

-660!-e00/~Â¢ IZ

Art

The role of the missions in art  
education in South Africa

Elizabeth Rankin, Professor of Art History at the University of the Witwatersrand,  
and Dr Elza Miles analyse the important role played by the missions in educating  
and training South African artists.

The increasing attention being paid to the contribution of  
black artists to art history in South Africa,! raises questions  
about the educational opportunities available to them, par-  
ticularly prior to the 1970s â\200\224 which saw the establishment of  
the first Department of Fine Arts at a black universityâ\200\235 and a  
burgeoning number of urban art centres. Attention has  
rightly been focused on the importance of the art training  
offered at the Polly Street Recreation Centre in Johannes-  
burg under Cecil Skotnes from the 1950s and at the  
Evangelical Lutheran Art and Craft Centre at Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift  
in Natal from the 1960s, but training outside these centres  
for the fine arts has been little explored. It has perhaps been  
tacitly assumed that there were no other possibilities, and  
that early black artists who did not enjoy the benefits of  
Polly Street or Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift must have been entirely self-  
taught, and, by implication, naive in their production and  
their knowledge of art practices. The quality of the work of  
such artists as Ernest Mancoba (b 1904) and Gerard Sekoto  
(b 1913) demonstrates that any such assumptions are sim-  
plistic, and suggests that opportunities for a visual education  
of some kind must have been available, and that research in  
this. area could prove enlightening. Of the many directions  
such research could take, it is the intention of this article to  
draw attention only to one â\200\224 education in mission schools,  
which provided a starting point for the art careers of  
Mancoba and Sekoto, as for many others.

A considerable amount of enquiry has been devoted to  
mission schools in general, because they were the chief  
source of education for blacks, administered by the  
provinces from the time of Union, until the inauguration of  
the Department of Bantu Education in the 1950s and the  
subsequent gradual demise of mission initiative in educa-  
tion. It would seem, however, that relatively little attention  
has been given to the contribution of mission schools to the  
arts. Yet it has proved to be such a rich field that it is not  
possible within the confines of a short article to do more  
than outline the diversity of directions in the arts initiated by  
the missions, and suggest the potential of the area for further  
research.

Job Kekana: Bishopâ\200\231s Staff, carved with the seven sacraments,  
following a design by Rev Edward Paterson, 1930s.  
(Archive of the Church of the Province, University of the Witwatersrand.)



Art

Pn ads

b

Friends. Oil on paper. 1976. Private collection  
(South African Bureau of Information, Pretoria)

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

award at the Art South Africa Today Exhibition; in 1967, a bronze medal from the Transvaal Academy, and a travel bursary to the USA and Europe as a guest of USSALEP; and in 1981, first prize at a South African Race Relations exhibition in Durban.

Kumalo received a number of public commissions. These included: Stations of the Cross, Kroonstad Catholic Church, Orange Free State (1958); Stations of the Cross for a church in Orlando, Soweto (1959-1960); a sculpture entitled 'Praying Woman' at the State Pavilion, Milner Park, Johannesburg (1960); a sculpture entitled 'Eagle' for a Hotel in Kitwe, Zambia (1960); a sculpture entitled 'The Blessing' at the Civic Centre in Cape Town (1980); a commission for Premier Holdings Johannesburg (1986) and for the Napac Playhouse in Durban (1987).

Kumalo's work is to be found in many private and public collections in South Africa and abroad, including the South African National Gallery (Cape Town), Johannesburg Art Gallery, Pretoria Art Museum, Durban Art Gallery, William Humphreys Art Gallery (Kimberley) and Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation (Stellenbosch); also in the Sanlam and Sasol art collections, and a number of university collections including those of the University of Fort Hare, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of South Africa.

#### References

1 E Berman, Art and artists of South Africa, A A Balkema, 1970, pp 231-232.

2 E Rankin, Images of wood 'Aspects of the history of sculpture in 20th-century South Africa, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery & The Hans Merensky Foundation, 1989, pp 18-24.

Smee Didapios  
Loc cit.

5 L Watter, 'Sydney Kumalo', in H Toerien and G Duby, Our Art 3, Pretoria: Foundation for Education, Science and Technology, not dated.

The Diocesan Teachers Training College at the Anglican mission of Grace Dieu,â\200\231 founded in 1906 twenty-eight kilometres from Pietersburg, was an enclave of Christian colonial culture. The founder of the mission, Father John Latimer Fuller of the Community of the Resurrection,\* and Father Woodfield, who headed the college for nearly two decades, both held MA degrees from Cambridge University.Â°> Taking into account that the college buildings, although unpretentious, were designed by the well-known British architect Herbert Baker in 1914,Â° and that the belfry was embellished with a ceramic panel in the style of Della Robbia,â\200\231 it is not surprising that artistic expression enjoyed priority there.

