

Chapter 5

CASE STUDIES PERTAINING TO MODERN AND POST-MODERN TIMES



1. INTRODUCTION

The speed of social and technological change influenced the artist in countless ways. Mass-produced paints in tubes made it possible to work in the open air instead of the studio. The first age of globalization – the rise of imperialism and international communications – brought exotic influences from a wide variety of countries. The invention of photography opened a dispute about the purpose of representational Art, but also offered a new resource for painters. The painting by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) acknowledged the influence of stop-motion photography. Scientific developments in the study of optics led to fresh experiments with colour, as illustrated in the techniques adopted by Claude Monet (1840-1926) and George Seurat (1859-91).

The opening of the 20th century found Western Art in an experimental phase that broke the boundaries of any previously known artistic form.

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Cubism and the beginning of abstraction were neither representational nor decorative, but forged new ways of seeing the world. Technological advances such as cinema, automobiles, electric light and aviation were influences on Art, intentionally as in the case of Futurism. Avant-garde artists formed movements with manifestos to proclaim programmes of artistic change. These changes heralded the misfortune of the Great War – which incidentally reintroduced state support in the form of the ‘war artist’. After the war a sense of cultural crisis was world wide, although with varying results.

Some artists sought a new objectivity or return to classicism, while others plunged into a revolutionary celebration of the irrational and taboo. The splendid riot of individual styles and competing movements ran headlong into the rise of European dictatorship that rejected this immoral bourgeoisie Art in its entirety and patronized a heroic representational Art celebrating the state. After 1945 some artists continued in the heroic/romantic model expressing themselves in monumental gestural abstraction or as if tortured in expressive representational works. Pop artists rejected the ‘elitism’ of high Art. The surge of visual imagery in the age of mass media led to an adjustment in how works of Art were viewed – they were seen as only one kind of image among many.

2. PABLO PICASSO –

2.1 A CASE STUDY OF AN EVERLASTING GENIUS

It is difficult to categorize Picasso in a specific genre, or time line, or phase, because of his ingenuity, exemplary and highly creative artistic abilities.

Picasso's technique was flawless; he was academically trained by his father. It's not easy to explain how an artist works. Picasso started to make a drawing, going into a direction, the observer can't figure out what he is about to do, he was breaking a habit. It is thought to be a woman, then suddenly it is a goat. But then his pen goes on and he transforms it into a fish. And it is just a never-ending process. And that is what was interesting about Picasso, to see where his mind would take him.

Picasso was born in Malaga in the South of Spain in 1881. At first the midwife thought that he'd been still born, in desperation the doctor, who was his uncle, puffed cigar smoke into his face, where upon little Pablo came to life with a great roar. At the end of his life, 90 years later, Picasso replayed the scene of his birth in a gory drawing.

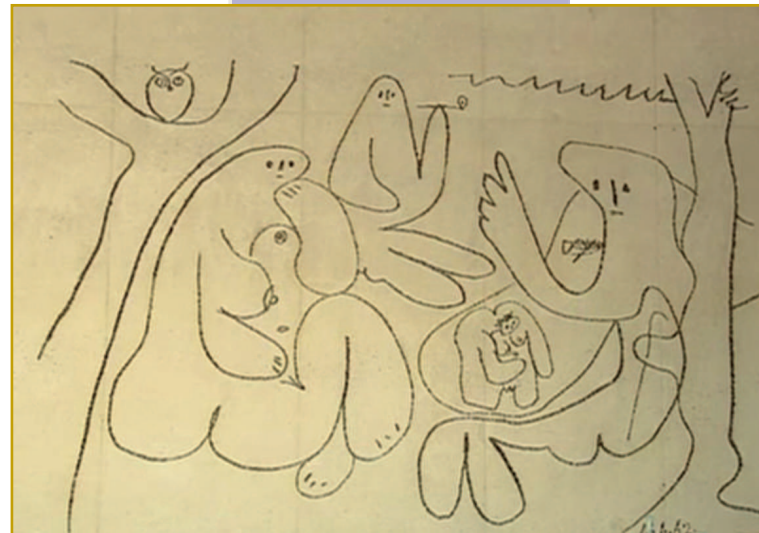


Fig. 686 – Picasso



Fig. 687 – Picasso

Fig. 688-690: Drawings resembling Mother Mary– Picasso



Fig. 688



Fig. 689



Fig. 690

Picasso was named Pablo, after his famous uncle who was a canon in the amazing baroque cathedral. Catholicism, and the rituals of the cathedral, was part of his life and of his family's life. He came of an renowned line of knights and clerics. His great uncle Pedro, lived as a hermit in the hills above Córdoba. There was the Arch Bishop of Lamar and Captain General of Peru. Later in his life, Picasso

claimed to be an atheist, but his widow, Jacqueline, told that he was more Catholic than the pope.

By the time he died in France in April of 1973, had created a staggering 22 000 works of Art in a variety of mediums, including sculpture, ceramics, mosaics, stage design and graphic Arts. Picasso's was always searching for the greatest life.

Picasso was brought up in the Plaza de Moureze a rather possessive and bossy mother. His father, like most un-involved fathers, was almost never at home. Running the Art School, running the museum. He went to bull fights, he was famous for being a witch in the local café and for going to whore houses. But as Picasso grew up he would see more of his father, because it was his father who taught him how to draw.

Picasso's father, Don José, was a painter, and usually thought of as a very bad painter. Above all a painter of pigeons. The town hall of Malaga bought this painting of pigeons in 1878. One of the most famous stories of Picasso's youth tells of an incident that occurred when Picasso was about 13 or 14 years old and his father, Don José, who has been training him as a painter left him to paint the legs of the pigeon in one of his paintings. Picasso became one of the greatest pigeon painters of all times. And we can only think of the *"Dove of peace"*, which is in fact a pigeon. As he told me once: *"Given the enormous amount of time my father put into painting pigeons, I have gone into pigeon painting too. I'm repaying him in my pigeons."*



Fig. 691: Picasso's father.



Fig. 692: Painting of the pigeons by Picasso's father.

Fig. 693: The ruins of the Moorish Castle.



The Moorish Castle which dominates Malaga with its crumbling hanging gardens and its dungeons and battlements, used to be Picasso's favourite playground. He loved going there because it was where the gypsies use to hang out, and he loved spending mornings with the gypsies, because they use to teach him tricks.

They taught him cante jondo, they taught him flamenco, and they even taught him how to smoke a cigarette up one

nostril and this kingship stayed with him for the rest of his life.



Fig. 694: Painting of perhaps one of the gypsies – Picasso.

When Picasso was 10, his father lost his job at the local museum, and the family left sunny Mediterranean Malaga for cold, wet, blustery La Coruña, the most Northwestern point of Spain. They all hated it there. His father had a good job teaching at the local Art school and they had a decent apartment.

Picasso's first drawing that we know of, was done at the age of 10 and it is not a particularly brilliant drawing. He said he drew like Raphael, but its nothing like Raphael, its much rather like Monett? He became a great draftsman at the Art school. Most student's drawings were as dead as the plaster casts they are drawing but somehow Picasso's drawing is so sensitive and so alive and so sexy that it was obvious that he had to be on his way of becoming a great master.



Fig. 695: Painting done from sculptures in the studio – Picasso.

Picasso loved plaster as a medium, the whiteness, the dirtiness, the mess of the plaster to bronze, which he felt, was museumy and expensive and grand and too luxurious. Picasso always felt that his sculptures were magical, that they were like a witch doctors fetishes, they were Shamans' creations. Paloma Picasso (Picasso's daughter answers) *"I think they were very dear to him. Actually he never parted from his sculptures, or he never parted from the originals. And usually there were two of each made. One he kept and one he sold and he could always hang on to them. And they were very much part of the memorabilia, the furniture."*



Fig. 696: Plaster of paris goat – Picasso.



Fig. 697: *The bearded tramp* – Picasso.



Fig. 698: *Picasso's sister Concepción* – Picasso.

The streets of La Coruña were famous for their glassed in balconies and Picasso enjoyed exploring the place. He was only 13, but his father kept him working away at models like the bearded tramp, and the Malegaon beggar girl who inspired what he called his first real paintings. Paintings he would keep until his dying day. Despite all this precocious abilities, Picasso very nearly gave up painting while he was in La Coruña.

His sister Concepción developed Diphtheria and in those days it was a very fatal disease. Picasso - age 13 - made a vow to God, that if his sister, whom he particularly loved, lived, he would never paint again. Concepción died, and he did paint again. The result of this was, that for the rest of his life, young woman, young girls, in a way had to be sacrificed on the altar of Picasso's Art. And it explains his relationship with so many women. It explains his identification with the Minotaur, the figure to whom girls, virgins and maidens had to be sacrificed. It explained his tenderness, his compassion, and the extraordinary sweetness of many of his images of young woman. And it also explains a darker side of menace that was always there. It is so typical of Picasso's life, this paradox, this ambivalence of everything that he loved. Don José hated La Coruña, hated the weather, hated his colleges and on top of everything else his beloved daughter had died.



Fig. 699: Painting resembling the paintings done with the death of his sister, showing the paradox, the ambivalence of everything he loved – Picasso.



Fig. 700: The Minotaur, the figure to whom girls, virgins, maidens had to be sacrificed in his paintings – Picasso.

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Fig. 701: First communion of his sister Lola – Picasso.



In the Spring of 1985, they moved to Barcelona and there he taught in the great Art school. Although Picasso had been enrolled in the local Art school, he was also an apprentice to a religious painter. Because his father thought that there was a lot of money in religious painting and a lot of fame to be made as the family had these religious decedents and it seemed like a good idea. His first religious painting was the first communion of his sister Lola. Instead of having a priest in the conventional way there is a clumsy altar boy who is fiddling with the vase of flowers. Only two of the candles are lit. And I think this is a deliberate piece of allergy because there was a son who died. And this is a reference of the two living children, Lola and Pablo and the two who died, the baby boy and Concepción.



Fig. 702: *Science and Charity* – Picasso.

The allegory “*Science and Charity*” was painted by Picasso when he was 15. The painting was intended, as a tribute to Picassos’ uncle Salvador, who was a very well know doctor in Malaga, and whom the family depended on for some of their finances. Picasso couldn’t stand his uncle, but all the same, the doctor represented uncle Salvador but is played by his father Don José. The girl in bed is in fact a beggar girl, a gypsy girl they found in the street. And after she was through posing she pinched the blanket. The nun is not a nun, the nun is a boy dressed up as a nun, in borrowed habit. Morbid subjects as this were very much in fashion. In this case the allegory is a rather up beat one of how great charity and science work together. Science is represented by the doctor and charity by the nun. There is a rather desolated feeling of how all is not well, that the girl is going to die. It is done in the memory of Concepción, that is why it comes through in this painting.

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Fig. 703



Fig. 704



Fig. 705

Fig. 706: Els Quatre Gats Tavern, focalpoint of Picasso's life in Barcelona



The celebrated tavern Els Quatre Gats "4Gats" in Gatrallaan which was a focal point of Picasso's Barcelona life. It was here at Els Quatre Gats that Picasso made his mark as a brilliant draftsman in a show of drawings of his fellow painters, writers and students. No girls. It would not have been respectable.



Fig. 707

Fig. 703-707: Drawings of his fellow painters, writers and students



Fig. 708: *Evening out in Paris* – Picasso.

Robbert Rosenblum from New York University says:

“Everything pointed to Paris. Paris was the mecca of the Art world. So anybody born outside of the capital would dream of coming to Paris to see where all the action was. Picasso had Spanish friends there, friends from Barcelona. You know it is the usual mythology of La bohème. You know addicts, not heat in the winter, unbearable heat in the summer, communal sleeping, sharing beds, eight hour shifts, etc., etc. And a lot of this stuff sounds like Puccini Opera but in Picassos’ case it was truth.”

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Fig. 709: Casagemas – Picasso.

On his first trip to Paris, Picasso was accompanied by his best friend Carles Casagemas, only a year older than himself but already an anarchist and a decadent, he was also a gifted poet and painter, but already addicted to drink and drugs and probably a manic depressant, and he was totally dependent on Picasso.

Casagemas ended his life in February 1901. Picasso had fixed him up with a girl named Charmaine, but Casagemas was impotent or sexually dysfunctional and Charmaine told him that the relationship was over. With a final farewell dinner, Casagemas tried and failed to shoot Charmaine and then shot himself. Picasso was away in Madrid at the time but back in Paris he would commemorate his friend's death with two agonizing portraits, complete with bullet holes.

Three years after Casagemas blew his brains out Picasso set to work on a puzzling allegory to be called "La vie". Until recently it had been something of a mystery. Why

was Casagemas holding his hand out like that? Why was Charmaine clinging to him like that? What was all this about? The answer, probably has to do with Picasso's recent experience and discovery of Tarot Cards.

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Fig. 710: Occultic Tarot Cards



Anyone familiar with occult iconography, would recognize the upward downward gesture. It symbolizes the most famous of all mystical axioms: *"What ever is bellow is like that which is above, as all things are made from one."*

Fig. 711: La Vie – Picasso



Fig. 712a-c: Paintings from Picasso's Blue Period.



Fig. 712a



Fig. 712b



Fig. 712c

X-rays reveal that underneath the figure of Casagemas is a self-portrait. It was originally about himself. He chose the name "La vie" and characteristically turns "La vie" upside down. But what this painting is all about is death. Later Picasso said that his Blue Period was inspired but Casagemas' suicide.

People always talked if Picasso's Blue Period was some sort of special invention of the young Picasso and there are all sort of myths that have to do with blue pigment might have been cheaper, nothing of the sort. Blue was really the colour of the moment and it was anonymous with the sense of the spiritual of the theoretical. It was a world that had to do with the airborne with the feelings of a floating experience, anything that said good-bye to hard material facts of the 19th century and there are artist galore who worked in a similar tone. So that Picasso's blueness is just part of a general mood, an effort which is spiritually, saintly melancholic.

Fig. 713: Au Lapin Agile.



This quint little building, Lapin Agile, hasn't changed since the beginning of the century. It was the head courters of Bourder Picasso, Picasso's Gang. It consisted of writers and painters and Picasso's girlfriends. And they use to come here night, after night, after night, and Freddy use to play away on his guitar. Freddy had two sons; both of them had bad habits. If he recalls correctly one of the brothers were murdered at Lapin Agile. There use to be these fights between the artists and the Apache, the local gangsters. Because the Apache use to come to get their girls back from the painters who use to made off with them and brought them to Lapin Agile. And one of the most famous paintings associated with this place is called "Au Lapin Agile".

It is a painting of Picasso in Harlequin clothing with Charmaine, with whom he was now having an affair, but who was the cause for Casagemas' suicide. The disguise that he favoured most was a Harlequin disguise, but it wasn't a jolly Harlequin it was a rather satanic Harlequin or at least an ambivalent figure. David Gilmore says that *"Andolusions favoured carnival, carnival was all about masking"*. Picasso must have observed Carnivals as can be seen in the painting. The Harlequin is in Carnival and the figure can be a figure of fun but also shade off into a figure of sinister, dangerous, threatening. When wearing a mask, a person can't be seen or identified because of the mask on the face.

Fig. 714: Picasso in Harlequin clothing with Charmaine.



Fig. 715: Picasso portrayed as a rather satanic Harlequin – not jollie.

It allows the person to do whatever he want. It's easy to engage in whatever misbehaviour of choice, sexual, political, whatever the case may be. Masking lets a person experience things with different identities, it can literally change someone into something else.

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Fig. 716: When wearing a mask, a person can't be seen or identified because of the mask on the face. Picasso.



