

# VISUAL CENTURY

South African Art in Context



volume two  
1945 - 1976

Lize van Robbroeck  
editor

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VOLUME 2 1945–1976 EDITED BY LIZE VAN ROBBROECK



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## Preface

It is often said that national liberation is based on the right of every people to freely control their own destiny and that the objective of this liberation is national independence ... the basis of national liberation is the inalienable right of every people to have their own history (Amilcar Cabral 1966).

If sometimes our great artists have been the most critical of our society, it is because their sensitivity and their concern for justice, which must motivate any true artist, makes them aware that our Nation falls short of its highest potential. I see little of more importance to the future of our country and our civilization than full recognition of the place of the artist. If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth (President John F. Kennedy 1963).

Nearly two decades after the fall of apartheid, these quotations from the revolutionary leader Amilcar Cabral and President John F. Kennedy have lost none of their relevance for South Africans. In the era of decolonisation, Cabral stressed the importance of history for the once colonised people of Africa, and Kennedy elevated the role of artists in the United States and elsewhere.

Even though these leaders came from vastly different backgrounds, their words register a common concern for culture. They highlight the value of history to the construction of a national identity, and the role of the artist within culture. They reveal why so much of South Africa's visual art, music, literature and theatre, is inextricably linked to the desire for liberty and equality. The notions of culture of the colonial regime and the apartheid government valued neither South African art nor its artists. British colonial culture saw little value in anything other than its own reflection, and the apartheid regime excluded black artists from any role in interpreting the nation's art history.

Works of art can articulate particular moments in the life of a nation. Not all South Africa's visual artists had the liberty, the means or the will to connect their work to the politics of national liberation, or to hold a critical light up to their nation's moral potential. But those artists whose work did make these statements have become actors in the making of history, and their work is testimony to historical progress. Whether a rock painting, a wood sculpture or a video projection, such works have provided insights into how South Africans view themselves in their social and cultural environments.

The task of the *Visual Century* project has been to grapple with the uneven flow of South African contemporary art; to contextualise the relevance of artists and their works to the nation's cultural identity and, where possible, to place them in relation to the history of international art. Providing a balanced record of the never-ending production of art is a difficult yet vital task in contemporary South African culture. The constant creation of images and re-formulation of artistic concepts make art history a fluid body of facts and ideas. Art historical writing becomes a topological exercise similar to mapping a river.

One can picture the history of South Africa's art as a river meandering through the southernmost part of the African continent, growing in stature as it glides towards the estuary of the present. It connects to the history of the world's art just as rivers inevitably connect to the great oceans of our planet. In the twentieth century, some tributaries of this

waterway have been navigated by historians, and the records of their journeys have helped the editors and writers of *Visual Century* to determine where the river has flowed, and what has shaped its momentum and direction. But these early records also make it clear that one cannot know this river with any degree of certainty. Even with the most rigorous research, its topology remains sketchy. Theories as to its origins and what has dissolved into its stream will constantly change. To understand what commands its direction or progression will continue to challenge the historians mapping it. In a postmodern age, we have begun to accept that there are plural narratives of art history, and that all history writing remains incomplete. Over time, we might trace new tributaries or re-evaluate the contribution of individual artists to its flow. But the true temporal and spatial parameters of the river remain elusive.

*Visual Century* is the latest contextual survey of the river's bed, channels and sedimentary traces. The intention is to take you, the reader, along this lengthy waterway, and to leave you with an imminent sense of arrival in a different time and place. If the limited page extent of its volumes, gaps in research or simple oversight should distract from this historical journey, I hope that it will none the less offer more novel insights about art practice in South Africa than anything that has gone before.

The harsh political circumstances of twentieth-century colonial, Union and apartheid rule often eroded facts and shaped cultural fictions. The interpretation of art history was forced into narrow channels conforming to even narrower cultural perceptions. It divided achievement along racial lines, and restricted critical engagement with the wellspring of ideas from other African cultures. The challenge facing the writers in each volume of *Visual Century* was not to only immerse readers in the turbulence of the river, but also to expose some of what lies hidden in the sediment.

The revision of the river's tributaries, started by South African historians in the 1980s and continued after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, made it necessary to review a century of contemporary art. The predominance of Eurocentric art history in the teaching and discourses of art within South Africa also needed to be addressed so that a more accurate and layered map could be drawn. With the support of Z. Pallo Jordan, then the Minister of Arts and Culture, the *Visual Century* project was born at the end of 2006, with research beginning a year later.

