

INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat



Ba
m
Fm
bw

Bron nr.
1 0 7 4

Datum
85/12/19 353

Onderwerp nr.
1 1

Knipsel nr.
1 1 1 1

WEEKLY MAIL

Jg.....1..... Nr.....27..... P.....19..... Dat.....1985.12.19.....

THE ARTS

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 non-figurative, 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."

TREFWOORDE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

INSTITUUT VIR EIETDSE GESKIEDENIS

Die Universiteit van die Oranje-Vrystaat



Bron
nr.
1 | 0 | 7 | 4

Datum
8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 3

Onderwerp
nr.
| |

Knipsel
nr.
| | | |

WEEKLY MAIL

Jg.....1..... Nr.....27..... P.19..... Dat.....1985.12.19.....

Bill Ainslie's large, light-filled painting "Serengeti", in its breadth of handling, represents a new phase in his work informed by the emphasis on speed and directness emphasised by the Triangle Workshop.

Peter Bradley was once asked how he, a black man, could paint Clement Greenberg-type abstract paintings. "No conflict," he said. "Modern art is African." The injection of non-Western values fundamentally changed European art: Japanese woodblock prints had a decisive influence on Manet, Degas and Van Gogh; the experience of living in Oceania on Gauguin's work; and African masks led to the decisive breakthrough in Picasso's work, in 1907, to Cubism, which is probably the most important movement of the Twentieth Century, in that it has established a visual language for almost all subsequent painting.

Ilona Anderson, William Kentridge and Simon Stone, the three figurative painters in the Art Foundation show, can perhaps best be seen in relation to a different branch of the modernist movement — that of Neo-expressionism, the chief challenge, in the late 70's and the 80's, to the dominance of the postwar American abstractionists. Its roots lie particularly in German art. The German Expressionists were influenced particularly by the colour, and the emotional and symbolic content of Van Gogh's and Gauguin's paintings and by Gauguin's explorations of graphic processes.

Simon Stone's paintings were, for this viewer, an exciting discovery — references from a range of different historical periods are held together, and in works such as "In the shadow of the fountain" he achieves a poised, enigmatic poetry.

Ultimately, a work of art must come from the artist's experience, his own life and immediate social context. Paradoxically, however, this transmutation of experience can occur only in relation to what has been done, to works that show what is possible, and reveal what is common across diverse situations.

So, while Koloane's work, for example, shows that he has confronted and internalised current developments in American and English painting, his paintings remain very African. The darkness in them, though very alive, grows in and from the darkness of the current South African situation.

TREFWOORDE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10