Jeffrey Weiss has the following statement about Picasso's works: *"It is unusual in its size and of course Picasso painted very few large scale pictures and when he did they were always major statements. And the Saltimbanks certainly represents that kind of summing up. The realm which the Saltimbanks occupy in that picture was actually observed by Picasso on the outskirts of Paris. It's the playgrounds where the itinerary performers played and this is where Picasso was able to watch acrobats and performers. It was also a place where he could observe them living there marginal life. The fairgrounds themselves were literally separated geographically and socially from the centre of the city and the realm is sometimes referred to as a vague realm. Almost literally the outskirts of the town, as it represented another place, another space or time."*

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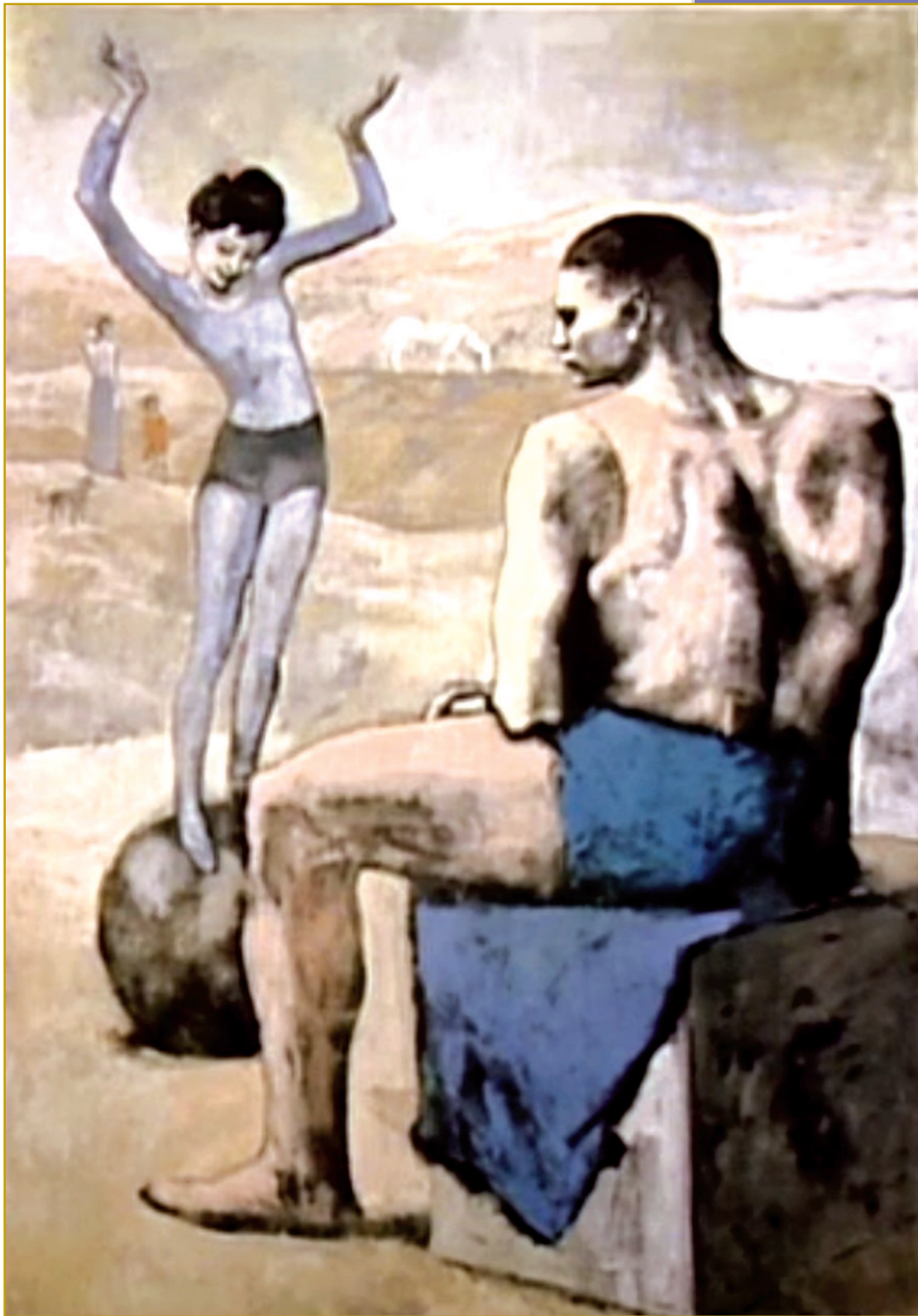
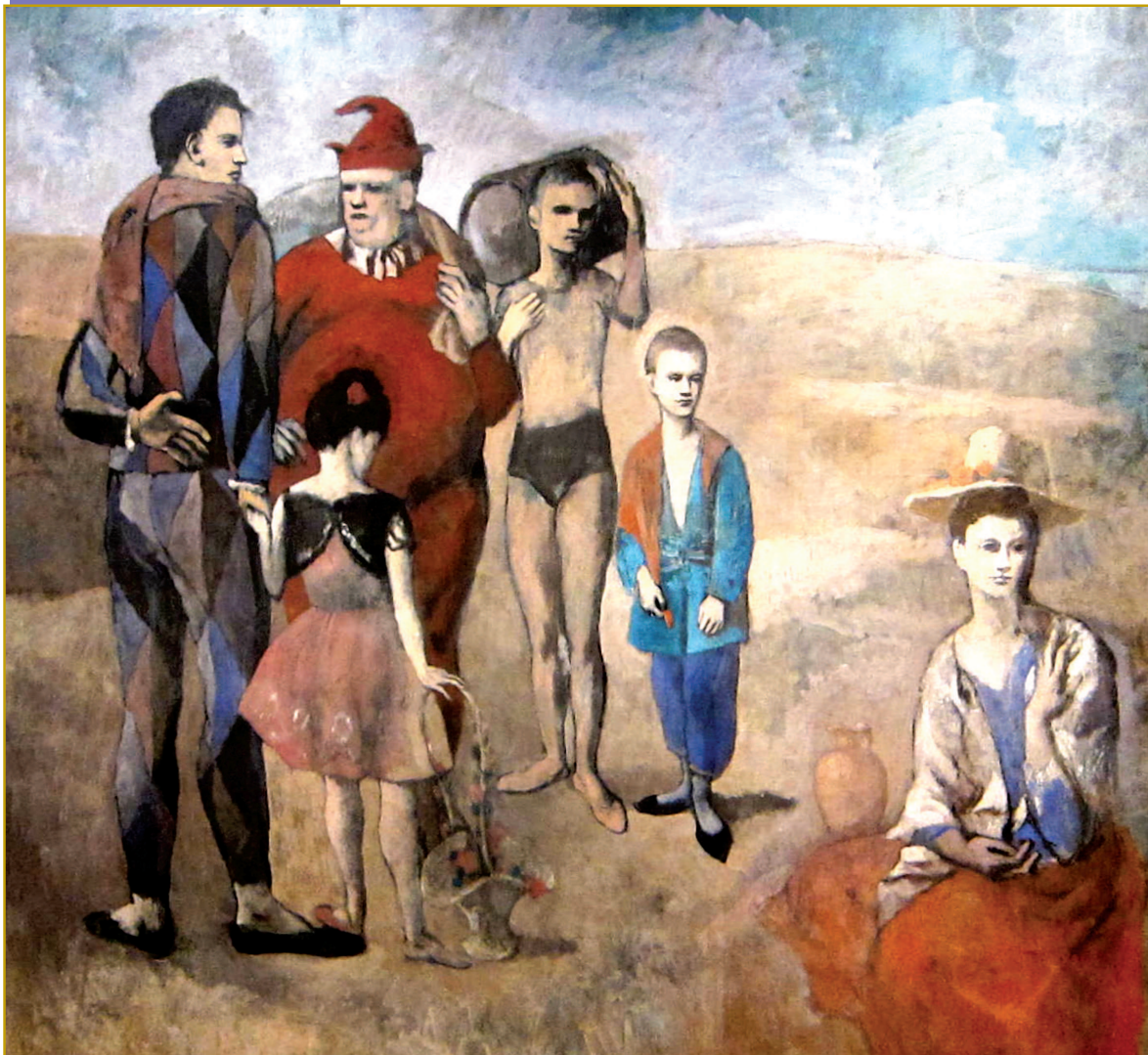


Fig. 717: The fairgrounds were separated from the centre of the city – Picasso.

Fig. 718: Family of Saltimbanks– Picasso.



When Picasso finally settled in Paris in 1904, he moved into the Le Bateau Lavoir. Known to poets as the acropolis of cubism. This ramshackle, wooden hovel subsequently burnt down. Outside was a little square with a fountain where a few months later he would meet the woman who would later become his first great love. Femandes Olivier had been living at the Le Bateau Lavoir since 1901. Picasso met her in 1904. She'd been a professional model since 1901; she posed for the greatest painters of the time. When Picasso arrived he saw her, she was a truly beautiful woman, she had almost oriental almond shaped eyes and she was shapely and luscious. She started living with him and one day he showed her how to smoke opium and he started smoking opium in 1905.

Fig. 719a-d: Four sketches of Femandes Olivier, Picasso's lover – Picasso.

From then onwards, they use to meet up with friends, either two or more times a week. Either at somebodies house or at his studio. It was opium that made Femandes feel her love for Picasso, it was under the effects of opium that she became aware of her love for Picasso.

By the spring of 1906, Picasso had been away from Spain for two years. He was desperate to get back, he wanted to go away for the summer, somewhere quiet, somewhere healthy, somewhere surreal. His great friend, the sculpture, had told him about Gonzol. A great deal of the journey had to be done on mule back. Final after hours and hours on the mules, they got to Gonzol and it was paradise. It was everything they wanted it to be and they settled in for the summer. And Picasso started to work.

When Picasso moved to a new locality, the new locality almost always reflected in his work. In Gonzol, this was not the case. The subject matter was mostly nude boys, a nude Femandes. It had nothing to do with the place, accept the colour. The colours of the earth, the colours of in these beautiful paintings he did of her. Particularly the big tall nude he did , are these colours of this earth, of this red limestone. He embarked on a completely new style, it was free, it was idyllic, Femandes was his muse, his model. He was greatly inspired by her. There was a feeling of illusion and emotion in the work.

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Fig. 719a



Fig. 719b

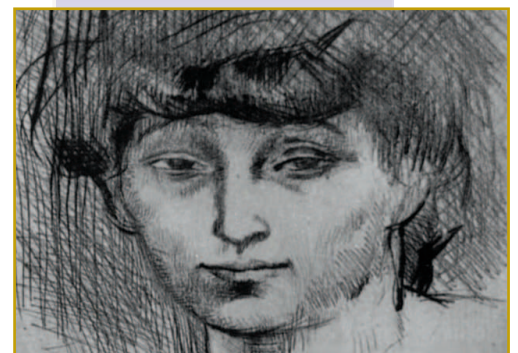


Fig. 719c

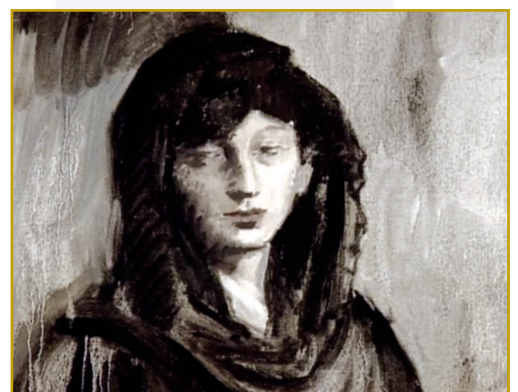


Fig. 719d

Fig. 719a-d: Sketches of Femandes Olivier–Picasso.

Fig. 720-725: Picasso's Pink period – The subject matter was mostly nude boys, and a nude Femandes, painted in Gozol.



Fig. 720



Fig. 721



Fig. 722



Fig. 723

Fig. 725

Fig. 724





Picasso and Femandes spent 10 weeks in the summer of 1906 in tiny rooms, how Picasso managed to paint is unthinkable. One of the paintings was virtually seven feet tall and there was six more big paintings, massive drawings, sketchbooks, he brought back bits of wood and carved them. They were sublimely happy and Femandes

wrote in some of her letters that they were having a kind of honeymoon and they were blissfully happy and once they got back to Paris they were never really happy again.



Fig. 726: The rooms where Picasso worked in Gozol.

Fig. 727: Femandes, a sensual, classissical goddess.



Paris was boiling hot, the studio was stifling, bed bugs had invested everything and mice had gotten into the place. Over the next few months, Femandes' image would totally change. From being a sensual, classissical goddess, Femandes would be metamorphosed into a primitive earth mother, sturdy as a turnip to quote a recent model of Picasso's Gertrude Stein. Picasso would always insist that the principal influence on his work during this period was an even earlier manifestation of Spanish Art.

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Fig. 728: Femandes, would be metamorphosed into a primitive earth mother, sturdy as a turnip



When these primitive Iberian figures evolved in 3rd Century BC, they were put in the Louvre in 1906. Picasso was fascinated by them, this was something he could use. They came from the part of the world from which he came from and he said to Apollina one day, one of his great friends - a poet - *"I'd love to have those"*. Unfortunately Apollina's secretary who was a gay, criminal, gigolo, overheard all this and he decided to go off and steel a couple of them so that Picasso could have his wish.

Fig. 729: Primitive Iberian figures



He went off to the Louvre where they were shown, saw that the guard was asleep, and took one out of its case and stuck it into his trousers and walked out with it. So successful was it that he went back the next day and stole another one. And Picasso paid 20 or 30 francs for them and they were very useful to him, because they were embodied with the sacred fire that he was always after. This was the sacred fire of pre-historic Spain and as usual he did what he could with it until yet another Spanish source took its place.

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Picasso was one of the earlier admirers of El Greco. When he was a student he copied El Greco and horrified his father, that his son should paint something so outrageous and unmannered as El Greco. El Greco was largely obscure and under-appreciated. Picasso's friend Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945) acquired El Greco's masterpiece, the *Opening of the Fifth Seal* (*The Fifth Seal of the Apocalypse or The Vision of Saint John*), in 1897. While Picasso was working on *Les Femmes d'Alger*, he visited his friend Ignacio Zuloaga in his studio in Paris and studied El Greco's *Opening of the Fifth Seal*. The relation between *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the *Opening of the Fifth Seal* was pinpointed in the early 1980s, when the stylistic similarities and the relationship between the motifs and visually identifying qualities of both works were analysed. El Greco's painting which Picasso studied over and over in Zuloaga's house inspired not only the size, format, and composition of *Les Femmes d'Alger* but it inspired its apocalyptic power. *Les Femmes d'Alger* (*The Young Ladies of Avignon*, and originally titled *The Brothel of Avignon*), portrays five nude female prostitutes from a brothel on Avinyó Street in Barcelona. Each figure is depicted in a upsetting confrontational manner and none are conventionally feminine. The women appear as slightly menacing and rendered with angular and disjointed body shapes.



Fig. 730: Opening of the Fifth Seal – El Greco

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Fig. 731: *Les Femmes d'Alger* – Picasso

Two are shown with African mask-like faces and three with faces in the Iberian style of Picasso's native Spain, giving them a savage aura. In this adaptation of Primitivism and abandonment of perspective in favour of a flat, two-dimensional picture plane, Picasso makes a radical departure from traditional European painting. The work is widely considered to be inspiring in the early development of both cubism and modern Art. *Les Femmes d'Alger* was revolutionary and controversial, and led to wide anger and disagreement, even amongst his closest associates and friends.

Picasso had taken a cellar in the Le Bateau Lavoir, a dark cellar, it was very very hot, he stripped naked in order to paint it. He was 5'3, the woman about 8' tall and night after night he would work away at this painting, his mistress Femandes locked upstairs, sitting waiting for Picasso who would forever be in a worse temper. And then when he was battling away with the Demoiselles, Picasso found a solution. He paid a visit to the Ethnical Geographical Museum. Tribal Art was to have an enormous impact, not only on the Demoiselles but on Picasso's view of Art as having a magic function. In that ill-lit, filthy, smelly, cluttered museum, he later said, *I understood that the Negroes's used their sculptures as weapons. Art could kill, it could exorcise*. Tribal Art made Picasso understand why he was a painter.

Fig. 732: Detail from Les Demoiselles d'Avignon – Picasso





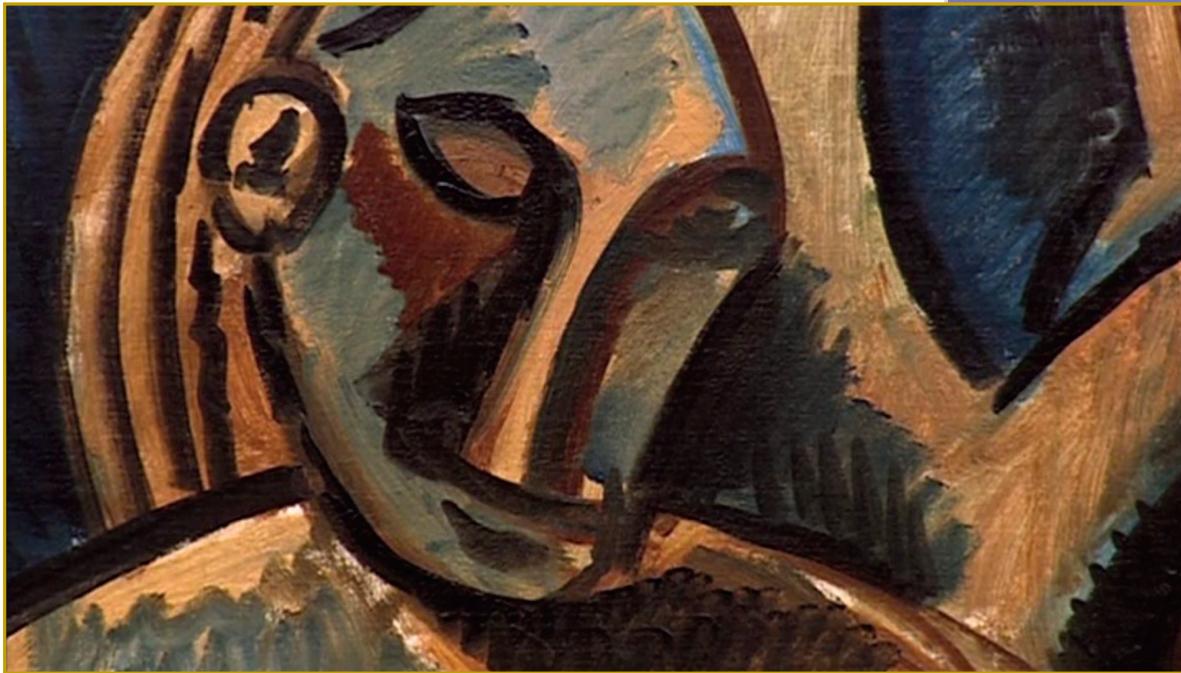
Fig. 733: Detail of Nudes in the Forest

The painting *Nudes in the Forest* is probably the most important painting at the Château de Castille and Picasso used to come quite often and would admire the painting. He used to say that it was all done in one go, like a Van Gogh, with this large amount of energy.



