

GERARD SEKOTO

GERARD SEKOTO is not only regarded as the father of contemporary Black art in South Africa, but also as one of the greatest Black painters that this country has ever produced.

Gerard Sekoto was born on 9 December 1913 at the Lutheran mission station, Botshabelo, near Middelburg in the Transvaal. From early on in his life, he showed a great interest in art. His outstanding ability to create soon became obvious. When he and his friends played with clay, his objects were always very different from those of his friends.

After finishing school, Gerard did a teacher's training course at the Diocesan College near Pietersburg. In 1934, he started to work as a teacher at the Khaiso Secondary School in Pietersburg. During this time, he won the second prize in a competition for Black artists.

In 1938, he decided to give up teaching and went to Sophiatown near Johannesburg, where he lived for four years. During this time he exhibited at several art galleries in Johannesburg, also taking part in the South African Art Academy's exhibitions.

In 1942, Gerard moved to District Six in Cape Town, where he also exhibited on several occasions. In 1945 he returned to the

Transvaal, but this time to Eastwood in Pretoria where he lived for two years. During this time he held two major exhibitions, which raised enough money for him to go abroad.

In 1947 Gerard arrived in Paris, where he attended drawing classes during the day and played the piano in bars at night. In 1948 he had his first exhibition in Paris. He has since held many successful international exhibitions and is today a well-known figure in art circles around the world.

Gerard Sekoto's earliest paintings were done on brown paper, with poster paint or water colours. During his stay in Sophiatown, he was introduced to oils, after which he did most of his work in this medium. Although he has been living in France for the last forty years, the Black people of South Africa have always stayed his main inspiration.

VOCABULARY

contemporary – (as used here) belonging to our own time

outstanding – excellent

exhibit – display, show (here used for paintings)

bars – shops or rooms where alcoholic drinks (such as beer and wine) are sold and served

oils – (here) short for – "oil paints"

medium – (as used here) the substance which an artist uses to express himself

inspiration – (here) that which makes one want to paint

The father of contemporary Black Art in South Africa



The Proud Father - Manakedi (also known as Anna or Naky) on Bernard's knee
c. 1947
Oil on canvas board
60,1 x 45,8
Signed bottom right
Collection: Mr and Mrs H.R. Slack

