on her work. In her transcript of the interview 'What I Remember',[5] she referred to her attendance at an art

Influence of Edward Roworth

1. Botha, p.4

2. Munitz interview 1968. Refer to letters from B. Hazell (U.S.79/5/12 and 13, and 79/5/18 and 19).

3. 'What I Remember.' p.407, par.1.

4. She was a member of the S.A. Drawing Club and the S.A. Society of Artists and she exhibited at the second S.A. Society of Artists Exhibition in 1903. Berman, 1970, p.90.

5. p.407, par.1.

school for one term and at Roworth's school for one term.[1] The name and whereabouts of the other art school to which she referred are not known. According to Berman[2] and Botha[3] she studied with Roworth in 1903. This is confirmed by Laubser in her curriculum vitae:

> About 2 years later [after 19[illegible]] I met [illegible] Ed[ward] Roworth [in] Cape Town and went to stay in Cape Town for 2 or 3 months and had a few lessons with him.[4]

A letter from E. L. Adams[5] referring to her training with Roworth is dated tentatively to 1903 in the records of the University of Stellenbosch. In this letter Adams wished the artist luck with the silver medallion that she received as a student of Roworth's. 'I am sure your work has a big future in store for you, if you go on working with the truth and sincerity which you are now doing.'

Even if Laubser did not enjoy the restrictions of painting classes and the 'dictatorial authority...,'[6] these first official painting lessons must have been a thrilling and stimulating experience for her, as she had the opportunity to experiment with the expressive and technical possibilities of oil paint under the guidance of an established painter. That she took these opportunities, is evident in the differing styles and interpretations of the seascapes from this period. nos.10-13

In Seascape the light 'feathery' brushstrokes relate no.10
this work to The Happy Mother and the juvenilia,but here, no.9
and in Mouille Point lighthouse, the paint has been no.11

1. This reference is crossed out in the typed transcript.
2. Berman, 1970, p.173.
3. Botha, p.4.
4. U.S.79/4/3, p.1.
5. U.S.79/5/4.
6. Berman, 1970, p.254.

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2. Berman, 1970, p.173.
3. Botha, p.4.
4. U.S.79/4/8, p.1.
5. U.S.79/5/4.
6. Berman, 1970, p.254.

applied more thickly, more so in Mouille Point lighthouse which shows a somewhat surer brushstroke. Later, during 1912, in Tablemountain and Landscape with mountains, the handling is broader and a misty romantic quality is manifest in the pinkish glow of the setting sun. This romantic quality was probably partly due to the fact that she copied, certainly in the case of Landscape with mountains, from a postcard.

no.11

no.24,pl.1, p.193
no.23

no.23

The style of these early landscapes by Laubser should be viewed within the context of the mainstream movement of romantic realism in the Cape at this time, as seen in the works of artists such as Roworth, Gwelo Goodman (1871-1939), J.E.A. Volschenk (1853-1936) and Nita Spilhaus (1878-1967). These works by Laubser may be seen as realistic in that her interest lies in painting the external objective characteristics of the material world, an influence from the topographical tradition of landscape painting in South Africa during the second half of the 19th century. The style is still essentially descriptive, for details are important and there is no subjective emphasis and concentration on certain objects. The scene is viewed from a distance and objects are seen on a relatively small scale. There is thus no particular focalization on the subject as occurred in later works of the same motif. Man is not included in the landscape. It was only later, on Laubser's return to South Africa in 1924, that the figure not only appeared in her landscapes, but was actively involved and integrally connected with it.[1]

Romantic realism

figs.2-6, pp.254,255

nos.432,433

nos.432,433

These works by Laubser may be seen as romantic, in that there is an idealization and an idyllic sweetness in the rose-pinks of Tablemountain and Landscape

no.24,pl.1 p.193

1. The figure in the landscape first appeared in Laubser's work in harvest scenes in Belgium. It only became a dominant theme, however, after 1924.

with mountains as well as an atmospheric misty handling of light and air. This interpretation may be compared to the romantic approach of Volschenk in Grazing Sheep ca. 1900 and Spilhaus in View of Mostert's Hoek from Ceres.

no.23

fig.5,p 255

fig.6,p.255

Edward Roworth, who painted in a romantic realist style, had been trained in the English academic tradition. He studied at the Slade School of Art under Henry Tonks, as Laubser was to do during the war years. He established himself in the Cape as a portraitist, receiving many important commissions, and painted many landscapes.[1] His emphasis in 'Landscape Art in South Africa' (an article in 'Art of the British Empire Overseas.' Studio, 1917) is on various typical characteristics of South African landscape, viz., its 'monotony, size and light.'[2] In his paintings, however, he depicts varied aspects of the surrounding countryside: the trees, the mountains, hills by the coast, the Cape homesteads, etc., and there is an almost cosy intimacy that denies the monotony and feeling of space which he discussed as typical characteristics of the South African landscape.[3]

Roworth's background

figs.2,3,76, pp.254,276

Having been brought up in the country, Laubser was sensitive to wide open spaces. She herself said: 'I have always thought it a great privilege to be born on a farm. From earliest infancy the child accustoms his eye to wide spaces and deep horizons.'[4] Elsewhere she noted:

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1. For Roworth's biography see Berman, 1970, p.253.

2. p.115. Holme, C. (ed.).'Art of the British Empire Overseas.' Studio, (special edition), 1917. Particularly 'Landscape Art in South Africa' by E. Roworth; text pp.115-119; illustrations pp.120-144.

3. 'They [the British] tended neverth less to interpret local subject matter in much the same way as they might have portrayed a corner of the English coast or countryside and they chose the kind of view and clouded skies which best recalled the landscapes of their earlier experience.' Berman, E. The Story of South African Painting; Cape Town; Balkema, 1975, pp.4-5.

4. 'What I Remember.' p.404, par.1.

> Sometimes my friends in Europe asked me if I didn't miss the South African sun and every time my answer was no - no, not the South African sun but the spaces of the South African landscape. This love of space gives me a free and abandoned feeling. It gives me my vision and therefore in my work I can never be bound to the restriction of photographic impressions.[1]

She repeated the above thoughts when she referred to her riding on horseback on the farm: 'It was a wonderful free feeling to be in the open.'[2] Perhaps this was one of the reasons that she chose to paint seascapes with distant horizons. She might also have been influenced by Roworth's observation that open space is one of the dominant characteristics of South African landscape. nos.28-32

The choice of the sea, by no means an unusual subject, probably appealed to Laubser because of its changing aspects and evocative associations (previously exploited by the Romantic landscapists in France in the first half of the 19th century). Although her early seascapes (1903-1912) are painted in the vein of Roworth and the realist landscape painters of the time, the evocative mood quality and misty atmosphere of Tablemountain is handled more successfully and maturely in At Camps Bay ca. 1911, probably because in the latter instance Laubser painted from the motif and not from a postcard. In Germany, and after her return to South Africa in 1924, the artist further developed the expressive possibilities of the seascape. Seascapes

nos.10-13; fig.3,p.254

no.24,pl.1, p.193
no.22,pl.2, p.193

These early seascapes show a new attitude as they appear to have been painted plein-air. The artist was aware of, and even advocated, plein-air painting before she went overseas in 1913 for, according to one of Laubser's former pupils, Janie Nel, she did not allow them to copy: 'Sy het ons in groepies geneem om die

Plein-airism
nos.10-13

1.[Author's translation] 'Dit is my Kontrei.' p.403, par.2.
2.[Author's translation] ibid. p.400, par.3.

kerk of die skool of 'n groep kalwers, ens. in die natuur te skets of te skilder.'[1]

Plein-air painting was fairly revolutionary at this time in the Cape as it was only some fifty years before that it had emerged in France. Laubser must have had some knowledge of the attitudes of 19th Century French landscape painters, even if it was only indirectly through Hugo Naudé. Naude is reputed to have worked at Barbizon in 1895[2] and he would probably have had direct experience of plein-air painting. He was a co-member with Laubser of the South African Society of Artists[3] and she would therefore, almost certainly, have known him and been familiar with his working methods. Lippy Lipschitz who accompanied him on many painting expeditions, particularly to De Doorns and to Robertson, said of Naudé:

> He was an outdoor artist who adapted what he had learned overseas to South African conditions. His work was spontaneous, luminous. He was one of our pioneering artists, the first to study overseas, the first impressionist in South Africa.[4]

However, he was not a true Impressionist for, although he did paint outside on many of his painting trips undertaken in his caravan to Kleinmond, Knysna and Namaqualand, he also reworked canvases in his studio.[5] Esmé Berman considers his method 'intuitive rather than scientific. It would be more accurate to refer to him as a plein-airist rather than as an exponent of orthodox Parisian Impressionism.'[6]

Maggie Laubser would have learnt of plein-air painting, probably through Hugo Naudé. Although as mentioned before, she practiced plein-air painting before travelling overseas in 1913, later in life she was to minimize the influence of

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1. 'She took us in groups to sketch or paint the church, the school or a group of calves etc. from nature.' Botha, p.5.

2. Berman, 1970, p.203; and Naudé, A. Hugo Naudé; Cape Town: Struik, 1974, p.12.

3. Berman, 1970, p.204.

4. Naudé, p.16.

5. ibid. p.17.

6. Berman, 1970, p.206.

painting plein-air:

> I never painted - very rarely from nature - sitting in front of nature - perhaps in Scotland...but mostly...pencil notes and even then I couldn't use the pencil notes again.[1]

However, a photograph of her and Arnold Balwé (J. H. Balwé's son),[2] shows them painting at easels outside in a wooded area, probably Antwerp in 1919/1920. Another postcard of Lake Garda is inscribed: 'Our special painting place.' Many sketches in Scotland and Belgium were male directly from the motif, for some record the time of day, the season, etc. It is thus apparent that Laubser's interest in plein-air painting was established whilst she was in South Africa, quite possibly due to the influence of Naudé. She continued working directly from the motif whilst in Britain, Belgium and Italy. By the early twenties a greater dependency on working from sketches rather than painting directly from nature is evident. This tendency continued and on her return to South Africa she began to work more and more from her imagination, until towards the end of her life she no longer relied on sketches. Laubser's statement about painting from imagination should therefore be seen as referring to her working method after ca. 1924.

fig.38,p.264
fig.58,p.271

Involvement in local art activities

During her stay in Cape Town, Laubser became more and more involved in the local art scene. In 1907 she was elected a member of the South African Society of Artists. She was thus establishing herself as an artist. By 1907 most of the foremost painters of the time were members, viz., George Crosland Robinson, Constance Penstone, Churchill Mace, Frans Oerder, Charles Peers, G. W. Pilkington, Allerley Glossop, Hugo Naudé, J. E. A. Volschenk and Nita Spilhaus. (Ruth Prowse joined in 1909).[3] The paintings of these artists

1. Munitz interview 1968.
2. See page 24 for further discussion of J. H. Balwé.
3. Berman, 1970, p.261.

consisted of portraits, landscapes and subject pieces. A few painted city scapes but this was total'y foreign to Laubser's outlook and experience, for, having been brought up on a farm in the country, she identified herself closely with nature and animals. Only two paintings of a city subject have been located: Flower-seller in Berlin 1922-4 and the unfinished oil study for it.

nos.299,pl.39, p.212;298 recto

Several of the painters whom Laubser had been in contact with at this stage, had been trained at the Slade, e.g., Ruth Prowse, Allerley Glossop, Edward Roworth and Hugo Naudé, and/or in Germany, e.g., Nita Spilhaus and Hugo Naudé. It is most likely that the artistic milieu in England and Germany was discussed. Later Laubser studied in England and Germany, perhaps as a consequence of her early contact with these painters who had trained in Europe.

In 1909 she was represented in the annual exhibition of the South African Society of Artists,[1] and the Fine Arts Association of Cape Town.[2] By 1910 Laubser had her own studio, for C. Visser, in a letter dated 24.7.1910, wrote: 'So you are embarking completely on your own.'[3] During these early years in Cape Town, however, Laubser felt there was a 'veiled hostility' to art. 'It was a time, unless you were very rich, what you learned had to produce money, or it was not thought worth spending time on.'[4]

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1. Van Rooyen, J. Maggie Laubser; Cape Town, 1974, p.60. No further documentary evidence of the existence of the 1909 S.A. Society of Artists Exhibition has been found.

2. See E.1.

3. U.S.79/5/16, addressed to Laubser at Studio 10, Bank van Afrika Kamers, Strand St.

4. 'What I Remember.' p.407, par.1.

Portrait-ure

It was probably for this reason and also as a result of the general artistic climate when portraits were fashionable subjects, that Laubser began painting portraits: Sheila Johnston 1909 and later in Ermelo Oom Paul 1912 and General Hertzog 1913, the latter two probably from photographs. The earlier portraits are rendered in a conservative manner, for plasticity is established by carefully graded modelling, and the figures emerge from the subdued atmospheric background. In the portrait of General Hertzog 1913, shading is more assertive, there is a greater emphasis on contrasts and the approach is more linear, a trend she developed at the Slade after 1914. As the figures are not placed in an environment, there is a concentration and focus on the head. This is typical of most of the contemporary portraits, as seen in Pearson's portrait of Paul Kruger, and Naudé's Huguenot Lady, painted after Naudé's return to South Africa in 1896. Laubser continued to isolate the heads in her portraits against a plain background until, on her return to South Africa in 1924, she introduced motifs and surroundings associated with the sitter, thus establishing a relationship between the images.

no.15

nos.25,26

nos.15,25

no.26

fig.7,p.256
fig.8,p.256

To the Transvaal

This 'veiled hostility' to art as a profession, the inability to earn a living through painting in Cape Town, and a general restlessness, probably contributed to the artist's visit to Pretoria in 1912 where relations of hers lived.[1] However, having read an advertisement in one of the newspapers, she applied for the post and was employed as a governess by Mr. and Mrs. Wolmarans on a farm near Ermelo, where she seems to have stayed for some time.[2] After some encouragement from old friends from Malmesbury, whom

1. Her nephew, Gert Coetzee. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser.' Interview with Dr. J. Schutte, Afrikaans Service, S.A.B.C., 12 May 1972, 7.22 p.m. Typescript U.S.79/3/1, p.5.

2. ibid.

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2. ibid.

she met in Ermelo, she gave art and needlework classes. At this stage she was living at the Anglican vicarage.[1] However, she was soon on the move again, and during the winter holiday she and Sophie Fischer, a school friend, went to Durban.[2] There is some confusion as to the exact date and duration of her stay in Durban. It appears that she went to Durban for a holiday only, and then returned to Ermelo.[3]

It was in Durban that she met Jan Hendrick Balwé (1858-1921), who had been the Dutch Consul in Durban from 1893 to 1903 and was a successful businessman and shipping line owner.[4] He was to be a great influence on her life, for not only was he responsible for her overseas sojourn, but he became very fond of her and they had a close relationship. Balwé wanted to marry Laubser but she declined on the grounds that she wanted to pursue her career in art.[5] In a letter

Jan Hendrick Balwé figs.9, 10a,10b, pp.256,257

1. Botha, p.5.

2. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser'. ibid. Refer also to the message in Laubser's autograph book (1903-1914),(U.S.79/15) on p.29, from So Fischer, dated 5 July 1913.

3. A letter from de Solla (U.S.79/5/26), dated 29 June 1913 indicates that Laubser was still at this time in Ermelo. The inscription reading: 'From Pal August 1st 1913 Ermelo' on a leather writing case left by Laubser in her estate to the University of Stellenbosch (U.S.79/20), indicates that she was in Ermelo at this time. Refer to the message in Laubser's autograph book (U.S.79/15) p.31, written by G. Ashworth in Ermelo on 19 July 1913. According to Mrs. Malherbe (née Nel) a one-time pupil of Laubser's in Ermelo, her work in Ermelo included portraits of Generals Botha and Hertzog. (Botha, p.6). The portrait of General Hertzog has been traced and is dated to 1913 - indicating that she was still in Ermelo in 1913. (no.26).

4. Refer to the message in Laubser's autograph book.ibid. p.17, from Balwé: 'Maggie! May your joy be as deep as the blue sea and your sorrow as light as its foam.

Sea Beach
Durban 6 July 13
J. H. A. Balwé

A photograph of Balwé has been pasted on the opposite page - p.18.
In 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser', Laubser recalled that, through a Dutch friend of Sophie Fischer's, namely, Van Skermbeek, they were invited for dinner and a show with the [ex] Dutch Consul. U.S.79/3/1, p.5.

5. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser.' ibid.

dated 21.7.1913 from Balwé to the artist, he writes of: 'Amanzimtoti, that ideal spot of our initial happiness ...the happy time we spent there...the spot where my true affection for you was born, where I saw you at work.'[1] Balwé's friendship and support until his death in 1921, was to be very important to Laubser.

Concentration on seascapes and space

Balwé's letter is also of interest as it provides further documentation that Laubser was painting plein-air. While in the area she concentrated on seascapes, a logical choice as she was at the coast. Not only was it a subject that offered the opportunities of working in the fresh air and sun, but, as previously suggested, it was a subject that lent itself to the expression of open spaces and vast expanses. This feeling for space is further developed in the horizontal compositions in which there is a sense of infinity, and only in Seascape: South Coast, Natal, with the outcrops of rocks on the right, is there a restriction to the seemingly never-ending expanse of sea Despite this sense of space, the motif is brought nearer to the spectator, and there is therefore a more direct involvement with the subject than in earlier descriptive landscapes, in which the motif is more removed. As a result of this close-up view, there is a focalization and concentration on the motif, which is further emphasized by the simplification and lack of superfluous detail. An involvement with the motif is strengthened by the feeling of movement and energy implicit in the undulating animate forms of the breaking waves and the beach/rocks in the foreground, and the vitality of the distinct and varied brushwork.

nos.28-32

no.32

no.30

Development during period 1901-1913

In conclusion, Laubser's developments and achievements within this period (1901 to 1913) may be summarized by examining the following works: Flowers 1902,

no.1

1. U.S.79/5/27. If Balwé lived in Durban and he wrote to the artist, it is unlikely that she was still in Durban. This further substantiates the argument that she returned to Ermelo.

Hibiscus and St. George Lilies 1908/9, and Red flowers 1908/9-1913. In comparing these works, the same development as noted in the seascapes is evident:viz., from Mouille Point lighthouse 1903-1908/9 to Kalkbay 1908/9 to Seascape: South Coast, Natal 1913. (no.14; no.21; nos.11;13; no.32)

The arrangements of flowers become, in themselves, increasingly more relaxed and the treatment is correspondingly more vigorous. In Flowers 1902 shapes are tightly enclosed and details are minutely described. In Hibiscus and St. George Lilies 1908/9 and Red flowers 1908/9-1913, forms are not as precisely defined as in Flowers 1902. Larger, bolder forms are also evident and there is thus a greater focalization on the object. In Flowers 1902 brushwork is masked, whereas the development towards increasingly looser brushwork can be seen in Hibiscus and St. George Lilies 1908/9 and Red flowers 1908/9-1913. In Red flowers 1908/9-1913, as in the later seascapes, brushwork is more structural and the individual brushwork is clearly visible. This is probably a direct influence from Roworth, as can be seen if one examines his loose and relatively vigorous brushwork in On a South Coast hillside. (no.1; no.14; no.21; no.1; no.1; nos.14;21; nos.21;28-32; fig.3,p.254)

The confidence in the handling of these later works and the striving for a personal style is a more natural result of the artist's increasing maturity. She was now twenty seven and had left the direct influence of home and family and had travelled a little, albeit only in South Africa. In Balwé, she found a cultured and well-travelled man, twenty eight years her senior, who probably encouraged a process of self-awareness. He urged the artist to study overseas and visited her parents to offer to pay for her, and her sister Hannah, to go overseas. As a result of this, the artist and Hannah Laubser sailed for Europe on 4.10.1913.[1] (figs.11a, 11b,p.257)

1. According to the records of the University of Stellenbosch, this information is recorded in a letter dated 3.10.1913 from Jac Moll (U.S. 79/5/37).

CHAPTER 2

HOLLAND, OCTOBER 1913 - APRIL 1914

Stay in Laren

In October 1913 the artist and her sister went to Laren, a town about thirty kilometres from Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, and stayed with Mrs. Burger, the wife of the past president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek.[1] At this time there was a thriving artistic community in Laren, and this environment must have been stimulating and exciting for Maggie Laubser who had come from the somewhat rigid conservatism of South Africa.

> Eventually I had the opportunity of going overseas, where the congenial atmosphere established me in my firm conviction that I wanted to become a painter.[2]

Artistic background

Laubser became friendly with Frans Langeveld,[3] a painter of landscapes and interior scenes with figures, who worked in Laren between 1908 and 1916,[4] and Dame Laura Knight, an English painter of horses and circus scenes. She also knew Ita Mees,[5] a Dutch concert pianist and Frederick van Eeden,[6] a writer and poet from the group known as 'Die Tagtigers.'

Maggie Laubser worked in the studio of the late Anton Mauve[7] (1838-1888), and it is therefore probable that she knew Mauve's work. Several of the artists who were influenced by Mauve worked in Laren during this period.[8] Anton Mauve's son worked in Laren from 1898

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1. Botha, appendix 2, p.184.
2. 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.407, par.1.
3. Botha, p.7.
4. See p.28, footnote 1.
5. Botha, p.7.
6. ibid.
7. ibid. See also 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser.' 12 May 1972, (U.S.79/3/1) p.6.
8. Engel, E. P. Anton Mauve 1838-1888; Utrecht: Haentjies Dekker and Gumbert, 1967, p.81.

until 1922, and J. S. H. Kever worked there from 1905 until he died in 1922. Willem Steelink was there from 1912 until 1917, having been at the Hague for fourteen years, and Arina Hugenholtz, who had worked with Mauve, was in Laren from 1895 until 1934.[1] Their interest lay in the subjects which Mauve and the painters of the Hague had painted which they interpreted in a similar way: viz., landscapes with peasant figures and animals, particularly sheep and cattle. This environment probably encouraged Laubser in her interest in plein-air painting,[2] already established in South Africa, and in her choice of naturalistic landscape subjects. Mauve's iconography of shepherd and sheep, the harvester and the bondage of the peasant and his animals, was later developed by Laubser on her return to South Africa after 1924.

fig.12,p.257
fig.13,p.257
fig.13,p.257

The only painting traced from this six month period, reflects Laubser's continued interest in plein-air landscape painting and shows that she painted from nature and not from her imagination as she did later in life. In Cape Town and Natal she had painted seascapes and now in Holland she painted a Barge on water against the typically flat Dutch landscape. In this work Laubser's control of form is evident, for she uses colour and brushstroke to structure and model forms, e.g., the highlight on the bow of the barge and the gradations of pink on the top rim of the large boat.

Barge on water no.33, pl.3,p.194
no.33, pl.3,p.194

In a letter of December 1914 an artist friend notes:

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1. For this information on the Laren artists, see Scheen, P. A. Lexicon Nederlandse Beeldende Kunstenaars 1750-1950; 's-Gravenhage: Kunsthandel Pieter A. Scheen M.V., vol.1, A-L, 1969; vol.2, M-Z, 1970.

2. Anton Mauve's studio had a glass extension (it was a room with three glass walls and a glass roof; the back wall was wooden as it served as an exterior wall of the house) and landscape scenes could therefore be painted under natural light (equivalent to that outdoors). See photograph no.C4 reproduced by Engel in Anton Mauve 1838-1888.
Mauve and the other painters of the Hague School may have influenced Laubser in her handling of light.

> I think it is best for you to draw. You can learn that. But colours you have from [sic] yourself. I don't think one can learn that so much as drawing...and I remember you had a good feeling for colour.[1]

This early 'feeling' for colour was developed in her later paintings in Italy and Germany during the 1920's. The artist's use of colour differs from the more subdued grey atmospheric landscapes by the Dutch painters of the Hague and Amsterdam school and their followers.[2] The comparative luminosity and freshness of colour suggests that Laubser was perhaps aware of the experiments of the more avant-garde artists such as Toorop, Thorn-Prikker and Mondrian between the years ca. 1900-1910. The influence of neo-impressionism, Van Gogh and later the Fauves, filtered through to Holland, for several Dutch painters lived in Paris during this time; e.g., Dirk Nijland, Otto van Rees, Petrus Alma, Lodewijk Schelfhart and Kees van Dongen.[3] Toorop visited Paris in 1905.[4] At the Four Year Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1907, Fauve works were exhibited by Kees van Dongen, Otto van Rees, Jan Sluyters and others.[5] Thus, although Laubser was most likely more exposed to the more conservative artists painting in the tradition of the Hague and Laren schools, she was probably also aware of the development towards purer colour as seen in the experiments of the Dutch pointillists and Fauves.

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1. Letter left by Laubser in her estate to Elza Miles (née Botha).

2. For colour illustrations see De Gruyter, Dr. J. De Haagse School; Rotterdam: Lemniscaat, vol.1, 1968, and vol.2, 1969; and Hammacher, A.M. Amsterdamsche Impressionisten en hun Kring; Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1941.

3. Loosjes-Terpstra, A. B. Moderne Kunst in Nederland 1900-1914; Utrecht: Haentjies Dekker and Gumbert, 1959, pp.16-22.

4. ibid. p.314.

5. Wijsenbeek, L. F. J. Piet Mondrian; London: Studio Vista, 1968, p.163.

When compared to the seascapes of ca. 1913, the Dutch work Barge on water shows a broader handling, particularly evident in the large brushstrokes which establish the plasticity of the boat. This is a further development in which the artist was already working before she left South Africa, and she might have been influenced by the more broadly handled, less detailed paintings of the Amsterdam school: e.g., G. H. Breitner, Isaac Israels, Suze Robertson, Floris Verster.[1]

Looser style

no.33, pl.3,p.194

In the same letter referred to above, Laubser's fellow artist writes:

> Well, I've been working for myself since Amsterdam. Of course it's not so as you [sic] can work in the atelier in Amsterdam, but still I am here and think I'm getting on a little. I've a Belgian model this time and she is a very good one. Her posing [?] is excellent only I'm very sorry my atelier is too small for taking the whole figure.

Life drawing

Because of the broken English it is difficult to establish the exact implication of this passage. However, it seems that the artist met Laubser in Amsterdam - perhaps the worked together in the same studio. This artist had apparently been trained in the tradition of painting from life, and Laubser, through contact with her, would, in all probability have been introduced to the practice of life drawing before she arrived at the Slade.

On the basis of comparison of this work Barge on water 1914, and the later works in Britain, with contemporary avant-garde art movements, it is evident that Maggie Laubser's art during this early period was conceived in the spirit of the conservative tradition of plein-airism. There would have been contact and connections between the artists of Laren and Amsterdam[2]

no.33, pl.3,p.194

Local avant-garde background

1. See Hammacher ibid. for illustrations.

2. As mentioned above, it appears that Laubser had met the writer of the letter (see p.29, footnote 1) in Amsterdam.

which, like all major cities, was a great centre of artistic life in Europe at this time. Dutch artists travelled to Germany and Paris, and works of the most modern contemporary artists had reached the Netherlands, and had been accepted by this time. At the end of 1910, the Moderne Kunstkring was established in Amsterdam, and in October/November 1911 the first exhibition was held which included works by Cézanne, Braque, Picasso, Derain, Le Fauconnier and Mondrian.[1] In a review in 1913 of the Salon des Indépendants, Guillame Apollinaire wrote:

> One shouldn't be surprised that Cubism is already represented in the Amsterdam Museum; here people mock the young painters, but there the works of George Braque, Picasso etc. are shown alongside Rembrandt. [2]

Laubser was therefore living in a cultural and artistic environment which embraced the most contemporary European movements and she had the opportunity to see examples of the avant-garde painters at first hand. However, the influence of Cubism, etc., is never seen in her work, and that of the Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists and Fauves is not seen directly during this early period, i.e., in Holland or during her stay in Britain.

Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War in July/August 1914,[3] Laubser, being a British subject, left for England. It seems that her sister returned to South Africa[4] and she went to England on her own. Balwé had left South Africa in 1913 (maybe on the same ship as Laubser and her sister) and, according to Botha he had been resident in London from

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1. Wijsenbeek, p.164.

2. ibid. p.71.

3. Austria declared war on Hungary and Serbia on 28th July 1914 and Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914.

4. In a letter dated December 1914 (see p.29, footnote 1) the writer asks: 'Is your sister glad to be back [in Africa] again.'

1913.[1] Laubser was in possession of photographs of Balwé on board R.M.S. Briton in April 1914. It is not known if she accompanied him on this trip. If she was also on board, it would appear that they sailed rom Holland to Britain in April 1914. Perhaps Balwé went over to Holland briefly, in order to accompany Laubser back to Britain.[2] Alternatively, Laubser did not accompany Balwé in April 1914 on this voyage, the destination of which therefore remains unknown.

figs.14,15, p.258

If, as Botha states, Balwé was resident in London from 1913, Laubser probably went to England in order to be with him. She said that she found the atmosphere overseas 'congenial' even though she was not satisfied with the 'work methods' of her Dutch teachers,[3] so perhaps as a result of her dissatisfaction she wanted to continue her studies in London. There are thus several factors which contributed to her decision to further her studies in England.

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1. Botha, p.6. Botha obtained these details from the Dutch Embassy in Pretoria but could not establish any further documented details about his movements after 1913.

2. In 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser' Laubser said: 'Die oorlog breek uit...en my vriend kabel vir sy Sekretaris in London dadelik om ons te kom haal in Holland.' Typescript U.S.79/3/1, p.6. [The war broke out...and my friend [Balwe?] cabled his Secretary in London to come and get us [Laubser and her sister only, or Balwé as well?] in Holland.]

3. U.S.79/5/48. Prof. Trümpelmann of the University of Stellenbosch, writes about this letter dated 28th December 1914 from a fellow student: 'Dit blyk dat Maggie Laubser op 28 Des. 1914 reeds weg was van die Hollandse leermeesters omdat sy nie deur hulle werkmetodes bevredig kon word nie.'

CHAPTER 3

BRITAIN, APRIL/MAY 1914 - JUNE 1919

Stay in England

In England Maggie Laubser stayed initially in Huntingdonshire with a Mrs. Mitchell, and then in October 1914 she moved to a London hotel and registered at the Slade School of Art.[1] By 1915 she was staying at no.46, Queens Gardens, London W.2.[2] Balwé probably supported her while she was in London and enabled her to study at the Slade by paying her fees as it is unlikely that she had a private income to support herself.

fig.16, p.259

Laubser's exact movements during her study in Britain are not known.[3] According to Botha,[4] she was not particularly happy in London and this probably affected her painting - no works dating from 1914 in England have been traced. The quality of life in a large cramped city must have been a great contrast to the outdoor life of South Africa and it was only natural that she should try and get out into the country as often as possible. She worked in Huntingdon-

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1. Botha, p.7.

2. See the address on her registration papers, fig.16, p.259. It seems probable that she stayed with Balwé during her years in Britain. In conversation between the author and Elza Miles (née Botha) this was confirmed. There is also very little correspondence traced from Balwé to Laubser during her stay in London after October 1914. He sent a postcard to her dated 18.5.1917 while he was staying in Ambleside, England, probably on holiday (U.S.79/5/53); and a letter from Balwé in London was written to Laubser on 24.12.1917 (U.S. 79/5/54). It seems probable that this was sent to Laubser whilst she was on one of her visits to Scotland.

3. There is very little correspondence addressed to her at this time.

4. p.8. Presumably this was established during one of her interviews with the artist. However, elsewhere this is contradicted: 'I enrolled at the Slade - and loved it, and London, people were always kind and I was able for the first time to find myself as a painter.'...'It was a battle, but worth it.' 'Pioneer Artist Was Ignored by Cape Town Critics.' Cape Times, Peninsula ed.; 20 June 1969: p.9, col.4. See also: 'Grand Old Lady Paints for Happiness.' Rand Daily Mail, Women's Mail; 25 June 1969: p.15.

shire in the Midlands on occasions.[1] It must have been with great excitement that she returned to the sunny climate and open spaces of her home country during 1915.[2] She stayed at Oortmanspost, the farm near Klipheuwel which her father had bought in 1914.[3]

The still life Bottle and fruit 1915 could have been painted during this holiday in South Africa. In this consciously set up still life, there is a new compositional awareness which shows a development from the flower pieces dating to her early South African period. This is apparent in the use of a chest of drawers as a background motif, for the two drawers' knobs are placed on a diagonal and echo the same directional link between the bottle and fruit, also placed on a diagonal. Form is more firmly established, to be seen in the simpler, more architectonic shapes of the bottle, the circular drawer knobs, and the oval fruit in the round dish. The motif of a chest of drawers as a background motif in a still life, was used by Cézanne several times;[4] perhaps Laubser was already looking at his work. The simplicity of form, the use of drapery on the horizontal and vertical surfaces, and the tilting of the dish towards the vertical plane, also suggest an awareness of Cézanne's work. Thematically, the painting anticipates the still lifes of the Italian period in which fruit in dishes, and drapery are common motifs.

Bottle and fruit no.56

nos.224-246

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1. Botha, p.27. A painting of cottages in Huntingdonshire (no.62) dates to 1915 but its present whereabouts is unknown. It was previously in the possession of a collector in Swellendam, Cape.

2 Botha, p.?. No passport from this period exists, so it has not been possible to establish precise dates. As the long vacation at the Slade is from June to October, it was perhaps during these months that she returned to South Africa.

3. ibid.

4. The chest of drawers 1883-7. Dorival, B. Cézanne; Continental Book Center, n.d. pl.96.

In 1915 or 1916 she returned to England and continued her studies at the Slade.[1] As several of the artists whom she had known in South Africa, had been at the Slade, it was understandable that Laubser should have chosen to study there. In addition, the Slade was at this time highly respected because of the standard of life drawing produced at the school. Furthermore it had

Possible reasons for studying at the Slade

> great social advantages over the contemporary art schools. It was free from the regulations and restrictions of [the]...State System, it was on a sounder financial footing than any private school, and it had the additional status of being part of a university college... It was only to be expected that persons of the middle and upper classes, especially the ladies, would prefer to attend the Slade rather than the South Kensington Schools, where the course was tedious and some of the pupils of rather humble origin.[2]

At the Slade, Laubser's teachers for drawing were Professor Henry Tonks, Assistant Professor from 1892 to 1918,[3] Walter Russell and Ambrose McEvoy.[4] Both Russell and McEvoy had studied under Tonks.[5] According to Botha,[6] Philip Wilson Steer, teacher of painting at the Slade from 1893 to 1930,[7] was also one of

Laubser's teachers and the influence of the teaching method

1. The author wrote to the Slade on 6th October 1976 asking for more specific details of Laubser's dates of registration. She also visited the Slade on 6th May 1977. During this visit the author established that Laubser's dates of registration were October 1914 to March 1919. However, it was suggested that the author write to the Slade with any further inquiries as any other information available was inaccessible at the time. As yet no reply to the initial enquiry of 6th Oct. 1976 has been received.

2. Macdonald, S.: The History and Philosophy of Art Education; London: University of London Press, 1970, p.269.

3. ibid. p.277.

4. Botha, p.8. Laubser referred to McEvoy in 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.407; and in her interview with Munitz in 1968.

5. Macdonald, p.275.

6. Botha, p.8. Unfortunately Botha gives no documentary proof for this. Presumably she established this in one of her interviews with Laubser.

7. MacColl, D. S. Life, Work and Setting of Philip Wilson Steer; London: Faber, 1945, p.131.

Laubser's teachers. The drawings executed by Maggie Laubser while at the Slade, reflect the concepts and methods of the drawing teachers at the time. — nos.34-55

For instance, several works executed by Laubser whilst at the Slade, are copies, and at the Slade there was a tradition of copying which stretched back to Legros, Professor from 1876 to 1892. — Tradition of copying nos.34,35, 38,39 recto

> One of his innovations at the Slade was a collection of full-size photographs of drawings of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael framed upon the School's walls.[1]

Tonks carried on this tradition for he

> drew the students' attention to the drawings of Michelangelo, Rubens, Rembrandt, and especially to Ingres whom he considered to be the supreme example of a draughtsman of contours, by reproductions of his work affixed to the walls, together with drawings by two of Tonks' star pupils, John and Orpen.[2]

Like Tonks, Steer advocated copying, in particular from the Antique. According to an ex-pupil,

> his interest in the student's working from the Antique was very marked. He regretted that so little study was given to this part of the training. Steer felt that more instruction could be given and more use made of the school by practice in painting the light upon a cast.[3]

Copy-bust of a man 1916, Copy-bust of a woman 1916, — nos.34;35

and Copy-bust of a boy 1918, which are, in all probability copies from actual sculptures and not from photographs of busts, and the probable copy from an old master, Studies - man with moustache, are executed — no.38 — no.39 recto

in this tradition of copying. The artist's interest in the sculptural form of the bust continued, as seen in the sketch of a Renaissance bust of a young boy — bk.4,f.6,p.224

1. Macdonald, p.273.
2. Ibid. p.277.
3. MacColl, p.133.

ca. 1920. The same bust appears in the background of the portrait from the English period, Girl with sculpture and in the Italian work, Bust of young boy and orange. The original bust is in the Mellon Collection in Washington and a copy of the bust is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.[1] As sketches and paintings of the bust were executed whilst the artist was in Italy, several working methods may be suggested. Perhaps the artist had a copy[2] of the bust in her possession, and she would thus have sketched and painted directly from the bust; she possibly sketched from the bust housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum and subsequently, after leaving England, sketched and painted from these original drawings; lastly, she may have sketched from a photograph of the bust.

no.59
no.245
bk.4,f.6,p.224; no.245

She continued to copy from old masters as seen in the sketches in sketchbook 1, in particular the copy from Rembrandt's Man in a Polish costume. This work is also in the Mellon Collection in the Washington National Gallery of Art. Although it seems a coincidence that Laubser made copies of two items both of which were housed in the Mellon Collection, it is unlikely that she possessed a catalogue of the Mellon Collection.[3] It is nevertheless apparent that she copied from photographs of paintings and not necessarily from the originals.

bk.1, ff.40-47;49, p.221
f.20,p.220
fig.19, p.259

Like Steer, however, Laubser realized that copying was valuable merely as a method of practice of train-

1. The author saw the bust when she visited the museum on 6th May 1977 but was unfortunately unable to establish when the copy was acquired by the museum.

2. Laubser worked in clay whilst at the Slade (see p.40), and she possibly made her own copy of this bust.

3. The author was unable to find any illustrated catalogues of the Mellon Collection in the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum Library.

ing. Steer said:

> Art like everything else must be progressive. It is not enough because we admire the works of the great masters that we should be content to go on producing pictures on their lines.[1]

Laubser echoed this attitude years later in her talk 'On Art':

> Abroad I saw much of and learned more from the Old Masters, but since I have become aware that, to look at the old masters alone is not enough, for one is inclined to copy, and above all, an artist must be free and individual.[2]

Once the pupils had mastered the technique of copying they were allowed to proceed to life drawing classes. Here

Life drawing

> the nude model posed on the throne under the top north light was the sole object of study, and a plain grey or khaki cloth was hung behind to ensure that no environment was considered.[3]

Several studies of nudes survive from this period. The concentration is on the figure itself for there is no attempt to indicate background or surroundings. The poses are traditional and may be compared to the photographs reproduced in the anatomy book used by Laubser whilst at the Slade.[4]

nos.36,37, 39 verso, 40-42 recto and verso, 43 recto and verso, 45 recto,46

figs.20-22, p.259

These linear academic studies of nudes, in particular Man with stick 1916, are executed in the manner taught by Tonks and the other teachers at the Slade at

Emphasis on line no.36

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1. MacColl, p.178.

2. Typescript of undated talk entitled 'On Art.' U.S.79/4/3, p.2.

3. Macdonald, p.277.

4. Spielmann, M.H. and Konody, P.G. (eds.) Human Anatomy for Art Students; London: Seeley Service and Co., 191[illegible]. Left by the artist in her estate to Elza Miles (née Botha) and inscribed in the front in the artist's hand: 'Maggie Laubser Slade School of Art Londo[illegible], Dec: 1915.'

> the basic principle held at the Slade under Legros, Brown and then Tonks was that drawing is the representation and expression of form by the study of contours, and that only.[1]

According to one of Tonks' ex-pupils Nevinson, Tonks laid stress on the importance in drawing of the outline.

> He asked me to define drawing, a thing I was fortunately able to do to his satisfaction, as I neither mentioned tone or colour in my stammering definition but kept on using the word outline.[2]

However, it appears that Tonks was not as rigid as this and that he would have preferred the use of the term 'contour', as opposed to 'outline'.[3]

> The word outline was repugnant to him and he insisted that a drawing should be kept open in order to leave something to God, nature or inspiration.[4]

And

> he insisted on construction, but not on precise accuracy as did Legros, nor on the tight drawing of the Victorians.[5]

Sculptural form

Although Tonks was an expert on anatomy, he did not encourage students to regard the nude as an anatomical study, but rather as a construction of solid forms tilted into various positions governed by the directions of the main forms.[6] This emphasis on 'sculptural form', reflected another aspect of the concept of drawing held at this time at the Slade.

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1. Macdonald, p.277.

2. ibid. p.276.

3. See Rawson, P. Drawing ; London: Oxford University Press, 1969. Rawson defines contour as 'a line which is not closed.' By outline he means 'a closed line which runs virtually all the way round a feature... Thus a series of joined contours could compose an outline.' p.94.

4. Macdonald, p.279.

5. ibid.

6. ibid.

