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INSTITUUT VIR EIETYDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat

Bron  
nr

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Datum

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Onderwerp  
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Knipsel  
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Linda believes in quality  
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artwork - not

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Â¢ Criwns

The Goodman Gallery first Span its doors  
to the public on November 25, 1966. Since  
then Linda Givon, the gallery's director, has  
consistently demonstrated her commitment  
to South African art, by not only attaining a  
90:10 ratio of South African to interna-

tional art, but also through her primary involvement in such exhibitions as the DPSC exhibition at the Market Theatre Gallery, the Human Rights show in Durban and the Peace Ribbon. She has actively promoted South African art abroad, in cultural centres like New York as well as being an annual participant at the Basel Art Fair. KENDELL GEERS asked her why she feels so committed to South African art.

TET LET Oe <nae  
K: Your gallery has | horrendous.

Linda: I am part of this country and therefore am passionately interested in what's going on around me. When I arrived here in 1965 there was literally nothing going on in the visual arts scene. It was dreary, dead and nobody seemed really interested in changing it. I like challenges and that seemed like a particularly interesting challenge.

Kendell: Do you think that contemporary South African art is as good as its international counterparts?

L: Yes. I think South African art can now hold its own and is making it its own statements. I'm much more interested in the statement that we are making than in the rather dreary statements that

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in- |

often been accused of being undemocratic because of its overtly commercial concerns.

as objective as possible but in the end yes, it's always my choice. But then I'm not forcing anyone to exhibit here. In fact I'm begging peo-

ple not to because we're so over subscribed.

| K: Why is that?

;L: Purely because  
thereâ\200\231s a shortage of  
' galleries who want to  
|exhibit South African  
art. If a gallery is not  
| Oversubscribed it is  
| simply because there is  
'a lack of the kind of art  
| they promote. Artists  
| today are not that pas-

I see in Europe and .

America.

L: I donâ\200\231t see how you  
could be democratic if  
youre a commercial  
gallery. One tries to be

life anymore. Itâ\200\231s be-  
coming fairly passe,  
thank heavens.

must be the most self-

preserving of all art-  
| forms,

somehow re-  
maining unaffected by  
social or cultural de-

\_ velopments.

L: And interestingly it  
doesnâ\200\231t really matter  
how bad it is. Give it Â¢  
pair of horns and il  
sells, and if you can  
stuff it and stick it on a  
wall, it sells even faster  
and thatâ\200\231s absolutely

K: Do you think all

wildlife art is bad?

L: That would be a stu-  
pid thing to say. But it  
is easier to fall into  
traps when you're  
painting zebra than  
when you're painting  
riots or cripples.

K: Riot paintings can

â\200\230become just as cliched

and formularised.

L: Actually yes, there

are too many riot paint-

ings that look like herds |,

of buffalo.

K: What governs your

decision about which of |

the many artists that

hibit?

L: I choose \_ artists  
whom I feel are making  
an interesting state-  
ment and are sincerely  
trying to contribute  
Something towards the

â\200\230sionate about painting i SOETY a SBEY

ust content \_

flower pieces or wild-â\200\224

live. Iâ\200\231m very sticky

â\200\230about quality and thatâ\200\231s

where I think I will

â\200\230have blems in a new

K: Although Wildlife Art !covtnPat

South Africa. I honestly  
believe that quality is  
important. Itâ\200\231s not  
enough to just have con-  
tent. Art is not about a  
slick fabrication of an  
idea that passed

â\200\230through oneâ\200\231s head in

the middle of the night.

We all have those but

we're not all good ar-

tists. I think thatâ\200\231s why

people like Hockney

won't last. A lot of his-

ideas are about 4 in the  
morning and they donâ\200\231t  
survive beyond 6 am.

K: Quality can be a  
very difficult thing to  
determine though. |

iL: If you look at enough  
â\200\230art and read enough  
books and listen to

enough music, you can

develop an eye or an  
ear for what is good and

| what is bad. And by bad

I donâ\200\231t mean â\200\234slapgatâ\200\235  
or dashed off, I mean  
insincere. South African  
art is riding on a crest  
at the moment and that  
means there is a lot of  
insincerity about.

K: The current art.

approach you get to ex- | boom may be accredit-

ed to the renewed inter-

est in art on the part of .

both the corporations

â\200\230and institutions.

L: Yes but I wish that

the institutions didnâ\200\231t  
get as much of a say as ;  
they do because often in |  
the end they are work- |  
ing for us the public |

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without actually doing  
anything. When you  
look at an exhibition  
which they so conde-  
scendingly put in their  
galleries like â\200\234Art  
Nowâ\200\235, they wash it out  
and turn it into a hodge  
podge, bottom of the  
gutter dregs of what  
those exhibitions origi-  
nally were. Iâ\200\231m\_ not  
blaming the Vita  
Awards, Iâ\200\231m\_ blaming  
the institutions.  
K: What do you feel  
about the current prolif-  
eration of art competi-  
tions?

L: It is the worst exploitation of the art world that I have ever seen. I mean look at the Triennial Award. What do they spend on it? Peanuts. And look at the millions of rands worth

that thumbnail of money: The services of all the top museums, critics and academics around the country all for free. If the triennial fulfills all the things that are now being demanded of it then it

of publicity they get for |

may be different, but it would certainly be the first.

K: At the moment the work of black artists seem particularly in vogue, at times even irrespective of its quality. What do you ascribe this to?

L: White guilt. It's what a lot of expatriate South Africans suffer from: they have never been to Soweto or Alex and feel that if they buy a black person's work, they can make it all go away.

K: What hopes do you

have for the future of South African art?

A: When I was young my passion was the Soviet Union and I studied Soviet dissident art. It was probably the most boring art I have seen in my life because it was so ideological. With bated breath I wait and fear that the same may happen here. If ideology takes over and starts making demands on art, creativity and imagination will be stifled.

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