The college was fortunate in having the advice of people well-equipped in the arts â\200\224 Grace Anderson, who was an Associate of the Royal College of Art, and the Reverend Edward Paterson, who had trained at Londonâ\200\231s Central School of Arts and Crafts. They not only advised the college in matters of art, but tangibly set a standard for good design. Paterson designed the memorial plaque for the bell-tower, for example, and Anderson the college badge.

In 1924 or 1925, Father Paterson explored the possibilities of wood carving on discarded wood from the carpentry workshop at Grace Dieu, which provided the only industrial course for Africans in the Transvaal at the time. What was started as an experiment and hobby with cheap penknives from the Pietersburg Dee Bee Bazaars was enthusiastically carried on by Sister Pauline CR. Under her guidance, though she had no art training,? wood carving developed into a separate department in 1934.

Fine wood furnishings, religious and secular, decorated with carvings, as well as independent sculptures, evolved from Grace Dieu, and were widely sold in South Africa and abroad. They were produced by many carvers whose names were not documented, but are mentioned collectively as â\200\234third year Normal studentsâ\200\235 or â\200\234carpentry studentsâ\200\235, and also by Job Kekana (b 1916), Eric Chimwaza, Dick Makambula, Thomas Makenna and Ernest Mancoba, whom we know from the mission records and the catalogues of the South African Academy exhibitions in the Selborne Hall, Johannesburg. Most of the carvings were in wood, particularly teak, but

Ernest Mancoba: Madonna, yellow wood, 1920. Convent of the Order of the Holy Paracletes, Manzini, Swaziland  
(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

Bernard Gcwensa: Madonna of Sorrows, Red ivory, 120 cm high, Servite Congregation Community House, Chicago.  
(Photograph kindly supplied by Dina Cormick.)

Ernest Mancoba: Faith. The only record of this early carving is a photograph reproduced in The Star, 8 June 1936.  
(Photograph reproduced by courtesy of The Star.)

occasionally students worked in other materials, as did Job Kekana and Zachariahs Sekgaphane (b 1902) who carved in soapstone.

In executing carvings for church furniture and other ecclesiastical artefacts, the students were encouraged to follow the traditional presentation of church art. Students were directed to copy the geometric patterns from photographs of work in our English cathedrals. And in a panel of the priest's prayer-desk in Christchurch, Pietersburg, for example, the pose of the Annunciate Mary echoes that of the Madonna on the ceramic panel of the belfry at Grace Dieu. Students also often followed the designs of Anderson, as in a priest's prayer-desk, Turfloop, depicting a kneeling boy and girl, and Paterson, as in his composition of the sacraments for a bishop's staff, carved by Job Kekana, or the tea-table top described as illustrating work in a Bantu village, carved by Eric Chimwaza.\* Yet students also carved their own designs. Ernest Mancoba's African Madonna (1929) for the St Mary's Chapel at Grace Dieu (now at the Convent of the OHP Sisters,

36

Gerard Sekoto: Mine Boy, pencil on paper, 24 x 15,4 cm, 1946. The Sowetan Collection of Sekoto Drawings, housed at the University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries.

(Photograph supplied by the University Art Galleries.)

Manzini) and Sekgaphane's bovine study in soapstone (1929) were both done independently. Neither Anderson nor Paterson showed any concern for traditional African carving in their proposals, although they Africanized Christian iconography, incorporating scenes of African rural life and African flora and fauna to illustrate biblical texts, as in the choir stalls of St Matthew's, Seshego. Stylistically these were rendered in a figurative manner, which may account for the naturalistic approach shown in Mancoba's carvings prior to 1936, such as his holy figures, for example St Augustine of Canterbury in Belvedere, Kent, in England, as well as the secular depiction of two black children, entitled Future of Africa.<sup>3</sup> But Mancoba was to develop a highly stylized rendering of forms thereafter, brought about by the influence of African sculpture. In 1935/6, the sculptor Lippy Lipshitz recommended that Mancoba read the book by Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro, Primitive negro sculpture (1929). The impact of this exposure was most effective. It not only changed his style, but also led to his refusal to carry out a commission for the



Mission church of the Good Shepherd, Hlabisa, KwaZulu. Built circa 1959.

Department of Native Affairs to produce narrative carvings of natives and animals in a tourist vein for the 1936 Empire Exhibition.\* He thus turned his back on the figurative mode in which he had been trained at Grace Dieu, and laid the foundation for the more experimental art he was to produce when he lived and worked in Europe after 1938.

