

INSIDE STORY

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OUR READERS WRITE

Capital issue

COLIN Gardner's piece is a classic example of electioneering propaganda. He offers the voter nothing. The best he can do is attempt to create fear and alarm, and then argue that the electorate should support the ANC to prevent this eventuality arising. Another party used to use the same tactics in the eighties — who can forget the "swart gevaar" and "rooi gevaar" sloganeering of the P. W. Botha government? Gardner appears to have latched on to a new fear, namely, "Ulundi gevaar".

Amazingly, however, at the end of his lengthy piece the author appears to have a crisis of honesty and admits: "I don't say that it (the IFP) would necessarily do so (proclaim Ulundi the capital). I have no insight into the party's way of thinking."

Gardner is saying voters must choose the ANC, not because of what it offers but because it might prevent a situation arising — and he admits he has no way of knowing whether it will or won't arise. It is a sad day when this is all the ANC has to offer the voter.

Without getting into the substance of his argument, three further points need to be mentioned:

- What would the cost be to make Pietermaritzburg the capital? Just moving the legislature to Pietermaritzburg has cost the taxpayer well over R20 million. The legislature, in terms of staff and equipment needs, is among the smallest government institutions in the province. What would be the cost of moving the really large departments currently housed in Ulundi?

- Gardner tends to use the terms capital and seat of the legislature interchangeably. The reality is that they are not the same thing. Two years ago, a vote took place in the legislature that made Pietermaritzburg the seat of the legislature. No decision was ever made to make Pietermaritzburg the sole capital of KwaZulu-Natal. The voter must not be fooled: the capital issue remains as it was before the vote was taken.

