



**Masterpiece**



# Masterpiece

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johans borman

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# Masterpiece

**Masterpiece? Isn't that a bit presumptuous?** was the standard reaction from most artists we approached to participate in this exhibition – and yes, they are of course all quite correct if our objective was to present all the works on this show as ‘masterpieces’. But, it is not – we have set out to investigate the concept of what is regarded as a masterpiece, how or by whom that is decided and most importantly, what all the creative elements are that need to converge in that magical moment to make the creation of a masterpiece possible.

The very diverse and eclectic selection of artworks assembled for this exhibition also include works by past masters – those artists regarded as the ones who have achieved the status and distinction of having created masterpieces. These works serve as a yardstick to help us gauge how the contemporary works measure up in terms of technical quality, emotional impact and timeless content.

The idea for this exhibition originated from a desire to create a platform where all the wonderfully gifted artists we represent and know can collectively ‘put their best foot forward’. Despite this presumptuous, intimidating and nerve wrecking challenge, the invited artists all stepped up to the plate. They engaged the concept head-on, transcending their individual barriers – whether conceptual, technical or otherwise imagined. The results speak for themselves and carry the trademark qualities of recognized masterpieces – technical excellence, conceptual integrity, authentic content and clear communication. When these elements are fused together by master artists, their creations bring us the timeless pleasure of emotional and cerebral stimulation as well as intellectual and philosophical interaction.

The idea of an artist confronted with a sterile, white canvas or

piece of formless clay from which to create a work of art that will be able to capture and communicate magical emotions and powerful messages is most intimidating. Apart from pure, raw talent, it demands bravery, commitment and unflinching self-belief to be an artist – something most art lovers take for granted. We should never lose sight of the difficulties artists have to face in order to succeed and should always respect their efforts whether we rate them as masterful or not.

We asked the artists to let us have their thoughts on what the concept of a masterpiece means to them and encouraged them to be as frank and uninhibited as possible. Their responses were insightful and resonated so well with our views that we have selected some extracts below – the full texts are published with the illustrated works in the catalogue.

*My initial reaction to an exhibition titled "masterpiece" was to cringe about the presumptuousness of it. Usually masterpieces are identified in a consensus by experts about artists who are preferably dead. We however live in a disenchanted world in which the notion of a "master" seems amusingly anachronistic. We also live in a cynical age that wised up to the way meaning is constructed by discourses. Powerful galleries, wealthy patrons, market speculation, imposing museums, art-historical constructs, influential critics, to name a few, mould the meaning we attribute to art.*

- Anton Karstel

*The artist makes because he or she must. It is arrogant for an artist to claim masterpiece status for his or her work. Only time will judge.*

- Marlene von Dürckheim

*Those few individuals who become “masterful” at their craft - the “masters” - have learned how to produce the results with minimal effort. They make it look easy because, after decades of toil, it has become easy. In my opinion, a “masterpiece” is an example of this phenomenon. It is a work imbued with genius, yet it seems void of effort.*

- Alex Emsley

*For me the work has to be done with integrity, passion, creativity and exceptional craftsmanship. In order to achieve Masterpiece status the work also has to withstand the test of time and the scrutiny of both peers and experts.*

- Hennie Meyer

*Art is really something that happens in one's mind, with the painting as the by-product. A painting can be considered a masterpiece when the connection between the idea and the realisation thereof is strong.*

- Gavin Rain

*It is difficult to walk away from a masterpiece unaffected, it stays with you. It takes you away from yourself and your environment. It grabs you. Often you don't know why.*

- Hanneke Benadé

*There exists a universal, very idealistic need to create a life that resembles a masterpiece, with harmony, balance, pattern, shape and texture.*

- Alet Swarts

*In all our differences a golden thread runs through us all that enables the recognition of something sublime or of a higher value. A Masterpiece is the ultimate result when craft and meaning meet through medium to recognize the beauty of our flaws.*

- MJ Lourens

We encourage our fellow art lovers to view, interact and analyse this selection of artworks and formulate their own definition and opinion on the concept and meaning of what a masterpiece is or should be.

**Johans Borman**

Cape Town

September 2016

**Nigel Mullins**

(b 1969)

*The idea of the masterpiece has been a point of contemplation in my recent work. I have presented paint spattered and broken antique frames, as a way of pointing to and exaggerating the fetishisation of the art object [any object, idea, etc., eliciting unquestioning reverence, respect, or devotion]. I have combined this reverence of the European museum piece with the other definition of fetish "... an object regarded with awe as being the embodiment or habitation of a potent spirit or as having magical potency." The masterpiece has all the pomp, weight and value bestowed on it by history and canonized by its gold frame.*

*I have also approached the issue more literally with this image of a Rembrandt Self-portrait, stolen and hidden in a salt mine by the Nazis during WWII. Fascinating that in the midst of total war, both sides were stealing and hiding, "masterpieces"!*

- NM

**Salt Mines of Heilbronn**

2014

Oil on Superwood and frame

69 x 82 cm

Signed and dated top right

Nigel Mullins appears courtesy of Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town





**Irma Stern**

(1894 - 1966)

Many of Stern’s portraits are both studies of the model and projections of the self. She sees herself in others and explores her own identity – woman, white German South African, Jewish, spinster/wife/divorcée, artist. In trying to come to terms with her own complexity and the disjunction between her outward appearance and internalized self-image, she paints many different people. In her studies of black and white, male and female, young and old, eminent and ordinary people, she seeks to understand her identification with and estrangements from others.

Marion Arnold, *Irma Stern: A feast for the eye*, Vlaeberg, 1995, p 98

ILLUSTRATED  
Joseph Sachs, *Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa*, JL van Schaik, 1942, p 69

**Zulu girls**

1935  
Charcoal  
47 x 60 cm  
Signed and dated top left  
Referenced in *Irma Stern and the Spirit of Africa* by Joseph Sachs



**Gerard Sekoto**

(1913 - 1993)

Sekoto inscribed a 1960 ball-point pen drawing of the South-African singer extraordinaire, Miriam Makeba: 'Inspiration – Miriam Makeba'. Recently deceased (2008), she was 'Mama Afrika' to the world and an anti-racist activist till the end – always supporting and identifying with the downtrodden and the disenfranchised. Both Lesley Spiro and Barbara Lindop are of the opinion that it is most probable that this drawing provided the inspiration for Sekoto's series of 'Blue Heads'.