Grace Anderson took a keen interest in the educational programmes of Grace Dieu until her marriage in 1940 to the well-known artist Walter Battiss. She painted water-colours of the mission on her regular visits as examiner of drawing for the Transvaal Department of Education, and lectured there on her subject.!!> Though Gerard Sekoto, who trained as a primary school teacher at Grace Dieu, mentions how blackboard work stimulated him to resume his drawing,!Â° one may presume that Anderson's lectures at the college also played a role. Anderson wrote an article on lino-printing, giving many useful and practical hints, for the Grace Dieu Bulletin of December 1935, accompanied by a print of her own of the college chapel and vestry. It is interesting to speculate whether the germ-cell for Mancoba's lino-printing many years later is to be found here.!!7

Members from other mission centres played a part at Grace Dieu from time to time, as had been the case with

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

Art

(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Father Paterson, who was a frequent visitor as well as an honorary staff member from 1925-1926. Another visitor was Brother Roger Castle of St Peter's Priory at Rosettenville, Johannesburg, who was occasionally invited to preach there. He conducted part-time art classes for black students interested in art in his room at the Priory.\* Both Mancoba and Sekoto benefitted from his informal discussions,!? and his help in marketing their work. But where Grace Dieu favoured figurative representation in ecclesiastical art, St Peter's showed a preference for modernism. The English teacher, George Harwood, said he was anxious to break away from the meretricious oleographs which do duty for biblical illustrations among the natives,?Â° and commissioned the British sculptor Leon Underwood to carve the Black Madonna for St Peter's, which arrived in the country in 1936. Occasionally the chapel at St Peter's served as an art gallery, where contemporary paintings, such as works by Preller and Sekoto, were hung.7!

Grace Dieu was unique in its early establishment of a carving school, but many missions belonging to the Anglican or Catholic faith shared the same need for religious images and carved church furniture, and thus encouraged art production, at least for their own use, among those they were teaching.

## Art

Above: Mission church of the Good Shepherd, Hlabisa.  
Interior view of altar with crucifix by Bernard Gcwensa.  
(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Right: Gerard Sekoto: The Train Crowd, oil on canvas,  
45,4 x 35,5 cm, circa 1945. The South African Reserve  
Bank Art Collection. (Photograph supplied by the courtesy of  
the South African Reserve Bank.)

There are, for example, many cases in the area of Natal and  
KwaZulu, often associated with the efforts of an individual  
priest or nun, rather than a specific institution.

Father Edwin Kinch, a Servite missionary priest, came to  
Ingwavuma from America in 1947. He soon felt the need for  
holy images appropriate to his African flock, and commis-  
sioned a Dutch artist to produce a Madonna based on a pho-  
tograph of a young Swazi woman in traditional dress. When  
he saw Bernard Gcwensa (1918-85) carving walking-sticks  
after he moved to Hlabisa in KwaZulu in 1953, he decided  
to ask him to carve a Madonna for the Legion of Mary,  
which was to be the first of his many religious images.  
Around that time, the artist Father Frans Claerhout visited  
the mission briefly, and encouraged Gcwensa to draw, and  
in the 1960s a German sculptor, Leopold Hoffner, spent  
some time working with him at Hlabisa.<sup>2</sup> Although Father  
Kinch was not trained in the arts himself, he was able to  
help the carvers with tools and materials because his own  
father had been a cabinet-maker. He also seems to have had  
a special ability to assist them to find their own visual lan-  
guage to illustrate the traditional iconography. Gcwensa's  
next work, for instance, a Mother of sorrows in red ivory,  
now in the Servite mother-house in Chicago, expresses grief

38

through the Zulu gesture of covering her mouth. Some of  
those who recognized Gcwensa's ability suggested that he  
should be sent abroad for training, but Jack Grossert, in his  
capacity as a school-inspector of arts and crafts, agreed that  
this would be of little advantage to a man with only a  
Standard Two education and little English.<sup>2</sup> Instead Father  
Kinch built a new chapel for the Mission of the Good  
Shepherd at Hlabisa in 1959 to afford Gcwensa the fullest  
Opportunity to exercise his talents. Given the security of a  
steady salary as a manual worker, he was able to carve  
whenever other tasks were done, and his works there, rang-  
ing from the crucifix to fully carved doors, represent a  
remarkable ensemble of religious art.<sup>2\*</sup>

Gcwensa was also to play an important role as the mentor  
of Ruben Xulu (1942-85),<sup>2</sup> whose talent had been noticed  
at a very early age when he won prizes in art competitions at  
a nearby school. Because Kulu was deaf and could no  
longer be helped by his teacher, he was sent to the mission,  
where he worked under Gcwensa from 1961. Although at  
first he imitated the older man, he soon began producing  
works in his own right, and carved in stone as well as



wood, as at St Joseph's Church at Matshemhlophe.

Father Kinch points out that these artists worked with the

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

Bernard Gwensa: Crucifixion, panel from carved wooden doors at Hlabisa (Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Ruben Xulu: Flight into Egypt, stone carving and painted decorations of the open colonnade at the mission church, Hlabisa.  
(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

Art

Art

agi  
i;

Azaria Mbatha: He went into Jerusalem, linocut, 46,1 x 62 cm, University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries.

outside form of the wood when they carved, so that he unwittingly influenced their style, as well as the scale of their work, by supplying them with cut timber, rather than natural wood. This may certainly have contributed to the compact forms and compositions favoured by Gewensa and Xulu, but hardly seems a limitation: their individual interpretations of biblical stories have a vitality reminiscent of Romanesque religious carvings.

