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O LIEWENHUIS

Newsletter of Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein



Valuable Art Collection returned to the people of South Africa

Sharon Crampton



LUCKY SIBIYA - *Figure and animal* (1973), silkscreen, 64 x 57,5cm (donated by The Haenggi Foundation Inc.)

Thanks to the vision and financial backing of the Department of Arts and Culture, Oliewenhuis Art Museum has received from The Haenggi Foundation Incorporated a major donation of 228 artworks by South African artists, which formed part of the original *PELMAMA Permanent Art Collection*. As a result of funding received from the Department of Arts and Culture, covering the costs relating to packing, transport and insurance from Basel, Switzerland to South Africa, it was agreed that all the works which had previously been on temporary loan to Oliewenhuis Art Museum from The Haenggi Foundation Incorporated would henceforth be considered as an outright donation to the Museum. The collection of works donated, represents the largest single donation of artworks that this Museum has ever received.

The collection of South African artworks produced between 1970 and 1980 arrived in Bloemfontein on 4 May 2006 and includes political, resistance and religious themes rich in multiplicity and in media. Artists include Norman Catherine, Dan Rakgoathe, James Serole Mphahlele, Dirk Meerkotter, Cyprian Shilakoe, Lucky Sibiya, Lucas Sithole and Walter Battiss.

Having been dynamically involved in the South African art market since 1961, Fernand Haenggi for personal reasons and changed political and financial attitudes resolved to leave the country in 1993 to settle in his home country, Switzerland. The greater portion of the *PELMAMA Permanent Art Collection* was then donated to existing museums throughout South Africa,

apart from a few works, which were acquired directly or placed on long-term loan to such institutions. Between 1990 and 1993, Oliewenhuis Art Museum received a total of 74 works of art on temporary loan from The Haenggi Foundation Inc.

The foundation of any museum is its permanent collection and although the traditional mission of collecting, conservation and education has been coupled with accessibility and active participation, the essence of a museum rests in its permanent collection. As temporary custodians of a national treasure, museums cannot elude the fact that their very existence, value and significance lies in their permanent collection.

Oliewenhuis Art Museum is still a young institution and although the Museum continues to show a steady growth in its collection, definite gaps still exist within the collection of South African art. Although the Museum, unlike numerous other museums of its scale, is still in the position to expand on its collection from its own funding, certain factors within the South African art market inhibit the Museum from establishing a collection that acknowledges and celebrates the visual culture of South Africa. These include a dramatically strengthened South African market, competition from both private and corporate collectors and considerable international interest in South African art.

Since 1990, numerous cultural institutions in South Africa, including the Pretoria Art Museum, the IZIKO: South African National Gallery and the Johannesburg Art Gallery, have committed themselves to the repatriation of artworks that were taken out of the

country, in order to build collections which recognize the cultural heritage of South Africa. Oliewenhuis Art Museum would like to acknowledge the generosity of The Haenggi Foundation Inc. and the financial backing and cooperation of the Department of Arts and Culture. This very generous donation not only augments the Museum's collection, but also strengthens the Museum's commitment to redressing imbalances created by our past and building a collection which honours and acknowledges South Africa's rich visual culture.

The official opening of the collection of works from the *PELMAMA Collection* will take place at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in June 2007.



NORMAN CATHERINE - *Catnap* (1990), drypoint etching, 35,5 x 50cm (donated by The Haenggi Foundation Inc.)



JAMES SEROLE MPHAHLELE - *Dialoga part 11 (blanketed on their mats)*, 1987, linocut, 31 x 105cm (donated by The Haenggi Foundation Inc.)