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WOMAN\200\231S FORUM

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idon: The Bodley Head, 1970.

today\200\231s high tech world we often forget
about our roots in the earth and we
come to believe that we do not need
it. Yet we desperately do. | believe
one\200\231s priorities in life would be so much
clearer if one regularly went back to na-
ture and therefore to oneself.

Apart from our contact with nature
we also need to work on our inter-
personal relationships. People are al-
ways more important than things and
if we have warm and loving relation-
ships with our children, spouses, par-
ents, friends and acquaintances we will
have little trouble determining our pri-
orities. Fortunately these aspects do

not need technology to survive and Â©

prosper. What we must do however, is
to see that the changes and novelties
in the world around us do not blind us
to these basic values.

To conclude, therefore: our best
â\200\234weaponâ\200\235 in a fast-changing society is
the self. If you feel good about yourself
and you are honest with yourself, you
will make the right decisions. Maybe
not all the time, but that is how you
learn â\200\224 from mistakes and wrong de-
cisions. So let us be brave and honest
and make our way through lifeâ\200\231s ups
and downs. Let us see the changes as
challenges, as new experiences where
it is up to us to deal with it in our own
way. Boldly forward!

HA human dilemma. New York: Van Nostrand, 1967

iaFaurus of quotations. New York: Crowell, 1970.
Hg someone other. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984,

WOMAN'S FORUM

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BEAT
WITH.LIFE

THE BLACK ARTIST AND HIS ENVIRONMENT:
RENDERING AND COMMENT

KATINKA KEMPF

In time, the art-of the black peoples of
South Africa will be absorbed into that
of Indian, coloured and white and be
amalgamated into a true South African
art. However, today it is still possible to
discern a difference between the crea-
tions of these different groups, and the
white inhabitants are slowly, albeit
reluctantly sometimes, trying to under-
stand and appreciate the creative
powers of civilizations so very different
in background from ours. One*cannot
lift the art of a man, be it music,
literature, theatre or fine arts, from the

ambience of the culture from which he
and all his forbears have originated.

In the early sixties a group of Johan-
nesburg artists, under the leadership
of art dealer Egon Giinther, decided to
try and define an African character
in art by way of the Amadiozi-group.
Amadiozi means â\200\230â\200\230Spirit of our
Fathersâ\200\235, so the recognition of the

importance of tribal characteristics is obvious. The activities included exhibitions, both in South Africa and overseas, and encompassed both black and white artists, of whom the

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In Our Church â\200\224 designed by John Muafangejo and woven in carakul wool b

! 1 y the weavers of the

Rorke's Drift Art School, size 264 x 217 cm. A wonderfully graphic depiction of the vis
it a white

bishop paid the local church. Decoration in the church is African in character: shields
and spears.

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best-known ones are Cecil Skotnes,
Hannes Harrs, Edoardo Villa, Cecily
Sash, Guiseppe Cattaneo, Sydney
Kumalo, Ezrom Legae. It is particular-
ly Cecil Skotnes who, through his
teaching at the Polly Street Art Centre,
and his continued encouragement of
black talent, made the most lasting
impression. His own work also echoes
the mystique of Africa, for he uses the
harsh criss-cross lines of arid land, the
burnt colours of black, greyish-white
and blood-red that are the colours of
much of our landscape. Polly Street,
however, was an. exception.in. that
generally much of black art was un-
detected and even fewer artists had
opportunities to study art. Besides this,
almost all black artists who were lucky
enough to get art lessons, were be-
holden to the white man: he taught,
bought, publicised and in fact, the
black man had little or no contact with
his own kith and kin in the artistic field.

One of the first black painters who
made a name of consequence was
Gerald Sekoto. Although his art
showed distinct realistic Western in-
fluences, he painted the environment
he knew well: that of the township and

its daily occurrences and business. He settled in Paris in 1947 and has kept on painting township scenes from memory â\200\224 these have, however, lost most of their appeal of genuine experience and emotion.

Another black painter who painted township life and particularly its

squalor and poverty, was Efraim Ngatane. His work leans heavily on the use of colour in an abstract way.