This is defined by J. Fothergill in his article in The Slade 1907 in which he writes;

> ...the representation of form still remains the one and only power of drawing...
>
> A drawing is plastic in graphic form...
>
> Contour, then has no beauty or value in itself any more than has shading, they are beautiful and have value only in so far as they are determined by and pregnant with, ideas of touch, i.e. in so far as they express the corporeity of form.[1]

This emphasis on the 'corporeity of form' would have been further developed by the artist's practice of modelling in clay. She modelled 'numerous busts in clay and develop[ed] a control of form to be utilized in her painting.'[2] An emphasis on three-dimensional form and mass is particularly evident in Copy-bust of a man 1916. no.34

The style of the early works is academic: there is a concentration on detail, especially on the muscular structure of the body, and the contours and outlines are tightly drawn, the latter enclosing the forms completely. Shading and line are used descriptively to establish the shape of the forms, as in Man with stick 1916, and structurally to define the planes which build up three-dimensional plasticity, as in Copy-bust of a man 1916. These early studies dated to ca. 1916 are laboriously finished, and the concentration on detail and tightly drawn contours are a probable result of this.

Early Slade drawing style nos.34-39 recto

no.36

no.34

Towards the end of her training at the Slade, i.e., ca. 1918, some of Laubser's works show a move away from Tonks' teachings, for her use of line and shading is more economical and looser.

Later Slade drawing style nos.39 verso -45 verso

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1. Macdonald, p.278, citing Fothergill, John: 'The Principles of Teaching Drawing at the Slade School' in Slade, Fothergill, John, Clay, R. and Sons, London, 1907, p.39.

2. Included in the 1969 Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue (E.167) under the section on Laubser's chronology. Perhaps she made her own copy of the Renaissance bust of a young boy. See pp.36-37.

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Influence of Steer's more painterly approach

This more relaxed approach, in which contours are more loosely drawn, might show the influence of Philip Wilson Steer's teachings. Steer had a more painterly approach than Tonks and his assistants, and this could have provided Laubser with a balance against the emphasis on line taught by the drawing masters.

> Steer did not see in line. At the Slade school, in the nineties, when, under the influence of Fred Brown and Henry Tonks, the expression of form by line was almost a cult, I once sat behind Steer as he drew the model's head for another student from the end of the semicircle about the model's throne. The girl's head was a delicate projection from the cast shadow and penumbra towards light. Steer said 'Why all th's line? There is no line.'[1]

no.33 verso
no.34

If one compares Studies - female nude 1918 to Copy-bust of a man 1916, the broken outlines, greater tonal contrasts, more assertive use of shading and increased emphasis on phrasing[2] in the later work, were perhaps the result of Steer's influence towards a more painterly, less linear approach.

Philip Wilson Steer taught painting at the Slade from 1893 to 1930.[3] According to Laubser, however, she did not paint whilst at the Slade.[4] Perhaps though, he taught her drawing occasionally for, according to one of the pupils who was at the Slade between 1894 and 1898, 'he taught the pupils and gave lessons to the students who were doing charcoal drawings or the model only if he had time left over.'[5]

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1. MacColl, p.136.

2. Refer to p.56 footnote 1, for definition of the term 'phrasing'.

3. MacColl, p.131.

4. Munitz interview 1968; 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.407. Refer also to contradiction of this statement quoted on p.33, footnote 4.

5. MacColl, p.135.

Reasons Laubser declined to paint at Slade

Laubser did not want to paint while at the Slade as she could see the influence of her teachers on her fellow students and she wanted to avoid this.[1]

> I realized in London that nobody can teach you to paint - you think consciously in taking from somebody and it is not your own and then you don't get very far.[2]

McEvoy encouraged her to paint but she declined on the pretext that her drawing was not yet proficient enough.[3] Although Laubser never particularly enjoyed her classes at the Slade, probably because of the rigidity and conservatism of her teachers, and although she felt intuitively that she would never have been able to follow her teachers whom she considered to be 'society painters',[4] it should be remembered that Laubser tended to underplay the influence in her formal training of her early masters.[5]

British paintings nos.57-86

There are several paintings surviving from Laubser's stay in Britain between 1914 and 1919 and she therefore painted extra-murally, i.e., independently of her classes at the Slade. She continued to paint the same subject matter that she had painted in South Africa and then in Laren, viz., outdoor motifs (landscapes now replace seascapes) and portraits.

nos.62-86

nos.57-61

English portraits

Laubser recollected that McEvoy commented on her ability in her drawings as a portraitist.

> At the Slade School of Art in London, I had for [a] master Ambrose MacEvoy [sic McEvoy], then at the height of his fame. Although I did not paint there he was much struck by my drawing and encouraged me, saying 'You have everything to become a fine portrait painter, sensitive line, deep insight into character and a fine sense for composition.'[6]

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1. Botha, p.8.
2. Munitz interview 1968.
3. ibid.
4. Quoted by the artist in an interview between her and Botha on 30.4.1962. Botha, p.27.
5. Refer to chapter 7, p.129, footnote 1.
6. 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.407, par.2.

Laubser's simple, almost stoic interpretations of her sitters, when compared with contemporary portraits by her teachers, e.g., Steer's idealized romantic portrait of Mrs. Hammersley 1907, indicate why she felt that her teachers were society painters. (nos.57-61; fig.23, p.260)

Laubser's treatment of her portraits in terms of clearly defined forms and large tonal areas strongly contrasted, particularly Old man with hat and Old woman corresponds with contemporary artists also trained at the Slade, as seen for instance in the work of Augustus John (1878-1961).[1] Although the focus on the head evident in Laubser's early portraits, e.g., Oom Paul 1912, in which the face occupied the whole canvas, is not seen in these works, Laubser's interest in the personality and individuality of the sitter is evident, for the features are more detailed and not as broadly handled as the bodies, and there is a greater use of modelling in the faces to build up structural form. The format of these English portraits, depicting the figures to the waist, is also typical of John's treatment of the sitter although, unlike John,[2] Laubser did not at this stage include attributes associated with the sitter's everyday life.[3] Laubser only included objects from the sitter's environment later whilst in Germany[4] and frequently after her return to South Africa in 1924.[5] (no.57; no.58; figs.24-26, p.260; no.25)

The sitters in these early English portraits, all of whom are unidentified, have in common an air of (nos.57-61)

1. See particularly Portrait of Kuno Meyer ca.1911, fig.25, p.260.

2. See Portrait of J. Phipps Esq. with his riding crop, fig.24,p.260; and Portrait of Thomas Hardy O.M. 1923 with his books in the background, fig.26,p.260.

3. The bust included in Girl with sculpture no.59, was probably one of Laubser's possessions, rather than the sitter's. See p.37.

4. See for instance Whore, Berlin no.406 in which the woman smokes a cigarette.

5. Refer to the many examples of Ou Booi and his sheep, her father against the landscape of the farm, girls and ducks, and fishermen and boats, figs.121-127, pp.284,285.

seriousness. This attitude of gravity is developed in her later portraits after her return to South Africa, particularly in those of the local coloured people. In many of these portraits of coloureds, the solemn stoicism of the sitters seer in the English portraits, is developed into an almost melancholic attitude. For instance, in Ou Lena 1924, the head is inclined and droops slightly forward almost as though it is too heavy to hold upright and her energy is sapped. This effect is further strengthened in another portrait of Ou Lena, in which the head rests wearily on her hand. In each of these works the air of dejection is further emphasized by the weariness of the voluminous scarf, with its deep folds enclosing the face, and by the deep furrows on the forehead and lines etched downward from the nose to the mouth.

fig.27,p.260

fig.28,p.260

Another common characteristic of Laubser's portraiture is already established in these early English portraits. The sitter does not look directly at the onlooker and thus there is no direct confrontation with the spectator. This becomes even more noticeable in Laubser's later portraits, executed between 1924 and the 1940's, and contributes to and helps establish the introspective meditative quality. The sitters gaze into the distance as though totally involved in a private world of their own.

The broad handling of the old man's coat in Old man with hat, in which areas of canvas are left exposed, is developed in the two portraits both entitled: Woman. In these works a more painterly style, in which tonal contrasts are reduced, is evident. This variation in style, from a strong contrast of clearly demarcated forms to a more painterly approach in which outline is diffused, seen also in her landscapes, e.g., Scottish landscape -

no.57

nos.60,61

mist,[1] was perhaps the result of Steer's influence who might have encouraged her to experiment with a more painterly style. The variation in Laubser's style during this period is logical and explicable when one considers that Laubser was still a student and she would have come into contact with many new and stimulating art movements; it is natural that she should experiment with different forms of expression - although within the context of the mainstream of contemporary British and European art, her works remained relatively conservative in subject matter and style.

no.77,pl.5, p.195

Laubser's contact with contemporary European art trends, probably first established in Holland, would have continued whilst in England. The Impressionists'and Post-Inpressionists' work was already known in England for, as early as 1905 pictures of Manet, Cézanne, and the Impressionists: Degas, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley, were exhibited by Durand-Ruel at the Grafton Galleries in London.[2] Works by Manet and the Post-Impressionists were exhibited in 1910 and 1911 at the same galleries.[3] The second Post-Impressionist Exhibition was held in 1912, at which works by such artists as Matisse, Cézanne, Derain, Vlaminck, L'Hote, Picasso, Van Dongen, Bonnard, Marquet and Wyndham Lewis were exhibited.[4] Wyndham Lewis returned from Paris in 1912 with 'a geometrical style of his own to which he gave the name vorticism'[5] and in 1914 the Italian

Contemporary avant-garde art scene

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1. It should be remembered, however, that the scene itself, a misty landscape, would necessitate a more painterly approach.

2. Refer to catalogue of exhibition entitled 'Pictures Exhibited by Durand-Ruel.' L.C.C.1.047.001.

3. Refer to catalogue of exhibition entitled 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists.' L.C.C.1.047.002.

4. Refer to catalogue of exhibition entitled 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition.' L.C.C.1.047.004.

5. Read, H. Contemporary British Art; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, p.22.

futurist painters and sculptors exhibited at the Doré Galleries in London.[1] However, artistic activity (exhibitions, etc.) declined during the war years and probably partly as a result of this, and as a result of an in-built conservatism, Laubser was not influenced by these avant-garde movements. Two books were given to Laubser by Balwé Snr. whilst she was in London in 1918[2]: Modern Art[3] and Allies in Art.[4] The illustrations in these books indicate the relative conservatism of Laubser's sources and influences at this time.[5]

Laubser's work and the English landscape tradition

Laubser continued the preference that she had shown in South Africa and Holland for painting outdoors. Having painted landscapes plein-air in South Africa and then in Laren, it is understandable that, once in closer contact with the English tradition of outdoor painting stretching back to Constable, Cotman, Turner, and Crome, and their interest in light and its effects, she should be further stimulated in her interest in landscape painting.

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1. Refer to catalogue of exhibition entitled 'Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition.' L.C.C.1.046.001.

2. Refer to the inscriptions in the artist's handwriting in the front of these books: 'Magdalena Laubser
London
From my dearest
April 1918'

3. Marriott, C. Modern Art; London: Colour Ltd. n.d. (U.S.79/1/18).

4. Marriott, C. and Claes, F. J. Allies in Art; London: Colour Ltd. n.d. (U.S.79/1/17).

5. In Modern Art, little of the Impressionists' work is reproduced: a child's head by Mary Cassat is drawn in pastel (pl.XLIV), and a seascape by Lucien Pissarro (pl.XL) dates to 1915, and no works by Van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat or Cézanne are reproduced. In Allies in Art, no Post-Impressionist, French Neo-Impressionist, Cubist or Futurist works are illustrated, and even the examples of work by Impressionist artists do not convey the broken brushwork, pure saturated hues and asymmetrical compositions of Impressionism at its height during the 1870's (e.g., the tonalistic Portrait of woman by Degas (pl.XXX), Monet's The pine tree 1888 (pl.XXVIII) and the broad brushworks of Mary Cassat's Spring - young girl (pl.XXIX), etc.).

She visited Scotland several times: 'I often went to Scotland and I stayed sometimes nearly a year at a time.'[1] Here she worked outdoors and tried to capture the landscape at certain specific times under varying weather conditions. This may be seen in the paintings of the same landscape seen from similar viewpoints. This interest in portraying a specific scene reflects the tradition of the English topographical painters, while the interest in time has its roots in the tradition of plein-airism, whereby an attempt is made to capture the precise effects of atmospheric light and general weather conditions. This indicates an almost scientific attitude which was taken up and developed by the French Impressionists in their study of light and colour, not fully appreciated in England. Laubser was also interested in the seasons. In sketchbook 6 she noted the season on the bottom left sketch of folio 37, viz., Autumn, and she painted the same landscape in different seasons: in autumn (the heather is out) and in winter (there is snow on the mountains). This interest in the seasons, which emphasize the cyclical aspect of nature, has Romantic connotations and reflects not only the English landscape tradition of Constable, but also the tradition of Anton Mauve and the Laren school. However, it is only at a later stage[2] that this aspect of the 'cyclical' in nature becomes significant.

nos.63,64; 71-77; 81-83

no.72,pl.4, p.194
no.75 recto

Like Steer, whose broad sketchy tonal compositions owe more to Constable than the French Impressionists, Laubser's British landscapes are executed in broad tonal areas of blues, purples, greens and browns. There is little evidence of the 'flickering touch with paint applied in small brightly-coloured dabs and the

Relationship to Impressionism

1. Munitz interview 1968.

2. See pp.70,155.

lack of firm outline'[1] of French Impressionism. Although Steer exhibited at the 1889 London Impressionist Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery,[2] it is apparent from his paper delivered at the Art Worker's Guild in 1891,[3] that he did not fully understand (certainly at that early date) the tenets of French Impressionism proper. For Steer: 'The Impressionist is inspired by his own time because his art is inspired by nature; he finds his pictures in the scenes around him.' This reflects the attitude of a plein-airist rather than an Impressionist, as noted by Chamot:

> The [official] Parisian studios in the early 'eighties had not yet been affected by Impressionism - Steer admitted that he had never heard of Manet when he saw the memorial exhibition of his work in 1883; but the work of Bastien-Lepage was already a powerful influence, and the aim of the young English painters was to paint everyday subjects in a diffused light out-of-doors, which was looked upon as ugly and revolutionary by the old school....The older painters had been minutely descriptive, elaborating every detail separately and composing the properties in their studio rather than the colours on their canvas. The new painters sought harmony of tone and subordinated detail to general effect.[4]

Laubser would therefore probably not have learnt of the true principles of French Impressionism as practised by Monet during the mid 1870's, from her English teachers.

Handling of space

In her landscapes from this period, Laubser continued to develop stylistic characteristics which she had begun before 1913. In her early South African seascapes she lent a feeling of lateral extension to her works by the horizontal compositions and high horizon lines. In her Scottish landscapes she established a

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1. Murray, P. and L. A Dictionary of Art and Artists; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p.208.

2. MacColl, p.30.

3. ibid. p.177.

4. Chamot, M. Modern Painting in England; London: Scribner's Sons, 1937, pp.29-30.

never-ending expanse of hills by her method of building up a composition by rhythmic repetition of lines and shapes indicating different planes. This forecasts her compositional structuring in the Belgian landscapes particularly. | nos.81-83 | nos.109,75 verso, 110,108 verso

As yet no buildings or figures were introduced into the landscapes. Nature was still viewed as an external occurrence and was not 'humanized' by interaction or interlinking with man-made structures (except in the case of Landscape with tower), or man himself, as happened later in the Belgian landscapes. | Lack of figures and houses in landscape | no.85

Laubser's landscape painting from this period should be seen within the context of English plein-air painting. She painted from the scenes around her and confined herself to local colour and although she did not extend her palette significantly or use more saturated colour than previously, there is an increased use of violet as seen in Landscape with lake and mountains and Cows by lake. She continued to use pinks in her palette: compare, for instance, the pink heather in Scottish landscape with heather to the pink on the bow of the boat in Barge on water 1914 and the pinkish-lemon pastel tints in Tree by lake to the palette in Tablemountain ca. 1906-11. Laubser's attempts to interpret the misty atmosphere were now more successful. This is evident if one compares the sweetness of Swans on a lake ca. 1902-1906, and the romantic connotations of the pink tints in Tablemountain, to the more objective rendering of Scottish landscape - mist ca. 1919. This shift to a less overtly romantic and subjective approach should be seen as a result of Laubser's contact, firstly with the more scientific attitude of the Dutch plein-air painters, and then later the English landscapists' more objective rendering of 'diffused light out-of-doors' and their subordination of 'detail to general | Summary of achievement in Britain | nos.63;69 | no.72,pl.4,p.194 | no.33,pl.3,p.194 | no.68 | no.24,pl.1,p.193 | nc.5 | no.24,pl.1,p.193 | no.77,pl.5,p.195

effect.[1] This British period represents the high point of plein-air painting for Laubser. When she moved to Belgium she probably continued to paint outdoors, but she also began to rely more and more on sketches made from nature. By the time she reached Germany she was even sketching from memory.

In most of the landscapes from the British period, forms are demarcated by clear contours and compositions are clearly structured, a probable influence from her training at the Slade. It is in this direction, i.e., towards a clarity and simplification of form, which Laubser developed during her Belgian and particularly her Italian period on her path towards Expressionism. Although at this stage colour is relatively subdued and conservative, there is a development from her early works in the simplification of form and reduction of descriptive detail which forecasts her later European works.

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1. See p.48, footnote 4.

CHAPTER 4

BELGIUM, JUNE 1919 - SEPTEMBER 1920

Maggie Laubser left London on 6th June 1919[1] and went to Belgium where she stayed in Antwerp,[2] and in Schoten.[3] She stayed in Belgium until late September 1920.[4] It is not known if Balwé Senior moved to Antwerp to live there, or if letters written by him in London between early July 1920 and middle September 1920, were written whilst he was living in England, permanently or temporarily.[5]

Biographical

figs.34,35, p.263

J. H. A. Balwé's son, Arnold, who was twenty one at this time,[6] was studying at the Antwerp Academy.[7] He had spent his youth in South Africa,[8] probably until 1913 when his father left.[9] During 1917 he was

Arnold Balwé

1. Detailed in her passport 1919-1921, U.S.79/14/1, appendix 4, p.423.

2. Correspondence during this time is addressed to her in Antwerp. See footnote 5 below.

3. In a letter to Prof. Trümpelmann of the University of Stellenbosch, dated 2 Nov. 1977 (copy R.A.U. Maggie Laubser project), Prof. A.A.F.Teurlinckx of the Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat, records that he traced the house in Schoten, (through the population register of the Schoten municipality), where Laubser lived from June to September 1920. He gives the address as: Les Chênes, Henri Engelsvlei, 12 Schotenhof, Schoten, and includes a photograph of the house: reproduced as fig.35, p.263. A photograph left by Laubser in her estate (U.S.79/35/3), shows the same house from a slightly different viewpoint: fig.34, p.263; whilst the stoep in figs.33, p.262, and 39a and b, p.265, is almost certainly that of the house in question.

4. Refer to her passport, U.S.79/14/1, appendix 4, p.425.

5. These letters are dated 2.7.20 (U.S.79/5/64); 13.7.20 (U.S.79/5/65); and 17.9.20 (U.S.79/5/66). As there are only three letters and as Laubser was in the habit of keeping Balwé's letters, it seems that he was not living in England permanently. Furthermore, in a letter dated 4.11.20 (U.S.79/5/94) written to Laubser in Italy, Balwé Snr. mentions the liquidation of the firm in Antwerp, (presumably his firm) and this would suggest that he was resident in Antwerp. Refer also to figs.32a, b and c, pp.261,262.

6. Sailer, M. Arnold Balwé; Mannheim: Mannheimer Grossdrückerei, n.d.,p.6.

7. ibid. He studied under Professors Gogo and Opsomer.

8. ibid.

9. See Chapter 2, p.31.

in Germany in Würzburg and during 1918 and 1919 he spent two years studying agriculture and then architecture.[1] By 1920 when he was in Belgium, Laubser had contact with him for he knew that she did not register officially at the Academy.[2] Laubser left several photographs tentatively identified as Arnold Balwé, in her estate. She perhaps accompanied him as an 'occasional' student and this might explain the existence of several nude studies sketched during her stay in Antwerp.[3]

figs.30-31,p.261

Up until Laubser's stay in Belgium there is no documented evidence that she was religiously inclined, although it is probable that, with her Afrikaans Calvinistic family background, she had been brought up in a churchgoing Christian environment. Later in life Laubser become interested in the religious philosophy of Christian Science[4] and this had an important influence on her life and work. The first indication of this interest occurred during her stay in Belgium in a letter, written on behalf of Rawson, (who wrote on Christian Science)[5] dated 26.11.1919.[6] Christian Science was the name given by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) to a system of metaphysical healing based on the Scriptures Christian Science declares that:

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1. Sailer, p.6.

2. Written in a letter to Botha dated 5.2.64. (Botha, appendix 3, p.185.)

3. Meintjes, J. (1944) writes: 'Somtyds het sy na ateljeë gegaan waar sy net die figuur geteken het.' p.10. [Sometimes she went to studios where she drew only the figure.]

4. Many books, pamphlets, cuttings and thoughts written on scraps of paper dealing with this subject in particular and related spheres of religion and metaphysics, were left by Laubser in her estate to the University of Stellenbosch: U.S.79/1/19-138 and U.S.79/ 2/1-11.

5. A book by Rawson entitled Life Understood was left by the artist in her estate to Elza Miles (née Botha). A book by Rawson, F.L. True Prayer in Art; London: Crystal Press, n.d., was given to Laubser by Balwé Snr. in 1919 (See inscription in front of book: 'Magdalena Laubser Antwerpen Belgium '19. From my dearest.'

6. U.S.79/5/61.

> God is spirit, that he is good, and that He is the only creator. This being the case, only the spiritual and the good are real and eternal. The spiritual and good being all, there is in reality no place for evil, sin, disease and death.[1]

Laubser herself echoed this philosophy when she wrote in one of her sketchbooks from the 1950's:[2]

> There is only one Power and that power is established - for me only to accept. If there is only one power that fills all space then how can there be another power to oppose and obstruct it. The perfection of man is in tact [sic]. God is all without an opposite. He is the only cause. Life is energy, liveliness, animation, vivifying influence, power, realization, forceful, radiant, vital, alertness, beauty, power.

Laubser's religious beliefs provided an anchor for her during a time when the people of Europe were caught up in a mood of prevailing pessimism and anxiety. The atmosphere of disillusionment resulted not only from the growing pressures caused by increased urbanization and mechanization, but also as a result of the horrors of the First World War. This led to a despair and nihilism and a desire to destroy all the existing established values upon which art was based - an attitude which was most obviously expressed by the Dadaists.

However, it seems that the War did not affect Laubser too severely for, although she was in London from 1914 to 1918, and despite her anglicized background, she went to Germany for two years. Furthermore, unlike the Second World War, the effects of the First World War on the civilian population of London, were relatively insignificant.[3]

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1. Bozman, E.F. (ed.) Everyman's Encyclopedia; London: Reprint Society, 1961, vol.3, p.436.

2. Private collection, Strand. R.A.U. negative no.2929/25a. Although this was written years later, one may assume that, as she was already involved in Christian Science, she was already beginning to formulate these ideas whilst overseas.

3. 'Less than 1,500 civilians were killed [in the whole of England during the First World War] by enemy action from sea or air.' Taylor, A.J.P. English History 1914-1945; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, p.121. 'London suffered over 80,000 of the estimated total for the country of 146,777 fatal and serious casualties [during the Second World War].' O'Brien, H. Civil Defence (Appendix VI, p.684) a volume in the series The History of the Second World War gen. ed. Sir Keith Hancock; London: H. M. Staticnery Office and Longmans, 1955.

Laubser's optimistic attitude to life was not only due to the fact that she remained largely unaffected by the War, but also was, in all probability, directly correlated to her belief in a divine power. As a result of this world view, nihilism and pessimism found no place in Laubser's art:

> In these days of hurry and confusion, when all our energies are bent on destruction, because we have lost sight of our Creator, we no longer have eyes for the beauty of Nature, and take no interest in it. The artist's task, therefore, is to express this beauty in his architecture, the interior decoration of his home, and in the daily life about him, for he alone can see all the beauty about him, and can enjoy it.

This quotation is taken from an undated typescript of a radio talk 'On Art',[1] and reflects the influence of religion on Laubser's outlook. Although it was probably written many years after her return to South Africa in 1924, (i.e., after she had achieved recognition), as she was already involved in Christian Science during her stay in Belgium, one cannot underestimate the influence of this religious philosophy on her life and art, even at this early stage. It will be seen how her attitude to man and nature is governed by her religious beliefs.

Subject matter

Returning to the works painted during this period, it can be seen that Maggie Laubser continued to develop the kind of subject matter which she had painted and sketched in Britain. Her preference for landscapes is seen in the pencil sketches in sketchbook 1, the ink and watercolour drawings and in the oil paintings from this time. She painted the typical local scenery as seen in her paintings of barges[2] and fields with hay-

nos.126-136

figs.46-48, p.268

1. U.S.79/4/3, p.1. It has not been possible to trace the date of this talk as, in conversation on 22.4.78 with Mrs. Lamprecht, an assistant in the archive section of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, it was established that no record of the date of broadcast of this talk could be found in the archives.

2. nos.122, 123.

stacks.[1] She introduced houses and buildings[2] into landscapes and on occasions made them the subject of the painting.[3] The figure in the landscape appeared in her work for the first time in the form of a harvester,[4] a theme which Laubser developed more fully later in life. One portrait[5] and two still lifes[6] also date to this period. She continued to copy from old masters[7] and she continued with life drawing from nude models.[8]

These studies of nudes[9] were almost certainly executed when Maggie Laubser attended studio classes[10] or perhaps even the Antwerp Academy as an 'occasional' student. Perhaps she even hired her own model.[11] These studies show a linear freedom that differs from the more tightly finished drawing of the Slade period. The use of line is more confident and less laboured than in the Slade sketches. Longer pencil strokes are evident not only in the shading, but also in the contours. Forms are not as enclosed as in the Slade sketches (e.g., the feet in Female nude - sideview and Female nude - backview with hands on head). Laubser's improved drawing technique may | no.87 no.93

1. nos.137, 138.

2. nos.75 verso, 107-113, 116-119, 121, 123.

3. nos.147-149.

4. nos.139, 140.

5. no.151.

6. nos.152, 153.

7. Sketchbook 1, ff.20, 40-47, 49, pp.220,221.

8. nos.87-105.

9. There are areas of doubt about the dating of several of these nude studies. (For discussion see catalogue summary, p.491).

10. See p.52, footnote 3.

11. She hired her own model later whilst in Germany. Refer to appointments with 'male model' noted in Sketchbook 8 on the inside front folio 35, p.236.

be seen in her use of linear phrasing[1] to achieve a three dimensional quality rather than by shading and tonal gradations, as before. Volume and shadow are established by linear rhythms, rather than gently graded tonal modelling. In Female nude - sideview and Female nude with arms above head, sweeping diagonal lines from right to left indicate the shadows of the body on the vertical backdrop, and parallel hatched lines establish the dark areas of the hair and the shadow of the leg.

no.87
no.88
See also nos.89 -93

Where shadows are seen as solid tonal patches, they too, are handled in terms of repetitive areas which affirm the picture plane and establish the unity of surface. In Female nude - sideview and Female nude with arms above head shadow areas are emphasized so that they relate to each other across the picture plane and build up a composition of dark and light areas that further reiterate the repetition of certain shapes. Line is also used to stress the repetition of shapes. Contours and shading reinforce the repetitive pattern made by the shapes of the head, the shadow of the nose, the breast, and the shadow of the breast. There is thus a development towards an emphasis on the rhythm of the whole, rather than on the precise accuracy of individual parts. There is less concentration on detail, more rhythmic contours are apparent in the looser, flowing lines, and her drawings become more stylized.

no.87
no.88

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1. In an examination of the general problems pertaining to drawing, one of the methods Rawson discusses, '...is to phrase the contours of notional objects in a particular way. This involves treating each section of outline as a sequence of contour units, usually curved and most but not all of them convex. Such contour-units will be connected in different ways. They may be continuous with one another, each representing a fresh act of conceptualization but linked by the fact that the drawing-point has not left the paper. The lines may break either with a gap or so that one line emphatically crosses, often at an exaggerated angle, the springing point of another, suggesting a strong recession between the "foremost" line and the "rear" one.' pp.104-105.

This more fluid quality of line and stylization is evident particularly in the two works of Two female nudes - seated and standing. The more fluent character of the line may be seen in Two female nudes - seated and standing, in the stylized depiction of the right leg of the standing nude and in the patterned material. The decorative pattern on the material further emphasizes the flowing nature of the line. Laubser's move away from the representation of specific detail towards a more general schematization may be seen in the use of a negative instead of a positive shape for the bracelet on the seated nude's right arm. The rhythmic repetition of line and shape, noted in Female nude - sideview and Female nude with arms above head, is evident in Two female nudes - seated and standing, in the accentuated curve in the waist of the standing nude and in the bracelets on the arms, which relate to each other and establish a pattern across the picture plane.

nos.98,99
no.98
See also nos.99, 100, and bk.3, ff.2,3, p.223
no.87
no.88
no.98

Another indication of Laubser's move away from precision in detail, is evident in the looser, more fluid line in the hip and thigh of the seated nude and in the buttocks and left knee of the standing nude in Two female nudes - seated and standing. There is also a generalization by means of the exaggeration of certain forms and the suggestion of others. In Two female nudes - seated and standing, the abstract shape of the standing nude's right elbow echoes the rendition of the elbow in Female nude in runner's posture. Similar distortions are seen in Female nude with right hand on hip, in which the angular indentation at the waist (seen to a lesser extent in Female nude with foot on chair), echoes the interpretation of the shoulder in Female nude - front view. This abstraction from a naturalistic depiction to a decorative shape, is developed further in the knees in Female nude reclin-

no.99
no.99
bk.3,f.9, p.223
no.95
no.92
no.94

ing. The pattern of the material merging with the left foot emphasizes the decorative stylization. bk.3,f.2, p.223

This fluid use of line, more open form and greater schematization, is part of a new linear freedom that differs from the tautness of the Slade sketches. It also indicates Laubser's shift away from the depiction of precise anatomical detail towards the representation of a generic type - a trend also seen in the oil paintings from this time. However, although Laubser was developing towards a more avant-garde drawing style in which the demands of art versus the demands of nature were given more careful consideration, it should be noted that compared to the more progressive contemporary European trends, her art was still very conservative.

From the oil paintings and water colour sketches of ca. 1919-20 it is evident that Laubser continued to work outdoors and sketched directly from the motif. Plein-air painting

A photograph exists of Laubser and Arnold Balwé, at their easels in the open air with an unidentified woman. This was probably taken in the woods outside Antwerp.[1] fig.38, p.264

Her interest in rendering the same scene at different times is confirmed by comments in sketchbook 1, viz.: 'good at 12 o'clock' and '7 o'clock'. f.11;f.13, p.219

She still painted the same scene from different viewpoints: compare the two works of Landscape with village; the three paintings of Landscape with tree and house; and the two works of Landscape with haystacks. no.109;75 verso,pl.6, p.195 nos.116-118 nos.137,138

In works from this Belgian period brighter hues and colour accents are apparent, as seen in the red brown of the roofs in Landscape with village;[2] in the General stylistic characteristics

1. Laubser's contact with Balwé seems (on the basis of documented sources) to be restricted to Belgium, Italy and Germany. By 1922, when she was in Germany, it appears that Laubser no longer painted plein-air (see p.137) and in Italy she painted mostly on the shores of Lake Garda (see fig.58, p.271).

2. nos.110, 75 verso, pl.6, p.195.

two works of Landscape with church;[1] in the white of the washing in Landscape with tree and house; in the turquoise field in Landscape; and in the red houses in Landscape with houses. These brighter hues are then developed in the warm autumn hues of Lane with autumn trees which forecasts the bright colours of the Italian period. The brushwork is looser and apparently more spontaneous, as can be seen for instance, in Barge on canal and in the gaps in the foliage in the trees in Landscape with church; Landscape with trees and houses and Landscape with trees.

no.117,pl.8, p.196
no.120,p.196
no.121
no.141,pl.10, p.197
no.123
nos.108,112, pl.7,p.196
nos.113-115

During her stay in Belgium there is a development in her works towards a simplification and elimination of detail, a concentration on silhouettes, an absence of modelled forms and an emphasis on a decorative repetition of motifs. This development can be seen in the shift from the loose broken brushwork and blurred outlines of Lane with autumn trees to the increasing clarity of form, simplification of outline and emphasis on silhouette in Autumn trees, Trees and haystacks and Trees. This tendency is developed even further in her Italian works and must be seen within the context of the general international art movements of that time. For example, the same emphasis on the rhythmic repetition of simplified forms of trees is seen in Monet's work from the 1890's and in Mondrian's work from the first decade of the twentieth century.

Development within the period
no.141,pl.10, p.197
nos.142-145

These tendencies should be seen against the background of the influence of the Japanese woodcut and the development of the symbolist movement in France and Belgium, and the Art Nouveau and Jugendstil movements in England and Germany, for there was a general shift towards bold flat planes of colour, sinuous outlines and simplified shapes. In addition, Laubser saw

Laubser's development seen within the context of European art

1. nos.108 verso; 112, pl.7, p.196.

in nature an order, structure and simplicity that she felt was the result of underlying governing laws.[1]

Laubser's lightening and brightening of her palette should also be seen within the context of the general sources available to her at this time. These influences are threefold: the general artistic climate of the time; internal cross-influences from one technique to another, e.g., the ink and water colour technique influence on her oil paintings; and more specific influences, e.g., that of Van Gogh.

Sources and influences: artistic climate

Whilst in Belgium Laubser would have had the opportunity to come into contact with the contemporary art trends. Belgian artists such as Henri Evenpoel (1872-1899) had studied in Paris (1892-1899)[2] and the discoveries and practices of the Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists,[3] and Fauves had filtered back to Belgium. The greater luminosity, increasingly bright saturated colours and loose broad brushwork of Flemish 'Fauvism' is seen for instance, in the work of Rik Wouters (1882-1916). Laubser would almost certainly have seen his work which would account for the less subdued, more saturated palette of Laubser's Belgian works.

figs.40,41, pp.265,266

Laubser probably saw work by Permeke and other Flemish expressionists and this perhaps awakened her interest in Expressionism, which she developed later when she came into contact with German Expressionism. James Ensor (1860-1949) was established and well known by this stage. In 1920 he held a major retrospective exhibition in Brussels.[4] Flemish

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1. See p.86 for further discussion.

2. Smeets, A. Flemish Art from Ensor to Permeke; Tielt and Utrecht: Lannoo 1971, p.65.

3. Refer to Portrait of Oscar de Clerck by Jean de Clerck (fig.59a,p.271) reproduced in Allies in Art by Marriott, a book given to Laubser, by Balwé Snr. in London in 1918.

4. Smeets,p.37. He also held another major reprospective exhibition in 1921 in Antwerp (ibid.) but Laubser had already left Belgium by then.

Expressionists, mainly those of the Latem group of whom Permeke was a member, were promoted by the gallery 'Le Centaure' founded in 1920 in Brussels.[1] Thus Laubser probably saw work by these artists whilst in Belgium. Years later in her radio talk 'On Art' she named Gustav de Smet as one of her favourite artists:

> The modern artists I like most of all are: Van Gogh, Gougun [Gauguin], Matisse, Gusiaof de Omet [Gustav de Smet], Schmidt-Rotluft [Schmidt-Rottluff], Emil Nolle [Nolde], Picasso and Henri Rousseau. [2]

Other contemporary international movements had reached Belgium by this stage. In 1918 in Antwerp, the 'Moderne Kunst' [Modern Art] group was founded to promote futurism, cubism, abstractionism and constructivism[3] and in 1920 in Antwerp the magazine 'Overzicht' [Survey] supported abstract art.[4] Laubser, in all probability, saw examples of these contemporary avant-garde movements, but there is little evidence in her art that she was directly influenced by such avant-garde movements. Although she might have been indirectly influenced towards an overall simplicity, it is rather the influences of the more conservative trends of Flemish painting, such as Impressionism, that show in some of her works: in the loose broad brushwork and lack of definitive outline in View of Antwerp and Old man - Antwerp, and in the touches of bright high-keyed colour in Lane with autumn trees.

nos.124;151

no.141,pl.10, p.197

Laubser,during this period,used the technique of pen and ink and watercolour for the first time. The influence of the watercolour technique on her oil paintings cannot be disregarded. A freer, looser

Influence of water-colours

1. Smeets, p.65.

2. U.S.79/4/3, p.4. The errors in spelling almost certainly occurred in the typing of the transcript. Laubser did not type herself.

3. Smeets, p.266.

4. Smeets, p.277.

line, typical of these watercolours, and an apparent spontaneity is manifest, for example, in Landscape. In this work not only are the outlining contours of some of the trees incomplete, but also the distinction between adjoining trees is only partially indicated, and even totally abandoned. This simplified style is developed in some of the oils from this period. In Trees, for instance, there is a degree of abstraction (i.e., reduction of descriptive detail) in the representation of the trees. This is a further development of the tendency seen in the rendering of light through foliage in the paintings of landscapes with churches, trees and houses.

no.128

no.145

nos.108,112, pl.7,p.196; nos.113-115

This liberty in the use of line, whereby forms are not completely outlined, was seen in the nude studies (e.g., the bracelet on the arm of the seated nude in Two female nudes - seated and standing). The fluid quality of line (also noted in the 1919-1920 nudes) is apparent in the two watercolours of landscapes. A vital, animated quality of line is evident in the irregular outline of the furrows of the field and in the soil in the Landscape. This organic quality has the effect of reproducing the movement and dynamism of nature. Thus motifs are given a vital quality parallelling the energy of nature.

no.98

nos.132,133

no.128

Vitality is seen also in the shading. In the 1919-1920 nudes it was noted that Laubser experimented with different methods of shading - sweeping diagonal lines and broad zigzags. These are now employed in a dynamic and vigorous way, which further emphasizes the seemingly haphazard quality through the parallel diagonals and broad zigzags which are often combined, as in Landscape. The influence of the outline in the ink and watercolour

nos.131,134, 135

no.130

series is to be seen in some of the oil paintings, viz. in the trees in Landscape with church.

no.112,pl.7, p.196

The looser, apparently more spontaneous brush-stroke is evident in paintings from this period, e.g., in Barge on canal and in the light shining through the foliage of the trees in Landscape with church, Landscape with trees and houses and Landscape with trees. This is a probable influence from the ink and watercolour technique (as well as from the local artistic environment), which encouraged her in her development towards a looser style as seen in Lane with autumn trees.

no.123

nos.108,112, pl.7,p.196; 113;114

no.141,pl.10, p.197

Several of the landscapes from this period, particularly the ink and watercolour works, show a thematic, compositional and technical influence of Van Gogh's work. This raises a problem, however, as it is not clear if Laubser would have seen Van Gogh's work either in the original or in reproductions, as early as 1919/1920. Laubser later in life stated how much she admired Van Gogh. 'Above all I like the Dutchman Van Gogh.'[1] She also said that she was perhaps most drawn towards the inimitable Van Gogh.[2] She had in her possession two early Van Gogh folios with several colour reproductions; one folio is dated 1924[3] and the other is undated.[4] It is not known exactly when she first saw reproductions of Van Gogh's work or when she first became interested in him as an artist. Perhaps by this time, she had seen and admired reproductions of Van Gogh's work, and for this reason Balwé Senior, knowing of her already established

Influence of Van Gogh

1. Typed transcript of radio talk 'On Art', U.S.79/4/3, p.4.

2. L.F.W. 'Painter of "Life Around Her." Art of Miss Maggie Laubscher[sic].' Cape Times; 13 Oct. 1930: p.11, col.4 (E.4, p.328).

3. Hagan, O. (comp.) Van Gogh Mappe; München: R. Piper and Co. Verlag, 1924.

4. Seeman, A. (comp.) Vincent van Gogh; Leipzig: Seeman, n.d. 8 reproductions It has not been possible to date this publication.

interest, gave her a book of Van Gogh's letters[1] while she was in Italy in 1921[2] in which several of Van Gogh's pen and ink drawings are reproduced. Botha[3] suggests that Laubser came into contact with Van Gogh's style indirectly through Arnold Balwé. According to Hans Vollmer[4] Arnold Balwé was influenced in his 'early work' by Karl Caspar and Van Gogh. However, he was taught by Caspar at the Munich Academy only after 1922. Paintings by Balwé from ca. 1930, show the influence of Van Gogh, both in brushwork and motif, e.g., Church in Katwijk 1930[5] and Mussel collector Katwijk 1930.[6] No works before 1928 by Balwé, have been seen, either in reproduction or in the original, by the author.[7] The most probable explanation for the early influence of Van Gogh, is that Laubser had already seen examples of his work in reproduction. This is highly probable if one takes into account the contemporary peak of Flemish Expressionism.

The motif of sheaves of wheat seen in Van Gogh's work, were used as a theme by Laubser, e.g., Landscape and Landscape with wheat sheaves. A work by Van Gogh, Sheaves of wheat, was sold on 18th May 1920 on the Enthoven sale in Amsterdam.[8] Other Van Gogh works

Van Gogh's thematic influence

no.133
no.135
no.136

1. Ludovici, A.M. The Letters of a Post-Impressionist; London: Constable and Co., 1912. Left by the artist to Elza Miles (née Botha), Johannesburg.

2. The inscription in the front of the book in the artist's own handwriting, reads: 'Magdalena Laubser Lago di Garda Italië 1921 from my dearest.

3. p.9.

4. Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts; Leipzig: Seeman, Erster Band A-D, p.105. 'In Seiner Frühzeit beeinflusst von s. Lehrer Caspar u. Van Gogh.'

