

Swazi - head - next

1987.3.1



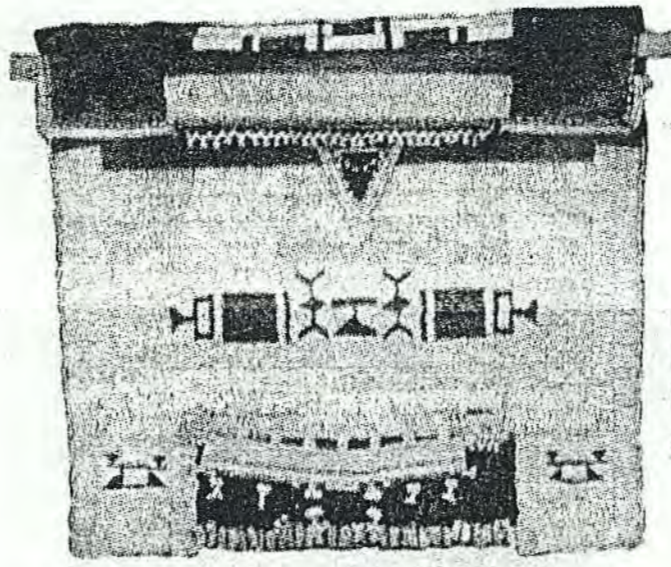
EKM

JOL (but this is great!) ... SSV Rkv ... lev Wonderful! ... File Headrest 1987.3.1

Art



Shona headrest, 1992, in wood and metal (chain).



Mphotho, Ndebele beaded apron.

Patrick Ramano Mphephu, 1992, by Noria Mabasa (b. 1935) in clay and paint.



Arts Afire

The Johannesburg Art Gallery is no more a repository for stuffy works of Eurocentric art; today it's a vibrant, exciting gallery that has its roots firmly in Africa and the '90s. MAUREEN ISAACSON reports.

CALLING all burnt-out city slickers! If you've steered clear of galleries all your life because the art soars way above your head, the Johannesburg Art Gallery will change your mind.

The Gallery has long since kissed Eurocentrism goodbye and brought in a range of exciting concepts and images.

Step inside the portals of this house of beauty and see for yourself. In the gallery coffee shop are funky murals and still life drawings created by the gallery's art class students. And in a room tucked away, in training for the day they will make their startling contributions to the gallery's collection, children on holiday splash paint onto white paper.

Certainly those who have until now believed the Johannesburg Art Gallery to be an ivory tower, housing only the lace collections of mining magnates' wives, (exquisite though the Lady Phillips lace collection may be) and paintings depicting defunct scenes with no "relevance", will be relieved to discover that images of our daily existence abound. Here you will find a visual feast of frozen moments in the troubled times of our country. You will see bullets, barbed wire, instruments of torture and the gross symbols of apartheid.

In its own way, each local artwork reflects our immediate world: Steven Cohen's *Bitter Suite* takes a high-camp look at local fascism. Alan Alborough's shattered bullet-proof window says all there is to say about shattered bullet-proof windows in this time and place; Jann Cheifitz' printed and hand-painted screen fabric entitled *African Blood* speaks of Aids in Africa.

Then there is the church with Casspir in Dominic Thorburn's *Sunday Afternoon*

Thoughts of Monet and Magnus and David Roussouw's triptych, *The barren hearts of those who presume*, a vision of the gunslinging, bestial "cop" mentality in pastel and charcoal. Gideon Mendel's images of AWB insignia, wagon wheels and Voortrekker clothing do not soothe the mind.

But don't stop there. Further down the line you can enjoy the lushness of Penny Siopis' silkscreen and perspex collage, *Exhibit: ex Africa* which tells the sadly racist tale of Bushwoman Saartjie Baartman who was exhibited in England and Europe during the 19th century because of the extraordinary shape of her enlarged genitals and buttocks. In addition, you can feast on the ripe abundance and excesses of Siopis' *Melancholia* or Bonnie Ntshalintshali's painted clay three-tiered fantasy, *Pharaoh's Dream*.

Hot stuff, 1992, by Michele Raubenheimer in fibreglass resin and oil paint.



God and Angel, 1991, by Owen Ndou in wood and paint.

And for vivid swipes at the patriarchy, see the works of Bonita Alice, Michelle Raubenheimer, Nina Romm, Josephine Ghesa and Lola Frost.

All this and we have not yet approached the ongoing printmaking exhibition, with selected prints from the gallery's generous collection.

Also currently on show, from the Brenthurst and Horstmann Collections of South African Art, are an exquisite array of artefacts. Here are detailed Tsonga headrests, some engraved with heads and wheels, others in the shape of guns. Here are poker-work Nguni vessels, milk pails, gravemarkers, Tswana knives and sheaths, spoons, pipes and exquisite Ndebele aprons made of hide and sinew, thread, seed beads and brass. Wooden Northern Nguni staffs, once symbols of status and authority, have horn-like motifs.

It's all there for the taking, although it has been a long time coming. The gallery's assistant director Lesley Spiro explains that although in 1940 the gallery bought its first work by a black artist - *Yellow Houses: A Street in Sophiatown* by Gerard Sekoto, it wasn't until the Eighties that the collection of contemporary black artists was truly expanded.