The history of these two carvers in relation to Edwin Kinch is paralleled by many cases of artists assisted at the Mariannhill Mission in Natal, founded in 1882. But whereas Father Kinch had been encouraging art where there was none, at this German Catholic mission there was a well established tradition of fine architecture and the production of religious imagery, which provided a visual context for the making of art at Mariannhill. The brilliant hues of the stained glass and the painted altar-pieces, for example, drawn from European ecclesiastical traditions, seem to be reflected in the vivid colour of the tapestries produced there by African weavers.

Two members of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, who had themselves trained in art in Europe and subsequently taken Fine Arts degrees at the University of Natal, showed a particular interest in encouraging African painters and sculptors at Mariannhill. Both were active as versatile artists in their own right, Sister M Pientia Selhorst having trained primarily as a painter and Sister M Johanna Senn as a sculptor. Sister Pientia qualified as a teacher and taught art at the St Francis Training College at Mariannhill

40

(Photograph supplied by the University Art Galleries.)

from 1942, and established an art centre at Lumko in the Transkei in the 1950s; whereas Sister Johanna does not think of herself as a teacher although she has acted as a mentor for many artists, giving technical advice and encouragement. During the 1970s, a number of art exhibitions were arranged at Mariannhill, and, in 1978, the Mariannhill Art Centre was established, incorporating a gallery and a studio for a resident artist. Sister Johannes believes strongly that the work of black artists should be used in South African churches and not taken out of the country. She is constantly seeking out appropriate artists to fulfil religious commissions, and has in this way helped many who are not usually associated with Mariannhill, such as

Michael Zondi (b 1926), who began his career at the Swedish Mission Trade School at Dundee, Natal, and Vuminkosi Zulu (b 1947), who trained at Rorke's Drift.

The range of artists who have enjoyed assistance in many different forms at Mariannhill is remarkable. Joseph Dlamini, who carried out the carvings for St Gertrude's Mission, for example, only came for informal help as an older man. Duke Ketye (b 1943), on the other hand, started at Lumko as a boy, beginning his art career under Sister Pientia's instruction, but assisted with carving by Sister Johanna, and then studied for his matriculation at St Francis College. He fulfilled a number of religious commissions during his early years as an artist, such as his series of the Stations of the Cross for Our Lady of the Assumption at Makwane in QwaQwa. But Ketye's training also enabled him to work independently outside the mission: he has been

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

## Art

Wiigea

Bongiwe Dhlomo: Women at Work, linocut, 1983, private collection.

a full-time artist since 1968, producing both painting and sculpture, has worked as an illustrator and also extended his skills to include pottery and screen-printing.\*4 Ketyeâ\200\231s example demonstrates how readily art skills could be transferred from a religious to a secular context, particularly when artists were encouraged to develop their own visual language, rather than working within the European tradition of religious art. The variety of styles emerging from Mariannhill makes it clear that this was the case there. In contrast to the expressive distortion of Ketyeâ\200\231s style is the detailed observation in the work of Zamokwakhe Gumede (b 1955), who came to Mariannhill as a young man, after his schooling, and took a carpentry course with Brother Florian in the 1980s. He remembers being encouraged by Sister Johanna to make carvings to illustrate Bible stories, which

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

SSE

(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

provided a starting point for his career as a sculptor.\*> In 1988, he worked on a large commission for Oakford Priory Catholic School, calling it God loves children and everyone, but has also been active making sculpture for sale, sometimes religious, sometimes secular in subject matter, and has participated in the Zasha art group in Durban.

Beyond the mission environment, then, many artists from that background, such as Gumede and Ketye, produce works of a secular nature for the art market. It should be remembered, however, that the main direction of their mission training had been in the creation of religious images, a direction which is to be expected within the high church context. Yet an exception is to be found in the work of a group of artists living in the Orange Free State who came under the guidance of Father Frans Claerhout (b 1919) at the St Francis Mission

At

Art

Mother and Child, tapestry woven at Mariannhill Mission.

42

(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Gatehouse of the Mariannhill Mission, Natal, circa 1905, showing incorporation of traditional Western

religious imagery. (Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

at Thaba à\200\230Nchu, and later at the Mission of Our Lady of Sorrows at Tweespruit.3Â° These were also Catholic institutions, but there the artists were encouraged to make works of great variety: they did on occasion carve religious images, but these seem to have occupied a place of no greater significance in their oeuvres than other subject matter. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that Father Claerhout is himself a practising artist, who has exhibited with the Bloemfontein Group and sells his paintings commercially. His work too may have religious reference, but it does not follow a traditional liturgy, rather depicting a personal iconography, coloured by his own mystical and moral reflections.

