# Revisionist Narratives: Locating Six Black Artist-teachers onto the Map of Twentieth-Century Modern Art in Zimbabwe.

By

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## Abstract

Job Kekana (1916-1995) was a South African sculptor and teacher who moved to Zimbabwe in 1944, where he founded the Kekana School of Art and Craft in the early 1960s. There were also a few Black Zimbabwean artist-teachers, namely, Sam Songo (1929-1977), Cornelius Manguma (b. 1935), Lazarus Khumalo (1930-2015), Joram Mariga (1927-2000) John Hlatywayo (b. 1928), who were either working with missionaries Canon Edward Paterson (1895-1974) and Father John Groeber (1903-1973) at the Cyrene and Serima workshops respectively and later on at the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre, or with Frank McEwen (1907-1994) at the National Gallery school. This thesis examines the relative invisibility of Kekana and the selected Black artist-teachers in the dominant discourse of the history and development of modern art in Zimbabwe. Employing the biographical approach as a methodology, and modernism as an analytical tool and foregrounding African thinkers like Chika Okeke-Agulu Elizabeth Georgis, Emma Wolukau- Wanambwa and Salah Hassan, this research exposes the possible reasons for their exclusion from the canon, which are rooted in a gatekeeping culture shown by actors in the local art scene, including art historians and scholars, as well as cultural workers in institutions like the National Gallery of Zimbabwe who have not sufficiently questioned and possibly shaken the enshrined legacies of Paterson, Groeber and McEwen.

Canons mostly tend to tell a story that privileges and excludes others from the art narrative of a nation. With the arrival of Frank McEwen on the scene in the late 1950s the stone sculpture tradition rose to prominence in such a way that it overshadowed other forms of art produced in the two mission schools or workshops at Serima and Cyrene. In the process, Kekana and his students at the Kekana School of Art and Craft were relegated to the peripheries of the canon as they carved in wood and tended to work in a more representational style. While there is literature acknowledging the role of the missionaries in laying the foundation of modern art in Zimbabwe, local artists-cum-teachers working with them are only recognised as a footnote on the nation's map of modern art. Recognising that canons are always evolving and shifting, and without discrediting the work of the three mentioned expatriates – and to an extent that of Tom Blomefield of the Tengenenge Workshop – this thesis attempts to expand the canon by arguing for the inclusion of the critiqued overlooked six.

Citing the efforts of researchers, scholars and curators in multicultural South Africa to bring the previously marginalised generation of Black modernists into the mainstream, this thesis demonstrates that it is possible to spotlight the narratives of the Black artists and teachers who continue to occupy peripheral space in the history of Zimbabwe. This comparative analysis is

done bearing in mind the temptation of falling into the trap of glorifying 'South African exceptionalism'. In analysing the Black artist-teachers' contributions as a counter-narrative, this research proposes a more heterogeneous modernism and revisionist art history.

## Declaration of originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete references. This thesis is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for Doctor of Philosophy at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at another university.

Signature 

Date 15 February 2023

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Lastly, it is a pity that two of the people I interviewed for this research – Derek Huggins and Helen Lieros – did not live long enough to see their words in print. Continue to Rest In Peace.

## Abbreviations

| | |
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| B.A.T. | British American Tobacco |
| B.S.A.C. | British South Africa Company |
| F.E.S.T.A.C. | African Festival of Arts and Culture |
| F.U.B.A. | Federated Union of Black Artists |
| I.C.A. | Institute of Creative Arts |
| I.C.A.C. | International Congress of African Culture |
| ISANG | Iziko South Africa National Gallery |
| L.A.S.S.CO | London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company |
| L.M.S. | London Missionary Society |
| MoMA | Museum of Modern Art |
| N.G.Z | National Gallery of Zimbabwe |
| S.P.G. | Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts |
| U.D.I. | Unilateral Declaration of Independence |
| U.S.A. | United States of America |
| ZANU-PF | Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front. |

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## Introduction

A research assignment on the emergence and development of Black Modernism in pre-1994 South Africa for the 'Critical Thinking in Curatorship' course at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Curating the Archive in 2015, led to my chance encounter with Job Kekana's name. It appeared alongside those of luminaries such as Gerard Sekoto (1913-1993), Ernest Mancoba (1904-2002), Louis Maqhubela (1939-2021), Ephraim Ngatane (1938-1971), Durant Sihlali (1935-2004), Sydney Kumalo (1935-1988), Gerard Bhengu (1910-1990), Moses Thladi (1903-1959) and many others whom Marilyn Martin, an academic who is also a former Director of the Iziko South African National Gallery, describes as the "black precursors of modernism in South Africa" (Martin 2002: 208). Kekana (1916-1995) and others had participated in the South African Academy[1] exhibitions, albeit under the problematic 'Native Exhibits' category, "a fact which illustrated that racial discrimination even in matters of art and culture was alive and well" (Manganyi 1996, 30). That encounter ignited this research, as I wanted to find out more about the man.

I had encountered Kekana at home in the community of St Faith's Mission near the town of Rusape. I did not know then that he was a prominent artist, nor that he was of South African origin, and had honed his woodcarving skills at the Grace Dieu Diocesan Training College in Pietersburg (now Polokwane in Limpopo Province), an Anglican institution which, according to curator and art historian Steven Sack, "laid the foundations for a new generation of black fine artists" (Sack 1989: 12). Grace Dieu also appears often in the biographies of Mancoba and Sekoto, albeit the latter claims to have been 'self-taught' (Sack 1989: 11). However, as noted by Elizabeth Rankin, an art historian and curator, education at the mission institution provided a starting point for Kekana's career and that of many artists (Rankin and Miles 1992).

I came across Kekana several times in 1994 and a few more times in 1995 prior to his death on the 10th of March.[2] An aide was always helping him navigate the weathered roads and paths of the St Faith's Mission environment. Except for the Easter Sunday Mass gathering which brought everyone from the community together, I would have met and greeted him in passing

[1] As stated on the South African History Online website, "The South African Academy was established in 1920 under the auspices of the Transvaal Institute of South Africa ArchiÂtects and in cooperation with the Transvaal Art Society from 1939. Exhibitions were held in the Selbourne Hall from 1920 to 1941, in the Duncan Hall in 1942 and 1943, and at the Johannesburg Art Gallery between 1944 and 1950." Although, Blacks exhibited their works separately from whites under a category named Native Exhibits, the Academy's catalogues show that this was the first institution where they exhibited their works professionally. For more, see South African History Online.

[2] As reported in *The Herald* of 12 March 1995, Kekana died of a stroke-related illness on the night of Friday the 10th at Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare. See Elizabeth Rankin. Job Kekana File. Wits Arts Museum.

as I would do to all the elders, as per the culture and traditions of the area. There was a huge gathering of mourners at his funeral, surpassing that witnessed at any other funeral that had occurred at the mission station in the period I was there. I could tell from that send-off that the deceased was an important individual. It was through a few of my classmates who came from the local community that I learned that Kekana was a famous artist.

In the Kekana School of Art and Craft, he pioneered the only art school founded by a Black man in Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe). Interestingly, I also found out that Kekana was not the only Black artist-teacher of the time. There were others namely John Hlatywayo (b. 1938),[3] Lazarus Khumalo (1930-2015), Joram Mariga (1927-2000), Sam Songo (1929-1977) and Cornelius Manguma (b. 1935). These artist-teachers form the spine of this thesis. However, while the history of their careers as artists exists in some form and to an extent, it is the dearth of information on their careers as teachers that my thesis grapples with as I try to instate them on the nation's map of modern art. There is very little written about them as the mainstream history of modern art in Zimbabwe is one that mostly foregrounds the work and exploits of two white missionaries and at least two expatriates. In most cases, their stories have been co-opted into the oft-repeated histories of Father Groeber (1907-1973) – the founder of Serima Mission – Canon Edward Paterson (1895-1974), – who founded Cyrene Mission, Frank McEwen (1907-1994) – the first Director of Zimbabwe's National Gallery, and Tom Blomefield (1926-2020), who founded the Tengenenge Workshop near Guruve. The four men came to the-then colonial state of Rhodesia and worked in the country in the twentieth century. Their contributions in laying the foundation of modern art in the country were immense, hence their dominance over all other contributors – both white and Black – was attained and continues to be cemented through investments in writings on them, reworkings of the archives they left, as well the continued focus on the work they left, either physically present at the institutions they founded and/or established or is in circulation today. I have come to the realisation that by continuing to spotlight Paterson, Groeber and McEwen, the mainstream narrative continues to gloss over the contributions of many others who also played a significant part in building the nation's arts.

The named four white expatriates are the ones whose stories account for almost every facet of the literature that exists on art history in Zimbabwe. They overshadow individual narratives of everyone else. Thus, the grand narrative of the nation's modern art history is that of its

[3]John's surname is sometimes spelt with a slight variation, in some texts as Hlatwayo. Throughout this thesis I chose to stick to Hlatywayo, unless the variant appears in a direct quote.

phenotypically white fathers of European origin. Zimbabwe sits with this "increasingly impoverished" (Pollock 1999: 4) history mainly generated by foreign art historians as there are few local ones. The foreign art historians, usually with enshrined interests, research remotely from the ivory towers of European and American institutions. On this often-contentious aspect of history, South African historians Nancy J. Jacobs and Andrew Bank make an interesting observation and reflection. Jacobs and Bank (2019: 173) state and ask:

> … throughout academia on every continent, non-African and white biographers of Africans have been asked to account for their own position in relationship to their subaltern subjects. What right, it has been asked, does a white author of another race or from another country or continent have to re-narrate the life of a black person who already lived too much at the command of privileged whites? Can self-awareness and self-reflectivity ameliorate the imbalance?

The two authors' reflection is pertinent to Zimbabwe's context, and that of many African nations where there are few local writers. As the art historian and theorist Elizabeth Georgis contends, these intellectuals "fall short of looking at the totality of political, social, and cultural phenomena" (Georgis 2010: 1) of the places they examine remotely – Zimbabwe in this case – with the same rigour as someone with full experience of the local context. As such, for me as a Zimbabwean, to write about the selected Black artist-teachers is to examine and challenge that dominant narrative, as well as to contest perceptions of art historians and critics with the power to marginalise or neglect, if not conceal, these histories. In doing so I am answering to the call of Ghanaian philosopher J.E. Wiredu (later Kwasi Wiredu) for Africans to contest the status quo. In his words, "Africans cannot leave the task of correction to foreign researchers alone" (Wiredu 1997: 327). In the same vein, prominent South African sociologist Xolela Mancgu (2017) laments the fact that there are hardly any histories of early luminaries by African scholars. The dearth of African scholarship is compounded by local universities that do not offer art history as a subject, local institutions with poor archiving traditions and contemporary writers with little or no interest in their past.