The century under review begins in 1907, which marks the year the British restored self-governance to the Boer Republics after defeating them in the Second South African War. This in turn led to the establishment of the Union of South Africa (1910) that joined Afrikaner and British settlers under one government. The year 1907 also coincides with the epoch in which artists in Europe broke with prevailing conventions by assimilating African and other cultures into their practice to create European Modernism. Pablo Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) is one of the striking examples of this fissure, alongside Henri Matisse's *Dance* (1907), which references the art of Asia and the Arab world.

The research for *Visual Century* took existing and new material and located these in the context of South African social history and international art history. The prominent themes that emerged from initial research prompted the division of the book into four volumes. The volumes have an open structure that avoids a single author narrative. Numerous writers were invited to interpret these themes and, where possible, to redress the racial and gender imbalance of colonial and apartheid art histories. This approach matched the spirit of the project's intentions, which recognised that there are plural narratives of

history. It allowed writers to retrieve the history of South African art from the political doctrines of colonialism and apartheid, and to uncover its essential African character. By avoiding a strict linear narrative, the information gathered does not claim to be finite or absolute. There are overlaps at the start and end of volumes. Occasionally this open structure creates coincidences of ideas across volumes and different readings of certain artists whose practice extends across eras. But the multiplicity of voices keeps the project open-minded about the scope and dimensions of the river of history, and the need to review who contributed what to South Africa's art history.

Any text about art only creates new meaning through engagement and comment. The editors and I hope that the chapters in this overview will be seen as an invitation to further scholarly research. The nature of mapping something fluid is that certain issues and artists inevitably rise to the surface, while others sink. To broaden and deepen our knowledge of this river beyond what is revealed in these four volumes, South Africa's visual art history must be constantly reviewed.

Gavin Jantjes  
*Visual Century* project director  
Oslo, 2011

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Walter Battiss: Untitled, 1970s. Serigraph on paper (artist's proof), 62.5 × 42.5 cm. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Museum of Art, Port Elizabeth.

## Foreword

Throughout Africa, the decades covered by this volume were years of considerable significance on the cultural front. Characterised by gradual liberation from the colonial yoke, and all the political turmoil associated with such periods of massive upheaval and change, these decades saw an unprecedented, but not always unproblematic, establishment of new arts centres and schools across the continent. The successes achieved during this period, while significant, appear to have been overshadowed by the inability to build on these achievements while learning from past mistakes. This raises questions about future prospects for the continued growth and development of a thriving indigenous contemporary arts and culture sector on the African continent. This foreword gives a brief historical comparison of developments in indigenous art practices in Nigeria and South Africa, and attempts to raise questions concerning the issues mentioned above.

In Nigeria, as in South Africa, the period from the early 1950s to the late 1970s was one of significant growth in the development of locally driven contemporary music, visual and performing arts. In both these countries, the 1950s were regarded as the crucial turning point in the establishment of fine arts institutions, with the founding in 1953 of the Department of Fine Art in the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Ibadan branch in Nigeria, and with the establishment of the Polly Street art centre in South Africa. The course structure of the Ibadan branch was initially that of a teacher's college. Three years later, it was restructured at Zaria, with the aim of training professional artists and designers in disciplines such as painting, sculpture, graphic design, textile design and, later, ceramics. The programme was largely influenced by the British art school tradition, and all the lecturers were accordingly trained in British art schools.

One inherent weakness of this colonial transplant was the absence of basic facilities that were taken for granted in the British environment – a lack of infrastructure, materials and technical equipment that hindered the development of a strong modern artistic tradition in Africa that was firmly rooted in British artistic foundations. Nigeria, therefore, like South Africa and many African countries, inherited a system of values that was not compatible with its struggles for political independence and cultural identity. Academic art considerations and technical prowess were confused with progress and modernity. The result was the formation of the Zaria Art Society, which espoused the idea of synthesis.

There were a number of significant factors that contributed in the 1950s to the growth of a rich literary and artistic culture in Nigeria, inspired by expressions of socio-religious belief, socio-economic conditions and social lives of the people. The African branch of the Pan-Africanist movement spearheaded by Dr Kwame Nkrumah in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which promoted nationalism and pressured for independent self-governed African states, served as a source of inspiration for artists in the West African region and around the continent. The Pan-Africanist movement contributed to political and cultural debate in South Africa as well.