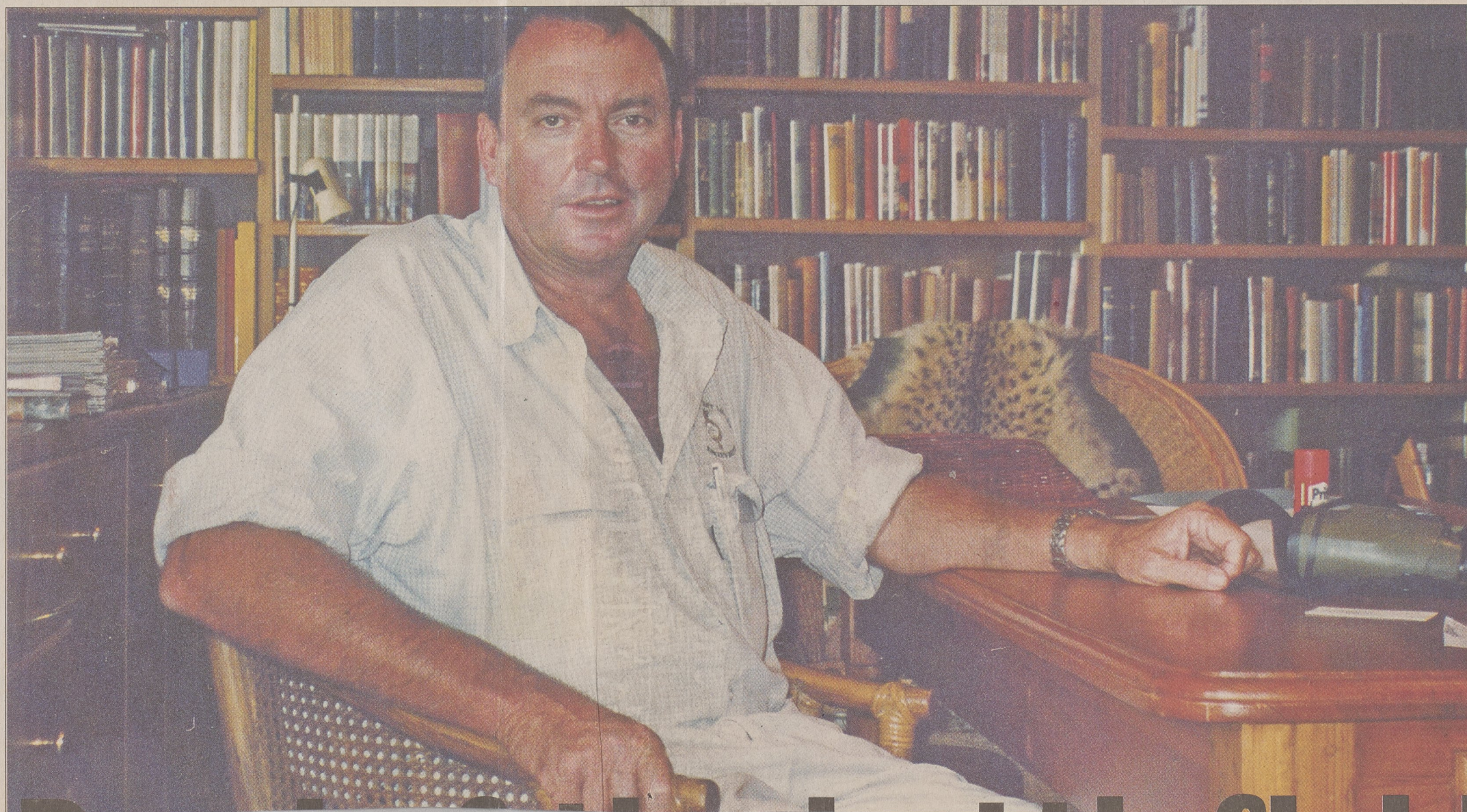


Photo: STEPHEN COAN

David Rattray — 'No person is allowed to walk away from here thinking it's all 'rah rah'.'

ARTS & TV

Zondi gets the recognition he deserves

MARGARET VON KLEMPERER

BACK in 1959 at the Swedish Mission Hospital in Appelsbosch, a momentous meeting took place. The mission grounds manager, Michael Zondi, met the medical superintendent, Wolfgang Bodenstein, for the first time.

They should have been worlds apart. Apartheid ruled: one man was black and one was white; Bodenstein was a doctor and Zondi's only qualification was as a carpenter from the Dundee Trade School, but he was an artist and the doctor was destined to become his patron. It was not a one-way relationship, as Zondi and the Bodensteins shared interests in more than art and, over the years, a deep and genuine friendship grew up.

Despite apartheid, Zondi became known as an important sculptor during the sixties, seventies and eighties. In 1965, he was only the second black artist to have a solo exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery and many of his pieces were bought by galleries and collectors, both in South Africa and abroad. But in the years since 1994, Zondi's status as a major

South African sculptor of the second half of the 20th century has somehow failed to gain the recognition it deserves.

That is now being put right. Kirsten Nieser, as part of the requirements for her Master's degree from the Centre for Visual Art on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is writing her thesis on Zondi, and has put together an exhibition of his wooden sculptures which will open in the Tatham Art Gallery on Thursday.

For Nieser, the project means more than meeting degree requirements. Her father, Heinrich Schlaudraff, came to South Africa from Germany in 1962 and met Zondi at his 1965 exhibition. Schlaudraff was a professional photographer and photographed many of Zondi's works over the years, some on their own and some while the artist was working on them. Nieser grew up knowing Zondi and his work, and now owns a priceless collection of her father's beautiful black-and-white photographs of the pieces, some of which will be shown at the exhibition.

She also has two Zondi sculptures — a head of a young man,

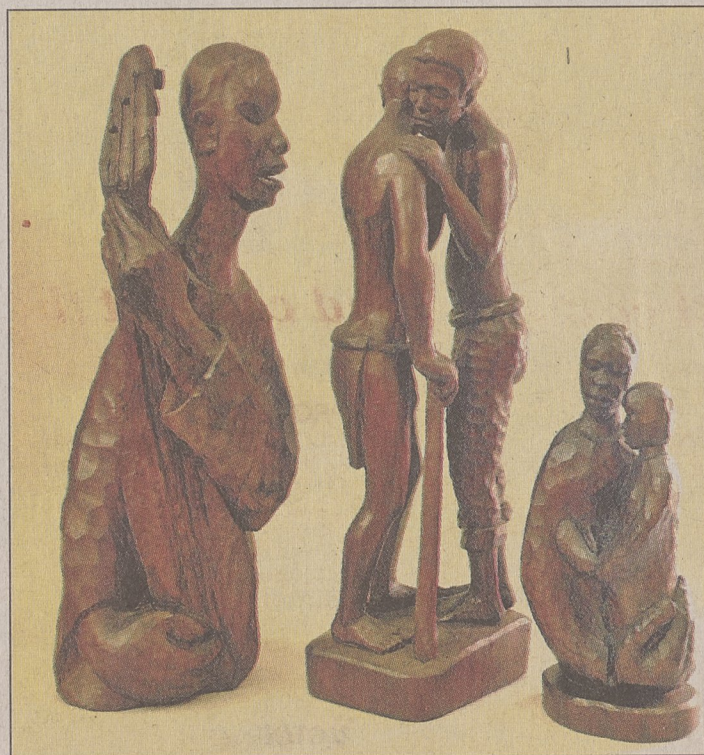


Photo: NASH NARRANDES

Above: Three of the Michael Zondi sculptures that will be displayed at the exhibition opening at the Tatham Art Gallery on Thursday . . . (from left) *Orpheus* (1972); *Reunion/Reconciliation* (1964) and *The Daughter Speaks and the Father Listens* (1983). **Right:** Sculptor Michael Zondi at work on a piece in the sixties.