Fig. 733: Nudes in the Forest

Fig. 733: Detail of Nudes in the Forest



Cubism is a much less cubical, geometrical, analytical thing than one should think and need to boil down in a way to understand the form of development. But there is also something shadowy and dark and haunting about cubism that is even more compelling. To a degree Picasso was interested in various ways to magic and that cubism itself should probably be related to that theme of Picasso's work and his life. There is no question that the transformation of objects and figures and faces in cubism had an enchanted quality. When talking about breaking down and remaking the body or face we are talking about something that is almost a supernatural discipline. It is a display on the part of the artist of mastery over his subject in complete control almost like a godlike object.



Fig. 734: A nude done in Picasso's early cubistic approach.



Fig. 735: A cubistic still life painting – Picasso.



Fig. 736: Cubistic painting by Georges Braque.



Fig. 736: Cubistic painting by Picasso – Still Life with a Bottle of Rum.

Cubism, a silly word invented by an antagonistic critic, was in fact in partnership with another painter of the name Georges Braque. For the next seven years the two artists were inseparable, *like two mountaineers roped together* like Braque said. In Paris, Picasso and Braque, visited each other almost every evening, to check up on what the other one had done and when they went away for the summer they worked even more closely together. Looking at the two paintings, one by Braque and one by Picasso, they are extremely alike but there are certain things, which differentiate the two. The painting by Braque is a still life, there are bullfights nearby, over the frontier in Spain and references to the bullfights are clear. There is the two bandoliers, with the spikes on it, reference to a bull-fighting poster, a bottle, more than one glass, and the composition is fairly readable. In Picasso's painting, it is more referencable, with reference to the letters CER, a table, a bottle of rum, glass and a music sheet. It is less exquisitely painted than Braque who would spend months on a painting where Picasso would do it in a much more summary, direct and graphical way. Although it is easier to see the similarities than the dissimilarities, the more one look, the more one see that they are done by two separate painters with two separate visions.

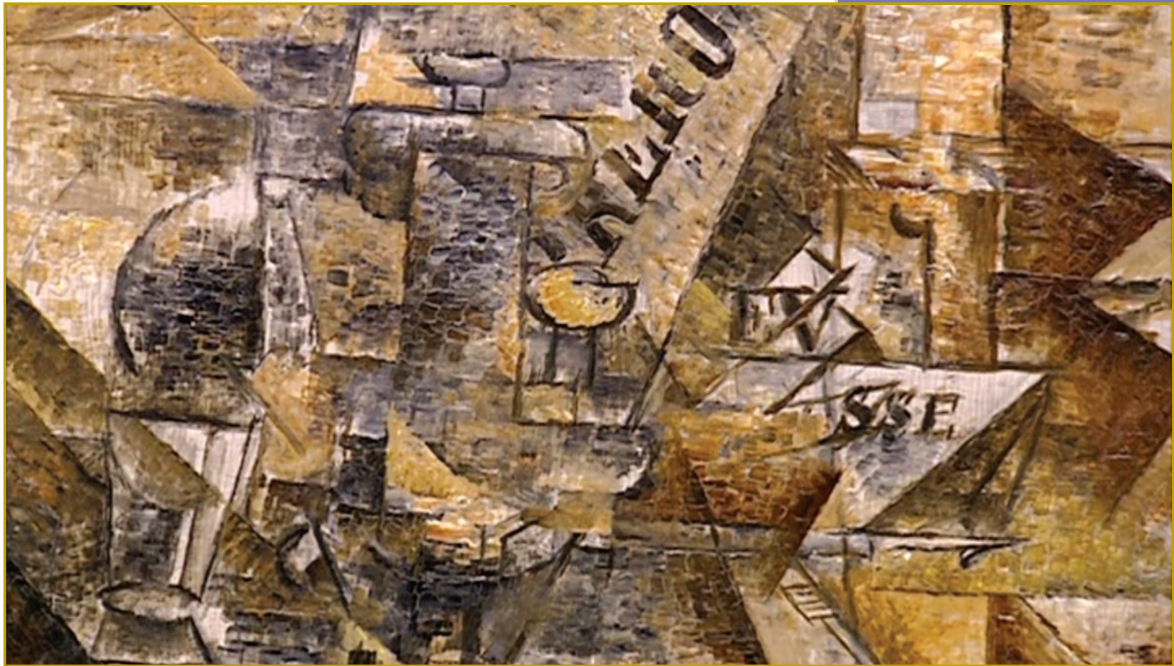


Fig. 736: Detail from the Cubistic painting by Georges Braque.



Fig. 736: Detail from the Cubistic painting by Picasso.



Fig. 737: Detail from the Cubistic painting of a violin with the letters E V A – Picasso.

Fig. 737: Cubistic painting of a violin with the letters E V A very secretly added – Picasso.

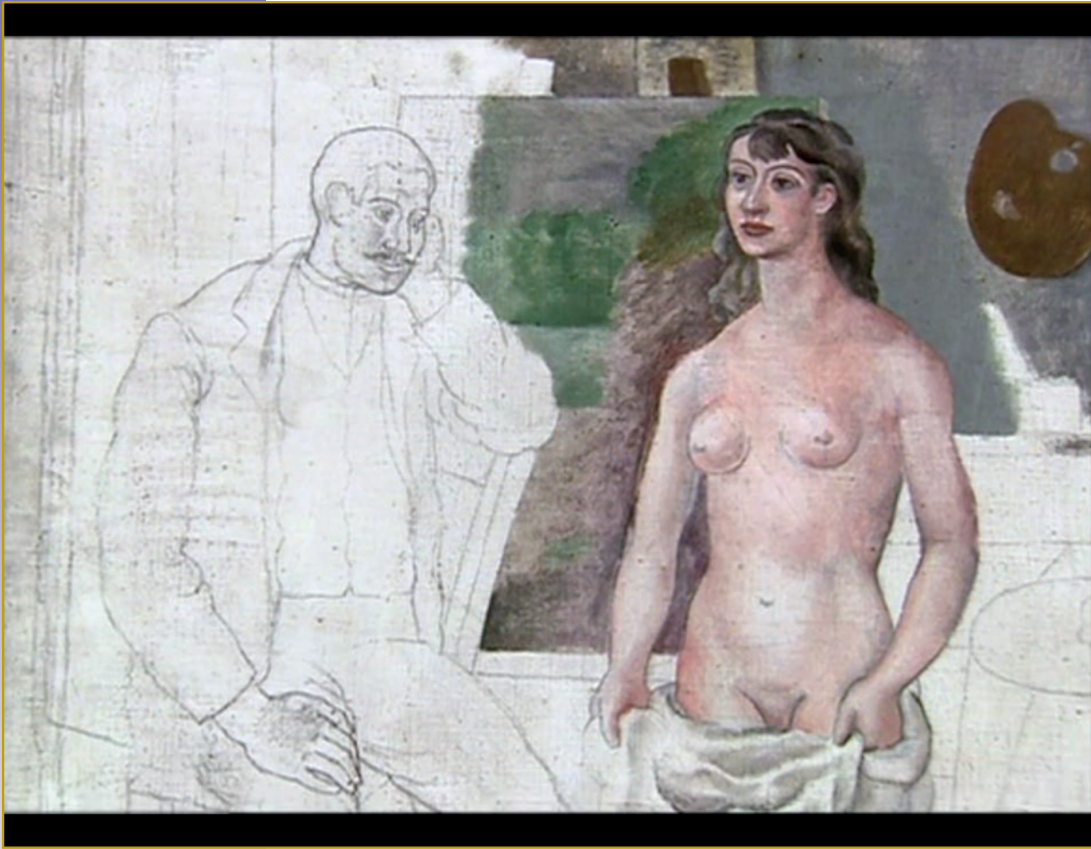


Fernandes loved his Blue period and she loved his Rose period because she was his muse, his model. But she didn't understand cubism. They were no longer at the Le Bateau Lavoir. Picasso left Olivier for Marcelle Humbert, who he called Eva Gouel. Picasso included declarations of his love for Eva in many Cubist works. Sometime in 1913 Picasso's beloved Eva fell ill. She told people that she had Tuberculosis, as she didn't want people to know that she had Cancer, probably Cancer of the breast. To judge of this amazing image done in 1914 in which Picasso shows her tenderly but also monstrosously. Her beautiful pointed breasts nailed to her body with an alternate set of nipples. By 1915 Eva would be confined to a clinic.

Fig. 738: Cubistic painting of Eva's pointed breasts nailed to her body – Picasso.



Fig. 739: Painting of Eva, found after Picasso's death – Picasso.



Picasso who would have a psychic terror of illness in woman ever since the death of his sister. To help him through this nightmarish ordeal he embarked on a very secretive affair with a woman called Gaby Lespinasse. As Eva lay dying, Picasso fell more and more in love with Gaby. He took her away to St. Tropez for a few days. He sent her love letters illustrated with watercolours of the rooms in which they stayed. He entwined his name with hers and told her he loved her in every possible colour. This puzzling painting, painted in 1914 in Avignon, was only found after Picasso's death, he kept it hidden ever since he painted it and showed nobody. And one could see why. On the right you could see Eva, it is almost the only figurative representation of her. It is probably one of the first attempts of him to leave Cubism and to try some sort of other representation of style. And then in December 1915 Eva died. Two months later Picasso asked Gaby to marry him but she turned him down. Picasso was more than ever tormented with grief and guilt, self-pity and despair.

Fig. 740a-b: Watercolours of the rooms in St Tropez, where Picasso stayed with Gaby – Picasso.



Fig. 740a



Fig. 740b

Fig. 741: Self-portrait in the form of a Harlequin – Picasso.



Remember too that this was one of the more darker periods of World War I and this is when Picasso's closest friends were away at the front and he felt very alone. Shortly before Eva died, he expressed his despair in a self-portrait in the form of what else, a Harlequin. For many years nobody even realized that Picasso left a profile of himself, a shadowy one of the white rectangles of the Harlequins holes.

2.2 CONCLUSION

In the summer of 1918, Picasso married Olga Khokhlova, a ballerina with Sergei Diaghilev's troupe, for whom Picasso was designing a ballet, *Erik Satie's Parade*, in Rome; they spent their honeymoon near Biarritz in the villa of glamorous Chilean Art patron Eugenia Errázuriz. Khokhlova introduced Picasso to high society, formal dinner parties, and all the social niceties attendant to the life of the rich in 1920s Paris. The two had a son, Paulo, who would grow up to be a dissolute motorcycle racer and chauffeur to his father. Khokhlova's insistence on social propriety clashed with Picasso's bohemian tendencies and the two lived in a state of constant conflict. During the same period that Picasso collaborated with Diaghilev's troupe, he and Igor Stravinsky collaborated on *Pulcinella* in 1920. Picasso took the opportunity to make several drawings of the composer.

In 1927 Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a secret affair with her. Picasso's marriage to Khokhlova soon ended in separation rather than divorce, as French law required an even division of property in the case of divorce, and Picasso did not want Khokhlova to have half his wealth. The two remained legally married until Khokhlova's death in 1955. Picasso carried on a long-standing affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter and fathered a daughter with her, named Maya.



Fig. 742: Sketch of Stravinsky – Picasso.

Marie-Thérèse lived in the vain hope that Picasso would one day marry her, and hanged herself four years after Picasso's death. Throughout his life Picasso maintained several mistresses in addition to his wife or primary partner. Picasso was married twice and had four children by three women.



Fig. 743: Picasso, an everlasting genius.

3. CHRISTIAAN DIEDERICKS – A CASE STUDY OF A SOUTH AFRICAN ARTIST

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Christiaan Diedericks – is a professional practising contemporary artist, educator and creative development specialist with proven facilitation skills and experience in education, soft skills, technical skills and (project) management skills, as well as extensive experience in the specific areas of new media, printmaking, graphic design, creative process and also the design, implementation and facilitation of curriculum programmes in-line with national qualification Initiatives.

Inherent ability to collaborate effectively within a team in order to realise organisational objectives through transformational leadership. Motivator with well developed communication and interpersonal skills and commitment to excellence in Art practice, research, education and conceptual development.

Fine Arts Cum Laude graduate from the University of Potchefstroom, Christiaan Diedericks has created an impressive body of work over the years. He went on to complete his Masters in Fine Arts Cum Laude (practical component) at the University of Pretoria in 2000.

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Diedericks has exhibited extensively throughout Southern Africa, as well as internationally. His work has been exhibited in the USA, Japan, Finland, Spain, Germany, Turkey, Poland, Belgium, England, Sweden and France, where he worked, as artist in residence, at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris.

Diedericks has also worked in New York, after receiving the prestigious Ampersand Foundation Fellowship, where his work was exhibited to critical acclaim in the New York Blade newspaper, at the gallery 5+5 in Brooklyn, in December 2007. Diedericks, amongst his many achievements, has also been awarded artist residencies at the Frans Masereel Centrum, Belgium; The Halka Art Project, Istanbul, Turkey; The Venice Print Studio for large format printmaking, Italy and the Chhaap Foundation in India recently awarded Diedericks with an AIR in June/July 2013. In 2006 Christiaan was the winner of the coveted Kanna award for Fine Arts at the ABSA KKNK festival in Oudtshoorn for his exhibition Secrets and Lies: Her Majesty's Ivory Tower. He has also been given numerous grants over a broad spectrum, which range from a NAC International bursary for workshops in non-toxic printmaking in 1999 from the Grande Prairie Regional College in Alberta, Canada, to being chosen to appear on the 13th "The Apprentice" on SABC 3 in Johannesburg in 2005.

3.2 COUNTERPOINT

Counterpoint, artist/printmaker Christiaan Diedericks' most recent creative offering were on exhibition in Pretoria at FRIED Contemporary Art Gallery, during April/May 2013. In this exhibition, the artist is especially showing his abilities as a highly skilled printmaker. A large selection of sketches, watercolour monoprints, linocuts and drawings were on display.

In a nutshell, this new body of work is an environmental call to action to stop some of the brainless things we do to our environment. For many years the artist's fascination with dystopia (and utopia for that matter) fuelled his work and his most recent works, lyrical and disturbing at the same time, move the viewer to some serious introspection. The title for this show was borrowed from a book with the same title by American photography duo, Robert and Shana Parke-Harrison. The artist's favourite photographers. According to American animal rights activist Gedden Cascadia, every kind of living being on earth has a definite quantity of time to survive before unavoidable extinction begins to affect it.

However, true to his style, there is always a second 'hidden' narrative in Diedericks' images. This second narrative, echoing similar issues in the artist's previous work, still deals with issues of gender, sexuality and masculinity and is deliberately not disclosed by the artist.

Fig. 744: Into the Void – Diedericks.



3.2.1 COUNTERPOINT – INTO THE VOID

In his work *Into the Void*, a large watercolour monoprint, Diedericks addresses the issue of the senseless harvesting of fish from our oceans, pollution and fish in captivity merely for our own visual pleasure. The Koi fish in the work have a rather interesting history and mythology. Both sides of the globe are acknowledged in their scientific hybridization, which is actually a very delicate matter. If they are released into the wild they will revert to their normal gray coloring within several generations.

- Watercolour monoprint on 350gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 50 x 180cm
- Printed at the Venice print Studio for large format printmaking, Murano, Italy, November 2012



The Japanese recognized Koi fish not just for their beauty, but also for their ability to ‘transform the observer into other-worldly states of perception’. These altered states of perception ultimately lead to the attraction of high energy - and this manifests in the form of prosperity of all kinds in our lives. The irony in specifically choosing Koi fish for this work should therefore be quite obvious to the viewer. A secondary narrative in the work is provoked by the obvious absence of water in the work. Water, as an ancient symbol for healing and regeneration, is disturbingly ‘left away’ from the image, which enhances the tension in the work. It creates a very unusual perspective in which the subject is floating on his back, although he peculiarly appears to be standing upright.

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Fig. 745: Earth Elegy – Diedericks.





3.2.2 COUNTERPOINT – EARTH ELEGY

In *Earth Elegy* the subject in the work is spitting acid, killing an endangered butterfly, the *Cethosia Biblis*, common name Red Lacewing. On a secondary level this work is the artist's response to how easily people 'kill' each other with words, without sometimes even thinking twice about the power of a single word.

Watercolour monoprint on 350gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 50 x 180cm

Printed at the Venice print Studio for large format printmaking Murano, Italy, November 2012

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Fig. 746: Transfusion – Diedericks.



3.2.3 COUNTERPOINT – TRANSFUSION

In another monoprint *Transfusion* a young man is depicted feeding a single Poppy plant with his own blood in a seemingly desperate attempt to sustain what could soon so easily be the last existing plant of this species. The blue *Papilio Ulysses* butterfly in the work was also an intentional symbol and its name derives from Ulysses, the Roman name for the Greek hero, Odysseus, a character in ancient Greek literature – this is a sly comment from the artist on the human race desperately in need of a ‘hero’ to save us from a very possible disaster – extinction.

Watercolour monoprint on 350gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 50 x 130cm

Printed at the artist’s studio in Cape Town, December 2012



Cascadia further states “humanity is now at the point where civilizations are no longer isolated. We are a global species with one global society and, more and more, one global culture. Our destruction is no longer limited to one region or one continent. Everything we do have global ramifications, the likes of which have never been seen before.”

The Earth is not my mother. The Earth is not my anything. The Earth is not mine. I am merely a trespasser who is trying to do as little damage as possible while mitigating the damage that is so casually inflicted by the countless other trespassers like me.

- Gedden Cascadia

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Fig. 747: The bleeding tree – Diedericks.