This thesis aims to instate the six artist-teachers – Kekana, Manguma, Khumalo, Songo, Mariga and Hlatywayo – into the dominant discourse of art history in Zimbabwe. My attempt at locating them onto the nation's map of modern art is done through identifying and analysing their contributions to the advancement of modern art in Zimbabwe and beyond through their roles as artists and art mentors. The analysis of their work and careers is done by employing a biographical approach. In the second objective, the notion of modernism will be critically examined in relation to the arts of Africa, foregrounding the theories expounded

by art historians Salah Hassan, Elizabeth Georgis, Okwui Enwezor and Chika Okeke-Agulu. For this thesis, I see modernism as a central tool to explaining why the selected Black artist-teachers' contributions to the development of modern art in Zimbabwe are overlooked. Modernism is a concept I also unpack in relation to South Africa, considering the different forms it assumes in the country, namely 'settler-', 'black-' and 'township' art. I go on to scrutinise South Africa's revisionist projects in a bid to draw lessons for Zimbabwe from the nation's wealthy and dynamic experience. Central to the development of modern art in Zimbabwe is the role played by missionaries and white expatriates in the establishment of the first formal art institutions and the teaching of art. These aspects will be critically examined in the third chapter. The thesis also aims to critique Frank McEwen's role in the construction of what became the dominant narrative of Zimbabwean Modernism, which was an attempt at negating the contributions of missionaries and other settlers. Like art historian Jonathan Zilberg, I acknowledge the work of the missionaries as the solid foundation upon which McEwen's workshop was able to thrive. The last main objective is to highlight the individual contributions of selected Black artist-teachers whose legacies are often overshadowed by those of the expatriates they worked with.

I have already acknowledged and critiqued the contributions of foreign art historians attempting to write Zimbabwe's story. What are some of the obstacles faced by a Zimbabwean interested in contributing to the nation's art history? Is the environment enabling enough to promote the work of revisionist art historians and aspiring art writers? The first major problem one is confronted with is the dearth of records in the local institutions. This is not to say there are no records at all, but most of the information on the nation's early modern artists exists scattered in family archives and in the memories of mentees and at times community elders in places the artists operated in. It would be much more helpful if the information was to be found in central spaces like the NAZ in both Harare and Bulawayo. Secondly, there are very few or no local art critics to document the practices of the artists. As such, one is forced to reference the writings of prominent African art historians like Hassan, Okeke-Agulu, Enwezor, etc, and yet these individuals hardly focus on Zimbabwe itself. One of the problems levelled against Euro-American Modernism in this thesis is its tendency to view Africa as monolithic. For such a vast and diverse continent, referencing a West African writer when narrating the story of southern Africa is a big challenge. Then there is a problem of writing in a space where the government in place hardly appreciates the practices of artists, let alone the writer. As such, there is hardly any

funding for art history projects. Another problem is that universities in Zimbabwe do not offer art history courses. As such, individuals become art historians by chance or out of passion. Lastly, the one which gives the writers headaches the most is coming across artists who do not know or appreciate the importance of writings to their practices.

I consider my research a form of revisionist history. As such, it is important that I conclude this introduction addressing that aspect. While speaking about his latest book *The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History Is Revisionist History* (2021), historian James M. Banner, Jr. defined revisionist history as any form of analysis that that adds a fresh perspective to our understanding of the past based on evidence and at times new methods. The historian – who is also a co-founder of the National History Centre of the American Historical Association in Washington D.C. – went on to highlight the characteristics which help define revisionist history, namely that it is transformational in that it alters existing perceptions of the past; it is philosophical since it is rooted in thought; it is conceptual as it shifts society's position on certain issues – as has happened with women's histories and that of marginalised peoples over the years; it is method-driven, even employing previously non-existent methodologies at times, as has happened with the discovery of DNA analysis in science; it is evidence based, that is, new findings lead to new and/or revised thoughts, even on matters other historians have visited in the past; and lastly it is what he calls 'normal' in that it can be the refining of what we have always known.

In his talk,[4] Banner – who acknowledges that there is not much literature on the subject or this component of histories – employs the analogy of sedimentation to explain the process of writing histories. Each generation tends to build what was presented by previous generations as it agrees or disagrees with certain positions adopted in the past. This substantiates the notion that history is never static and inert, nor is it beyond interpretation. Our interpretations might speak to our contemporaries and locality but will be challenged by a different mind from a different era and place of origin. Thus, the workings of memory, perceptions and thought will always be challenged by others.

Zimbabwe and South Africa, which are the two nations inhabited by the artists and artist-teachers discussed in this thesis, were previously colonised. In the case of South Africa, Hayden Proud, the former senior curator of the Iziko South African National Gallery (ISANG),

[4] See Washington History Seminar. 4 May 2021. 'The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History is Revisionist History'. You Tube. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeSf0j4cXMU&t=79s [Accessed on August 17, 2023].

acknowledges the role played by academics, curatorial and political processes in bringing the previously excluded Black African artists into the mainstream, which had for long been a preserve of white artists like Irma Stern and Maggie Laubser (Proud 2006). Thus, through the work being carried out in art institutions, which include academic institutions, museums and galleries, there are individuals who are challenging that which was written in the past and are offering new interpretations and reinterpretations based on new evidence and perspective. I argue that it is from this example of historical revisionism that Zimbabwe can take cues in acknowledging its own overlooked or neglected modern Black artist-teachers. This is not to say nothing has been happening on the ground in Zimbabwe, just that there are few individuals doing so, as well as few institutions and few platforms committed to such initiatives.

## Literature Review

A significant body of literature on modern art from Zimbabwe exists. It includes a few books, doctoral dissertations, academic papers, opinion pieces, catalogues, reviews, etc, by different art historians and writers with an interest in art developments in the nation. Except for recent publications like *Mawonero/Umbono: Insights on art in Zimbabwe* (2015), with contributions written by the NGZ personnel, the *Zimbabwe Art* (2017), a project cataloguing the permanent collection of the NGZ and providing artists' biographies, most publications on Zimbabwean art have been produced by academics and writers in foreign institutions and countries. I found these four theses – Jonathan Zilberg's *Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture: the invention of a tradition* (1996), Elizabeth Morton's *Missions and Modern Art in Southern Africa* (2003b), Lance Larkin's *Following the Stone: Zimbabwean Sculptors Carving a Place in 21st Century Art Worlds* (2014b), and Grace Zhou's *Missionaries' Impact in the Formation of Modern Art in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Cyrene and Serima Mission Workshops* (2017) – quite helpful as they provided the foundational material for my thesis. However, a closer scrutiny of them reveals that they centre the stories of Frank McEwen as the main figure on the development of stone sculpture, and Canon Paterson and Father Groeber, the founders of Cyrene and Serima Missions respectively. Of these academics, Zilberg went on to produce more than a dozen papers and Morton authored a few more. Their main subjects were the above-named figures.

Marion Arnold's *Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture* (1986), which was developed from her thesis, *Some Aspects of Iconography in Selected Shona Sculptors* (1982) was the first major comprehensive writing on stone sculpture from Zimbabwe. In it she tried to link the development of stone sculpture as a transition from the local woodcarving and clay moulding traditions. From an anthropological analysis angle Olga Sicilia – in her dissertation *There Is No Such Thing as a Spirit in the Stone! Misrepresentations of Zimbabwean Stone Sculpture* (2010) – situates the emergence and development of the stone sculpture movement within the colonial and historical circumstances of its time and demonstrates that it is linked to modernist primitivism. Her arguments built on Johnathan Zilberg's thesis which I mentioned earlier and the claims he makes in a paper titled 'Inscriptions and Fantasies in the Invention of Shona Sculpture', published in 1994. Although Morton's 'Grace Dieu Mission in South Africa: Defining the Modern Art Workshop in Africa' (2013a) and a few of Elizabeth Rankin's writings (listed in Chapter 4) focused on Kekana, none of them examined the Kekana School of Art and Craft which he founded and operated in Manicaland. Thus, none of them went into detail regarding his career as an artist-teacher.

Besides the above-mentioned texts, there have been several more writings – mostly academic papers – on the development of modern art in Zimbabwe over the years. However, none of them go into detail on the careers of Manguma, Mariga, Khumalo, Songo and Hlatywayo as artist-teachers. The best they do is to mention some of them as teaching assistants to Canon Paterson and Father Groeber. It is on this basis that I argue that Zimbabwe's modern art canon is incomplete as it is dominated by Paterson, McEwen and Groeber, and to an extent, Blomefield. Most of the writings on McEwen and Paterson also build on archival records left by the two. As such, in relation to the Black artist-teachers I am interested in, the question that Lillian S. Robinson, a Marxist feminist activist, writer, and theorist, and Lise Vogel, a feminist sociologist and art historian, posed half a century ago is even more pertinent in this day: "How could one study the cultural history of the vast majority who did not leave enduring monuments?" (1971: 183). This thesis, therefore, makes use of fragmented archives to try to fully account for the careers of the six artists-cum-teachers, and to insert them onto the nation's map of modern art.

Confronted with such an incomplete, yet resilient national art canon, one of the suggestions made by art historian and cultural analyst Griselda Pollock in *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art Histories*, her seminal text published in 1999, is to expand it so that it accommodates what it omitted in the past. This goal can be attained without necessarily replacing what exists in the canon (the traditional), but bringing in "additional ways of seeing and understanding" (Camille etal. 1996: 202). Thus, the canon can be reconfigured through a re-reading and reworking of the archive, interpretations and reinterpretations of that which exists, and embarking on new research. Having such an incomplete canon is not unique to Zimbabwe. The situation reflects what obtains in all nations, especially those that were colonies of Western European powers. That is why this is a discussion that occupies the mind of one of Africa's most respected thinkers, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. In *Moving the Centre*, a ground-breaking text published in 1993, Thiong'o advocates for the recognition of a multiplicity of centres in all spheres of culture as a way of disrupting the sole dominance of the exclusionary Euro-American centre occupying the heart of the modernism discourse by default. While we can clearly appreciate the persistence of this phenomenon on a global scale, it is also a key national problem for Zimbabwe where the names of the whites highlighted earlier constitute a minority, yet continue to occupy the centre of the canon.

The discourse of modernism,[5] is an 'unmarked case' that implicitly stands for 'Western' modernism. "By this token, a qualifying epithet becomes necessary to speak of any other: East European modernism, Chinese modernism, Indian modernism, African modernism, and so on" (Mitter 2008: 532). Thus, the way modernism has been packaged and presented to the world mainly as a narrow Euro-American concept deliberately omits the role of Africa and other places considered peripheral to the two centres of Europe and America. As the Zimbabwean thinker Pascal Mungwini explains, "it is in those aspects of African history excluded by modernity, that is, in those aspects located on the other side of modernity, that most of Africa's own history can be found" (2014b: 8). Defined by art historian Clement Emeka Akpang (2016) as the intersection of art with political and social concerns, the era of modernism marked a phase of great experimentation in art characterised by the introduction of new ideas, new media, and a shift in the materiality and many other aspects of art. This happened in many parts of the world, including Africa, as modernity is a larger phenomenon beyond the Euro-American formulation (Hay 2008: 115).