Lesley Spiro, *Gerard Sekoto: Unsevered Ties*, Johannesburg Art Gallery, 1989, pp 54 to 56 and 89

Barbara Lindop, *Gerard Sekoto*, Randburg, 1988, pp 212 and 213

ILLUSTRATED

*Song for Sekoto - Gerard Sekoto 1913 - 2013*, WAM Exhibition catalogue, The Gerard Sekoto Foundation, Johannesburg, 2013, pg 70

**Woman wearing a scarf**

1961

Oil on canvas board

65 x 55 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





Walter Battiss

(1906 - 1982)

*In his life and in his work the artist rejected conformity and challenged every kind of boundary – creative, academic, political, cultural, spiritual. His vision and artistic approach shifted continually, and his enquiring mind embraced life in all its facets.*

Karin Skawran, *Walter Battiss - Gentle Anarchist*, Standard Bank Gallery, 2005, p14

Fruit sellers in the sun

Oil on canvas  
40,5 x 45,5 cm  
Signed bottom left



**George Pemba**

(1912 - 2001)

*This is a rare painting, named after one of the artist's favourite pieces of music. It shows a brief flirtation on his part with the notion of abstraction, of painting the approximation of the condition of sound. Interestingly, Pemba's signature is mounted on top of a high-rise building as if it was a neon sign and is an integral part of the painting itself.*

Sarah Hudleston, *George Pemba Against all odds*, Johannesburg, 1996, p 118

ILLUSTRATED

Sarah Hudleston, *George Pemba Against all odds*, Johannesburg, 1996, p 118

Michael Stevenson and Joost Bosland, *'Take your road and travel along'*

*The advent of the modern black painter in Africa*, Cape Town, 2008, p 87

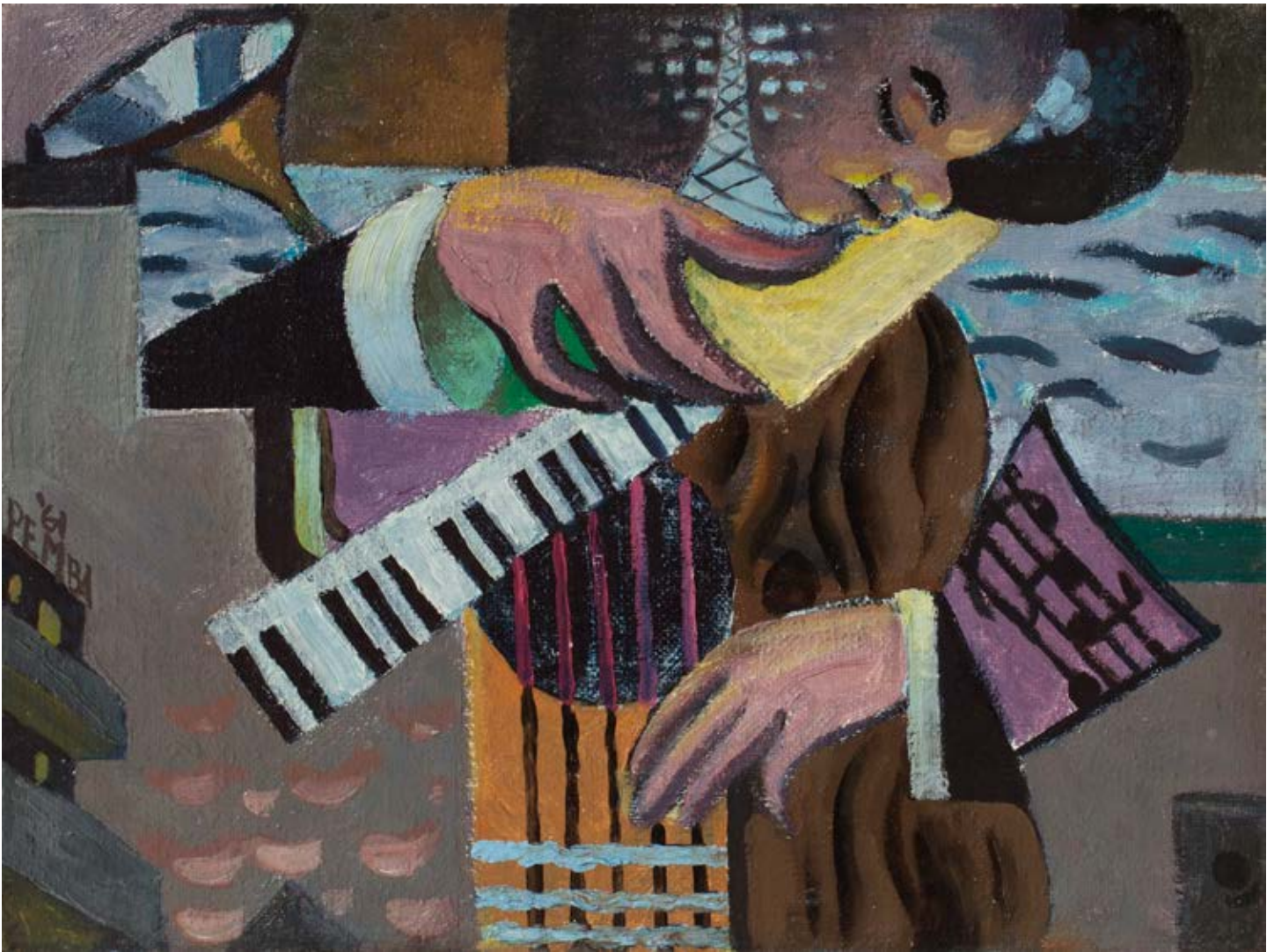
**In the Mood**

1961

Oil on canvas board

30 x 40 cm

Signed and dated middle left





**Neil Rodger**

(1941 - 2013)

*I believe very strongly that pictures need no commentary by the artist, and do not propose to provide any. The only concession towards public explication of my work that I make is that I set out to create a climate rather than convey a message. Further than that, my work must speak for itself.*

- NR

**Girl with a greyhound**

1980's  
Oil on canvas  
122 x 91 cm  
Signed bottom right



**Gregoire Boonzaier**

(1909 - 2005)

*In those character studies which are often described as self-portraits (although here not in the sense of realistic or faithful reproduction of facial features), Gregoire’s art reaches a visionary climax. The self-portraits are, in fact, expressive attempts at self-examination in which the soul is ruthlessly exposed. They are disciplined examples of the painter’s art. Professor Trümpelmann has referred to one such self-portrait done on coarse canvas and in subdued colours which evoked a gloomy response in the viewer: “In a moving way the painting attests to the trials and tribulations of the artist and to his wearisome path through life.”*

Martin Bekker, *Gregoire Boonzaier*, Cape Town, 1990, p 92

**Self-portrait**

1966

Oli on canvas

41 x 30,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom left





**Anton Karstel**

(b 1968)

*My initial reaction to an exhibition titled "masterpiece" was to cringe about the presumptuousness of it. Usually masterpieces are identified in a consensus by experts about artists who are preferably dead. We however live in a disenchanted world in which the notion of a "master" seems amusingly anachronistic. We also live in a cynical age that wised up to the way meaning is constructed by discourses. Powerful galleries, wealthy patrons, market speculation, imposing museums, art-historical constructs, influential critics, to name a few, mould the meaning we attribute to art. Historically a "masterpiece" was created by the "master craftsman" to qualify for guild membership. This valorisation of artisanal skill has been thoroughly debunked throughout the 20th century, but still clings persistently to painting, especially paintings that are made by the artist's hand. Using craft skill in the 21st century however means something very different. Manual virtuosity is an ingredient that can be sampled among other available objects in the world. Painterly skill is in fact especially tinged by an embarrassing association with traditionalism, out of step with "advanced" art. As a painter I relish this depreciated status of the medium. I also like the way painters throughout the 20th century have thumbed their noses at theoretical discourses that had such a powerful grip on artists. Painting is conducive to an iterative process-driven production where the artist can lose him or herself. The best works are usually those where the artist felt like someone else made it, which is more interesting than many predetermined and contrived conceptual artworks.*  
- AK

**Miss Hoffa**

Oil on canvas  
70,5 x 52 cm  
Signed and dated bottom right



**Joshua Miles**

(b 1967)

*I believe that in order for an artist to make a ‘masterpiece’ he must first be able to master his chosen technique.  
This can only be achieved through time with practice and dedication....  
Then the work speaks for itself....*

- JM

**Elza**  
2016  
Monoprint  
56,5 x 42 cm  
Titled, signed and dated in the margin





## Albert Coertse

(b 1980)

The consensus view is that the essential requirements for any artwork to qualify as a masterpiece would be its artistic authenticity and conceptual integrity communicated successfully by the artist's masterful craftsmanship. Albert felt too intimidated by the masterpiece concept to submit anything in writing – he did not have to – the work he submitted says it all.