It is of interest that the artists working with Father Claerhout, such as Jacob Tladi (c 1930-85) and Joel Noosi (c 1935-77) seem to have concentrated on carving, even though his own skill lies chiefly in painting. In this case it cannot be explained in terms of the suitability of the medium for religious objects, and it is all the more noteworthy because a lack of wood in the

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

## Art

Above: Joseph Dlamini: Carvings at St Gertrude's Mission.

(Photograph by courtesy of Sister Johanna Senn.)

Above: Duke Ketye: Stations of the Cross, Our Lady of the Assumption, Makwane, QwaQwa. (Photograph courtesy of Sister Johanna Senn.)

Right: Zamakwakhe Gumede, God Looks After the Poor, Wood, 50 x 29 x 29 cm, acquired 1989. Standard Bank Collection of African Art, housed at the University of the Witwatersrand Art Galleries.

(Photograph supplied by the University Art Galleries.)

area makes it unlikely that the artists were drawing on established skills. Claerhout sells a considerable amount of the carvers' work to the many tourists who visit his mission, suggesting that, in his eyes and theirs, carving with its craft connotations, is perceived as an appropriate medium for black artists. The likelihood that this perception has influenced the selection of suitable art skills for African students at mission schools cannot be discounted.

In the case of missions of a Protestant origin, where there would be no call for images for the church, one might expect that there would be no art production. This has not been the case, although the development of art in these missions has been rather different. An important example is that of Ndoleni Training College. A Wesleyan mission had been established as early as 1847 at Ndoleni near Richmond in Natal. Like so many of the missions, Catholic and Protestant, it took on educational responsibilities in the community, and established a teacher training college. Training colleges invariably included some form



## Art

of art and craft on their syllabus for intending teachers, but Ndaleneni was to develop a special project in this direction on the initiative of Jack Grossert, who was appointed organizer of art and crafts for the Native Section of the Natal Education Department in 1948. Together with Ann Harrison, a teacher at Ndaleneni who had trained at the Slade,<sup>231</sup> he began in 1949 to plan a specialist two-year course for art teachers, to be available to those who had already completed their teaching diploma. Ann Harrison left before the programme could be inaugurated, but it was launched in 1952 under Alfred Ewan, who had a diploma in art from Dundee, Scotland.<sup>232</sup> A succession of well-qualified teachers followed him <sup>224</sup> Peter Atkins who had trained in sculpture at the Slade, Peter Bell who had a Fine Arts degree from Michaelis, and Lorna Peirson, who had both specialized in art in her teacher training and taken a BA (Fine Arts) with Honours in design at Natal University.<sup>233</sup>

Although the mission was responsible for the general organization of the college, and provided the context for the introduction of art specialization, the teachers of the Ndaleneni art course had never been missionaries; the provincial authorities had paid the salaries of secular teachers through the mission administration. But the links with the mission became even more tenuous after the introduction of Bantu Education in the mid-1950s, when Ndaleneni Training College was annexed by the government department, although the same premises were used and the students still lived in the mission hostels. Ultimately the authorities were to close Ndaleneni and move the school to the Transvaal Training College at Mabopane in 1982.

The Ndaleneni course was primarily aimed at the training of art teachers, not artists, but in the context of the 1950s it offered probably the most programmed art training available to black students, who were drawn from all over South Africa. The course was wide-ranging in its scope, including classes in art history, design, picture making, clay modelling, crafts and wood carving. It is noteworthy that, although there was no prompting through a need for religious images or church furniture in this context, carving seems to have been the strongest section of the school. It is true that carving classes were a compulsory part of the syllabus, but the students seem to have taken it up in their spare time by choice, and to have shown a great aptitude for this particular form of sculpture.

While Ndaleneni artists like Solomon Sedibane (b 1933) and George Ramagaga (b 1951) are best known for their wood sculpture, many were ultimately to make art in a wide variety of fields. Eric Ngcobo (1933-87), for example, continued carving but also painted, and Dan Rakgoathe (b 1937) is best known as a print-maker, although this direction in his work may well have been encouraged by his later training at Rorke's Drift from 1967, and at Fort Hare in the 1970s. The Ndaleneni group were to be of great importance because they provided role models for aspiring artists of the black community throughout South Africa. They were also influential because many of them held teaching posts, and were often promoted to inspector level because of their additional qualification, although these could be thankless tasks in the context of black schools where art education was <sup>224</sup> and is <sup>224</sup> severely limited.<sup>235</sup>

Equally important in the stimulation of art production in the black community were the artists who trained at the Evangelical Lutheran Art and Craft Centre, established in the

44

Carving in the garden, Mission of Our Lady of Sorrows, Tweespruit.  
(Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

## Art

Jacob Tladi, wood carving, bottom half 673 cm high, top half 675 cm high, acquired 1988, King George VI Art Gallery, Port Elizabeth.  
(Photograph supplied by the Gallery)