5. Sailer, H. Arnold Balwé. Mannheim: Mannheimer Grossdruckerei, n.d. ca.1970 . (U.S.79/1/1). repro. p.27.

6. ibid. repro. p.28.

7. A painting of flowers by Balwé, dated 1918, was left by Laubser, in her estate, to the University of Stellenbosch. However, when the author went to Stellenbosch in June 1979, the painting was in storage and people involved were not sure of its location. (The painting is not catalogued in the University archive list on Laubser.)

8. De la Faille, J-B. The Works of Vincent van Gogh - His Paintings and Drawings; Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1970. See exhibitions and provenances of F193, p.618.

sold on this sale were Autumn lane at sunset[1] and Haystacks in Provence.[2] Iconographically these works relate to paintings by Laubser: Lane with autumn trees; Landscape with haystacks; Woman gathering harvest - Belgium respectively. Although she had the opportunity of travelling to Amsterdam from Antwerp, no evidence of such a trip is to be found in her passport. Furthermore, she maintained that she had never seen a Van Gogh in the original.[3] It thus seems certain that Laubser absorbed influences from Van Gogh from studying reproductions of his work.

no.141,pl.10, p.197;no.137-8;nos.139, pl.9,p.197; 140

Laubser was perhaps also influenced by Van Gogh's method of structuring a composition in parallel bands of decreasing width to indicate recession. Compare Van Gogh's Wheat sheaves to Laubser's Landscape with haystacks. Laubser was already moving towards this kind of compositional structuring in the early Belgian works: Landscape with village; and Landscape with church, in which contrasting bands of tone alternate in recession. This underlying structure was probably further developed as a result of Van Gogh's influence.

fig.42,p.266

nos.137,138

no.75 verso, pl.6,p.195; no.108

The motif of a ploughed field and the method of using it as a compositional perspectival device to lead the eye back into space, seen in Landscape with ploughed field; Landscape and Woman gathering harvest - Belgium is also seen in Van Gogh's work.

no.127

nos.128-130; nos.139,pl.9, p.197;140; fig.43,p.266

Finally, the technique of pen, ink and watercolour could have been adopted as a result of looking at Van Gogh's ink drawings.

It should be remembered, however, that the motifs of haystacks and harvesters were scenes that Maggie Laubser actually saw. Refer to the photograph left by Laubser in her estate to the University of Stellen-

Influence of surrounding landscape figs.46a,46b, p.268

1. ibid. F123, p.616.
2. ibid. F425, p.628.
3. Recorded by Botha in conversation with the author.

bosch which is inscribed by the artist on the back of the photograph - 'Woman gathering harvest - Belgium.' The flat landscape with furrowed fields and neat rows of trees, compartmentalized by fences and hedges is typical of Belgium and this type of scenery lends itself to the compositional structuring of horizontal bands of tone receding in depth. However, it seems there is still sufficient evidence, on the basis of visual parallels mentioned above, to assume that Laubser was already influenced by Van Gogh.

fig.45 recto and verso, p.267

fig.47,48, p.268

Iconographically, there is a new development during this period, for Laubser humanized her landscapes by introducing man-made structures such as stone churches and houses. Laubser painted only one landscape, which included a building, during her stay in Britain. It is significant that In the Highlands, Scotland, painted during her stay in Scotland in ca. 1918-1919, the houses are indistinguishable, whereas in the version painted in 1924, the houses are clearly emphasized. Thus although one may argue that the inclusion of houses in the landscape is insignificant, as Laubser was painting plein-air, it can be seen that not only is the choice of motif indicative of a new interest, but also that in certain cases she underplayed elements in the landscape and in others she emphasized them.

Iconography - building in landscape

no.85

no.72,pl.4, p.194

no.296,pl.37, p.211

The houses and buildings in the Belgian works are compositionally integrated with the surrounding countryside. For example, in Landscape with village and the two works of Landscape with church, the houses are nestled under the rising hill behind and between groups of trees flanking them protectively on either side. In Landscape with village the lines of the hedges in the field to the right of the work converge on the village so emphasizing it, particularly the church. The lower of these two hedges continues in an imaginary line through the village

no.110

nos.108 verso, 112,pl.7, p.196

no.75 verso, pl.6,p.195

to join the hedge in the field to the left of the village. This compositional integration of the houses and the countryside suggests a bond between the man-made shelters and the natural surroundings and the harmony between man and nature is implied.[1] In these early Belgian works the houses and buildings are viewed from a distance. There is, however, an increasing focalization on the motif of the house as seen in the two works of Farmhouse and House with sunflowers.

nos.148,149, pl.12,p.198
no.147,pl.11, p.198

In House with sunflowers, the house is viewed thrcugh a screen of gigantic sunflowers which act as repoussoirs huddled protectively around the cottage. She developed this theme years later after her return to South Africa in Man sitting by hut with sunflowers. Here the bold sunflowers again encircle the home. Another variation on this theme is seen in Duck and sunflowers ca. 1960. Laubser was perhaps influenced by Van Gogh in her choice of the sunflower as motif. Furthermore, the sunflower, with its yellow colouring evoking a gay and cheerful quality and its similarity to the sun and sun's rays, probably also had symbolic meaning for Laubser.

House with sunflowers
no.147,pl.11, p.198

fig.49,p.268

fig.50,p.268

> Outside walls and window frames of the cottage [Altyd Lig, at the Strand] - she built it to be near a brother - are gay primrose yellow - a colour one finds repeated in her paintings, in the clothes she wears, and in a favourite little Chinese figurine standing on a crowded table.[2]

As a result of her Christian religious beliefs, Laubser's colour usage was associated with traditional

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1. See pp.183-4 for further discussion.

2. 'Pioneer Artist Was Ignored by Cape Town Critics.' Cape Times, Peninsula ed.; 20 June 1969: p.9, col.2. See also: 'Grand Old Lady Paints for Happiness.' Rand Daily Mail; 25 June 1969, p.15.

ideas on light-dark symbolism.[1] Yellow a light, bright hue would be regarded as a positive vivifying colour and Laubser viewed the sun as a light-giving source.[2] Thus the yellow sunflowers surrounding the cottage create an aura of warmth and protection repeating more explicitly, the theme of the village nestling in the valley.

Figure in landscape

During this period Laubser introduced the figure into the landscape. In an unpublished interview in 1968 she stated that she was, on her return to South Africa in 1924, the first person in South Africa to include the figure in the landscape. Contemporary artists such as Pierneef, Volschenk and Naudé, concentrated on a naturalistic descriptive depiction of the landscape often stressing the loneliness and vastness of the veld by the lack of human figures, as can be seen in Pierneef's Landscape seen from Imperani 1922 and Volschenk's The Lonely Veld 1918. A drawing by Pierneef from 1910, P. Wenning with Pretoria in the background, includes figures as does the undated work by Hugo Naudé of Chincherinchees Valley.[4] However, as Esmé Berman says of the latter work (and despite the

fig.51,p.268
fig.52,p.268
fig.53,p.269

1. See p.149 for further discussion. Laubser left a book in her estate to the University of Stellenbosch (U.S.79/ 1/120), in which colour and its spiritual and metaphysical values and associations are discussed: Colville, W.J. The Human Aura and the Significance of Colour; London: Fowler, 1917. An excerpt dealing with the colour, black, reads (p.31): 'In Leadbeater's classification of colors as applied to the human aura, black is said to denote malice, and it is certainly difficult to conceive of any good-will proceeding in the shape of sable-hued emanations.'

2. See pp.149-150 for further discussion. Laubser marked the following passage in The Human Aura and the Significance of Colour (p.35): 'The brightest, clearest yellow betokens the highest and purest type of intellect. ...The lighter shades of yellow are quieting in the extreme to an overwrought nervous condition, and people who generate aura of that hue accomplish often a great deal in the direction of healing by their quiet regulating presence.' [Author's italics]

3. With Benita Munitz.

4. Reproduced in Berman, 1975, p.72, fig.12.

title it applies to the former work as well): 'The figures have a pictorial function only; they are not the subject of the picture.'[1] Thus, although she was probably not the first artist to introduce the figure into the landscape in South Africa, she was certainly one of the first, if not the first, to make the figure the subject in a landscape, interacting and forming a unity with it, with the latter of secondary or subordinate importance.

In both versions of Woman gathering harvest - Belgium, the figure has become the subject of the paintings and not merely a pictorial element, for it is the focal point both compositionally and, by implication, symbolically. The figure is brought relatively close-up to the picture plane. Thus the focalization and concentration on the motif, first seen in the seascapes dating to her stay in Durban, and then in the houses in the Belgian landscape, is here applied to the figure in the landscape. The figure has been reduced to a type,for there is little detail in the peculiarities of dress and the hat hides the face.

nos.139,pl.9, p.197;140

nos.28-32

nos.147,pl.11, p.198;148;149, pl.12,p.198

There is a greater generalization in the treatment of the landscape than in previous works for, as in the handling of the human figure there is an elimination of superfluous descriptive detail. Because of the simplification of background and the focalization on the human figure, there is a concentration on the images themselves (the landscape harvest scene and the harvester) and as a result the relationship between the images is intensified.

In Woman gathering harvest - Belgium the figure is portrayed in the act of harvesting.

nos.139,pl.9, p.197;140

1. Berman, 1975, p.72.

> ...When I came [back to South Africa] Pierneef... painted the landscape but he never introduced the figure and for me at once when I got back I got very excited for I saw everything is in action. Psychologically I know it, that all must meet in action, and I was so pleased, the women washing, the women carrying wood, women...in the fields walking and the men digging in the fields and the harvesting - that's why I painted so many harvesting [scenes].[1]

This concept of activity and action (like the concept of serenity and calm) is reflected in Laubser's thoughts: 'All thought takes form in action';[2] 'You are the activity of Truth - you are all action';[3] and 'There is no inaction. There is action.'[4] These two phases of stillness and action are totally dependent on each other as is the sowing of the seed and the harvesting of the crop and as a result there is a continuous cyclical movement.[5] The images are thus interpreted on the one hand on a structural and compositional level (a pictorial function), and on the other hand, they are imbued with a symbolic meaning and they therefore have a specific associative value.

Stylistic development within the period

In conclusion it can be seen that there is a development within the period both stylistically and iconographically. Stylistically, Laubser increased the range of her palette to include more shades and tints of greens. Colours are more saturated, seen particularly in the reds, greens and violets. Her palette is warmer as she painted on a brown ground

1. Munitz interview 1968.

2. Written on folio 1 of a sketchbook dating to 1953 in a private collection in the Strand. R.A.U. negative no.2928/10a/11.

3. Written on the back of an envelope left in the artist's estate to E. Miles (née Botha).

4. Written on the cover of The Psychologist and the Magician-A Psychological Study in Story Form by Ernest C. Rodwick, 1920, left in the artist's estate to E. Miles (née Botha).

5. See pp.155,156.

leaving it exposed in places. Thus it not only adds warmth but also acts as a positive colour, e.g., in the tree in Landscape with church. There is an increased awareness of complementaries to be seen in small areas such as the red roofs and green pastures and the violet shadows and yellow grass of Landscape with village, the red and green, blue and orange, and violet and yellow contrasts of Woman gathering harvest - Belgium, and the violet shadows and yellow sunflowers of House with sunflowers. Colour is used to highlight the focal point of a work - for instance, the red orange on the boat in View of Antwerp, the red around the hat of the harvester in Woman gathering harvest - Belgium, the yellow of the sunflowers in House with sunflowers and the red roofs of the houses in the villages. Laubser also began to draw in colour during this period, as can be seen in the outline of the tree in Landscape with church and the blue around the wheat in Woman gathering harvest - Belgium. Paintwork is looser and broader and in a work such as Lane with autumn trees one sees the climax of the development towards a high-keyed palette, broken areas of more saturated colour with no addition of black, and individual colour touches which dissolve objects in atmosphere and light and create a flickering sensation across the picture surface. This development should be seen within the context of Flemish Impressionism and the shift towards brighter, bolder colours and looser brushwork of Flemish Fauvism, as seen in the work of Rik Wouters.

no.112,pl.7, p.196
no.75 verso, pl.6,p.195
no.139,pl.9, p.197
no.147,pl.11, p.198
no.124
no.139,pl.9, p.197;no.147, pl.11,p.198
no.75 verso, pl.6,p.
no.112,pl.7, p.196
no.139,pl.9, p.197;no.141, pl.10,p.197

Despite these developments, however, Laubser's colour is still predominantly local. She continued to use degraded hues and subdued her palette by overpainting bright colours - e.g., the red showing through in the roof of Farmhouse. Similarly,

no.149,pl.12, p.198

although in places luminosity is increased by the addition of white (as in Lane with autumn trees), in most works luminosity is reduced by painting on a brown ground and, in many instances, leaving it exposed.

no.141,pl.10, p.198

In other works from this period there is a reduction of descriptive detail, a flattening of the image to a silhouette, a simplification of outline and focalization and concentration on the image. See for example the trees in the background of Barge on canal; Woman gathering harvest - Belgium; Trees; Landscape with trees and house; and House with sunflowers. This should be seen within the context of the development towards a general simplification of form in European art at this time and, more specifically, within the style of the monumental decorative of Holland and Belgium.

nos.123;139,pl.9, p.197;140;145; 146
no.147,pl.11, p.198

That her stay in Belgium was a time of experimentation, can be seen in the varying styles of this period: the loose, broad, vigorous brushwork of Barge on canal; Woman gathering harvest - Belgium and House with sunflowers, the thick impasto of Farmhouse and Irises, the delicate 'feathery' brushwork of Farmhouse and the broken flickering colour touch of Lane with autumn trees. She began to experiment with different techniques during this period as seen in the ink and watercolour works.

Experimentation

nos .123;139, pl.9 ,p.197; 147,pl.11,p.198; 149,pl.12,p.198; 152
no.148
no.141,pl.10, p.197

Thematically, her interest in plein-air landscape painting continued, and she returned to the theme of the boat, first painted whilst in Holland in 1914. There is a development in subject matter, with the introduction of buildings into the landscape and, more significantly, the figure. The harvest scene or landscape with haystacks, is portrayed on several occasions. The theme of men and women working in the lands was one that Laubser developed on her return to South Africa after 1924.

Little is known about the details of Laubser's stay in Belgium and the reason for her departure. She probably did not wish to stay in Belgium without her close friend and painting companion, Arnold Balwé, and in a desire for the warm sunny climate of the Mediterranean she agreed to accompany him, when he won the Prix de Rome, to Italy during September 1920.

CHAPTER 5

ITALY, OCTOBER 1920 - AUGUST 1921

Bio-graphical

Maggie Laubser left Belgium sometime during August/ September 1920[1] to travel to Italy via Germany, probably with Arnold Balwé.[2] She was apparently arrested because she did not have the necessary visa, but the British Consulate dealt with the problem promptly.[3] Botha suggests that, taking into account the post-war situation, she would have had to return to Belgium in order to obtain the necessary visas.[4] This seems probable for, according to Balwé Snr. in a letter dated 27.9.20,[5] she was due to leave Antwerp that day. This presumably refers to her second departure. She returned to Germany[6] and passed through Deggendorf in late September/early October 1920,

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1. Her exact date of departure from Belgium is not known. Further details, listed below, of her journey to Italy, are based on the stamps and visas in her passport covering the years 1919-1921, U.S.79/14/1. Appendix 4, pp.418-431.

2. According to Botha, (p.12) Laubser travelled with both the Balwés. However, one may presume on the basis of the letters written to her at this time by Balwé Snr., that he did not accompany them. It is not exactly clear if Laubser left Belgium with Balwé Jnr., or if she joined up with him at a later stage. The former seems likely for, in a letter to Botha dated 5.2.64 (Botha, Appendix 3, p.185), Balwé Jnr. writes: 'We went together to Italy, actually I went for the Prix de Rome.' [translated from German by the author] In the opening speech of the Laubser exhibition (E.201) at the University of Stellenbosch in 1975, Dr. A. Rupert quotes that Laubser went to Italy via Munich because Balwé Jnr. wanted to visit his mother. (See Typescript of speech U.S.79/3/12, p.4).

3. Botha, p.12. A visa, presumably a temporary one, in her passport is issued in Munich on 18.8.20 entitled her to stay in Munich until 24.8.20 (p.424).

4. p.12. This would explain two further visas in her passport: one issued in Antwerp on 13.9.20 (p.424) entitled her to go to Germany and the second issued in Brussels on 17.9.20 (p.425) for the purpose of 'visiting family' (besuch von Verwanellar) entitled her to be in Germany from 25.9.20 until 10.10.20. The purpose given for the visit indicates that travelling was strictly controlled in Europe after the War.

5. U.S.79/5/68.

6. Botha's suggestion (p.12), that she went straight from Belgium to North Italy, is therefore not quite correct.

where she probably stayed for a while,[1] and also went back to Munich in early October.[2] She travelled through Austria,[3] and crossed into Italy via the Brenner Pass on 11th October.[4] After passing through Verona,[5] she arrived at Lake Garda during mid-October,[6] where she apparently stayed first in Torri-del-Benaco and then San Vigilio[7] until she left Italy for Germany in April 1921.[8]

Laubser enjoyed her stay in Italy[9] and appreciated the sun and warm climate, a pleasant reminder of South

fig.54a and b,p.269

1. A letter from Balwé dated 27.9.20 (U.S.79/5/68) reached her at Deggendorf. Letters from him dated 1.10.20 (U.S.79/5/72) and 2.10.20 (U.S.79/5/73) did not reach her in Deggendorf as she had already left. A photograph left in Laubser's estate (U.S.79/29/12), fig.54a, (p.269) shows Arnold Balwé in a field at harvest time. According to Balwé Jnr. in a letter to the University of Stellenbosch dated 18.2.75, the photograph was taken in 1919 at Baron Hafenbrödl's farm, Grosswalding, near Deggendorf. (See fig.54b, p.269). Baron Hafenbrödl was probably a family friend and they most likely stayed there whilst in Deggendorf. It seems unlikely that Laubser should keep a picture of Balwé Jnr. if she was not present at the time it was taken. Perhaps the photograph was taken in 1920 and not in 1919 as Balwé states.

2. A visa issued in Munich on 6.10.20 (p.426) entitled Laubser to go to Verona and Genoa.

3. A visa was issued in Munich, entitling her to travel through Austria. (p.427).

4. Refer to the stamp in her passport. (p.426).

5. In a letter dated 18.10.20 (U.S.79/5/79), Balwé Snr. thanks Laubser for her letter from Verona.

6. The correspondence from Balwé Snr. between 6.10.20 (U.S.79/5/74) and 21.10.20 (U.S.79/5/82), was addressed to Laubser in Garda.

7. Botha, p.13.

8. There is some confusion as to Laubser's precise whereabouts at specific dates during this time. Letters from Balwé Snr. between 6.11.20 (U.S.79/5/96) and 22.11.20 (U.S.79/5/108), were addressed to Laubser at Torri del Benaco. In a letter, however, of 18.11.20 (U.S.79/5/105), he writes: 'So you have shifted ...from Vigilio to Garda.' This letter is readdressed to Torri del Benaco. On the basis of the inscription on a photograph of Laubser riding a bicycle (U.S. 79/23/14)(a duplicate, (U.S.79/24/7), is reproduced as fig.55 recto, p.269) one may presume that she was in Torri del Benaco during February 1921. The inscription reads: 'Torri del Banco [sic Benaco] Lago di Garda February 13th 1921.' In a letter to Botha dated 5.2.64 (Botha, appendix 3, p.185), Balwé Jnr. writes: '[We] stayed there [in Italy] for nearly a year on the Lake Garda (and Venice), in Torri del Benaco 1921 and 1922.'[translated from the German by the author].

9. 'Daardie jaar was miskien die heerlikste van my loopbaan.' [That year [my time in Italy] was perhaps the best of my life.] 'Die Natuur Steeds Haar Grootste Vreugde, sê Maggie Laubser.' Transvaler, vol.25, no.172; 24 April 1962: p.8. (B2, p.305).

Africa.[1] She and Arnold Balwé led an outdoor existence suited to this climate.[2]

figs.55 recto, and 56a,p.269

> Dit was wonderlik [in Italië]. Elke dag was 'n nuwe ervaring en dan moet [sic. met] die fiets, knapsak op die rug en dan klim ons die berg...[3]

> 'When I was in Italy,' she said, 'I went hatless and barefoot and knew the meaning of perfect freedom and perfect happiness.'...'I am naturally a lazy person,' she confiled [sic. confided]. 'I never work unless I must, and while I studied hard in London and worked in Holland, Belgium and Germany, in Italy I was satisfied to live.'[4]

The way of life was relaxed, carefree and unsophisticated, a contrast to urban life.[5] Being on a lake, close by the water, must have appealed to Laubser. In the past she seemed attracted by water, whether it be the sea as in the Durban seascapes and the Cape Coast, or inland lakes, as in the highlands of Scotland. In Italy she had the opportunity of living close to water, and in fact, from the window of her room in the Albergo in Torri del Benaco, she could see the harbour with sailing boats.[6]

fig.57, p. 271

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1. In an interview first broadcast in 1948, and rebroadcast on the Afrikaans service of the S.A.B.C. on 21 Dec. 1976, Laubser recalled how she enjoyed the bright sunlight in Italy and how much she appreciated and missed the South African sunshine.

2. Refer to a photograph of Laubser at a table on a terrace, captioned 'Maggie Laubser - die Goue Jare in Italië.' Miles, E. 'Maggie Laubser - van Gister, Vandag en Môre.' Rapport; vol.3, no.25; 20 May 1973: p.12, cols.6-8.

3. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser.' Interview with Dr. Schutte on the Afrikaans service of the S.A.B.C. on 12 May 1972 at 7.22 p.m. Typescript U.S.79/3/1, p.6. ['It was wonderful [in Italy]. Each day was a new experience and then with the bicycle, knapsack on the back, and then we climbed the mountain....']

4. Silva, Z.M. 'An Artist Devoted to Farm-Life.' Sunday Express; 8 March 1936: p.29, col.2.

5. Botha postulates that in her desire to escape from 'beskawings-ongesmuktheid' [urban sophistication], Laubser was already embracing the characteristics of an expressionist. (p.13).

6. ibid.

Whilst in Italy, Laubser, and presumably Arnold Balwé too, were supported by Balwé Senior.[1] Therefore Laubser had financial security while in Italy, and would not have had to produce works in order to support herself, which is significant as it meant that she had the freedom to paint and experiment without external pressures. This was very important to her as can be seen by the fact that she marked the following passage in her edition of Van Gogh's letters given to her whilst in Italy:[2]

> But to work with a view to sell is, in my opinion, not the proper way, neither should we consider the taste of the art-lover - the great painters never did so.[3]

Laubser did, however, plan to have an exhibition in Gardone at one stage,[4] which probably accounts for the existence of so many signed and dated works from this period, but there is no record of or reference to the exhibition ever having actually taken place.[5]

The majority of paintings executed during her stay in Italy depict either lake scenes with the emphasis varying from a concentration on boats, to a focus on trees, or landscapes with trees and/or village scenes. There are a number of still

Iconography	
nos.155-214	
nos.155-174	
nos.216-222	

1. Refer to the letter from Balwé Senior of 18.11.20 (U.S.79/5/105): 'Gardone is lovely but I am afraid it is too heavy for my purse.' Prof. Trümpelmann of the University of Stellenbosch, who catalogued the letters left by Laubser in her estate, records that in a letter (U.S.79/5/79) Balwé Snr. complains about his business going badly.

2. The Letters of a Post-Impressionist, Constable and Co., 1912, with introduction by Ludovici. Refer to chapter 4, p.64, footnotes 1,2. Any further references to Van Gogh's letters in this chapter refer to the same edition.

3. ibid. p.9.

4. Refer to Balwé Snr.'s letter of 8.11.20 (U.S.79/ 5/97): 'I am so glad that you are getting on well with your work and is it really true that you contemplate having an exhibition at Gardone.'

5. Laubser said in 1922 or 1924/5 that she had not yet exhibited. [See p.125, footnote 10.]

lifes[1] from this period as well as several portraits.[2]

Boats

In the Italian seascapes and lake scenes, boats are often a focal point. In the case of the two works Boat in harbour, the scale of the boats, their central position in the picture format and the elimination of detail in the background, are responsible for this focus. In other works[3] the bright colours of the boats or the trees which function compositionally as screen motifs or as repoussoirs, emphasize the boats despite their smaller scale. Thus whereas in the Italian works the boats provide a compositional and formal focus, in her later landscapes in South Africa they become symbols which orchestrate the main theme (e.g., the birds and boats,[4] face and boats[5] and the fisherman's cottage series[6]) and they assume a specific associative and symbolistic value rather than merely a compositional function.

nos.156;157 recto, pl.14,p.199

Portraits

Laubser's interest in portraiture (evident from the copies in sketchbook 1 of Portraits by old masters made whilst in Belgium), is continued in these Italian paintings, which pave the way for her period of study under a portrait painter in Berlin. Balwé Jnr. noted this tendency when he wrote: 'She wanted especially to paint people.'[7] The importance for her of the human figure, is evident from her making of the following passage written by Van Gogh: 'I should like to prepare myself for ten years, by means of studies for the task of painting one or two figure

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1. nos.224-246.
2. nos.247-261.
3. nos.199; 201 recto, pl.18,p.201; 202; 203,pl.19,p,202; 205,pl.20,p.202.
4. fig.139, p.286.
5. fig.123, 127, pp.284,285.
6. figs.111, 141, pp.282,287.
7. In a letter to Botha dated 5.2.64 (Botha, appendix 3, p.185). [Author's translation.]

pictures.'[1] Laubser's interest in portraiture and the human figure continued and developed on her return to South Africa, as can be seen in her many portrait studies and in her landscapes with harvesters, shepherds, farm labourers and fisherfolk.

The influence of Van Gogh's writings on Laubser's choice of motifs, may perhaps be seen in subjects such as the cypress tree series,[2] boats in the harbour,[3] trees in blossom[4] and the theme of old age as rendered in Old woman[5] 1921.[6]

Plein-air painting

During this time Laubser continued to paint and sketch plein-air, as can be seen by referring to a postcard of Lake Garda, on which the artist marked San Vigilio and, a little further along the shore line, 'Our special painting place.' When she was not painting outdoors, she painted directly from objects before her, as seen in the views from her studio window[7] and the still lifes.[8] The importance of nature for Laubser is evident in her marking of a passage in her copy of Van Gogh's letters:

fig.58,p.271

> Sooner or later a love of Nature always meets with response from people interested in Art. Therefore it is the painter's duty to become absorbed in Nature, to exercise all his intelligences, and put all his feeling into his work so that it may be comprehensible to others.[9]

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1. Ludovici, p.xxxvii.
2. nos.208-215.
3. nos.155-167.
4. nos.217-219.
5. no.254.
6. Refer, for example, to Van Gogh's Old Arlesian woman, F.390, p.187.
7. nos.182-184.
8. nos.224-246.
9. ibid. p.9. Laubser quoted Van Gogh freely years later in her radio talk 'On Art'. U.S.79/4/3, p.4.: 'It is the duty of a painter to deepen himself in nature, in order to exert the power of his understanding and to put all his emotions in his work so that others can understand him.'

Laubser worked more and more from sketches whilst in Italy. She therefore shifted from painting from nature, to painting from sketches drawn from nature, until towards the end of her life she painted from her memory and imagination.

She continued to use ink and watercolour and sometimes drew with ink only, more frequently than during her stay in Belgium. She began to draw with charcoal again, for the first time since her early portraits, and also made many pencil sketches during her stay in Italy. Pencil and charcoal are the obvious medium for preparatory sketches for paintings, as they are easily transportable, and are ideal for rapid notations from nature.

Technique

nos.15,26

The drawings from this period have been broadly divided into four groups, but the distinguishing characteristics are stronger in some drawings than in others:

Sketches

1. Apparent rapid notations based on observation from nature.

nos.170-174

2. Somewhat more analytical sketches which, although based on observation from nature, seem to show more concern with composition and awareness of motifs. Several of these are directly related to paintings and may be regarded as compositional studies.

bk.4,ff.3,12, p.224; bk.5, ff.6,8,13,22, pp.226,227

no.208

3. Preparatory sketches for oil paintings which have the quality of finished drawings in their own right, e.g., the sketch for Boat in harbour; By the Garda Lake which depicts the same scene as Trees by lake with boat, Italy and Study - trees by lake with boat which is a sketch for Trees by lake. These drawings show the same tendencies that will be seen in a certain group of paintings from this period, viz. a flattened illusion of space reinforced by the high horizon lines (Boat in harbour and By the Garda Lake), and a lack of shading to indicate aerial perspective and an amphasis on the unmodelled silhouette. Shapes

no.155;no.156

no.200

no.199
no.207
no.206

nos.155,200

are simplified into flat stylized generalizations: the folds of the sails in Boat in harbour and the foliage on the bank of the lake in By the Garda Lake. | no.155 no.200

4. Charcoal drawings which do not appear to be preparatory studies for paintings. In these works there is a concern with the rendering of volume and solidity. Three dimensional form is established by modelling: dark outer edges recede and the white chalk highlights project forward. Objects are positioned logically in space: the placing of the fruit one behind or in front of another, clarifies spatial relationships. This is further emphasized by the strong contours particularly in Five apples in a dish and by the play of light on objects which affects the shadows and highlights. | nos.238-243 nos.239-242 no.239

> Die studie van lig is een van die belangrikste in die skilderkuns, want lig is noodsaaklik om 'n voorwerp te sien...' is nodig om die regte posisie van 'n voorwerp te bepaal in die komposisie.[1]

A predominance of bold forms and uncluttered compositions is evident in these drawings and clarity of form is achieved through tonal modelling.

In Five apples in a dish the high viewpoint and close-up view of the apples result in a focalization on the motif. In Lemon and apples on dish the treatment of the horizontal surface, even more so than in the previous work, is such that it could be drapery or sand. This duality, coupled with the isolation and concentration on the motif, results in a very ambiguous work. The evocation of a landscape is further strengthened by the similarity between the piece of drapery jutting upward in this work and the | no.239 no.242

1. Quoted by Laubser years later in the typescript of 'Die Lewende Kuns: "Artiestieke Credo"' for the South African Broadcasting Corporation. n.d. R.A.U. art archives, pp.1-2. ['The study of light is one of the most important in painting because light is important in the vision of an object...light is necessary to establish the correct position of an object in the composition.']

irregular shape of the mountain in the Scottish highland scenes. In Lemon, apples and dish and Three apples and dish the dish in the background is cut off by the frame. This implies a continuation of the object outside the picture and suggests that a complete world is not represented. One sees rather a fragment of the whole, an aspect of a wider totality and not a completely self-contained representation - a rendering common from the time of Impressionism onwards.

nos.71-75

nos.240; 241

See also nos.210-213

Old woman 1921 forecasts the artist's practice of drawing portraits in charcoal, first seen in the portrait of Sheila Johnston 1909 and General Hertzog 1913. In Sheila Johnston the head merged with the tonal, undefined background, whereas in Old woman, as in General Hertzog, there is a greater emphasis on form achieved through tonal contrasts - the light scarf against the dark dress and the shaded head and dark dress against the white background

no.254

nos.15;26

no.15

no.254

no.26

The majority of her works from this period are oil paintings. Laubser marked the following passage in her edition of Van Gogh's letters, which indicates the importance that she attached to this medium.

Oil paintings

> The way in which one chooses to express oneself is no accident; it is determined by the very source of one's artistic passion. A true painter expresses himself best in paint.[1]

Painting in oils gave Laubser the opportunity to develop and experiment with colour. This is very important as the major change in her style whilst in Italy was in her palette. She painted with brighter colours of more high-keyed values. Just as her artist friend in Holland had noticed her feeling for colour, so Balwé Jnr. later remarked on it:

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1. Written in the introduction by Ludovici, p.ix.

> ...it very soon transpired [in Italy] that Maggie Laubser had a definite as we say, talent in colour and was thus looking for a purely painterly form of expression - from the start she loved beautiful, rich colours, especially the paradisical in life.[1]

Further on he writes:

> If one had to classify her, one would call her a very original colourist, who with extremely great perceptual powers, and a great respect and love, looked at creation and wanted to reproduce it in colour.[2]

Sources and influences: attitudes to religion and nature with reference to Van Gogh

Change and development in style may result from an influence on two levels: on one level, a change in attitudes or ideas is fundamental to a change on the level of style; i.e., on a pictorial level. One can gauge many of her ideas and beliefs from passages which she marked in her edition of Van Gogh's letters. Although it should be remembered that she may have marked these passages later in life, the fact that she had access to this book whilst in Italy, suggests that she may have begun evolving her philosophy as early as 1920, particularly as she had become involved in Christian Science whilst in Belgium, or perhaps even before.

The illustrations in the book provide documentary evidence that she saw reproductions of Van Gogh's work, (only in black and white), whilst in Italy.

As a change in attitude is fundamental to a change in style, it is necessary to examine her beliefs and ideas first, and it is here that Van Gogh may have been the greatest influence. Laubser was perhaps most drawn to Van Gogh because she saw in him a person with spiritual views similar to her own. The fact that Van Gogh believed in a divine being was very important to Laubser. She stated this explicitly years later:

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1. In a letter to Botha dated 5.2.64 (Botha, appendix 3, p.185). [Author's translation].

2. ibid.

> Undoubtedly Van Gogh has given the world a great deal. For me I place his work above his contemporaries Monet, Manet, Renoir, Degas, Whistler. Van Gogh was conscious of God, therefore his ideals were higher and he had more vitality.[1]

Laubser, like Van Gogh, believed in a divine being:

> Daar is iets bo alles, wat mens nie kan verklaar nie, sou dit inspirasie heet, of iets bo-mensliks, wat vasstel dat die skildery 'n kunswerk is - al die groot skilders het dit gehad.[2]

Ludovici noted in his introduction to Van Gogh's letters:

> The purpose of art was tacitly assumed to be to obtain as faithful a transcript as possible of nature and of reality, pure and simple - not nature linked up with a higher idea, or reality bathed in the atmosphere of a love that transcended mere actualities - but simply nature and reality as they were felt by anybody and everybody.[3]

The phrase underlined here was underlined by Laubser and signifies the importance she attached to this passage. Similarly she marked the last part of the following passage:

> [the spiritless and uninspired subject picture was the most poignant proof that could be found of the fact that mankind no longer possessed, to any passionate or intense degree, that which made the subject picture possible -]...a profound faith in... something which gave not only art but also life a meaning and a purpose.[4]

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1. 'On Art' U.S.79/4/3, p.4. The words underlined were underlined by the author. This passage is in fact almost a direct quotation from Ludovici's introduction to Laubser's edition of Van Gogh's letters: '...he is a painter for whom I feel a much greater respect than I can feel for Monet, Manet, Renoir, Degas and Whistler....Van Gogh was by no means so mature in his procedure as any of these artists....but his aims were higher and more vital.' p.xxi.

2. Typescript of 'Die Lewende Kuns: "Artiestieke Credo"' for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, n.d. R.A.U. art archives, p.1. 'There is something above everything, [something] that a person cannot explain called inspiration or something superhuman that determines that the painting is an art-work - all the great painters had it.'

3. p.xviii.

4. p.xix.

Laubser also felt, like Van Gogh, that the artist has a responsibility to convey these 'higher ideals' to his fellow man and, through his art, to move towards a more constructive life. She must have agreed with the passage written by Ludovici which she marked:

> These letters [Van Gogh's] are not only a confession of the fact that he participated heart and soul in the negative revolution of the latter half of that century, they are also a revelation of truth that he himself was a bridge leading out of it, to better and more positive things.[1]

Van Gogh himself expressed the idea in his own words:

> But we you know, live in the midst of complete <u>laisser-aller</u> and anarchy; we artists who love order and symmetry, isolate ourselves and work at introducing a little style into some particular portion of the world[2]

This idea of the responsibility of the artist to create for himself, and for his fellow men, a clarity and beauty from the chaos that existed in modern society, is also explicitly stated by Laubser,[3] thus emphasizing the importance of Van Gogh for her:

> What is true beauty but the perfection of all Creation? As the artist understands this fact, he becomes a leader to explain and to express the beauty around him. His pictures influence the spectators - his standards become theirs, and unconsciously he influences all their spiritual values.
>
> The responsibility of the artist, therefore, is very great, and he cannot escape it, and still remain an artist. He can raise the world by his faith and his expression to something higher existing, or he can lower it by his negligence and poverty of faith. By the beauty of hiw [sic his] own effort an artist can encourage the longing for beauty and appreciation of it, and give a real place for it in the philosophy of life.[4]

Laubser's development towards a stronger and more high-keyed palette should be understood within the context of her

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1. p.x.
2. p.59.
3. See chapter 4, p.54.
4. 'On Art', n.d. U.S.79/4/3, pp.1-2.

ideas and perceptions. Firstly, for her, very clear and recognizable forms were to be found in nature: 'Die natuur maak al haar beweringe en ontwerpe eenvoudig en definitief.'[1] And

> The artist longs for peace and tries to find it by going back to nature and bringing tranquillity into his work. It is the search for simplicity and clarity, and so he begins with definite harmonies of colour and design, even though he might be blamed for being child-like.[2]

This mode of perceiving finds its parallel in her painting, and explains her development towards a style in which bold colours, flatly applied and distinctly outlined, are juxtaposed in simple shapes. By using stronger, purer colours and greater contrasts of hues in large defined areas, there is an intensification and clarity of shape. By her use of colour therefore, she expressed her consciousness of structure rather than superficial appearance in Nature, and created a work of clarity and order, paralleling the 'perfection of all creation.'

Secondly, Laubser had an optimistic attitude towards life. 'Ek skilder om die skoonheid uit te druk en daarmee ander mense 'n genot te gee.'[3] And: 'We are living in a wonderful world. My philosophy is that everything is beautiful.'[4] This positive attitude finds its expression through a style of painting in which bright colour reflected her optimism.

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1. Typescript of 'Die Lewende Kuns: "Artiestieke Credo"', for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, n.d. R.A.U. art archives, p.2. [Nature makes all her statements and designs simple and definite.] Although Laubser wrote this many years after her stay in Italy, one may assume that, as a result of her involvement with Christian Science and her interest in Van Gogh's letters, she was already formulating these ideas relatively early on in her life.

2. Laubser, M. 'Waarom en Hoe ek Skilder.' Huisgenoot vol.23, no.908; 18 Aug. 1939: p.37. [Die kunstenaar verlang na rus en probeer om dit te vind deur terug na die natuur te gaan en so vrede in sy werk te bring. Dit is die verlange om eenvoudig te wees en om beslis te wees, en so begin hy met besliste harmonie van kleur en ontwerp, al loop hy dan gevaar om van kinderlikheid beskuldig te word.']

3. ibid. [I paint to express beauty and thereby to give other people pleasure.]

4. 'Everything is Beautiful.' Star, city late ed.; 26 April 1962: p.12, col.3.

Ludovici, in his introduction to Van Gogh's letters, expressed the above ideas:

> Now the technique which places colour above values,[1] is admirable for three reasons: first, because inasmuch as its results are simpler and more definite than those of the 'values-technique', it implies a much more masterful grasp of reality; secondly, since its results betray far less compromise and blended, grey, or democratic harmony, than those of the values-technique, it implies a much braver and less tolerant attitude towards reality; and, thirdly, because its results are so much more luminous and more bright than those of the values-technique, it betrays a much greater love of sunshine, a much more hearty yea-saying and positive attitude towards life.[2]

It is apparent therefore, that Van Gogh was of great importance to Laubser. Although she was probably drawn to his writings because of the similarities in their philosophies, he most likely also confirmed the direction of her thoughts on art, nature and religion. The parallel between Laubser's idea on beauty and her attitude to Nature and those of Van Gogh's, is that for both the beauty of God's creation is reflected and reconstructed in the work of art, which thus parallels the beauty of nature. Because it is not a mere imitative reproduction of the external appearance of nature, an aesthetic is established which implies symbolic connotations.

The foundation for Laubser's aesthetic may be directly related to her belief in Christian Science. In 1939 Laubser said:

> When I look at the miraculous creation that communicates with me through its harmony of colours and forms, the wonderful oneness of unity and infinity fills me with a great longing and urge to express what I experience, and so to praise and glorify my Creator. I think that that is what each artist

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1. It appears that Ludovici means by 'values' that which has been called 'tones' elsewhere in this dissertation.

2. p.xxxii.

> feels in himself - at least that is what painting means to me.[1]

However, Laubser's painting is not a mere mirroring or reflection of God's perfection, for she said: 'As painting is my life's work, I have developed an eye for colour and design.'[2] It is evident therefore, that the artist reconstructs a harmony paralleling God's creation. This relationship between art and religion, and the establishment of an aesthetic within the framework of Christian Science, is extensively discussed in a book by Rawson: True Prayer in Art, which Laubser had in her possession in 1919.[3] Laubser marked several passages in this book:

> When you are at work, if you think of yourself at all, try always to think of yourself as you really are, a perfect being, in a perfect world, governed by a perfect God; but you will do better work if you forget yourself completely and remember that there is only one Mind, God, and that God thinks and works by means of His perfect instrument, man. Recognize that the work you, the real you are doing, is absolutely perfect because it is due to the action of God, the Principle of good. When you are at work God is at work, because the real man is the activity of God, the instrument by means of which God works in the real world. ...There are no mistakes, man reflects divine wisdom, intelligence and knowledge; man knows everything he needs instantly.[4]

The artist is therefore, like all men, an instrument of God. By sublimating his Self to a wider all-embracing

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1. 'Waarom en Hoe ek Skilder.' ibid. [Wanneer ek kyk na die wonderbare skepping, wat gedurig tot my spreek deur sy harmonie van kleure en vorms, vervul die wondere samehang van eenheid en eindeloosheid my met 'n groot verlange en drang om uit te druk wat ek deurleef en so my Skepper te loof en te aanbid. Ek dink dit is wat elke kunstenaar in homself voel - ten minste dit is wat skilder vir my beteken.]