To consider a Zimbabwean modernism is to acknowledge the pluriversality[6] of world modernisms as the "currents of modernity are rarely unidirectional" (Salami and Visona 2013: 7) and as James Ferguson highlights in *Expectations of Modernity*, there is no such thing as "a linear sequence of progressive forces" (1999: 42). It is interesting to note that Zimbabwe's prominent cultural heritage theorists and archaeologists – Shadreck Chirikure, Innocent Pikirayi and Munyaradzi Manyanga, etc. – consider the Great Zimbabwe Empire (AD1000-1700) an ancient urban settlement[7] born out of the social forces of migration and state formation. What I refer to as Zimbabwean modernism in my thesis has its own distinctive historical coordinates[8] commencing with the encounter with the first European missionaries of the London Missionary Society arriving and setting up Inyati (1859) and Hope Fountain (1871)

[5]The concept of modernism will be discussed in depth in Chapter 1.

[6]Walter Mignolo (2018: x) explains, "Modernity – the Trojan horse of Western cosmology – is a successful fiction that carries in it the seed of Western pretense to universality." As such, the concept of 'pluriversality' challenges the Western idea of universality which is part of the imperial project. It stands for a world in which many worlds exist. See Mignolo, W. 2018.

[7] I consider urbanism a modernist characteristic. Great Zimbabwe, especially in the period AD1000-1700 when the dry-stone walls were constructed, reached its peak as an urban centre (*guta*) with multi-homesteads that were sometimes dispersed, and was the state capital of a socially hierarchical empire constituting of the ruling elite class and the ruled commoners. Powerful figures belonging to the chief's advisory council lived among the commoners, and therefore the outer perimeter wall enclosing the capital did not necessarily demarcate the difference between the elite and the commoners. However, the chief's family resided within the wall. For insight on this, see (i) Summers et al. 1961. (ii) Garlake 1973. and (iii) Chirikure et al. 2013.

[8] I am ascribing the concept of historical 'coordinates' to key turning points in the history of Zimbabwe. For more on the concept, see Georgis 2010.

Missions in Matabeleland. They were followed by the mining concession seekers who arrived and signed treaties which led to the full-fledged colonial occupation characterised by the arrival of the Pioneer Column, the British South Africa Police (B.S.A.P.) and the hoisting of the Union Jack at both Fort Victoria (Masvingo) and the site where present day Harare is. Missionaries who set up the early modern schools in different parts of the country only arrived when the colony was established.

The soapstone bird sculptures, and decorated soapstone bowls found at the site of the Great Zimbabwe monument are evidence of an advanced local art tradition within the empire, albeit at a smaller scale[9] when compared to the traditions of the precolonial state of Benin in West Africa, a part of present-day Nigeria. However, if we consider that a European artist like Picasso was exposed to African Kru masks, which opened fresh grounds for interrogation, making him question and confront his own society's ethics and structures and brought in new modes and perspectives (Childs 2007, Akpang 2016), we may begin to appreciate Africa's importance in the modernism discourse. The existence of the soapstone birds is evidence that Zimbabwe had an alternative or parallel modernism distinct from that of European influence. However, one of the main arguments I make in this thesis is that the stone sculptures found at the ancient monument have no connection with the 'Shona Sculpture' movement which developed in colonial Rhodesia under Frank McEwen in the 1950s. While art historians reference key historical coordinates like the 'decade of independence', a phase during which – in the case of Senegal, Nigeria, and other West African nations – artists responded to colonialism by ascertaining national identity and individual subjectivism (Okeke-Agulu 2015) as a marker of the establishment and spread of postcolonial modernism in that region, it is not plausible to talk of developments in Zimbabwe in the same vein, as the evolution of modern art in the southern African nation was not inspired by nationalism.[10]

In his book, *Art and the end of Apartheid*, art historian John Peffer (2009: 6) assets that "there were responses to modernity and modernism everywhere European colonialism impressed its mark". The assertion that modernism and modernity are married to imperialism and colonialism is one many thinkers are in agreement with. As highlighted earlier, Okeke-Agulu (2015) and Akpang (2016) talk of artists' nationalistic response to colonial hegemony in what

[9] However, current archaeological findings and reconstructions of the site do not present the full picture as the site experienced massive plundering and looting of early excavations and findings by early archaeologists and treasure hunters. Early documentation of the site was also very poor.

[10] There are no artists known to have challenged colonialism through their work. If there are any, this is certainly an area for future research.

they have termed the ‘decade of independence’ in West African history. In their critique of modernity, Marxist theorists point to mercantilism and colonialism as the highest forms of violence and human exploitation, and therefore constitutive of the dark side of modernity.

The pioneer art workshops like the mission stations of Cyrene and Serima, which were started by Canon Paterson and Father Groeber respectively, were the first to be set up in Rhodesia. One can argue that colonialism created a platform for these particular projects, as the missionaries and expatriates found their way to an established colony. The workshops nurtured and produced the first formally educated Black modern artists in the nation’s history. That the work produced from these mission stations was inspired by the students’ surroundings and experiences does not take away the fact that they were taught under mentors with a European training background, and therefore it is not practical to dismiss European influence from their practices. Under Frank McEwen at the National Gallery artists also learned to integrate the European and local ideas into their practice.

The Black artist-teachers highlighted in this thesis have not been recognised as such in the past. In most cases, their careers as artists are recognisable to an extent. However, it is their role as mentors or educators that has not been studied. This thesis is, therefore, what author Jonathan Hay calls “an attempt to challenge the totalizing claims of western modernity” (2008: 114) by offering a counter-canonical reading of Zimbabwe’s mainstream art history by bringing Kekana and his contemporaries onto the nation’s map of modern art. Mariga, Songo, Khumalo, Hlatywayo and Manguma have not been written about extensively. As such, this thesis, presented in five chapters, is designed to question a dominant narrative that privileges the work of white missionaries and expatriates.

## Methodology


Fig 1. Map of Zimbabwe – locating most of the places, art workshops and main institutions discussed in the thesis. Map generated on Google Maps. Courtesy of Nyasha Njovana.

In pursuit of the above-stated goals, data was collected using qualitative research methods including informal and unstructured interviews with various stakeholders in the arts sector and ordinary members of the community. I recorded all the interviews and transcribed them before extracting what I felt was relevant to my research. I also gathered and analysed various archival documents or content and artworks from different institutions in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world. I carried out most of the primary fieldwork research for this qualitative thesis in October of 2018. During that month I travelled to Harare where I spent two weeks collecting data at both the National Gallery and the National Archives of Zimbabwe. Surprisingly, the two institutions do not have much archival materials on the six

artist-teachers who form the core of this research. However, they have records on Canon Paterson and Frank McEwen, two individuals whose legacies, I argue, dominate Zimbabwe's mainstream art history, and overshadow those of the teachers I write about in the thesis. Nonetheless, in 2018 the National Gallery published *Diamond Years: 60 Years of Art in the Media, 1957-2017*, a compilation of the Zimpapers or the state media's coverage of events that happened at the gallery from the day it was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1957. I found the newspaper cuttings published in the book a useful archival resource for this thesis.

Due to a lack of written materials on the six Black artist-teachers I focus on in this research, interviews became an integral data collection tool. I carried out interviews with people outside academia. While still in Harare and at the National Gallery, I was able to interview then Executive Director, Doreen Sibanda, and then Chief Curator and Deputy Director, Raphael Chikukwa. On Livingstone Avenue at Gallery Delta, I interviewed Helen Lieros and Derek Huggins. My last port of call in Harare was the Beatrice Cottages in Mbare where I interviewed John Hlatywayo, one of the only two surviving artist-teachers from the sextuple at the centre of my research. In the third week of October, I travelled to St Faith's Mission in Rusape where I was able to interview VaMaibvisira and Mbuya Gwatidzo, two senior members of the community around St Faith's High School, with the former being the village headman. The two were there when Kekana arrived at the Mission school in 1944. They were part of his community to the time he died. At the school, I also interviewed then headmaster VaMukoyi who, although he only came to the school in the early 1990s, was a friend to Kekana. In the town of Rusape I interviewed artist Guy Mutasa who was mentored by Kekana. In the final week of October, I travelled to Bulawayo where I interviewed Voti Thebe, then Regional Director of the National Gallery branch in the city.

I was also able to visit Cyrene Mission near Bulawayo. The institution founded by Canon Paterson was instrumental in mentoring Lazarus Khumalo and Sam Songo, two of the artist-teachers in this thesis. When Voti Thebe said "I will take you to Cyrene where the journey began", I knew I had to go there. At the school, I was guided by Asa P. Ncube, one of its art teachers.[11] Ncube also allowed me to record the process and entertained my interjections through random questions and comments. In the end, my experience interacting with him was not very different from that I had had during the interviews as they were all non-directive or

[11] Ncube has since transferred to the Christian Brothers College, a private high school in Bulawayo.

unstructured. They were more of conversations with the individuals identified prior to traveling for the fieldwork. The interviews also carried on over the course of my research, sometimes via an unconventional source like WhatsApp. I used the medium to relay questions to artist Tapfuma Gutsa who was taught by Cornelius Manguma, and to Sekuru Walter Ndundu who knew about John Hlatywayo's time engaging with the National Gallery school. I also had an unstructured interview with Christopher Till, a former Director of the National Gallery, on Skype.

Voti Thebe also made sure that I visit the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre where Lazarus Khumalo and Sam Songo had taught. Although I was not able to find much helpful information on site, there is something I felt walking on the ground the two had walked on. In my pursuit of traces of history left in the place, I found myself imagining and mentally visualising how they had negotiated and helped define the paths on site. It felt like my reenactment of part of what had transpired in the past. I felt the same walking in- and outside the Cyrene chapel, imagining and visualizing them painting the massive wall murals. However, this experience was quite conspicuous on the St Faith's Mission grounds where I had physically seen Kekana crisscrossing the paths and dusty roads on his wheelchair. I went to the site of his workshop, the church and his house. In the end I felt like I had not completed the journey, knowing that his grave was in the local community cemetery, but getting there would have required engaging the community elders. Perhaps there is something important written on his grave. In his doctoral thesis, the South African historian Ciraj Rassool talks of the autobiography and the biography functioning together, arguing that there is "no conceptual division between the two" (Rassool 2004: 45). Having felt and experienced what I just narrated above, I realized that there is no way I can distance myself from my subjects (the artists-cum-teachers) in my attempt at recounting their life stories. I identify with them.

On my way back to Rhodes University in the last week of October 2018, I made a stopover in Johannesburg where I visited the Wits Arts Museum. Elizabeth Rankin, who is now based in New Zealand, had compiled a file on Job Kekana and left it in the custody of the museum. I was welcomed by Lois Anguria, who already had taken the file out of storage for me since I had communicated prior to my visit. Besides the file, I was also shown a bust of *David with his sling* which was also carved by Kekana.

