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A SERIES OF 25 LINOCUTS

In an edition of 175
by

Ag ME Se MP AY He liad

Introduction

Since we are on the brink of losing all
that was best in African Art and African |
Tradition, who will take the initiative
to retrieve that which has been lost to
the West ?

Traditions have to be passed on to future
generations,

1.2.1989 JAMES SEROLE MPHAHLELE

DIALOGA Part 1 1987

"Carrying the sheep skins" Image: 393x994 cm

The men are carrying sticks with red sheep skins, which have been inspected, from the Chief's Kraal or Capital to the initiation lodge. They are arranged in order of seniority according to the different kraals and their totems, i.e. the kraal that has a lion as their totem will not be mixed with the elephant, buffalo, buck etc,

"Running from the lodge" Image: 35 x 98 cm

The young men are running from the burnt down and demolished lodge (left of picture) to the village and nobody is allowed to look back at the burning lodge (Mphatho/Moroto) They make a circle with their heads bent down. Their Elders are running next to them so as to shelter them from the women and uninitiated people. The man next to the entrance of the kraal (right of picture) is their medicine man. The Rod of Honour is planted firmly in the middle of the young men's circle,

Background

The "DIALOGA" series of 25 linocuts by JAMES SEROLE MPHAHLELE is about the Closing Ceremony of the Initiation. The name given to this ceremony is "goAlo\$a/goAloga",

The Chief and Indunas of the Pedi tribes in the Northern Transvaal (Lebowa) are the controlling heads of circumcision lodges. They are qualified to conduct traditional initiation schools, but require a permission from the local Magistrate or Government office.

The Chief and the men of the Kraal (Bakgomana ba MoSate) gather in secret and elect the following;

a) Master of the Lodge (Rabadia) and Deputy Master

They are men who know the details of initiation and who

are related to the Chief's Kraal or Capital. They will spend days and nights with the initiation until the Closing Ceremony;

b) The Surgeon or Village Doctor;

Âç) Their Elders who have taken part in and witnessed other initiations. They act as instructors and shepherds.

Closing Ceremony

The Head of each kraal carries a stick with red dyed sheep skins ("Hlaba") from the Chief's Kraal to the initiation lodge.

The body of each initiate is smeared with red-ochre, called "Letsoku't. The young men are now Called "DIALOGA"., They put on the "Hlaba" and their elders give them each a stick called "Lekgai".

AS soon as the initiation lodge starts burning, set on fire by the medicine man, the young men start running to the village, not being allowed to look back (Mphatho/Moroto) .

Upon arriving at the village, the Chief's son leads the Procession, holding the Rod of Honour (Sefoka), all singing songs of victory.

All fathers and the Elders carry wood to make a fire in the Chief's Kraal.

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"Leading the Procession" Image: 37 x 77 cm

The young men are surrounded by their Elders (Baditi) to shelter them from the women and the uninitiated. The Chief's son holds the Rod of Honour (Sefoka) on his side and leads the Procession to the Chief's Kraal, singing songs of victory. The men and Elders are carrying wood for a fire, whilst the women are carrying reed mats, blankets and so forth. They are very happy, waving their hands.) Saying "eu sacew wae yeu. tite

DIALOGA Part 1987

"Fire Circles" Image: 42 x913 cm

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Nes Oy ur ares

The Chief's Kraal is surrounded by various courtyards, like a New Moon. The men carrying wood and younger men with their sticks are seen arriving at the Chief's

' Kraal. Inside the Kraal are circles for the fire (Dibe&So).

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DIALOGA Part a 1987

"Elders enter the Kraal" Image: 41+x 92 cm

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The young men are now inside the Kraal. People are arriving from all angles of the village. At this moment, only their Elders are allowed to enter the Kraal, whilst the women remain outside the Kraal, dancing happily.

DIALOGA Part 6 1987

"Carrying wooden bowls" Image: 38 x 99 cm

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aw â\200\230 a ; " wa Lao

The young men are inside the Kraal
(Kgoro ka Kgoro). Women are standi
(Megopo), smeared with white lime,
are on the other Side, fetching the

Â» Placed in order of seniorit
ng outside (left of picture),
and small clay pots (Thiswana
food from their sisters to b

Y, section to section
Carrying wooden bowls
) for food. The Elders
ring it into the Kraal.

DIALOGA Part 7 1987

"Day of trimming" Image: 34 x 784 cm

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The people are drinkin

g African beer (Bjala bja setSo) in the Chief's Knaial wld
mothers are busy attending to their sons. it

is the day of decorating and trimming
their hair (African cut) (LetS&at&i la dipoolo). All mothers have new razor blades,
fats (T&holo), water and MoSidi o moso (charcoal

DIALOGA Part 8 1987

Image: 413x984 cm

"Rushing to the mountain"

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The young men are rushing to the mountain to hide their hair which was cut off when decorated with the African cut (Tlopo). Wherever they go, the Rod of Honour is their lead.

DIALOGA Part 9 1987

"The Elders are with them" Image: 31 x974 cm

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Wooden bowls and clay pots are in front of the young men in the Kraal. The reed mats and blankets are folded at the back. The Elders are with them when they eat, but the young men do not eat all the meat, leaving the bones for the Elders.

This is the day of not eat
living off herbs and roots.

ing. The young men spend a day in the bush or mountain,
This day is called "go ilela legwetSane".

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"Go ilela legwetSane

Image:

40+x 98 cm

DIALOGA Part 10

1987

"Blanketed on their mats"

Image: 31 x105 cm

Back at the Chief's Kraal, the young men are seated blanketed on their mats to protect themselves from the cold. Men and women surround the Kraal and are seen drinking. The Closing Ceremony is a respectful event amongst the Bapedi, .