2. ibid. p.39. [...Aangesien skilder my lewenswerk is, my oog ontwikkel is om kleur en ontwerp te sien.]

3. Rawson, F.L. True Prayer in Art; London: Crystal Press, n.d. inscribed in front: 'Magdalena Laubser Antwerpen Belgium '19. From my dearest.'

4. ibid. pp. 31-32.

consciousness, and by reconstructing the perfection of beauty and harmony (a product of law and order) which he sees in nature, the artist becomes a creator.

> God is the Principle of law and order, and man is therefore governed by law and order. Man does perfect work, reflecting these ideas and grouping them together into new combinations which radiate out in infinite Mind, giving infinite beings joy and happiness, and man receives ideas in exchange which give him joy and happiness. Mortal mind cannot possibly stop this action of the unfolding and reflecting of God's ideas, for there is only one Mind, God.[1]

It can be seen from this passage that the principles of Christian Science were crucial in the formulation of many of Laubser's ideas on art and nature, e.g., her concept of the cyclical process of 'giving' and 'receiving',[2] her belief in an underlying structure and stability in Nature,[3] the responsibility of the artist to convey the perfection of Creation,[4] etc.

In another book, entitled Modern Art, which Laubser was given by Balwé in London in 1918, she marked the following passages:

> ...we need not sniff at a reasonably good representation so long as it does not pretend to be something different. If it does, we have a right to apply our strictest rule of criticism and to point out that just as goodness does not begin until duty is lost in love, so art does not begin until representation is forgotten as an aim.[5]

Also:

> ...his [Blake's] idea of paint as a substance to be used not for imitating something else but for its own sake as a means of expression is only now generally accepted in practice.[6]

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1. ibid., pp.44-5.
2. See p.155.
3. See p.86.
4. See p.85.
5. Marriott, C. Modern Art; London: Colour Ltd., n.d., p.10.
6. ibid.

And finally:

> ...it stands to reason that the more a man is convinced that the invisible world is the real one, the less inclined he will be to use his materials for imitating appearances. Instead, he will try to get out of his materials what they have to say about reality in their own language.[1]

Her particular interest in these passages shows an awareness of an aesthetic. Although Laubser may not have marked these passages as early as 1920, her painting style in Italy argues for an acceptance that, by this stage, (as a result both of her belief in Christian Science, and because of the influence of Van Gogh's ideas on art), she was formulating these thoughts about the relationship between art and nature. Thus aspects in nature, such as vitality, are invoked in the work of art by formal pictorial means, viz., distortion, colour abstraction, simplification, etc.

Stylistic Influences

The change and development in Laubser's styles and the co-existence of a variety of different styles can in many instances be explained by looking at Laubser's sources and influences. Because of the isolation of Lake Garda, it is very unlikely that Laubser came into contact with contemporary artists and art during this period. The development during her stay in Italy is probably the result of influences from paintings which she saw either in the original, or in reproduction, before she came to Italy, i.e., probably while she was in Belgium but, because of lack of documentation, some speculation is consequent.

Balwé stated that nobody had any important or long lasting influence on her whilst she was in Italy:

> Regarding her artistic attitude she was absolutely individual and any influences in this regard she quickly translated into her own form of expression

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1. ibid.

> so that one can scarcely speak of a permanent influence in any direction with her....The art historian so often tries to put an artist in a certain category, into a certain drawer. That may be so of many followers [of artists] but the more personal and unique an artist is, the less does one do him justice with such a definition.[1]

No artist can be 'absolutely individual', and it appears that, by denying 'permanent influence', and writing rather of influences which she 'translated into her own form of expression', Balwé is referring to general stimuli to which Laubser was exposed. It would be virtually impossible for Laubser, having gone from South Africa to the exciting environment overseas, not to have absorbed something of the artistic trends and styles. Some of the possible sources and influences which cannot be overlooked are the work of Arnold Balwé, the German Expressionists, Cézanne, the work and writings of the Neo-Impressionists and Van Gogh, and the general developments of late nineteenth and early twentieth century art towards an emphasis on the flatness of the picture plane, simplification of form and liberation of colour.

Arnold Balwé

Arnold Balwé may have influenced Laubser both by his own art, particularly what he had learnt in Antwerp, and by filtering influences from other artists. As a Prix de Rome candidate, Balwé would have undoubtedly been aware of the general developments of late nineteenth and early twentieth century art.[2] It is difficult to assess his precise influence, as no examples of his paintings from that period have been seen by the author.[3] A Christmas card sent to Laubser in South Africa in 1921 by Arnold Balwé (and presumably drawn by him), depicts

fig.60, p.272

1. In a letter to Botha, dated 5 Feb. 1964. (Botha, appendix 3, p.185). [Author's translation].

2. Sailer, p.4.

3. See p.64, footnote 7.

sailing boats on the water with the sun low on the horizon. Although it is only an ink drawing, it shows a similar theme and the same stylistic characteristics to be seen in Laubser's Italian works, viz., a focus on reflection, clear outlines and simplification of detail, and a high horizon line, all of which create a stylization and flattening of any spatial recession. Perhaps, therefore, Balwé influenced Laubser, but one cannot exclude a reciprocal influence from Laubser to Balwé.

German Expressionism

Perhaps too, Laubser saw work by the German Expressionists whilst she was in Munich.[1] If she did have contact with Expressionism, this might have contributed to her decision to return to Germany later. However, there is confusion about the date of her first exposure to Expressionism. According to Dr. Jan Schutte,[2] who interviewed the artist on several occasions, Laubser had visited Munich briefly whilst she was in Belgium, and saw an exhibition of work by German Expressionists. No evidence of this visit is to be found in her passports, so perhaps Laubser was referring to her brief stay in Munich during August 1920.[3] Furthermore, in an interview with Dr. Schutte, 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser', Schutte asked: 'Was dit die eerste keer dat jy kennis gemaak het daarmee [met ekspressionisme]? Toe jy in Berlyn gekom het [in 1922]?' Laubser answered: 'Ja.'[4] On the basis of comparison of style of works from ca.1920/1 to works executed whilst she was in Germany, ca. 1922-4,

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1. Botha, p.12.

2. In a letter to Botha dated 10.4.1964.

3. Refer to p.74, footnote 3.

4. Afrikaans Service, S.A.B.C., 12 May 1972. See typescript, U.S.79/3/1, p.8. [Was it the first time that you came into contact with it [Expressionism]? When you came to Berlin [in 1922]?]

it seems improbable that Laubser had examined German Expressionist works at length, prior to December 1922 when she arrived in Berlin.

Reproductions

It is not impossible that she saw reproductions of the work of other artists whilst in Italy. This is perhaps what Balvé Jnr. meant when he wrote: 'Naturally Maggie Laubser looked carefully at all the modern painters (for instance the French) and learnt a lot from that.'[1]

Cézanne

Visual similarities between Laubser's work and that of Cézanne, suggest that she was possibly influenced by him although she did not make specific reference to his work. In Cézanne's work and in several of Laubser's still lifes from this period, unconventional space relationships and a distortion of objects are evident, e.g., the drawing of the ellipse in Five apples in a dish and Three oranges in dish. Similar distortions occur when there is asymmetry around a central point. Thus the various aspects of an object are seen from different viewpoints. In Orange, lemon, pot and tray and Five lemons and dish, the left handle of the tray and the right handle of the dish respectively, are seen from a side view, whilst the centres of the objects are seen from frontal view. Similar distortions occur in Cézanne's art.[2] As in Cézanne's work,[3] the spatial relationships of objects in some of Laubser's work are very unclear. In Orange, lemon, pot and tray one wonders if the tray is hanging on the wall, as this would be the only explanation for the fact that the tray has dropped behind the table. It seems probable, on the basis of these visual similarities, that Laubser saw reproductions of Cézanne's work. However, Laubser's work has none of the sophisticated deliberation of Cézanne's.

nos.239;219 verso

no.224,pl.2 p.203;no.231

no.224, pl.22,p.203

1. In a letter to Botha dated 5 Feb. 1964. (Botha, appendix 3, p.185). [Author's translation].

2. See the handle of the milk can in Fruits, napkin and milkcan. Dorival, B. Cézanne; Continental Book Centre , n.d., plate 63.

3. See the bugle in Still life with apples. Schapiro, M. Paul Cézanne; New York: Abrams, 1962, p.101.

Neo-Impressionism

no.224, pl.22,p.203

The influence of Neo-Impressionism may be seen in the quasi-pointillist still life, Orange, lemon, pot and tray. This work is painted in a style quite different from any other works during this period or in fact in her oeuvre. It is the only painting traced, in which forms are structured by small but clearly differentiated brushmarks, an experiment which she never again repeated. In this work it is evident that she extended her palette and used more saturated colours: reds, blues, yellows, purples, oranges. There is an emphasis on reflection, and light is represented by the division of colours and dotted brushstrokes, without using dark degraded tones for the shadows. Shadows are coloured: the blue and red of the lower part of the dresser, the red of the receding surface of the orange and the blue of the underside of the lemon. Contrasting colours are used: blue and orange, (the orange fruit and vase); and blue and yellow, (the reflection of the lemon and the blue horizontal surface of the dresser). This could also be seen to be a consequence of her knowledge of Van Gogh's writings on colour practice - although the influence of Neo-Impressionism should not be ignored. Whereas the Impressionists regarded the complementary of yellow as violet and that of orange as blue, Van Gogh wrote: 'There is no blue without yellow and orange, and when you paint blue, paint yellow and orange as well.'[1]

In this still life some of the principles of Neo-Impressionism are adopted, e.g., coloured shadows, divided colour, juxtaposition of near complementaries and dotted brushwork. However, whereas the Neo-Impressionists aimed to obtain luminosity and vibration as well as an overall colour harmony, in this still life by Maggie Laubser the intense contrasts, the

1. Ludovici, p.48.

isolation of colour and, to a certain extent, the large brushstrokes, distinguish her work from that of the Neo-Impressionists.

Laubser had opportunities to come into contact with Neo-Impressionism either through their writings or through reproductions. She was in Holland during 1913-1914, where the Hague school of Neo-Impressionists, viz., H. P. Bremmer, J. Vijlbrief, J. Aarts, had reached its height about twenty years before, in 1895.[1] Jan Toorop was an important figure and,

> although he turned to Art Nouveau and the arts and crafts in the early 1890's, he continued to paint landscapes and occasional figures out of doors in the Neo-Impressionist technique.[2]

In 1909, only five years before Laubser's stay in Holland, Mondrian was using 'a mosaic divisionism'[3] in his dune series.

Laubser then spent four years in England where Neo-Impressionism had also become known. In 1910 an exhibition of contemporary artists at the Grafton Galleries in London, included examples of Neo-Impressionism.[4] Philip Wilson Steer, the professor of painting at the Slade during the time Laubser studied there, had exhibited in Brussels in 1889 and again in 1891 with Les XX[5] which included works by Seurat, Cross, Pissarro and lowland Neo-Impressionists such as Toorop, Van Rysselberghe and Henry van de Velde. A reproduction of Portrait of Oscar de Clerck, by the Belgian artist, Jean de Clerck, appeared in Allies in Art, a book which Laubser had in her possession in London in

fig.59a, p.271

1. Herbert, R.L. Neo-Impressionism; New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1968, p.245.
2. ibid. p.198.
3. ibid. p.247. Laubser might have seen examples of this style.
4. ibid.
5. ibid. pp.242 and 243.

1918. In this work, executed in highly keyed tints of violets, pinks, blues, yellows and greens, form is constructed by means of relatively large and clearly differentiated brushmarks. Broken brushwork and intense colours, mainly pinks and reds, are also seen in Van Rysselberghe's Le Cap Bénat, reproduced in Allies in Art.[1] It is probable that these works influenced Laubser, in her interpretation of Orange, lemon, pot and tray.

no.224, pl.22,p.203

When she moved to Belgium for a year from 1919 to 1920, she might have seen the work of these Belgian Neo-Impressionists in the original. By 1890 Neo-Impressionism was the dominant new style in Belgium with Van Rysselberghe, Van de Velde, Finch and Lemmen all members of the movement.[2] By the mid-1890's the interest in the arts and crafts claimed most of the Belgian Neo-Impressionists.[3] However, in 1904 La Libre Esthétique held a retrospective exhibition of Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist work[4] and in 1911 La Libre Esthétique held a retrospective exhibition of Cross's work.[5] Interest in Neo-Impressionism therefore continued in Belgium, even after the dissolution of the Neo-Impressionist group, and Laubser, perhaps, saw more illustrations of Belgian or French Neo-Impressionism in catalogues, reviews and/or articles.

She might also have come into contact indirectly with Neo-Impressionism through Van Gogh's work. He met Signac in 1887[6] and painted many pictures in a quasi neo-impressionist technique. Perhaps too, she

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1. Marriott, C. and Claes, J Allies in Art; London: Colour Ltd., n.d., pl.LXVI.
2. Herbert, p.243.
3. ibid.
4. ibid. p.246.
5. ibid. p.247.
6. ibid. p.242.

saw reproductions of early Fauve works which were strongly influenced by Neo-Impressionism. Even if her knowledge of Neo-Impressionism was only theoretical, it would still explain the change in her palette in Orange, lemon, pot and tray. (no.224, pl.22,p.203)

Although this still life,(Orange, lemon, pot and tray), is an isolated experiment executed in a style which she did not develop, it is significant for the change in her palette towards more saturated colours. (no.224, pl.22,p.203) Despite the broken divided brushwork there is a preoccupation with the precise definition of shape, and contours are not eliminated as in the quasi-impressionist work Lane with autumn trees of the Belgian period. (no.141, pl.10,p.197) The Italian still life, although it does not adhere strictly to the scientific approach of Neo-Impressionism, shows a shift from the more plein-airist works of the Belgian period. This shift to flat planes of colour and intense contrasts of saturated hue is illustrated in other works from this period as well. This development will be examined before postulating further possible sources and influences.

The increased intensity of colour in other works from the Italian period is evident if the red of Poppies, painted in Belgium, is compared to that in the suit lapel in Man with red hat and green coat,[1] the red of the sail in Boats in harbour, or with the red of the Poppies 1921.[2] Because colours are more saturated, there is also a greater contrast of hues. For instance, in Three lemons in dish on patterned cloth the yellows, pinks and greens are bolder and the contrast is therefore greater than the pink heather within the overall violet blue range and dull brown green of Scottish landscape with heather painted whilst Laubser was in Britain. The greater intensity of colour also results in greater contrasts of opposite or complementary colours, as seen in many works.

Laubser's palette

(no.153, pl.13,p.199)

(no.165, pl.16,p.200)

(no.230, pl.25,p.205)

(no.72, pl.4,p.194)

1. no.261, pl.29, p.207.
2. no.236, pl.27, p.206.

For example, in Poppies, the red poppies are intensified by the green stalks and the yellow vase is contrasted against the violet table. In Man with red hat and green coat, the red lapel clearly intensifies its opposite: the green of the jacket, as does the blue drapery and the oranges in the still lifes. In Trees by lake,[1] the green trees are outlined by a contrasting orange. In other works, contrasts that might have been too intense, are separated by a more neutral colour, e.g., in Boat in harbour the vivid orange and blue are not juxtaposed but are separated by a degraded violet on the left sail and by a toned orange brown on the right sail.

no.236, pl.27,p.206

no.261, pl.29,p.207

no.229, pl.24,p.204

no.157 recto, pl.14,p.199

In some paintings, large areas of saturated pigment are applied, which gives an impression of a higher degree of saturation than the same intensity of colour in a smaller area. Refer to the large expanses of blue in Trees by lake, Lake Garda[2] and Trees by lake.[3] Although spectral colours are more common in the Italian works than in the British and Belgian paintings, at times there is still tonal degradation of shadow areas, but generally a greater use of coloured shadows and a focus on coloured reflections is seen. In the boat series[4] and in the still lifes with oranges, poppies and lemons,[5] shadows have been rendered in violet. In Orange jug and three limes on table, green and violet describe the receding surface of the jug; the bottom of the jug is rendered in red.

no.203, pl.19,p.202

no.205, pl.20,p.202

no.233, pl.26,p.205

1. no.205, pl.20, p.202.

2. no.181, pl.17, p.201.

3. See Cézanne's views of The Bay from L'Estaque which show a similar expanse of blue. The subtle variations and gradations of value and hue would probably not have reproduced well and thus the flatness of the colours would have been intensified in reproductions. If Laubser saw such reproductions they might have influenced her.

4. nos.156,157 recto, pl.14, p.199.

5. nos.225-237, pls.23-27, pp.204-206.

In the majority of works from the Italian period, shadows are coloured, hues are more saturated, the palette is more luminous and the mutual intensification of hues through contrast of near complementaries is frequently apparent. Several factors explain this development.

Influence of Van Gogh on her palette

The importance of Van Gogh's writings for Laubser, in her development towards more saturated colours, cannot be underestimated. She marked the following passage on colour written by Ludovici in the introduction to her edition of Van Gogh's letters: 'the characteristic I chiefly admire in them [Van Gogh's paintings] is their gradual glorification of colour, and neglect of values.'[1] Van Gogh stressed the importance of colour in several letters. He explained how he shifted from the dark tonal palette of his earlier years:

> ...why did I not get to know this country at 25 years instead of at 35 years of age! In those days, however, I was mad on grays, or rather on the absence of colour. I always dreamt of a Millet, and had my friends in the artistic circle of Mauve and of Israels etc.'[2]

and

> It is impossible to attach the same importance both to values and to colours....One must choose one's way; at least this is what I hope to do, and my way will be the road to colour.[3]

Brilliant sunshine accentuates bright colours and clarity of form, and therefore the Italian sun and light probably provided a further stimulus. Van Gogh noticed the effect of the Southern sun on colours and stressed it several times in his letters:

> There are several themes here [in the South] which have exactly the same character as in Holland: the only difference lies in the colour.

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1. p.xxxi.
2. p.48.
3. p.137.

> Everywhere a cadium yellow, produced by the burning sun, and in addition a green and blue of such extraordinary intensity![1]

and again: 'the southern sky and the Mediterranean both tend to produce very intense orange colouring, as their blue is very strong.'[2] Van Gogh's emphasis on the effect of the sun on the strength of colours might, in all probability, have influenced Maggie Laubser.

Laubser's use of colour, however, despite the change in her palette, always remained ostensibly more intuitive than scientific. The latter was relatively unimportant to her as can be seen by her marking of the following passages written by Ludovici in the introduction to her edition of Van Gogh's letters: 'Light, the play of complementaries, the breaking up of light, the study of values! - little things please little minds!'[3] and

> while in concentrating upon technique and in finding their inspiration in such secondary matters as the treatment of light, values and complementaries, besides revealing the poverty of their artistic instincts they merely delayed the awakening which was bound to come and which already today is not so very far distant - the awakening to the fact that the artist, the architect, the painter, the poet and the preacher, are bankrupt unless some higher purpose and direction, some universal aim and aspiration, animate their age, inspire them in their work...[4]

Ludovici, in the above passage, makes a distinction between technical scientific innovations in painting and a 'higher purpose'. Having examined some of Laubser's attitudes, it is clear that she would have agreed with Ludovici that the spiritual aspirations of an artist are of greater importance than scientific technical knowledge.

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1. p.95.
2. p.46.
3. p.xviii.
4. p.xx.

It has been seen that the major change during the Italian period was in Laubser's palette. This change was most likely due to a number of factors: the intensity of light and sunshine in Italy, a general development in Laubser's attitude to light and colour as a result of her interest in Christian Science and probably confirmed by her reading of Van Gogh's letters, possible influences from Arnold Balwé, possible visual contact with German Expressionism whilst in Munich, general stimulation from reproductions, the work and/or writings of the Neo-Impressionists and, probably most important of all, Van Gogh's writings on colour. Despite this new development, however, the changes are not consistent within the period and a variety of styles are co-existent.

Different styles

These different styles of her oil paintings may be divided broadly into three groups:

1. There is a decorative stylization evident in the flat planes of bright colour contrasted in clearly and simply demarcated shapes.[1] This is carried to its furthest point in paintings such as Lake Garda,[2] Trees by lake,[3] Trees by lake,[4] and the two works of Cypresses[5] and Cypresses by lake.[6]

2. Other paintings show a looser technique and more painterly style, in which areas of board are sometimes left unpainted,[7] particularly in Boats in harbour and Trees by lake with boats, Italy.[8] A freer more vigorous brushstroke and more subdued colouring is evident, seen particularly in From my studio window, Italy

no.164, pl.15,p.200

no.183

1. nos.156, 157 recto, 179-181, 203-205, 209-213, pls.14,17,19,20, pp.199-202.

2. no.181, pl.17, p.201.

3. no.203, pl.19, p.202.

4. no.205, pl.20, p.202.

5. no.211.

6. no.213.

7. nos.163 recto, 164, 183, 184, 192 recto, 201 verso, 198, 215, pls.15, 21, pp.200,203.

8. no.198.

and in From my studio window and Landscape with cypresses and olive trees. (no.184, no.215, pl.21,p.203)

3. In the rest of the paintings - the majority - there is a looseness of technique somewhere between the works of group 1 and 2, and there is a careful structuring of form, colour, tone and brushmarks, particularly evident in the still lifes.

One can perhaps argue that the flatter and more stylized painting style, as seen in the works of the first group, as well as works painted with more saturated colours, viz., Poppies (no.236, pl.27,p.206) date prior to the more sober subdued works of most of the third group. This would suggest that Laubser, on her arrival in Italy, experimented with a new style and then returned to a more conventional style, having benefited from the disciplines of the initial style, viz., the simplification of form and outline, broader planes and flatter spatial illusion. There are two factors which would seem to disprove this: Firstly, a painting Trees by lake (no.288) dated by the artist to 1922, shows the characteristics of the works in group 1. If this work is correctly dated, it suggests that after developing towards a style in which a more sober palette and less outlined forms are evident, she retrogressed to the earlier stage in the works of gr up 1. Secondly, even whilst experimenting with expressionism in Germany, she painted portraits in a more conservative style and tonal palette. (nos.338,339, 374,375)
This indicates that during a given period she painted in more than one style simultaneously. This explanation seems to be more probable in the case of the Italian period, i.e., she did not develop from the style of the works in group 1 to those in groups 2 and 3 but painted in all styles concurrently.

Within each of the three groups mentioned, colour plays a different rôle. In the works of the first group, the colour is bright and areas are strongly contrasted. This occurs also in works of the third group, e.g., Poppies 1920; but the most important difference is the flat application of pigment in the paintings of the first group. These homogeneous areas of unmodelled colour, together with the clarity and simplification of form, emphasize the two-dimensionality of the picture plane.

Paintings of the first group

no.236, pl.27,p.206

Forms are reduced to their simplest by means of essential outlines and the elimination of superfluous detail. Line is of the utmost importance and by calling attention to itself rather than what it represents, stresses the picture plane. In Lake Garda and Trees by lake, the well defined edges of forms emphasize surface design and turn three dimensional forms into two dimensional planes, which have an almost decorative quality. Shadows are avoided and modelling is renounced. Where shading and shadows are included, they are interpreted within the context of planar design rather than volume. Broad homogeneous areas of colour are used in strong contrast and the silhouette, which excludes a suggestion of volume, is often used. In Cypresses the silhouettes of the trees are detached and brought close to the picture plane. By a repetition of similar colours over the picture plane, facilitating pictorial integration, objects in the background are linked with objects in the foreground and a deep spatial recession is partially negated. For example, the violet mountains relate to the violet on the tree trunks in Trees by lake and the violet in the foreground of Lake Garda links across to the mountains in the background.

no.181,pl.17, p.201;no.205, pl.20,p.202

no.213

no.203, pl.19,p.202
no.181, pl.17,p.201

With the simplification of forms as seen, for example, in Boat in harbour, there is a suppression of detail in the background against which the fore-

nos.156; 157 recto, pl.14, p.199

ground motif is seen. This relationship between the foreground motif and the background, tends to reduce the structure of the painting to superimposed layers, which is further emphasized by the high horizon line tilting the scene on to the picture plane and the lack of modelling which denies depth. This leads to a spatial ambiguity. In the two works of Cypresses and olive trees with sun's rays and the painting Cypresses, the trees, simplified into flat overlapping planes, are largely unmodelled. The edges of the trees create a decorative rhythm from the bottom to the top of the canvas, not from the foreground to the background, for space has been flattened into a series of superimposed layers. Space now becomes planar and two-dimensional as opposed to perspectival and three dimensional. Compare, for example, to a painting Three Pines by C. Maresco Pearce, reproduced in Modern Art, a book given to Laubser.

nos.209,210
no.211
fig.59b,p.272

In late nineteenth century and early twentieth century painting, there was a development towards simplification of detail, an assertion of the essential flatness of the picture plane and stylization and generalization of form. This occurred as a result of many factors, the influence of Japanese woodcuts being of prime importance. Laubser might have seen Japanese prints. Alternatively she may have been influenced indirectly, via artists whose work show the influence of the Japanese print or who wrote about Japanese art, e.g., Van Gogh. In a letter to Emile Bernard, included in Ludovici's edition of his letters, Van Gogh wrote:

General influences on style of paintings in first group

> For the Japanese pays no heed to the play of light, and paints flat tones one beside the other - characteristic lines, which seize the movement or the form in a simple manner.[1]

1. p.46.

and in another letter to Bernard:

> I shall at once begin by saying that the country in these parts seems to me just as beautiful as Japan as far as the clearness of the air and the cheerful colouring are concerned. In the landscape the water looks like sheets of fine emerald or of a rich blue of the shade with which we are familiar in crape prints.[1]

In the basic tenet that the surface of a picture is essentially flat and that this flatness should not be denied, but rather emphasized, the artists were stressing the autonomy of the picture. This may be summed up by Maurice Denis' now famous statement: 'A picture, before being a war horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered by colours arranged in a certain order.'[2] In Laubser's works grouped under the first section, the predominant characteristics are the emphasis on the two dimensionality of the picture plane, clear definition of form and bold colours. In stressing the autonomy of the picture plane therefore, it is evident that Laubser's painting was conceived in the general artistic direction inaugurated in the late nineteenth century.

In the second group of works, colour is not as bold, pigment is more loosely and vigorously applied, and brushwork is freer and more expressive. The looseness of technique, in which areas of board are left unpainted, could possibly indicate that they are working sketches and not finished paintings, e.g., Lake scene with trees, Italy. However, From my studio window, Italy, From my studio window and Landscape with cypresses and olive trees do not appear to be unfinished. Perhaps the ink and watercolour technique that she first used in Belgium, and then in Italy,

Paintings of the second group

no. 201 verso

no. 183, no. 184

no. 215, pl. 21, p. 203

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1. p.40.

2. Haftmann, W. Painting in the Twentieth Century; London: Lund Humphries, 1968, vol.1, pp.41-2.

encouraged her to also experiment with a looser technique in her oil paintings.

Influence of Van Gogh

An analysis of a work from the second group, Landscape with cypresses and olive trees[1] will show the influence that Van Gogh had on Laubser. Apart from the iconographical similarity to his work, the palette, viz., the violet furrows, the yellow green grass and the blue sky, is also seen in the work of Van Gogh. Even if Laubser had seen no colour reproductions of his work at this stage, she would have read about his colour usage in the edition of his letters in her possession:

> When I paint direct from nature, I always try to seize what is essential by means of line. Then I fill up the defined spaces (whether they have been expressed or not; for they have been felt at all events) with simple flat tones as follows: all ground or soil will contain the same violet tone, practically the whole of the sky will be kept blue in tone, while foliage will be blue-green or yellow-green (either the blue or the yellow may be deliberately intensified) in short, no photographic imitation, that is the chief thing.[2]

In the same letter he described his technique:

> I lash the canvas with irregular strokes and let them stand. Impasto - bare patches here and there - some places left quite unfinished - others overpainted - brutal touches, and the result is... sufficiently disconcerting and irritating to displease people who have preconceived notions about technique.[3]

It seems probable therefore that the rhythmic calligraphic line in the works painted from Laubser's studio window, as well as in Landscape with cypresses and olive trees, shows the influence of Van Gogh's brushwork for Laubser once wrote: 'I like [Van Gogh's] work for his deep honesty, the beautiful colours and the fine powerful rhythmic line.'[4]

nos.183,184

no.215, pl.21,p.203

1. no.215, pl.21, p.203.
2. Ludovici, p.45.
3. ibid.
4. 'On Art', U.S.79/4/3, p.4.

Furthermore, in several of the paintings from the second group, areas of board are left bare to act as important colour patches. This might also be a result of Van Gogh's influence - 'bare patches here and there - some places left quite unfinished - others overpainted ...'.[1] In Boats in harbour the boats are defined by the warm orange-brown of the cardboard, as are the houses and road in Houses by lake. This positive use of the cardboard surface is seen again in Trees by lake with boat, Italy. Parts of the trees and the sails of the boat are painted in yellow-ochre, the same colour as the cardboard. Areas of cardboard are left unpainted, and these show through as colour patches which relate to the chromatically and tonally similar yellow-ochre pigment. The boat in the distance is chromatically similar to the trees in the foreground and is therefore brought onto the picture plane. In addition, being a light colour, it does not recede but comes forward and creates a spatial shift. By using the cardboard as a positive colour element in the picture, Laubser also reaffirmed the autonomy of the picture plane. Colour is also used structurally by stressing and accentuating the rhythm of a composition, e.g., the different tints and shades of blue in the sea in Trees by lake with boat, Italy and the bands of colour on the ground emphasize the repetitive rhythm of the composition.

no.164, pl.15,p.200

no.192 recto

no.199 recto

no.199

Stylistically the paintings of the third group fall between those of groups 1 and 2 - showing characteristics of both. Forms are clearly defined but there is not the same stress on outline as in the paintings of group 1, and colours are not as bright and are not as flatly applied. The brushwork, although more vigorous than in the works of group 1, is not as loose as in those of group 2. However,

Paintings of the third group

1. Refer to footnote 3, p.106.

individual brushstrokes can be seen and planes are more broken than in the paintings of group 1. In these works there is a definite emphasis on the solidity of objects, particularly in the still lifes and portraits. Whereas in the first group, colour calls attention to shape, i.e., flat images, in the still lifes of group 3, colour emphasizes three dimensional form.

In most of the portraits, the palette is subdued and colours are desaturated, e.g., Self portrait, Italian girl and Young girl;[1] brushwork is structured and flat and form is determined by colour gradations, tonal changes and directional brushstrokes. In Man with red hat and green coat the vivid red and juxtaposition of contrasting colours echoes the palette of some of the works in group 1, but the tonal modelling and dark brown background is more similar in handling to works of group 3.

In the still lifes three dimensional form and spatial recession are also established by colour changes, tonal modelling and directional brushstroke. In Five oranges and drapery the form of the oranges is established by tonal modelling - reflected light in the shadows of the receding surfaces of the oranges is defined by blue pigment, while the high-

no.247, pl.28,p.206; nos.249;251

no.261, pl.29,p.207

no.229, pl.24,p.204

1. Italian woman and Young girl have not been seen in the original by the author. Botha describes the palette: 'In die Italiaanse meisie in rooi is die kleur baie subtiel. Die dominerende kleur is die rooi van die baadjie wat gekontrasteer word deur die blou-swart in die hare en die sagte blougrys in die agtergrond. Die rooi word gesteun deur die bruin-swart in die rok. Die verf is breed en ryk aangewend en dit toon nie die matheid van baie ander werke uit hierdie periode nie. Die Italiaanse boerin sluit nie alleenlik ten opsigte van behandeling by hierdie werk aan nie, maar ook ten opsigte van die paletkeuse; rooi, blougrys en swart.' p.28. [In the Italian girl in red the colour is very subtle. The dominant colour is the red of the jacket that is contrasted with the blue-black in the hair and the soft blue-grey in the background. The red is backed-up by the brown-black in the dress. The paint is broadly and richly applied and does not resemble the matt surface of many other works of this period. The Italian farmer woman fits in with this work not only on account of the handling, but also because of the choice of palette: red blue-grey and black.]

lights of desaturated orange project forward. In the two versions of Lemons on a branch,[1] the work Three lemons in dish on patterned cloth and Orange jug and three limes on table,[2] colour gradation defines changes in direction of planes and surfaces. In Poppies, the right side of the conical vase recedes and this is indicated not only by a change in value and hue, but also by long vertical brushstrokes which differ from the horizontal and shorter vertical brushstrokes in the area in light. Brushstroke is therefore not only instrumental in building up form, but also helps in establishing shadow areas, i.e., Laubser is using brushstrokes to structure her painting.

no.230, pl.25, p.205

no.236, pl.27, p.206

There are several works which cannot be placed within any group. For example, Boats in harbour,[3] Lake scene with boats, Italy,[4] Village by Lake Garda with boats[5] and Trees by lake with boat[6] all have a surface quality which is most unusual in Laubser's work. This is probably due to the fact that they have been 'restored.'[7]

Exceptions to the groups

Certain works cannot be placed within an exact group as they show characteristics of more than one group: e.g., Lake scene with boats, Italy and Lake scene with boats and trees, Italy (characteristics of groups 2 and 3), and Trees by lake with boat, Italy (characteristics of groups 1 and 2). In Lake scene with boats the flat decorative shape of the cloud resembles

no.196

no.197

no.199 recto

no.175

1. nos.225, pl.23, p.204; 226.

2. no.233, pl.26, p.205.

3. no.165, pl.16, p.200.

4. no.177 recto.

5. no.190.

6. no.201 recto, pl.18, p.201.

7. According to Mr. M. Farmer, Collector's Gallery, Johannesburg, who had Trees by lake with boat no.201 in his gallery at one stage, the painting had been cleaned. Village by Lake Garda with boats no.190 was sent to the Lister Gallery, Johannesburg, for cleaning and reframing.

the treatment of the objects in the first group, while the looser and more vigorous brushmarks depicting the waves are more similar to the style of the paintings in the third group. Botha describes it in the following way:

> Dubbelslagtigheid kenmerk egter dié werk: dit is nog dekoratief nog realisties. Aan die eenkant gebruik sy 'n lewendige tegniek in die waterkringe en aan die ander kant werk sy die vlakke so dekoratief af dat hulle enigsins plakaatagtig aandoen. Die stilering van vlakke en veral dié in die wolk versteur die algemene harmonie in die werk. Hierdie bewuste stilering herinner aan die monumentaal-dekoratiewe styl, maar dit is hier nie geïntigreerd nie en sodoende val dit buite die behandeling van die res van die skildery.[1]

Bio-graphical

It can be seen therefcre, that not only did Laubser paint in a variety of styles concurrently whilst in Italy, but also, probably because she was so secure and fulfilled at this time, she painted and drew prolifically. Towards the end of 1920, nowever, Balwé Senior was not well,[2] and, although he improved in health during December,[3] he died in April or May 1921.

> My vriend was toe baie siek en toe neem ons vir hom na Bad Kiesingen [Kissingen]. Bad Kiesingen [sic.] het hy 'n groot vriend gehad en wat hy vertroue in gehad het maar sy hart was baie swak

1. [Duality characterizes this work: it is both decorative and realistic. On the one hand there is a lively technique in the curves of the water and on the other hand she treats the planes so decoratively that they are almost poster-like. The stylization of planes especially in the cloud upsets the overall harmony of the work. This conscious stylization is reminiscent of the monumental-decorative style but it is not integrated in this work and subsequently falls outside the handling of the rest of the painting.] Botha, p.28.

2. Refer to the letter from Balwé Snr. dated 29.11.20 (U.S.79/5/114). Refer also to the photograph of Balwé Snr. in a wheelchair, alongside Balwé Jnr. and Laubser, fig.61, p.273.

3. Refer to the letter from Balwé Snr. dated 6.12.20 (U.S.79/5/117).

> en die 't ingegee en toe het die tyd gekom, die einde was daar.[1]

Laubser returned to Germany to Bad Kissingen some time after mid-April 1921.[2] The exact date of Balwé's death is not certain. It appears that Balwé Snr. had joined them in Italy and that Laubser and Balwé Jnr. took him to Bad Kissingen in mid-April 1921.[3] A photograph inscribed 'Arnold and I at my dear Pal's grave Germany May 26th 1921',[4] indicates that he died before the end of May.[5] Sometime after 3rd June she returned to Italy to Venice[6] where she stayed certainly for part of July.[7] Whilst in Venice she visited the Doges' Palace as can be seen from the photograph inscribed 'Palace of the Doges in Venice. Do you see me at the fountain?' This is almost certainly the time that she drew the Studies : gondoliers and the ink and watercolour drawings: Sketches: portrait of a man - Arnold Balwé?; houses[8] and Sketches: village street; mountain probably also date to this period. In August

fig.62, p.273
fig.63, p.274
no.223
no.221
no.222

1. 'Die Wêreld van Maggie Laubser' Interview with Dr. Schutte, 12 May 1972. Typescript U.S.79/3/1, p.7. [My friend was very sick and so we took him to Bad Kissingen. In Bad Kissingen he had a close friend in whom he had a lot of confidence, but his heart was very weak and it gave in and so the time came, the end was there.] This implies that Balwé Snr. had joined them in Italy.

2. A visa issued in Milan on 15.4.1921, entitled her to make a return journey to Germany and back to Italy by 14.5.1921, for the purpose of visiting a critically ill uncle at Bad-Kissingen (p.428). On 2.6.1921 this visa was extended until 15.6.1921 (p.428). Letters at this time, viz., 10.5.21 (U.S.79/5/120) and 25.5.21 (U.S.79/5/121), were addressed to her in Bad Kissingen. No stamp in her passport giving the date of her entry into Germany has been identified.

3. Refer to footnotes 1 and 2 above.

4. U.S.79/24/11.

5. A letter from S. Connor Smith (U.S.79/5/121) in which he/she sympathizes with Laubser over Balwé's death, is dated as late as 25.10.21.

6. A visa issued in Munich on 3.6.1921 entitled the artist to visit Venice for a month for family affairs. (p.430).

7. Refer to the bill from the Pension La Calcina in Venice dated 9.7.21, fig.62, p.273.

8. A. Balwé accompanied Laubser to Venice. Refer to his letter to Botha dated 5.2.64.(Botha, appendix 3, p.185.) See p.75, footnote 8 of this dissertation.

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fig.62, p.273
fig.63, p.274
no.223
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1921 she returned to Milan probably in order to obtain re-entry visas into Germany[1] and she returned to Germany on 18th August 1921.[2] She left Germany virtually immediately[3] and spent a little over two weeks (if that) travelling through the continent to England.[4] This would have left her little time to paint. She left from England for South Africa on the Union Castle Line[5] and arrived home on the 19th September 1921.[6]

Conclusion

It has been shown by analysis of the paintings from this period, that her stay in Italy, like her time in Belgium was a period of experimentation for the artist, as paintings are executed in a variety of styles. However, all works from this period, despite the stylistic differences, have basic similarities. In all there is an increased saturation and luminosity of colour (to varying extents), and an obvious movement towards the establishment of the autonomy of the picture plane. This right of the art work to function as an independent reality is achieved in several ways: the essential flatness of the picture plane is constantly affirmed (particularly in works from group 1); areas of the painting ground are left uncovered, thus emphasizing the picture as a self-sufficient entity, (particularly in works of the second group); and colour sometimes becomes non-naturalistic or non-local

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1. A visa entitling her to enter and leave Germany, valid until 3.11.1921, was issued in Milan on 4.8.1921. (p.431) A visa entitling her to leave Italy via Austria and re-enter Italy, valid for one month, was issued in Milan on 10.8.1921. (p.431).

2. Refer to the stamp in her passport. (p.431).

3. A visa entitling her to return home to Cape Town via London, was issued in Munich on 18.8.1921. She was to leave between 18th and 22nd August 1921. (p.426).

4. She could not leave Germany later than 22nd August 1921 (see footnote 3) and she was home in South Africa on 19th September 1921 (see footnote 6). As the trip from Southampton to Cape Town took about two weeks, that meant she would have left England on or about the 5th September. See also the letter of 31.8.21 from H.M.Meyler (U.S.79/5/122) in which he/she writes: 'If you go this week...'.

5. See the menu for dinner on 18th September on the Union Castle Line. Appendix 6, p.448.

6. See stamp in her passport. (p.428).

and is used for expressive or decorative purposes, as opposed to imitative ends, e.g., Lake Garda and Trees by lake with boat. These tendencies, along with the many analytical and compositional sketches, indicate a shift from the plein-airism of the earlier periods and show a new attitude to the demands of art versus nature.

no.181,pl.17, p.201
no.201 recto, pl.18,p.201

A feeling of stability and structure continues to pervade her work. This is achieved by various means: clarity of shape is emphasized by simple outlines, suppression of detail and flat colours; and a tangible solidity of forms is evident in the objects of the still lifes and in the portraits. Horizontals and verticals predominate,(e.g., reflections, tall cypresses, horizons) and these evoke a sense of calm. In some cases, by their position across both vertical and horizontal planes, they establish the flatness of the picture plane, e.g., reflections. In other cases they establish a repetitive rhythm, e.g., the pergola in White blossom tree and Pink blossom tree and Trees in Courtyard and the cypresses in Landscape with cypresses and olive trees.

nos.170-174
no.217 recto
nos.218;219 recto
no.215,pl.21, p.203

Some sources and influences for her various styles were postulated and in discussion it appeared that Van Gogh was probably one of the major influences on her art at this stage. His influence was examined on several levels: viz., the affinity of their attitudes to art, nature and religion, the similarity of many of their themes and his stylistic influence on her work with particular regard to colour and brushstroke. It was suggested that Laubser might have been influenced directly, or indirectly, via her knowledge of Van Gogh's writings and/or paintings, by the following: Neo-Impressionism, the bright sunlight of the south and the flat style and bold colours of Japanese woodcuts. It was also postulated that she might have learnt of Neo-Impress-

ionist theories through seeing their work in Belgium as well as via illustrations in books, and that perhaps Cézanne influenced her particularly in her still lifes. If Laubser did see examples of German Expressionist paintings in Munich, there is no direct influence to be seen in her Italian paintings unless it was to encourage her in her shift towards a brighter palette.[1]

From the Post-Impressionists onwards there was an emphasis on simplified forms and elimination of detail (Symbolists and Art Nouveau artists), and on broad homogeneous areas of colour used decoratively to create a flat surface, (Gauguin and the Synthetists, the Nabis, the Fauves). It was suggested that as a result of the general artistic climate from the 1880's onwards, which would have also influenced Balwé Jnr., Laubser developed further the tendencies seen in some of her Belgian works, i.e., an absence of modelled forms and a simplification of shapes in which colour is flatly applied. nos.142-145

It was suggested that her attitudes to life were fundamental to the way in which she painted and therefore that her work should be seen not only against the background of the general artistic climate of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, but also within the context of her own philosophical outlook and artistic attitude.