Another factor that influenced Nigerian art was the coming of the missionaries. The impact of the church schools in the second half of the nineteenth century caused important socio-economic changes that put Nigeria on a new path in the twentieth-century world. The coming of Christian missionaries and the founding of many schools in southern Nigeria at the dawn of the century brought in their train new sources of artistic inspiration. Similar developments could be seen in South Africa, particularly in the role that Rorke's

Drift arts centre and a variety of missionary-run art schools played in the development of an indigenous Christian art tradition. Indeed, the cultural impact of the missionary presence, which has been explored by Simon Ottenberg in relation to Uli art traditions and Christianity in Igbo culture, is something that needs to be thoroughly researched and critically analysed throughout Christianised Africa.

While these parallels between Nigeria and South Africa demonstrate forces at work in the establishment of modern art practice throughout Africa, the specificity of local contexts must also be considered. The Nigerian civil war of 1967 had a significant impact, particularly on artists from the eastern region of Nigeria. Before the Biafran war, Nigeria was fractured by the dilemmas presented by adapting to colonial models. These contradictions were reflected in all social and cultural institutions, and resulted in the tragic collapse of the first republic. After the civil war in 1970, there was a general awareness of the challenges of independence, and a particular zeal in the way these challenges were tackled. A new spirit was born, a rebirth rather than the revival of old and sometimes questionable values.

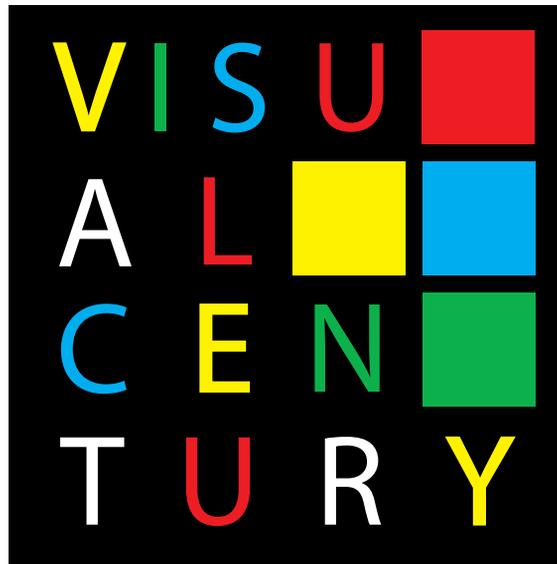
The art schools became to a large measure indigenous, although their programmes were not 'Nigerianised' and still adopted British models in terms of academic structure. The Nsukka experiment is an important example. The art programme and the course content offered by this institution were rationalised to meet societal demands. For example, Nsukka explored and exploited the Igbo traditional Uli, a complex system of thought based on human and natural elements and subject to supernatural law. The post-war period therefore, signified a turning point in Nigerian contemporary art practice and training. Here the South African and Nigerian situations begin to draw apart, as the perpetuation (and worsening) of repressive colonial models by the apartheid state prevented the growth and development of independent art schools and movements.

It is important to note, however, that historically, contemporary art practice and education in South Africa were nonetheless more advanced than in Nigeria in the years highlighted for discussion here. The fundamental difference in terms of art practice and educational training appears to lie in the impact of apartheid on indigenous South African cultures. In contrast to their counterparts in Nigeria, black South African artists were deprived of the opportunity to explore and exploit their cultural past in their contemporary art forms, and this appears to have had a significant impact on the cultural content of South African contemporary art traditions. The anti-apartheid movement was one of the few platforms that provided opportunities for forms of artistic expression outside of censorship, particularly in the visual arts. It also generated important artistic partnerships and collaborations (for the struggle) between exiled South African artists and their colleagues, both from the continent and internationally. South Africa's isolation from the West, and more significantly, from other African states, created a barrier that denied its artists the opportunities for more vigorous discourse and exchanges during the period under discussion until independence in 1994.

This foreword has attempted to highlight some of the factors that have contributed significantly to the successful development of a locally driven Nigerian contemporary art culture between 1945 and 1976, with a view to understanding how the differences in socio-political history have likewise shaped contemporary art development in South Africa. However, this forum does not allow for in-depth comparative analysis of historical events for the purpose of examining contemporary art development in both countries, and drawing conclusions. What is clear is that there were more opportunities to create an enabling environment for the emergence of indigenous contemporary art traditions in Nigeria.