Email correspondence with different individuals enabled this research process to go forward. I reached out to Elizabeth Rankin from the time I decided to embark on this research to the

time of writing the thesis. I also communicated with the Botswana-based artist Shepherd Ndudzo, whose father Barnabas was one of Kekana's most illustrious students. Also, via email, Peter Fisher, the Special Collections Manager of the London Metropolitan University unveiled Kekana's enrolment cards from the Sir John Cass College's Annual Reports archive. I reached out to Pippa Skotnes at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Curating the Archive after John Hlatywayo indicated that he would at times be invited to Cecil Skotnes' home. Pippa is Cecil's daughter. It was also via email (and WhatsApp) that I kept in touch with Lisa Masterson, who was managing *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition on its tour of Zimbabwe, leading to our meeting in Cape Town on the 25th of May in 2022. Lisa went on to assist with images from Canon Paterson's family and the Curtain Foundation archive. Email correspondence also made enable Mike Tucker of ZimFieldGuide.com to share images from Serima Mission.

I presented my proposal twice during the Fine Arts Postgraduate Seminars which take place on Wednesdays at the Department of Fine Arts main building at Rhodes University. I received invaluable feedback in both instances, with some of it to do with issues of ethics. In 2019 at the Rhodes University Postgraduate Seminar held at the Department of Education in Makhanda over two days (22-23 August), I presented a paper titled 'Destinies Shaped by Geography: Job Kekana in the Shadows of Ernest Mancoba and Gerard Sekoto'. On the 1st of November 2022 at the Humanities Seminar Room as part of the Rhodes University African Studies Centre Seminar Series, I presented a paper titled ''The Stars Are Bright' Exhibition of 1940s Cyrene Mission Artworks: Contesting Ideologies and Legacies of Zimbabwe's Mainstream Art History'. The audiences for these two presentations were from different disciplines and their constructive feedback was very vital and improved the way I approached certain aspects of my thesis.

As I indicated earlier, at St Faith's High School, I walked on the ground that Kekana walked on and got to know the people he knew. Since I devote a chapter to Kekana, it is imperative that I reflect on my positionality. For me, to write about Kekana is to pay tribute to St Faith's Mission, a place that I remember with great nostalgia as it moulded and nurtured me in the six years that I was there for my junior secondary, Ordinary and Advanced Levels education. It is a place which shaped my personal values, and one that I still identify with. Drawing from Rebecca Solnit's writings on places we love and that love us back, and always offer "something to return to," South African sociologist Jacklyn Cock employs the phrase "a paean to place," (Cock 2018: 5). In my case, this is almost like a love story disguised as art history, a case of

the autobiography and the biography functioning together as indicated earlier. St Faith's High School groomed me, and it is in my best interest to return the beautiful memory and love. That my identity as an 'insider' of St Faith's Mission has a bearing on the information I collected and intend to disseminate is something that I am aware of. That positionality, as highlighted by Griselda Pollock, a feminist art historian and cultural theorist, might be said to inform or intrude upon my evaluation of the historical materials (1999: xvi) as it has a significant bearing on moulding and shaping this close to personal narrative. Human geographer Gediminas Lesutis observes that there is the potential to "fetishize" someone or his "individual agency" (2018: 510), especially in situations where the writer is close to the subject. I treat the information gathered on Kekana through various sources including the selected research participants with utmost respect and subject it to the best possible objective analysis. I rely on reflexivity, which Linda Finlay, an integrative psychotherapist and academic consultant, defines as exercising an "immediate, continuing, dynamic and subjective self-awareness" (2002: 533) to avoid reducing this thesis to a mere hagiography exercise. That I only came to know a bit about Kekana at around the time he died shows how detached from the mission institution he had become in the later years of his career. To write about him is, therefore, to acknowledge the role that this same institution that moulded me, played in sidelining, if not silencing, his legacy.

Overall, this research is a form of storytelling employing the Biographical approach. Oral historian Joanna Bornat indicates that "Biographical methods' is an umbrella term for an assembly of loosely related, variously titled activities [which include]: narrative, life history, oral history, autobiography, biographical interpretive methods, storytelling, auto/biography, reminiscence," etc (2008: 344). Academic Barbara Merrill, who traces the history of biographical methods, indicates that they recently gained prominence in response to "the dominance of scientific and objective approaches to understanding human behaviour which mimics that of the natural sciences" (2020: 15). Merrill also indicates that the biographical methods work well with oral history, place much more "emphasis on agentic possibility in people's lives" (Merrill 2020: 17), and tend to draw from different disciplines and aspects in life, including the sociological, psychological, philosophical and educational. Both Bornat and Merrill agree that biographical methods are 'universalistic', encompassing, and reflective in character. The biographical approach also works well with a wide range of archival materials and sources including "diaries, notebooks, interactive websites, written personal letters" (Bornat 2008: 344) and the varying methods of collecting these materials too. Due to the significant gaps in the archives on the selected and overlooked or marginalized artist-teachers,

I also make use of Critical Fabulation, an approach developed by Saidiya Hartman (2008) which allows room for proposing possible narratives fashioned out of the existing fragmented archives. I tend to revisit the methodologies mentioned in this section in the chapters they are applied.

## General Overview: Thesis Structure

The first chapter reveals Africa's somewhat problematic relationship with the Euro-American Modernist movement in art which is exclusionary and tends to leave out Africa's contributions to global modernity. Foregrounding the writings of Salah Hassan, Chike Okeke-Agulu, Elizabeth Georgis, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, and many other writers from the continent and the African diaspora, I discuss the shortfalls of Modernism as a Euro-American construct which I argue has led to the marginalisation of the artist-teachers at the centre of this thesis. While the various African thinkers remind us of the encroachment of modernism on the continent as part of the colonial encounter, they highlight the contributions of African artists in an exchange exercise marked by the cross-fertilisation of ideas. However, they also remind us of how much the lack of documentation worked against African artists of years gone by. The unequal playground of a philosophy that centres the West is a subject that also occupies the Kenyan literary giant Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who advocates for the shifting of the centre, or at least the recognition of multiple centres outside the Euro-American construct.

South Africa, towards the end of apartheid and in its aftermath, has done a formidable job in efforts to canonise the previously marginalised Black artists. The gains in this area have been realised through the effort of the curators and researchers working in art galleries and museums. With South Africa's wealth of academic institutions offering different degrees in the arts, the nation's intellectuals have played a great role in documenting the work of Black artists, and to steer enriching conversations in the domain. While South Africans themselves are quick to point to the lacklustre support they get from their government, they fail to realise that they are in a much better position compared to what obtains in other countries on the continent where the arts sector does not get any support whatsoever. I suggest that South Africa's efforts at canonising the Black modernists is something Zimbabwe, which also sits with an incomplete biased canon should try to replicate in an effort to recover the stories of the Black modern artists and artist-teachers overshadowed by the stories of the white missionaries and expatriates who are dominant in the art history of the nation.

Even though Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o strongly advocates for prioritising African languages in attempts to disrupt the Euro-American centre of modernity, Ntongela Masilela points out how African languages played second fiddle in facilitating and comprehending modernity (2006:32). Confronted with these challenges I ask: What would be best for a way forward with Africa engaging the modernity discourse? As a response I am drawn to the suggestions made by Denis Ekpo and Pfunzo Sidogi in their latest book titled *The De-Africanization of African*

*Art* (2022) that African innovations and inventions must incorporate the best that the world has to offer, even though I am still grappling with their concepts of 'de-Africanization' and the 'Post-African aesthetics'. I interrogate these terms at the end of the first chapter.

In the second chapter I examine the introduction and influence of modernism on the Zimbabwean art landscape. Modernism in Zimbabwe has intrinsic ties to Western imperialism and hegemony taking off from the colonisation of the country by Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company (B.S.A.P.) on behalf of Britain and its Queen. The company obtained treaties and concessions that allowed it to occupy the territory and to name it Rhodesia, after Rhodes himself, with the aid of missionaries like John Smith Moffat and Charles Helm of the London Missionary Society, who signed the Moffat Treaty of 11 February 1888 with King Lobengula. The treaty stipulated that the Matabele king was "going to refrain from entering into any correspondence or treaty with any foreign State or Power without the previous knowledge of the British High Commissioner for South Africa" (Zvobgo 2009: 13). Although a critical examination of the transaction leaves us doubting whether the Ndebele king would just give away his nation's sovereignty on a silver platter, what we also need to remember is that the treaty was drafted in a foreign language and the monarch could likely have been duped by the interpreters. The Moffat Treaty was followed by the Rudd Concession of 30 October 1888 through which the Matabele king, who was "conveniently presumed to rule over Mashonaland as well" (Mazarire 2007: 60) effectively surrendered all mineral rights to his kingdom and the territory beyond, covering the Mashonaland areas, to the B.S.A.P. Therefore, the signed treaties were officially the first step in the colonisation of Zimbabwe.

Following this, mission centres and schools were set up in different parts of the country. Missionaries had a significant impact in converting and indoctrinating the aboriginal population to turn its back on African traditional structures through the introduction of missionary churches and schools.[12] It was in the mission schools that the first art workshops and institutions were established. Serima under Father Groeber, and Canon Edward Paterson's Cyrene were typical examples, even though they were established decades later when the nation was already a British colony. Although the missionaries in most parts of the colonised world were known to serve the interests of the coloniser, the stories of Groeber and Paterson

[12] This does not mean that there was no resistance to Christianity from the onset of colonisation. Based on the clash of cultures, the missionaries faced resistance based on polygamy and the belief in ancestral spirits. However, they were able to overcome the resistance through the ministry of preaching, translating scriptures into the vernacular, the establishment of Christian villages, the ministry of healing and Western education. For more on this subject see (i) Zvobgo 1986. and (ii) Bhebe 1979.

are quite interesting as they tried to Africanise their work. Importantly, their institutions were instrumental in nurturing the first generation of formally trained Black modern artists and artist-teachers in the country. In doing so, they also laid the foundation for the National Gallery Workshop started by Frank McEwen a few years later. Besides the missionaries, there were other expatriates involved in the setting up of art institutions in the country. In 1963, Alex Lambert founded the Mzilikazi Arts Centre and Tom Blomefield, a tobacco farmer, was instrumental in the setting up of the Tengenenge project in 1966 (Moyo 2020).

The third chapter is dedicated to critically examining the work of Frank McEwen, who was the first director of the national gallery, then named Rhodes National Gallery. He was instrumental in the establishment of a fictional form of modernism named 'Shona Sculpture' (Zilberg 1996, Sicilia 2010). Although heavily contested by academics and arts writers, the label is surprisingly refusing to disappear. As recent as mid-September 2018, and as if to reinforce the idea that 'Shona Sculpture' is canonical, Edone Anne Logan employs the term without even problematising it when writing about "An Exhibition of Shona Sculpture" by Nyanga's Jonathan Matimba (1940-2013) that was at the Rhodes Museum[13] between 10 and 14 August that year (Logan 2018). I analyse McEwen's attempts to deconstruct or undo and almost obliterate the contributions of the missionaries and the expatriates as he canonised 'Shona Sculpture'. In challenging the dominant narrative of art history in Zimbabwe that glorifies McEwen's work, I also question the contributions of the researchers who continue to peddle the problematic narrative from the comfort of the ivory towers of academic institutions of the Global North.[14] The figure (or ghost) of McEwen is important to this thesis. From the missionaries who established art schools before he arrived in the country to the artist-teachers who operated for close to two decades in an independent Zimbabwe, thus almost three decades after McEwen's departure from the then Rhodesia, there is no one who was not affected by the man's actions or decisions. The course and development of modern art revolved around him in his tenure as the National Gallery Director, and many years after as many gatekeepers – directors who were not radical enough to shake the foundation he had established – have walked in his shoes. For this chapter, I rely on primary data that I gathered at the NAZ and the NGZ.