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1. Refer to catalogue summary of German period pp.569–570, and notes to nos.289-294.

CHAPTER 6

SOUTH AFRICA, SEPTEMBER 1921 - NOVEMBER 1922

Laubser arrived in South Africa on 19th September 1921,[1] stayed for a year in the Cape, and returned to Germany in November 1922.[2]

The majority of the thirty six works from this period are portraits, and all the sitters, except for The artist's brother, are Coloured and Malay women. The remaining five paintings depict Cape homesteads and landscapes. — nos.262-283, nos.284-288

The majority of works are executed in oils. There are ten charcoal drawings. — nos.272-279, 282,283

The portraits from this period show many of the characteristics described in the third group of Italian paintings, indicating a consistent development towards liberation of colour, elimination of superfluous descriptive detail and greater structural clarity. Fairly thick paint is used to establish planes, e.g., Woman with orange patterned scarf. — no.268,pl.30, p.207

Colour is relatively intense although not fully saturated, e.g., blue in Woman without scarf and orange in the scarf in Woman with orange patterned scarf. — no.271,pl.32, p.208

In one version of this work,[3] the colours of the blue patterning on the orange scarf, being near complementaries, mutually intensify each other and changes in value are rendered by manipulation of relatively pure colour rather than degradation of colour through the addition of black and white. — no.268,pl.30, p.207;no.269, pl.31,p.208

For example, pink and ochre establish the variation in

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1. See stamp in passport (U.S.79/14/2), p.428.

2. Laubser received a new passport in Cape Town (C.T.3923) (U.S.79/14/2) on 9th November 1922, appendix 5, pp.432-447.

3. no.268, pl.30, p.207.

the brown tones of the skin; the lips, chin and irises of the eyes are blue and the corner of the eye is red. In Woman with blue scarf the shadow areas of the cheek, forehead, nose and mouth area are rendered in green while the shadow area on the chin and the irises are rendered in turquoise blue. In most portraits from this period, however, tone remains important, as volumes are modelled by gradations of light and dark, e.g., Woman without scarf and Woman with orange patterned scarf.

no.281,pl.33, p.209

nos.271,pl.32, p.208;269,pl.31, p.208

Directional brushstrokes construct form - to be seen, e.g., in the forehead and the shadow on the right hand cheek of the woman in Woman without scarf. This method of constructing form is further developed in her German portraits, e.g., Man with hat and Man. Simplification of planes is also to be seen in some of the charcoal portraits, particularly Woman without scarf. In this portrait the light falling on the woman's right cheek and forehead is depicted by a plane with clearly defined boundaries. The shadow on the left side of the face and neck is equally simple in form. The tendency to simplify form into angular planes and stylized shapes is really only further developed later in her German portraits[1] for in most of the drawings from this period more fully modelled forms are to be seen. In these charcoal portraits, there is also no particular emphasis on outline or contour as happened later in the German portraits, where there is a greater stress on line, which becomes more assertive as individual strokes are more visible.

no.271,pl.32, p.208

no.335

no.338

no.272

The predominance of portraits during this period indicates Laubser's interest in studying the face, already evident during the Italian period. Laubser's

1. nos.340, 341, 351, 380-385, 387, 391.

sensitivity and sympathetic handling of the theme of old age, seen in the Italian portrait Old woman is again manifest in Old woman without scarf. no.254 no.275

Few sitters are depicted gazing directly at the spectator. Their eyes are focused on something outside the picture area and this gaze sometimes suggests a meditative introverted thought process. This quality is further heightened by Laubser's sensitive interpretation of the features, particularly the eyes and mouth.

Although an evocative mood quality is established, Laubser's attitude to the sitter is not romantic. As she painted directly from the model and not from memory, the individuality of the sitter is stressed. She painted Coloured and Malay women for being workers on the farm, they were the most easily available models. Because she depicted subjects that were not foreign to or removed from her life, but were part of her everyday empirical experience her interpretation tended to be more descriptive than nostalgic.

Later, towards the end of her stay in Germany and on her return to South Africa in 1924, she painted portraits of blacks,[1] in which there is an emphasis on a general type, rather than specific peculiarities. Some were sketched or painted from memory or imagination and primitive attributes and exotic associations were stressed. This romantic interpretation was, however, a very temporary phase, in which the overt emphasis on the exotic and primitive resulted from her contact with German Expressionism. It was the interpretation evident in the 1921 South African portraits, that Laubser was to develop in her later (post 1930) portraits, particularly the charcoal drawings.

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1. nos.418-420, 325 verso, 422, 298 verso, 423 recto, 428.

When Laubser returned to South Africa, landscapes and portraits were still the predominant motifs painted by the local artists. Few artists were interested in painting indigenous people and the Coloureds and Malays. Hugo Naudé painted portraits whose titles indicate the artist's ethnological interest, viz., Hottentot Captain and Griqua woman. He also painted portraits of the local coloureds which depict more general types, viz., The Gardener,[1] and Shepherd[2] - a subject that Laubser painted many times after her return to South Africa in 1924. Stylistically, Naudé's portraits differ from Laubser's in that his brushwork is much broader and looser and there is a concentration on individual details, e.g., the wrinkles on the forehead of Hottentot Captain. Like Laubser, Naudé was painting people around him and his interpretation is therefore descriptive[3] rather than romantic or nostalgic.

figs.67,p.274; 68,p.275

fig.67,p.274

James Morland's (1846-1921) Indian boy and G. C. Robinson's (1858-1950) Native woman indicate the general trend of descriptive realism in portraiture at the Cape during the early 20th Century. If one compares these portraits to Laubser's portraits of Coloured women 1921-1922, one sees in Laubser's works a greater concentration on the image, for only the head is depicted within the frame. There is thus a greater focalization on the motif and this, together with the reduction of detail in Laubser's work, differentiates her portraits from the earlier generation of English trained artists.

fig.69,p.275

fig.70,p.275

Her portraits of this period perhaps show some affinity with the few paintings of Coloureds by Moses Kottler. If one compares the style and subject matter

1. Naudé, repro.30, p.46.
2. R.A.U. art archives.
3. There is an interest in specific characterization.

of Laubser's later portrait of Young coloured girl in chair ca.1926-8 to Kottler's Small coloured girl 1917, it seems that Laubser must almost certainly have seen Kottler's work. It is not known whether Laubser ever met Kottler, for Scholtz in his monograph on Kottler,[1] based on Boonzaaier's diary, makes no reference to any contact between Laubser and Kottler. There was perhaps a cross-influence via mutual friends: Kottler was acquainted with Ruth Prowse[2] and Dr. Bodenstein[3] whom Laubser also knew,[4] but it is not known whether Laubser had met them as early as 1921-1922. Kottler also knew Irma Stern[5] but again there is doubt about the date of Laubser's first meeting with Irma Stern.[6] Kottler left for overseas on 13th April 1922[7] and thus if Laubser did come into contact with him, it must have been between October 1921 and April 1922. If one examines Kottler's portraits painted in 1917,[8] one sees the same simplification of outline, reduction of detail, broad planes and sensitive interpretation of the large limpid eyes as noted in Laubser's 1921-1922 portraits.

figs.71,p.275; 72, p.275

fig.73,p.275

fig.72,p.275; fig.74,p.275

Of the paintings of the old Cape homesteads, only the exact location of one homestead is known. It depicts La Dauphine, Franschhoek. Laubser had painted farmhouses whilst in Belgium in 1919-1920. It was understandable that she should develop this theme whilst in the Cape from 1921 to 1922, as interest in the Cape Dutch homestead was very high at this time.

no.285. fig.75a & b, p.275; nos. 147-149,pls. 11,12,p.198

1. Du P. Scholtz, J. Moses Kottler-His Cape Years; Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1976.

2. ibid. p.32.

3. ibid. p.54.

4. Refer to Ruth Prowse's portrait of Maggie Laubser, fig.73, p.275. Dr. Bodenstein was the original owner of a Harvest scene now in the possession of Professor E. van Heerden, Johannesburg.

5. Du P. Scholtz, pp.57 and 58.

6. See p.125 for further discussion.

7. Du P. Scholtz, p.59.

8. ibid. p.90, nos.11-13.

Dorothea Fairbridge's Historic Houses of South Africa, for which Gwelo Goodman did the illustrations, was published in 1922,[1] and Boonzaaier referred to the popularity of the subject amongst artists when he wrote in his diary on 15th October 1927: 'How tired one grows of these old Dutch houses as painted by Goodman, Roworth and de Jongh.'[2] [3]The subject appealed not only to the artists trained in the English tradition of topographical description and romantic realism, e.g., Roworth in Morning Star, Somerset West, but also to the so-called Cape Impressionists such as Wenning who experimented with the light effects of the trees against the white-washed walls. Gwelo Goodman's painting Stellenberg 1919 was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London and during this period he painted many similar pictures of Cape Dutch homesteads in which there is an emphasis on the dappled effect of the sunlight shining through the foliage of the trees, e.g., Stellenrust and Tokai.[4] Wenning also painted Cape houses seen through a screen arrangement of trees but his approach is less topographical than Goodman's,for his brushwork is broader and there is not the same concentration on detail, e.g., Oakfield, Newlands 1917, and Bishopscourt Newlands 1916.

fig.76,p.276
fig.77,p.276
fig.78,p.276
fig.4,p.255
fig.79,p.276
fig.80,p.276

If one compares Laubser's farmhouses to Goodman's and Wenning's, the same characteristics are evident as those that were noted when comparing Laubser's

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1. Published by Maskew Miller, Cape Town.

2. According to Berman, 1970, p.76, De Jongh only arrived in the Cape in 1921 so he would only have just begun painting Cape farmhouses when Laubser returned to South Africa.

3. Cited by Du P. Scholtz in his monograph on Kottler, footnote 80, p.76.

4. For further illustrations see Newton Thompson, J. Gwelo Goodman - South African Artist; Cape Town: Timmins, 1951.

portraits to works by early English portraitists: viz., detail is suppressed, planes are broader and there is a greater focalization on the motif. Laubser expresses the dappled effect of the sunlight through the trees by the measured rhythm of light and shade, rather than by broken brushwork. In Cape homestead and La Dauphine, Franschhoek the rhythm is emphasized by the verticals of the screen motif of the trees, and by the large horizontal forms of the homesteads. The monumentality of the farmhouses imbues the paintings with a solid stability.

no.284,pl.34, p.209; and no.285

Laubser had herself grown up in an old Cape homestead and this made a great impression on her:[1]

> The picture I always remember most is the pure white dignified old homestead with its thatched roof and gracious Dutch gables - the year 1757 on the front gable. The curves of this gable were so gracious and the old stones on the stoep so delicately laid that one could hardly imagine that the hands that created them had disappeared a long time ago to form part of the eternal dreams and shadows. The space, the cool tranquillity of this old farmhouse with its wide paved stoep made an indelible impression on me.[2]

Laubser's choice of motif was significant. Although she did not yet depict the figure in the landscape,[3] e.g., in harvest scenes and farm scenes, she concentrated on humanity and its artefacts in the

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1. It seems relevant to emphasize that this quote is taken from a radio talk delivered in 1956 and there is thus a time span of over thirty years. However, the old Cape homestead at Bloublommetjieskloof made such an impression on her (she referred to it again in another radio talk 'What I Remember') that it seems likely that she harboured these memories as early as 1922 even if she did not verbalize them then.

2. 'Dit is my Kontrei', U.S.79/4/5, 21.2.56. Appendix 1, p.399, par.2. [Author's translation.] In 'What I Remember', U.S.79/4/4, Appendix 2, p.404, par.3, Laubser writes: 'Our home was an old Dutch Colonial building with a thatched roof and three handsome gables, on one of which the date 1757 was [proudly - deleted] displayed.'

3. Except for nos.138-140.

form of her portraits and Cape homesteads respectively. The majority of works executed in Germany were portraits and they continued to form a major part of her oeuvre. Later in her work the house (in the form of African huts) is used more and more as a symbol and is imbued with specific meanings.

The simplification of detail, flatness of motifs and decorative stylization seen in several works from the Italian period: viz., Lake Garda and the two works entitled Trees by lake, is carried even further in yet another work entitled Trees by lake. (It is on this basis that the date of 1922 is accepted.) The extreme stylization could have resulted from the fact that the work was painted from a sketch drawn a year before in Italy. However, the same tendencies are also seen in Landscape with pig and two trees, and perhaps show that Laubser was influenced on her return to South Africa by the monumental decorative style of Pierneef. As early as 1912 he had moved towards a style in which there was an emphasis on outline, a reduction of detail and simplification of form and a flattening of motifs to a two dimensional design. See for example Boomst. van Asiate buurt 1912 and Proes St. 1912. This probably resulted from his contact with Bushman art and from his experiments with graphic mediums:

> Conditioned also by requirements of wood-engraving, in which he found a highly sympathetic medium, he began to simplify his images and seek out their essential form.[1]

However, this development should also be seen within the context of the general artistic trends in European painting which he had seen. Pierneef was in Holland, first at Hilversum and then Rotterdam for two years between 1900 and 1902.[2] Pierneef exhibited

no.181,pl.17, p.201;no.203, pl.19,p.202; no.205,pl.20, p.202;no.288

no.287

figs.81,p.276; and 82,p.276

1. Berman, 1970. p.224.
2. ibid. p.222.

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no.287

figs.81,p.276; and 82,p.276

1. Berman, 1970. p.224.
2. ibid. p.222.

in Stellenbosch in April 1921 and in Cape Town in October 1921.[1] On the basis of visual similarities between Laubser's work and Pierneef's work at this stage, it seems likely that Laubser saw his work at the October exhibition, having arrived back in mid-September.[2]

nos.287 and 288; figs.81,82, p.276

The majority of her work during this period should be seen as a development of the style of the third group of Italian works, viz., a move towards clarity and structuring of form through brushstroke, colour gradations and tonal modelling, an increasing reduction of superfluous detail, and a focalization on the image. She still experimented with new forms of expression as can be seen in Landscape with pig and two trees and Trees by lake which not only show the influence of Pierneef's monumental-decorative style, but should also be seen as a development of the style of the first group of Italian works, viz., an emphasis on the sihouette and unmodelled forms, simplification of outline, flattening of spatial recession, large broad areas of paint and a reduction of detail.

nos.287;288

1. Grosskopf, J. F. W. Hendrik Pierneef - The Man and his Work; Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1947, p.10.

2. It cannot be discounted that she had seen his work earlier than 1921, although no reference to earlier exhibitions appears in literature.

CHAPTER 7

GERMANY, NOVEMBER 1922 - NOVEMBER 1924

Bio-graphical

'In 1922 I returned to Europe - this time to Germany and lived in Berlin for two years.'[1] Laubser left South Africa sometime after the 16th November 1922. A visa in her passport[2] was issued by the German consulate in Cape Town on 16.11.1922.[3] This entitled her to enter and leave Germany in order to study art.

Immigration control in Germany was very strict during the years after the war. In Laubser's case it was probably even more tightly controlled as she was a British subject. She had to report to a police station at regular intervals and as a result one can reconstruct her movements whilst in Germany fairly accurately. By 23rd January 1923 she was staying in Berlin in Kurfürstendamm.[4] By 8th March 1923 she had moved to Kalkreuth no.5.[5]

Her stay in Berlin was interrupted by an eight day transit journey through the Netherlands, during

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1. Noted by Laubser in her curriculum vitae (U.S.79/4/8), p.2.

2. Laubser received a new passport C.T.3923 on 9th November 1922 valid until November 1924. This passport is numbered 79/14/2 in the University of Stellenbosch archives. Any further references, unless otherwise stated, refer to this passport. (Appendix 5, pp.432-447). The pages of this passport are numbered 1-15, and to avoid any confusion:- f., indicates the page number in the passport, whilst p. indicates the page number in appendix 5 of this dissertation.

3. Originally this visa was valid until 31.3.1923 but this was then extended until 31.6.1923. (There are only 30 days in June!) f.7, p.439. This extension was approved, presumably by another department of the German consulate. (See stamp on f.6, p.438).

4. On 23.1.1923 her address was recorded in her passport as Kurfürstendamm 43, Berlin (f.8, p.440). On 24.1.1923 her address was given as Kurfürstendamm 40. ibid. It is not clear whether she moved after one day, or whether the above addresses refer to the same place.

5. Refer to passport, f.9, p.441.

mid-June 1923.[1] The exact purpose or destination of this journey is not known. Her exit point was specified as Vlissingen.[2] Perhaps, in order to renew her German residence permit, she had to leave the country temporarily. As her visa expired at the end of June,[3] this explanation seems probable.

She returned to Berlin ten days after the visa was issued, for a residence application to stay in Berlin, was handed in on 26.6.1923.[4] She began almost immediately to make plans to visit Ahrenshoop on the Baltic Sea,[5] and by the end of July she was in Ahrenshoop,[6] where she stayed for three weeks.[7] According to Botha, she was accompanied by Irma Stern.[8] There is doubt about the date of Laubser's meeting with Stern,[9] and about their association,[10] and the influence of Stern on Laubser. A watercolour drawing by Stern is now in the collection of Mrs. Shirley Green- fig.83,p.276

1. Refer to passport, f.8, p.440. The exact date of issue of the permit was 16.6.1923.

2. ibid.

3. See footnote 3, p.124.

4. Refer to passport, f.9, p.441.

5. Permission to report temporarily at Ahrenshoop was given in Berlin on 14.7.1923. See passport, f.9, p.441.

6. A permit in her passport indicates that she reported to a magistrate in Ahrenshoop on 28.7.1923. See f.10, p.442.

7. Botha, p.15.

8. ibid. [No documentation is given for this - presumably Laubser told Botha in an interview. There are no references to this trip in the literature on Irma Stern:- Dubow, N. Irma Stern; Cape Town: Struik 1974; Osborn, M. Irma Stern; Leipzig: Klinkhardt and Bierman, 1927; Sachs, J. Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa; Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1942.]

9. According to Berman, 1970, p.173, Laubser and Stern met in 1920. However, according to Laubser in her interview in 1968 with Benita Munitz, they only met in 1924 on Laubser's return to South Africa.

10. In the interview with Munitz, Laubser said that she visited Stern's home in Oranjezicht, that she liked her work and that she was a very kind person. She said that Stern had also just come from Germany, [author's italics] and that Stern had an exhibition soon after they met. Laubser confirmed that she herself had not yet exhibited. She also said that they did not have a very long friendship.

wall, Cape Town. Mrs. Greenwall wrote about this drawing:[1]

> One day whilst holidaying in Spain[2] Irma tried to convince Maggie to put black lines around her figures as illustrated [in the drawing] but Maggie disagreed and Irma 'flung' this work across to her and told her to keep it as a reference... They then parted and dissolved friendship.

The changes and developments in Laubser's style during her stay in Germany, towards darker more definite outlines, may thus perhaps be seen partly as a result of Irma Stern's influence.

It appears that Laubser, after her holiday at the Baltic Sea, travelled straight from North Germany to Weimar, South of Berlin, arriving on about 16th August 1923.[3] However, she left almost immediately (on 18th August)[4] and returned to her lodgings at Kalkreuth 5[5] in Berlin. She made a short visit to Stein-Platz in Bavaria, leaving Berlin sometime after 10th September 1923,[6] but she only stayed there for a day or so[7] and returned to Berlin by 12th October 1923.[8]

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1. Undated letter R.A.U. art archives. The inscription on this drawing 'From Irma To Maggie Laubser '30' is in Laubser's handwriting. The date of 1930 is thus suspect.

2. There is no evidence in her passports of a trip to Spain, and Laubser never mentioned visiting Spain. It seems probable, (in view of other unreliable information given by the artist), that the holiday with Irma Stern was spent in Germany and not in Spain.

3. A permit issued at Weimar, entitled her to stay there from 16.8.1923 until 22.8.1923. See passport f.11, p.443.

4. See passport f.11, p.443.

5. The permit in her passport (f.12, p.444), indicates that she was staying there by 27.8.1923.

6. A permit issued in Berlin on 10.9.1923, entitled her to report to officials in Stein-Platz in Bavaria. See passport f.12, p.444.

7. She reported in and out of Stein-Platz no.2 on 11th October 1923. See passport f.12, p.444.

8. A permit indicating her residential address was issued on 12th October 1923 in Berlin. See passport f.13, p.445. Her address was given as Pension Finck, Van der Heydtstraat 1. Prof. Trümpelmann of the University of Stellenbosch, referred to this address in his documentation of a letter dated 14.8.1924 (U.S.79/5/134).

Through Irma Stern Laubser met Kate Madler, an art student who managed to obtain rooms for her at Fräulein Finck's pension, which was on the Lötze Bank near the Tiergarten.[1] Laubser was able to use one of these rooms as a studio.[2]

figs.84a, , p.276

fig.85,p.277

fig.86,p.277

There is no further record after 12th October 1923 of her exact movements in Germany. This seems to indicate that Laubser no longer had to report at regular intervals to police stations. Whether she had complete freedom of movement throughout Germany is not clear. The one lodging to which Laubser referred during later years was Fräulein Finck's pension. The fact that she remembered this pension so clearly, would seem to indicate that she stayed there for the longest period. It is therefore assumed that she was more or less continuously in Berlin from October 1923, until November 1924, when she returned to South Africa.

It seems that Balwé Jnr. was also in Berlin at this time, as he introduced Laubser to Professor Jächels, the portrait painter.[3] Laubser was perhaps encouraged to return to Germany in the knowledge that her good friend Arnold Balwé was also there.

The cultural life in Berlin was exciting and stimulating during the early 1920's. 'The whole world was there because of the cheap living.'[4] In the evenings Laubser attended many concerts:

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1. Botha, p.14.

2. 'This...friend found me a wonderful pension - such a nice lady, Fräulein Finck...I went to see her and asked whether she had [a] room for me. She liked me and she said "yes" and she emptied...a bedroom and said I could use it as a studio.' Munitz interview 1968.

3. 'She wanted to improve her colour...by correct draughtsmanship and portrait studies. Because of this I introduced her to the then well-known modern portraitist, Prof. Jächels in the Fasanen Strasse, Berlin. There she worked for some time.' Balwé in letter to Botha dated 5.2.1964. Botha, appendix 3, p.186.

4. Munitz interview 1968.

> In Berlin I often had the privilege of going to the best operas - Wagner's Lohengrin and Verdi's Traviata. Then I longed for our old farm because I saw again my mother in front of the piano playing Lohengrin.[1]

Brahms was Laubser's favourite composer[2] and she met two pianists, the Swiss, Otto Glore who also painted, and Willem Busch.[3] It was, of course, the artistic climate of Berlin that had an important influence on Laubser, for she had direct contact with German Expressionism.

The majority of the paintings dated to her German period are portraits (seventy six out of one hundred and twenty two). As already mentioned, she worked for a time under Prof. Jächels and she also painted fellow lodgers at Fräulein Finck's pension:

Subject-matter nos.335-411

> I met nearly all the [members of the] embassies [and] the banks. [who] stayed there [at Finck's pension]...I met...Norwegian, Swiss and Greek [people] and [they were] very interesting people. They all lived there [at the pension] and from time to time I asked them to sit for me because my studio was in the house. And later on I decided to paint a portrait every day, one portrait a day.[4]

She also used models from an agency. 'Then I had contact with one of the model clubs...they are there for you; and you phone and get a model.'[5]

She also drew and painted nudes during this time in Germany. 'In Berlin I sometimes went to school alone. I just drew from the nude but I never painted at schools.'[6]

nos.328-333

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1. 'Dit is my Kontrei.' Appendix 1, p.402.

2. Botha, p.14.

3. ibid. Refer to a letter dated 1 Dec. 1938 (U.S.79/5/173), from Busch in which he refers to Christian Science. Also: 'I was in Berlin and went to a concert with a friend who studied Busch and...knew [him] in Berlin.' Munitz interview 1968.

4. Munitz interview 1968. See also folio 1 of Sketchbook 8: 'I owe model 1 mark' and 'model man 10 o'clock.' (p.235).

5. Munitz interview 1968.

6. ibid.

She continually stressed that she never had any formal training in painting in Berlin:

> I've never painted with anybody. I've never learnt at a school. I've never been to...school to paint. When I was in Germany I didn't go to a studio there.[1]

Her striving for freedom and individuality, first noted by her reaction to painting at the Slade, continued in Germany. It was probably due to this conscious emphasis on independence that, in her curriculum vitae, she crossed out the references to Schmidt-Rotluff's help[2] and that she never mentioned Prof. Jächels' training.

A number of still lifes exist, the majority of which depict arum lilies. In her arum lily pieces it is clear that Laubser chose her subject matter to suit her style of painting, as there is a concentration on large flowers with definite clear outlines. As Bouman wrote: nos.315-327 nos.315-320

> Reeds vroeg bemerk ons, veral in die stillewes, die bewuste drang na gestileerde versobering; die onderwerp word gekies in ooreenstemming met hierdie strewe, en dus is dit dikwels die varkblomme, met hul statige vorms en dominerende toon-effek wat die middelpunt van haar stillewe-stukke vorm.[3]

Mediums

The majority of works executed whilst in Germany are oil paintings. There are several charcoal drawings: a still life[4] and a number of portraits.[5] There are two sketchbooks which relate to her stay in Germany: no.8[6] and several folios of sketchbook 6.[7]

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1. Munitz interview 1968.

2. See p.138, footnote 8.

3. Huisgenoot, vol.27, no.1084; 1st January 1943, p.7. 'We notice early on that, especially in her still lifes, there is a conscious urge towards sober simplification; the subject is chosen in accordance with this trend and it is therefore often the arums, with their static forms and dominating tonal effects, that form the majority of her still life pieces.'

4. no.326.

5. nos.340, 341, 356, 363, 380-385, 391.

6. pp.235-236.

7. pp.231-233.

There are several individual sketches: two still lifes,[1] a number of nudes,[2] and a sketch of a Woman playing guitar.[3] The majority of sketches are portrait studies.[4] All these pencil sketches were probably originally part of sketchbook 8 and have subsequently been torn out. Laubser also executed woodcuts for the first time whilst in Germany. Five different subjects have been traced. They are: Tablemountain, House with sunflowers, Harvesting in Belgium, Three women hoeing and two works of Windmill. nos.412-417

The charcoal drawings show the same stylistic development as the oil paintings from this period. In comparison with earlier charcoal works, shading is more vigorous and tonal contrasts are starker. Compare, for instance, the portraits of women and Sunflowers and three apples, with the charcoal still lifes from her earlier Italian period, in which tonal gradations are gradual with no great contrasts. There is a more angular configuration of lines, e.g., the pattern on the dress in Self portrait and the lapels of the suit in the two works entitled Man with beard. There is a stylization of forms and a reduction in detail, as evident, for instance, in the interpretation of the neck in the portrait of a Woman and the hair of Woman with hand on head. Outlines are stressed as seen in the jagged petals of the sunflowers and the contours of the apples in Sunflowers and three apples; and in the chiselled features of the women, particularly Woman with hand on head and Woman with hat.

Drawing style

nos.380-385
no.326
nos.238-243
no.356
nos.340,341
no.385
no.382
no.326
no.382
no.383

The same stylistic characteristics are seen in the pencil drawings. Strong tonal contrasts and a

1. no.394 verso, no.327.
2. nos.328 - 330.
3. no.334.
4. nos.337, 353-355, 362, 366-372, 387, 394, 395, 398, 399, 404, 405.

more assertive use of line are particularly evident in Sketch : male nude reclining - back view,[1] Sketch: male nude with hands on head,[2] Woman with hat in chair[3] and Woman with beret in chair. There is a general simplification of detail. This may be seen particularly in the portraits of Japanese girl, in the hairline, and in the hand of Woman.

no.368

no.394 recto and verso; no.395 no.404

On examining Self portrait it can be seen that, in comparison with earlier works, e.g., Sheila Johnston 1909 and Studies - man with moustache 1916-18, shading is more vigorous (paralleling the jagged brushstroke in her paintings from this period), there is an increased looseness, fluidity and freedom of line, and contours are more broken. There is a reduction of detail, e.g., in the dress, an emphasis on certain shapes, e.g., the brooch, and a stylization of forms, e.g., the highlight on her right cheek.[4]

no.353

no.15

no.39 recto

no.353

Painting styles

Laubser's paintings show a development of the characteristics of some of her Italian works, viz.: a liberation of colour, large bold forms and simplification of shape, and a negation of deep recessional space.[5] Laubser's stay in Germany was, to a lesser extent than in Italy, a time of experimentation and she continued to paint in several different styles.

There are several works which show marked symbolistic characteristics,[6] particularly Sun behind Mountain,[7] Olives and cypresses,[8] Figure in landscape with

1. no.330 recto.

2. no.330 verso.

3. no.370 recto; no.371 recto and verso.

4. Possibly because of technique (pencil as opposed to charcoal) Self portrait no.353 does not seem as 'stylized' as nos.380-385, i.e. contrasts are not as stark and line is less angular and more fluid.

5. See pp. 101, 103-105.

6. See Roskill, M. Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle; London: Thames and Hudson, n.d. Chapter 6, 'Towards Symbolistic Art 1880-90.' Roskill defines symbolistic art: 'A gathering of images, which by virtue of association, and/or organization, collectively carry suggestive power.' p.263, footnote 27.

7. no.289, pl.35, p.210.

8. no.291, pl.36, p.210.

trees, mountains and sun's rays[1] and Harvesting in Belgium.[2] They are mostly of earlier motifs[3] painted from memory, from sketches (in the case of Olives and cypresses) and from imagination. Colour is unusually vivid, e.g., Sun behind mountain[4] and Poplars[5], and forms are stylized and silhouettes emphasized. The relationship between the important images is thus more sharply stressed and in several works, e.g., Sun behind mountain, Olives and cypresses[6] and Harvesting in Belgium,[7] there is an overt symbolic content.[7a]

no.291, pl.36,p.210

no.289, pl.35,p.210

In several works such as Three women hoeing; Boats;[8] the two works entitled Seated female nude;[9] Man;[10] Self portrait;[11] The cleaning woman;[12] and Woman, colour is not fully saturated but is relatively high-key in value. The individual brushmark is fairly small and is clearly visible. In several of these works, paint is applied 'wet-in-wet' and the brush-stroke is dragged. This aspect of working 'wet-in-wet' implies spontaneity of execution.

no.303

nos.375 and 376

In other paintings vigorous brushstrokes are applied in an apparently free and spontaneous way, e.g., Harvester resting, Field at harvest time and Four women hoeing. The apparent swiftness, directness and freshness of handling evoke a quality of animation in the motif.

nos.306,307

no.308

1. no.294.
2. nos.297, pl.38, p.211.
3. See catalogue summary, p.569.
4. no.289, pl.35, p.210.
5. no.290.
6. no.291, pl.36, p.210.
7. no.297, pl.38, p.211.
7a. See p.147 ff.
8. no.313.
9. nos.332 and 333.
10. no.338.
11. no.357.
12. no.374.

In the majority of works from the early German period paint is thickly and fairly flatly applied. Brushwork follows the form and emphasizes it as seen in the still lifes[1] and Man with hat. In the latter the brushmarks in the background weave around the outer right edge of the hat, thus defining it clearly.

General stylistic characteristics

no.335

Forms are large, bold and simplified, as can be seen in the broad planes of colour in Riverscene, Berlin and the monumental forms of the arums in the still lifes.[2] Planes and outlines are stylized and there is a lack of descriptive detail as seen, for instance, in the planes of the forehead of Man with hat, the hairline of Woman with necklace and earrings and the neck of Young singer.

no.300,pl.40, p.212

nos.335;390

no.402

Heavy dark outlines are emphasized, e.g., in Flowerseller in Berlin;[3] Four arum lilies in a vase; Tulips; Pointsettias; and Woman. Diagonals are more predominant during this period than at any other time in her oeuvre as can be seen in Four arum lilies in a vase;[4] Boats; and Self portrait. Pointed forms are also common, e.g., the petals in Tulips, Pointsettias and Amaryllis; the jagged neck line in Self portrait; and the corn in the Cornfields by the Baltic Sea. Supple, sinuous curving lines are evident in Tulips and Pointsettias.

no.317

nos.322,323;409

nos.313;364

nos.322;323

nos.324;365

no.312

no.322

no.323

In most paintings vivid colours are combined with low-keyed tonal colours, e.g., the pink heather against the deep blue and green mountains in In the Highlands, Scotland, the blacks and pinks in River Scene, Berlin, and the vivid colours in the faces against the dark backgrounds in the portraits, e.g.,

no.296,pl.37, p.211
no 300,pl.40, p.212

1. nos.315-324
2. nos.315-319, pl.43, p.214.
3. no.299, pl.39, p.212.
4. nos.317-319.

the red-brown in Woman, the olive-green in Man with white moustache and the dark-brown in Self portrait. The contrasts are dramatic and the paintings carry a greater power and force than earlier landscapes and portraits as a result of the tonal contrasts. Laubser introduced into her palette a more vibrant pink than previously used, as can be seen in Olives and cypresses and Black sail. She also made use of non-local colour evident particularly in her portraits. In South Africa she had shown this tendency, e.g., the blue irises of the Coloured and Malay women, and in Germany she developed it further, to be seen in the blue-green shadows on the faces of several sitters and the yellow necks of the models in a number of portraits.[1]

no.408
no.344,pl.44, p.214;no.361
no.291,pl.36, p.210;no.292
no.281,pl.33, p.209

During this period there is a development towards more strident and disturbing colour relationships. Colour combinations become harsh as seen particularly in the faces in the portraits, in which colours are vivid and electric, e.g., pinks and greens in Man with white moustache, yellow-greens and purple in Man with moustache and turquoise and pinks in Self portrait.

Development in style during German period
no.344,pl.44, p.214
no.348,pl.45, p.215;no.361

In the later German works, paint is more thinly applied and has a more transparent quality, and lines and brushwork are not smooth and flowing, seen particularly in the portraits.[2] The brushwork is loose, jagged and agitated, fanning outwards from the forms, as is seen particularly in Turkish man. The fact that paintwork is transparent and that brushstrokes are visible, leads one to conclude that she painted very spontaneously.

no.352,pl.46, p.215

This development towards a thinner paint surface, probably resulted from her contact with Schmidt-Rottluff for, from fairly early on, he had thinned

fig.87,p.278

1. nos.344, 348, 352, 393, 406, 410, pls.44-49, pp.214-217.

2. nos.342, 343, 348-350, 360, 361, 389, 396, 402, 406-409.

his paint with petrol.[1] He himself said that he felt it very possible that his painting technique of the early 1920's influenced Laubser.[2] Laubser might also have been influenced by Heckel's and Kirchner's work. Heckel, when he returned from Italy in mid-1909, used a high proportion of turpentine in his paint and probably added a mixture of sizing glue as well.[3] Kirchner, possibly as a result of Heckel's influence, also thinned his paint at this time.[4] Later, several of his paintings from the summer of 1918 at Staffelalp, were thinly painted in a sketchlike manner.[5]

If one compares the two paintings of Man with moustache; the two Self portraits; and the two paintings Woman with hat, the development in Laubser's work is clear. Colour is more intense, planes and outlines are more simplified and are more angular, paint is more thinly applied and has a transparent quality, and forms are constructed by directional brushstroke. In the case of the above works, Laubser probably painted the second works from the first. This indicates a

nos.346,347; nos.359,360; nos.392,393, pl.47,p.216

1. Scholz, Ute M.U. 'Die Vormende Invloed van die Duitse Expressionisme op die Skilderkuns van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaars Irma Stern, Maggie Laubser, Pranas Domsaitis.' unpublished M.A. diss. University Pta., March 1975, p.57. 'Schmidt-Rottluff thinned his paint with petrol and his paintings are therefore characterized by thin paint application and the transparency of pigment which he possibly derived from his water colour technique.' [Translated from the German by the author].

2. ibid. The fact that Schmidt-Rottluff probably influenced Maggie Laubser in this oil technique was confirmed by him personally with Prof. Reidemeister who supplied this information in a letter of 13th June 1974: 'I have since then had another opportunity to talk again to Mr. Schmidt-Rottluff who said that he remembered Maggie Laubser very well. He thought it very possible that his painting technique [malweise] of the early 1920's was influential for Maggie Laubser. (With 'malweise' he meant, when questioned, her oil painting technique).' [Translated from the German by the author].

3. Gordon, D. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968, p.64.

4. ibid.

5. ibid. p.112.

change in working process as she was no longer painting from the subject before her. In landscape painting, this change marks a shift away from descriptive plein-air painting that she had practiced whilst in England and Belgium.

Working process

For the first time there are definite indications that Laubser painted from sketches drawn some time previously. Poplars, Olives and cypresses and Black sail painted whilst the artist was in Germany, are based on sketches drawn whilst she was in Italy.[1] In the Highlands, Scotland, painted in 1924, is based on an oil sketch[2] of the same title which, judging by the style, seems to have been painted whilst the artist was in Germany. This oil sketch[3] seems, in turn, to have been painted from Scottish landscape with heather, which depicts the same scene and was painted approximately five years previously in ca.1919 whilst the artist was in Britain.

nos.290;291, pl.36,p.210 no.292

no.296,pl.37, p.211

no.72,pl.4, p.194

Two factors become apparent: Laubser worked from her own paintings or sketches. Later she repeated this practice many times. Secondly, Laubser began to work from memory whilst in Germany, as seen in the paintings based on Italian and Scottish scenes, which were painted whilst the artist was in Germany. She stressed the importance of painting from memory when discussing the portrait of Japanese girl 1922-4. She had seen the girl in question the night before at a concert in Perlin, and was struck by her emerald green kimono with violet flowers. The next day she made a sketch from memory and then painted from the sketch.[4]

no.396

1. See sketchbook 6, ff.31 and 33, p.230, for sketches for Poplars no.290, sketchbook 4, f.13, p.224; and sketchbook 5, f.20, p.226, for sketch for Olives and cypresses no.291; and sketchbook 5, f.17, p.226, for sketch for Black sail no.292.

2. no.295.

3. ibid.

4. Munitz interview 1968.

It seems probable that Laubser progressed, in instances, from painting from memory, to painting from the imagination. This is suggested by the way in which Laubser combines certain motifs. For example, a sketch for the Scottish landscape in Figure in landscape with trees, mountains and sun's rays exists on folio 5 of sketchbook 6, but the motifs of the figure and sun's rays are not included. A similar interpretation of the mountain by Lake Garda depicted in Sun behind mountain is seen in the sketch on folio 31 of sketchbook 6, but the motif of the sun is again excluded. In several other sketches in this book the motif of the sun's rays can be seen in combination with several subjects, viz., with Tablemountain on folio 1, with a lakeside scene on folios 10, 17 and 27, with a mother and child on folio 13 and behind a tree on folio 26. This suggests that Laubser's combination of motifs was often imaginative and were no longer reliant on her direct observation of nature. The faculty of imagination became more and more important for Laubser.

no.294 p.228
no.289,pl.35, p.210 p.230
p.228
pp.229,230

The greatest influence on Laubser's art at this time appears to have derived from the work of the expressionist[1] painters of Die Brücke. Although this group had dissolved almost a decade previously in May 1913,[2] Laubser saw their work in Berlin and met several of the artists concerned, personally. She saw works by artists such as Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein and Eric Waske at the Kronprinzenpalais.[3] Some of the artists still exhibited under the umbrella of Die Brücke group (probably in the form of a retro-

Sources and influences: Die Brücke

1. By Expressionism is meant:
The search for expressiveness of style by means of exaggerations and distortions of line and colour: a deliberate abandon of the naturalism implicit in Impressionism in favour of a simplified style which should carry far greater emotional impact. (Murray, P. and L. A Dictionary of Art and Artists; Harmondsworth: Penguin 1968, p.137.)
2. Gordon, p.22.

3. Botha, p.15. In an interview on the Afrikaans service of the S.A.B.C., broadcast in 1948 and rebroadcast at 8 p.m. on 21 Dec. 1976, Laubser said that she saw works by Schmidt-Rottluff and Nolde at the Kronprinzenpalais. She also said that she admired the Expressionists' work for their free and unrestricted feelings [gevoelens - nie gebonde].