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

1960s at Rorke's Drift, the site of an old Swedish mission.\*! At this Protestant establishment the training of artists was also of a more secular nature from the start. Although the teachers were appointed and employed by the Church of the Swedish Mission, there seems to have been no proselytizing intention at Rorke's Drift. The primary aim was to nurture the artistic heritage of Africa, and art was not presented either in the service of the church or as the tool of another profession, teaching, but was conceived as an independent career. In line with the Centre's purpose to assist in raising the standard of living among African people, the attitude to art was a practical one, focusing on the training of art and craft advisers for hospitals, and on the production of saleable objects, particularly weaving and pottery. There was also a strong print-making section from an early period, represented by the linocuts of Azaria Mbatha (b 1941) and John Muafangejo (1943-87). Their graphic works do suggest a religious link with the mission background, not only in the frequent choice of biblical subject matter, but in the nature of their narrative which suggests a visual equivalent of the didactic approach of Protestantism.<sup>4</sup> This has remained a characteristic of much graphic art from Rorke's Drift, even when the subject matter is secular, as it is in the linocuts of Bongile Dhlomo (b 1956).

Fine Arts training with a formal syllabus was introduced a few years after the craft classes, but was discontinued in 1982, perhaps partly because it was not an income-earning venture.\*? But it seems likely too that as fine arts studies at Rorke's Drift became increasingly sought after, and attracted talent from urban centres all over South Africa, the nature of the student body and its art changed and became too experimental in form and content not to come into conflict with the mission environment. The rural situation and the religious affiliations were also becoming less appropriate. The demise of the Fine Arts Department at Rorke's Drift would seem to intimate the waning of the mission's role in art education in contemporary South Africa. In many ways, the incentive of Rorke's Drift has been taken over more aptly by urban-based art centres, but the impact of the school continues to assert itself because so many of the teachers at the centres had their training there.<sup>234</sup>\*

It is unnecessary to discuss Rorke's Drift and its artists in any detail, as its role in art, alone of all the mission schools, is widely recognized. But it provides yet another example of the part that missions have played in the education of the black artist in South Africa, and stresses their diversity and the many questions they raise for art historians. The links with religion need to be fully explored: some missions trained artists, just as they educated children, chiefly in the cause of Christianity, while in other cases art was pursued independently, as a teaching subject or a way of earning a living, or even for its own sake. The interaction of mission schools with Bantu Education is another issue of great

importance that cannot be debated in a short article, although some of the ironies are implicit in what has been presented. Ndaleni art courses, for example, although initiated in the period of mission control, continued to flourish because government co-option was accepted, only to be closed down later anyway; while the art programme at St Francis College, Mariannhill, foundered together with teacher training that could not carry on independent of government support, but survived informally in individual

Weaving a tapestry: Evangelical Lutheran Art and Craft Centre,  
Rorke's Drift, 1990. (Photo: Elizabeth Rankin)

mentoring. Mission attitudes to art are also of interest, some perceiving European traditions as appropriate, others encouraging a more African emphasis.

Because of the adverse attitude to indigenous African arts customarily found amongst early missionaries, intent on replacing traditional religions with Christianity, missions have been assigned a predominantly negative role in the annals of South African art: this paper proposes that missions also had a positive albeit complex role to play.

#### Notes and references

1 This article is a reworked version of a paper read at the Conference of the South African Association of Art Historians held at the University of Natal, Durban, in July 1989.

2 Education at the University of Fort Hare itself, the first black university to offer a Fine Arts degree, was inaugurated in the mission context of Lovedale: as Edgar Brookes said in 1936, Fort Hare may not unfairly be described as the pinnacle of missionary achievement in education, E H Brookes, A century of missions in

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

12  
16

18

19  
20  
21

#### Art

Natal and Zululand, Durban, 1936. Art courses were not introduced, however, until long after mission control had ended, coincidentally at much the same time in the 1970s as Unisa introduced art tuition, available to black and white, but not of course to residential students.

Today Setotolwane.

Founded at Oxford in 1892, the monastic Community of the Resurrection of Our Lord aimed to reproduce the life of the early Christians as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Fuller's degree was actually conferred by the University of Cape Town, as he was in South Africa by the time the degree requirements were fulfilled.

The buildings of sun-dried brick and thatch were executed by the students of Grace Dieu, and inaugurated by the Governor General, Lord Buxton, in 1916.

The belfry, which is the only surviving building of the complex today, was dedicated to Cecil Mary Talbot, friend of Her Royal Highness Princess Alice, who presented the ceramic panel.

Recorded in D Walker, Paterson of Cyrene, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, p 8.

Sister Pauline's teaching subjects were geography, history and music; Job Kekana told us in an interview in Johannesburg, March 1989, however, that her father had been a carpenter

A church font by Kekana in soapstone is recorded in the catalogue of the South African Academy Exhibition in Johannesburg in 1939, although this carver, still active today in a mission context at St Faith's, Rusape, in Zimbabwe, commonly prefers wood as his medium.

Undated article, CR Annals, St Peter's Home, Grahamstown. The wooden candlesticks presented to the Sisters of the Community of the Resurrection in Grahamstown on the occasion of their Jubilee in 1935 were carved after sixteenth-century designs (Quarterly Letter, 1935).