- Johans Borman

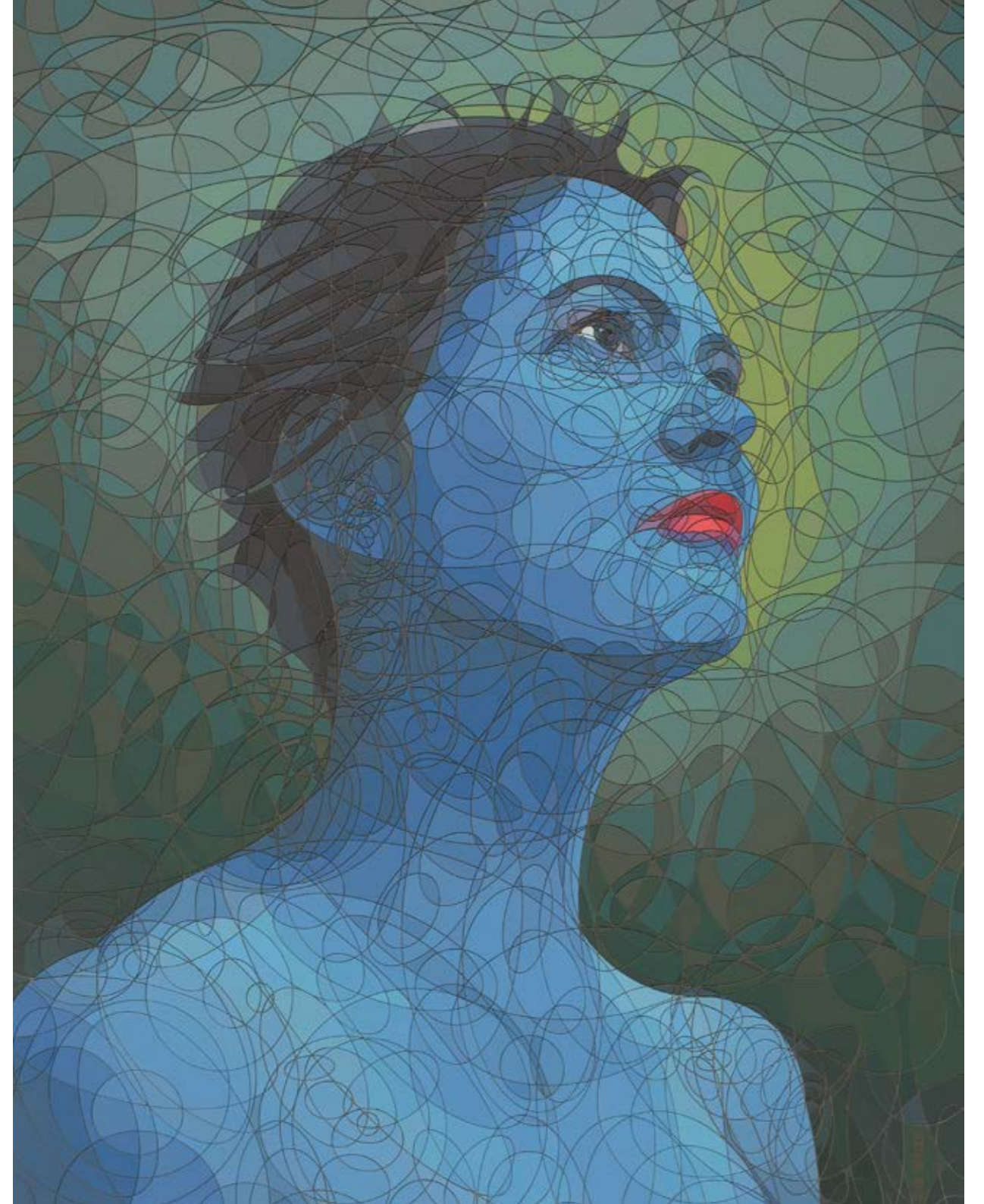
### Kyne of Blue

2016

Acrylic and oil on CNC routed Valchromat

156 x 119,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





Owusu-Ankomah

(b 1956)

*I did not create the Microcron; I simply recognized it as what it is, the ultimate symbol.*  
*The Microcron is all the symbols that I have ever seen and comprehended. It is all the symbols that I have ever created and will ever create. [...]*  
*In the Microcron, the number of Micras in a circle varies from constellation to constellation, cluster to cluster, region to region, domain to domain. Or from dimension to dimension.*  
*A Micron is a cluster of Micras that have culminated into a circle of light, and alternate numbers of these circles of light, or Microns, constitute the Microcron, the symbol of symbols.*

- OA

Joachim Melchers, *Owuso-Ankomah Movement to the Microcron*, Herzonrath, 2011, p 69

Microcron Kundum No 8

2011  
Arcylic on canvas  
120 x 145 cm  
Signed and dated bottom left





**Sanell Aggenbach**

(b 1975)

*Some works sit outside an artist's comfort zone, and they wrestle with the making of, the outcome or the perception of that particular work. I would not go so far as calling any of my own work masterpieces, but it's the difficult work, the one which changes your interpretation every time you look at it, the one that you try to unravel which you always remember.*

- SA

**Sonic baby**

2011

Oil on paper

56 x 61 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed with the title in the margin



Jaco Sieberhagen

(b 1961)

Adam Small is the ultimate artist who stood tall in his vision to write about the humiliation and hurt of his fellow man. He was fearless in his critique towards unjust laws and corrupt leaders, but kind in his words of love and forgiveness. Above all he expanded and enriched Afrikaans beyond its traditional confines.

- JS

Master Small

2016  
Laser cut mild steel and paint- Edition of 5  
43,5 x 18 x 18 cm  
Signed and editioned underneath



Time has shown him to be:

Master Small  
Master Peace  
Master Piece

What abou' de lô?

Diana was 'n wit nôi  
Martin was 'n bryn boy

dey fell in love  
dey fell in love  
dey fell in love

sê Diana se mense  
what abou' de lô  
sê Martin se mense  
what abou' de lô  
sê almal die mense  
what abou' de lô

sê Martin sê Diana  
watte' lô  
God's lô  
man's lô  
devil's lô  
watte' lô

sê die mense net  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
what abou' de lô  
what abou' de lô

Diana was 'n wit nôi  
Martin was 'n bryn boy

dey go to jail  
dey go to jail  
dey go to jail

sê Diana se mense  
we tol' you mos  
sê Martin se mense  
we tol' you mos  
sê almal die mense  
we tol' you mos

sê Martin sê Diana  
what you tol'  
what God tell  
what man tell  
what devil tell  
what you tol'

sê die mense net  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
what abou' de lô  
what abou' de lô

Diana was 'n wit nôi  
Martin was 'n bryn boy

Diana commit suicide  
Martin commit suicide  
Diana en Martin commit suicide

sê Diana se mense  
o God behoed  
sê Martin se mense  
o God behoed  
sê almal die mense  
o God behoed

Martin en Diana  
died for de lô  
God's lô  
man's lô  
devil's lô  
watte' lô

sê die mense net  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
de lô  
what abou' de lô  
what abou' de lô