[13] Not to be confused with the old name for the National Gallery, the Rhodes Museum is in Nyanga in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. Built in 1897 by R. Marks, a stonemason, the building was used for stabling Cecil John Rhodes's horses on his several visits to Nyanga between1897 and 1900.
[14] Elite universities in the former colonial powers of Western Europe and the United States of America.

The fourth chapter employs the biographical approach to try and understand the role played by Job Kekana in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. He is relatively more visible in the discourse of the evolution of Black modern art in South Africa,[15] albeit not in the same vein as his more prominent contemporaries like Ernest Mancoba and Gerard Sekoto. However, the same cannot be said of Zimbabwe where he did even greater work. It could be that he was pushed to the peripheries of the canon, as his career – rooted in the missionary tradition – coincided with the promotion of the overhyped 'Shona Sculpture' in McEwen's years at the National Gallery. Alternatively, this just reveals the shallowness of scholarly work on him and his contemporaries. Taking these reasons into account, my work aims to reveal invaluable aspects of his work both as an artist and artist-teacher that ought to be cherished.

In the fifth chapter I again make use of the biographical approach to try and give meaningful accounts of the selected Black artist-teachers. I also turn to Saidiya Hartman's Critical Fabulation (2008) which allows me bit of creative freedom in working with scattered archives where I only have access to tiny bits of information, contesting the "received or authorised account and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done" (2008: 11). Because most of these teachers have passed on, the attempt to critically tell their stories is what Joanna Grabski and Carol Magee, in their text *African Art, Interviews, Narratives* (2013), describe as "posthumous constructions" or "narratives around absences". The selected Black modern artist-teachers played a significant role in the development of art in Zimbabwe, and yet their legacies continue to exist in the shadows of their more visible white counterparts, the missionaries and the expatriates. Among them is Joram Mariga, who is sometimes acknowledged as being the "father of 'Shona Sculpture'" (Zilberg 2001a). John Hlatywayo, who trained in South Africa and came back to teach at the B.A.T. Workshop School in Harare, still lives in Mbare, a high-density suburb in Harare. The late Lazarus Khumalo, a graduate of the famous Cyrene Mission, went on to teach at Mzilikazi Arts Centre. Cornelius Manguma trained at Serima, and Sam Songo who trained at Cyrene Mission also ended up teaching at Mzilikazi Arts Centre. I also acknowledge the contributions of Black artist-teachers like Gabriel Hatugari and Paul Wade who are not a part of this thesis. I was fortunate to find and interview some of the above-mentioned artist-teachers' former students, as well as their contemporaries, who provided comprehensive and sincere primary information.

[15] I make this claim based on the literature that exists on Job Kekana's time in South Africa by Elizabeth Rankin and Melanie Klein, as well as several mentions in other writings. This archive is more expansive when compared to the literature on his career in Zimbabwe.

I conclude the thesis reminding the reader of its contributions to the expansion of Zimbabwe's incomplete canon of modern art. I also emphasise how this task has been achieved without any attempts to overthrow or discard the useful contributions made by the missionaries and expatriates who are still mainly credited for the foundations and establishment of modern art in the country. However, I also point out that a critique of their work was carried out as a way of exposing the injustices of the biased canon on the marginalised Black artist-teachers. I also wind up suggesting further readings and research needed to build on this study.

# Chapter 1: Modernism as a Discursive Framework

## 1.1. Introduction

With its varying geographical regions populated by diverse peoples of distinctive ethnic groups, exhibiting marked differences in cultures, cultural practices, and beliefs, speaking different languages, and practising diverse politics, the continent of Africa is so complex that it can only be understood when particular attention is paid to its multifarious richness. The idea of Africa embracing modernity, usually periodised and explained in terms of the continent's encounter with Europe and North America, tends to gloss over the above multi-layered differences. As such, that conversation tends to marginalise the roles played by the different societies whose contributions are deemed less important by virtue of their being located outside the Euro-American core, both physically and ideologically. This formulation is rooted in the patronising attitude of Europe and America towards the rest of the world, a characteristic which was compounded by slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and is now perpetuated by writers bent on "increasing [the] process of re westernisation (the revamping of Western ways of thinking…)" (Mignolo 2013: 2). Such writers like Slavoj Žižek and Santiago Zabala (Mignolo 2013) centre their narratives around the Euro-America core, thereby continuing to diminish, trivialise and erase Africa from history. The core of this chapter, centring the philosophical contributions of African theorists and critical thinkers like Salah Hassan, Chika Okeke-Agulu, Okwui Enwezor, Elizabeth Georgis, and many others, highlights the contributions of artists from the continent, and attempts to counter the narrow Eurocentric version of modernity. In doing so, it argues for the inclusion, advancement and/or promotion of the African alternatives.

The focus on South Africa in the later phase of the chapter substantiates that the concept of modernism is complex on many levels as there can be multiple and entangled modernisms in one nation, as the different cultural groups and individualistic diverse art practices show and enrich each other. While South Africa continues with attempts to recognise previously marginalised artists, a lot has already been achieved in that regard. Such efforts are what I suggest Zimbabwe ought to draw from in efforts to acknowledge its own lesser-sung artists and artist-teachers. Although I question African cultural philosopher Denis Ekpo's notion of a "de-Africanised Post-African aesthetic", I wind up the chapter by embracing his suggestion that the most meaningful way Africa can bring its modernism to the forefront is to stop imposing it onto the Euro-American formulation, but instead to build its own critical theory and philosophy. To do this, the continent can draw from the contributions of its modern literary giants, such as the Nigerian, Chinua Achebe, Kenya's Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, South Africa's

Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, the Senegalese, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Cheikh Hamidou Kane. It can also look up to its diasporan thinkers, like the prominent Guyanese historian, political activist and academic Walter Rodney, the Trinidadian historian, journalist and Marxist Cyril Lionel Robert (C.L.R.) James, or the Martinique-born French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon as well as contemporary Black critical writers in North America, Britain, Brazil, Columbia and other parts of the world. Ekpo suggests that this strong African philosophical base ought to be synthesised with the best "ideas and winning formulae" the world has to offer (Sidogi 2022: xi).[16]

### 1.2. Entangled modernisms

Modernism in Western art history describes styles, ideologies and philosophies of modern art produced between 1850 and 1950, a phase described as the age of modernisation, when many European societies transformed from classical to modern civilisations (Atkins 1993, Crouch 1998, Clark 1998). By virtue of its origins in Western Europe, the concept's underlying assumption is that it has a race which is white and sex which is male, and is mostly associated with society's or the world's elite (Robinson and Vogel 1971). The concept is political and ideological, and it is time-specific, within the socioeconomic context of the industrial, technological, and cultural revolutions when Western European societies experienced radical socio-political revolutions seeking "to break with the past traditions and to set cultural agenda for the future" (Crouch 1998: 5). In that period the avant-garde, mainly of Western Europe, questioned "the authorities of the bourgeoisie and its notions of high art in modern society" (Akpang 2016: 3) and chose to make "Art for Art's Sake".[17] By adopting anti-authority, anti-institution, and anti-order stances, the avant-garde transformed culture, psychology, literature, and art by challenging the institutionalisation enshrined in Classicism and Renaissance. However, the changes did not always happen quietly, as these innovators who were fighting for the emancipation of the individual from the oppression of the industrial society, and therefore were in open conflict with tradition and taboos, facing resistance from those in defence of the status quo (Belting 2003, Crouch 1998).

The main challenge with what the Cameroonian anthropologist and sociologist Francis Nyamnjoh calls Euro-American "reductionist metanarratives" (2001: 363) of modernism is that

[16] The idea of the "de-Africanised Post-African aesthetic" is one the Nigerian thinker Denis Ekpo has been pushing forward for some years now. For more on it, a look at the latest book he has co-edited with Pfunzo Sidogi is warranted. See Ekpo, D and Sidogi, P. 2022.

[17] The concept is a translation of the French phrase l'art pour l'art expressing the idea that art should be assessed on its own merits, regardless of socio-political, thematic, moral and ethical relevance.

they create “a linear narrative of history” and therefore lose sight of “a continuous process of ruptures and fragmentations” taking place in other parts of the world (Georgis (2010: 1). Evidence proves that the transformation of classical art into modern art through movements like Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Fauvism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art mostly happened through the infusion, and sometimes appropriation, of influences from other parts of the world, often from African and other colonial art forms. Thus, the notion of ‘modern art’ is not culturally neutral, yet its “erstwhile universal claim proves to be a view that was never ready for globalization” (Belting 2003: 6). It therefore should not be a surprise that Western scholars equate modernisation with Westernisation (Mahmoud 2016) in the dominant, yet narrow Euro-American-centred version of art history. As enunciated by artist/curator and writer Rasheed Araeen and Indian author and painter Balraj Khanna (1989), this sanitised version of the history of modernism, solely from a Western perspective, tends to exclude, or fail to acknowledge, not only the plurality of cultures, but the objects of high culture produced by the other modernities found in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. In fact, it mostly tends to silence the contributions of the societies existing outside Europe.

Peter Childs, an author who has written extensively on British culture and postcolonial theory, expands on this notion by arguing that modernism is an international art phenomenon encompassing all avant-garde styles,[18] philosophies and movements of modern art, characterised by the desire to create new traditions with unconventional aesthetic appeal and by subverting classical and traditional or established conventions (Childs 2007). Be it in Europe or Africa, the notion denotes a break from the traditional way of doing things. The avant-garde were not only found in Europe, but several communities around the world had their own,

[18] In different parts of the world artists come up with innovative styles that are different from what is considered the norm. This includes African expression of what the West considers non-conventional.

including those that Europe looked down upon as 'primitive'.[19] This is supported by art historian Elaine O'Brien (2013: 9) through the observation that "an avant-garde attitude, then, unites global modernists, but it was a unity of difference. Besides the infinite range of contexts, each modern artist's stance was unique and complex." Thus, African artists "have also been at the forefront of contributing to modernism and even postmodernism" (Hassan 1995: 30) and therefore cannot be merely "portrayed as bystanders in the making of history" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 182).