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spective exhibition), as late as 1922, for a group exhibition of Die Brücke, including work by Schmidt-Rottluff and Kirchner, was shown at the Gallery Ferdinand Möller in Berlin from November 1922 to January 1923.[1] It is almost certain that Laubser, who had just arrived in Berlin, would have visited this exhibition.[2] She also saw works by Karl Hofer[3] and Frans Marc: 'I went to the Kronprinzenpalais. I happened to live quite near the gallery where I saw the best expressionist work like Frans Marc.'[4] Frans Marc made a great impression on her: 'The moment I got to Berlin...then I saw Frans Marc.'[5] She also recalled that she understood his work immediately.[6]

She met several of the German expressionist painters personally, including Waske, Nolde, Pechstein and Schmidt-Rottluff.[7] Schmidt-Rottluff had a great influence on Laubser and her work. 'Schmidt-Rottluff saw my work and was interested and helped me - I liked the work of Schmidt-Rottluff.'[8] She became friendly with Schmidt-Rottluff[9] and years later had a woodcut of his hanging on her lounge

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1. Gordon, p.450; Grohmann, W. Schmidt-Rottluff; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1956.

2. It seems probable that there was no catalogue for this exhibition as, although Gordon includes this exhibition amongst Kirchner's exhibitions, no details of the individual works exhibited were given.

3. Botha, p.38.

4. Munitz interview 1968.

5. ibid.

6. In a radio interview (see footnote 2, p.137) she recalled that she saw Frans Marc's work which she '[het] dadelik verstaan.'

7. 'Then I met Schmidt-Rottluff, Eric Waske...Nolde, Pechstein etc.' Curriculum Vitae. U.S.79/4/8, p.3; also 'I had a German friend...and she introduced me to them [the German artists] and Schmidt-Rottluff.' Munitz interview 1968.

8. ibid. The words underlined here by the author, were crossed out by Laubser in her handwritten version.

9. Botha, p.15, and Munitz interview 1968.

wall at her house in the Strand.[1] He regarded her as one of his students.[2] According to Scholz, Laubser only met Schmidt-Rottluff at the end of 1923 as he went to Italy with a group of sculptors in the summer of 1923.[3] He was only in Italy for three months,[4] however, and Laubser was also travelling from June to mid-October.[5] It is not clear whether she met him early in 1923 but it appears that she was in contact with him for at least a year.[6]

fig.88,p.278

It seems relevant to note that Laubser would not have been as interested in German Expressionism had she not already been moving in this direction, viz., the trend seen particularly in her Italian works towards a liberation of colour, heightened expressiveness of form through simplification of outline and detail, and negation of deep recessional space. 'I enjoyed the life in Berlin [and] saw interesting works of art by leading Expressionists and that was the art I had longed for.'[7]

The influence of the Expressionists, particularly Schmidt-Rottluff, may be seen in Laubser's works on various levels, viz., stylistically, technically, in

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1. Botha, p.15, and Munitz interview 1968.

2. Scholz, p.47, footnote 57. 'The writer herself did not have access to Karl Schmidt-Rottluff in Berlin as she was aware that he did not wish to conduct any more interviews and only kept in contact with a close circle of friends. One of this circle was the director of Die Brücke museum in Berlin, Prof. Leopold Reidemeister who was kind enough to make enquiries with Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. On 15th May 1973 both Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and his wife immediately confirmed Prof. Reidemeister's question that they knew Maggie Laubser as a trustworthy person and as an artist with great talent. On this occasion Schmidt-Rottluff said that Laubser was a student of his. He could also remember Irma Stern and said that he had known her, while Mrs. Pechstein could not remember Maggie Laubser.' [Author's translation.]

3. ibid.

4. Myers, B.S. The German Expressionists - A Generation in Revolt; New York: McGraw-Hill, n.d. He refers to 'a three month's trip with the sculptor Kolbe to Italy in 1923.' p.118.

5. See pp.125,126.

6. Scholz, p.48.

7. Curriculum vitae, U.S.79/4/8, p.2.

the themes and motifs that she chose to paint and generally in the ideas and attitudes.

The stylistic influences of Die Brücke's work may be seen in Laubser's painting in the intensified palette, the flat unmodelled planes of colour, strong outlines and the large blocked-in forms. (As has been seen, the thin transparent paintwork was probably also an influence of Die Brücke as was the jagged brushwork.)

Stained glass work

Members of Die Brücke group were probably influenced in this direction by their direct contact with stained glass work, although the influence of Gauguin's work on Die Brücke should not be ignored. Kirchner had seen Thorn-Prikker's stained glass work when he went to Cologne in the spring of 1912,[1] and Pechstein was commissioned to design stained glass for the city hall of Eibenstock in ca. 1906-8[2] and later, in 1918, for Mr. Gurlitt's private apartments and for the staircase of the Gurlitt Gallery[3] (which Laubser would almost certainly have visited).

Furthermore, magazines such as Studio, which had a wide circulation, included examples of stained glass windows in virtually every issue. Thus Laubser's direct contact with artists so involved with the medium, and her access to those reproductions which showed the vivid colouring, heavy dark outlines, and simplified forms of stained glass work, probably strengthened Die Brücke's influence on Laubser's work as seen in Flowerseller in Berlin.

no.299,pl.39, p. 212

Graphic medium

The simplified outlines, large closed forms and dramatic tonal contrasts in many of Die Brücke's work was probably partly a result of their increasing use of the graphic medium.

1. Myers, p.141.
2. ibid.
3. ibid. p.145.

> The efforts of the Brücke painters in the woodcut medium not only belonged to their most important accomplishments, but were also decisive in the development of their style in painting.[1]

The woodcut had been revived at the end of the 19th Century by artists such as Gauguin, Felix Valatton (the magazine Pan published his woodcuts), Munch and members of Jugendstil. As a result of the influence of these artists and of the late Gothic German woodcuts, almost all members of Die Brücke used the woodcut medium, viz., Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, Kirchner, Pechstein, Nolde.

> One can see how the emotional and symbolic character given it by these men [Munch and Gauguin], its deformation of form, colour and space, its use of flowing summary line, would make it the leading graphic medium of 20th Century Expressionism.[2]

Laubser made several woodcuts during her stay in Germany and it seems likely that she turned to this medium as a result of Die Brücke's influence. The requirements of this graphic medium, with its solid blocked-in forms and striking contrasts, influenced Laubser in her painting as can be seen in Harvesting in Belgium and Riverscene, Berlin. nos.297,pl.38, p.211;300, pl.40,p.212

The influence of Die Brücke's graphic style is evident in Laubser's woodcuts dating to this period. In these works there is an emphasis on large bold shapes and dramatic tonal contrasts. There is an awareness of the positive-negative interplay of black and white, e.g., in Three women hoeing, the scarf of the woman on the left is depicted by black and that of the woman on the right by white. no.415

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1. Selz, P. German Expressionist Painting; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1968, p.81; Haftmann, W. Painting in the Twentieth Century; London: Lund Humphries, 1968, vol.1, p.87.

2. Myers, p.90.

As in Die Brücke's work, space is non-naturalistic and flattened, and as a result, background and foreground are closely related, e.g., the waves and mountain in Tablemountain, the sunflowers and the house in House with sunflowers and the women and wheat sheaves in Harvesting in Belgium. In Windmill one sees the same anti-perspectival striations as in Schmidt-Rottluff's paintings, e.g., Village by the sea 1913 and in his woodcuts, e.g., the woodcut which he gave to Laubser. Detail is suppressed and objects are indicated by summary shapes. Objects thus become tokens or symbols, e.g., the wheat sheaves in Harvesting in Belgium.

no.412
no.413
nos.414;417
fig.89,p.278
fig.88,p.278
no.414

By means of the concentration on the image, the flat, planar structure, large bold forms, simple contours and suppression of detail, Laubser developed the expressive potential of the woodcut. Thus her interpretation of the woodcut should be seen within the general context of Expressionism.

Primitive art

To return to the discussion of the general influences on Laubser's art via Die Brücke, it should be noted that one of the most important sources for this group was that of primitive art. There were examples of work from Africa, New Guinea and the Cameroons[1] in the Dresden Ethnological Museum, and these stimulated Die Brücke in their search for a style in which simplification and, if necessary, distortion, led to a heightened expressiveness and directness of impact. Laubser would obviously have been familiar with their ideas on the significance of primitive art and sculpture, via direct contact with the artists and their painting. Although the African and Melanasian figurative sculpture would have been just as strange and and exotic to Laubser as it was to the German artists,

1. 'In an interview (June 12, 1954) Schmidt-Rottluff singled out scupture from the Cameroons (a German colony until 1919) as representing the major African source of inspiration for Brücke art.' Gordon, p.462, footnote 58.

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coming from Southern Africa she would have been exposed to the simple archetypal motifs of Xhosa art as seen in their bead work and clay pots.[1]

In her early German works the influence of primitive art may be seen indirectly in the harsh simplicity of many of the still lifes, in which the forceful animistic power of the sinuous curving lines deny any lyrical sweetness or grace. Towards the end of her German stay and on her return to South Africa, Laubser painted portraits of blacks with bold colours in which there is an emphasis on broad outlines, brutal forms, primitive attributes and exotic associations.

nos.418-420, 325 verso,422, 298 verso, 423 recto,428

Laubser was probably influenced by the expressionists' notion of man's relationship to nature, which had its roots in the 19th Century - in Van Gogh's empathy with mankind; in Gauguin's idea of the symbolic union of man and nature; in the symbolism of Munch, Thorn-Prikker, Hodler and others. More specifically the art of Die Brücke had its roots in the 19th Century German art - in the emotion tinged impressionism of Corinth, Slevogt and Liebermann; in the social consciousness of Käthe Kollwitz' naturalism which expressed sympathy with the downtrodden and the peasant classes; in the 'nature-derived, anti-mechanical, anti-mercantile'[2] Jugendstil; and in the Naturlyrismus and the 'poetic vision of nature',[3] characteristic of the Dachau and Worpswede schools. It was this heritage which influenced Die Brücke and to which Laubser was exposed.

Man and nature

1. According to Ms. Anitra Nettleton, Lecturer in African art at the University of the Witwatersrand, there was no Xhosa figurative sculpture surviving in South Africa in the early 20th Century. By the 19th Century it had all been taken to Europe to be displayed in museums. One cannot discount the possibility that Laubser saw such examples whilst overseas.

2. Myers, p.27.

3. Haftmann, p.82.

> The concept of man's reversion to an untouched arcadian environment - antique exotic or primitivistic - as found in Gauguin and Puvis de Chavannes, has its German analogue in the influential Hans von Marées. The latter's example is reinforced by Gauguin, whose romantic search for a primitive society apparently inspired Nolde and Pechstein to make pilgrimages to the South Seas, sent Mueller to primitive Central Europe and interested a host of others in the cult of the 'unspoiled'.
>
> Gauguin's favourite theme of man and nature synthesized in rhythmic union became popular with Pechstein, Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff, Mueller, Marc, Campendonk, Nauen and others.[1]

Although Laubser did not take over the theme of the nude in the landscape, as depicted by members of Die Brücke - Heckel, Mueller, Kirchner, Pechstein, Schmidt-Rottluff - she would have been influenced by their quasi-pantheistic attitude to nature and their ideas of man's idyllic harmony with nature.

Influence on subject matter

It appears that Laubser was not only influenced by Die Brücke in general attitudes and ideas, but also by specific motifs. In her still lifes Laubser concentrated on big flowers with clear and definite outlines, such as tulips and arums, both of which were subjects painted by Kirchner[2] and Schmidt-Rottluff.[3] Laubser might have been influenced in her choice of these flowers as a result of Kirchner's and Schmidt-Rottluff's paintings.

Like Die Brücke, Laubser painted nudes in the studio, a practice which she discontinued on her return to South Africa. This suggests that the choice of motif resulted not only from the availability of models, but also because of the influence of general artistic practice at this time in Germany of painting the nude.

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1. Myers, p.29.

2. Still life with calla lily Gordon no.217; Still life with tulips, carvings and hands Gordon no.234; Yellow tulips 1918 Gordon no.515.

3. Tulips 1913 Grohmann, p.258.

The motif of the woman wearing a hat, so favoured by Laubser in her German portraits, is also common in Kirchner's work. Kirchner's Standing nude with hat 1910[1] was exhibited in Berlin in 1912 and was illustrated in the catalogue, as was Half length nude with hat[2] which was exhibited in Dusseldorf in 1922. Laubser might have seen these catalogues. Unlike Kirchner, the erotic implications of the semi-clothed woman are absent in Laubser's work. Other subjects painted by Die Brücke such as the cat, and the sun or moon, were to become very important in Laubser's later work.[3]

There are a number of major paintings from Laubser's German period that are key works in her oeuvre and show a significant development in her style or in choice and interpretation of motifs, or both. In order to examine the changes and influences more closely, several specific works and a number of groups of works have been chosen for discussion. They are: Sun behind mountain;[4] Olives and cypresses;[5] Harvesting in Belgium;[6] the three figure paintings:[7] Woman with hat sitting on bench, two paintings of Harvester resting: woman between sheaves; Field at Harvest time; Four women hoeing; Flowerseller in Berlin;[8] Riverscene, Berlin;[9] In the Highlands, Scotland;[10] At the Baltic Sea;[11] various still lifes, viz., Tulips, Pointsettias, and the paintings of arums; and a number of portraits.

no.307;no.308

no.322

nos.323; 315-320

1. Gordon no.163.
2. Gordon no.180.
3. See pp.181-182, 185.
4. no.289, pl.35, p.210.
5. no.291, pl.36, p.210.
6. no.297, pl.38, p.211.
7. nos.304; 305, pl.41, p.213; 306.
8. no.299, pl.39, p.212.
9. no.300, pl.40, p.212.
10. no.296, pl.37, p.211.
11. no.311, pl.42, p.213.

As mentioned under the general stylistic characteristics of the period, Sun behind mountain is painted in some of the most vivid hues that Laubser ever used. The intensity of the orange sky is heightened by its juxtaposition to the blue mountain and the large unmodelled areas of colour emphasize the high degree of saturation. The mountain is depicted as a flat bold silhouette and the sun's rays are stylized into patterns.

Sun behind mountain no.289,pl.35, p.210

It is understandable that Laubser should choose a motif such as the sun:

> My bedroom [at Bloublommetjieskloof] was on the stoep facing East, and every morning I could watch the sun rise; first a golden glow over all the sky and then, with great suddenness, like a giant striding over a wall, the sun came out in all its glory.[1]

Further on in the same radio talk she described how she used to ride at dawn:

> I even used to get up at dawn and ride out [on horseback] to see the sun rise. The slow golden light flooding the valley in the entire silence I can never forget.[2]

The motif of the sun grew in importance in her later work.[3]

The choice of motif was probably also the result of Schmidt-Rottluff's influence. The same interpretation of the sun is seen in a work such as Buchenwald with sun 1919 by Schmidt-Rottluff. He was in turn probably influenced by Munch when he went to Norway in 1911.[4]

fig.90.p.278
fig.91,p.278

1. 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.404, par.3. She repeated the same thought in 'Dit is my Kontrei.' Appendix 1, p.401, par.3. 'My bedroom window faced east and I looked on to the stoep and garden. Every morning was again a new experience of happiness as the sun's first rays came into the room and I lay still and listened to the familiar farm noises and the birds.' [Author's translation.]

2. 'What I Remember.' Appendix 2, p.406, par.4.

3. See pp.181-182.

4. Myers, p.114.

The sun had a symbolic significance for Laubser which extended beyond its association with light. She wrote in sketchbook 8, f.33, dating to the German period: p.236

> As the earth depends for its continual existence from year to year on inexhaustible supply which it receives from the sun so existence depends on the quality of a man's mind for its continual so-called physical existence.

This parallel between the sun as a light and life-giving source and man's mind fulfilling a similar rôle was a traditional idea[1] and was probably influenced and/or strengthened by contact with Schmidt-Rottluff. If one compares works by Schmidt-Rottluff such as Portrait of Emy 1919 and Setting moon 1920, the similarity in interpretation of the eye in the portrait and the light giving source, the moon, in the landscape, indicates the same parallel visually, that Laubser expressed verbally. figs.92,p.278 93,p.279

In Olives and cypresses the stylistic characteristics of paintings from the Italian period are seen, particularly the two versions of Cypresses and olives with sun's rays. There is a deliberate negation of cubical space, a lack of aerial perspective and an emphasis on a high horizon line. This, together with the suppression of detail in the background, reduces the representation of space to a series of horizontal bands with the verticals of the cypress trees shooting upwards. Shapes are simplified and silhouettes emphasized. Olives and cypresses no.291,pl.36, p.210 nos.209,210

Colour and value contrast are used compositionally. The sombre dark colouring of the trees at the

1. Cirlot, J.E. A Dictionary of Symbols; London: Routledge and Kegan, 1971, p. 99. 'Given that the sun is the source of light and that light is symbolic of the intelligence and of the spirit, then the process of seeing represents a spiritual act and symbolizes understanding.' In the Bible light symbolizes the eye: 'The light of the body is the eye.' St. Matthew, Chapter 6, verse 22; and St. Luke, Chapter 11, verse 34.

bottom of the painting anchors the lower half firmly and accords with the bold heavy shapes of the trees. The cypresses project vertically upwards and the tallest tapers off against the background of the pink sky and blue cloud.[1]

Laubser was probably influenced by Van Gogh's writings on non-local colouring. In a letter to Bernard, Van Gogh wrote about a painting of olive trees:

> I am working at the olive trees, and trying to seize the various effects of the gray sky over the yellow ground, together with the black and green note of the foliage, or of the deep violet ground and foliage against a yellow sky, or again, of the yellow-red ground against a pale green and pink sky.[2]

And also:

> Shortly before his death good old father Corot said: 'Last night in my dream I saw landscapes with pink-coloured skies.'[3]

It is quite probable that Laubser was influenced by these descriptions.

The particular significance of Olives and cypresses, lies in the symbolic use of colour and value contrast. Symbolism had been largely absent in Laubser's work up until the German period.[4] Her interest in symbolism may be traced to her knowledge of Van Gogh's writings

no.291, pl.36,p.210

1. Botha (p.48) writes: 'Ongelukkig gaan die kleureenheid in hierdie stuk verlore as gevolg van kleure wat verander[+] en sodoende doen die skel blou bergreeks en ligroos-rooi aandlug afbreuk aan die expressiviteit en donker gewoel in die voorgrond.' [+]'Ongelukkig blyk dit dat die kunstenares verskeie kere van die verraderlike chroomgeel in haar skilderye gebruik gemaak het.' [Unfortunately the colour unity of this work is lost as a result of colours that have changed[+] and consequently the harsh blue mountain range and pink-red evening sky detracts from the expressiveness and dark tumult in the foreground. [+]Unfortunately it appears that the artist used dangerous chrome yellow in her paintings, several times].

2. Ludovici, A.M. The Letters of a Post Impressionist; London: Constable and Co. 1912, pp.112-113.

3. ibid. p.98.

4. The two versions of Cypresses and olives with sun's rays, nos.209, 210, tentatively dated to the Italian period, with the sun's rays shining from above, and the tree disappearing upwards, should probably be seen as exceptions.

and the Bible, to her developing interest in Christian Science, and to the general artistic background of late 19th Century art.[1]

Probably because of Laubser's religious convictions, her colour usage was directly connected with her association with traditional ideas on light and darkness. Light in the Bible represents the powers of good and the love and understanding of God,[2] whilst darkness is associated with melancholy and evil.[3] That Laubser was influenced by this can be seen in many of her writings. She explicitly stated the connection between light and goodness and between dark and evil:

'God gives us light and happiness'[4] and

'If there is sickness there is darkness in you.'[5]

On page 41 of a sketchbook dating to ca. 1942,[6] she made the heading:

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1. See p.143.

2. Orr, J.(ed.) The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia; Michigan: J.Eerdmans, n.d., volume III, p .1891. 'The origin of light...finds its explanation in the purpose and very nature of God whom John defines as not only the author of light, but in all-inclusive sense, as light itself: 'God is light' (1 Jn. 1 5). The word 'light' is Divinely rich in its comprehensiveness and meaning. Its material splendor is used throughout the Scriptures as the symbol and synonym of all that is luminous and radiant in the mental, moral and spiritual life of men and angels; while the eternal God, because of His holiness and moral perfection is pictured as "dwelling in light unapproachable."(1 Tim. 6 16).'

3. ibid. 'Darkness is the universal symbol and condition of sin and death; light the symbol and expression of holiness' and ibid. volume II, p.789: 'In the Bible the main use of darkness is in contrast to light. Light is the symbol of God's purity, wisdom and glory. Darkness is the opposite.'

4. Sketchbook 6, f.69, p.233.

5. Folio 39 of a sketchbook in the University of Stellenbosch Collection. Archive no.79/6/20.

6. ibid. Although this book dates to ca. 1942, she would have been aware of these ideas in ca. 1924 as can be seen by the writings in sketchbook 6 (see footnote 3) which dates to ca. 1919-1924. Admittedly she could have written the spiritual thoughts in the back of sketchbook 6 at a later date, but one may presume that, as she was already interested in Christian Science as early as 1919, (see chapter 4, p.52), she would have known of the traditional association between light and good and between dark and sin.

'Subject Light' and amongst the quotations on the page are those such as:

> 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness.'
> 'Jesus said I am the light of the Lord.'
> 'To come to light we must obey.'

Thus it becomes apparent that the dark tones of the earth-bound trees which are contrasted to the light colourful tints of the sky, have a symbolic significance as well. This is substantiated by the fact that the cypress tree is a traditional symbol of death in the Mediterranean lands.[1] Graetz, in discussion of Van Gogh's symbolism, suggests that the cypress is a symbol of man striving towards the infinite:

> In all these paintings [of cypresses] the big and massive cypress is cut off by the upper edge of the canvas. The top seems to disappear in the heights of the sky. It becomes invisible as the tree - symbol of the struggling man - reaches for the infinite.[2]

Friedländer feels that trees with vertical upward thrusts imply a spiritual struggle: 'The sky-pointing tree points to the victory of the forces of life over the force of gravity. The clouds awaken longings for the unearthly.'[3]

These associations of the cypress tree with death and spiritual striving, assume even greater significance in the case of Olives and cypresses for, according to the artist, she painted this work after Balwé Senior's death.[4] However, | no.291, pl.36, p.210

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1. 'Q. coccifera [the cyprus or holm-tree] is a magnificent tree growing to a height of 40 feet or more, and often found in Pal[estine] flourishing near sacred tombs, and itself not infrequently the object of superstitious veneration.' The International Bible Encyclopaedia volume III, p.1405. See also Loevgren, S. The Genesis of Modernism; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, p.184.

2. Graetz, H.R. The Symbolic Language of Vincent Van Gogh; London: Thames and Hudson, 1963, p.194. The author's attention was drawn to this observation by Graetz and the following observation by Friedländer, by Botha (p.48).

3. See footnote 2. Friedländer, M.J. Landscape Portrait Still Life - Their Origin and Development; Oxford: Cassirer, 1949, p.143.

4, Botha, p.48.

on another occasion she told the present owner that she painted this work whilst feeling very upset about her friend's serious condition. The present owner notes:

> "oe sy my vra waarom kies ek juis dié skildery... ek antwoord dat die skildery my sterk boei oor 'n onverklaarbare mistieke element daarin van verlange en tog uitstyging. Sy verduidelik dit is juis in hierdie tyd dat sy baie hartseer gevoel het oor haar vriend se ernstige toestand maar in die skilderkuns die troos gevind het om bo die hartseer uit te styg en haar skepper te vind.[1]

If the friend referred to was Balwé Senior, then it would imply that the work was painted whilst the artist was in Italy (as Balwé died before May 1921). However, not only did she tell Botha that she painted the work after Balwé's death but also one cannot assume that the friend referred to in conversation with the present owner, Mrs. White, was indeed Balwé. The only conclusion one can derive from her comments, is that she associated the painting with a time of personal crisis in her life.

The cloud behind the tip of the tallest cyprus tree, by its juxtaposition to the cypress tree and its position in the sky, forms a transition between heaven and earth. This, together with its blue colouring, (blue is the traditional spiritual colour as symbolized in the Virgin's dress), suggest, as Friedländer expresses it, that 'the clouds awaken longings for the unearthly.'[2] Perhaps this interpretation explains the cloud motif behind the head of Old Coloured woman with scarf. no.430

Furthermore, Laubser was almost certainly aware of the religious significance that the olive grove had for

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1. Letter from the present owner, Mrs. M. White, dated 27.10.76 in the R.A.U. archives. [When she asked me why I chose that particular painting ...I answered that the painting interested me intensely on account of an indescribable mystical element in it of longing and yet transcendence. She explained that it was just at this time that she felt very upset about her friend's serious condition but had found comfort in painting in order to rise above the grief and to find her creator.]

2. See footnote 3, p.150.

Van Gogh. He associated it with the Mount of Olives.[1] Laubser marked the following passage in one of Van Gogh's letters to Bernard: 'Corot painted Christ in an olive grove with the shepherds' star.'[2] Laubser's painting of Olives and cypresses therefore has further significance.

no.291, pl.36,p.210

Van Gogh also made her aware that for a work to have spiritual content it is not necessary to paint religious figures:

> one can give the impression of fear, without going direct[ly] to the historical Gethsemane, and that one can paint a comforting and gentle subject without depicting the chief actors in the Sermon on the Mount...Heavens! the Bible! Millet was brought up on it entirely in his childhood, and read nothing else; and yet he never, or scarcely ever painted real Biblical subjects.[3]

Laubser marked the last part of this passage thus indicating the importance she attached to it. Olives and cypresses, which should be seen within the context of Laubser's knowledge of the Bible and of Van Gogh's writings, and was painted during a time of crisis in her life, shows a further development in her art.

no.291, pl.36,p.210

In Harvesting in Belgium, the development from earlier works is clearly evident: the flat unmodelled shapes of the background trees depicted in the Belgian ink and watercolour landscapes are now further simplified and are, as a result of the oil technique more solidly blocked-in, while the suppression of detail and flat shapes seen in her Italian works now have an added expressive meaning.

Harvesting in Belgium no.297,pl.38, p.211

nos.126-136

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1. 'This letter [L614a (Nov.1889) Letter to Isaacson] shows that the olive trees held religious significance for Van Gogh. He spoke of them directly after he had mentioned Puvis de Chavannes' Sermon on the Mount and stated that Puvis would know how to do the olive trees.' Shear, C.F. 'Van Gogh's Iconology 1888-1890 with Particular Reference to Colour.' Unpublished M.A. diss. Wits., 1975, p.136.

2. Ludovici, p.115.

3. ibid.

The composition consists of a repetition of horizontal layers: the foreground area where the women are working, the row of wheat sheaves and the row of trees; and of a repetition of shapes: the angular bending forms of the women echo the forms of the wheat sheaves and are reinforced by the outline of the trees.

The figures are conceived in terms of broad unmodelled areas of colour and contrasting tonal planes. No facial features distinguish the women and there is a broad generalization of the figure. The figure is represented as a type both in build and countenance. Descriptive detail in the wheat sheaves and in the background has been suppressed. The setting becomes a token in which the wheat sheaves serve as symbols representing a cornfield. The flat simplified background brings the mass of the two women forward towards the picture plane.

Colour is used expressively to emphasize the most importa t images: the deep violet between the tree trunks emphasizes the complementary yellow of the wheat sheaves, and the red surrounding many of the bunches of corn is intensified by its juxtaposition with the green grass and thus draws attention to the wheat. The blue and red blouses and white scarves of the harvesters enforce the bold figures as a focal point.

Strong tonal contrasts reinforce the rhythm of this composition. Botha writes:

> Die duidelike kontraswerking tussen lig en donker dui ook op 'n moontlike beïnvloeding van die hout- en linoleumsneëtegniek wat die kunstenares nogal heel dikwels in vroeër jare beoefen het.[1] Hier word die donkergroen bome in die agtergrond en die twee figure in donkergroen rompe in die voorgrond gekontrasteer teen die geel-geel koringland waar die arbeid verrig word. Naas die swaar donkergroen, teenoor die skerp geel werk die amper spierwit

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1. Compare this work to the woodcut of the same subject, no.414.

> kappies en voorskote soos verblindende ligflitse wat dikwels by die kontraswerking van die ekspressionis voorkom.[1]

Therefore through stark reduction of detail, the expressive use of colour and tonal contrasts and the repetition of shapes and compositional elements, the relationship between the main images of the harvesters on the one hand and the corn on the other, is more sharply stressed. Furthermore, the repetition of the horizontal layers, vertical elements (the tree trunks), and similar shapes (the women and corn sheaves), help establish a measured rhythm across the canvas. Bouman describes the rhythm of the work in this way:

> Hier is 'n ritme, die ritme van die arbeid van ure en dae: in die twee eenders geklede en geboë vroue, in die koringgerwe wat van die helling afdaal in die teenoorgestelde lyn, in die donker boomgroepe daaragter wat skyn of hulle wil meeleef in die voortgang van die arbeid. Hier ook reeds die vereenvoudiging, ter wille van die hoër bedoeling, want te veel details sou die aandag aflei van die ritmiese beweging."[2]

Similarly, a development is seen in the three paintings of seated women: Woman with hat sitting on bench (no.304) and the two works entitled Harvester resting: woman between sheaves (nos.305,pl.41, p.213;306). In these works the facial features

1. p.37. [The clear contrast between light and dark indicates a possible influence from the woodcut and linoleum cut [sic. see below] technique that the artist often practised during these years. Here the dark-green dresses in the foreground are strongly contrasted against the yellow wheatland where the work is performed. Near the heavy dark green contrasting with the sharp yellow, the off-white scarves function as highlights of the kind that often appear in the contrast technique of the Expressionist.]. (Linoleum had not been invented as early as 1924.)

2. 'Maggie Laubser'. Huisgenoot, vol.27, no.1084: 1st January 1943, p.7. [Here is a rhythm...the rhythm of labour of hours and days: in the two identically dressed and bending women figures, in the corn sheaves that descend the slope, in the opposed lines, in the dark group of trees at the back which glow as if they want to participate in the progress of the labour. Here already the simplification [is] for the sake of higher meaning, for too many details would detract attention from the rhythmic movement.] The author's attention was drawn to this passage by Botha, pp.37-38.

have either been schematized to a general approximation or are not depicted at all. In Harvester resting : woman between sheaves the figure, centrally placed within the composition, is surrounded by wheat sheaves. This physical proximity is emphasized compositionally by the use of colour - the blue dress links to the non-naturalistic blue of the ground and the wheaten yellow hat relates to the sheaves. This compositional link emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between the woman, who has just harvested the crop and is now resting, and the wheat which was originally sown by human hand.

no.305,pl.41, p.213

The harvest scene is a part of the cyclical nature of life, of the order in the universe: the seed is sown and the wheat is germinated, grows to maturity and is harvested. Man is a vital participant in this ever-recurring rhythm. The concept of the cyclical nature of life is prominent in Laubser's art and is formulated in her thoughts: 'I am always at the point of perfection - what I send out I bring back - I attract home.'[1] And: 'To be conscious is to be giving and to give is to receive - so all is one - I can't receive without giving and I can't give without receiving.'[2]

Whereas in the two versions of Woman gathering harvest - Belgium ca.1920 and in Harvesting in Belgium painted several years later in Germany, the figure is depicted in action, in these works the 'passive' or 'non-active' phase is portrayed. The women are depicted sitting, inactive and introspective with their hands folded inertly on their laps. The human, pensive and meditative in the world of nature, is a theme that has its roots in Romanticism.

nos.139,pl.9, p.197;140; no.297,pl.38, p.211

nos.304-6

1. Sketchbook in a private collection, R.A.U. negative no.2961/27.

2. Written by Laubser on the back of an envelope left in her estate to Elza Miles, Johannesburg.

This passive view of the world is developed by Maggie Laubser in her portraits and even more so in her still lifes, and is expressed in her beliefs on serenity, rest, peace and calm.

'Just be still and let go all that is troublesome. Be definite in all & everything. Be still - Be still & quiet. Just let go & be at rest!'[1]

And 'Let the foundation of all your effort be rest - Rest in peace knowing that the law of life is working perfectly in all things - Just be at rest & relax!'[2]

The two poles of work and rest, effort and repose, action[3] and inaction are part of the ever recurring rhythm in nature and are both expressed in Laubser's work.

In the Highlands, Scotland the same rhythmic repetition of planes, forms, tonal contrasts and colour as in Harvesting in Belgium is evident. The composition is constructed with a series of diagonal planes receding in depth. The modelled and textured foreground plane moves in a way diagonal from the left to the centre to the middle-right. The middle plane echoes the wavy diagonal and consists of two diagonals converging towards the houses and agricultural lands which form a focal point. The third plane is placed diagonally from top left to middle right. The round volumetric forms of the cloud in the fourth plane are repeated on a smaller scale in the shrubs in the foreground plane.

A secondary rhythmic sequence is established by three receding planes of the mountains on the right which are placed diagonally from bottom left to top

In the Highlands,Scotland
no.296,
pl.37,p.211
no.297,
pl.38,p.211

1. Sketchbook 6, f.67, p.233.

2. Sketchbook 6, f.71, p.233.

3. For further discussion of the concept of action in Laubser's work see p.70.

right and the four receding planes on the left which are placed diagonally from bottom right to top left.

The predominant colours are blues and greens with patches of contrast in the ochre, pink and blue-white. Colours are repeated over the painted surface: the pink in the foreground is related to the purple in the middle distance and in the pale tints in the sky; the blue-white of the two paths is echoed in the columns of smoke and in the clouds. The ochre patches are arranged in a triangular way: one on the bottom left, one in the middle right and one in the upper central area of the painting. The blue-green mountains are seen on the middle left, right and top left of the picture.

The painting is of the same scene as one painted earlier whilst the artist was in Britain in ca.1915-1919. A comparison of these two works shows that in the case of the later version, there is a greater power and force achieved through intensification of colour, simplification of form, repetition of structural elements[1] and an emphasis on certain motifs, e.g., paths, houses, clouds and heather. A comparison of the two works also reveals an emphasis in the later work, on the presence of humanity. This presence is implied by the existence of the paths on the hillside, the cultivated farmlands and the houses with smoke wafting from their chimneys (these motifs are barely visible, if at all, in the earlier work). Thus the contrast between the life and activity of human existence and the vast emptiness and solitude of nature, also seen in At the Baltic Sea is given clear expression.

no.72,pl.4, p.194

no.311,pl.42, p.213

From the above analysis it becomes evident that there is deliberate control in the clearly defined forms, carefully structured composition and harmonious colour usage. Botha also comments on this:

1. This repetition lends a decorative character to the work.

> Dit blyk dus uit bogenoemde analise dat ‚onbeheersdheid' en ‚jeugwerk' ongelukkige bepalings is in Werth se verwysing na hierdie stuk ['In Hoeverre Dra die Skilderkuns in Suid-Afrika 'n Eie Stempel?' M.A. Verhandeling U.P.1952, bl.79]. In die eerste plek word onbeheersdheid uitgeskakel deur die voorbereidende skets en tweedens kan die werk wat Maggie Laubser in 1924 lewer lank nie meer as jeugwerk beskou word nie. Die gelukkige gevolg van so 'n voorbereidende skets is die besonkenheid in die finale skilderstuk. Hierdie besonkenheid voer Maggie Laubser myns insiens verder van die gewone ekspressionisme af as Irma Stern. Die mate van ingehouenheid en geestelike rypheid wat in Maggie se werk voorkom, lê dus opgesluit in 'n mate van beplanning en oordenking wat vooraf gaan aan die finale skilderstuk.[1]

It is this apparently deliberate control, which separates Laubser's work from the dynamic style of Die Brücke artists at the height of the movement during the years 1906-1912. The disciplined restrained quality would result, in part, from Laubser's working process, as she painted this work from a preparatory oil study. Therefore, as she was not 'on the spot', the quality of immediacy and even urgency is lacking. The controlled quality probably also resulted in part from Laubser's views on serenity and calm.[2]

no.295

In At the Baltic Sea the same rhythmic repetition landscape elements is evident, and large areas of bright colour, vigorously applied, are juxtaposed as in a patchwork quilt. Botha describes it in this way:

At the Baltic Sea no.311,pl.42, p.213

1.pp.46-47.[It appears from the above analysis that 'uncontrolledness' and 'youth work' are not good terms as used by Werth with reference to this work. [In Hoeverre Dra die Skilderkuns in Suid-Afrika 'n Eie Stempel? Unpublished M.A., U.P.1952, p.79.] In the first place, the uncontrolled quality is ruled out by the [presence of the] preparatory sketch and secondly, the work that Laubser produced in 1924 can no longer be seen as 'youth work'. The happy result of such a preparatory sketch is the discipline of the final painting. This constraint, in my opinion, removes Laubser further from the usual expressionism than Irma Stern. The quality of control and spiritual maturity that appears in Laubser's work is contained in the degree of planning and consideration that precedes the final painting.]

2. For further discussion refer back to page 156 of this chapter.

> In hierdie werk toon sy onmiskenbaar die invloed van die expressioniste en veral Schmidt-Rottluff as die vereenvoudiging in the vorm en kleur in ag geneem word. Die skildery wat bestaan uit groot vlakke, bly binne die perke van die suiwer pikturale sodat elke kleur 'n simbool word vir die gewone alledaagse verskynsels op 'n oesland.[1]

The influence of Schmidt-Rottluff is evident if one compares the handling of the clouds in this work and in In the Highlands, Scotland, to Schmidt-Rottluff's interpretation of the same motif in Storm at Sea 1920. Furthermore, the anti-perspectival devices of the strips of colour representing the cultivated lands in In the Highlands, Scotland, and the two strips of red and yellow in the background of this work, At the Baltic Sea, show a direct influence of Schmidt-Rottluff. Compare the effect, for instance, to the illogical space construction created by the vertical red strips in the centre of Village by the sea 1912.

no.296,pl.37, p.211

fig.94,p.279

no.296,pl.37, p.211

no.311,pl.42, p.213

fig.89,p.278 (reprc.in black and white)

The background motif of the trees and houses, treated as silhouettes, is very similar to the subject of the Belgian watercolour and ink studies. This might indicate that she recalled certain motifs from memory and combined them with scenes she saw in Germany: in this case, a farmland scene at harvest time near the Baltic Sea.

nos.126-136

As in In the Highlands, Scotland and Harvesting in Belgium, there is a specific link between the dominant images, in this case between the landscape and the houses. Botha expresses it in this way:

nos.296,pl.37, p.211;297,pl. 38, p.211

> Wat hierdie werk in konsepsie nog groter maak, is die duidelike tekens van kontraswerking: eerstens word die na uurbeeld groots en oorweldigend gegee en tweedens lê onder hierdie natuurgeweld die

1. p.48. [In this work she shows unmistakably the influences of Schmidt-Rottluff, if one takes into account the simplification of form and colour. The painting, which consists of large planes, remains within the limits of the purely pictorial so that every colour becomes a symbol for the ordinary everyday appearances of a harvest scene.]

kleiner andersoortige aktiwiteit en warme lewe wat in die huisies neers soos blyk uit die rookvlae wat opwaai.[1]

The intrinsic relationship between the two most important images in the painting is expressed in Flowerseller in Berlin through simplification of detail and use of colour. Colour functions expressively as can be seen in the repetition of orange in the face of the flowerseller and in the flowers which she sells in order to make a living. The importance of colour already evident in her Italian works has thus become even greater. Whereas in her pre-Italian works colour was only an important additive factor, in her Italian and German works colour became basic to the construction of the whole painting. Intense vivid colours are used compositionally: by the repetition of colours, viz., orange, over the picture surface, links between the background, middleground and foreground are established. This shift negates spatial recession and facilitates pictorial integration.

Flowerseller in Berlin no.299,pl.39, p.212

In keeping with the suppression of space, the foliage of the tree is indicated by flat unmodelled shapes[2] and the colour of the flowers is applied in large broad areas. This in turn, supports the simplification of detail: no individual leaves or flowers can be discerned and no features distinguish the face of the flowerseller. This indicates a move towards the representation of a type as there is an increased generalization in the treatment of the human figure and in the lack of descriptive detail in the flowers.

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1. p.48. [What makes this work even greater in conception is the clear indication of contrasts: firstly, the image of nature is grandly and overwhelmly reflected and secondly, under this natural power lies the smaller different activity and warmer life that dominates in the houses, as can be seen from the smoke columns that waft upwards.]

2. Compare to the same motif in Cape homestead 1922 no.284, pl.34, p.309, and Mother and child ca 1924 no.447.

Outline is stressed and as a result shapes are contained, enclosed and clearly distinguishable. Aligned with this clarity of shape is the clarity of composition. Although the flowers and the paving stones form a diagonal, and the pavement lines curve upward and out of the picture on the right, the composition is built up on a clearly structured grid of horizontals (the tree and two lamp posts) and verticals (the shop fronts).

In Riverscene, Berlin large areas of unmodelled colour are juxtaposed and in some cases they are independent of recognizable objects. Spatial recession is negated by the repetition of colours in foreground and background, viz., the deep pink; and in the reflection motif which suppresses the distinction between the vertical and horizontal surfaces. The large areas of flat colour, illogical space construction, the jagged brushstrokes in certain areas and the use of mixed tonal colour should be compared to work by Schmidt-Rottluff executed between 1910 and 1912, e.g. Norwegian landscape, Skryqeda' November 1911. Grohmann defines the style of this period as Schmidt-Rottluff's 'coloured planar style.'[1]

Riverscene, Berlin no.300, pl.40,p.212

fig.95,p.279

The influence of Expressionism may also be seen in her still lifes, particularly in examples such as Pointsettias and Tulips. Bold colouring, a limited palette, heavy dark outlines and twisting heaving forms characterize these works. Detail is suppressed and the large flowers are bold and almost savage in execution. In both works the composition is constructed with curves, the only straight lines in the composition in Tulips are seen in the sides of the jug. The semi-circular table and the curve of the jug handle in Tulips, and the vase in Pointsettias, echo the sinuous forms of the petals and stalks. The

Still lifes

nos.323;322

no.322

nos.322;323

1. Grohmann, p.256.

heavy outlines, thick impasto, and curving shapes, all evoke a feeling of animation and vitality. In Tulips particularly, the thick brushstrokes follow the shape of the swirling forms. There is a concentration and focalization on the motif, further emphasized by the plain background which acts as a foil to the foreground. no.322

In the paintings of arum lilies there is an emphasis on large, bold forms and heavy, dark, curving outlines. There is a suppression of detail and a concentration on the image. In Two arum lilies and leaf in vase the motif is further isolated and emphasized by the plain background and the high viewpoint. Furthermore, the flowers are not contained within the picture area - but are cut off by the frame. Thus the complete image is not represented, one sees rather a fragment of the whole, a detail from a larger scene. nos.315-320 no.315,pl.43, p.214

The majority of paintings from this period are portraits. Laubser was thus developing the interest she had shown, particularly during her South African stay in 1921-1922, when she painted portraits of Coloured women. As mentioned before, it was as a result of her interest in portraiture that Balwé Junior introduced her to Prof. Jächels,[1] a portrait painter in Berlin.