## Ben Coutouvidis

(b 1970)

*A masterpiece is a work that is the summation of the artist at a certain point, it includes discipline, hard work, inspiration, proficiency with the medium and a depth to the understanding of the subject.*

- BC

### Bodywork

Mixed media on wood

144 x 60 x 128,5 cm

Some figures individually signed



**Walter Battiss**

(1906 - 1982)



**Nude study in hand**

Wood

14 x 8 cm

Signed underneath





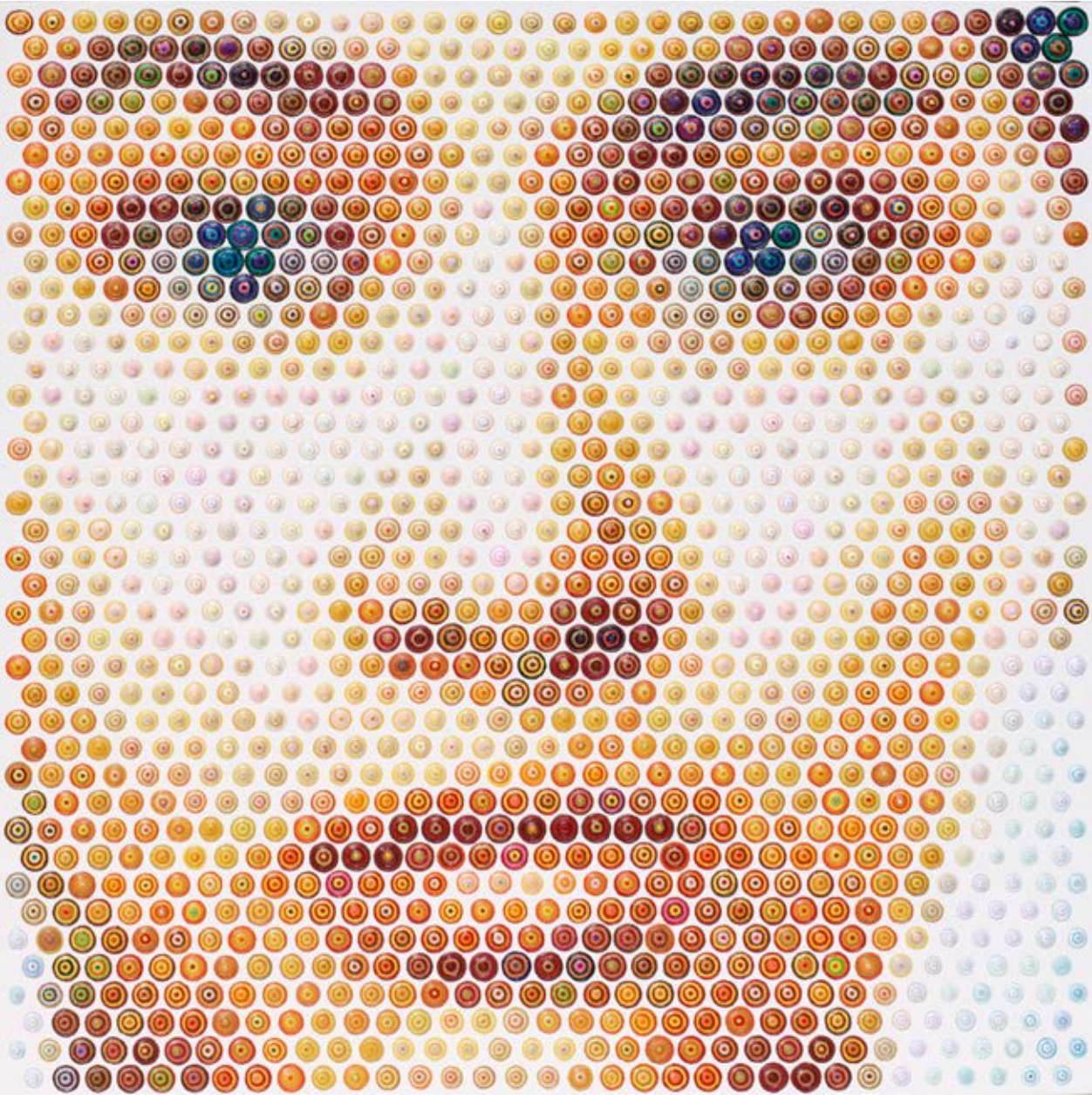
Gavin Rain

(b 1971)

*Art is really something that happens in one's mind, with the painting as the by-product. A painting can be considered a masterpiece when the connection between the idea and the realisation thereof is strong.*  
- GR

Aung San Suu Kyi

2016  
Acrylic on canvas  
150,5 x 149,5 cm  
Signed and dated bottom right  
Gavin Rain appears courtesy of WORLDART, Cape Town





**Anthony Lane**

(b 1961)

*I have no interest in the accolade 'Masterpiece'.  
In a world that feeds on instant success and fame the term is loosely  
used, easily given, seldom earned and rarely deserved.  
What does interest me is pursuing work that has integrity, originality  
and transcends time and fashion.*

- AL

**Jazz Series. Composition No. 9**

2016  
Stainless steel  
72 x 187 x 83 cm  
Signed, dated and editioned on the foot





**Georgina Gratrix**

(b 1982)

*In ancient Rome, the festival of Saturnalia was an ecstatic week of banqueting, gambling and general licentiousness. For the duration of carnival time, the social order was inverted, and masters and slaves could temporarily switch roles. In Medieval times, this tradition morphed into the Feast of Fools, a carnival over a number of days during which peasants switched places with the aristocracy, dressing up in their clothes and mimicking their highbrow habits. [...]*

*Serious aesthetics, in this festival, are also out of the window. Subjects are represented by analogy, rather than descriptive mark; [...] Show me your Dancing and Show me your Feelings, two larger than life nudes, are cobbled together from canvasses, ironically badly painted paper limbs and assemblage genitalia (a pair of spectacles and a puny plastic penis for the man, an inverted painting of a mountain, complete with forest, and tiny figures walking through it, for the woman).*

Katharine Jacobs, *Georgina Gratrix at Whatiftheworld / Gallery, Art-throb Archive: Issue No. 134*, October 2008

**Show me your dancing (female)**  
2008  
Oil on Fabriano, board, canvas and found items  
280 x 90 cm  
Certificate of Authentication



**Edoardo Villa**

(1915 - 2011)

According to Esmé Berman, Villa’s work transformed the way in which South Africans perceive sculpture:

*“[It] is in the conceptual substance of his oeuvre that his most significant achievement lies. Edoardo Villa has been uniquely able to translate his South African experience into symbolic visual form”.*

Esmé Berman, *Art and Artists of South Africa*, Halfway House, 1983

**Standing figure**

1964  
Bronze - Edition 4 of 6  
Height: 48 cm  
Signed, dated and editioned on the bottom





## Hennie Niemann Jnr

(b 1972)

*I regard 'The Dance' as one of Hennie's seminal works. When I first laid eyes on it as he carried it into our gallery in Onrus in 2001, its energy and trance-like mood immediately grabbed my attention - like any masterpiece should. The confidence of the heavily laden red brushstrokes capture and communicate the energy of the ritual dancing while the contrast of the ethereal, sketchy outlines describing the faces of the girls in deep trance provide the perfect counterpoint. Hennie was 29 years old at the time and I was reminded of the comment by the curator of major 1992 Matisse retrospective exhibition that, in his opinion, Matisse produced some of his very best work at the age of 28. My immediate thought was – how can Hennie possibly improve on a painting as powerful as this?*

- Johans Borman

### **The Dance**

2001

Oil on canvas

120 x 90 cm

Signed and dated bottom left





**Ephraim Ngatane**

(1938 - 1971)

**Sacrifice for the dead Amadlozi**

Watercolour

57 x 78 cm

Signed bottom right





## Willie Bester

(b 1956)

### Where are the children now? (blue)

2016

Oil on Army canvas

47 x 37 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



### Where are the children now? (orange)

2016

Oil on Army canvas

46 x 38 cm

Signed and dated bottom left





## Ephraim Ngatane

(1938 - 1971)

In South Africa, a country of sunshine and blue skies where it rarely snows on the Highveld, it is unusual to find paintings of urban snow scenes - particularly by an African artist depicting the snowfall over a township.