The concept of modernism refers to developments that are so broad and diverse that it cannot be defined within the narrow confines of Europe and its Industrial Revolution, which give the impression of a monocentric world civilisation. Indeed, as the Trinidadian historian, journalist and Marxist, Cyril Lionel Robert 'C.L.R.' James (1963) enunciates, the presence of sculptures in Africa and other parts of the world that the European avant-garde drew inspiration from for the transformation of their own work serves as proof that the Industrial Revolution did not bring art to other parts of the world. Rather, the art of these peripheral areas or the 'uncivilised world', considered 'backward' in the eyes of the coloniser, had a significant impact in shaping modern art in Europe, "not just spelling out the co-existence of different modernities but also their interrelations", as the sociologist Goran Therborn (2003: 295) observes. In fact, a lot of the art in other parts of the world predates Europe's watershed moments of the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The art in both the communal and egalitarian, and the centralised precolonial states of Africa, for example, could not even fit the categorisations marked by the narrow European 'universalist' individualistic tastes and functions of fine art "created primarily for aesthetic and intellectual purposes and judged for

[19] Terms like 'primitive,' 'tradition,' 'tribal,' and 'authentic' are problematic and will always appear in single quotes in this thesis as a way of acknowledging the controversies they bring. Many authors have raised the issue and interrogated these terms, including Kasfir 1992, Hountondji 1996, Monroe 2019 and Kuper 1988. 'Tribal' and 'primitive' can be used interchangeably as they are employed through a Victorian lens to denote art that is supposedly pure and uncontaminated by Western influences. The art has unique material culture or 'tribal style', lacks refinement, and is thought to be more spiritual than that from the West. The art is allegedly collective and not assigned to individuals, and is ascribed to timeless codes of behaviour, and is to belong to 'traditional' societies which are supposedly either static or on the brink of disappearing. These terms and characteristics are used to qualify 'authentic' art. Fillitz (2012: 225) makes a distinction between nominal authenticity which identifies origins, authorship or provenance of an object, and expressive authenticity used in the anthropological context to ascertain an "object's character as a true expression of the individual's or society's values and beliefs." "Both are determined by some primitive character implicitly requested by collectors and explicitly produced by the traders" (ibid, 212). In the case of Africa, authenticity is "a condition that tends to conflate perceived cultural integrity, a sense of connection to the precolonial past and perceived value" (Monroe 2019: 7). Kasfir (1992) proposes that relocating authenticity in the minds of the African artists and not the Euro-American consumers. However, Monroe (2019) highlights what he considers authenticity's "paradoxical relation to the present." In agreement with the author are Munjeri (1997), Ntuli (2020) and Fillitz (2012), that the term can be employed as a radicalised quality by people with appropriate links to heritage they desire to preserve or revive, especially faced with the threat of globalisation.

its beauty and meaningfulness," as artist and researcher Wolukau-Wanambwa (2014: 106) points out. The multimedia art of the early African societies mostly performed functional purposes, such as initiation rituals, and served other ceremonies that the kings and queens mostly held a monopoly on. This substantiates the notion advanced by the Zimbabwean thinker Pascal Mungwini (2014b: 17) that "the world was truly polycentric with many centres of power and knowledge, each suited to the needs of their respective communities." Therefore, as the Zimbabwean art historian Tony Monda (2013)[20] indicates, global modernisms ought to be acknowledged as overlapping and yet in variance from the narrow European models.

For Therborn, to the colonial zones of the World (Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and South Asia), "modernity literally arrived out of the barrel of guns [and] subdued the internal forces of tradition" (2003: 299). Therefore, the idea that Euro-American modernism is synonymous with the infiltration of European ideas and standards of life into the 'uncorrupted' spaces adds weight to the claim that modernity cannot be separated from colonialism.[21] As art historian Salah Hassan emphasises, "It is important to note that 'modernity' itself is a European construct that was articulated initially and most forcefully at the same time 'traditional' Africa was being colonized" (1995: 32). It became a way of imposing European values and ideals, what Europeans considered "the burden of civilising Africa", especially in the aftermath of the 'Scramble for Africa' and the Partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885. In many cases the processes of colonial occupation involved missionaries as imperialist agents – albeit often/sometimes unwittingly – and turned violent where the local communities resisted in wars and skirmishes that lasted for years. They also resisted through multiple creative forms, including artistic expression. Nonetheless, 90% of Africa was under European colonial rule by 1914. At this juncture, it is important to scrutinise the role played by missionaries in the colonial enterprise.

### 1.3. Missionaries cultivating the ground for Empire

While points of debate can be raised as to whether they were philanthropists or agents of imperialism, "thus translating a complex historical problem into a crude equation of cause and effect," (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986: 1), it is well documented that explorers and

[20] In other writings the surname Monda is spelt as Mhonda.

[21] In her doctoral thesis titled 'Ethiopian Modernism: A subaltern perspective,' Ethiopian art historian Elizabeth Georgis argues that the idea of tying modernism to colonialism applies to a nation like Ethiopia, even though it was never colonised. Georgis (2010: 1) elaborates, "the discourse of modernity in Ethiopia can only be understood within the critical discursive space of modernity that explores the relations between nations and cultures, the relations between colonialism, nationalism and imperialism, and the theories that have attempted to rework these frameworks in the heterogeneous space of modernity."

missionaries like Savorgnan de Brazza, Charles Helm and John Smith Moffat played a shrewd, albeit controversial, role of helping their mother countries secure 'friendship' treaties with traditional African rulers, such as the Makoko Treaty of 1880 in the Congo basin, and the Moffat Treaty in Zimbabwe in 1888. While the treaties appeared like sincere ways of establishing diplomatic relations between the African kingdoms or nations and the newcomers, they all paved the way to the eventual colonisation of various parts of the continent, leading to the disruption and discontinuation of traditional power structures, land and territorial dispossessions, and various other violent means. From a standpoint of modernity, the German philosopher Walter Benjamin's assertion that "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin 1969: 256) is a befitting literal reading of the nature of these 'friendship' treaties, which promised to offer protection to the local leaders and their kingdoms.

As soon as they obtained permission to enter the territories the missionaries quickly set up mission schools and churches as a way of establishing and imposing "a European cultural framework", making the missionaries "the most active cultural agents of imperialism, and complicit in the systematic erosion of indigenous African cultures" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 6) being the first to introduce Western education and to convert many locals to Christianity and turn their backs on African traditions and customs. I would argue that they indirectly prepared Africans to accept European colonial occupation with little to no resistance. The first formal art institutions were set up on mission stations. While colonialism was an evil to be resisted, many African societies embraced Western education and Christianity. Instead, in most parts of the continent outside the Islamic dominated Maghreb region, Christianity went on to become the religion of first choice for most Africans, with independent or liberated countries going on to write or adopt constitutions based on Roman-Dutch law. In the same vein Mignolo (2017: 43) opines that "modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin. Coloniality is constitutive of modernity; there is no modernity, there cannot be, without coloniality."[22]

Modernism in the arts in most parts of Africa was characterised by three factors, namely, the rise of European and Western patronage and interventions, the establishment of Western education modelled formal art schools and academies and a nationalistic cultural resurgence in

[22] Mignolo's assertion seems to reinforce the notion that modernity can only be attained through Western influence, which is the case when we apply Western thought and language, but which can be subverted if we embrace and appreciate the local development initiatives.

newly independent countries during the struggles for independence (Hassan 1995). Mission schools introduced a Western type of education that denigrated and whitewashed the traditional modes of education on the continent. This sentiment is supported by Shapiro (1981: 130) who argues that missionaries were instrumental in the colonisation of indigenous modes of perception. In what they consider the "restructuring of the conceptual universe" by missionaries, Comaroff and Comaroff (1987:2) argue that the evangelists might have failed to create a unified black Protestant Church, but admit that "the missionaries' efforts were decisive in the imposition of a new mode of being." As Manganyi (1996:30) explains, "Christianity was without doubt a decisive element in the colonisation of the African mind in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent." Examples of missionary institutions were Grace Dieu and Rorke's Drift in South Africa, and Serima and Cyrene in Zimbabwe. It was in these missionary stations that Africans were taught to look at their traditional mode of life as an evil that had to be halted.

The role of missionaries in pacifying the local African communities and the setting up of Western modelled institutions and ways to spread – and at times impose – Western 'civilisation' or 'modernity' on the local community, should not be underestimated. It marked the beginning of epistemicides[23] committed against the collective local knowledge systems of Africans, thereby paving the way for the actual partitioning and colonisation of the continent. There were deliberate and well-orchestrated efforts at assaulting and demonising local traditional customs and cultural practices in favour of the supposedly superior and righteous, but alien, Western traditions. Some Africans abandoned traditional rituals and ceremonies defined as paganist practices by the doctrine of Christianity. Artworks that played important functional roles in traditional rituals, functions and ceremonies were suddenly denigrated and at times confiscated from the local people as they were deemed to be instruments or vessels of the dark world or evil. As art historian Olu Oguibe observes, "Art practice in traditional idioms was condemned as idolatry and violently combatted, with tons of art objects seized and destroyed in bonfires. Converts were warned in damning language of the harsh and irrevocable consequences of either creating or keeping indigenous art forms" (2004: 49). It was through the missionaries that the Africans were introduced to the ambivalent binary opposite of God

[23] Nyamnjoh (2012: 129) defines epistemicide as "the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror." See Nyamnjoh 2012.

and the devil.[24] They were persuaded to adopt the former at the expense of their own customs and traditions, which were now seen as being associated with the latter. Paraphrasing the words of the British arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes, Zimbabwean academic Mhoze Chikowero (2015: 24) emphasises that "the mission's job was to epistemologically revolutionize and spiritually disarm Africans for empire".

To the western observer the language employed by the missionaries appeared quite civil. In their eyes, they had a duty to mentor the colonial subjects to equality. Instead of just being clear that they were helping exploit local resources to build their empire, missionaries would talk of the need to civilise and modernise the natives (Kohn 2014). It was on that basis that Rudyard Kipling wrote the poem "The White Man's Burden" in 1899:

> Take up the White Man's burden
> Send forth the best ye breed
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need;
> To wait in heavy harness,
> On fluttered folk and wild
> Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
> Half-devil and half-child.

As Masilela (2006: 31) sums it up, the entrance of European modernity onto the territory of Africa was a "violent process of secularisation … it was a violent process of proselytising and conversion into Christianity." The process was quite disruptive to the modes of life different societies were used to. African were forced to adopt an alien social lifestyle, a cruel economic system, and to learn a new, supposedly unifying, colonial language. In short, modernism entailed some form of acculturation.

[24] To elaborate on this idea of thinking in the binary opposites mode, the difference between the way Europeans understand and interpret art, and possibly everything else, compared to the way Africans perceive it is something the South African sculptor, poet, writer, and academic Pitika Ntuli explains in an essay accompanying his exhibition titled *Azibuyele Emasisweni* (2020). In the exhibition's introductory essay titled 'The Revenge of the Minkisi,' Ntuli enunciates, "When a Westerner and an African speak of art they could just be speaking about two different things. Westerners generally see the world from a Newtonian worldview of binary opposites, in which everything is predicated on the mind/body split, hence: Head Office, Head teacher, Headlights etc. African worldviews are more in line with the quantum mechanics of interconnectedness, interrelationship and interdependence…" See Ntuli 2020.