DIALOGA Part 12 1987

"In the Kraal" Image: 32 x 61 cm

This picture shows how the young men move about the Kraal, grouped according to their seniority and totem. They are holding their sticks (Makgai) on their side and follow their leader,

DIALOGA Part 13 1987

"Bringing African beer" Image: 31 x 86 cm

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The Closing Ceremony is also a period of entertainn
kraals, i.e. lions, buffalo GUC.i,
to entertain the visitors.

ent. The Chief commands all the
to bring African beer to the Capital (Chief's Kraal)

DIALOGA Part 14 1987

â\200\234Return from the Paramount Chief" Image: 55 x 39 cm

The Elders are always sheltering the young men who are seen returning from the Paramount Chief, having made their greetings. The Paramount Chief commanded his followers to slaughter two or three cows, the young men danced for him, and African beer was plentiful.

DIALOGA Part 15 1987

"Dancing for the Chief" Image: 39 x 75 cm

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The young men are dancing for the Paramount Chief, in the Capital. This dance is called "Kgantla", Their leader is seen holding the Rod of Honour. Two poets in the Kraal are seen holding shields, a knobkerrie and spear.

DIALOGA Part 16 1987

Image: 39 x 95 cm

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The Chief organises a traditional dance to entertain the people and visitors in the Capital. They put on colourful Pedi dresses. The traditional dance is called

"Kiba",

DIALOGA Part 17 1987

Image: 39 x 7h cm

"Leaving the Chief's Kraal"

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The young men remain at the Capital for a few days and disperse after being enter-

tained by the Chief. He will announce the name of the initiation lodges, e.g. Magasa or Matladi. The picture depicts everyone leaving the Chief's Kraal, the Poet blowing a horn outside. Women carry mats, blankets and dishes. The young men are accompanied

by their Elders.

DIALOGA Part 18 1987

"On their way home! Image: 39 x613 cm

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Here we see the people on their way home, the Elders close to the young men, while the women are maintaining a distance according to tradition. The three women in front are in a happy mood. The older one is holding a broom, calling out: "eu ... eu... eu soe tttt Å«ee Lilt 66. Lili... newakwana ka... ngwakwana ka ... khuthi ..o ikhutel . .. khutSi ... P&Shagaa ... P&hagaa", until arrival at home.

DIALOGA Part 19 1987

"Arrival in the Courtyard" Image: 353x 26 cm

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ast oie Voumanae

This scene depicts the arrival in the Courtyard. Two grandmothers are sitting on their mats, while young men and their Elders are on the other side of the courtyard.

DIALOGA Part 20 1987

"Preparing the mats"! Image: 41 x 30 cm

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Two women are preparing a mat to sit on.

These are made from reeds and Ilala palm,
Young men are approaching them.

â\200\230DIALOGA Part el : 1987

"Young men seated" Image: 404x284 cm

This scene depicts young men seated on the mat, facing down, with four utensils on their side. In front of them are two men and a poet. The young men are not talking.

"Matshelape" Image: 324x 78 cm

Young men are seated at their kraal at home. It is the time of greetings. They are not allowed to say anything unless they are paid something. The name of the greeting is "Matshelape",

"Bangles and necklaces" Image: 18 x323 cm

The most common articles used for "greeting" the young men are bangles and necklaces. The young men may not reveal their name of manhood to anyone. They may only recite their name after having received presents, e.g. Ke nna Maditsi sereto ke Mogale.

"Departing" Image: 344x714 cm

The following day, the young men and their Elders are returning to their own homes.
This picture shows a young man and his Elder departing, whilst the others are return -â
\200\224
ing to their home,

"ytensils" Image: 304x403 cm

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This scene depicts the various utensils and objects used, e.g. the reed mat - Legogwa ; the wooden bowl - Mogopo; the small clay pot - Thiswana; the stick - Lekgai; the Rod of Honour - Sefoka; the razor - Legare; the blanket - Lepai; the necklace - Pheta ya Molaleng; the bangle - Leseka; the sheep skin - Hlaba; the red-ochre - Letsoku.

Biographical Notes

JAMES SEROLE MPHAHLELE was born at GaMphahlele near Pietersburg (Northern Transvaal) on 19th July, 1954.

In 1970, he passed Std. 6 at Mamaolo H.P. School, obtained his Junior Certificate at Kgoadia Moleke in 1975, was trained as a Primary School Teacher at the Sekhukhune College of Education in 1976/77, taught at the Makurung H.P. School during 1978/79.

He studied art at the Ndalen College of Education, Natal, during 1980, was a teacher at the Mashite H.P. School (1981), was a Fine Art student at Rorke's Drift/Dundee, Natal, in 1982, when he exhibited his work at Ngoye, Zululand. He continued his art studies at the Johannesburg Art Foundation during 1983/84.

During 1986/87, he worked as an artist and part-time art teacher in the Northern Transvaal.

He held a two-man show with Ranko Pudi at the FUBA Gallery, Johannesburg, during 1986, and his first solo show at Gallery 21, Johannesburg, from 7.2. - 24.2.1989, presenting the "DIALOGA" series of 25 linocuts.

His work is included in the PEIMAMA Permanent Art Collection, Johannesburg, a.o.

Exhibition Brochure

This exhibition brochure has been compiled by F.F. Haenggi based on information obtained from the artist (Ref. 1/89).

Enquiries

Enquiries for complete sets (nos. 51-70) and for individual prints, subject to availability, should be directed to:

Gallery 21

P.Os Box 41037

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Exhibition of the
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and other works by

JAMES MPHAHLELE
tee x 24.22.1989

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