### **Snow scene, township**

1967

Oil and mixed media on board

59,5 x 76 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





## David Botha

(1921 - 1995)

This painting depicts a bird house in the courtyard of the historic (now demolished) Blue House in Bree Street, Cape Town where the lady owner allowed struggling artists to live and work.

### The birdhouse

Oil on canvas

92 x 77 cm

Signed bottom left



Lucky Sibiya

(1942 - 1999)

Sibiya received guidance from Bill Ainslie and Cecil Skotnes, and it was Skotnes who introduced him to the incised and painted wood panel as medium.

EJ de Jager writes: *Nature, as a source from which to derive shape and form, is also very important in Sibiya’s art. Here he is concerned with the phenomenon of creation, the sun, the trees, and the birds. His woodcut panels are timeless, reminiscent of the ancient traditional art of Africa, but also at the same time thoroughly modern.*

EJ de Jager, *Images of Man: Contemporary South African Black Art and Artists*, Alice, 1992, pp 156 – 158

PROVENANCE  
Yusuf and Amina Cachalia – acquired directly from the artist early 1970’s

**Abstract**  
Carved, incised and painted wood panel  
61 x 91 cm  
Signed bottom right





JH Pierneef

(1886 - 1957)

*Pierneef's graphic work consists mainly of linocuts and a few woodcuts, although he always spoke of 'woodprints'. In this medium he could express his penchant for decorative, constructed compositions. Practice in graphic methods consolidated his preference for simplification and sureness of line, and many of his oil paintings should be assessed against the background of his graphic work.*

Gré van der Waal-Braaksma,*Pierneef the artist*, PG Nel (ed), *JH Pierneef His Life and his work*, Cape Town, 1990, p133

REFERENCE  
FEG Nilant, *Die Hout- en Linosneë van JH Pierneef*, Cape Town, 1974, No. 91, p 126

Doringbome, Pietersburg, Northern Transvaal

1936  
Linocut 5/50  
15 x 20 cm

Inscribed with the title, signed and dated in the margin.



**Pranas Domsaitis**

(1880 - 1965)

Domsaitis only arrived in South Africa after the Second World War in 1949 at the age of 69. His contribution to South African art was, however, significant as he introduced the latest expressionist influences from Europe and thus brought another dimension to the local art scene.

- Johans Borman

**Three Sisters, Karoo**

Oil on board  
35,5 x 45,5 cm  
Signed bottom right





## Walter Meyer

(b 1965)

*Meyer's art describes human displacement. His works retreat from narrative - they carry no promise for a brighter future, nor are they nostalgic for a better past. Suspended in the 'now', his works proclaim not ownership and authority, but transience and temporary residence.*

Liese van der Watt , Vuka Vol 2 No 4 Aug/Sept '97, *Exploring the art of Walter Meyer - Now is the landscape of our discontent*, p 31

### Pompstasie, Anysberg

1993

Oil on canvas

100 x 150 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





Jacobus Kloppers

(b 1959)

*William Feaver said this about the work of Frank Auerbach:  
Good paintings are the better for harbouring subliminal suggestion  
while being grounded in specifics.”  
Lucian Freud had this to say about the same artist: “Auerbach is the  
master of the persuasive – the degree of conviction is so absolute.  
Why are the great painters so much greater than the others? Because  
you believe in them more!”  
This, for me, are the two necessary elements needed in a “master-  
piece” – “subliminal suggestion” and “mastering the persuasive”.  
The rest is just hard work (for the artist and the viewer).*

- JK

**Spoelgoud**  
Oil on canvas  
60,5 x 100 cm  
Signed bottom left





## Joshua Miles

(b 1967)

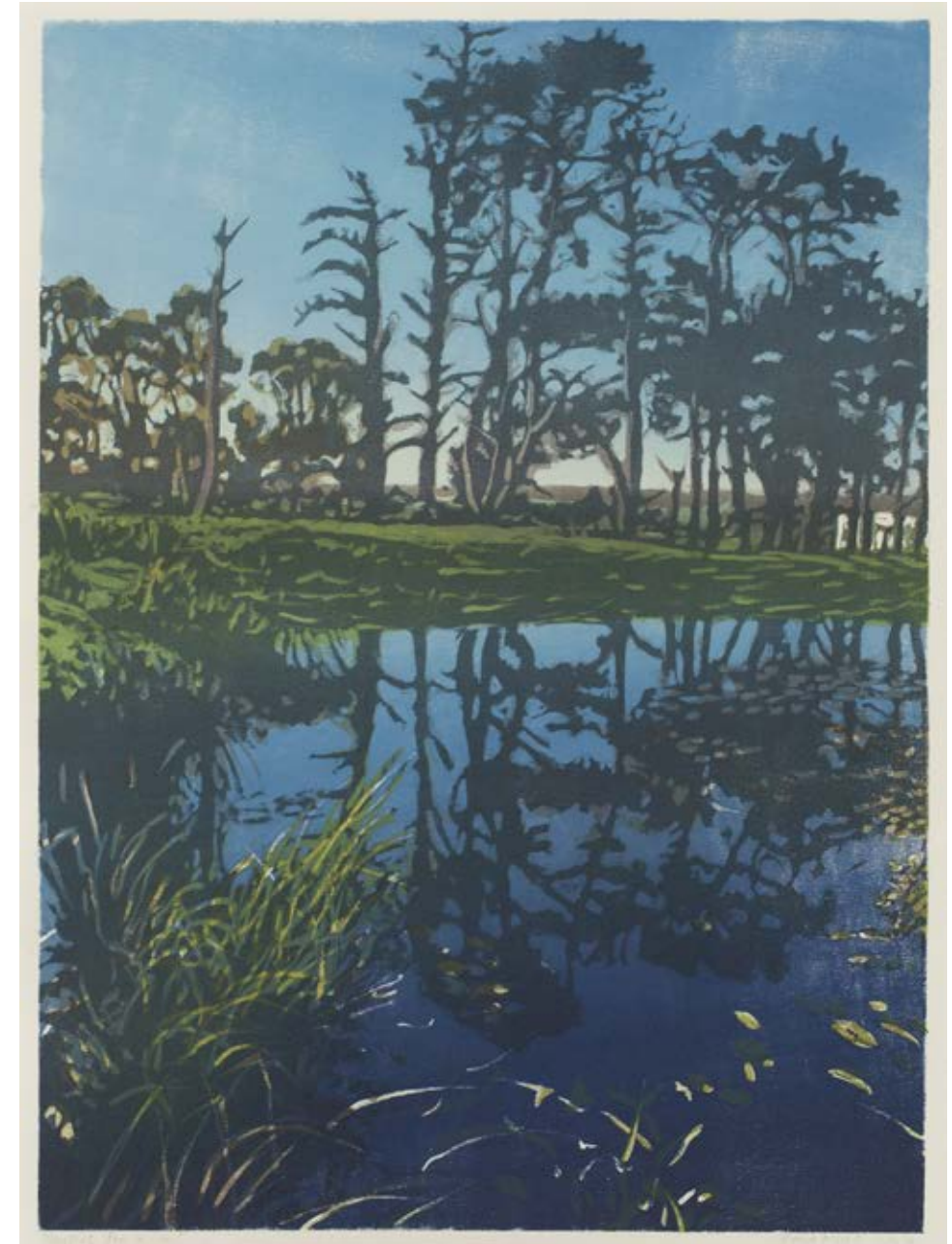
### Ben se dam

2016

Monoprint

56,5 x 42 cm

Titled, signed and dated in the margin



## JH Pierneef

(1886 - 1957)