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3.2.4 COUNTERPOINT – THE BLEEDING TREE

Watercolour monoprint on 350gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 130 x 50cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, December 2012

The Bleeding Tree investigates the alarming issue of deforestation – the gradual elimination of the lungs of our planet. In this work the artist gives the upside-down tree a human face, a personality of its own. The explanation for this is simple; humans seem to believe that chopping down another tree is just a tree, but on the contrary, deforestation is clearing Earth's forests on a massive scale, often resulting in damage to the quality of the land. Forests still cover about 30 percent of the world's land area, but swaths the size of Panama are lost each and every year. The world's rain forests could completely vanish in a hundred years at the current rate of deforestation.

Deforestation has many negative effects on the environment. The most dramatic impact is a loss of habitat for millions of species. Seventy percent of Earth's land animals and plants live in forests, and many cannot survive the deforestation that destroys their homes. Deforestation also drives climate change. Forest soils are moist, but without protection from sun-blocking tree cover they quickly dry out. Trees also help perpetuate the water cycle by returning water vapor back into the atmosphere. Without trees to fill these roles, many former forests can quickly become barren deserts.

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Fig. 748: *Bloodline* – Diedericks.



3.2.5 COUNTERPOINT – BLOODLINE

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper

45 x 95cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, December 2012



In his monoprint *Bloodline* (inspired by a photograph with the same title by Robert and Shana Parke-Harrison), Diedericks investigates a heritage of destruction and neglect in terms of our environment. In short the word bloodline refers to all the members of a family group over generations, especially regarding characteristics common to that group – in this instance, the entire human race. The work depicts the ‘bloody trail’ the human race is leaving behind - imprinted on the earth - as part of our sad legacy; the heavily tattooed man is pivotal in the reading of this work.

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Fig. 749: The Gardner – Diedericks.

3.2.6 COUNTERPOINT – THE GARDNER

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 45 x 95cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, January 2013

The Gardener portrays a heavily tattooed man cradling a wooden heart as if protecting this precious natural object from a single suited figure in the background attempting to clear a mountain of waste. The irony about the heavily inked man is that printing inks used in advertising is one of the largest contributing factors in the pollution of our planet. The wooden heart made from cut-down trees, is also hugely ironic.



The man in the suit is a very sly comment from the artist about the unequivocal guilt of countless unethical corporations dumping waste all over our planet.

Landfill sites or incinerator plants where most of our waste ends up are very visual waste footprints. However, there are many invisible impacts such as methane, a greenhouse gas, released from landfill sites or toxins leaking out from waste sites into the land or water supplies. In the UK alone, quite literally, a mountain of waste is disposed of every year - over 400 million tonnes of it to be precise. The ever- higher levels of waste worldwide mean we are using natural resources at a faster and faster rate, putting an increasing strain on the planet's ability to deal with our waste.

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Virtually everything we use creates waste throughout its lifecycle. There is waste associated with the extraction, harvesting, manufacture or transport of materials and products; waste connected with using a product, e.g. a car using petrol or a toy using batteries; and then the harmful effects of waste disposal.

The conditions of the Earth will not remain the same in the future due to our ways of dealing with trash disposal. If people maintain the same approach to waste disposal, then our planet will face the catastrophe of global pollution and contamination. This will lead to massive dumps of household trash and commercial waste around the cities, poisons the air, rivers and oceans making water in them dangerous to people.

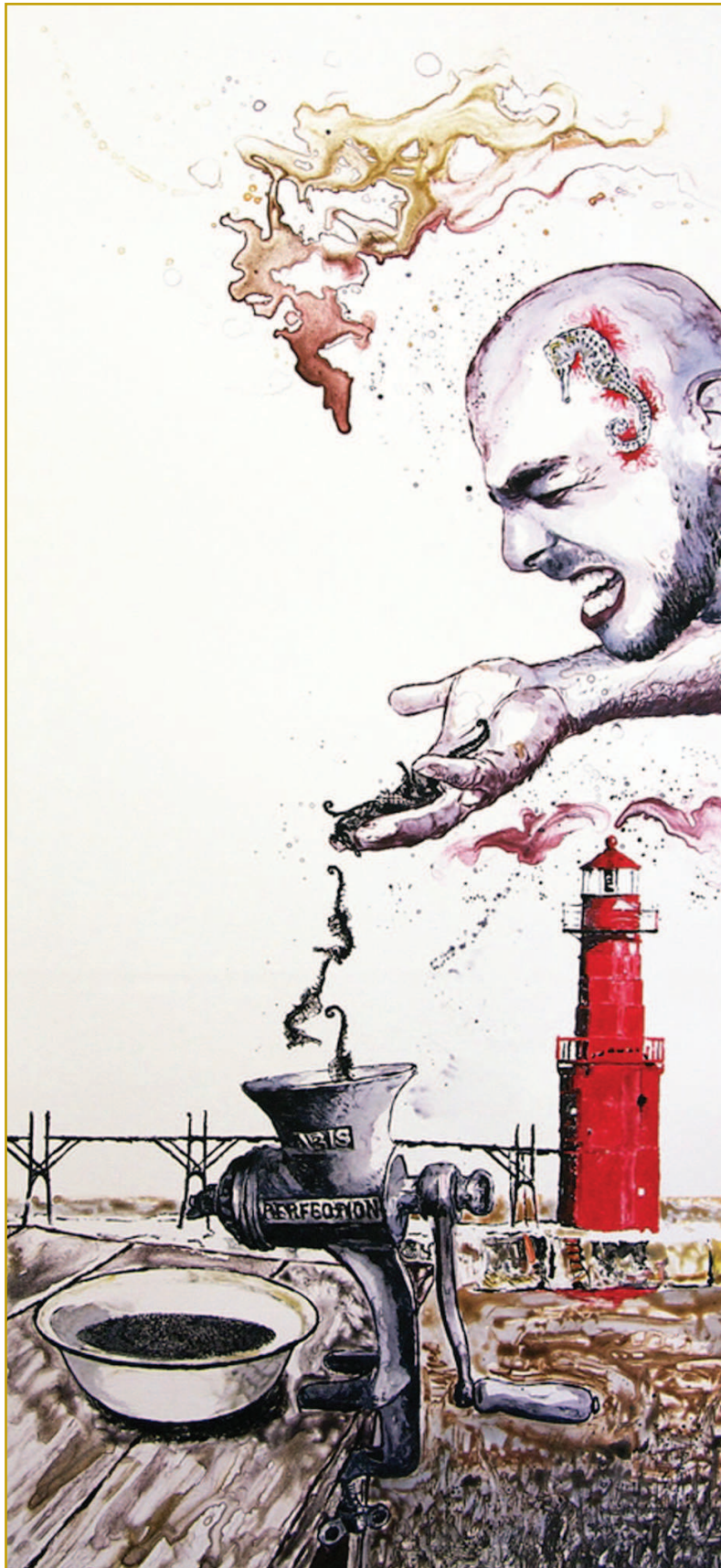
3.2.7 COUNTERPOINT – HARVEST

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 95 x 45cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, January 2013

In Harvest Diedericks puts a critical spotlight on the use of other often critically endangered species by humans as “remedies” for certain ailments. A quite disconcerting example is the harvest of the seahorse (Hippocampus), used in natural medicine, commonly prescribed by doctors who practice a form of alternative medicine called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Fig. 750: Harvest – Diedericks.



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These TCM doctors prescribe dried Seahorses ground into a powder to treat certain ailments, but the most common application of this powder is for men who have erectile dysfunction - hence the very specific non-literal depiction of an 'erect' lighthouse by the artist in the background of the work. Consuming ground-up Seahorses is a Natural medicine alternative to drugs such as Viagra and other medications engineered for similar reasons. Although this natural medicine is an alternative for treating ailments such as erectile dysfunction, it has created a very unnatural impact to all Seahorse species, and in turn the ocean reefs they call home. The question that arises for those seeking solutions to this negative impact on the Seahorse population and their environments is: How can the world's Seahorse population be protected when they feed a multi-billion dollar industry?

Western doctors question the effectiveness of the use of Seahorse as a "cure" for erectile-dysfunction.

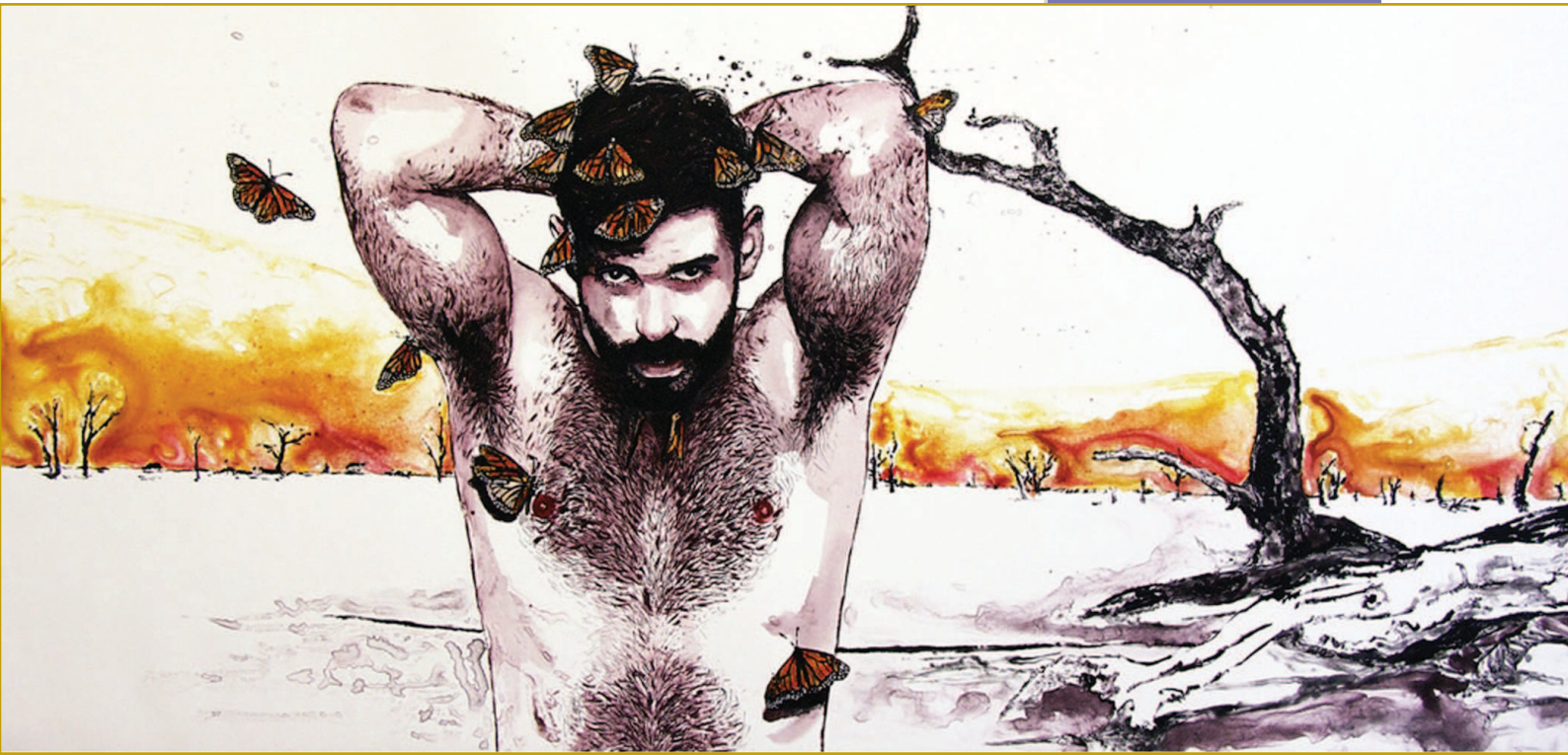
3.2.8 COUNTERPOINT – STOLEN SPRING

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 45 x 95cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, January 2013

Stolen Spring is a lyrical yet disturbing watercolour monoprint commenting on global warming.

Fig. 751: Stolen Spring – Diedericks.



Climate change is the single biggest environmental and humanitarian crisis of our time. The Earth's atmosphere is overloaded with heat-trapping carbon dioxide, which threatens large-scale disruptions in climate with disastrous consequences. We must act now to spur the adoption of cleaner energy sources at home and abroad. When it comes to connecting the dots between climate change, extreme weather and health, the lines are clear. The earth is saying something with record heat, drought, storms and fire.

In *Stolen Spring* a man covered with butterflies appears to be standing in a burning desert – butterflies hatched as spring arrived (as suggested by the chosen title), but in the absence of flowers they seem to be drawn to the only other living organism in the barren landscape. Carbon pollution is the main reason our planet is getting hotter, increasing the chances of weather disasters, drought and flood and hurting our health.

3.2.9 COUNTERPOINT – MENDING THE EARTH

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 45 x 95cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, January 2013

The temerarious use of nuclear power and possible nuclear disasters remain a constant threat to the human race, our planet and the environment. In his monoprint *Mending the Earth* Diedericks comments on the human race's preoccupation with relatively small issues in the face of much more disconcerting global realities.

Nuclear power technology produces materials that are active in emitting radiation and are therefore called "radioactive". These materials can come into contact with people principally through small releases during routine plant operation, accidents in nuclear power plants, accidents in transporting radioactive materials, and escape of radioactive wastes from confinement systems.

This radiation consists of subatomic particles traveling at or near the velocity of light - 186,000 miles per second. They can penetrate deep inside the human body where they can damage biological cells and thereby initiate a cancer. If they strike sex cells, they can cause genetic diseases in progeny.

The Chernobyl disaster is the most serious accident in the history of the nuclear industry. Indeed, the explosion that occurred in 1986 in one of the reactors of the nuclear power plant, and the consequent fires that lasted for 10 days, led to huge amounts of radioactive materials being released into the environment and a radioactive cloud spreading over much of Europe.

The greatest contamination occurred around the reactor in areas that are now part of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. Since the accident, some 600000 people have been involved in emergency, containment, cleaning, and recovery operations, although only few of them have been exposed to dangerous levels of radiation.

Those who received the highest doses of radiation were the emergency workers and personnel that were on-site during the first days of the accident (approximately 1000 people). At present, more than five million people live in 'contaminated' areas with radioactive materials from the Chernobyl accident.

Fig. 752: Mending the Earth – Diedericks.





3.2.9 MENDING THE EARTH

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 45 x 95cm

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, January 2013

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3.2.10 COUNTERPOINT – THE INNOCENTS I – IX

Watercolour monoprint on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper – 50cm diameter

Printed at the artist's studio in Cape Town, February 2013

The Innocents I-IX is a series of nine watercolour monoprints bringing homage to the “greenies”; “nature lovers” - the “innocents” who are trying to make small differences in the dystopia the human race is busy creating. Our generation was raised so that we would, above all, feel good about ourselves - thus we try to satisfy our desires, when in many cases, the ethical and effective thing to do is to abandon or resist our desires. And to bring this back to environmentalism, notice the willpower that being environmentally conscious requires. One must, in most cases, simply abandon what one wants right now, whether it is meat, a car, fashionable shoes, or less time spent walking to the recycling bin, and just do with less.

This is hard. It's difficult to put aside one's immediate wants for what one believes is right, especially when what is right is something as abstract as an ecosystem, or lower deficits forty-years from now. The lesson is general though. To have a moral society, one needs more than moral institutions, one needs moral people, and if skepticism towards one's desires is evaporating on a societal scale, then we may be unable to sustain fairness, much less our natural environment.

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Fig. 753: *The Innocents I* – Diedericks.



Fig. 754: The Innocents II– Diedericks.



Fig. 755: The Innocents III– Diedericks.



Fig. 756: The Innocents IV– Diedericks.



Fig. 757: *The Innocents V– Diedericks.*



Fig. 758: *The Innocents VI*– Diedericks.



Fig. 759: The Innocents VII– Diedericks.



Fig. 760: The Innocents VIII– Diedericks.



Fig. 761: The Innocents IX– Diedericks.



3.2.11 COUNTERPOINT – THE WISDOM OF DRAGONFLIES

The Wisdom of Dragonflies II

- Etching, aquatint and embossing on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 26 x 36cm
Ed: 20 (with three artist's proofs)
- Printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press in Cape Town 2012

The Wisdom of Dragonflies I - IX is a limited edition suite of nine etchings loosely based on nine carefully considered quotes from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. This series of etchings is the artist Christiaan Diedericks' response to nine specific news events in the South African political playground during 2012. Like always the works are inspired by the dystopian political/cultural landscape in which the artist lives and works. All nine etchings in *The Wisdom of Dragonflies* were hand-printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press in Cape Town. This suite of nine etchings is the artist's first collaboration with The Heaven Press.