An artist concentrating on heads of noble monumentality is Maqhubela. Ben Macala also draws and paints big round heads with enormous eyes and stylised, thick rounded lips of considerable sentimentality: the work unfor-

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tunately becomes too stereotyped and borders on tourist art. The Polly Street Centre produced a number of important sculptors as well, of whom Sydney Kumalo is best known. The early work had an innate monumentality, with strong frontal characteristics that reminded one of the classical African masks and ancestral figures of Central and West-Africa. He managed to impart a wonderfully effective surface texture to his sculptures that not only pleased the eye, but had marvellous tactile qualities. Unfortunately the sculptor has been influenced by Henri Moore in later years, and his sculptures have lost the dignity that his early works possessed in great measure. Ezrom Legaeâ\200\231s sculptures and graphic works tend more towards the abstract and as a result, also have a more Western style.

Two draughtsmen who imbue their drawings with great compassion are Julian Motau, who unfortunately was murdered as a very young man, but who showed exceptional promise, and Mslaba Dumile, in whose work a rather macabre note sounded from time to

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Sydney Kumalo's "Mother and Child" bronze, height 70 cm. Kumalo has successfully synthesised the stylised masks and ancestor figures of traditional African art and the sophistication of European art in this moving sculpture of the bond between mother and child. The cross-hatched bronze surface adds interest to the overall effect.

Ilse Teper's
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time: a man-eater or ogre, or a depiction of the concept of fear, are some of his subjects. Sithole is a gentle sculptor who, tongue in cheek, creates fascinating bird-beast-man creatures which he carves out of wood, often utilising roots of trees that already, by their convoluted shapes, suggest certain unknown creatures to him. Ascholastic influence which cannot be disregarded when discussing black art is that of Rorke's Drift. Rorke's Drift in Natal near Dundee is a Scandinavian mission station where work is done among the Zulus. Right from the

Julian Motau's "Mother and Child" in charcoal, size 110 x 74cm, is a very good example of the dexterity with which the black artist handles the contrast between black and white to achieve an expressionist character. The expressionist usually

makes use of colour and ;
distorted images; this is ten ote
obviously not necessary Sp nk
to Motau, as he fully
succeeds in expressing
emotion through these
limited means.

beginning the idea was not only to
bring Christianity to the Zulus, but also
to teach them crafts which would en-
able them to earn money. The result
was beyond expectation. The Swedish
teachers who came to teach pottery,
weaving and graphic art, were careful
not to destroy the natural feeling for
design, rhythm and colour of the local
people, but simply taught the skills
necessary to express themselves in
clay, wood or on paper. | think it is true
to say that the result from the Rorkeâ\200\231s
Drift workshops is almost more popular
overseas than it is in South Africa. The

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which we Westerners are SO accus-
tomed. A herd of elephants will simply
be depicted in 4 or 5 rows, each row
standing with heavy, solid feet on the
backs and heads of the preceding row.
The pots owe much in shape to the
utility ware the black tribes used to

| weavers learnt how to process the raw
| wool from the fully-grown karakul
| _ sheep, how to spin and dye and how
| to set up a tapestry loom. The designs
| are based on legends, stories, every-
| day happenings, and owe little to the
| Renaissance rules of perspective. to

Gerald Sekoto â\200\224 Street Scene â\200\224 oil on canvas, size 45,5 x 53,5 cm. An o
il painting by one of the
earlier practising black artists. Sekoto who left South Africa for France, and totally
lost the typical
â\200\234township artâ\200\235 character of his early work, was one of the pioneers of
black art. Note the stocky,
earthy figures and squat houses. In contrast to contemporary black art, there is no ves
tige of vio-
lence or unrest.

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white washing in the foreground.

;, make in clay for centuries to store in
-or drink from â\200\224 and the decorations
are generally naive, sometimes the
vessels are in the shape of animals or
birds. Â¥ :

-_ The graphic work, often in the lino-
â\200\234cut technique, is usuallyâ\200\231 decorative
and narrative. Azaria Mbatha in par-

icular, reveals a natural feeling for rhythm and a good sense of balance -between black and white. What typifies many of the Zulu graphic artists's work is the consolidating of a number of

P.D. Mogano's Denelton Village, Eastern Transvaal is a watercolour, size 53,5 x 72,5 cm. Mogano uses an almost photographic preciseness in his watercolours of township life. An interesting contrast and movement is formed by the corrugated iron walls, roofs, the V. of the birds and the plain

episodes of a story into one contained unity is a concept that was quite well-known during the middle-ages.