*Pierneef realised that of all the shapes used in indigenous ornamentation it was the triangle in particular that could form the basis of a South African decorative art. He began to use this shape in all sorts of ways – for example in decorative borders. He believed that this principle should be developed and refined in accordance with a personal view of art.*

Gré van der Waal-Braaksma, *Pierneef the artist*, PG Nel (ed), *JH Pierneef His life and his work*, Cape Town, 1990, p 126

### Still life of gourds, a pomegranate and and African clay pot

Oil on board

45 x 60 cm

Signed bottom left





## Irma Stern

(1894 - 1966)

*Placed in vases or bowls, flowers – signifying nature – are controlled by the artefacts of culture, and thus the human presence intrudes into the image.*

Marion Arnold, *Irma Stern: A feast for the eye*, Vlaeberg, 1995 p 128

### ILLUSTRATED

Marion Arnold, *Irma Stern: A feast for the eye*, Vlaeberg, 1995 p 138

### Anemonies

1938

Oil on canvas

66 x 69 cm

Signed and dated top left



**Maud Sumner**

(1902 - 1985)

Maud Sumner’s artistic development underwent a drastic change during the period 1947 to 1954. Charles Eglington writes:

*... all artists of strong creative vitality feel the need for development, and hence of change. They are not content to limit their range of achievement, to go on repeating what they can already do well; they become dissatisfied with their past work. Nor are they insensitive to new trends in art.*

Charles Eglington, *Sumner*, Purnell and Sons SA, Cape Town, p 34

**Still life**

1949

Oil on canvas

65 x 54 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





## Francois Krige

(1913 - 1994)

*Krige's still-lives are personal meditations and seem to invite introspection on the part of the viewer. He appreciated fruit and flowers as the products of nature, and also humble, unadorned, traditional objects like earthenware jugs and bowls. Often made by his wife or potter friend, Hym Rabinowitz, which he felt represented an admirable sense of craftsmanship and rural domesticity.*

Justin Fox, *The life and art of Francois Krige*, Fernwood, 2000, p 98

### Peaches in a bowl

Oil on canvas

41 x 47 cm

Signed bottom right



## Gregoire Boonzaier

(1909 - 2005)

*I am very particular about my paintings and would like them to last. It is pleasing to think that what you have made today and what is regarded now as a good painting, and which pleases and stimulates people to-day, will still do the same a thousand years from now.*

- Gregoire Boonzaier 1976

Martin Bekker, *Gregoire Boonzaier*, Cape Town, 1990, p 83

### Still life with jug

1948

Oil on canvas

50,5 x 40,5 cm

Signed and dated top left





## Cecil Higgs

(1898 - 1986)

Cecil Higgs' paintings from the early 1960's are testament to the perfection of the artist's unique style and approach. Through her refined technique, she masterfully conveyed the subtleties and interplay of delicacy and strength in her paintings.

- Johans Borman

### Still life with bottles

Oil on canvas

46 x 61 cm

Signed bottom left



Alex Emsley

(b 1973)

*I believe that the skill of a painter, or the success of a completed painting, is inextricably linked to effort. I am convinced that a painter can only reap what they have sowed - but that this phenomenon is governed by a “law of increasing returns”. Through decades of sustained effort, a painter can learn how to produce the desired results with less and less effort. I feel that the term: “master” is often misused by those who assume that a painter can reach a point at which he or she has nothing left to learn. But such a point can never be reached. We all remain students until the last brushstroke of our last painting. Those few individuals who become “masterful” at their craft - the “masters” - have learned how to produce the results with minimal effort. They make it look easy because, after decades of toil, it has become easy. In my opinion, a “masterpiece” is an example of this phenomenon. It is a work imbued with genius, yet it seems void of effort. An amusing legend about Picasso, whether true or not, alludes to this law. He was approached by a passerby, who asked him to draw something on a paper napkin. Picasso took a few seconds to sketch the woman's profile, handed it to her and asked for a large sum of money in return. “But this only took a few seconds!” she exclaimed. “Yes,” Picasso replied, “but it took me a lifetime to learn how to do it in a few seconds.”*

- AE

Upon the dull earth dwelleth

2016

Oil on linen

40 x 40 cm

Signed bottom left





**Alet Swarts**

(b 1963)

*There exists a universal, very idealistic need to create a life that resembles a masterpiece, with harmony, balance, pattern, shape and texture. “Turning keys” deals with a stilled movement, when a deep experience of perfection combines with a sense of well-being. The depth of feeling, waves of beauty that runs through you, is open-ended. It is as if everything comes to its senses after a period of chaos. Doors open and invisibles and unsayables become possible. Your life becomes your masterpiece, for a moment.*  
- AS

**Turning keys**

2016  
Acrylic on canvas  
30 x 30 cm  
Signed bottom middle



Andries Gouws

(b 1952)

*My paintings are about my everyday world and its objects – alternatively numinous and banal, as one encounters them in meditation. What is meditation? One answer: “to slow things down”. In this sense my painting is meditative – both as process and as product. Every painting is several months in the making, and I want to slow down the viewer’s eye as well.*

- AG

*This scene was found in the kitchen of the Wakkerstroom home of the mother of a friend. The kitchen had beautiful light streaming down from a skylight, and I based a number of different paintings on different bits of the kitchen.*

EXHIBITED  
Cape Town, South African National Gallery, *Is there Still Life?*, 2008

LITERATURE  
Godby, M., *Is there Still Life? Continuity and Change in South African Still Life Painting*, Cape Town, 2007, illustrated p 45

**Toaster and tea cosy on green formica**  
2001  
Oil on board  
26 x 38 cm  
Signed, titled and dated verso





## Marlene Von Dürckheim

(b 1945)

*The artist makes because he or she must. It is arrogant for an artist to claim masterpiece status for his or her work. Only time will judge.*

- MvD

### Still life with pears

2016

Oil on canvas

100 x 100 cm

Signed and dated bottom left



## Hennie Meyer

(b 1965)

*I do not believe that one decides and then sets out to make a masterpiece. An artwork has the potential to become a masterpiece. For me the work has to be done with integrity, passion, creativity and exceptional craftsmanship. In order to achieve Masterpiece status the work also has to withstand the test of time and the scrutiny of both peers and experts.*

*The vessels created for the Masterpiece exhibition is part of my continual search to create, in clay, that exquisite, special piece.*  
- HM