The Wisdom of Dragonflies VIII

- Etching, aquatint and embossing on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 26 x 36cm
Ed: 20 (with three artist's proofs)
- Printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press in Cape Town 2012

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Fig. 762: *The Wisdom of Dragonflies II* – Diedericks

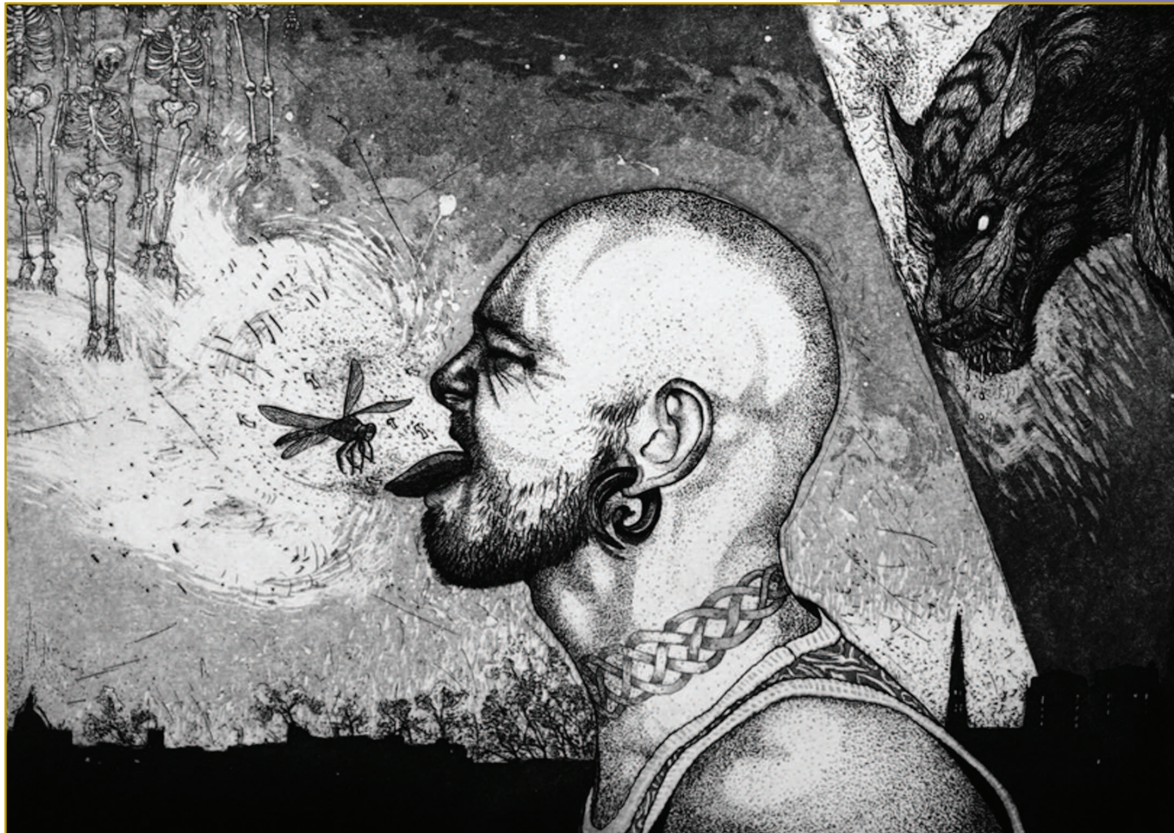


Fig. 763: *The Wisdom of Dragonflies VIII* – Diedericks



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3.2.12 COUNTERPOINT – PLANETARY PLATITUDES I

Planetary Platitudes I - V is a limited edition (ed.10 each) suite of 5 etchings by Cape Town based artist Christiaan Diedericks, completed in September 2012. In this suite of etchings Diedericks looks at more than merely ‘trying to understand dystopia, the world we all share, a bit better’. In these works Diedericks seems more intent on “sweeping the rug from underneath viewers and to expose the ‘little lies’ people feed each other on a daily basis”. Or, in his own words: *“the meaningless things we so often say to one another - ‘everything will be ok’ - ‘it is what it is’ - ‘go with the flow’ etc”*. The artist explains: *“I thought that it would be a good idea to create Art using everyday platitudes. I called it ‘planetary’ because it is actually so huge — we all do it. And really, it’s truly meaningless but we still do it.”* All five etchings in the Planetary Platitudes suite were hand-printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press in Cape Town. This suite of five etchings is the artist’s second collaboration with The Heaven Press.

Planetary Platitudes I

- Etching, aquatint and embossing on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 44 x 66cm
Ed: 10 (with three artist's proofs)
- Printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press
in Cape Town 2012

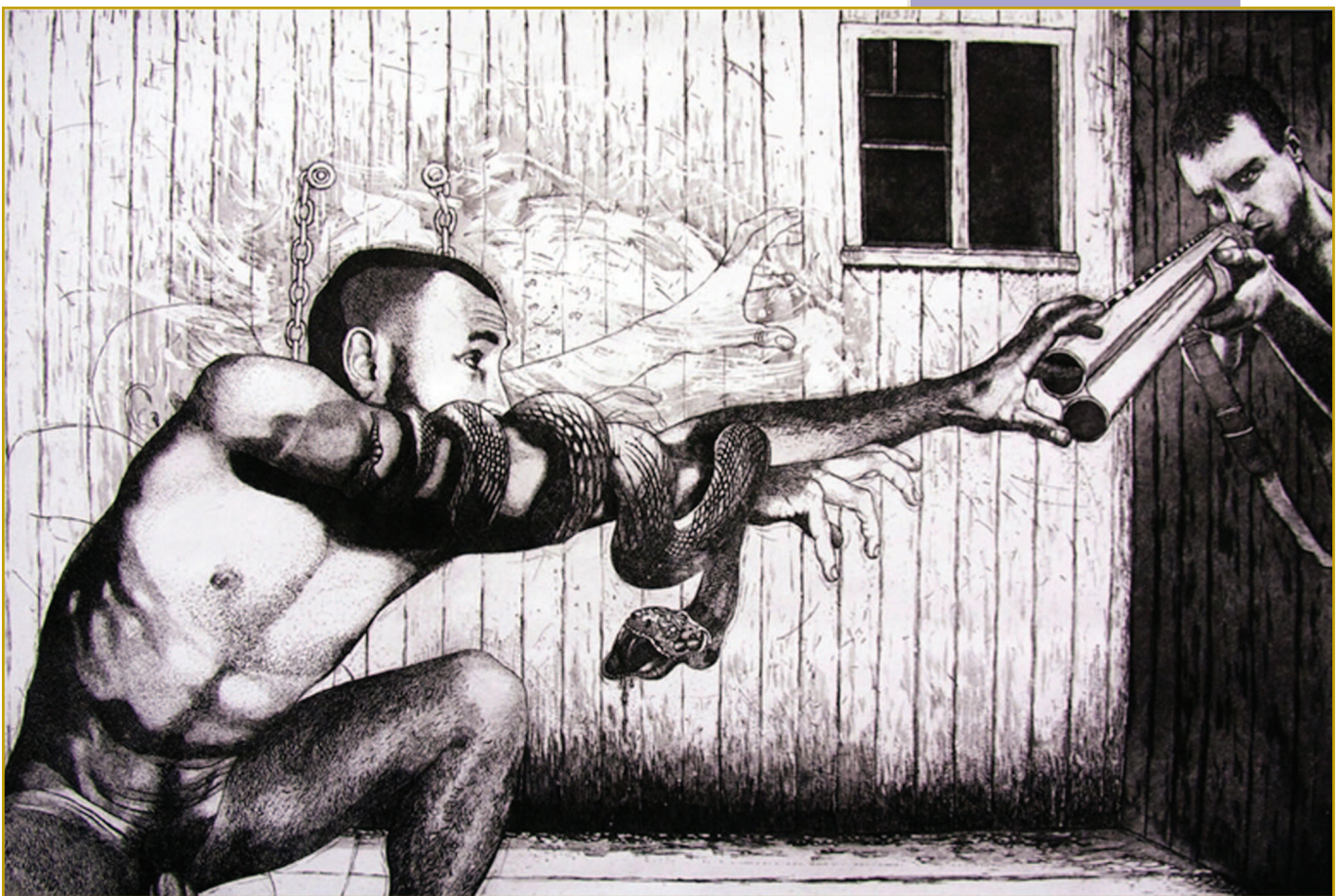
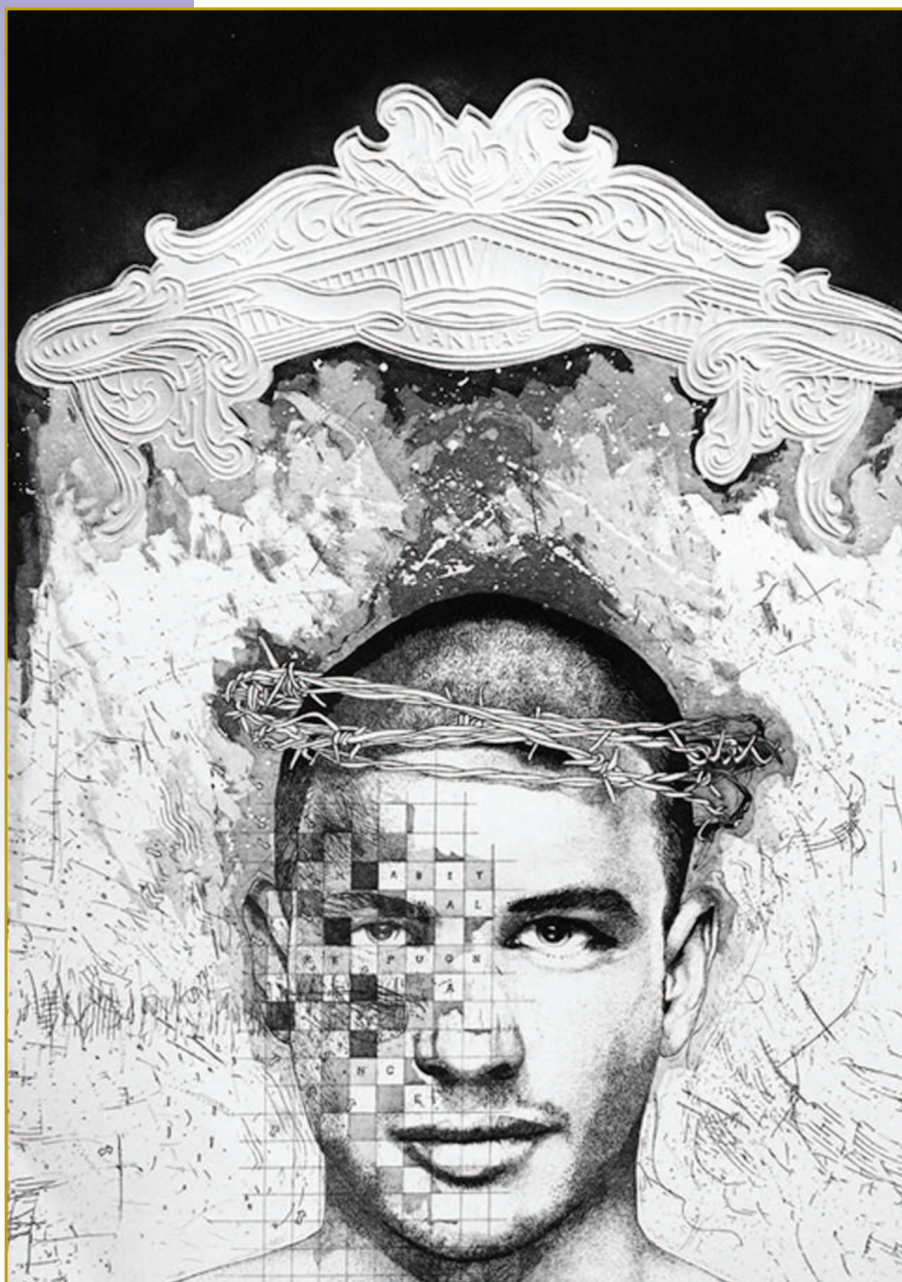


Fig. 764: *Planetary Platitudes I* – Diedericks

Planetary Platinudes II

- Etching, aquatint and embossing on 300gsm Hahnemühle etching paper 66 x 44cm
- Printed by Emma Brokensha at The Heaven Press in Cape Town 2012

Fig. 765: *Planetary Platinudes II* – Diedericks



4. A CASE STUDY OF A JOURNEY THROUGH THE OWL HOUSE OF NIEU BETHESDA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The small Cape village of Nieu Bethesda lies in a remote corner of South Africa, known as the Valley of Desolation and within sight of the towering Kompasberg. It was here that artist Helen Martins once lived and worked. She died on 8 July 1976 from a lethal dose of caustic soda

Few people knew it, but on that day the village, and indeed the country, lost an eloquent and unusual artist. What made her death more tragic was the fact that she never managed to complete her Owl House, the one artwork which occupied half her lifetime and for which she is remembered today.

Helen Martins did not create The Owl House by herself. She always worked in conjunction with an assistant, like Jonas Adams, Piet van der Merwe and Koos Malgas. They worked under Helen's direction at different times and have left their marks of influence upon the Owl House. She had no formal Art training and created her work from unconventional Art materials – cement and broken glass. She never created her work for financial gain or public acclaim.



Fig. 766: Helen Martins

It was a private and personal endeavor, a form of self-searching, of personal creative discovery. There are other Art labels that apply to this form of Art. One of these is Native Art, describing the untutored vision; another is Art Brut. The latter is a term coined by the Frenchman Jean Debuffet to describe Art that is characterized by individuality and originality and which, as he says, 'thrives in other places than those socially assigned to the fine arts'. There is a raw and pure source of creative energy in Helen's work. Helen's work became her life. She was possessed by a sense of urgency – as if time would run out before she fully realized her dream of transformation. She was very conscious of life's briefness and her desire to acknowledge and savor this, she placed a quatrain at the entrance to the Camel Yard, number 37 of the first edition from the Rubaiydt (rendered into English verse by Edward Fitzgerald). It is traced in bent-wire letters. It is the only verse, of many, that is legible from the street. It can be read as a personal motto.

Ah, fill the Cup: What boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:
Unborn TOMORROW, and dead YESTERDAY,
Why fret about them if TODAY were sweet!

Helen never regarded herself as a fully-fledged artist, only as someone with an urgent compulsion to create a space that reflected her personal vision and aspirations.

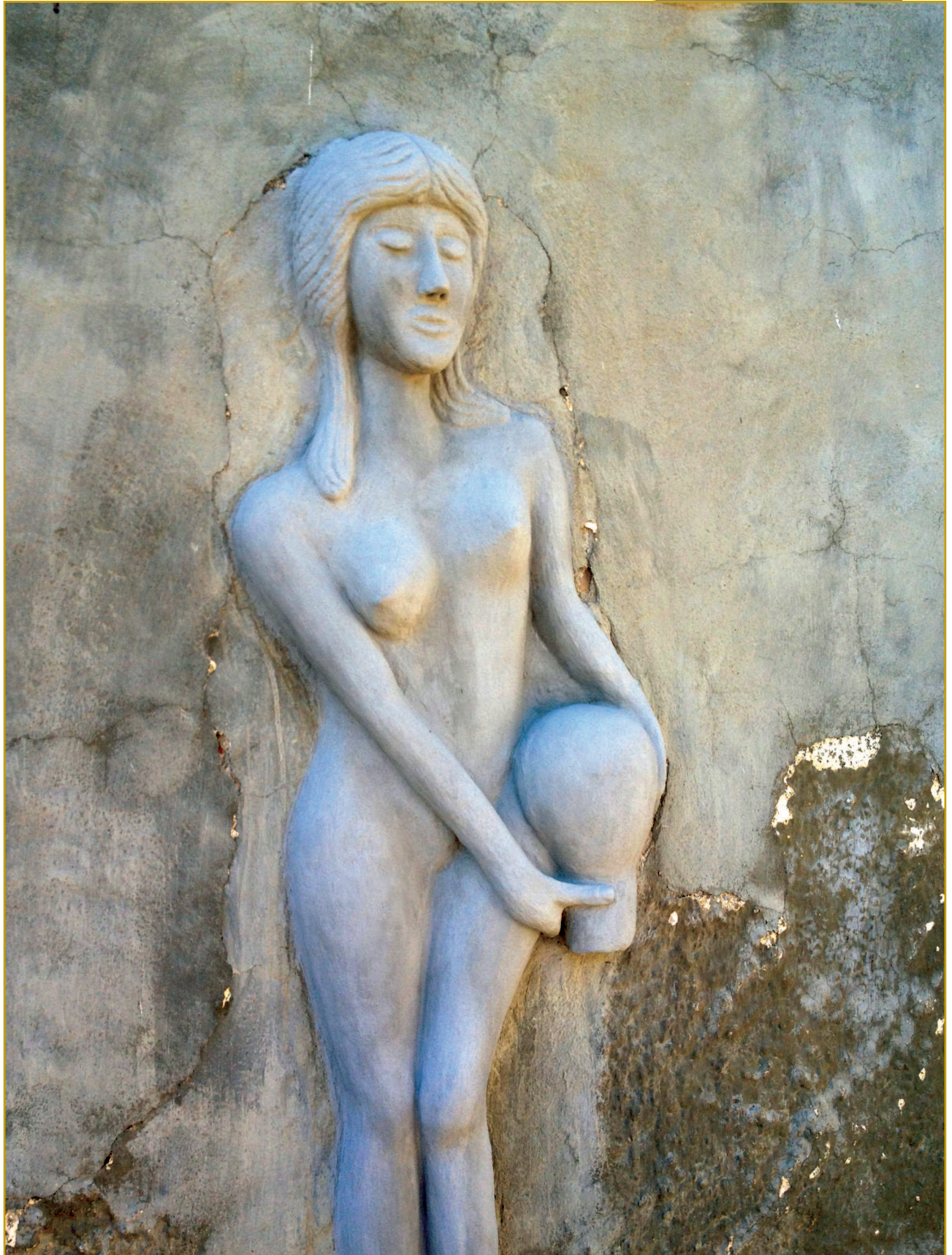
Fig. 767: Christian worshipper.



Her materials were the furnishings and trappings of everyday life, many of them kitsch and sentimental, which she filled with rich personal significance in the way she arranged them within the context of her Art environment. She also recycled junk in a most imaginative manner – discarded glass bottles and parts from abandoned cars were incorporated into her sculpture. Cement, wire and mirrors were the only materials that she had to purchase. The fact that she felt unequal to the task of making the statues in her garden or single-handedly coating the interior of her house with pulverized glass shards, presented no obstacle to her. She paid assistants to work under her guidance, while other households in the village employed ‘garden boys’.

