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INSTITUUT VIR EIETYDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat

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THEARTS

Black art: glowing ever-stronger

IN THE USSALEP-FUBA Workshop exhibition painters such as Fikile, Kay Hassan, Garth Erasmus and David Koloane showed non-figurative works of a new vigour and expansiveness.

Over the two-week period of the workshop Peter Bradley had introduced the painters to new materials and strategies — acrylics and gel, and working on large, unstretched canvases on horizontal painting platforms on the floor; and the sculptors to steel and welding equipment. There was ample working space and the artists were able to work together and share common problems. The workshop was primarily an exercise in finding new possibilities. The extent of its impact will have to be assessed once its

implications have been worked through. The exhibition was, in a sense, an interim report.

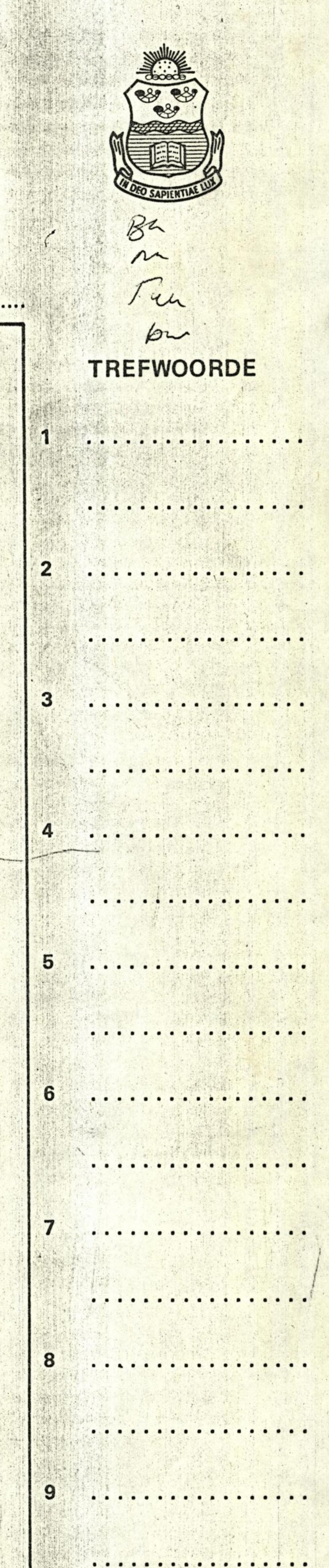
However, David Koloane's paintings currently showing at Fuba (in a two-man show with Ben Nsusha) are those of a mature artist who has found his 'voice'. The works were done over two years, during which time Koloane was studying and painting in the US and Britain. Most of the works are relatively small, usually

dark and with little tonal contrast. Most are nonfigurative, though several depict runners, heads, night scenes. They are clearly related to contemporary American or International modernism (during this time Koloane was accepted for participation in the Triangle Workshop.) The key to these initially unassuming paintings lies perhaps in the artist's touch. Varied and alert, it registers a range of experience and sensation. Lines journey around the page, circle obsessively, slice across, gouge into the paper; surfaces are built up with collage, with tracks and blobs of gel; spots of pure colour sputter or dance in dark webs of paint. What happens on the page, rather than what is represented, gives them their life.

How do local artists best tap their
Africanness — and draw on
international influences? New York
sculptor Peter Bradley examined the
problem at a two-week workshop for
black artists near Johannesburg.
LIONEL MURCOTT reports

The all-over compositions of Koloane's work—the eye is not drawn to a particular point, but is rather allowed to move through a field of colour—relate to the work of contemporary painters such as Larry Poons, whom Koloane met in New York. Its beginnings lie earlier, though: In painting light, Turner and the Impressionists found that chiaroscuro—tonal contrasts—a key to the achievement of the illusion of volumes since Leonardo, had to be dropped. And further, that the all-pervading unity of light provided a unifying principle for a painting (Koloane found Turner's to be the most significant paintings of all that he saw in his time overseas).

Showing currently at the newly-opened gallery of the Johannesburg Art Foundation is an exhibition by a group of eight painters who have taught or studied there. Again, contact with current work in the US and Europe has helped extend the ambitions and clarify the direction of these painters. They all show a concern with the qualities of the medium; the meaning of many of the paintings arise from the actual wrestling with the materials. This concern with process and materiality has been a feature of modernism from its beginnings in Europe. The Impressionists, attempting to record changing light, were forced to work fast and directly. Cezanne, too, insisted on the importance of the explicit handling of the medium: "One has to be a painter through the very qualities of painting. One has to use coarse materials."



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"Serengeti", in its represents a new phase the emphasis on speed a by the Triangle Worksh Peter Bradley was on man, could paint Cle abstract paintings." "Modern art is African Western values fur European art: Japanese decisive influence on Gogh; the experience Gauguin's work; and decisive breakthrough 1907, to Cubism, whi important movement in that it has establish almost all subseque Ilona Anderson, Simon Stone, the three Art Foundation show, in relation to a different movement — that of chief challenge, in the the dominance of abstractionists. Its German art. The Gerinfluenced particular emotional and symbol and Gauguin's pain	ement Greenberg-type No conflict," he said. "The injection of non- indamentally changed woodblock prints had a Manet, Degas and Van of living in Oceania on African masks led to the in Picasso's work, in ch is probably the most of the Twentieth Century, and a visual language for int painting. Villiam Kentridge and e figurative painters in the can perhaps best be seen int branch of the modernist Neo-expressionism, the late 70's and the 80's, to the postwar American roots lie particularly in man Expressionists were ly by the colour, and the lic content of Van Gogh's tings and by Gauguin's	/P/ Dat		TREFWOORE 1
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