

proud of our indigenous culture. He believes that in our tribal form of life lie subjects for great art. But he also believes that an artist must be well-versed in the political, social and economical problems of the contemporary African scene so that he can express the feelings, aspirations and will of the people. Like other frustrated African men of talent, Mr. Pemba bewails the time and energy which perforce he has spent and still spends on drudgery (miscalled work) which dissipates his power as an artist.⁴⁴

There were a number of other artists who briefly made an appearance. That occupation which now self-employs hundreds — township art — was beginning to take shape. There was Ezekiel Ntuli whom Dhlomo called 'sculptor of genius'.⁴⁵ There was Job Kekana who did religious plaques,⁴⁶ Arthur Butelezi who tried to subsidise his paintings with signwriting jobs,⁴⁷ Mizraim Maseko, a pavement artist,⁴⁸ and the self-taught Simoni Mnguni, who turned out many hundreds of paintings. (In 1948 Mnguni was seventy-three years old.)⁴⁹ Generally acknowledged as the best and most original, however, was Gerard Sekoto.

Sekoto was described in 1949 in an editorial of Jordan Ngubane's newspaper, *Inkundla ya Bantu*, as 'most responsive to the progressive influences in Western art'.

This has not driven him to the false position where, to make a living, he has had to pander to the vulgar tastes of some of those who patronize art in this country. He has consistently refused to see the African as a picturesque creature. To him, the acquisition of more skill has meant that he must paint with deeper feeling for and active sympathy with that African whose soul is daily being crushed and bruised in his own Africa.⁵⁰

Sekoto's scenes of African life were 'living essays on a people who are slowly and painfully discovering themselves, and who are, amidst the most adverse of conditions, setting their feet firmly to a full national life'. Sekoto, born about 1913, grew up in the Eastern Transvaal. His father was a teacher at Middelburg and Sekoto himself trained to become a teacher at Botshabelo College, where his design for a school blazer badge won him a prize of five shillings and a Bible. After teaching in Pietersburg he moved to Johannesburg and visited Cape Town.⁵¹ With a penchant for strong, bold colours (a phrase used by the *Cape Times*), he made 'no effort to romanticize his themes',⁵² and thus represents the beginnings of a shift from his predecessors in various arts (his first picture to gain any considerable reputation was called 'In the Barber's Shop' and was done on brown paper with thickly