Helen’s garden requirements were out of the ordinary. One of her helpers, Koos Malgas, summed it up succinctly by saying that ‘Miss Helen’ grew statues in her garden where others grew plants. It provided her with a sense of meaningfulness and purpose. Her work was her voice, a way of articulating her thoughts, heartfelt emotions and personal perceptions. While her themes are universal and much of her imagery is representative in nature, her work is also grounded in the particularities of her life and the location of Nieu Bethesda. It could have been made nowhere else and by no one else, Conceived by a woman, it is in many respects a woman’s world, containing innumerable variations of femininity.

Fig. 768: *Pouring water.*



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4.2 THE HALL

The house is both welcoming and unwelcoming. There is as tension of opposing signals that can be related to Helen's involvement with the 'great mother' archetype. In Helen's work the Owl House itself can be seen as one manifestation of this archetype, which contains within itself positive and negative features. Mythological, the 'great mother' is the protector and nourisher, but she is also the terrible one, the devourer, and a danger to those whom she shelters and attracts. Sometimes she takes on one guise; sometimes another, and sometimes both roles become enmeshed as seems to happen in Helen's Owl House.

Two crescent moon mirrors hang in the hallway. Whereas the exterior of the Owl House is largely associated with the daytime, the interior is to be viewed predominantly as the realm of the night. Night is the domain of sleep and the world of dreams. Entering the hall, one could almost believe that one has already slipped into some unreal dream space, for outsized hand-mirror challenges perceptions of scale and reality. Only in a world of giants could such a mirror be put to its proper use. A displacement happens. The visitor has entered a realm of surreal possibilities, is asked to suspend disbelief and enter into a fantasy game a make-believe space.

Fig. 769: Quatrain 71 of the Rubáiyát.



4.3 THE HONEYMOON ROOM

The walls are predominantly red, the colour of passion for Helen. And on the window is one of the suns visible from the stoep. It is the sun 'with the jealous eyes', according to Helen. The jealous eyes are green, with yellow centers and they unceasingly and possessively survey this room, intended for the union of newly wed lovers. The eyes of the suns on the windows of the Owl House, like the eyes of God, are omnipresent and all seeing. They may all smile broadly, like the icon on the cobra polish tin from which they were copied, but sometimes, as here, they exude a baleful and unsettling presence.

A half-moon window has been knocked through one wall and red glass inserted. Here, as elsewhere, the moon and the sun imagery complement each other. They form a yin-yang pair: the moon suggesting the night and the feminine sphere; the sun, the day and the masculine principle. In ancient Chinese yin and yang symbolism, the yang originally stood for sunshine and light and the yin for shadow and darkness.

The yin also came to represent qualities such as femininity, passivity, coldness and wetness whereas the yang became connected with masculinity, activity, heat and dryness. The two principles are viewed as complementary and dependant, just as in Helen's Owl House the realm of the feminine and the realm of the masculine are seen as interdependent and the conjunction of the two is understood to be crucial to the continuance of spiritual and psychic development.

In Helen's work, as in the yin and yang symbolism, clusters of imagery come together and can often be interpreted interchangeably, for example where the moon and the lunar realm are depicted. Helen also evokes associations with the feminine sphere.

Her use of imagery in this manner reflects age-old mythological traditions. The moon, from earliest times, was associated with the movement of the tides and seasons as well as with the menstrual cycle of women.

It was believed that the moon controlled the fertility of women and therefore the lunar realm became the sphere of the feminine principle. Together with this, the moon gathered significance as a symbol of romantic love between the sexes – an association that Helen wished to conjure up in her Honeymoon Room.

Fig. 770: A very occultic feeling – supernatural.

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4.4 THE DINING ROOM

On the right of the hall is a door that leads into the dining room. Two suns beam down from the window of this room, an upper one and a lower one. Their positioning relates to the passage of the sun through the sky from sunrise to its zenith at midday and subsequent descent, the passing of time is a theme of this room. There is the passing of days, represented by the suns and there is the passing of nights – mirrors on the walls have been cut into shapes that denote different phases of the moon. Moon imagery complements sun imagery, as in the Honeymoon Room.

There is also a star mirror, companion to the moon mirrors. A moon, like a mirror, reflects light, symbolically, they are connected. Both the moon and the mirror are also connected with the notion of flux. While the mirror continually reflects an altering world passing before its face, the moon is continually altering its face as it passes through phases of waxing and waning. Helen's reflecting moon mirrors are symbols of fluctuation and change, the passing of moments and time. They are a product of Helen's creative imagination and also refer to the nature of the creative imagination and its ability to reflect upon the world and circumstance. A participation in the act of creative reflection is exactly what Helen attempts in all her imaginative play at the Owl House – and the moon-mirror is her icon for this.

The camels in the yard form part of Helen's sacred pilgrimage to the East. Some of them are accompanied or ridden by wisemen and are connected with her re-enactment of the Christmas story: The small camels on the dining room table are another indication that a central theme of this room is the celebration of the birth of a divine child, a spiritual leader.

4.5 THE LIVING ROOM

The theme of celebration and expectation is continued in the living room where a golden cherub flies from a hook on the glass-bespeckled ceiling and Christmas tinsel and shiny balls adorn the room. There are many mirrors on the walls. An old photograph of the room reveals that when Helen inhabited the house a large and handsome star-shaped mirror once hung on the wall behind the statue of the baby who sits in the hollow of an owl face.

This is an important sculptural tableau. The image of the owl with the upturned concave face came to Helen in a dream. It took on various permutations when she translated it into concrete. Sometimes the hollowed owl-face holds plants. Sometimes the vessel shape of the face holds water and becomes a birdbath. Sometimes the concave half-face of the owl becomes a seat upon which to sit. **'Imagine sitting on so much wisdom.'**

And sometimes they are single owls; sometimes double owls, where one owl caryatid carries upon its shoulders a second upturned owl face. These are the two-faced owls. Helen had her own gleeful interpretation of the two-faced or double-faced owl.

The version of the owl container seen in the living room is both a planter and a womb-like vessel for the figure of the baby. The owl becomes the maternal, nurturing mother. Koos Malgas, the assistant who made this piece, says that he was creating a dammetjie in the hollow upturned face of the owl. Helen planted reeds in this vessel and added a child's plastic crocodile to suggest the primordial swamp-like conditions where life began. Elsewhere at the Owl House swamp birds abound. There are cranes, herons, ibises and pelicans. These, as well as other creatures such as a cement coelacanth fish and the numerous fish-women or mermaids, continue the theme of the primordial conditions where life originated. The mythical imagination that characterizes the work of Helen Martins often conjures up images of primordially and the origins of things in order to validate a personal cosmology.

The story related in the owl-vessel nativity scenario is of the birth of divine child. The baby sitting amongst the swamp reeds in the upturned owl-face dammetjie is attempting to place its toe in its mouth, a gesture reminiscent of the symbolic ouroboros serpent, tail in mouth, that symbolizes rebirth – for the ouroboros renews itself while it devours itself.

Fig. 771: Patio mural.



And like the dammetjie womb of the owl, the ouroboros signifies a self-supporting system. The star mirror that in Helen's day hung behind the tableau, held resonances of the bright star, such as the Star of Bethlehem, that appears in mythology to herald the birth of a spiritual leader.

On the mirrored sideboard is a wooden casket that contains some of Helen's ashes, returned to the Owl House after her death. Helen once expressed the wish that her ashes might be mixed with her precious red ground glass, kept in a Consol jar on the larder shelf, and then glued to her favorite owl. This owl, known as Oswald, stands outside the kitchen door. He once had a bone across his feet. Her request was never carried out, but Koos has scattered ash among her garden statues.

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Such a request from Helen does highlight the degree to which she identified with her owls, desiring to become part of their plumage and an integral part of her Owl House creation.

The owl was Helen's bird counterpart, a creature with whom she identified closely. It is a bird of nocturnal habits with an uncommonly acute ability to see in the dark, hence its association with the attributes of intuition and insight. In Ancient Greece the owl was identified with the goddess Athena, symbolizing her wisdom. This is an association with the owl that has continued down the ages. But, like the mythical mermaid, the owl can be the bearer of false as well as true wisdom. Its nature is ambivalent. Because of the bird's uterine shape and preference for the night, it has also been identified with the feminine principle. Helen's owls carry all these associations. In addition her owls are protective and maternal, often grouped in families – one or two adults and a brood of young ones. They frequently form a trio, such as along the window ledge in the living room and on the water tank in the Camel Yard.

On the wall of the living room is a browning photograph of Helen as a child – a sweet and smiling face with a straight fringe and a look of eagerness. It hangs beneath a print of the Mona Lisa.

Helen was obsessed with the image of the Mona Lisa. Those who knew Helen say that as a young woman she believed that she resembled the Mona Lisa in appearance. It is true that Helen did identify with Leonardo's beautiful and mysterious woman, but there was more to her obsession with the image than possible personal similarity.

Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of a Renaissance lady against a receding landscape represented high Art and, as is one of the functions of Art, permitted access to an imaginary world gained through the doorway of Art. This access to an imaginary world is gained through the doorway of Art.

Fig. 772: The owl holds water.



Fig. 773: Hollow upturned face of the owl.



This was something that Helen Martins herself was attempting. It is possible that the Mona Lisa became a talisman for the creation of an alternative time and space through the process of Art making. The enigmatic and gentle face of the Mona Lisa has become deeply embedded in Western culture as an arch type of feminine beauty and wisdom.

Helen was fascinated by the feminine archetype in its many manifestations – the mysterious Mona Lisa features alongside the Virgin Mother, the woman who half belongs to the animal kingdom (like the sphinx and the mermaid), the serving maids, the female guides and many others in Helen's cast of female characters. She created these as if trying to find a key to the elusive and multi-faceted nature of femininity. Her work refers to many of the cultural attitudes and stereotypes that have determined the lives of women down the ages.

The sea is a universal symbol for the unconscious, Sea shells, sailing ships, fish, mermaids, a sea-horse and other sea imagery at the Owl House suggest that Helen was entranced by the sea and its symbolic connotations. While the sea washes shells ashore, the unconscious, through dreams and creative play, washes up symbolic imagery. Helen's work has about it the quality of a dream.

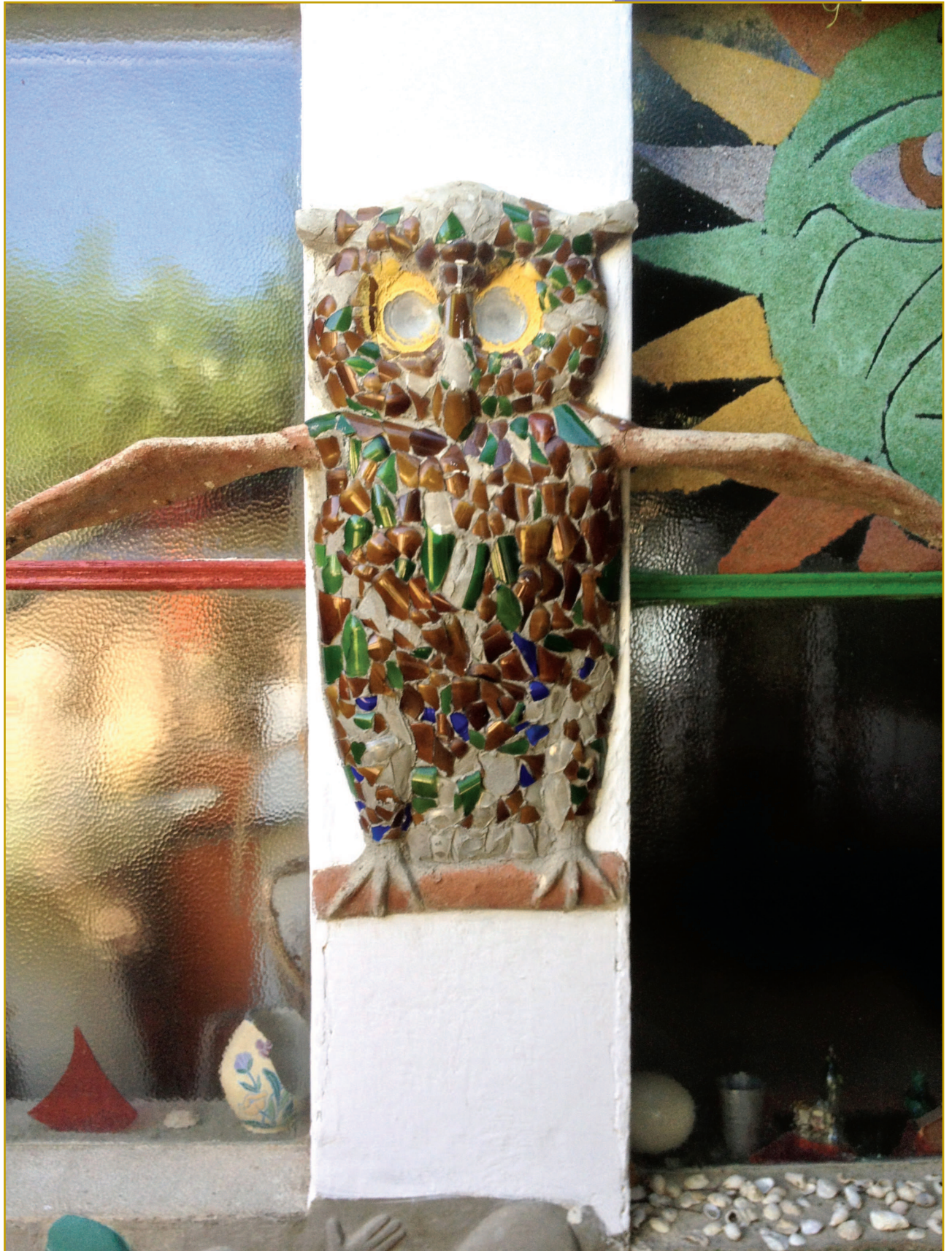
4.6 THE POWDER ROOM AND THE LONG BEDROOM

The seven beds in the house have a connection with the story of Bluebeard. Bluebeard had seven wives. Helen named the small windowless storeroom, leading off the long bedroom, Bluebeard's Chamber. Bluebeard, in the fairy story, gave a set of keys to all his wives in turn, instructing them never to use the key to a certain room. One by one curiosity overcame them and they unlocked the forbidden door, whereupon Bluebeard murdered them all except the last, which was fortunate enough to outwit her husband, who then himself perished.

Metaphorically it is a story, much like the story of Pandora's box, about the fateful dangers of undue curiosity and the hazardous outcome of trespassing into forbidden territory. Psychologically, Bluebeard has come to stand for a negative animus, which is capable of destroying her own femininity.

A negative animus in a woman is characterized by a surfeit of male conscious thinking and a neglect of feminine feeling. It is only corrected by a relationship with a man or by relating to the animus. This is the key that will unlock the secret chamber in the mind and overcome an inner deadness. Helen kept the door to her Blue beard's Chamber firmly locked.

Fig. 774: The owl was Helen's bird counterpart, a creature with whom she identified closely



If Bluebeard's Chamber has dark and chilling connotations, so too does a sculpture that lies on the floor of the Powder Room. It lies in front of the door that leads onto the patio and was used as a doorstep. It has one human foot and one animal hoof, both modelled from cement and protruding from a belly bag or torso made from a stuffed bokvel, the skin of a buck. There is no head and only the beginning of an arm.

Most bizarrely, a silver spoon lies beside the creature. The old saying '*born with a silver spoon in his mouth*' could not be less applicable; there is a silver spoon but no mouth, no means for the creature with the sealed belly to be fed. To take in nourishment is a prerequisite for growth and life. Without it, one dies. The horizontal and headless creature on the floor has corpse-like connotations. It is akin to death, not life. It has no sensory connectedness with the world.

This sculptural piece is one of a cluster of images conceived by Helen that have metamorphosing characteristics. It is both animal and human, just as the anthropomorphic suns are both sun and man. There are numerous other examples. In the yard is a camel-owl, an owl-person, a cock-man and numerous fish-women or mermaids. They are all metaphorical statements. The making of such metaphors is an ingredient of the mythic imagination that spawned the work of Helen Martins.

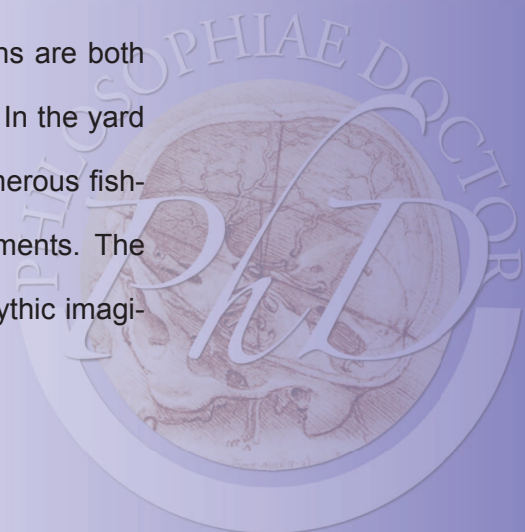


Fig. 775: Small church buildings, showing worshipping.