Laubser experimented with a variety of styles in her portraits. One portrait, Man with glasses, shows the probable influence either of minor Cubists or of the early Cézanne-phase of Cubism,[2] examples of which no.339

1. It seems he was a relatively obscure artist as no mention of him is made in any of the standard German reference works. Prof. Trümpelmann from the University of Stellenbosch, told the author during 1975, that a student from the history of art department of the University of Stellenbosch had been sent to Germany to conduct research on Prof. Jächels and his influence on Maggie Laubser. As yet no results of this research have been made known.

2. As illustrated by Fernande 1909 by Picasso. Reproduced in Haftmann, vol.2, no.164, p.83. The planes in this work are broken into facets which are angled and juxtaposed in such a way as to suggest mass and volume, and there is only one viewpoint. This differs from the multiple and simultaneous viewpoints and the poly-dimensional idea of space seen in the later analytical and synthetic phases of cubism.

Laubser possibly saw at exhibitions in Berlin or in reproduction. She might also have read some of Cézanne's writings on art. In this work volume is constructed not by gradual modelling, but by juxtaposition of broken angular facets. However, this is an isolated example of this style and should be considered as an experiment in a direction abandoned in favour of the expressionism of German art.

A few portraits are painted in a subdued tonalistic palette, e.g., Man 1924; Self portrait 1922; The clearing woman 1922-4; Woman 1923; and Woman 1924. These paintings accord with the style of works such as Three women hoeing and the two works Seated female nude, for brushstrokes are small and clearly visible, colour is subdued, paint is thickly applied and planes are not as abstracted as in her later portraits from this period.[1]

nos.338;357
nos.374-376
no.303
nos.332,333

Botha sees the influence of Modersohn-Becker in The cleaning woman:

no.374

> Vanweë die massale vorms en vereenvoudiging herinner hierdie portret meer aan Paula Modersohn-Becker se werksmetode as die van Cézanne van wie Paula veel geleer het.[2]

That Laubser knew of Paula Modersohn-Becker, is indicated by the inscription on the back of the sketch of Woman with hat in chair which reads: 'Paula Modersohn von Gustav Pauli.' Although the directional brushstroke and tonal modulation recalls Modersohn-Becker's treatment as seen in her still lifes, e.g., Sunflowers 1907, if one compares these portraits by Laubser to Modersohn-Becker's, there is not the same radical simplification of form, frontal view and symmetry, e.g., Old woman at the poorhouse 1906.

no.370 recto and verso
fig.96,p.279
fig.97,p.279

1. no.348, pl.45, p.215; nos.360, 365, 393, pl.47, p.216; 406, pl.48, p.216.

2. p.39. [On account of the massive forms and simplification, this portrait is more reminiscent of Paula Modersohn-Becker's working methods than those of Cézanne from whom Paula learnt much.]

These portraits by Laubser should rather be seen as a development of the style of her 1921-1922 South African portraits, in which forms were tonally modelled, directional brushstrokes were integral in constructing form and paint was fairly thickly applied. In the later portraits of this group, i.e., those dating to 1924, viz., Man and Woman, brushstrokes become more jagged and more vigorous and in the background of Man, fan outwards from the head.

nos.338;376

no.338

This looser style is further developed in the transitional group of portraits,[1] which bridge the stylistic gap between the more conservative, tonalistic portraits on the one hand[2] and the more expressionistic portraits on the other.[3] In these 'transitional' or 'intermediary' portraits, colour is more intense and less naturalistic than previously, paint is still fairly thickly applied, and jagged directional brushstrokes form planes which, by their juxtaposition at contrasting angles, build up volumes, e.g., Woman with hat. Forms are angular, e.g., the eyes and shadow on the neck in two of the self portraits, and in the eyes, eyebrows and left cheek in Man with white moustache.

no.393,pl.47, p.216

nos.364,365

no.344,pl.44, p.214

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1. Man with hat, no.335; Man with elbow resting on chair, no.336; Man with white moustache, no.344, pl.44, p.214; Man with moustache, no.345 recto; three Self portraits, nos.359, 364, 365; Woman with beret, no.377; Woman, no. 379; Woman with hat, no.386; Woman with hat, no.392; and the two versions of Young singer, nos.400, 401.

2. Man, no.338; Self portrait, no.357, and the three portraits of women, nos.374-376.

3. E.g., Young man with bow tie, no.342; Man with white moustache, no.343; the three works entitled Man with moustache, nos.346-348; Young man, no.349; Young man with bow tie, no.350; Turkish man, no.352, pl.46, p.215; the two versions of Self portrait, nos.360, 361; Woman (with earring?), no.389; Woman with necklace and earrings, no.390; Woman with hat, no.392; Japanese Girl, no. 396; Woman, (German Jewess), no.403; Whore, Berlin no.406, pl.48, p.216; German girl, no.407; Woman, no.408; Woman with right arm resting on chair, no.409; and Woman, no.410, pl.49, p.217.

In the paintings of this group, although paint is is not transparent, brushwork not as jagged, colour not as harsh and planes not as simplified as in her most expressionist portraits,[1] there is a definite expressive use of form, line and colour. This is perhaps most evident in the two self portraits. In both the combination of the viewpoint from below, the slanted eyes, heavy eyelids, the angular shadows on the neck and the jagged brushmarks evoke a disturbing effect. In Self portrait the quizzical, self-examining gaze, which is by implication hesitant, is further emphasized by the off centre position of the head. This parallels Van Gogh's interpretation of his sitter in Portrait of a man 1889 and the similarity suggests that Laubser may have seen a reproduction of this portrait. If compared with the unfinished Self portrait with hands on forehead, one sees how Laubser strengthened the impact of the meditative, self-exploratory gaze by the focalization on the motif, bold colouring, the viewpoint from below, jagged brushstrokes, angular forms and distortion.

nos.364,365

no.364

fig.98,p.279

no.358

Laubser's more expressive and subjective interpretation of the sitter may be seen not only in the freer more arbitrary use of colour, but also in the distortion of form. For instance, in Man with white moustache the head is viewed from a frontal view and the ear from an almost profile view. This was perhaps an influence derived from Kirchner who distorted form in a similar way as can be seen in Portrait of Oskar Schlemmer 1914, Gordon writes of this portrait:

no.344,pl.44, p.214

fig.99,p.279

1. Comparisons may be made between the following pairs of works: Selfportrait nos.359 and 360; Woman (with earring?) nos.388 and 389; Woman with hat nos.392 and 393, pl.47, p.216; and Young singer nos.401 and 402.

> The ear presentation suggests a subjective attitude, not so much of listening as of the fellow artist's extreme sensitivity to all stimuli from the outside world. It is achieved through the rendition of each ear in full profile view on the otherwise frontal head... The simultaneous rendition of profile and frontal features...is unknown in Egyptian convention and as yet only imperfectly realized in cubist precedent.[1]

Similar emphasis on certain features of the face as a result of distortion or exaggeration, is seen in Laubser's most expressionist portraits which show the influence of Die Brücke's art even more clearly. Outline is emphasized, as is seen in the hat, eyebrows, nose and chin of Woman with hat and the hair of Woman with hand on head. Paint is thinly applied, brushstrokes are clearly visible and are jagged and angular. See particularly the transparent paintwork and the jagged and whirling gestural brush in Whore, Berlin. Colour in the faces is fully saturated, non-local and often used in harsh, even shrill combinations, e.g., the turquoise, red and blue of the face and yellow of the neck in Woman with hat; the lilac, pink and green of Man with moustache and the turquoise, pink and green in Selfportrait(?). This vivid colouring in the face often contrasts tonally with the background, e.g., browns in Man with moustache,[2] Selfportrait(?), Woman with hat,[3] and Woman, and the greens in Man with white moustache and Young man with bow tie. Forms are simplified to the point of stylization and crudity, e.g., the neck in Young singer.

The expressive distortion and exaggeration of form seen in the self-portraits is seen again in Turkish man. In this work the fleshiness of the mouth is expressed through the wavy outlines of the lips and the warm sensuous colour, red. In Man with

no.393,pl.47, p.216;no.382

no.406,pl.48, p.216

no.393,pl.47, p.216

no.348.pl.45 p.215

no.361

no.361

no.408

no.344,pl.44, p.214;no.350

no.402

no.352,pl.46, p.215

1. Gordon, p.101.
2. no.348, pl.45, p.215.
3. no.393, pl.47, p.216.

moustache, the deranged quality of the gaze is further heightened by the dissimilarity in the size of the pupils and the asymmetry of the eyebrows. This disturbing quality is emphasized by the angular forms, harsh non-naturalistic colour and loose, vigorous transparent brushwork. Laubser herself said that she always thought there was something odd about the man who sat for this portrait. She discovered subsequently that he had been committed to an institution.[1]

no.348,pl.45, p.215

In Whore, Berlin the formal handling and the iconographic interpretation lead to the expressionistic quality of the work. The slope of the eyes, the angularity of the features seen particularly in the line of the left eyebrow which joins the nose at an angle, the closed form of the hair and the jagged brushwork support the theme of a prostitute. The pointed fingers give particular prominence to the cigarette with trailing smoke. Form, motif and title thus woke the harsh reality of contemporary urban life - a popular theme with the Expressionists as seen in Kirchner's Erna with cigarette.

no.406,pl.48, p.216

fig.100,p.279

From the analysis of the above works it is clear that there is an influence of German Expressionism. Laubser no longer illustrated the appearance of an object with photographic accuracy as in her early works, e.g., Proteas and the painting was no longer a decorative translation of external objects, a style evident in many of her Italian lake scenes. By suppression of detail, intensification of colour, distortion of forms, bolder shapes and simplification of outline, Laubser recreated objects with a greater power and force.

no.27

From the naturalistic representation of objects she moved to a style in which it was not local colour and individual details that were important, but rather the essence of the subject.

I did not want to paint things or events or

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1. Established by Botha in an interview with the artist on 10 Dec. 1961 (Botha, p.39).

> ideas but I wanted to paint visions. Whatever the object on my canvas, it must be a vision of that object, whether one recognizes it or not; or whether it has that misty form in dreams, it must only represent the final spiritual shape of the object.[1]

Despite the 'exaggerations and distortions of line and colour'[2] however, even in Laubser's most expressionist work, there is a control that differs from the abandoned sense of urgency and immediacy of many Expressionist painters. It is in this direction which Laubser developed on her return to South Africa in 1924.

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1. 'What I Remember,' Appendix 2, p.407, par.3.
2. See page 137, footnote 1.

CONCLUSION

Summary: early South African period 1901-1913

Before her sojourn overseas, Laubser's work typified the romantic-realist style[1] of early twentieth century South African art: a detailed tonalistic description of objects depicted on a relatively small scale. She developed from copying postcards to painting landscapes and portraits (the most popular subject matter at that time) and still lifes. Even before she left for Europe in 1913, however, she was already painting plein-air.

Holland and Britain 1913-1919

Her contact with Dutch painters in Laren during 1914 and then later with the English landscape tradition, strengthened this practice of plein-air landscape painting. Her palette during the years up to 1919 remained tonal and relatively subdued. During her period of study at the Slade from 1914 to 1919, she produced linear academic studies; copies of sculptured busts and nudes. Towards the end of her time at the Slade, her drawing style became looser and less linear, and she developed in this direction whilst in Belgium, as seen in her nude studies from that period.

Belgium 1919-1920

Landscapes continued to predominate in Laubser's work whilst she was in Belgium and her palette lightened and brightened, perhaps as a result of the influence of the Flemish Fauves. The motifs of the figure in the landscape, as well as buildings in the landscape, appeared in her work for the first time, and there are signs of a shift in her working process: from plein-air sketching and painting, to painting from photographs and compositional studies. The first evidence of her interest in Christian Science dates to her stay in Belgium. This belief influenced her art increasingly.

In Italy, although Laubser continued to paint plein-air, there is a definite shift from the more descriptive

1. For definition of romantic-realist style see pp.17-18.

realistic interpretation practised up until this time, to a more abstracted decorative style, in which there is a simplification of form, reduction of detail and intensification of hue. Thus Laubser relied more and more on analytical compositional sketches. The majority of works from this period depict scenes by Lake Garda, or still lifes. There are also several portraits. The change in the palette in so many of the Italian works points to the influence of the Post-Impressionists, particularly Van Gogh and Neo-Impressionism.

South Africa 1921-1922

When she returned to South Africa from 1921 to 1922, Laubser concentrated mainly on portraits of Coloured farm labourers. These portraits, although not descriptively detailed, do not yet show the distortion of form and colour and simplification of outline of Laubser's German works (although Laubser was perhaps acquainted with German Expressionism at this stage).

Germany 1922-1924

When she returned to Germany, Laubser met and was influenced by the leading Expressionists, particularly Schmidt-Rottluff. Their influence may be seen in her works from this period; landscapes, still lifes and portraits: in the large bold forms, simplified outlines, reduction of descriptive detail, heavy dark outlines, jagged shapes, loose vigorous brushwork, stark tonal contrasts and non-local colour. Several works have symbolic content and several of these should be seen within the context of 'symbolistic' art.[1] Laubser's development from a descriptive interpretation to an expressive one was thus complete.

Laubser's return to South Africa in 1924 at the age of thirty eight, may thus be seen as a turning point in her life. She had lived overseas for ten years and studied at the Slade, London, and Germany, and she had come into contact with international art, and artists such as Wilson Steer, Van Gogh and Schmidt-Rottluff inter alia, and the influence of their art had filtered through

1. For definition of term 'symbolistic' see p.131, footnote 5.

into her work. Although many of her early South African works, i.e., 1924 to 1928, show an overt influence of German Expressionism, she gradually tempered this style and adapted it into her own personal style.

Influence of German Expressionism

A number of works painted either in Germany or on her return to South Africa[1] and others definitely dated to ca 1924-1930,[2] serve to illustrate the point which she had reached stylistically after her study years overseas and particularly after her contact with German Expressionism.

Stylistic influence

Stylistically, the influence of German Expressionism in works painted in ca 1924/1925,[3] may be seen in several ways. In the portraits of black women, paint is thickly applied, shapes are large and bold, outlines heavy and emphasized, detail is radically simplified and colour contrasts are dramatic. For instance, in Woman with arums, colouring is exotic and shapes are simple and evocative: the archetypal egg-shaped head completely encircled by the scarf, the almond-shaped eyes with enlarged pupils, the thick sensuous lips, bold heavy folds of the red-pink scarf, the sinuous outlines of the arums and the dark heaving forms of the foliage behind. One reads from one image to the next and the relationship between the head, arums and foliage: between the 'primitive' woman and the surrounding dark primeval forms of the greenery, is more powerfully portrayed as a result of the reduction in detail, exaggeration of certain shapes and emphasis of some forms over others. This work and others of black women are isolated examples, however, and Laubser did not develop this extreme style.

no.428

In other works painted on Laubser's return to South Africa, e.g., Mother with children, Two women carrying

fig.103, p.280

1. Nos.418-420, 325 verso, 422, 298 verso, 423, 428, 430, 432-434, 436. See catalogue summary for reasons for uncertainty in dating.

2. Figs.101-111, 113-118, 121-123, 125, 131-133, 137, 138, 140, 141, 145, 146, 155, 159, 160, 162, 163, pp.280-291.

3. See footnote 1.

water, Four cows in landscape, Two birds in landscape, Amaryllis, Two washerwomen with babies, Three washerwomen in landscape with sun, Woman carrying water, the characteristics of the late German works are evident.[1] Paint is thinly and transparently applied, the palette is low-keyed, and 'strange' colour combinations are seen in the turquoise green, lime-yellow and pink accents that highlight the otherwise sombre and earthy colours. See particularly, Mother with children and Two women carrying water. Brushstrokes are vigorous, jagged and directional e.g., Four cows in landscape. The predominance of the high horizon line in the landscape negates recession into space and forces the figure towards the picture surface, thus emphasizing it. Shadows, cast vertically downwards and represented by solid, blocked-in shapes, further strengthen the two-dimensional flatness of the picture plane: e.g., Two washerwomen with babies. The focalization on the main image is further stressed as a result of the suppression of superfluous detail. The landscape is reduced to token signs, as seen, for instance, in the archetypal spherical or hemispherical shapes of the sun, e.g., Three washerwomen in landscape with sun, in the mountains and ploughed fields of Two birds in landscape and in the simplified shapes of the trees, in which no details of foliage are indicated and outlines are boldly stressed: e.g., Woman carrying water. Facial features are absent in the figure scenes and toes and fingers are summarily indicated, if at all.

figs.104-110, pp.281, 282
fig.103, p.280
fig.104, p.281
fig.105, p.281
fig.108, p.281
fig.109, p.281
fig.106, p.281
fig.110, p.282

In the above works, there are accents of bright colour and contrasts are vivid and dramatic. In the majority of works executed on her return from Germany, the palette is low-keyed, colours are mixed and tonal and consist of muted shades of blues, greens and ochres. Her early years back in South Africa were difficult, for her art was not accepted, let alone acclaimed by either critics or the general public during these early years.

1. See p. 134.

Not only was this demoralizing and upsetting for a sensitive artist, but Laubser also relied on public support as she was in financial need at this stage.

> When I did start [to exhibit] they criticized me terribly. There was a man...Bernard Lewis - he criticized Irma [Stern] too....It was terrible for me because my people didn't understand my work. I [was] just beginning to get into Expressionism, just feeling my way, when I had to go back to Africa. And then I started there - I was so criticized and there was no money. Financially it was a bad time ...but Irma [Stern] didn't mind, you see she had lots and lots of money. It didn't really affect her. No, she went on her way. It was me...I got very nervous because it was my bread and butter.'[1]

The combination of these factors probably had an effect on her painting in that, in these difficult circumstances, her palette became more subdued. It was only during the 1930's, particularly after she began using watercolour in 1935, that her palette lightened and brightened. Thus the influence of Expressionism is not seen in the palette of all works executed on her return to South Africa. However, in many of the works in which the palette is subdued, the influence of Expressionism may be seen in the brushwork. In Woman by fisherman's cottage 1928 and Boy with cat 1928, forms are not clearly defined and enclosed, and thus they tend to merge with one another. This is further emphasized by the differing directions of the brushstrokes and the fact that individual brushmarks are clearly visible. This evokes the idea of a direct and spontaneous process and continues the style of German period seen in works such as Three women hoeing and Field at harvest time.

figs.111, p.282;156, p.290

nos.303;307

In the majority of works executed on Laubser's return to South Africa in 1924, the influence of her study years overseas may be seen in the shift from the

1. Munitz interview 1968.

romantic-realist style of her early descriptive works, to a more expressive style, in which there is a reduction of detail, simplification of form, and distortion of objects. In these works, large, unmodelled planes of paint are thickly applied. No areas are left unpainted. Shapes are bolder and more solid and contained, and the radical simplification of form is seen particularly in objects such as trees, mountains, houses and paths. Forms become heavier and have a greater clarity. There is a distortion of objects, in that figures become shortened and squat, a possible influence from Kirchner. See The manure cart by Kirchner. Because of the flat unmodelled paint application there is a lack of textual detail. Thus the tactile appearance of objects becomes standardized and there is a similarity between objects, which in reality are totally different, e.g., the hairline in Leentjie, the wood being carried by the women in Two women and child carrying wood to fisherman's cottage, the mountains in this same work, the trees in Woman against landscape with cottage, trees and watercarrier and the roots of the tree entering the ground in Two women and geese by fisherman's cottage. Simplification of details and surface texture, and reduction of outlines to the barest essentials, result in certain stylized conventions which also tend to minimize the differences between dissimilar objects, e.g., the clouds and trees in Two women and geese by fisherman's cottage, and the clouds in Landscape with two women carrying wood, and the column of smoke in Landscape with two women carrying water.

fig.112, p.282
fig.113, p.282
fig.114, p.282
fig.115, p.282
fig.116, p.283
fig.116, p.283
fig.117, p.283
fig.118, p.283

This tendency to simplify and stylize may be seen in certain motifs which are repeated over and over again and become typical characteristics of Laubser's style, e.g., the heavy folds of drapery in the labourer's clothes seen in Two women and a child carrying wood to

1. For influence of Schmidt-Rottluff refer to his treatment of clouds in fig.94, p.279.

fisherman's cottage, the solid, voluminous cumulus clouds in Two women and geese by fisherman's cottage and the stark reduction of the stratus clouds in Landscape with two women carrying wood. fig.114,p.282 fig.116,p.283 fig.117,p.283

It has been seen therefore, that Laubser's work executed whilst she was overseas and on her return to South Africa was influenced stylistically by the international artistic climate with which she had come into contact until 1924. As has been noted, Laubser was not affected by the avant-garde movements, but was rather influenced by the late 19th Century Post-Impressionist artists. Even in Germany, she was influenced by Die Brücke, a group which had reached its height almost fifteen years before.[1] Thus, for instance, even though Laubser would probably have seen examples of non-figurative art whilst abroad, she was not influenced at that stage to move towards abstraction. During the 1950's she experimented with non-figurative art, almost certainly as a result of the artistic climate in South Africa at that time, but she did not pursue this development.

> 'One comes therefore to a conclusion that abstract art is only pure decoration or the work of men, who to retreat from the chaotic modern conditions of the world have chosen this method instead of reflecting its traditional exterior.
>
> Let me therefore hasten to say that in my abstract composition I am not following any theory or formula. For me it is not a method of escape but purely a desire to create a beautiful thing.'

She soon returned to figurative subjects in which the influence of her abstract works is seen in the non-figurative curves and angular patterns and the decorative repetition of shapes across the surface. Her belief that art should be 'comprehensible to others'[2] and her desire to communicate, help to explain her attitude to

1. 'Art.' U.S.79/ 4/2, p.4.
2. See p.79, footnote 9.

avant-garde art: 'To paint is to reach out, hoping that one will touch; one wants to be understood.'[1]

Laubser's study years overseas, particularly in Germany, influenced her choice of themes and her interpretation of these themes, from 1924 onwards when she returned home. Again, the late German/early South African works serve to illustrate the stage which she had reached iconographically by 1924, and the themes which she subsequently developed and repeated until she died in 1973.

Iconographical influence of overseas study period

The influence of the cult of the primitive, so in vogue during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, is seen not only in the style of many of the portraits, but also in the nudity in Black woman and bird and in the emphasis on the ethnic attributes such as the beads and headdress in Black woman and bird and Woman with beads and headdress, and in the thick fleshy lips of the Black woman and the heavy, unrefined features.

Cult of the primitive

no.419

no.419

no.420

no.325 verso

The first appearance in Laubser's work of so-called 'symbolistic' portraits, in which the spectator reads from one image to another and establishes symbolic content, occurred in Germany in the painting Whore, Berlin, in which the cigarette helps describe the nature of the woman. In the late German/early South African portraits, there was a continuation and development of this associative process. For the first time (in Black woman), a landscape was included in the background of the portrait. This became a common feature in many of Laubser's portraits and, in many instances, functioned as an attribute, even an extension, of the sitter, which is descriptive of his daily life, e.g., Laubser's father seen against his farm.[2] Coloured women with their homes in the back-

'Symbolistic' portraiture

no.406,pl.48, p.216

no.325 verso

1. Laubser quoted by Godfrey, D. 'The Magic of Maggie - Retrospective Exhibition of a Supreme Artist.' Star, noon ed.; 15 Nov. 1969: p.6. (E.169).

2. Fig.121, p.284.

ground,[1] the shepherd, Ou Bcci, with his sheep,[2] and the fisherman with his boat.[3]

A further example of 'symbolistic' portraiture, is that of a woman and flowers, a theme first seen in Flowerseller in Berlin, which was developed by Laubser from 1924 onwards. Laubser's development may be seen if one compares Flowerseller in Berlin with a later painting entitled Flowerseller painted in ca. 1950. Whereas in the earlier work, the woman is set within a realistic setting on a street with pots of flowers surrounding her, in the later work, the clues to the woman's profession are reduced to the bunch of flowers encircled by her arm. Background details are eliminated and there is a close-up focalization on the woman's head and bunch of flowers.

Woman and flowers

no.299,pl.32, p.212

no.299

fig.124,p.284

The motif of a woman and bird juxtaposed, first appeared in Laubser's work after her contact with Expressionism. She developed this theme on her return home, in works of girls and ducks and later with a woman's face against a window with a bird in flight. 'Haar geliefkoosde onderwerp is voëls. Sy sê hulle laat haar vry voel. Hulle verteenwoordig die afwesigheid van tyd en ruimte.'[4] The motif of a woman and bird juxtaposed, therefore almost certainly had symbolic content for Laubser.

Woman and bird

fig.125,p.284
fig.126,p.284
fig.127,p.285

Laubser's interest in the theme of mother and child began late during her stay in Germany and/or early on her return to South Africa. She was perhaps influenced in this choice by Modersohn-Becker, whose work she knew.[5]

Mother and child

figs.128-130. p.285

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1. Fig.113, p.282; fig.115, p.282.

2. Fig.122, p.284.

3. Fig.123, p.284.

4. Interview with Mr. R. van Dyk, secretary of the Klerksdorp Association of Arts. Quoted in: 'Dr. Tom Muller Sal Kuns Uitstalling Open.' Western Transvaal Record; 4 Sept. 1970. (E.174: original not traced). [Her favourite subject is birds. She says that they make her feel free. They represent the absence of time and space.]

5. See p.163.

In several of Laubser's works, the motif has overt religious connotations. In Madonna and Child, one reads from the image of the mother to that of the child to that of the encircling halo, whose colourful curves are reminiscent of a rainbow.

figs.128-130, p.285 no.422

The combination of these motifs is symbolic of the Mother and Child, an interpretation which is confirmed by the title, 'Madonna and Child', written on folio 44 of sketchbook 6. In the unfinished painting of Mother and Child, the light-giving source, the sun, is juxtaposed with the head of the mother. In the finished version, the connection between the sun (with its traditional associations with light. goodness and understanding),[1] and a halo, is more explicitly expressed for the light rays, acting as a halo, radiate from behind the heads of the mother and child and give the effect of the heads as the light source. Thus the religious connotations of the mother and child theme are reinforced.

p.231

no.298 verso,p.628

In only a few sketches,(perhaps executed whilst the artist was in Germany), are white western women and children depicted. The mothers are seated with their children fully clothed, on their laps. In all other works, the mothers and babies are black. Perhaps Laubser felt that the basic maternal impulses were better expressed in the natural simplicity of rural people. In all works the bond between mother and child is stressed in various ways. In some the child drinks from its mother's breast whilst the mother's arms encircle the baby protectively.[2] In others, the mother sits passively and meditatively,[3] whilst in most the babies are carried on their mothers' backs,[4] the enfolding blankets binding them securely to their mothers' backs, both in actuality and symbolically, whilst their mothers are involved in physical activities such as

1. See p.68, footnote 2, and pp.149-150.

2. Figs.131, p.285; 132, p.285.

3. Figs.133, p.285; 134, p.286.

4. Figs.108, p.281; 114, p.282; 117, p.283; 143, p.287; 145, p.287; 146, p.287.

collecting wood, carrying water or washing. That the theme had intense personal significance for Laubser may be seen from the fact that she drew a sketch of a mother and child with herself in the rôle of mother, on the same page as other self portraits. no.427 recto

Laubser did not only restrict the maternal theme to humans but portrayed ducks and ducklings - as early as 1906 she portrayed a cat with kittens. She also depicted animals suckling their young, e.g., in Two blue cranes with sheep, in which the idea of protection, so integral to the maternal theme, is evoked by the ewe bending round to nuzzle the lamb. fig.135, p.286

Another theme which Laubser first painted whilst overseas was that of old age. Whilst in Italy, she made a charcoal drawing of an old woman and then on her return to South Africa in 1921 to 1922 she painted portraits of old Coloured women in which there is a concentration on the expressive characteristics of old age: wrinkles, sunken features, grey hair and bowed head. These same attributes are evident in the face of Old Coloured woman with scarf ca. 1924/5 and Laubser painted many more sympathetic portraits of old coloured women and of Ou Booi, the shepherd on the farm Oortmanspost. Laubser was perhaps influenced by artists such as Van Gogh[1] and Modersohn-Becker, in her interest in the theme of old age. no.254 figs.27,28, p.260 no.430 fig.122, p.284 fig.97, p.279

A theme which became a leitmotif in Laubser's oeuvre and which she first painted whilst overseas in in Belgium, was the figure at work in the landscape. When she returned to South Africa and retreated into relative isolation, she drew her inspiration from her surroundings and from familiar people, objects and scenes. Her paintings from this time consist of views of the local landscape: farm scenes such as women at work carrying water or wood, men hoeing and harvesting Figure in landscape

1. See p.79.

and shepherds tending their flocks: and fishermen and their families working near their cottages. She was perhaps influenced in her choice and interpretation of the motif of the figure working in the landscape by Van Gogh, Modersohn-Becker, for whom 'peasants and their plain lives symbolized closeness to nature of which they seemed so much a part,'[1] and particularly the Expressionists.

Kirchner had moved to Switzerland in 1917 and painted in the country at Staffelalp and Lärchen.[2] By 1920 'pastoral 'pastoral subjects of monumental simplicity or landscapes of almost architectonic discipline are found.'[3] In these works, the harmony between man and nature is expressed by the peasant figures working in the landscapes and tending their animals. Laubser would have been familiar with some of these later works, as Kirchner would probably have sent some to the group exhibition of Die Brücke, held at the Galerie Ferdinand-Möller in Berlin from December 1922 to January 1923.[4] He held a one man exhibition of paintings in November/December of 1923 at the Paul Cassirer Gallery in Berlin,[5] which Laubser is also likely to have visited. There is documentation that Kirchner's Italian roadworkers 1923 was shown at this exhibition.[6] This painting, with the focalization on the distorted, squat peasant figures working in the landscape, probably influenced Laubser thematically and stylistically on her return to South Africa. The same simplification of form and short, heavy figures are seen in Laubser's peasant workers. Laubser probably also visited Kirchner's exhibition of

fig.136, p.286

fig.137, p.286

1. Myers, p.46.
2. Gordon, pp.107-119.
3. Gordon, p.118.
4. See p.138.
5. Gordon, p.450.
6. Gordon, nc.708.

drawings and watercolours at Goldschmidt and Wallerstein Gallery, Berlin, in October 1923,[1] where she might have seen his more recent pastoral Swiss scenes.

From 1919 onwards, Schmidt-Rottluff, like Kirchner, painted many landscape scenes with the working peasant figure, as can be seen in his fisher scenes and works such as Landscape with watercarrier 1919,[2] Peasant with cow 1921,[3] Woman milking 1921,[4] Washing at the lake 1921,[5] and The last wagon load 1922.[6] As Laubser was in direct contact with Schmidt-Rottluff, she might have seen these paintings and would thus have been familiar with the importance he attached to the theme of man working in nature. In Laubser's work, the harmony between man and nature is given clear expression in her harvest, fishing and farm scenes, in which the men live off the land, whether it is for their food (wheat and fish) or for the basic necessities of wood and water.

In Laubser's farm scenes painted on her return to South Africa in 1924, there is a shift from an imitative descriptive view, evident in her pre-1913 landscapes, to one in which certain motifs are elevated to the level of symbols - objects are imbued with a meaning which extends beyond the mere fact of their existence, objects such as the sun and moon, the house, the open door, the column of smoke, etc.

Stylistically, Laubser's interpretation of the sun and the moon shows the influence of Schmidt-Rottluff. In works such as Landscape with two cows and moon and Landscape with two women carrying wood, the simplified

The sun

fig.138,p.286
fig.117,p.283

1. Gordon, p.270.
2. Grohmann, p.266.
3. ibid.
4. ibid. p.267.
5. ibid. p.207.
6. ibid. p.206.

round shape of the moon is further emphasized by the stress on outline. If one compares Setting moon by Schmidt-Rottluff with Laubser's Cormorant, three boats and sun,[1] the clearly outlined spheroid shape of the moon and sun respectively, are the light source for both paintings. The angular jagged forms around the moon in Schmidt-Rottluff's work are seen also in Laubser's work in the surrounding clouds.

fig.93,p.279

fig.139,p.286

In Germany Laubser had depicted the sun with the beams radiating outwards in a conventional stylization (seen also in Schmidt-Rottluff's work, e.g., Buchenwald with sun). She continued this on her return to South Africa with a number of variations: Seated shepherd, Fisherman's cottage, Landscape, Woman carrying wood, and Landscape with figure and three sheep. As the sun is the light source in her landscapes, and as she associated light with God, goodness, beauty, life and understanding,[2] one may presume that the sun, spreading its warmth and light from the sky, had symbolic significance for Laubser.[3]

no.289,pl.35, p.210

fig.90,p.278

figs.140-144, p.287

Similarly, the house is a common motif in Laubser's work, a motif which she had also first painted whilst overseas, e.g., the Belgian watercolour series and the farmhouses in At the Baltic Sea and In the Highlands, Scotland. In these works the columns of smoke rising from the chimneys, because they suggest a hearth fire or coal stove inside, evoke the feeling of warmth and contentment. This idea was developed by Laubser on her

The house

nos.126-136

no.311,pl.42, p.213;no.296, pl.37,p.211

1. The author's attention was drawn to this comparison by Scholz in her unpublished M.A. dissertation 1975, pp.52-53.

2. Laubser called her house at the Strand, Altyd Lig, 'want in duisternis kan mens nie alles wat mooi is, sien nie.' (Liebenberg, E. ''n Kuiertjie by Maggie Laubser.' Vaderland, vol.28, no.8424; 8 Feb. 1964: p.5. [...because in darkness one cannot see all that is beautiful.] And: 'Want ons het die son hier [in Suid-Afrika] wat alles ophelder, nie waar nie? Die son is lewe.' Schutte, J. 'Die See Het Haar Krag Gegee.' Rapport, vol.3, no.25; 20 May 1973: p.12. (B.2, p.306). [We have the sun here [in South Africa] which brightens up everything, not so? The sun is life.] See also pp.149-150.

3. Refer also to the yellow sunflowers in Duck and sunflowers, fig.50, p.268.

return to South Africa. In the background of many of the paintings there is a house with the front door invitingly open and/or smoke billowing from the chimney, e.g., Landscape with two women carrying water, Evening at the farm, Watercarrier with child and geese and cow, Fisherman's cottage. It became the centre of all basic peasant activities needed to ensure survival.[1]

fig.118,p.283
figs.145,146, p.287
fig.141,p.287

Laubser developed the tendency seen in her early Scottish mountain and lake scenes, of repeating landscape features, e.g., the curves of paths, the rolling hills and mountain ranges. Stylistically many of these early South African works bear a close similarity to the work of James Dickson Innes (1887-1914), who also studied at the Slade[2] and whose work Laubser perhaps knew. Compare From Collioure ca. 1912 to Landscape with two cows and moon. In these works the simplified motifs of paths, ploughed fields and mountains are reiterated and echoed in repetitive series. A measured rhythm is thus established and a visual structure is created which parallels Laubser's belief in the ever-recurring cycle which functions in nature. All is part of an eternally evolving pattern that follows fundamental laws - the law of life.[3]

fig.147,p.288
fig.138,p.286

During the late 1950's and early 1960's, Laubser painted a number of works in which forms flow into and grow out of one another. Baum noted:

figs.148, 149,p.288

> No doubt influenced by contemporary abstract trends, she began [in her later years] exploring

1. The symbolic significance of the house in Laubser's work may be gauged by referring to a particular passage in a piece of Christian Science writing entitled 'Our Dwelling Place' by Nina Violet Wright, which Laubser marked to study:

> The thought of home is perhaps one of the most sacred. Men design and erect structures within whose walls they plan to abide and cherish such qualities as love, peace, happiness, unity, consideration, kindness, protection, rest, shelter, completeness.'

Left in Laubser's estate to E. Miles, Johannesburg.

2. Fothergill, J. James Dickson Innes; London: Faber, 1946, p.6.

3. See p.88-89.

> the relationship between curve and line - a symbol of the unity and interrelationship she observed between all living things and which she had already expressed in figurative terms in her early work.'[1]

Thus these works should be seen within the context of her belief in the mutual dependence of all living things, in an all-pervading spiritual power, in the unity of creation and the harmony of nature. 'I am so conscious of the evolving line - it is feeling the union, the connection of all the animals and the birds.'[2] And also: 'Separateness cannot be - it is the community that brings us here - we are to be in harmony with all.'[3]

It was probably this attitude which drew her to Franz Marc, whose work had made a great impression on her whilst she was in Berlin.[4] Conversely he perhaps strengthened and confirmed the direction of her thoughts. His influence had not been seen in her work before the 1960's. Marc's work, with the interlocking and overlapping forms, reflected his belief in the interrelationship of all creatures in the totality of nature and this probably influenced and strengthened Laubser's ideas. This attitude was held by other artists of Der Blaue Reiter. fig.150,p.289

Thus Laubser's notion of the interdependence of all living things, should be seen within the context of her religious ideas and her contact with the German Expressionists, particularly Der Blaue Reiter. It was probably as a result of her belief in the interconnection of all things that Laubser juxtaposed ostensibly unrelated

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1. Baum, S. 'Retrospective Show of Maggie Laubser's Art Highlights Her Draughtsmanship.' Cape Times, weekend ed.; 30 June 1973: p.10. (E.189).

2. Munitz interview 1968.

3. Written on an envelope dated 7.V.1957, left in Laubser's estate to E. Miles, Johannesburg.

4. See p.138.

objects such as a swan and fish, a cat and flowers, and a duck and arums or sunflowers.[1]

fig.151,p.289
fig.50,p.268

The Expressionists' fascination with the theme of the cat, e.g., Marc, Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff and Beckmann,[2] probably also influenced Laubser in her choice of this theme, although it should be remembered that Laubser painted this theme as early as 1909 in The Happy Mother and that she did own a cat. Compare also the iconography of Laubser's Boy with cat 1928 to Modersohn-Becker's Girl with cat.

The cat
figs.152-155, pp.289,290
no.9
fig.156,p.290
fig.157,p.290

A further symptom of this pantheistic view of nature, which Laubser shared with the Expressionists, was the desire to escape into the country, particularly to the coast. Thus the sea, a popular image in High Romanticism, re-emerged as a theme in the work of the German Expressionists, which might have encouraged Laubser to return to the theme, with its connotations of space, which Laubser had depicted before 1913. In a radio interview broadcast in 1948 and re-broadcast on 21 December 1976, Laubser mentioned the importance of space and suggested that this was why she moved to the Strand in 1945. Laubser's trip to the Baltic Sea in 1923 and then later, after her return to South Africa in 1924, to Saldanha, Langebaan and Gordon's Bay, echo similar trips

The sea

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1. In these works the harmony between animals and nature is expressed by formal means, e.g., in Duck and sunflowers fig.50, p.268, the flowers encircle the bird completely. In Cat and nasturtiums fig.151, p.289, the green of the leaf (which almost engulfs the cat), echoes the green of the cat's eyes and the shape of the leaf is repeated on the cat's back.

2. Two works by Max Beckmann, Frau B. 1920 (in which she holds a cat - p.29), and Self portrait with hat 1921 (in which there is a cat in the background - p.25), were reproduced in a publication left by Laubser in her estate to the U.S.: Max Beckmann; J.B. Neumanns Bilderhefte, April 1921 (U.S. 79/1/5).

to the coast by members of Die Brücke.[1] Laubser was probably influenced by Die Brücke's choice of motif and if one compares Nolde's The Sea III to Laubser's sea scenes painted on her return to South Africa, the similarity of tyle and motif is striking. The jagged explosive image of the water crashing against the rocks and the dynamic wavy forms repeated across the picture surface convey the feeling of power the sea evokes.

fig.158,p.290
fig.159,p.290

> But it is lovely to be near the sea as I am. When you are feeling down you can go to the beach and feel the sea's ever-changing moods, and its endless power at work. It renews me...'[2]

And:

> Dis 'n heerlike gevoel om so by die see te gaan sit saans en die son gaan onder en jy sien die beweging...die beweging van die see gee my altyd baie krag, want vir my is die lewe beweging...'[3]

In Seascene with two boats this feeling of power is further stressed by the little boats, which because of their relative size and position in the composition, remind one of the helplessness and insignificarce of men pitted against the sea. The theme of sailboats on a rough sea, an image favoured by nineteenth century

fig.160,p.291

1. Kirchner went to Fehrmann on the Baltic Sea during the summers of 1908, 1912 and 1916 (Gordon, pp.54, 80, 106). His painting A pond at Fehrmann 1908 (Gordon no.41) was in Schmidt-Rottluff's possession, and Laubser would therefore probably have seen it. Schmidt-Rottluff painted with Nolde at Alsen in 1906 (Haftmann, p.90), and with Heckel in Dangast on the Oldenburg coast in 1907 (Haftmann, p.90), where he returned during the summers of 1908 and 1909 (Myers, p.114). From 1919 to 1922, just prior to Laubser's period of contact with him, Schmidt-Rottluff painted many coastal scenes (Grohmann, pp.264 and 265. See also Harbour with boats 1910, Grohmann, p.177).