Exhibited at the South African Academy, 1935.

The whereabouts of this work, exhibited at the South African Academy in 1934, is unknown. In an interview with Elza Miles in Alexandra in April 1989, Mancoba's sister, Edith Ntomela, said that the piece, representing their younger brother Ronnie with a friend, was bought by Bishop Parker of Pretoria. A visual record survives in a photograph owned by the sisters of the Community of the Resurrection of Our Lord in Grahamstown.

This information was obtained when Ernest Mancoba was interviewed by Elza Miles in Paris, September 1990. There was also a change in Sekgaphane's style, as documented in the photographic collection of the Archives of the Church of the Province, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, but it was less dramatic. The principal, Father Goodall, designed the pieces for Sekgaphane while he was studying theology at St Peter's Priory, Rosettenville, in Johannesburg. (Zachariahs Sekgaphane interviewed by Elza Miles at Itsoseng near Mafikeng, October 1989.)

A 750/A2, Logbook, Grace Dieu, 25 July 1933.

B Lindop, Gerard Sekoto, Randburg, 1988, p 16; see also L Spiro, Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered ties, Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1989, pp 12-13.

In 1962 Ernest Mancoba illustrated his article on the African artist, Den Afrikanske Kunstner, for a Danish magazine Hvedekorn (grain of wheat) with a linocut and a pen-and-ink drawing. Contrary to Anderson's application of dark lines to depict the college chapel and yard, Mancoba uses his gouge almost automatically to evoke a dark totemic image by means of light lines.

E Berman, Art and artists of South Africa, Cape Town, 1970, p 268.

L Lipshitz, Sekoto, The African Drum, June 1951, p 20. Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), 18 March 1936, p 12.

L Lipshitz, op cit. In 1949, Father Trevor Huddleston CR became superintendent of the St Peter's Secondary School, widely referred

Art

St George and the Dragon, modelled figures by the students at  
Ndaleni Mission, Natal. (Photo: Elizabeth Rankin) {

Above: Evangelical Lutheran Mission Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift, Natal. Stone . ' }  
church dating from late 19th century. : \ ;

Right: George Ramagaga: Grieving Sisters, wood carving made at ad ad

Ndaleni. Collection of Professor Estelle Marais.

(Photos: Elizabeth Rankin)

46 Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992

Art

22

2B)

24

25

26

DI

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

48

to as â\200\234the black Eton of South Africaâ\200\235, T Huddleston, Naught for your comfort, London and Glasgow: Collins, 1956. Although art does not seem to have played an important role as a school subject, it is noteworthy that such artists as David Koloane and Ephraim Ngatane count among the students who were educated there.

Father Kinch (b 1918) provided this information during a most helpful interview with Elizabeth Rankin in Hillcrest in June 1989.

Personal communication from Jack Grossert, April 1989. Gratitude is due to Dr Grossert for much information on the topic of early art education for blacks, notably in two interviews with Elizabeth Rankin at Mariannhill in November 1988 and June 1989.

Gcwensa was to have many more commissions of this kind, if not as extensive in nature, over the years, and examples of his oeuvre may be found at such places as Inkamana Abbey near Vryheid, Hammanskraal Seminary near Pretoria and the mission church of Hammansdale, near Pietermaritzburg. This information was supplied by Dina Cormick who has been researching a publication on the work of Gcwensa and Xulu. She mentions that the Hammansdale designs were not Gcwensaâ\200\231s own, but given to him to follow in the manner that had been common in the early days at Grace Dieu, and at many of the missions.

The dates recorded for Xulu in the Johannesburg Art Gallery catalogues, The neglected tradition and Images of wood, were based on incorrect information. Dina Cormick has subsequently confirmed that his birthdate was 1942, not 1952.

Gewensaâ\200\231s asthmatic condition prevented him from working in stone, which generates fine dust during the carving process.

See Juliette Leeb-du Toit, â\200\234Beuron and Mariannhillâ\200\235, unpublished MA dissertation, University of Natal, 1984.



Sister Pientia was born in Westphalia in 1914 and had some art training in the studios of the Benedictine Order in Holland before she came to South Africa in 1938. (F Harmsen, *The way to Easter: Stations of the Cross in South Africa*, Pretoria, 1989, pp 85-86.) The interesting career of Sister Pientia was discussed by Juliette Leeb-du Toit in a paper on her work at Mariannhill, at the same conference of the South African Association of Art Historians (University of Natal, Durban, July 1989) as this paper was originally presented, and has been published in the Proceedings.

Born in the Austrian Tyrol in 1930, Sister Johanna had entered the Order of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood in 1956, and came to South Africa in 1961. (F Harmsen, *op cit*, p 86.) Sister Johanna has been most helpful in supplying information about the work of Mariannhill, during Elizabeth Rankin's visits there in November 1988 and June 1989, as also has Sister M Adalgisa CPS on the latter visit.