The uterine shape of the belly-bag sculpture that reclines on the floor of the Powder Room relates it to the realm of female imagery. Helen's world is populated with male creatures and female creatures. For example, her owls of the Owl House, with their uterine form and associations with mysteriousness and nighttime, belong to the female realm. Their counterpart, the camels of the Camel Yard, belongs to a masculine and counterpoised world. They travel beneath the relentless desert sun of day and their riders and attendants are always male. Helen's work reveals an acute awareness of tension between the male and female principles, and works towards a resolution in the conjunction of these two. In this and other respects it can be related to the task that the ancient alchemists set themselves. Constant reference is made to the sealed vessel in alchemical texts. The belly bag is also a sealed vessel shape, another intriguing aspect of the creature.

Helen would chuckle about this piece. She called it her *'little devil'*, a cloven hoof, a mark of the devil, is a feature of this sculpture. Helen's name for her doorstep suggests that she associated the form with the forces of darkness. The bestial element of the animal skin reiterates the creature's relation to the animal kingdom. The devil, in popular imagery, not only has cloven hooves but also other animal features such as horns and a tail. Like this sculpture, he is a metamorphosed creature, part human and part beast. The deformed feet of Helen's little devil suggest an autobiographical connection. Jill Wenman confirms this. Helen, she says, 'saw a connection between the devil's cloven hoof and her own ugly feet with amputated toes.'

4.7 THE LARDER AND THE KITCHEN

There are other owls. One sits on a small shelf and, from this high perch, surveys the room. Another stands on the floor beside the alcove. This is one of Helen's half-faced owl-seats. There is a pair of cement owls that have been fashioned into candlesticks which, in keeping with the owl's own exceptional night vision, provide night vision for others. Then there is the row of owls, both small and large, that forms family groups on the window ledge. There is also a rough drawing of an owl on brown card that has been propped up on a shelf. It has a story attached to it.

Fig. 776: Oriental figure with Blue Crane Bird.



When Helen first conceived the idea of making owls for her garden, she asked a young boy in the village, Johan van Meyeren, to make a sketch of the bird for her. This is his drawing and it was used as the prototype for the construction of Helen's first cement owls. There is a circular table in the kitchen, made in cement by Piet van der Merwe. The circular cement disc rests on the horns of an antelope (a blesbok), an unusual system of support.

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The circular shape carries resonances of the moon. In her work, opposites such as male and female, night and day or the sun and the moon are frequently counterpoised. On the ceiling of the kitchen is an enormous sun mural. It therefore seems likely that Helen would have wished to create a narrative tension by pairing the face of the sun above with the disc of the moon below. Koos Malgas made the sun mural on the ceiling. He remembers it being a difficult task. He worked while standing on a ladder, painting it section by section and applying the glass particles to the wet paintwork. The kitchen shelves and surfaces are worth examining closely. They contain objects that Helen used as source material for her statues. There is, for example, an old biscuit tin with a picture of two herons on it, which was used as inspiration for her cement herons. The old Cobra polish tin from which her suns were copied remains in the kitchen. So does an old box of Lion matches. Koos copied the lion motif when he built the sphinxes of Egypt.

4.8 THE CAMEL YARD

The Camel Yard is a crowded and complicated space. Hundreds of statues have been squashed into a half-acre plot. There are camels, owls, peacocks, wise men, shepherds, giraffes and churches, and much else, there is an air of frenzy and muddle, but a degree of logic can be discerned.

Fig. 777: Moon and Star.



There are certain distinct zones and paths of travel and consistent themes that can be traced through the maze of sculptures.

An important theme of the Camel Yard is the search for spiritual enlightenment. Another is the theme of entrapment. Other thematic strands include the perpetual cycle of death and life, the macrocosm in the microcosm and vice versa. There is much that is worth contemplating, such as Helen's suggestion of the significance of worship, dream and reverie as ways of accessing the Divine, her use of the symbolism of birds, of water and of wine bottles, as well as the importance of the theme of the sacred pilgrimage. The influence of the poetry and art of William Blake, the Bible and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam can also be traced and employed to reveal Helen's personalized meanings.

Another way of making sense of the yard is to look at the various categories of creatures and elements, and to consider their significance. There are other points of entry into the meaning of the Camel Yard, but the approach adopted in the following pages is simply to travel through a number of Helen's demarcated zones, observing their features and contemplating their significance.

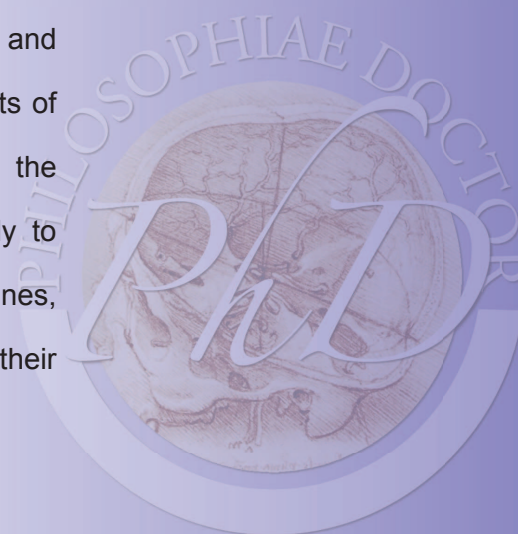


Fig. 778: Pilgrim and Camel.



Fig. 779: Blue Crane.



4.9 THE PATHWAY OF THE HOSTESSES

Helen liked to admit visitors to her Camel Yard through the zinc gate at the side of the stoep. The path from the bottom of the cement steps at the gate makes a natural starting point. The pathway travels alongside the wall of an outside room, named by Helen the Lion's Den. This wall is decorated with a large sun mural. Above the sun soars a bird with outstretched wings and long legs. It appears to be a benu bird.

In the ancient world of Greece the benu was identified with the mythical phoenix. Once every five hundred years the phoenix burnt itself to death and then rose again from the ashes. It is a story of cyclical rebirth, which mirrors the daily drama of the sun as it dies at sunset and is reborn at sunrise. Opposite the mural are two sculptured replicas of the Long Ears figures found on Easter Island. Koos Malgas copied them from a postcard that Helen received from Jill Wenman's parents.

On Easter Island the Long Ears statues are positioned so as to pay homage to either the rising or the setting sun. Like the wall with the sun mural they are a reminder of the cyclical nature of life – of beginnings and endings and new beginnings. And both the sun mural and the Long Ears statues are positioned at a junction in the Camel Yard, which is both a beginning and an end.

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Fig. 780: The Garden Hostesses.



It is intended that one should enter to his corner of the garden to take leave of it. A bottle-skirted lady, acting as a guide, points the way down the garden path. The function of the hostesses is to greet and guide and serve refreshments. The first two along the path hold out a hand to shake. The third imperiously points the way onwards towards the pool at the water tank, where another meisie waits in greeting. A small dog on the one side and a cat on the other flank the entrance to the Lion's Den.

A man, possibly a shepherd, sits alongside the dog. Helen's lion is a little way off, guarding the gates of Paradise. He has bristling wire whiskers and eyes that have been created from the headlamps of an old Volkswagen car that crashed in the district. His den, now the official entrance to the Owl House and radically altered, was once an eerie place. Stepping across the threshold and into the room, one entered a black cavern. Helen had removed the window and painted the room entirely black.

She had then sprinkled the walls with ground glass. In the lamp-light the walls glittered like a night sky of shimmering stars. The room could have been a microcosmic firmament of the heavens. It is significant that Helen's nickname for her father was 'the Lion'. His room, the Lions Den, was turned into a sealed-off space apart. One can perhaps think of it as the equivalent of a tomb in which she buried her thoughts and feelings about him, closing them off from the light of day.

If Helen's swimmers are creatures of the watery realm, so too are her mermaids. Mermaids are as numerous as Mona Lisas in the Camel Yard. The earlier mermaids, made by Jonas Adams, sit quite placidly, arms at rest, replicas of Helen's plaster mermaid ornaments inside the Owl House. Near the Corner of Debauchery, and framed by the curved beak of a large ibis, sits one of these older mermaids.

Following the path of the hostesses to the water tank, one encounters a younger and saucier breed of mermaid; some sit in their own dammetjies and beckon enticingly. Helen liked to say that they were calling the geese that lived in her yard to come and swim in their pools. But like Helen's meisies, they also appear in the role of garden guides, busily gesturing to Helen's imagined visitors. One of the dammetjie mermaids attends to her toilette.

In keeping with the age-old tradition of the mermaid's irritable and fateful charms, she combs her long cement locks with a yellow plastic comb while the reflective surface of the water in her dammetjie serves as her mirror. The mirror is another traditional attribute of the mermaid who attempts to lead men astray by her alluring physical charms. The mermaid with the comb is part of a trio.

On the edge of the pool at the water tank is another trio of mermaids. Two of them crook their index fingers in a manner, which says 'come hitler'. The other mermaid, sitting on the front rim of the pool, points with one hand to the outstretched palm of her other hand. She is asking for money. 'Please pay and then come and make your wish at my pool,' she appears to be saying. This is Helen's Pool of Healing. The clues are on the side of the water tank, where a number of murals have been modelled. The replica of the headache lady, first modeled by Koos as an apprenticeship piece in the sardine tin that lies on the window ledge of the main living room. The lady was copied from a box of headache powders and clasps her hands across her painful brow. She is here on the water tank above the pool so that the healing waters can soothe her ailment. Beneath the Mona Lisa to her right are written the words 'The Stream', referring to the furrow for running water along the back of the pool.

We see the lady with the headache again on a tablet that leans against the outside wall of the Lion's Den. There is no healing pool here, but alongside there is a little lady on a ledge that holds a jar – one of Helen's water-bearers. Helen has ensured that the healing presence of water is close at hand,

Fig. 781: A mermaid.



Fig. 782: Owls accompanying the camels next to the “dammetjie” (pool).

The village of Nieu Bethesda is named after the Biblical Bethesda pool in Israel, which is famous for its healing waters. Helen's pool is her local equivalent. On one of the front corners of her pool she has chosen to place a cement rendition of a pelican. There is another Biblical connection here – for the pelican is the bird that symbolizes the sacrifice that Christ made for mankind. The identification of Christ with the pelican comes from a story about the creature. The story goes that the self-sacrificial pelican so loved its offspring that it pecked upon its breast to feed its hungry youngsters from its own blood. If Helen's owls have dominion over the sphere of the air, her mermaids preside over the realm of the water. The Camel Yard is home to an unexpectedly large mermaid population. They sit solidly and stare, they dive into pools, one mermaid even combs her cement locks with a gap-toothed old yellow comb. Many beckon and entice the passer-by onwards up Helen's garden path towards her Pool of Healing, and further in the direction of her kitchen door.

Turning the corner around Helen's Pool of Healing, it is possible to see a mural of three owls modeled onto the back of the water tank. As elsewhere, Helen's owls are associated with water. Here, they do not form the water receptacle themselves, as in her design for owl birdbaths, but they decorate it. Helen's owls preside over the realm of water.

Fig. 783: Headache lady with Mona Lisa next to her.



We may recall, for example, the row of owls lined up on the ledge at the back of the dammetjie that occupies the kitchen alcove. And again the number three is associated with Helen's feminine protagonists – on the tank there are three owls, while perched around the Pool of Healing are three mermaids. The trio, as well as the element of water, frequently accompanies the symbolic manifestations of the anima. The anima is a psychological term for the female shadow figure in a man's psyche. If Helen's healing waters are revitalizing, so too is contact with the anima. Water maidens, such as Helen's three mermaids on the rim of her Pool of Healing, are often used as symbol of the regenerative anima.

But like the mermaid, who in mythology is also sometimes the bewitching seductress who lures her victims to a watery death, the anima is not only life-giving, there is a dark and destructive side. It is because of the multifaceted nature of the animal that she is often depicted as a threesome, embodying the feminine as a group and relating the changeable nature of the anima to the three lunar phases – the new moon, the dark moon and the full moon.

4.10 THE OLD BIRDCAGE AREA

The patio leading from the back door was once part of Helen's old birdcage area. It was necessary for Helen to keep her back door shut so that the owls and the other wild birds she kept there did not fly into the house and cause havoc. It was after a visit by her nephew, Herman Martins, Koos Malgas seems to recall, that Helen removed the wire and freed her wild birds. It had been impressed upon her that it was cruel to keep them captive. Sadly, many of the birds did not survive freedom. They were so used to Helen's world that they kept returning and many were caught close to the house by village dogs or shot by the children with their catapults.

The patio is paved with Helen's glitter paving created from the down-turned bottoms of bottles and shards laid into a bed of cement. As on the front stoep, the color of the glass is clear.



Fig. 784: Hudled shepherd boy with small lamb.

Elsewhere in her garden clear broken shards of glass, sprinkled like thick confetti, represent the snow and frost that cover Nieu Bethesda in winter. The bottle paving is Helen's ways of representing the ice on the ground in the cold of winter.

Camel Yard. Indeed, many of the sculptures are partially constructed from wine bottles. One needs to look no further than the patio to understand this.

There is miniature Mecca (Helen's name for her beehive-shaped bottle houses) resting on a ledge of the patio. There are the eyes of the owls. The observant viewer will find many other ingenious ways in which wine bottles have been used in this small area.

Helen saw wine, and other alcoholic beverages such as beer, as an aid to the attainment of states of bliss as well as states of spiritual intoxication and the accessing of alternative levels of consciousness. It is significant that many of her backward bending figures, which are in the act of ecstatic worship, are placed on pedestals made from wine or beer bottles. On a door at the far side of the patio is the painted face of a Chinaman. Alongside this face is the white side wards figure of a mermaid, creature of the watery realm.

Fig. 785: Sunworshipper.



There is also another oriental man in Helen's yard. He is sculptured in relief on the side of the water tank and is a healing effigy; and alongside him is a mural of a woman entitled A Young Lady of South China. Interesting, all three oriental are closely associated with water. For Helen, water is a substance of healing. She illustrates this at her water tank as well as in a scenario on the ground near the tank where a lame man lies prostrate beside a dammetjie, or pool, waiting for the healing waters to cure him.

On the wall adjacent to the Chinaman swims a girl wearing flippers. She is directly beneath the big disc of the sun. Helen frequently counterpoises her masculine sun image-ry with a female figure. Here it is the underwater swimmer. Elsewhere, as on the wall of the Lion's Den, it is a sun and an image of the Mona Lisa, or a sun and an owl.

Indeed on this very same wall, two murals, one of a green sun on a glass windowpane and the other of a brownish glass-encrusted owl are counterpoised – imagery suggestive of day and night, masculine and feminine. This is by no means the only patio owl. Oswald, her favourite, stands on a ledge at the corner of the path. He used to have a bone across his feet, evidence of a good meal.

Helen entertained thoughts that Oswald might become her gravestone, suggesting that her precious red ground glass should be mixed with her ashes and glued to this particular statue – a final form of identification with her owls. Two owl-seats are also part of the patio furniture. Another half-faced owl outside the bathroom was used as a planter for succulents. It sticks out its bright red tongue as if in defiance of the passers-by.

And further down the path, through the archways, is another owl, important because it was one of the first owls in Helen's yard. A pair of owls was made by Piet van der Merwe to commemorate two pet owls that drowned in Helen's water tank. This is one of them. The other stands at the water tank, arms outstretched to beg for coins, the arms were a later addition, made by Koos Malgas.

Many of the statues in the old birdcage area were intended to interact with the birds. There was once a totem pole of owls resting upon each other's shoulders. It was Helen's owl tree, and the birds were encouraged to roost on the outstretched wings or 'branches' of the totem. Then there are two girls with cupped hands. The hollows of their hands from nesting places for the birds. The graceful statue of a heron bows before one of the girls, its beak touching its leg in a gesture of defense.

The nude young girl appears to be feeding grain to the heron. The other girlish figure is clothed in a simple frock. Some people believe that this is a portrait piece of Helen.

To build his statues, Koos first created a armature of wire and chicken wire. Around this wire skeleton he would pack his cement. His recipe was initially three parts sand to one part cement. This proved to be too weak and he later changed it to three cups of sand for every two of cement with a handful of salt thrown in for extra strength. (In retrospect the salt was not a good idea as it causes the internal wire framework to rust.)

A very odd sight in the old birdcage area is the neck of a camel sticking up from the ground beside one of the dammetjies. It is as if his body has been buried beneath the ground. In the work-shed is another camel neck and head. Again, behind him is a dammetjie hollowed into the earth (which has since become filled with sand). Helen kept a heap of wood piled into the dammetjie. This camel, Koos relates, is carrying a load of firewood to the oven, which is beside him, so that bread can be baked. This oven is the one that Helen removed from her kitchen alcove.

Fig. 786: Helen's owls have dominion over the sphere of the air.



She was a good person. She was very good to me. When she made coffee and had biscuits, she would take them out and one could eat there. She was Koos's '*miesies*'. But the white people did not think much of her.

She looked simple, but she was much more intelligent than anyone else here in Nieu Bethesda. I was very sorry the day she died. It was a great shock to me. Because she was a good person. She was always friendly when you arrived. She never changed.

4.11 EGYPT AND THE HOLY LAND

Stretching alongside the old stonewall of the yard is Helen's Land of Egypt. There are many pyramids. Some are of the stepped variety and some have smooth sides. Some of the pyramids date back to the days of Jonas Adams. Others were made by Koos. He remembers copying them off a Christmas card. The sphinxes of Egypt are also his work. He used the picture on a box of Lion matches as his source of inspiration. Mythological, the sphinx is a creature of riddles. She asks riddles and destroys those who cannot answer. To the Greek hero Oedipus she asked the question, '*What has four legs in the morning, two legs at midday and three legs in the evening?*' The answer is man, who crawls as a baby, walks upright in youth and needs a stick in old age.

