

In 1938 Ernest Mancoba made a quite exit

_from South Africa aboard a London-bound .
ship. He was en route to Paris to further .

his art studies. Political frustration partly
drove him to leave. The extent of the loss
our country suffered as a result of his

"departure only becomes markedly evident

in his distinguished career skillfully delin-

â\200\230eated in Elza Milesâ\200\231 â\200\234Lifeline out of Africaâ\200\235.

Before he left, Mancoba had already made
his mark in the South African art world. In 1929
he caused a stir with his revolutionary sculpture
of Madonna. Unlike Da Vinci's Madonna, his
was of an African woman. It took him 10 days
to complete. He was then an English teacher
at Grace Dieu, an Anglican Missionary School

- | outside Pietersburg. The sculpture hung on

the wall of the schoolâ\200\231s chapel. It is presently
part of the permanent collection at the Johan-

nesburg Art Gallery. He followed this with a -

carving he titled â\200\234St Augustine of Canterburyâ\200\235.
Its imposing presence adorns the altar of St

' Augustine's Church in Belvedere in Kent,

Britain.

â\200\234Lifeline out of Africaâ\200\235 chronicles the life of
Mancoba, his Christian background, stimulat-
ing friendships, intellectual development and
his exploits in exile.

Born in 1904 of highly religious family, his
Christian background was evident in his early
art work. However, his perspective of life grad-
ually changed with time. The change, Miles,
partly ascribes to his student days at the South
African Native College which later became
known as the Fort Hare College. It was there
that he was introduced to Marxism and-athe-
ism. He became one of the foremost advo-
cates of this revolutionary ideology. The book
explains his rationale for reconciling the two
divergent ideologies. During this period he
struck friendship with Marxist activists Govan

Mbeki and Eddie Roux.

Another landmark in Mancoba's intellectual development was at Khaiso Secondary School

near Pietersburg. He met and became a friend to Nimrod Ndebele, Louis Makena and Gerald Sekoto. Together they became the influential and intellectual foursome. They contributed immensely to the school's remarkable cultural accomplishment. The stimulating days at Khaiso turned out to be Mancoba's last in South Africa for he left at the end of 1938.

This book captures the highlights of Mancoba's life in exile. His unforgettable visit to the British Museum in London where for the first time, he was exposed to the West African art, marked a change of style and technique in his art. In Paris Mancoba met a Danish sculptor Sonja Ferlov and they married three years later in 1942.

The book also reveals flashes of meetings in which Mancoba brushed shoulders with world-renowned artists like Pablo Picasso and Alberto Giametti.

Mancoba's experiences in Paris during the Nazi-occupation of France in the Second World War, the birth of their only son Wonga and their departure for Denmark in 1947, where they joined a radical art movement called Cobra, all make fascinating reading.

In addition to expert analysis of Mancoba's art, the book is enriched by numerous illustrations of the artist's paintings, drawings and personal photographs.

Lifeline out of Africa is a well researched and readable book. It is written in a simple and engaging style. Elza Miles, the author is a personal friend of Mancoba and is herself an artist

HE ART OF ERNEST MIANC COBA

FUTURE AFRICA... Ernest Mancoba's carving, was awarded the first prize at the May Esther Bedford Bantu Art Exhibition at Fort Hare College in 1935

and scholar of repute. Her many years of painstaking research, which took her to Lon-

don, Paris and Copenhagen where she met
scores of interesting art personalities who bore
fruition in the compiling of this book.

Reviewed by MFUNDO NDEBELE

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1st Floor, Darragh House, 13 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg, 2001

PO Box 10874, Johannesburg , 2001 Telephone: (01 1) 383-2711 Fax: (011) 333-2733

TO CB Miles
FAX NC: #20 - 6000
FROM
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| At Grace Dieu, an Anglican Missionary School outside Petersburg. The sculpture hung on the wall of the school's chapel. It is presently part of the permanent collection at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. He followed this with a carving he titled "St Augustine of Canterbury" 200\235, Its imposing presence adorns the altar of St Augustine's Church in Belverdera in Kent, Britain.

200\234 Lifeline out of Africa chronicles the life of Mankoba, his Christian background, stimulating friendships, intellectual development and his exploits in exile.

Born in 1904 of a highly religious family, his Christian background was evident in his early art work. However, his perspective of life gradually changed with time. The change, Miles, partly ascribes to his student days at the South African Native College which later became known as the Fort Hare College. It was there that he was introduced to Marxism and atheism. He became one of the foremost advocates of this revolutionary ideology. The book explains his rationale for reconciling the two divergent ideologies. During this period he struck friendship with Marxist activists Govan Mbeki and Edie Foux.

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Lifeline out of Africa

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AUTHOR: Elza Miles

PUBLISHER: Human &

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PRICE; R110,00

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