### 1.4. Expatriates and the Euro-American canon[25]

Tied to colonialism are the processes and systems of knowledge production. Unlike in the contemporary Information Age of digital media like Twitter and Facebook where anyone can disseminate information to an extent and even the oppressed have convenient platforms to air their views, it was the coloniser who asserted total dominance over the transmission of information. The conqueror dictated what would and would not enter the mainstream and that to be excluded. Pioneers and founders of colonial art institutions like Pierre Romain-Desfosses, the founder of the School of Le Hangar in Elisabethville (present-day Lubumbashi), Pierre Lods of the Ecole de Peinture Poto-Poto in Brazzaville, Ulli Beier at the Oshogbo workshop in Nigeria and Frank McEwen in the then Southern Rhodesia, evaluated and wrote about art in their respective locations, and went to the extent of over-promoting the sometimes amateurish products from their workshops (Nicodemus and Romare 2008). They laid the foundation of a system that "adopts derogatory discursive frameworks to situate Africa outside its Eurocentric mainstream and devalue its cultural products i.e., 'Primitivism', 'Exoticism" (Akpang 2016: 69). The problem is compounded by the fact that even in the postcolonial phase, what is written about Africa mostly comes from scholars centred in Western universities, and publishing predominantly in Western journals as well.[26] However, these debates have become "a concern, mainly, of intellectuals from the non-European world" (Mignolo 2017: 43) forcing Europeans "to realize that their culture was only one amongst a plurality of ways of conceiving of reality and organising its representations in art and social practice" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002: 154). Importantly, the sustained commentaries of African scholars "have led to new information and insights, providing a better understanding of the complex cultural meanings embodied in art" (Clarke 2006: 30) from an empirical standpoint.

In the introductory essay in the recently published *African Artists From 1882 To Now*, art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu asserts that "artistic modernism in Africa, as elsewhere, was

[25] Acknowledging that there have always been multiple competing canons in history as artists and schools emerged and were "rediscovered and revalued", Pollock (1999:3) defines the canon as "the retrospectively legitimating backbone of a cultural and political identity, a consolidated narrative of origin, conferring authority on the texts selected to naturalise this function. Canonicity refers both to the assumed quality of an included text and to the status a text acquires because it belongs within an authoritative collection. Religions confer sanctity upon their canonised texts, often implying, if not divine authorship, at least divine authority. The canon signifies what academic institutions establish as the best, the most representative, and the most significant texts – or objects – in literature, art history or music. Repositories of transhistorical aesthetic value, the canons of various cultural practices establish what is unquestionably great, as well as what must be studied as a model by those aspiring to the practice." Writers and artists also play a role in defining the canon.

[26] I make attempts to highlight some of the problematic notions advanced by some of these scholars when I focus on Canon Paterson's Cyrene Mission Workshop and Sam Songo in the second and fifth chapters respectively.

ineluctably tied to the process and experiences of a modernity that is itself a consequence of the colonial encounter" (2021: 12). Thus, the art historian is acknowledging the role European colonial influence had on modernity on the continent by making clear that modernity goes hand in hand with colonialism and coloniality and, therefore, "modernity has to be assumed in both its glories and its crimes" (Mignolo 2017: 41). The controversial "glories" to be embraced comprising Western education, institutionalised medical care, bridging communication gaps through common colonial languages and the provision of consumer goods, while the "crimes" that undermined traditional values include violent conquest, usurpation of power, culture deterioration and erosion, greed, warping of social fibres, corruption and excess power (Kangai and Mupondi 2013; Mungwini 2014a).

In short, defining modernism "as mainstream (or universal) while everything else is placed within world art history" (Rea 2013: 9) is seeing the world through the narrow Euro-American lens. That notion is an extension of the colonial ideology as it is firmly rooted in the claim that it was Europe's burden to 'civilise' the 'primitive' societies of the world. It negates, for example Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, and African modernisms among many others. European expatriates were instrumental in introducing Western art on the continent and therefore played the central role of influencing peoples of the colonised world to embrace Western ideology. They were able to exert their influence working as explorers and the first expatriates operating on the continent. The expatriates and/or missionaries were the first to establish Western schools, which helped spread their culture to the new places they had reached and occupied. There has been a paradigm shift in this discourse over the years as researchers[27] from the Global Souths[28] have asserted their voice in challenging the monocentric notion.

### 1.5. Being modern, being African

The 'Scramble for Africa' and the actual partition and occupation of the continent were dirty enterprises that included the plundering and stealing of significant cultural artworks as happened in the Benin Empire[29] in 1897, when British forces under Admiral Sir Harry Rawson pounced on the city. Thus, while the supposedly superior or "dominant cultures were engaged

[27] While Salah Hassan and Chika Okeke-Agulu are the main thinkers cited in this part of the research as they directly write about art history, there are many other key African writers from other fields like Valentine Mudimbe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Mahmood Mamdani, as well as Latin Americans like Walter Mignolo and Gerardo Mosquera whose work contests European perceptions of Africa, South America and other previously colonised parts of the world.

[28] I deliberately use the plural to embrace different parts of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

[29] Situated in south-western Nigeria, the Kingdom of Benin, which is also known as Edo Kingdom, must not be confused with the present-day Republic of Benin, which was known as the Kingdom of Dahomey before it was annexed into French West Africa as the colony of French Dahomey.

in violently suppressing the 'savage' cultures they encountered in West and East Africa, they were importing into Europe, as loot, the revelation of an alternative view of the world in the form of African masks, carvings, and jewellery" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002: 154). Thus, they not only took away ideas, but also physical objects. The stolen cultural artefacts, which are mostly stacked in the British Museum and other heritage repositories and museums throughout Europe and North America are now at the centre of the contemporary restitution efforts and debates. They had a profound effect on the work of the avant-garde artists of Europe who "admired African sculpture for its abstract conceptual approach to the human form" (Clarke 2006:29) and ended up assimilating and incorporating their elements into their own work as an alternative to the classical realistic representation common in Europe at the time.

While Europe's presence and influence on the continent of Africa is integral to understanding African colonial (between 1885 and 1945) and postcolonial (between 1945 to the present) modernities (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009), an appreciation of early African achievements, that is, precolonial modernity (pre-1885), is also integral in understanding modernisms on a global scale. When a distinguished American writer, philosopher, educator, and patron of the arts Alain Locke noticed the productive influence of the 'primitive' African arts on European modernists in the early decades of the twentieth century, he remarked to young African American artists via his anthology called *The Negro Renaissance* that "By being modern, we are being African" (Gates 1997: 4, Jarab 2003: 10).

African modernisms vary from one nation to another, largely emerging as responses to outside influence of a kind. Prior to the arrival of European colonialists some parts of the continent, mainly the eastern coastal territories, had already established trade ties with Islamic societies on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Even based on internal developments, and with no external influence at all, African societies were not uniform or monolithic. Some societies were more advanced than others. There were highly organised, complex, and socially stratified societies like the Monomutapa Empire occupying the greater part of the present-day Zimbabwe plateau, Axum in Ethiopia to the east, Kongo in the centre, as well as Asanti, Dahomey and Benin in the west, and yet there were also numerous fragmented nomadic Stone Age hunter-gatherer nation groups who left a catalogue of sophisticated abstract rock art paintings found scattered all over the continent. Thus, the diverse nations on the continent were constantly undergoing a cycle of state formation, with some of the emerging united entities highly organised and with complicated ideas of how the world is made up, what it means to be a free person and what it entailed to fight a war. Based on the elements highlighted above, Howard French, in a recent

conversation with Anakwa Dwamena, argues that if Africa had only been accorded more space and time prior to encountering critical interruptions like the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism, most of the nations on the continent would have become quite sophisticated enough to resist European encroachment the way the Ethiopians defended themselves in the Battle of Abyssinia (Dwamena 2021).

The Guyanese philosopher Walter Rodney, in a seminal thesis titled *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1973: 47), asserts that the history of the "African continent reveals very fully the workings of the law of uneven development of societies". Rodney elaborates that even in fields which are readily comparable like 'the fine arts', African achievements prior to the arrival of Europeans on the continent were known and "stand as contributions to man's (sic) heritage of beautiful creations", citing the arts of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia as examples, and yet that of some parts of the continent continue to be 'discovered' and rediscovered by present-day researchers (Rodney 1973: 49). Even after the disruptive episodes of colonial occupation by different European powers, that trajectory of uneven development[30] still ensued and exists to this day. That variation can even be seen too in art that "is always embellished with geographical, historical and cultural ties" (Wade 1997: 26). As such, when one engages in the discourse of modernism on the African continent, it is important to pay attention to what Mazrui (1986) calls "Africa's triple heritage", that besides the colonial encounter with the Europeans, the contribution that is indigenous to the continent, and the influence of the Islamic traditions should not be forgotten.

The assertion made by Martin (2002) and Errington (2007) that African modernists adapted to the European methods of creating art reduces African modernism to what Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu (2009) and Okeke-Agulu (2016) describe as "second-rate", "derivative", "mimetic" and "a belated copy" of that of Europe, and therefore amounts to denying peoples and various cultures from the continent their rightful positions in the modernism discourse (Araeen 2000a). Such a perspective, employing colonial grandiloquence, continues to centre Europe and trivialise the artistic achievements and contributions of Africans by pushing them to the peripheries. Instead, the arts of the different peoples in Africa did not remain in a stagnant time warp as local artists often synthesised their own existing frameworks to produce hybrid forms (Monda 2014). Martin and Errington's claim dismisses the narrative of a complicated

[30] Levels of development cannot be measured through socio-economic indicators alone as there are many other factors conspiring to create the disparities. These include environmental factors like resource endowment, as well different political systems and ideologies.

bifurcated modernism that Nigeria, for example, had. As Akpang (2016: 76) enunciates, between 1900 and 1930 in Nigeria there was a "rejection of tradition and mimetic European ways" or appropriation as a mechanism to counter racism, and this was followed by a rejection of the European forms or reverse appropriation between 1930 and 1960, a time punctuated by a rise in nationalism.

Martin and Errington's assertion is at best an extension of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dismissive claim that Africa is no historical part of the world and has no movement or development to exhibit (Friedrich and Sibree 1956). It is even shocking that some of the writers advancing this notion are Africans themselves. Challenging the assertion that African modernists adapted to the European methods of creating art, Chikowero (2015: 4) elaborates that "Africans did not simply submit to the colonial designs, however. They variously mediated, accommodated, appropriated, resisted, and subverted those designs". In agreement with Chikowero, Klein (2014: 1350) emphasises that "artists like Kekana refused to produce certain objects, applied aberrations to original blueprints provided by teachers, repeated appealing and marketable designs or evolved artistically beyond institutional ambits". At times the shift in the art forms was not even in response to European encroachment, as local painters, sculptors, theatre performers and playwrights fed off the inspiration generated by the cross-fertilisation of their own ideas, drawing from both the modern and traditional influences (Okeke-Agulu 2013). What cannot be disputed, however, is the shift in the role of art on the continent from 'objects of utilitarian value' to society to commercial objects that could be sold to sustain the artist under an emerging predatory capitalist system.