Fig. 787: Madonna with bird and camel.



The sphinx's question to Oedipus relates to the inextricable passage of life – a theme we have encountered before and will come to again at Helen's clock tower. In a tableau, a baby crawls, two youths attempt to hold back time, and an old man sits.

The elements of the sphinx's riddle are enacted. The sphinx, like the mermaid, belongs to Helen's realm of creatures that are half-human and half-animal. The sphinx, traditionally, has the face of a woman, the body of a lion and the wings of a bird. Helen's sphinxes are a personal adaptation of this formula. They do not have wings. There is one sphinx with the hair-fringed face of a lion. Another two of the sphinxes deviate from the norm in that they have gouged-out eyes and are blind. The first nativity scene in the direction of Helen's East is housed in a stable built of wine and beer bottles. In this manner it relates to her Meccas or shrine structures, a fitting abode for the birth of divine Meccas or shrine structures, a fitting abode for the birth of a divine child.

The baby lies in a cement manger. Mary and Joseph are there and a wise man kneels and offers his gift, there is a donkey and an ox and three more wise men that are traveling at speed, cloaks flying, towards the tin star, which quivers on a pole above the roof of the beer bottle shed.

Fig. 788: The Camelyard with worshippers.



Koos explains that Helen chose to position her nativity but they had run out of space. Thus, there are camels, wise men, shepherds and pilgrims who surge towards and past the depiction of the Savior's birth. Further along is another Star of Bethlehem. It is attached to a shed and guides the wise men that follow its suggested brightness. An old car headlamp serves as the wondrous Star of Bethlehem.

This is Helen's witty electrical equivalent, although not attached to any wiring and not capable of lighting up on the dark. A shepherd and his flock arrive at this glass-bespattered twinkling shed. Yet another Star of Bethlehem, bright red in colour and cut from perspex, is suspended on a pole above the fence. Alongside this star are spelt the words East/Oos – a bilingual signpost reflecting a bilingual community.

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Her presence indicates another aspect of Helen's pilgrimage. Time and place have more than one reality. Helen depicts the historical time of Christ's birth synonymously with her lifetime. The first pilgrimage to the East happened at a particular time in history, yet it happens continuously in the lives of individuals. Helen's repetition of the Nativity and the Star of Bethlehem highlights this notion of dual time.

A pilgrim, gesturing like a traffic cop, also directs the crowds of worshippers and travellers towards this star in the eastern sky. This is not compass east. Rather it is Helen's East. The constraints of space and the layout of her yard led Helen to determine her own cardinal points in her own world.

Amidst the surging throng who move towards Helen's East are two unusually still figures. One is a fat Buddha, legs crossed in lotus posture, who sits on the jewelled hump of a camel and faces in the opposite direction to the rushing crowd. He is peacefully meditating. The other completely motionless figure is also meditating and facing away from the main throng. He is wearing a jewelled turban and hoop earrings. The well of his lap was always filled with water and is a variation on Helen's dammetjies. Again water and meditation are conjoined. He is a Hindu sage.

Fig. 789: A fat Buddha with crossed legs.



Helen, it seems, looked to the East and to the West, to Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism for her spiritual guidance and direction. Helen undertook the harsh and hurried desert journey through the hot and dry sands of Egypt to arrive at her Bethlehem. She also undertook the still interior journey, and saw contemplation and meditation as an alternative pathway on the road to the acquisition of self-knowledge and the approach to the Divine.

Helen's Buddha and her meditating Hindu embody the interior quest. These Eastern-meditating figures made an early appearance in the garden. Alongside some of the early camels and mermaids and owls. There is a small figurine, with a Dutch cap and a skirt made from bottles that rests at the foot of the meditating Hindu.

Another, slightly larger version, flanks the other side of the pedestal. These are a version of Helen's meisies. Inspired by Helen's brass bell an ornamental handle shaped as a Dutch girl, the bottle skirts of all Helen's meisies are also to be interpreted as bells. A glass-encrusted statue of a girl tumbles backwards with the ease of a practiced acrobat.

Fig. 790: A lion with searching headlamp eyes and bristling wire whiskers.



She is one of Helen's sun-worshipping figures. Many of Helen's sun-worshippers bend ecstatically backwards so as to face the divine source of the light, rather than bend their heads forward, as in conventional prayer.

Here, as elsewhere, Helen has placed an owl alongside camels. Helen's owls and camels relate to each other. Another place where this is very evident is in the old birdcage area where a cluster of owls nestles between two reclining camels. It is the principle that opposites attract, that is seen in operation here. The owl is the nocturnal and lunar creature that represents the feminine principle and is often associated at the Owl House with the element of water; the camel is the packhorse of the harsh and barren desert, travelling long distances beneath the scorching sun.

The camel traditionally represents a patriarchal world of trade and transport, and at the Owl House it is the chief icon of the long and difficult pilgrimage. Positioning one or more owls alongside resting camels, as in these two scenarios, is Helen's sign language for nighttime. In her work, Helen frequently makes reference to the time of day. The suggestion of night is also often accompanied by imagery that indicates the break of day. In the old birdcage area one of Helen's sun-worshippers, directly behind the camels and the owls, bends backwards to greet the rising orb of the morning sun. And on the steeple of the miniature church, forming part of the snow-clad village scene, a cock is positioned. Two more cocks rest on the wall behind, waiting to announce the dawn,

4.12 GOD'S OWN LAND

Leaving behind that part of the sculpture garden that deals mainly with the theme of the birth of a saviour and the attendant pilgrimage, one move into a land dominated by churches and a towering archway, called by Helen the Gates of Paradise. The church is a symbol of God's presence on earth; the Gates of Paradise are the gateway to His heavenly land in the world beyond death. Here one have God's land represented, both in this life and in the after-life. Helen's churches have tall spires and windows of colored glass. In one of the churches she instructed Piet van der Merwe to create the windows from intact empty wine bottles. The sacramental wine of the communion service, consumed in church as a reminder of man's divine salvation, and is an association evoked in these windows. Alongside this church is a forest of giraffes, modelled only from the neck up. They appear to grow out of the ground like strange tree trunks. There is a witty resemblance in their form to the elongated church spires. Heads atop their lofty necks, these giraffes appear to be nibbling at the bushes that grow between them. Like gods of the animal kingdom, they have a birds-eye view of events. From the window of another church, a little lady leans out. She clasps a candleholder to light the way in the dark for Helen's weary pilgrims.

Fig. 791: Two long ears statues.



Her church becomes a lighthouse, much as Helen's Meccas, the shrines built from bottles, are also lighthouse, as Koos calls them. Not very far from this church is a magnificent bottle shrine with an upside-down red brandy glass resting on the pinnacle, much like the cherry on a cake. If Helen's celestial bodies glittered at night, at day her glass glittered in the light of the sun.

And if the mirrored stars are gone, so has much of her crushed-glass snow. There were parts of the yard where she particularly liked her glass snow to be heaped up thickly, such as around her figures of crouched shepherds. These gnome-like creatures with their enfolding cloaks and, pointed, magician caps are tending lambs.

Fig. 792: Pilgrimage.



They are supposed to be seen huddled in the snow, as depicted on the Christmas card received from her neighbor Cynthia Craig, from which they were copied. A crouched shepherd sits in the space between two of Helen's churches in God's Own Land. One of the two churches has a clock. It is the largest of Helen's churches, with a walk – in alcove in which there is an inscription above a relief of hands held in prayer.

The inscription reads:

Lord, help me to accept the things I cannot change,

Courage to change the things I can,

And Wisdom to know the difference.

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An example of personal imagery that lives in Helen's land of churches is an intriguing hybrid creature. It is a composite of two of Helen's favourite images, the camel and the owl. Upon the winged camelback of this creature stands a naked lady. She has been created from cement with ruby-red glass to denote her nipples. It is a small but significant detail signifying both erotic and spiritual arousal.

Helen delighted in pointing it out to visitors with a naughty twinkle in the eye. Red, for her, was the colour of passion. There is a tradition in religious Art of signifying heightened spiritual passion and abandon by the introduction of elements of erotica, thus conjoining the notion of spiritual excitation and surrender with its sexual counterpart. It is within the context of this tradition that Helen's ruby-nipple naked lady must be understood. For this lady, hands held up to shield her eyes from the brightness of the light, is a worshipper. The light room, which she shields, her eyes is materially the light of the sun and metaphorically the divine light of the Godhead, which is blinding in its overwhelming intensity.

The hybrid creature upon which she stands symbolically connects her to the earth and the heavens, day and night, the masculine realm of the epic journey in the outer world, the feminine realm of intuition and insight.

Fig. 793: Group of Giraffes.



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Fig. 794: A cloaked figure holding a crook. A worm emerges from the earth and curls around him before it will again descent into the earth from whence it came.

For being half-camel and half-owl the creature contains within itself a synthesis of the meanings that Helen gave to her camels and to her owls. The bird's wings suggest flight, an ability to break free of earthly constraints and soar skywards. The body of the camel, transport animal of the desert, makes earthly travel possible, too, on the road towards spiritual enlightenment. The face of the owl suggests that divine revelation can also be accessed through the characteristics of this bird – an uncommon ability to charter the dark realms with its piercing eyesight.

The owl symbolizes intuition, insight and wisdom. It is a creature of unconsciousness and the night, whereas the camel is connected with the daylight realm of consciousness. The inevitable path from birth to death is depicted in another two cement scenarios close at hand. A caterpillar crawls up an oak leaf while a butterfly cocoon with a human face rests upon another leaf. The tableau was copied by Koos Malgas from an illustration by the visionary nineteenth century poet and artist William Blake. It comes from his frontispiece to the poem *'For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise'*, alongside huddles a cloaked figure holding a crook. A worm emerges from the earth and curls around him before it will again descent into the earth from whence it came. This is copied from another Blake engraving for the same poem. It is engraving number 16 and is accompanied by the text: I have said to the Worm: *Thou art my mother and my sister.*

If the baby in the cocoon represents the emergence of life, the cloaked figure surrounded by the worm is a depiction of death. From the earth and back to the earth, from dust and unto dust is the message that is told by the image of the encircling worm. The influence of the Bible on Helen's imagery is pervasive in the Camel Yard. The large family Bible that she inherited from her parents contained many illustrations that influenced her work. Piet van der Merwe remembers copying some of these. Helen's Gates of Paradise, for example, come from one of the pictures in the Bible, although certain elements such as birds that perch on it are her personal additions. Interesting, the arched gateway is depicted as a ruin. An owl perches on a central pillar – a bird often associated with ruins and desolate places. The jagged wall suggests the erosion of brickwork and the decay that happens with the passage of time. Grouped with Helen's other sculptures that deal with time and mortality as fundamental aspects of the human condition on earth, the Gates of Paradise suggest the impossibility of entering paradise in this world. Death, decay and the inevitable passing of time are man's natural enemies and make a true statement of paradise on earth as an impossibility. Paradise is often used as a synonym for Heaven; Helen's Gates of Paradise are guarded. It is not for the living to pass through them.

The idea of the Gates of Paradise as a divide between this world and the next is reinforced by the presence of the jewell-like peacocks that perch upon it. The peacock is a bird that has been used symbolically to represent the idea of rebirth and resurrection, dying in order to live. As such it is connected to the person of Christ as the prime Christian symbol of the conquest of death and the constraints of time. Helen's Gates of Paradise separate the earthly from the heavenly, the temporal from the eternal. It is not surprising, with her involvement in the resurrection drama, that Helen should have chosen to represent the crucifixion cross. The cross stands near the alcove church, on the slope of one of her renditions of the Kompasberg, the towering mountain peak visible from the Nieu Bethesda valley. She has not crucified the actual figure of Christ on her cross but has instead made a reference to his presence and suffering by the use of red glass to suggest the blood that flowed from nailed hands and feet.

4.13 LAND OF DESTINATIONS AND DEPARTURES

We have arrived at the part of the garden where a cluster of sculptures speaks of leave-taking. Many of the pieces here were made towards the end of Helen's life. Helen is seeking imagery that will adequately convey her sense of imminent departure from this world and express her intuitions about the nature of death and the invisible world beyond.

A pilgrim leans against his camel and gazes into the distance. He has been copied from an illustration by the artist Sherriffs, in Helen's copy of the Rubaiyat. On the fence in front of him is written the accompanying verse. There is poignancy in these words, written in cutout tin letters on Helen's fence, as if she was contemplating a time when she would no longer see the moon rise over her Camel Yard. Adjacent to this verse also suspended on the fence, is as an Eastern carpet rendered from cement and glass.

Below it lies the carpet seller from Samarkand, deep in sleep. We are in the East again, the mythical spiritual destination towards which Helen's pilgrims always converge. There are travellers with flowing robes, shepherds with crooks and wise men on camels. A sense of urgency prevails. The wise men are travelling at considerable speed; their cement cloaks appear to billow out behind them in an imaginary breeze. Perched on the shoulder of one of the wise men is a companionable owl. One of the attributes of Helen's owls is their quality of wisdom – the owl and the wise man are a fitting twosome. Owls also carry other associations. Because of their exceptional night vision they are understood to be creatures of unusual perceptiveness and insight.

Here the owl can be regarded as assisting and guiding his companion as they travel through the dark and into the realm of the unknown, for the presence of the owl suggests that the wise man and his camel are travelling at night. The darkness can also be understood as a metaphor for the unknown since the wise man is approaching Helen's Moon Gate – metaphorically her division between this world and the next.

Owls are sometimes associated with death. Certainly Helen's thoughts were on death when she and Koos created this final corner of the garden. A number of sculptures testify to this. There is the relief mural with the sun and the soaring phoenix, signifying death and rebirth. There is the girl who steps out into air. This aerial being has quite left the earth behind her. She defies the laws of gravity with poise and sureness and is perhaps the closest Helen comes to the concrete rendition of an angel.



Fig. 795: Egypt, the land of deserts, pyramids and sphinxes, is crammed into a narrow strip of land that runs along the western wall of the Camel Yard.

Then there is the Moon Gate, a circular gateway barricaded by wire fencing and Queen of the Night cactus plants. Like the Gates of Paradise, it is guarded. A two-faced owl has taken up a lookout position on the crest of the moon. With eyes at the front and back of his head, his surveillance skills are superb. Both the low moon on the ground and the presence of the owl suggest nightfall.

The Moon Gate also faces, to the garden, the direction of the westerly setting sun. A crowd of worshippers herald the moment of transition between day and night. One of the most striking of these is an acrobatic sun worshipper, back flipped on the ground to gaze through the Moon Gate. The Moon Gate is a point of threshold between day and night, the realm of the sun and the realm of the moon. It is also the threshold between Helen's world and the wider world, a point emphasized by wire writing on the fence near the Moon Gate, which reads *'This is my world'*.

And significantly, the Moon Gate is also the point at which Helen speaks about death and departure. The association of the owl with death has already been observed and another bird, a pelican that nestles beneath the archway, reinforces an affiliation with the idea of death. Again we find the pelican as a symbol of the self-sacrificial figure of Christ. Near the Moon Gate, standing in one of Helen's bottle-lined water dammetjies, is the figure of a girl.

Fig. 796: The Moongate in the Camel Yard.



Her hair, rendered in filigree cement, flies out behind her in the wind. She blows across the palm of one hand while waving with the other. She is blowing kisses, a gesture of farewell that those who knew Helen, remember her making when saying her goodbyes. Engulfed in the elements of wind and water, this girlish figure conjures up a verse from Helen's beloved Rubaiyat. It is quatrain 32 (second edition):

*Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
Nor whence, like Water, willy-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.*

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With this figure Helen takes her farewell. We are reminded that the problematic questions about our brief existence, inevitable death and intimated after-life ultimately remain unanswerable.



Fig. 797: A shrine built from tiers of beer bottles.

5. CONCLUSION

The contents of the three case studies were each unique in their own right and approached Art from completely different angles.

Picasso is difficult to categorise into a specific genre there his artistic abilities has no boundaries. As one of the greatest and most influential artists of the 20th century, he is known for co-founding the Cubist movement, the invention of constructed sculpture, the co-invention of collage, and for the wide variety of styles that he helped develop and explore. Picasso demonstrated extraordinary artistic talent in his early years, painting in a realistic manner through his childhood and adolescence. During the first decade of the 20th century, his style changed as he experimented with different theories, techniques, and ideas. His revolutionary artistic accomplishments brought him universal renown and immense fortune, making him one of the best-known figures in 20th-century Art.

Christiaan Diedericks being a practising contemporary artist, can still make a vast difference through educating the public on the awareness of our environment. The artist expresses his outrage through the use of printmaking of an exceptional high standard.

Some of the images is at first glance disturbing but succeeds in drawing the spectator's attention to view and understand the message that he wants to be taken seriously. It is all about the brainless things that are being done to the environment. He also have a second "hidden" narrative in his images that differentiate him from other artists and ensures that his work is especially valuable when viewing it from an academic perspective.

Helen Martins was committed to transform the environment around her with a project to decorate her home and garden. She used cement, glass, and wire to decorate the interior of her home and later build sculptures in her garden, drawing inspiration from Christian Biblical texts, the poetry of Omar Khayyam, and various works by William Blake. Helen's work inspired disrespect and little support from the small-town locals there she had close working relationships with workers from the coloured community during a time in the South African history when Apartheid was very alive. Although she lived an isolated life, the people who managed to get closer to her and understood her, enjoyed her company. She was very picky though, who she let into her private surroundings. Her work is very spiritual and borders on the edge of occultism.

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