### Jug

2016

Black earthenware, terra sigillata, maiolica glaze and gold lustre

Height: 51 cm

Signed underneath

### Vessel

2016

Black earthenware, terra sigillata, maiolica glaze and gold lustre

Height: 24 cm

Signed underneath





**Cecil Skotnes**

(1926 - 2009)

Cecil Skotnes' contribution to South African art is summed up in an extract from writings by Pippa Skotnes:  
*'Woodcutting offered Cecil the possibility of finding a new form for the symbolism he increasingly began to attach to a particularly local vision, without having to reject the rich European traditions which initially appealed to him.'*

**Kitchen still life**  
Carved, incised and painted wood panel  
100 x 122,5 cm  
Signed bottom right



Clementina van der Walt

(b 1952)

*For me ‘masterpiece’ would suggest a highlight of one’s oeuvre, one of the finest pieces. This would be a piece which excels both in concept and in skilled technique – in ceramics that would be hand-building, glazing and surface treatment. It may be the culmination of experimental work, which has manifest in resolution of the idea.*  
- CvdW

‘Now life’s a honeycomb I’ (white)

Charcoal earthenware clay, incised and sprigged  
Height 46,5 cm  
Signed underneath

‘Now life’s a honeycomb II’ (black)

Charcoal earthenware clay, incised and sprigged  
Height 47,5 cm  
Signed underneath

‘Now life’s a honeycomb III’ (grey)

Charcoal earthenware clay, incised and sprigged  
Height 45,5 cm  
Signed underneath





**Diane McLean**

(b 1963)

*The Oxford Dictionary definition of a masterpiece is a work of outstanding artistry, skill, or workmanship. It can also mean an artist's best piece of work.*

*Since an artist's best work can only be identified once he has completed his life's work, I would prefer to use the first definition with reference to any living artist.*

- DM

**Still life with olive branch and egg**

2016  
Oil on canvas  
42 x 50 cm  
Signed and dated bottom right



## Hanneke Benadé

(b 1972)

*A masterpiece makes us forget the artist, instead directing our attention to the artwork.*

*It is difficult to walk away from a masterpiece unaffected, it stays with you. It takes you away from yourself and your environment. It grabs you. Often you don't know why.*

- HB

### His Master's Voice

2016

Pastel on white cotton paper

125 x 166 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





**MJ Lourens**

(b 1973)

*In all our differences a golden thread runs through us all that enables the recognition of something sublime or of a higher value. A Masterpiece is the ultimate result when craft and meaning meet through medium to recognize the beauty of our flaws.*

-ML

**Birth / a brief end of violence I & II**

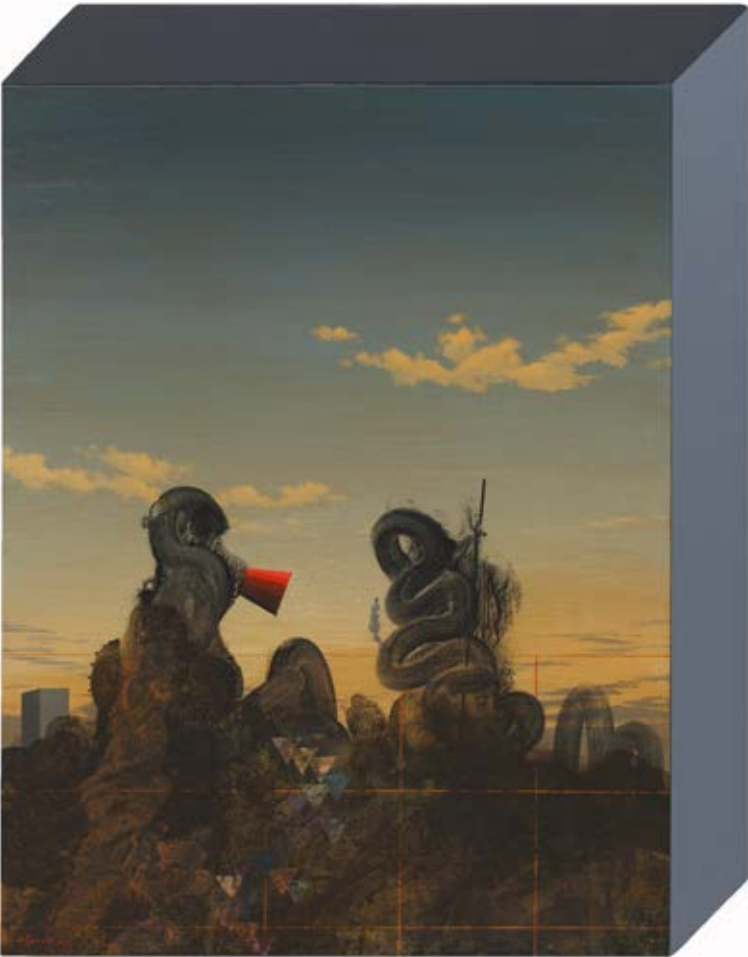
2016

Acrylic on board (diptych)

98 x 78 cm

Signed and dated bottom left

MJ Lourens appears courtesy of Barnard Gallery, Cape Town



**Khaya Witbooi**

(b 1977)

*A masterpiece for me would have many qualities, but very importantly,  
it is when the viewer discovers something new each time they observe.*  
- KW

**Gun behind the bible**

2016  
Spray paint on canvas  
150 x 100 cm  
Signed and titled verso  
Khaya Witbooi appears courtesy of WORLDART, Cape Town





**Richard Mudariki**

(b 1985)

*The master artist that I have come to respect is one who is extraordinary skilled and has the capacity to reinvent their creativity over time. The masterpieces, are not only timeless, but assume relevance to each generation.*

- RM

**A History of Art in South Africa**

2016  
Oil on canvas  
100 x 100 cm  
Signed and dated bottom middle





**Hussein Salim**

(b 1966)

*For me, art not only evokes memories and contemplation of the loss of home but it also encounters the present and shapes the future. My work is the product of a rich heritage from my origins in Sudan, my training there and my recent diasporic experience.*

- HS

**Eshrag (brightness)**

2016

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 150 cm

Signed and dated bottom right





## Georgia Lane

(b 1960)

*It would be presumptuous to ever dream of painting a "Masterpiece".  
I can only strive to improve, by giving everything of myself to each  
and every painting.*

