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â\200\230 Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat
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The Cape Times

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For gallery owners and art.
dealers, paintings and
sculpture are a way te:
wealth. Mario Sickle runs,
the only black art gallery in

the Cape â\200\224 one of only two |.

black galleries in the whole |
country â\200\224 but is not out to
make his fortune. The gal-
lery is there first and fore-
most as an oasis in,an art-
parched black community.

. years

MARIO SICKLEâ\200\231s Oasis gallery is a
modest little place tucked away under
the Klipfontein Road bridge into Ath-

lone.

Just around the corner there is the bustle of business activity, street vendors, schoolchildren, but the bell alerting Sickie to callers seldom tinkles.

The visitors w... do find their way to the gallery are usually tourists, mostly Germans and Americans, not the locals Sickie longs to see browsing.

Sickie himself is handsome and well-built. His powerful upper arms relate not only to his wooden sculptures which stand out against the artwork hanging on the walls, but to a background as a life-saver whose rescues on the Strandfontein coast have made the news pages more than once. :

Sickie is angry at the lack of art opportunity for blacks and the lack of support for black art from business, black business in particular. â\200\230

â\200\234They need a kick up their backside to make them take notice! They sponsor sport. Never art. They donâ\200\231t even buy art for their homes.â\200\235 |

Ballet was introduced as a-subject in! black schools some years ago, says Sickie. Art remains a Cinderella subject.

â\200\234Mitchells Plain has a population | nearing 250000 and not a single art institution.â\200\235 â\200\234

Thirty-six and the father of four, Sig?4

' le refers to himself as a â\200\234late develop~eyâ\200\231

G

in art. Largely because of his own, tailed education â\200\224 he left school?

An Oasis for

Standard Six â\200\224 but also because of his colour, as recently as 72 when he determined to give up a desk job for art, the doors of art schools in Cape Town were closed to him.

â\200\234T didnâ\200\231t have matric, but things like huge white models being sketched by a lack man seemed to present, problems

Sickie gives recognition for his. ultimate emergence as an artist to two

women. Barbara Pitt of the Foundation School of Art in Observatory who recognized his. talent and was prepared to sponsor him, and his wife who was total-

ly supportive in the difficult years when he was a student. He qualified only two ago having finished a four-year graphic art course in three years. Most of his earnings come from illustrating and designing book covers. His first love, however, is sculpture. The

â\200\230Sickle opened the Oasis Gallery 14 months ago. In the 70â\200\231s his friend, poet

| James Mathews, had tried the same

thing. The fact that Mathews failed did not discourage him.

â\200\234A gallery is a necessity in the community. My purpose in establishing the Oasis is to give artists a chance to expose their work. Sales are secondary.â\200\235 Commission charges, only 15% (in larger galleries it can run to 40%) are ploughed back.

The gallery is also needed to encourage art in young children. â\200\234It is vital that art is introduced at grass roots

_ level. Art encourages perception, debate, thought, ideas ...
| being given nothing for their minds.â\200\235

children are

In his own childhood, says Sickle, he was drawn to history and reference books. â\200\234I read as much as I could, but no education could have given me what I have learned through art.â\200\235

Oasis is a meeting place for writers and artists within the community.

Everyone knows everyone. It startsâ\200\231

coming to life towards the end of the working day when people walk in, socialize and exchange ideas.

University of the Western Cape owns.
' three of his works.

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