

SWART KUNG

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INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat



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★ ART

Five lively artists at the NSA gallery

Exhibition: Work by Mpolokeng Ramphomane, Thami Jali, Sifiso Mkame, Gordon Gabashane, and Paul Sibisi (NSA Gallery)

Reviewed by CAROL BROWN

AT the moment South African artists are busy carving out a national identity which should be neither black nor white nor partisan in any way.

The artists at the NSA show that they at least are looking in the right direction. The work does not overtly state that the artists are black yet they all draw upon traditions which are rooted in the consciousness of most of us Africans but are often suppressed.

Sifiso Mkame, for instance, allows a strong decorative emphasis to show in this work. He realises that he can use bright, sunny colours and that in our country these are right, yet what he says is not always happy or pleasing.

If we are beguiled by the attractiveness of the works, that is good. For they make us look closer at them and we realise that the stories they have to tell are not always bright and happy yet they are played out in our colourful environment. He depicts events particular to our country, or at least those which happen far too often here such as *Death of a Child*, as well as making more universal statements such as the pains of love in *It Hurts*.

The artist rose to the fore with his "postcard" series, where he collaged several incidents together giving an overview of a particular time and place. He is now developing these into enlarging particular themes and the works have rhythm and strength. There are interesting similarities to Klimt's work in *Being Without*, where the anxious prose and lines like nerves reflect the Austrian's work which detailed the excesses of another age.

Mpolokeng Ramphomane and Gordon Gabashane also use bright, decorative colours and rhythmic compositions to express more serious themes and Ramphomane's works are stylised and simplified giving them a directness and strength.

Paul Sibisi shows lino cuts which detail many of the crises occurring in education. These are important documentations of events and are depicted in clear, strong black and white. This simplicity aids

in getting his message across and the starkness befits the theme.

Thami Jali shows pottery which is influenced by Rorke's Drift, particularly in its decoration. However he has endowed his work with his own stamp in that his forms are well articulated with simple shapes and a good relationship of colour and form, using subdued, earthy tones which emphasise the essential functionality of the forms. One feels that Michael Cardew would have approved of his unpretentious, earthy yet delicate work.

An interesting and lively exhibition by five talented artists.

TREFWOORDE

- 1 Mkame
- 2 Jali
- 3 Gabashane
- 4 Sibisi
- 5 Ramphomane
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