In conclusion, in spite of the changed and continually changing circumstances in Nigeria, and in a larger sense Africa, the growth of a thriving arts and culture sector has been disappointingly stunted. It is therefore imperative that creative artists in their various regions around the continent not only critically assess where they are heading, but also begin to look outward and initiate more vigorous cross-regional dialogues with a view to strengthening art practice, education and training within the continent. It is very important that we create more local institutions dedicated to training cultural resources managers, art critics, curators and art historians. Government involvement needs to be strengthened through more efficient implementation of public/cultural policy, as well as initiation of stronger public-private sector partnerships. Until we establish a set of legitimate guidelines and principles to inform contemporary art practice on the continent, African artists will continue to encounter challenges when attempting to engage the global art market on their own terms.

Uche Okeke



SOUTH AFRICAN ART IN CONTEXT 1907-2007

INTRODUCTION

# ART IN BLACK AND WHITE

LIZE VAN ROBBROECK

The years covered in this volume, 1945 to 1976, are rich in political and cultural complexities and contradictions. From the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the Soweto uprisings, this period saw South Africa increasingly isolated from the international world as a result of its policies of racial exclusion and extreme social engineering. The threats posed to the state by a rising tide of internal revolt and external pressure, coupled with the successive independence of the African colonies, was met with increasingly restrictive legislation, as well as police and military interventions.

The year 1945 heralded the end of a bloody war that shook to the core the West's confidence in its own values, precipitating an intellectual and ethical crisis that was given new impetus by the emergence of the unprecedented global threat of atomic warfare, and the accompanying paranoia that would come to define the Cold War. Despite the South African state's defiant isolationism, the covert operations and overt ideological polarisation of the Cold War played a major role, not only in the country's internal politics, but also in the wars waged on South Africa's borders. More pertinently, as various authors in this volume point out, the Cold War had a considerable impact on the field of art and cultural production.

The triumph of Afrikaner nationalism after the election victory of the National Party in 1948 led to the establishment of a national canon that served the interests of the apartheid state. While Afrikaner self-construction was overtly pursued by newly formed cultural bodies in the programmatic nation-building efforts of the 1930s and 1940s, the imperative for such programmes waned once the Nationalists came to power. The Afrikaners' Herculean efforts at cultural formation before the 1948 election, in which the visual arts played no minor role, had served to embroider a hitherto tenuous Afrikaner cultural imaginary into a highly compelling national force – a force that, against the odds, united a divided white Afrikaans-speaking population into an apparently seamless political body. Once in power, however, the relationship between visual culture and the Afrikaner state changed significantly, as the growing confidence and political assertiveness of the National Party led to, if not a more subtle, certainly a less overtly propagandistic patronage of the arts. This relationship between Afrikaner nationalism and the emergence of an 'official' South African art is explored by Federico Freschi in the first chapter of this volume. Freschi demonstrates how the prosperity generated by the state's policy of Afrikaner affirmative action resulted in a class of patrons and a generation of artists that sought to showcase, via art, architecture, music and theatre, the newly established affluence, urbanity and cultural sophistication of South Africa. But supporting 'progressive' modern art was considered controversial and revealed the fault lines, mainly along class divisions, that were temporarily erased from the Afrikaner imaginary by the propaganda drives of the 1930s and 1940s. In this regard, there are parallels with the American government's covert support of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s and 1960s, which went against the grain of a largely reactionary public and political response to the perceived un-Americanness of this avant-garde style.

Although South Africa experienced an economic boom in the 1960s, which led to a proliferation of new galleries and a radically expanded art market, the local art scene started showing the effects of the imposition of the first sanctions against the country, along with increasing censure from a post-war world intent on overcoming the racist discourses that led to the Holocaust and other Nazi excesses. Increasingly cut off from major international art events and movements, and from an international postmodern culture that was responding with complex irony and anxiety to a world threatened with imminent atomic destruction, South African art remained relatively parochial, conservative and overwhelmingly white – a phenomenon explored both by Hayden Proud in his chapter on formalism, and Hazel Friedman in her investigation of the ideological ambivalences of this period. While black



FIGURE 1. Gladys Mgudlandlu: *Fungi*, 1962. Gouache on paper, 47 × 64 cm. Sanlam Art Collection, Cape Town.

artists increasingly struggled to find a toehold on the periphery of the art market, few openly challenged the socio-political iniquities of apartheid, and those that did, tended to cloak their criticisms in religious iconography or surrealist imagery. The apparent apoliticism of artists across the racial and political divide is critically scrutinised by Hazel Friedman in Chapter 2, which presents a birds-eye view of the complex ideological terrain of the South African art map in the decades concerned. Escalating international censure of the policies and practices of the apartheid state, especially following the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, along with Pretoria's stubborn isolationist reaction to this pressure, tended to clash headlong with artists' cosmopolitan ambitions, and frequently rendered South African versions of post-war movements mannered and superficial. Yet artists responded, however mutedly, to the injustices and polarisations that surrounded them. While very little was produced along the sharp political lines of the 1980s and 1990s, Friedman excavates the ideological subtext of a wide array of work from artists across the race and political spectrums.

