

Mohl, John Koenakeefe

These grew out of an ash pit
oil on board 66,3x91,8 cm
Johannesburg Art Gallery

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At an exhibition of his work, John Koenakeefe Mohl replied to a well- / meaning admirerâ\200\231s advice that he should not paint landscapes because Europeans had already refined the genre. â\200\234But I am an African and when God made Africa, He also created beautiful landscapes for Africans to admire.â\200\235 In an interview with Tim Couzens in 1975 he recalled how he had tried (in vain) to convince Gerard Sekoto not to leave the country of his birth. Mohl appealed to him: â\200\234South Africa or Africa needs artists badly, you see, to paint our people, our life, our way of living, not speaking in the spirit of apartheid or submission, but there are no artists here and there are no black artists...â\200\235

Mohl practised what he stood for. His landscapes which have a strong sense of the historical significance of place are windows on South African life and scenery. He portrayed the land with its inhabitants busying themselves in their daily tasks: going to work by bicycle or on foot, crushing corn, ploughing, fighting veldfires.

Some of Mohlâ\200\231s landscapes religiously reveal the marvel of life. He would discover the wealth of first fruits â\200\224 pump-

h kins, mealies and sunflowers â\200\224 which

grow on an ash pit or uncover the warmth of human presence in a distant homestead in a winter landscape.

â\200\230y Mohl was born at Dinokana near

< Zeetust on 29 September 1903. While

herding his fatherâ\200\231s goats, he used pepa â\200\224

chalk-like stone â\200\224 to draw goats and

~ __ sheep on stones or the smooth side of

_ hides. He would lose himself in these

-- portrayals, not noticing that some of the

Â¥ Johannesburg Art Gallery

goats had wandered off into people's gardens. For this he was punished. However his grandfather, Chief Marogoe, tried to

protect him and frequently paid the fines.

At school, in Mafikeng, he was reprimanded and severely punished for his overwhelming desire to draw and paint until Reverend Hale of the London Missionary Society paid a visit to the school. He suggested that Mohl be allowed one day a week to practise his talent.

Hale later arranged for Mohl to attend Tiger Kloof Training College, Vryburg. After two years at the college, Mohl was sent to an art school in Namibia, from where with the aid of the London Missionary Society and the Lutheran Church he went to Diisseldorf in Germany. -

Back in South Africa, Mohl took part in the Empire Exhibition of 1936 and had paintings selected for the annual South African Academy in 1942, 1943 and 1946. In 1943 he received the Academy Award for Midwinter.

From 1946-59 Mohl was commissioned by the government and tribal administration of Bechuanaland to record scenes of historical importance to the Bechuanas.

Mohl established an art school, the White Studio, behind his home in Annadale Street, Sophiatown, from 1944 until Sophiatown was demolished. He was a founder member of the Ungesun, | Mohl, , and the elgian ROME and Halter (1923-) and the eanianet asters Art Gallery in Johannesburg.

Mohl died on 28 January 1985 at the

age of 82 after a long illness.

September

Sunday

3

Stephen Khoza

- 1968

26

Thomas Nkuna
1959, d. 17S
1992, Soweto

Monday

6

Gerard Bhengu
~1910, d. 1938/90
â\200\234Clifford Mâ\200\231 pai 1940
Bhekisani Manyoni
1945

13

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27

Tuesday

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Thomas Lehupela
1962

14

Billy Molokeng
1949

21

28

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Wednesday

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Louis Maurice 1917
d. 1990, London

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Sige-70e
Al

22

29

John Mohl 1903,
d. 28 Jan. 1985,
Soweto

Thursday

2

David Mogano

1932

Dikobe wa Mogale
(Ben Martins) 1956

ean. Leta

(Gen

fer
16

23

Paul Sibisi 1948
Cameron Voyiya
1961

30

Friday
Eph FAN,

10

Buyiswe Mhkabela
1955

17

24

Pat Mautloa 1952
Sarah Tabane 1966

Ze 2b

Saturday

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Godfrey Ndaba
1947

18

Ephraim Maponya

1944
Hendrick Nekhofhe

Bove ee bone, ae och.

Vil â\200\224 Nkorro

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