2. Quoted by Godfrey, D. 'The Magic of Maggie - Retrospective Exhibition of a Supreme Artist.' Star, noon ed.; 15 Nov. 1969: p.6. (E.169).

3. Quoted by Schutte, J. 'Die See Het Haar Krag Gegee.' Rapport, vol.3, no.25; 20 May 1973: p.12. [It is a wonderful feeling to sit by the sea in the evening [while] the sun sets and you watch the movement...the movement of the sea always gives me great power, because for me life is movement...]. (B.2, p.306).

Romantic artists,[1] was painted by Nolde[2] and Kirchner. In Kirchner's 1912 Fehrmann scenes there is an emphasis on the motif of the storm-tossed boat. Laubser might have been influenced by Kirchner and Nolde in her depiction of sailing boats at the mercy of the sea. fig.161,p.291

It is evident therefore, that Laubser's stay overseas influenced her choice of motif and her elevation of these motifs into themes. However, there are two motifs which Laubser painted whilst overseas and which disappeared from her iconography after 1928: a cityscape and nudes. The only cityscape in her oeuvre, Flowerseller in Berlin and the study for it, date to her stay in Berlin. However, as a result of her pantheistic view of nature and the general 'return to nature' movement of the early twentieth century, she abandoned this theme and turned to rural and peasant country scenes. She also drew many academic studies of nudes whilst at the Slade in London, then in Antwerp, and later in Germany. Three paintings of nudes from her German period survive. On her return to South Africa she abandoned this theme, (except for a series of monotypes), almost certainly as a result of the natural conservatism of the South African art viewing public. nos.299,298 recto; nos.331-333; figs.162,163, p.291

It should be noted that, although the overt influence of German Expressionism is seen in the works executed while Laubser was in Germany, and in several works painted on her return to South Africa, in most of her work

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1. Cf. T. Géricault (1791-1824) The raft of the Medusa 1819 Louvre, Paris; J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851): The shipwreck: fishing boats endeavouring to rescue the crew ca 1805 Tate Gallery, London; D.C. Friedrich (1774-1840): Wreck of the Hope Kunsthalle, Hamburg, and Ship destroyed by ice Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

2. 'He [Nolde] tells of a violent crossing of the Kattegat which took place at about this time. The small boat was tossed angrily with each wave. 'This day,' he says, 'has remained so fixed in my memory, that for years afterwards all my paintings of the sea consisted of wildly, heaving waves and only a little edge of yellow sky on the upper fringe.' (Selz, P. Emil Nolde; New York: Museum of Modern Art, n.d. citing Nolde, E. Jahre der Kämpfe; Berlin: Rembrandt, 1934, p.96.) See also Urban, M. Emil Nolde Landscapes; London: Pall Mall Press, 1970: no.18 On the shore, no.19 Sea in evening light, no.20 Yacht in a storm.

from 1924 to 1973, the dynamism and harshness of Expressionism[1] was tempered as a consequence of Laubser's personal vision: because of her religious convictions, her world view was one of stability and tranquillity.[2] This desire for stability resulted in her predominant use of harmonious colours - a contrast to the Expressionist use of colour in which discordant colour combinations evoked an emotional response and produced a feeling of anxiety and uneasiness. The broad flat planes of colour in Laubser's work produced a feeling of calm stillness which contrasted to the movement and agitation aroused by the jagged brushwork and whirling impasto of expressionist painters. Enclosed solid forms, a balanced clear composition and the predominance of verticals and horizontals over diagonals, contributed to this feeling of stability.

Laubser's Afrikaans Calvinistic family upbringing and the subsequent Anglo-Saxon influence, first at school, then under Roworth and later during her study years at the Slade in England, almost certainly contributed to Laubser's more restrained and controlled style of painting, in direct contrast to the extravagance of the 'Nordic sensibility.'[3] Laubser's optimistic, lyrical and joyous attitude to life was also opposed to the 'Angst'[4] and sometimes even disillusionment conveyed by the Expressionists. Her religious convictions were responsible for this:

> Wanneer ek kyk na die wonderbaarlike skepping wat gedurig tot my spreek deur sy harmonie van kleur en vorme, vervul die samehang van eenheid en eindeloosheid my met groot verlange en 'n drang om uit

1. For definition of Expressionism see p.167.
2. See p.156.
3. Read, H. Art Now; London: Faber, 1968, p.64.
4. Read, H. Contemporary British Art; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, p.35.

te druk wat ek deurleef en so my skepper te loof.
Dit is wat skilder vir my beteken.[1]

What then was the influence of Laubser's overseas study period? Before she went to Europe she painted in a romantic-realist style typical of other contemporary South African artists, viz., Goodman, Roworth, Naudé, Spilhaus, Volschenk, etc. After her contact with international art and artists, particularly the Expressionists, she shifted towards an expressive style in which objects take on symbolic or emotive significance.[2] For example, in the two works entitled Impression of Table Mountain, nos.432,433 through suppression of detail, simplification of outline, clarity of shape and heightened intensity of colour, the images are given added meaning and are more powerful than in the earlier work of the same subject painted no.24,pl.1, p.103 before her overseas study period, i.e., ca. 1912. They are thus brought into closer alliance with each other: the counterpoint relationship between the images is stronger than in the earlier work. The style thus conveys the expressive meaning of the work: the movement

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1. Laubser, M. 'Waarom en Hoe Ek Skilder.' Huisgenoot, vol.23, no.908, p.37; 18 August 1939. [When I see the wonderful creation that often speaks to me through the harmony of colour and form, the combination of unity and eternity fills me with a great longing and desire to express what I am experiencing and so to love my creator. That is what painting means to me.]

2. In her unpublished M.A. dissertation entitled 'The South African Landscape in Painting and Literature' (University of the Witwatersrand, 1958), Frieda Harmsen defines three phases of landscape painting in South Africa. The early descriptive phase is characterized by artists such as Bowler, Naudé, Wenning, Seneque and Caldecott. In the second phase, painting is based on the visual, but there is a greater individuality of interpretation. A philosophical interpretation is apparent for the greater individuality of the artist suggests him/her as a person standing slightly apart from the community. This phase is characterized, for Harmsen, by Laubser and Stern. (The third phase of landscape painting is generally the art of the city dweller who has urban problems. He/She wishes to express the deeper emotional problems which arise as a result of the more intricate and complicated social conditions which confront the city man. This phase is characterized by Battiss and Preller.)

and changeability of the sea is clearly contrasted to the stability and security of the land (terra firma) - symbolized by the flat blocked-in shape of Table Mountain and Lion's Head. It is precisely in this shift from the descriptive rendition to the expressive approach, that the meaning and value of Laubser's study years abroad lies. It has thus been seen that Laubser's overseas period was a formative one which established the basis for her art executed directly on her return to South Africa in 1924 and for the years afterwards during which time there was little radical change in style.

INDEX OF COLOUR PLATES OF LAUBSER'S WORKS

Unless otherwise indicated. all colour photographs were taken by Mr. E. Wesselo, of the Rand Afrikaans University.

For further details, refer to the relevant catalogue entry, the number of which is quoted after the title and date.

For colour plates of comparative material see figs.2, 5, 6, 40, 41, 103, 150, 155.

1. Tablemountain ca.1912; no.24.

2. At Camps Bay ca.1911; no.22.

3. Barge on water 1914; no.33.

4. Scottish landscape with heather
ca.1916-1919; no.72.

5. Scottish landscape - mist
ca.1916-1919; no.77.

6. Landscape with village ca.1920; no.75 verso.

7. Landscape with church ca.1920; no.112.

8. Landscape with tree and house
ca.1920; no.117.

9. Woman gathering harvest - Belgium
ca.1919; no.139.

10. Lane with autumn trees
ca.1919/20; no.141.

11. House with sunflowers
ca.1920; no.147.

12. Farmhouse ca.1920; no.149.

13. Poppies ca.1920 no.153.

14. Boat in harbour 1920;
no.156.

13. Poppies ca.1920 no.153.

14. Boat in harbour 1920;
no.156.

15. Boats in harbour
ca.1921; no.164.

16. Boats in harbour
1921; no.165.

17. Lake Garda ca.1921; no.181.

18. Trees by lake with boat
ca.1921; no.201 recto.

19. Trees by lake ca.1921; no.203.

20. Trees by lake ca.1921; no.205.

21. Landscape with cypresses and olive trees 1921, no.215.

22. Orange, lemon, pot and tray ca.1921; no.224.

23. Lemons on a branch
1920; no.225.

24. Five oranges and drapery
ca.1921; no.229.

25. Three lemons in dish on patterned cloth
1921; no.230.

26. Orange jug and three limes
on table ca.1921; no.233.

27. Poppies 1921; no.236.

28. Self portrait 1920; no.247.

29. Man with red hat and green coat ca.1921; no.261.

30. Woman with orange patterned scarf 1921/2; no.268.

31. Woman with orange patterned scarf 1921/2; no.269.

32. Woman without scarf 1921/1; no.271.

33. Woman with blue scarf
1922; no.281.

34. Cape homestead 1922; no.284.

35. Sun behind mountain
ca.1921-4; no.289.

36. Olives and cypresses
ca.1921-4; no.291.

37. In the Highlands, Scotland
1924; no.296.

38. Harvesting in Belgium
ca.1922-4; no.297.

39. Flowerseller in Berlin
1923; no.299

40. Riverscene, Berlin
1923/4; no.300

41. Harvester resting: woman between sheaves ca.1922-4; no.305.

42. At the Baltic Sea
July 1923; no.311.

43. Two arum lilies and leaf in vase 1922/3; no.316.

44. Man with white moustache ca.1922-4; no.344.

45. Man with moustache
ca.1924; no.348.

46. Turkish man
1924; no.352.

47. Woman with hat
1924; no.393.

48. Whore, Berlin
1924; no.406.

49. Woman ca.1924; no.410.

INDEX OF LAUBSER'S SKETCHBOOKS

SKETCHBOOKS

Blank pages in sketchbooks have not been numbered and thus numbers do not necessarily follow the exact pagination of the sketchbooks. In order to differentiate between page numbers in this dissertation and page numbers in sketchbooks, the latter are referred to as folios. (Abbreviated to f. for folio and ff. for folios.)

SKETCHBOOK 1 ca 1919/1920
pencil on paper, 14x21 cm.
gift from the artist to a
private collector, Strand.


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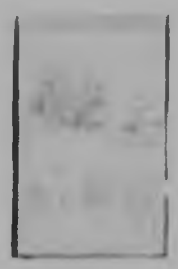
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SKETCHBOOK 1 cont.

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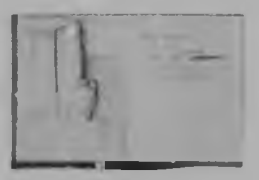

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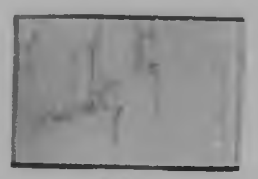

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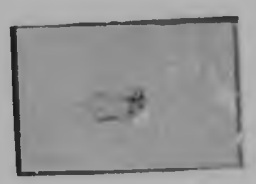

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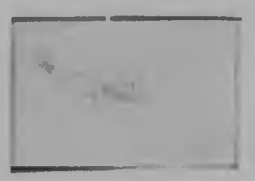

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SKETCHBOOK 1 cont.

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SKETCHBOOK 2 ca.1919/1920

pencil on paper, 11x15 cm.
gift from the artist to a
private collector, Strand.

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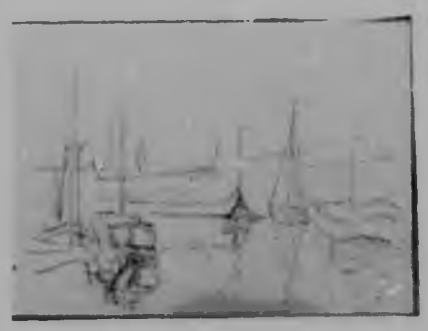

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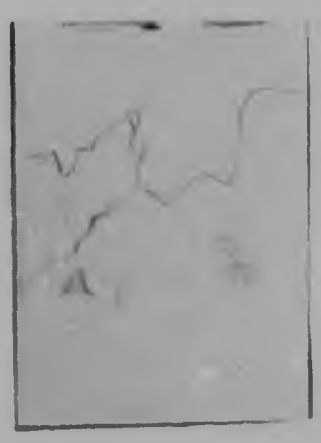

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SKETCHBOOK 3 ca.1919/1920

pencil on paper, 30,5x23,5 cm.
left in artist's estate to U.S.79/6/2/1-15.

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SKETCHBOOK 4 ca.1920/21 - post 1924

pencil/ink/watercolour on paper, 14x21,5 cm.
gift from the artist to Dr. H.K. Silberberg, Tulbagh.

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SKETCHBOOK 4 cont.

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SKETCHBOOK 5 ca.1919/20 - post 1924

pencil and/or watercolour on paper, 16x23,5 cm.
gift from the artist to Dr. H.K. Silberberg, Tulbagh.


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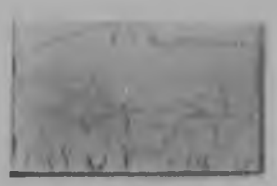
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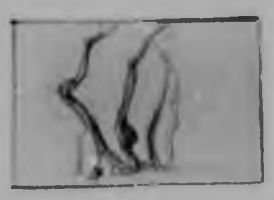
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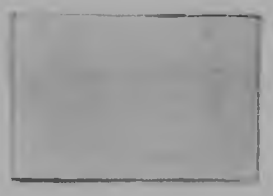
SKETCHBOOK 5 cont



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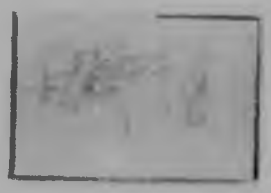

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SKETCHBOOK 6 ca.1916/19 - 1924/5

pencil and/or ink on paper, 12x18,5cm
gift from the artist to a private
collector, Strand.

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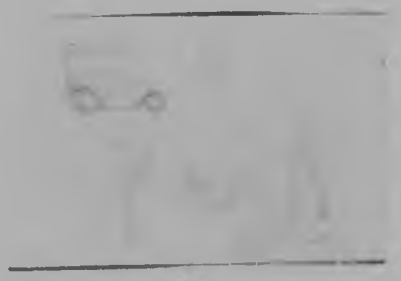

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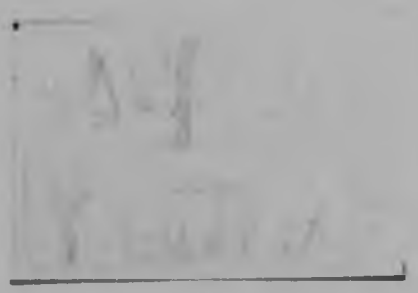

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SKETCHBOOK 6 cont.

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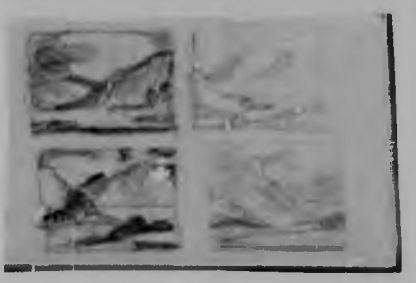

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SKETCHBOOK 6 cont.

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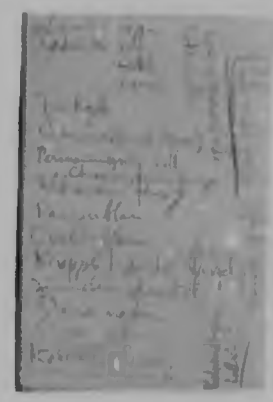

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SKETCHBOOK 6 cont.

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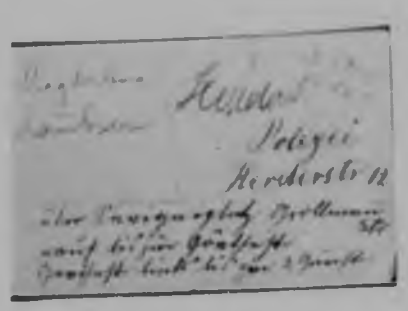
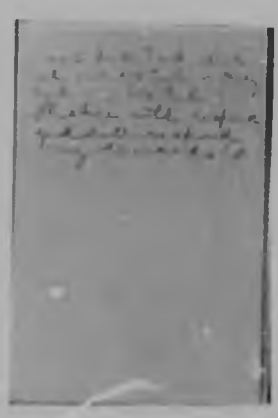


61



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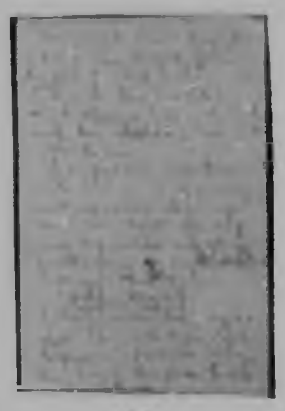

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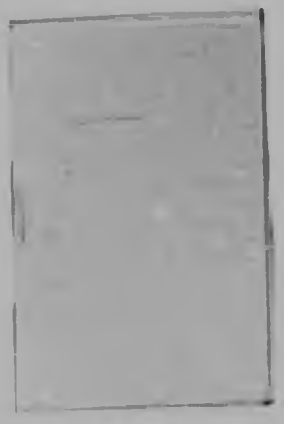

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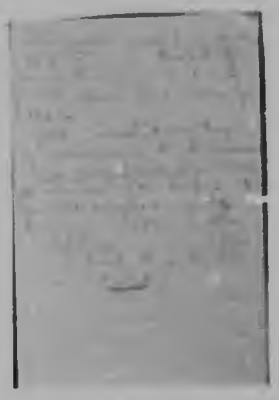

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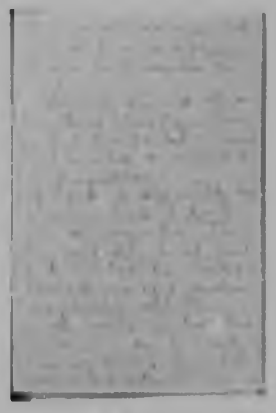

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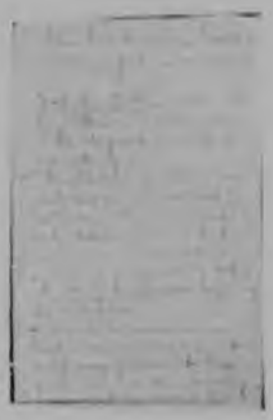
SKETCHBOOK 6 cont.



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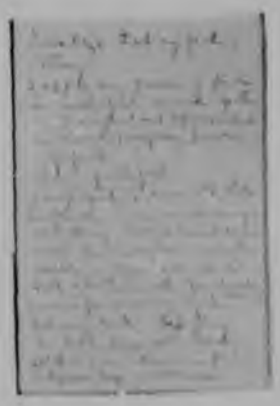

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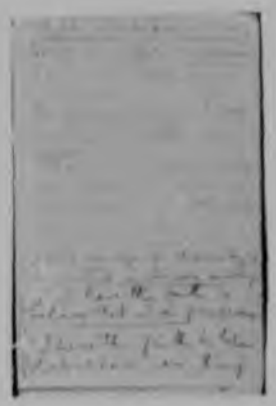

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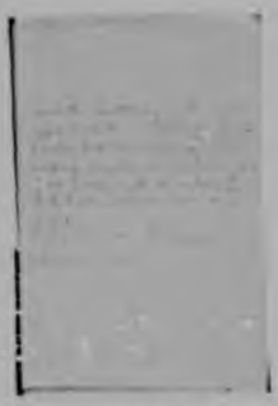

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SKETCHBOOK 7 ca. 1920/21

pencil on paper, 10x15 cm
gift from the artist to a
private collector, Strand

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SKETCHBOOK 8 ca.1922/4 - post 1924

pencil on paper, 21x16 cm.
left in artist's estates to
U.S.79/6/1/1-35.

Inside cover

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SKETCHBOOK 8 cont.

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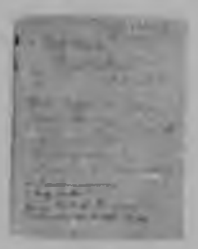

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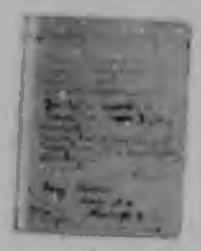

35

INDEX OF COMPARATIVE MATERIAL (FIGURES).

The following details of paintings are included in the index of comparative material, in this order: figure number, artist, title of work, date (where known), medium, size and location of work, source of photograph and relevant information, viz., page number on which the reproduction may be found or the University of Stellenbosch archive number. The differing sizes of the photographs do not necessarily relate to the importance of the reproduction. All measurements, unless otherwise stated, are in centimetres. In the case of reproductions of photographs, only the relevant details are recorded, viz., figure number, description of the photograph and source of reproduction.

Full details of all books cited, except for Berman and Van Rooyen and Wessels, may be found in section 4 of the Bibliography (pp.313-318). Details of Berman and Van Rooyen may be located in section 3 of the Bibliography (pp.306-313).

All reproductions of works by Laubser were obtained from the Maggie Laubser project, which forms part of the art archives at the Rand Afrikaans University. Alternate titles of Laubser's works, given in the 1969 retrospective exhibition catalogue, have been indicated where applicable.

Page no.

7. G.C. Robinson: Paul Kruger n.d. 256
oil, 61 x 51.
S.A.N.G. Cape Town.
Berman, 1970, p.250.

8. Hugo Naudé: Huguenot lady n.d. 256
oil, 48 x 38,5.
S.A.N.G., Cape Town.
Berman, 1970, p.204.

9. Photograph of Arnold Balwé, his father, and mother(?) 256
U.S.79/24/4.

10. Two photographs of Jan Hendrick Balwé 257
U.S.79/29/2.

11. a.Photograph of Hannah Laubser and her father 257
b.Photograph of Maggie Laubser, her sister Hannah, and their father in a group on board ship 257
U.S.79/32/4.

12. J.S.H. Kever: In de Moestuin n.d. 257
oil, 61 x 75.
Singer Museum, Laren.
R.A.U. art archives.

13. Anton Mauve: The return to the fold n.d. 257
signed b.r.: A. Mauve.
oil on canvas, 51 x 85.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
R.A.U. art archives.

14. Photograph of Balwé Snr. in peaked cap in centre of group on board R.M.S. Briton, April 1914 258
annotation on back of photograph: R.M.S. Briton, April 1914.
U.S.79/29/6.

15. Photograph of Balwé Snr. (third from left) on board R.M.S. Briton, April 1914. 258
annotation on back of photograph: R.M.S. Briton, April 1914.
U.S.79/29/8.

16. Laubser's registration certificate for the Slade School of Art, London 259
private collection, Strand.

17. Antonio Rossellino: Bust of a lady n.d. 259
marble, height: 53.
Staatliche Museum, Berlin-Dahlem.
Pope-Hennessy, repro. no.58.

Page no.

18. Desiderio da Settignano: Pensive girl n.d. 259
marble.
Bargello, France.
Avery, p.107, no.82.

19. Rembrandt Van Rijn: A man in a Polish costume 1637 259
oil on board, 96 x 65.
Mellon collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Gerson, no.186.

20. Photograph of figure of a man straining his muscles as he rests his weight upon a pole 259
Spielmann and Konody, repro. X, p.19.

21. Photograph of figure of a man in the 'ready' position for wrestling 259
Spielmann and Konody, repro. XXI, p.47.

22. Photograph of front view of female figure 259
Spielmann and Konody, p.7.

23. Philip Wilson Steer: Mrs. Hammersley 1907 260
oil, 244 x 152.
Mrs. Hammersley.
Ironside, pl.48.

24. Augustus John: Portrait of J. Phipps n.d. 260
details unobtainable.
J. Phipps Esq.
Rothenstein, pl.29.

25. Augustus John: Portrait of Kuno Meyer n.d. 260
oil, 91 x 71.
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Rothenstein, pl.36.

26. Augustus John: Portrait of Thomas Hardy O.M. 1923 260
oil, 60 x 36.
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Rothenstein, pl.41

27. Laubser: Ou Lena 1924 260
signed and dated b.l.: M. Laubser '24.
oil on cardboard, 40,5 x 30.
Mr. and Mrs. C.F. Moller, Strand.

28. Laubser: Ou Lena 1924-8 260
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on cardboard, 41,5 x 36.
Dr. C. de Villiers, Stellenbosch.

29. Laubser: Pencil sketches of African woman post 1924 261
signed and dated b.r.: M. Laubser '20 [sic]
pencil and paper, 31,5 x 23,5.
Mrs. D. Froneman, Strand.

Page no.

42. Vincent van Gogh: Wheat sheaves n.d. 266
signed b.r.: Vincent.
pen and ink, measurements unknown.
location unknown.
Ludovici, p.58.

43. Vincent van Gogh: Wheat sheaves n.d. 266
pen and ink, measurements unknown.
location unknown
Ludovici, p.141.

44. Vincent van Gogh: Landscape with sun n.d. 266
pen and ink, measurements unknown.
location unknown.
Ludovici, p.111.

45. recto. Photograph of woman gathering harvest - Belgium 267
verso. Annotation on the back of photograph:
Woman gathering harvest - Belgium Maggie Laubser 267
U.S.79/35/9.

46. a. Photograph of men harvesting flax 268
Oorthuys, p.30.
b. Photograph of Belgian landscape with wheatfields 268
Oorthuys, p.27.

47. Photograph of the Flemish Ardennes 268
Oorthuys, p.26.

48. Photograph of a Belgian landscape with poplars and alders lining lanes. 268
Oorthuys, p.74.

49. Laubser: Man sitting by hut with sunflowers 268
ca.1945-8
signed b.r.: M. Laubser.
oil on hardboard, 39,5 x 44,5.
Prof. S. Pauw, Pretoria.

50. Laubser: Duck and sunflowers ca.1960 268
signed b.l.: M. Laubser.
oil on canvas on cardboard, 44 x 60.
Julius Gordon Centre, Riversdale.

51. J.H. Pierneef: Landscape seen from Imperani 1922 268
signed and dated b.l.: J.H. Pierneef '22.
oil on board, 29,3 x 44,4.
Mr. J.A. Voorendyk, Ottosdal.
R.A.U. art archives.

52. J.E.A. Volschenk: The lonely veld 1918 268
signed and dated b.r.: J. Volschenk 1918.
annotated on back: J.E.A. Volschenk
The lonely veld 1918.
oil on canvas, 30 x 45.
Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria.
R.A.U. art archives.

Page no.

53. J.H. Pierneef: Pieter Wenning with Pretoria in the background 1910 — 269
signed b.r.: Pierneef.
annotated b.l.: Pieter Wenning 1910.
black and white chalk on grey paper, 33 x 43.
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg.
R.A.U. art archives.

54. a.Photograph of Arnold Balwé on the farm Grosswalding near Deggendorf, Germany [Baron Hafenbrödl and housekeeper in background] — 269
b.Photograph of Baron Hafenbrödl, Arnold Balwé and others on farm Grosswalding near Deggendorf, Germany — 269
U.S.79/29/12.

55. recto. Photograph of Laubser riding a bicycle, Lago di Garda, Italy, February 1921 — 269
verso. Annotation on back of photograph: — 269
To dear Hannah & Fred.
from Maggie.
Lago di Garda, Italië.
Feb. 21.
Italy 1921.
U.S.79/24/7.
A copy of the same photograph (U.S.79/23/14) is annotated on the back: Torri del Banco [sic Benaco?] Italy February 13th 1921.

56. a.Photograph of Arnold Balwé swimming, Italy, December 1920 — 269
annotation on back of photograph: J. Balwé in Italië Dec. 1920.
U.S.79/24/7.
b.Photograph of Arnold Balwé [at Lake Garda?] — 270
U.S.79/29/11.

57. Photograph of village by Lake Garda, Italy — 270
left in Laubser's estate to E. Miles, Johannesburg.

58. Postcard of Lake Garda, Italy — 271
annotated on front by Laubser:
St. Vigilio
Our special painting place
Monte Pazzocola
Monte Luppia
U.S.79/35/1.

59. a.Jean de Clerck: Portrait of Oscar de Klerck n.d. — 271
no details available.
Marriot and Claes, pl.LXVIII.
b.C. Marasco Pearce: Three pines n.d. — 272
no details available.
Marriot, pl.XLIX.

Page no.

60. Christmas card to Laubser from Arnold Balwé, 1921 — 272
private collection, Strand.

61. Photograph of Balwé Snr. in wheelchair, alongside Arnold Balwé and Laubser — 273
U.S.79/24/6.

62. Account for stay at La Calcina, Venice, 6 July 1921. — 273
private collection, Strand.

63. Photograph of Laubser in front of the Doges Palace, Venice [1921] — 274
annotated on back of photograph:
Palace of the Doges in Venice. Do you see me at the fountain?
U.S.79/35/2.

64. Desiderio da Settignano: Portrait bust of a boy ca 1460 — 274
marble
Mellon collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Seymour, repro. 76B.

65. Laubser: Ex Libris pen and ink drawing — 274
pen and ink, 11,5 x 4.
left in Laubser's estate to E. Miles, Johannesburg.

66. Laubser: Succulent, two nartjies and an apple ca 1928 — 274
initialled b.r.: M.L.
oil on cardboard, 34 x 42.
Mrs. A.V.G. Botha, Pretoria.

67. Hugo Naudé: Hottentot captain n.d. — 274
signed b.r.: Naudé.
oil on canvas on cardboard, 45 x 35.
Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria.
Berman, 1970, p.235.

68. Hugo Naudé: Griqua woman n.d. — 275
signed b.r.: Naudé.
oil on cardboard, 45 x 34.
Worcester Municipality.
R.A.U. art archives.

69. James Morland: Indian boy n.d. — 275
watercolour, 38 x 25,5.
private collection, Cape Town.
Berman, 1970, p.323.

70. G.C. Robinson: Native woman n.d. — 275
oil, 30, 5 x 20.
private collection, Cape Town.
Berman, 1970, p.251.

Page no.

71. Laubser: Young Coloured girl ca 1926-8 — 275
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on cardboard, 37,5 x 33,5.
Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria.

72. Moses Kottler: Small Coloured girl 1917 — 275
signed t.r.: Kottler.
oil on cardboard, 42 x 35,5.
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg.
Du. P. Scholtz, cat.13, p.90.

73. Ruth Prowse: Maggie Laubser n.d. — 275
unsigned and undated.
oil on canvas, 29 x 25.
Van Rooyen, frontispiece.

74. Moses Kottler: Little Coloured servant 1917 — 275
unsigned.
oil on canvas, 56,5 x 40,5.
Mr. D. Kottler, Johannesburg.
Du P. Scholtz, cat.11, p.90.

75. Photograph of La Dauphine, Franschhoek — 275
a.Front entrance
b.End gables
Fransen and Cook, p.119.

76. Edward Roworth: Morning Star, Somerset West n.d. — 276
details unknown.
S.A.B.C. calendar, 1963; R.A.U. art archives.

77. Gwelo Goodman: Stellenberg R.A. 1919 — 276
oil, 124 x 152.
collection unknown.
Newton-Thompson, between pp.52 and 53.

78. Gwelo Goodman: Stellenrust n.d. — 276
pastel, 61 x 74.
collection unknown.
Newton-Thompson, between pp.116 and 117.

79. Pieter Wenning: Oakfields, Newlands 1917 — 276
initialled and dated b.r.: P.W.F.W. 1917
oil on canvas, 24,5 x 34,5.
Miss Anna M. Smith, Johannesburg.
Du P. Scholtz, cat.46, p.107.

80. Pieter Wenning: Bishopscourt, Newlands 1916 — 276
signed and dated b.r.: P. Wenning 1916.
oil on canvas, 35 x 45.
L. Sukas, Cape Town.
Du P. Scholtz, cat.15, p.98.

Page no.

81. J.H. Pierneef: Boomstraat van Asiate buurt 1912 — 276
signed and dated b.r.: J.H. Pierneef 1912.
annotated b.l.: Boomstraat van Asiate (buurt).
pastel, 26,5 x 34
Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria, cat. P.1529.
R.A.U. art archives.

82. J.H. Pierneef: Proes St. 1912 — 276
signed and dated b.r.: J.H. Pierneef 1912.
annotated b.l.: Proes St.
pastel, 25 x 33,5.
Pretoria Art Gallery, Pretoria, cat. P.1522.
R.A.U. art archives.

83. Irma Stern: Girl with fruit n.d. — 276
signed and dated b.r. by Laubser:
From Irma - To Maggie Laubser '30.
watercolour on paper, 32,5 x 24
gift from Laubser to Mrs. S. Greenwall, Cape Town.
R.A.U. Maggie Laubser project.

84. a.Photograph of Laubser and Káte [Madler] in Kaiser St., Berlin, 14 May 1924. — 276
annotation on back of photograph:
am 14 Mei 24, in der
Kaiser allee in Berlin
Maggie u. Káte.

b.Photograph of Laubser and Káte [Madler] with dog Fifi in Kaiser St., Berlin, 14 May 1924. — 276
annotation on back of photograph:
Fürchterlich mich u. Fifi
anzusehen!!
Aber dagegen die
Königliche Ruhe von Dir, Maggie!
Please don't remember me as I am
on [sic] this photo!
[Author's translation: It is terrible to see me and Fifi!! As opposed to us, the regal repose of yours, Maggie!]
U.S.79/24/13.

85. Photograph of Laubser and Frau Finck [in Kaiser St., Berlin, 14 May 1924] [Compare Laubser's attire to that in figs.84a and b.] — 277
U.S.79/24/14.

86. Photograph of Laubser working in her studio in Berlin. — 277
[The works on the wall in the background date this photograph to Berlin, Germany.]
U.S.79/23/13.

Page no.

87. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Self portrait with monocle 1910 — 278
signed and dated t.l.: S. Rottluff 1910.
oil, 84 x 76,5.
Dr. Wilhelm Niemeyer, Hamburg.
University of the Witwatersrand slide library.

88. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Winter, dunes and breakwater 1917 — 278
colour woodcut, 28 x 34.
Laubser estate U.S.
Zigrosser, no.50.

89. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Village by the sea 1913 — 278
signed and dated b.l.: S. Rottluff 1913.
oil, 75 x 89.
Morton D. May, St. Louis, U.S.A.
Grohmann, p.189.

90. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Buchenwald with sun 1919 — 278
signed and dated b.r.: S. Rottluff 1919.
oil, 77 x 90.
F. Lantheman, Geneva.
Grohmann, p.262.

91. Edvard Munch: The sun 1909-11 — 278
oil on canvas, 4,52 x 7,88 m.
Oslo National Gallery, Oslo.
University of the Witwatersrand slide library.

92. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Portrait of Emy 1919 — 278
signed and dated b.l.: S. Rottluff 1919.
oil, 73,5 x 66.
Dr. Wilhelm Valentiner, Los Angeles. on loan to
The Detroit Institute of Arts.
Grohmann, p.201.

93. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Setting moon 1920 — 279
signed b.l.: S. Rottluff.
oil, 89 x 75.
George-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin.
Grohmann, p.204.

94. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Storm at sea — 279
signed b.r.: S. Rottluff.
oil, 87 x 101.
lost.
Grohmann, p.264.

95. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Norwegian landscape, Skrygedal 1911 — 279
signed and dated b.r.: S. Rottluff 1911.
oil, 87 x 96.
Lothar Günther Buchheim, Feldafing/Obb.
Grohmann, p.256.

Page no.

96. Paula Modersohn-Becker: Still life with sunflowers 1907 — 279
oil on canvas, 110 x 64.
Kunsthalle, Bremen.
Seiler, no.31.

97. Paula Modersohn-Becker: Old woman at the poorhouse 1906 — 279
oil on canvas, 95 x 78.
Kunsthalle, Bremen.
Seiler, no.29.

98. Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of a man Nov.1888 — 279
oil on canvas, 65 x 54,5.
Rijksmuseum Kroller-Müller, Otterlo.
de La Faille, cat.533.

99. E.L. Kirchner: Portrait of Oskar Schlemmer 1914 — 279
oil, measurements unobtainable.
Karlheinz Gabler, Frankfurt.
Gordon, no.416.

100. E.L. Kirchner: Erna with cigarette 1915 — 279
signed t.r.
oil, 72,5 x 61.
private collection, Berlin.
Gordon, no.429.

101. Laubser: Mother and child ca 1924-30 — 280
signed and dated b.r.: M. Laubser '30.
charcoal/sepia on light brown paper, 53,5 x 43.
Mr. B. Trakman, Cape Town.

102. Laubser: Shepherd and five sheep by sea 1924 — 280
signed and dated b.l.: M. Laubser '24.
oil on canvas [on board?], 39 x 49.
Prof. and Mrs. P.F.D. Weiss, Pretoria.

103. Laubser: Mother with children ca 1928 (colour) — 280
signed b.r.: M. Laubser.
oil on paper on cardboard, 42 x 37.
Mr. F.J. Olivier and Mr. T.J. Marchand, Johannesburg.

104. Laubser: Two women carrying water (Farm scene) ca 1928 — 281
see Delmont no.451 for details.

105. Laubser: Four cows in landscape ca 1925-8 — 281
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on cardboard, 37,5 x 45.
Mrs. H. Rupert, Stellenbosch.

106. Laubser: Two birds in landscape ca 1925-8 — 281
unsigned.
oil on cardboard, 38 x 46.
U.S.

Page no.

107. Laubser: Amaryllis ca 1924-8 — 281
signed b.r.: M. Laubser.
oil on cardboard, 42 x 37.
Mr. and Mrs. Krut, Krugersdorp.

108. Laubser: Two washerwomen with babies 1925 — 281
signed and dated b.l.: M. Laubser '25.
oil on cardboard, 43,5 x 37,5.
Dr. H.K. Silberberg, Tulbagh.

109. Laubser: Three washerwomen in landscape with sun ca 1925-8 — 281
unsigned.
oil on cardboard, 25 x 30.
U.S.

110. Laubser: Woman carrying water 1925 — 282
signed and dated b.r.: M. Laubser '25.
oil on cardboard, 46, 5 x 39.
Mr. L.J. Hill, Cape Town.

111. Laubser: Woman by fisherman's cottage 1928 — 282
signed and dated b.r.: M. Laubser '28.
oil on cardboard, 21,5 x 27
Mrs. F.E. Martin, Pretoria.

112. E.L. Kirchner: The manure cart 1920 — 282
oil, 70 x 80,5.
Lilo Behr, Stuttgart.
Gordon, no.642.

113. Laubser: Leentjie 1928-30 — 282
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on cardboard, 46 x 37,5.
Prof. and Mrs. A.C. Cilliers, Stellenbosch.

114. Laubser: Two women and child carrying wood to fisherman's cottage ca 1928-30 — 282
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on canvas, 37,5 x 46,5.
Prof. and Mrs. A.C. Cilliers, Stellenbosch.

115. Laubser: Woman against landscape with cottage, trees and watercarrier ca 1928-30 — 282
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on canvas, 51 x 46.
Dr. A.M. le Roux, Nelspruit.

116. Laubser: Two women and geese by fisherman's cottage ca 1930 — 283
signed b.l.: M. Laubser.
oil on canvas, 44,5 x 49,5.
Mr. and Mrs. A. Niemann, Pretoria.

Page no.

117. Laubser: Landscape with two women carrying wood (Huistoe) ca 1928/9 — 283
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on canvas, 42 x 53.
Miss B. Cluver, Stellenbosch.

118. Laubser: Landscape with two women carrying water 1930 — 283
signed and dated b.r.: M. Laubser '30.
oil on canvas, 44,5 x 50.
Mrs. E.M. Dowling, Johannesburg.

119. Laubser: Composition ca 1950's — 283
signed and dated b.l.: M. Laubser '60 [sic]
pencil and gouache on paper, 36 x 26.
Mrs. A. Broude, Sandton.

120. Laubser: Composition ca 1960-65 — 283
signed b.l.: M. Laubser.
oil on hardboard, 50 x 40.
Dr. and Mrs. F.J.Z. Booysen, Johannesburg.

121. Laubser: Mr. Laubser - the artist's father ca 1928 — 284
unsigned.
oil on canvas on hardboard, 54 x 44.
Mr. G.P.C. Laubser, Germiston.

122. Laubser: Ou Booi and five sheep ca 1928-32 — 284
initialled b.l.: M.L.
oil on canvas, 51 x 61.
Dr. and Mrs. G.J. Potgieter, Pretoria.

123. Laubser: Fisherman and boats 1928 — 284
signed and dated b.l.: M. Laubser '28.
oil on canvas, 44 x 54.
Mrs. D. Droomer, Paarl.

124. Laubser: The flowerseller ca 1950 — 284
signed b.l.: M. Laubser.
oil on canvas on board, 49,5 x 46,5.
Prof. J. Tiedt, Potchefstroom.

125. Laubser: Malay girl with four ducks ca 1928-32 — 284
signed b.l.: M. Laubser.
oil on cardboard, 55,5 x 44,5.
Mr. B. Trakman, Cape Town.

126. Laubser: Girl at window with dove and apples ca 1949 — 284
signed b.r.: M. Laubser.
oil on hardboard, 45 x 50.
Mr. I. Gibor, Johannesburg.

127. Laubser: Fisherboy with birds and boats ca 1960-5 — 285
signed b.r.: M. Laubser.
oil on hardboard, 50 x 42,5.
Mr. J. Lazarus, Pretoria.