It was during this era that the trickle of modern black artists of the early twentieth century became a small but steadily growing stream, as newly formed arts centres started feeding their art into an overwhelmingly white art market. The formation and impact of these centres are discussed by Liz Rankin in Chapter 3. The lack of opportunities for formal art training for black artists was addressed by missionary and liberal initiatives, and gave rise to the establishment of art collectives that provided points of contact between black and white – though seldom, as Rankin points out, beyond the paradigm of patron/teacher and pupil. More importantly, perhaps, these centres facilitated mutual support and intellectual stimulation between artists to counter the isolation that was the lot of the first generation of black modernists. As both Rankin and Uche Okeke (in his foreword to this volume) point out, the prominent role played by arts centres is not confined to South Africa, but is a pan-African phenomenon that can be regarded as an outflow of the cultural and educational practices of the colonial era.

The nature of the art market and the repressive political climate of apartheid South Africa, however, severely restricted artists' freedom to voice political concerns. The result was the emergence of 'township art' – a proliferation of picturesque genre scenes that pleased white patrons, while often containing hidden socio-political commentary. With the rest of Africa systematically gaining independence from colonial regimes, African nationalist debates about pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness and Négritude began to inform the work of many local black artists. Due to the oppressive restrictions on political expression, however, expression of these ideologies was often veiled in metaphoric language.

White responses to this increased black art production, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, largely strove to contain any threat it represented by patronising and diminishing it. 'Black art' or 'township art' – the most common designations used to racialise and collectivise black artists' work – was even promoted by the government's Department of Information,<sup>1</sup> but contemporary writings about this phenomenon seldom engaged with the art as a product of a wider political context. Alternative coverage was confined to publications such as *The Classic*, which was privately funded and had a very limited circulation. White institutions, including universities, art schools and galleries, continued racially exclusive practices, and many promising young artists chose exile rather than face continuing marginalisation.

Exiled artists' lives and works, their response to the countries in which they found themselves, and those countries' responses to them, are dealt with by Christine Eyene in Chapter 5. The romantic lure of Paris and London contrasted sharply with the often painful emotional realities of exile; the promise of an egalitarian, non-racist artistic community often disappointed black artists in particular, who found that while their adopted countries offered greater political

<sup>1</sup> The Department of Information, in tandem with the Bureau for State Security (BOSS), served as propaganda instrument and security watchdog of the state during the apartheid years. This department also played a major role in propagating the policies of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Pfister, 2005).

freedom, their communities were scarcely less racist than those of their homeland. It is only relatively recently that exiled artists of this generation have been 'rediscovered', and an array of publications has emerged on the most prominent artists (Gerard Sekoto, Azaria Mbatha, Ernest Mancoba and Dumile Feni<sup>2</sup>) in the last few decades. As the dominant canon of the apartheid era is slowly being questioned and dismantled, these artists and their relationships with other political and cultural exiles are only now beginning to earn the intense scrutiny they deserve. Any consideration of South African art within the global socio-cultural milieu cannot afford to neglect the networks of influence and interaction between exiled artists, musicians, writers and political organisations, nor the influence these people and bodies exerted on the cultural policies subsequently adopted in post-apartheid South Africa.

In South Africa, the growth in the market for black artists' work saw the tentative beginnings of an interest in Africa's cultural traditions. This interest mainly centred on the sculptural products of West and central Africa, probably because they were recognisable, to the Western eye, as 'art'. In the process, local cultural practices remained the domain of anthropologists, who tended to fix these practices in the timeless realm of the traditional. This focus on an 'authentic' African tradition belied the fascinating flux, inventiveness and creolisation that characterised cultural production in the rural sphere. It is ironic that, just as economic and art historical interest in local traditional art was beginning to take root, traditionalist art practices were undergoing major shifts in response to the rapid social, economic and political changes introduced by the colonial encounter, and elaborated by the apartheid regime. Sandra Klopper explores, in Chapter 6, the introduction of new sartorial styles and the impact of uncommon materials and techniques on the fertile cultural interface between the rural and urban life-worlds of migrant workers. This chapter explores how the social hierarchies of rural communities were symbolically re-affirmed by the assimilation and adaptation of imported items of clothing, demonstrating that a reductive traditional/modern binary fails to account for the rich variety of hybrid artefacts and art forms that emerged from the historical confluences and social clashes of this period. In recognition of the fact that the definition of art as free-standing aesthetic object is necessarily a Western imposition, Klopper's broad cultural studies approach considers a wide array of material artefacts and cultural practices to demonstrate how the creative explosion of new styles and forms often served traditional purposes, while, simultaneously, the new economic and social orders imposed by colonialism and the apartheid state resulted in the invention of new traditions and the inventive adaptation of old ones.