Mbatha, who was born in 1941, was the star pupil of Rorke's Drift, and was sent overseas to study. Unfortunately it seems that he now has also lost that particular quality which made his work uniquely African in character.

Other well-known products of
Rorke's Drift are John Muafangejo,
who hails from Ovambo, and Ndlovu.
An important fact which emerges as

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the art of the black man is studied, is that he is mainly preoccupied with his own people, and also, that people interest him, their loves, joys, plays, sorrows, all the manifestations of being human, in fact being a black human. Landscape and still-life feature only as long as they are part of the environment of that human being. The question that comes to mind now, is, whither black African art? As the black man gets better education and is exposed to more white culture and art, is it possible that his own culture and art could disappear altogether? For that matter to what extent will white South African art remain aloof from the influence of black art? It is in

conceivable that no cross-influences have taken place or will not, in future, take place in even greater measure. Art schools and art tuition is on the increase in townships, often under the direction of black teachers. Groups such as Fuba and Kathlahong, venues such as the Market Gallery, all are the underpinning for a vigorous growth of artistic awareness. Besides this, important business sponsorship, such as that of BMW with the marvellous â\200\234Tributariesâ\200\235 a collection of art from South Africa, amongst which was a sizeable number of black work, that was sent overseas some time ago, opened the eyes of a considerable number of people to the so-called transitional art

Azaria Mbatha â\200\224 â\200\234â\200\230Invitationâ\200\231â\200\235 â\200\224 linocut 74/100, size 30 x 50 cm. Mbatha is one of the most talented of the Zulu artists trained at Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift. Not only does his work result in a marvellously composed design, but he has understood the principle of simultaneous depiction of different scenes at different times, as was applied during the Middle Ages, very well.

monious composition achieved by the artists trained at the Rorke's Drift Missionary School. A strong emphasis is placed on pattern, so that the dense mass of Israelites on the right hand side, the

of Noria Mbaso who models strange, stocky men of clay which she paints in strong colours, or the fascinating creations of Dr Phatuma Seoka, who sees animals in tree trunks, branches and roots, and paints them in realistic enamel paints: the white

wavy sea and the riders on the left, form a well-unified entity.

leopard has black spots and a wide-open, blood-red maw. Nelson Makhuba was sensational with his dancers in wood, tall, attenuated, thoroughly contemporary. Unfortunately Makhuba (born in 1925) recently committed

suicide.

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DOr Phatuma Seoka â\200\224

â\200\224Leopard â\200\224 wood,

painted, size 83 x 111 cm.

An example of so-called
transitional art, this
branch or root of a tree
has, as if by magic, been
turned into a leopard. In
work like this the
inventiveness and fresh
vision of the black artist
is well illustrat@d.

The Market complex, both its theatre
and. its-exhibition space, provides. .a.
place for exposure, often unavoidably,
of politically-inspired as well as protest
art. That is as it should be. Black art
must take its place in contemporary so-
ciety, and hopefully, if and when times
become more stable and peaceful, the
pendulum will swing back towards, a
narrower centre without the excesses
of over-emotional outpourings.

WOMANâ\200\231S FORUM

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Boldly
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COLYN JAFFE

08h00. Departure. And as the bus
begins to move slowly forward, it is
proud testament to the departure from
years and years of rigid government
prohibition on private commercial
transport enterprises. And with the
Start of another new journey, the bus
ventures boldly forward into the new
future.

Immediately, the stewardessâ\200\231 voice
comes over the intercom, welcoming
the passengers aboard. She proceeds
to announce pertinent information: that
the journey time from Durban to Joha-

nnesburg will be eight hours; that there will be a half hour stop at Montrose for lunch, and that everyone should feel absolutely free to call her for absolutely anything they need. A ribald murmur of male voices sprints momentarily throughout the bus. The stewardess draws attention to the service buttons