"Redressing the imbalances in the collection" is how she puts it, talking of

"huge strides" and speaking proudly of the work of major artists Pat Mautloa, Jackson Hlungwane, Noria Mabasa, Ndou Brothers and Paul Tavhana.

She looks forward to upcoming exhibitions - Vita Art Now, a major exhibition of historical and contemporary Bushman art, and the works of Ernest Mancoba, the Boksburg-born Parisienne contemporary of Gerard Sekoto.

Gallery curator and publicist Sandy Shoolman speaks with great enthusiasm of further programmes - signwriting for hawkers, a wall for mural painting, a programme that is partly to involve the neighbourhood community.

A morning's visit to the Gallery is not enough, but it reveals one thing - its art is accessible. If you like you can even run your hands over *Daniel*, Jackson Hlungwane's mini "touch" sculpture, eye level with any four year-old who is keen to learn the things we adults too easily let slip through our fingers.



The Johannesburg Gallery borders Joubert Park. There is free, secure parking (entrance in King George street). Gallery hours are: 10 am - 5 pm Tuesday to Sunday. Tel: 725-3130.

Bitter Suite, 1993, screenprint by Steven Cohen.

167 50/893

Size: Height 140 mm
Length 415 mm
Width 70 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular, ending in six small rounded pleats at the sides.

Lugs: One in centre, long, cylindrical and blackened.

Legs: Two flared and blackened with three deep rounded pleats at sides, and two at front and back. Each leg projects slightly above the crossbar to form two "V" shapes.

168 50/894

Size: Height 140 mm
Length 415 mm
Width 70 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular with rounded edges ending in seven small, blackened square pleats at the sides.

Lugs: One at centre, rectangular and blackened.

Legs: Two, each with two joined blackened triangles raised slightly above the crossbar. They are rectangular and blackened and have four rounded pleats at the sides and three at front and back.

169 50/895

Size: Height 140 mm
Length 405 mm
Width 65 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Curved rectangular top having a rounded base.

Lugs: One, pendant from centre, roughly cylindrical, flaring outward toward base with small circular holes pierced toward the centre from each side, but not meeting.

Legs: Two legs pleated at front, top and back and decorated at sides with featureless cattle-like "heads" each with an ovoid hole pierced through close to the bottom.

Comments: The wood has a golden sheen on the top and upraised areas, but is otherwise blackened.

170 50/896

Size: Height 145 mm
Length 525 mm
Width 65 mm

96

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular with two slight dips between rectangular raised sections at sides and centre.

Lugs: None.

Legs: Three legs, pleated at front and back, with vertical indentations on inner sides. The two outer legs are decorated with slightly raised triangular shapes similar to the "heads" of 50/895.

Comments: The whole head-rest is covered with a red substance. The extended length and two dips in the crossbar suggest a double head-rest.

171 50/897

Size: Height 175 mm
Length 430 mm
Width 75 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular and straight, ending in five corrugations.

Lugs: One at centre, multifaceted and blackened.

Legs: Two, split slightly at bases to make four "feet". Roughly rectangular, blackened and pleated on all sides. Each projects slightly above the crossbar to form two semicircles.

172 50/898

Size: Height 140 mm
Length 450 mm
Width 80 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular, straight and decorated with deeply incised vertical lines.

Lugs: One, at centre, blackened and roughly diamond shaped in cross section.

Legs: Two, flaring slightly to base, blackened and pleated on all sides. Each projects slightly above the crossbar to form a raised section which is decorated with incised arches.

173 50/899

Size: Height 140 mm
Length 405 mm
Width 45 mm

Description: *Crossbar*: Rectangular and slightly curved, with small "L" shapes at the narrow ends, and a slightly raised band extending from centre front and back down to the lug.

Lugs: One, at centre, cylindrical and blackened.

Legs: Two, blackened, pleated at front and back with concave sides.

97

object type: head-rest

acc no: 1987.3.1

vernacular:

sub-type:

community: Swazi

sub-group:

location:

shelf

geographical location:

b/w: c/t: c/s:

date and place collected: Elim,
Transvaal, c.1930

date executed:

artist name, sex:
male

use: for resting the head while
sleeping

contact
prints

dimensions:

h: 14 cm

diam:

w: 41,5 cm

mounted:

d: 7 cm

medium: wood

~~purchase~~ / donation / ~~bequest~~: Anglo American Johannesburg Centenary Trust

price paid: - (R168 000 incl. GST paid by Trust for Collection)

insurance value: R346 291 (114 objects in Jaques Collection) (1990)

authority: AGC 1987-03-26
MC 1987-03-30

original collection no: Jaques Coll./
Africana Mus. 50/893

object type translation:

catalogues: Wanless, AN&N 28(3):96

physical description:

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

ARCHIVE SHEET II

PROVENANCE

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.:

collected by Rev. A. A. Jaques
lent to the Africana Museum in 1950

JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
ARCHIVE SHEET IV
REFERENCE

ARTIST:

ACC. NO.

Wanless, A Africana Notes and News, see acc. card
for vol. and page no.