St Francis College, which had started in 1915, was ultimately to close following the inauguration of Bantu Education: as the Catholic colleges were not prepared to operate within the proposed educational paradigm, government funding was halted, and their qualifications were not officially recognized.

Mariannhill organized art exhibitions in 1974, 1976, and 1977. In 1974, the first prize was awarded to Lucky Sibiya for his wood panel entitled *African life*, the second to Ruben Xulu's carvings, and the third to Patience Ngogodo's tapestries.

Unfortunately this project, involving resident artists like Duke Ketye and Charles Nkosi, and sponsoring quite a diverse range of exhibitions, was fairly short-lived. Sister Johanna suggests, that one of the reasons for its lack of success was that artists needed to be located in large towns to attract sufficient buyers for their work.

Sister Johanna states that "through an inculturated artistic expression, the Gospel message will reach out to the hearts of the people in their own idioms and become part of their life". (Paper delivered at the Austrian Mission Conference, September 1983.) Works sent abroad invariably take their place in mission museums, rather than churches.

Information supplied by the artist in an interview with Elizabeth Rankin, Soweto, March 1989.

35

36

37)

38

39

40

41]

42

43

44

Information supplied by the artist in an interview with Christina Jikelo when at the Durban Art Museum; she is now educational officer at the De Beers Centenary Gallery at Fort Hare. Gumedede

was subsequently to develop his skills at the Community Arts Workshop in Durban from 1985 to 1986.

See L Strydom, Frans Claerhout: Catcher of the sun, Cape Town, 1983, and Frans Claerhout, Belgium, 1975. Claerhout was born in Flanders in 1919, and came to South Africa in 1946. Father Claerhout must be thanked for a useful discussion with Elizabeth Rankin at Tweespruit in January 1989.

Ann Harrison (now Robinson) was employed at Ndaleni to teach blackboard writing and visual aids for teaching, not art as such, but had introduced some exercises, first in design and fabric printing (which produced articles that could be sold to generate funds for much needed art materials), then in narrative painting. (Private communication, January 1991.)

Information about the early years at Ndaleni supplied by Jack Grossert in a personal communication of April 1989.

Lorna Peirson supplied much useful information about Ndaleni in an interview with Elizabeth Rankin at Richmond in November 1988, and also brought to her attention the final, souvenir edition of ARTTRA, the journal of the art school, volume 40, issued in October 1980, which includes essays on the history of Ndaleni and its students.

See ARTTRA 40, October 1980, for some reports from teachers who had trained at Ndaleni.

There is, comparatively speaking, a sizable literature on Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift, although, as is the case with most areas of art production in South Africa, more extensive research would be valuable. See The ELC Art and Craft Centre, Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift, Natal, Pretoria Art Museum, 1970; S Henderson, â\200\234Conflict and conciliation: The story of Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift Missionâ\200\235, Optima 34(4): 192-203, December 1986; S Sack, The neglected tradition: Towards a new history of South African art 1930-1988, Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1988. There has also recently been an MA dissertation, â\200\234Die Evangeliese Lutherse Kerk Kuns- en Handwerksentrum, Rorkeâ\200\231s Driftâ\200\231, by Dirkie Offringa (University of Pretoria, 1988). An exhibition exploring the subsequent work of artists trained at Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift was organized in Cape Town in 1990. One short piece of documentary research, carried out by Elizabeth Rankin at Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift in January 1990, is in press for The South African Journal of Art and Architectural History.

In an article in Artlook (October 1969, p 30), Mbatha mentioned that during his first contact with the ELC centre at Umpumulo, before the move to Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift, â\200\234many theological students attended this school and their arguments on theological questions deepened my artistic vision by giving me new ideas and a deeper insightâ\200\235. More recent works, made since his emigration to Sweden, have a less obviously narrative quality, and demonstrate links with modern European art.

It is noteworthy that the art qualification at Rorkeâ\200\231s Drift, like the teacherâ\200\231s diploma at independent Catholic training colleges such as Mariannhill, was not given official recognition.

Steven Sack cites the cases of â\200\234Lionel Davis at Community Arts Project (CAP) in Cape Town, Bongsi Dhlomo at the Alex Arts Centre, Sokhaya (Charles) Nkosi at the Funda Centre, Soweto, Cyril Manganye at the Mofolo Art Centre, Soweto, Dumisani Mabaso at the Johannesburg Art Foundation, and many othersâ\200\235 (Neglected tradition, p 20). One could add Tony Nkotsi at the Johannesburg Art Foundation, Vincent Baloyi at Funda in Soweto, Velile Soha and Thami Jali at the Nyanga Arts Centre in the Cape, and Ephraim Ziqubu and Bhakisani Manyoni at the Katlehong Art

Centre, as well as others who taught in government schools and training colleges, such as Dan Rakgoathe and Paul Sibisi.

Africa Insight, vol 22, no 1, 1992