- GL

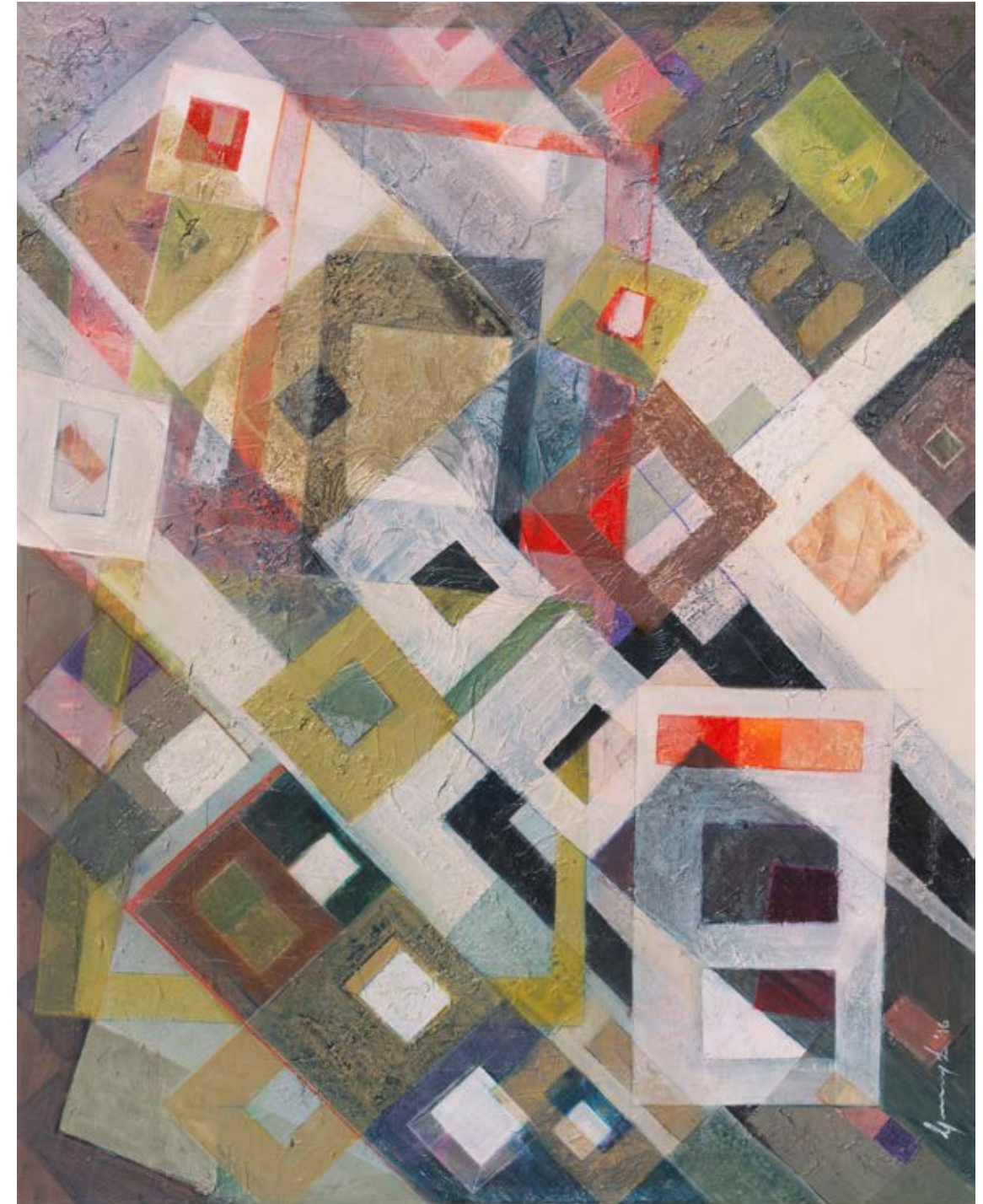
### Transient

2016

Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

127,5 x 101,5 cm

Signed and dated bottom right



## Lars Fishedick

(b 1968)

*I think that there are only a few masterpieces in an artist's career...like milestones. And those moments aren't planned. They happen after hours and hours of work. How do we name a work a masterpiece? Sometimes, and only sometimes, magic happens and a work comes alive and climbs higher and higher. When we look back we recognize a piece of mastery...and call it a masterpiece. It is the one pearl within a chain of pearls that grows and stands out to become this very special work.*

*I believe I can create a masterpiece, but I don't know when.*

- LF

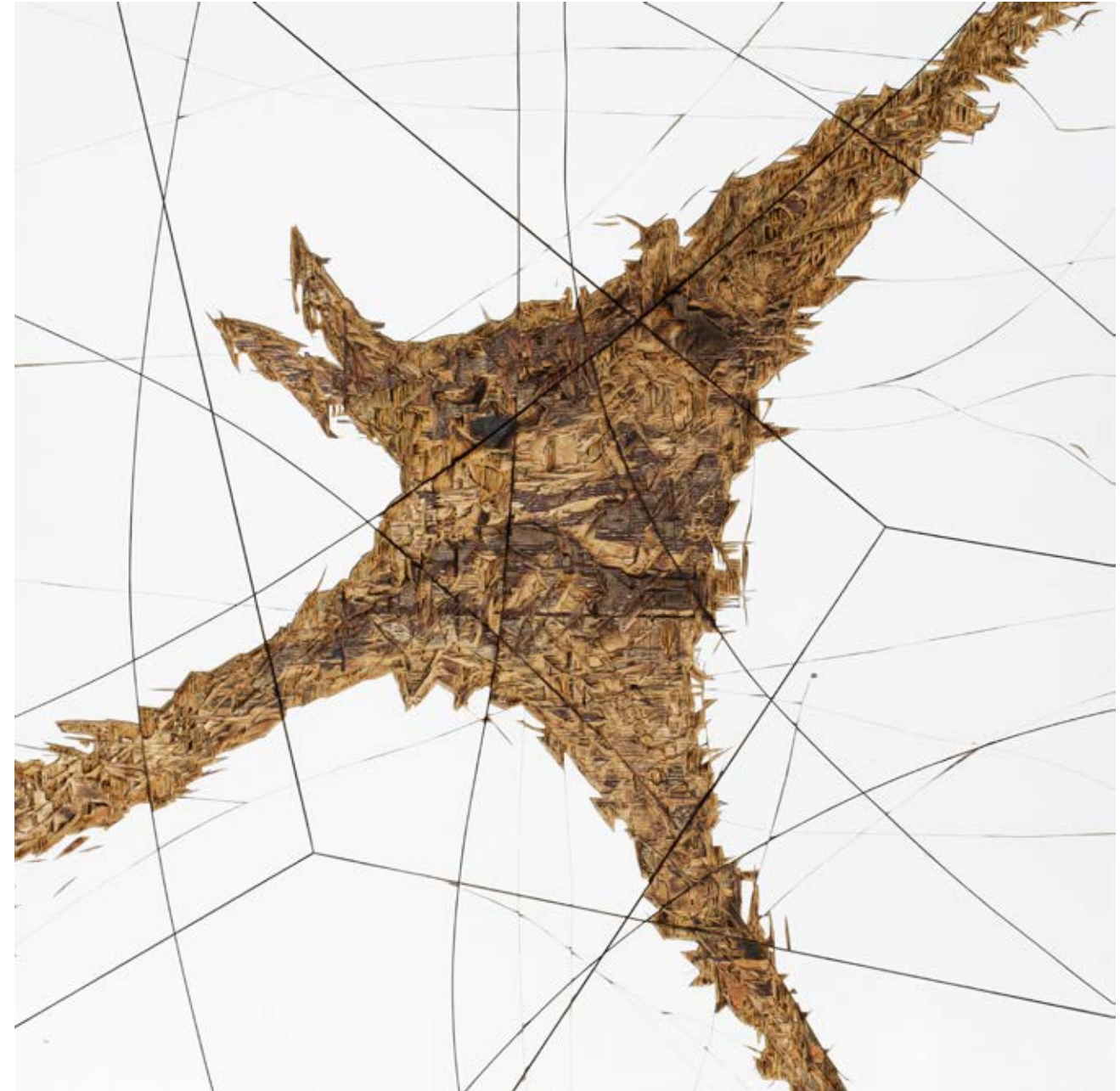
### Phenomenon

2016

Acrylic and burned wood

121 x 122 cm

Signed, titled and dated verso





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FRONT COVER  
**Gerard Sekoto 'Woman wearing a scarf'**  
BACK COVER  
**Albert Coertse 'Kyne of Blue'**



johans borman  
FINE ART