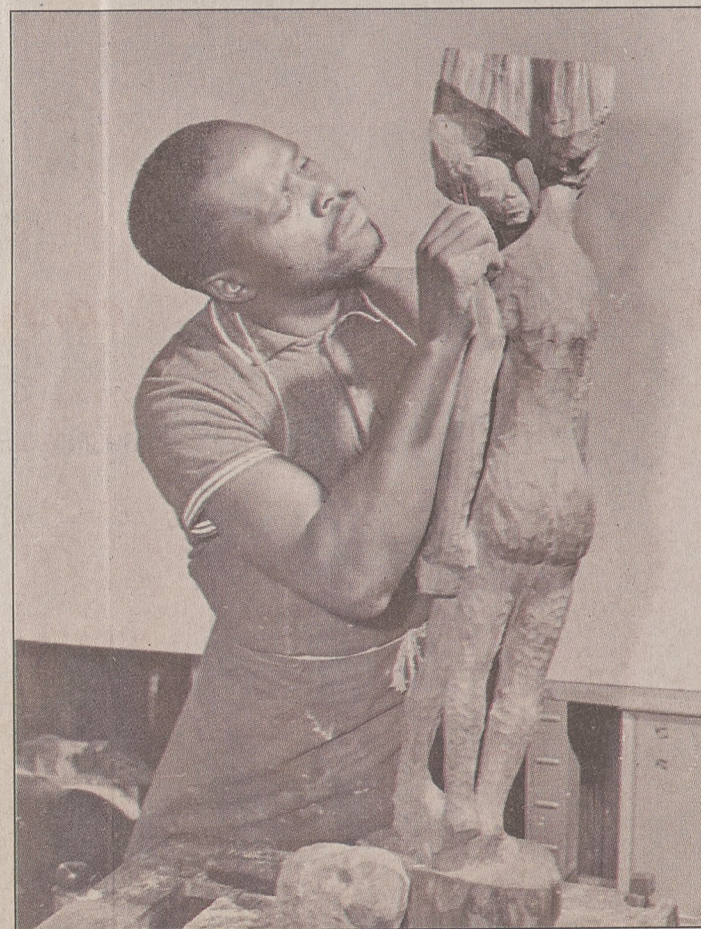


Photo: HEINRICH SCHLAUDRAFF

bought from a gallery, and a beautiful image of a flute player. She acquired the latter when she visited a long-time Zondi collector, now elderly and beginning to give his collection away. Nieser mentioned that once she has completed her degree, she wants to settle down and turn her current research into a full-scale biography of the artist. As she left, the owner's daughter handed the flute player over to her, saying: "In return for a copy of the book, when you write it."

Over the years, many of Zondi's works were collected by members of the medical profession, introduced to the artist by Wolfgang and Anges Bodenstein. Zondi often exhibited at medical conferences and symposiums, and some of his works left the country from those events. One South African-based collector was Pietermaritzburg doctor Kurt Strauss, whose Zondis have now been divided among his three children. Nieser will be showing seven of them in the Tatham exhibition, together with eight from Kay Nixon of Pietermaritzburg, 11 from the Bodenstein collection and some others.

When the Bodensteins left Appelsbosch for Durban, Zondi went with them, setting up a studio in their garage and working for the Department of Information. Then, in 1972, Bodenstein was sent to work at the Health Ministry in Pretoria and, again, Zondi made the move too. And at that point, he made the leap from being a part-time to a full-time artist.

Zondi is still living, although he has not sculpted since a stroke in 1992. According to Nieser, who has been in close contact with him over the exhibition, his short-term memory is failing, but as soon as she mentions her father, Zondi can immediately tell her stories that Schlaudraff told him about the war years. She is hoping that he will be well enough to attend the opening of the exhibition, which is to be opened by art historian Dr Elza Miles, an important figure in seeing that South Africa's black artists of the apartheid era are given the recognition they deserve. For many, this recognition has come too late. For Zondi, it will be in time.

• The exhibition will be held in the Ceramics Room at the Tatham Art Gallery.