Interest in indigenous traditions was also spurred by a number of urban artists' engagement with modernist primitivism, which most commonly took the form of a search for an 'authentic' African identity. Local white artists turned to Africa for inspiration and asserted their rights to call themselves Africans. Artists actively pursued an indigenous artistic expression, which generated some of the first cross-racial art exhibitions in the country. This primitivist strain in the art of this period is explored by Anitra Nettleton in Chapter 7, where she compares South African primitivism with its European counterparts, and also notes that the practice had different resonances for black artists of this generation than for white artists. As was the case for numerous modern artists from the newly independent African colonies, a nascent nationalism underlay the excavation of African traditions for South Africa's black artists; while for white artists, the 'primitive' constituted a quintessentially modernist means of accessing the unconscious and challenging normative social and sexual taboos.

In his chapter on formalism, Hayden Proud uncovers the complexities of South African artists' relation to the European and American art capitals during this period. The conservative collection practices of the major South African art museums in the first half of the twentieth century delayed patronage of a local modernist tradition, and once such

2 Recently, publications have also emerged on lesser-known exiled artists such as Selby Mvusi, Albert Adams, Ernest Cole, Gavin Jantjes, George Hallett and Louis Maqhubela.

a tradition took root, much of it consisted, inevitably, of weak derivations of its Western counterparts. Yet, despite the isolation that was their lot, numerous artists managed to respond to the issues, causes and debates of the wider art world, and some even managed to further their studies in Europe, the United Kingdom and America, introducing South African institutions on their return to the latest trends in the West. As in most of the Western world and Commonwealth countries, formalism and abstraction became modernist orthodoxies in South African art schools in the late 1950s and 1960s, and generations of (white) artists who studied at these schools assimilated the theories of the early formalists such as Roger Fry, and Clement Greenberg's later more doctrinal approach to abstraction.

Set as it is between the bookmarks of the Second World War and the Soweto uprisings, this volume covers rich historical ground that has been given surprisingly little coverage in recent South African art historical writings. In keeping with the dominant current art historical methodologies, most contemporary scholarship has adopted a formalist approach, and declines to consider art as a product of the political and social context of apartheid South Africa. This volume is a tentative first move to come to terms with the socio-political complexities and fertile cultural ambivalences of the art of this period. As one of the aims of the *Visual Century* project is to situate South African art in its wider African and global context, these chapters also consider the impact of the international cultural and historical milieu on artists, highlighting both the singularity and cosmopolitanism of South African art in the decades concerned.

It scarcely needs mentioning, however, that no single volume can possibly do full justice to the enormous complexities of the period concerned. It is extremely difficult to cover three decades of artistic production without omissions and generalisations. The themes of this volume were selected because they home in on aspects of artistic praxis that provide valuable insight into the close interweaving of the political, cultural and social spheres. Certainly the aim was not to produce a new canon, or an encyclopaedic overview of all the art produced in these decades; nor do the contributors necessarily discuss the most prominent or the 'best' artists of the time. Writers selected examples in accordance with the demands of their particular themes, and there are a great number of artists who perform fell through the cracks. Invariably, as happens in broad thematic approaches, those artists who worked in a particularly idiosyncratic manner and whose art consequently does not conform to dominant traits or themes, tend to be omitted. One such artist is Gladys Mgudlandlu, of whom Michael Stevenson says: "Mgudlandlu was a visionary artist whose style and subject-matter stand apart from those of her contemporaries. Her work was not rooted in the socio-political realism that characterised the work of most black artists of the time, or the formalism of the white artists of the period" (Figure 1).

Also inevitably, a disproportionate number of artists featured in this volume are white, as are the majority of the authors. This points not only to the hegemonic normativity of whiteness during the apartheid era, but also demonstrates the severe shortage of black art historians in the 'new South Africa' – a legacy of the past that, one can only hope, will be addressed sooner rather than later.

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