In the colonised territories "the challenges faced by African artists were not monolithic, but instead depended on the specific histories of their countries, as well as the intellectual, political and artistic philosophies and ideologies to which they were exposed" (Okeke-Agulu 2016: 14). Nonetheless, right across the continent, as was the case throughout the world, the nationalist struggles in colonised countries awakened artists' desire and determination to seek out aspects of their cultures discredited by the logic of colonialism (Kapu 2013). Expanding on that notion, I argue that artists responded differently to different colonial systems. Even artists in Ethiopia, which was never colonised, had unique forms of modernisms that were mostly home-grown but also encountered influences from outside the country's borders (Giorgis 2010). Developments in Ethiopia could not have been the same as in Nigeria or Ghana under British direct and indirect rule, nor could the same occur in Lusophone Africa (Angola and Mozambique) or in places like Senegal and Mali that were under the French, imposing their

'assimilation' doctrine of colonial administration. To this day the artistic practices in all these countries vary and are quite diverse.

A common denominator to the different colonial ideologies advanced by the European powers was that they were occupying empty territories with "wild nomadic and foraging communities" that had no documented culture and owned no land. Even the abstract and religious rock paintings of the egalitarian communal Khoe-Sān societies found in most nations of southern Africa, and the stone sculptures of complex[31] centralised and hierarchical African societies like Great Zimbabwe,[32] and other achievements, were belittled by the colonisers. As Chikowero (2015: 3) substantiates, "the foundational, colonizing epistemic racial discourse depended on a familiar representation of Madzimbabwe as *terra incognita* – an uncultured, unexplored, uninhabited no-man's-land" or what Wolukau-Wanambwa (2014: 112) referred to as *"terra nullius* – nobody's land".[33] And yet Africa was never the vacant and changeless continent Western explorers and colonisers depicted (O'Brien 2013). Colonialists like Cecil John Rhodes even went on to fund archaeologists and researchers in a bid to advance and justify distortions, propaganda and theories that attributed any notable achievements in the region to the work of foreign elements like the Phoenicians (Summers 1971).[34] Their racist philosophical claim was based on racial characteristics that "were thought to set a limit on the level that each race could reach" and black Africans were thought to have "reached the limit of their potential progress, whereas Europeans were still undergoing advancement" (Tangri 1990: 293). Thus, based on this doctrine, there was no way the primitive and nomadic Stone Age, nor the sedentary early Iron Age African communities could have built complex stone structures like Great Zimbabwe,

[31] Archaeologist and heritage studies scholar Munyaradzi Manyanga describes the complexity of the Iron Age prehistoric societies of southern Africa as "a phenomenon that accepts an adaptive cycle of growth … allowing for their collapse, reorganisation, renewal, and/re-establishment" (Manyanga 2007: 15).

[32] According to the archaeologist Paul Hubbard, "Great Zimbabwe was southern Africa's first city, consisting of an imposing set of stone structures located near the modern city of Masvingo, situated on a steep-sided granite hill and an adjacent valley covering an area of 720 hectares. It was occupied between the 12th and 15th centuries, and reached its peak in the 13th and 14th then its empire extended over 100 000km$^2$" (Hubbard 2009: 109).

[33] This impression was also expressed through art. Thomas Baines (1820-1875), for example, was a prominent 'explorer-artist' of the time, whose paintings showed vast tracts of land devoid of the local inhabitants, and always presented the locals in 'traditional' dress which was considered primitive by the occupiers. For more, see: Pissarra, M. 2015.

[34] According to Koutonin (2016) the idea that Great Zimbabwe "was an African replica of the Queen of Sheba's palace in Jerusalem" was first advanced and promoted by Karl Mauch, a German explorer who reached the site in 1871, drawing Western attention to it. Refusing to believe that the colossal structure was the work of the local African people, Mauch is quoted as having declared, "I do not think that I am far wrong if I suppose that the ruin on the hill is a copy of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah and the building in the plain a copy of the palace where the Queen of Sheba lived during her visit to Solomon. For more, See Koutonin, M. 2016.
This claim is backed by Chirikure (2020) who states, "the English coloniser Cecil John Rhodes later appropriated this narrative to firm up his grand imperial dream" and brought Western excavators to the site. See Chirikure, S. 2020.

which could only have been the work of an advanced Iron Age civilisation from either Europe or the Middle East. In South Africa, the colonisers even went on to advance claims that they had arrived at the Cape shores at the same time as the Nguni groups were arriving from the equatorial regions of Africa on their wave of migration southwards.[35] To this day such theories are deliberately employed to justify the wild claim that the Nguni states and the European colonisers occupied Khoe-Sān territories and dispersed them at the same time. Therefore, based on that claim, neither of the two groups is entitled to the land as both are colonisers.

The periodisation of modernism in art on the African continent is complicated by the fact that there is a tendency by art historians and writers to focus only on South Africa and Nigeria when discussing the subject matter. Besides the presence of writers in these two populous economic giants of Africa, they have institutions devoted to the study of art. Yet each of the continent's main regional geographical locations has a lot to offer on the subject, albeit hardly covered. Nigeria embraced modern art much earlier, followed by South Africa, while other countries were still in the preliminary phase (Nicodemus 2013). "In the context of Onabulu's colonial Nigeria … Western art was not taught until the artist himself introduced it" (O'Brien 2013: 11).[36] Thus, in terms of temporality, when Aina Onabulu (1882-1963) revolutionised art in Nigeria as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the artists associated with the rise of Black modernism in South Africa were still young. Therefore, the rise of Black modern art in Nigeria happened slightly earlier than in South Africa. An analysis of these two countries alone shows how complicated and multi-layered the subject of African modernisms is. Yet that of the rest of Africa either occurred much earlier or much later, or is yet to be accounted for in most cases.

According to Martin (2002), the foundations of black modernism in South Africa had been laid by the 1940s when artists like Job Kekana, Ernest Mancoba, John Koenakeefe Mohl (1903-1985) and Gerard Sekoto, very much drawn to Europe's artistic traditions, went to Europe in

[35] In explaining his nation's policy of apartheid in London in 1961, Hendrik Verwoerd, the Prime Minister of South Africa, observed: "More than 300 years ago two population groups, equally foreign to South Africa, converged in rather small numbers on what was practically empty country. Neither group colonized the other's country or robbed him by invasion and oppression." See Weisbord, R. 1966. Who got there first? Africa Today, pp.10-12.

[36] Chief Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) was a pioneering Nigerian modern arts teacher who introduced Western or academic art into the curriculum of secondary schools in Nigeria in the 1920s. He is considered the founder of modern painting in Nigeria. See Oloidi 1991.

search of experience, education and training (Martin 2002).[37] Martin goes on to claim that these artists aspired to paint in the European fashion, disregarding the idea that the encounter with Europe was "a dialectic of acceptance and refusal, [and] of give and take" (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009: 13). Contrary to Martin's view, Ntongela Masilela states that Mancoba and the Black artists of his generation were inspired by the New African Movement that had emerged among Xhosa and later Zulu intellectuals as early as the 1880s, paralleling "the explosion of industrialized modernity" in a country being ushered into the capitalist world-system (2006: 31).

Mazorodze et al. argue that for most of the artists who either enrolled in the early mission schools and workshops or opted to go abroad, there was a desire to abandon their own heritage culture and ethnicity, opting to 'emulate' those of the dominant but minority group, especially in southern Africa where such practices are well documented (Richards et al. 2005). However, their argument should not stand unchallenged as even in mission schools the African elements and expression were not completely discarded. Of course, all this was happening under a capitalist mode of life in which artists had to respond to the dictates of the market for their own sustenance and survival, and not so much out of the artist's own desire to abandon more aspects of local traditions. In most cases, these artists thoughtfully blended local and foreign aspects.

Interestingly, the story of the European modernists like Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Maurice de Vlaminck, Piet Mondrian and Andre Derain who sought inspiration from Africa and other parts of the world is well documented. As Gates (1997: 3) argues:

> Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1906-7) – the signature event in the creation of Cubism – stands as a testament to the shaping influence of African sculpture and to the central role that African art played in the creation of modernism. The Cubist mask of modernism covers a black Bantu face. African art-ugly, primitive, debased in 1900; sublime, complex, valorised by 1910 – was transformed so dramatically in the cultural imagination of the West.

On the contrary, the stories of the pioneering African artists of the early twentieth century like Kekana, Sekoto, Mancoba and others, who at an earlier stage in their careers co-opted European elements into their work due to the curriculum they were exposed to in the early mission institutions, is well acknowledged.

[37] On artist Ernest Mancoba's decision to move and stay in Europe, Nicodemus and Romare (2008: 56) argue that he made "a conscious choice not to return home, but to position himself within the western field of art and in relation to international modernism."

A closer look at the careers of the above-mentioned artists, and that of Onabulu in Nigeria, for example, proves that "the three main features of this international modernism – a break with inherited artistic traditions; prioritization of formal experimentation and invention; and the belief in the new art's role in bringing about a progressive and humanistic social order – were evident in the work of African artists" (Okeke-Agulu 2021: 12). Many of them "were largely ignored by the international art world, were usually poorly documented, [and] their works were barely collected or properly archived by local and private museums" (Okeke-Agulu 2006, 14). Thus, their invisibility and/ erasure have something to do with world power dynamics. In some of the areas or nations that earlier generations of artists came from, the local and private museums were non-existent. That some of them were ignored by the international art community confirms the biases enshrined in the dominant European knowledge system, which provincialises other knowledge systems.

However, it ought to be acknowledged that this is an anomaly, for whenever two cultures collide there is bound to be dialogue, resulting in a compromise, or in assimilation or rejection. Colonial modernities in the world were not just about the other parts of the world mimicking the Euro-American ideas and creations. In most cases this interaction is characterised by what Nicodemus and Romare (2008: 56) describe as "the double process of sequestration" which takes place the moment modern African artists encounter European institutions, that is "the Western sequestration of African traditions and the domestic appropriation of Western modernism's transformation of them." Thus, the exchange of ideas went both ways. Aimé Césaire (1972: 2) alluded to this when he stated, "for civilizations, exchange is oxygen". Throughout the world the effects of acculturation, which are creolisation, hybridisation and interculturation, are central to the understanding of modernism (Friedman 2012). Therefore, the influence of artists from other parts of the world on modernism ought to be acknowledged.

While many Africans enrolled in the missionary outposts established in different centres in their countries, others crossed the borders to train in other countries, and others even made the pilgrimage to Europe.[38] Even though a few would remain exiled in Europe, most of the artists would return to impart the knowledge attained in Europe in their local communities, or in the newly liberated African states. Ali Mazrui (1986) considers that journey a form of "counter-penetration" as their journey was in the opposite direction to that of the Europeans who were heading to the warmer continent of Africa in large numbers. Not only were the African artists

[38] Job Kekana, Ernest Mancoba, and Gerard Sekoto, for example, all left South Africa for this reason or another.

learning or receiving knowledge in these Western centres of artistic production, but they were also at the forefront of contributing to modernism and even 'postmodernism.' This can be illustrated by the influence of Ernest Mancoba on the group of artists known as CoBrA (an abbreviation of Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) made up of artists from Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands, whom he worked with when he arrived in Europe.

### 1.6. Apartheid and the emergence of the benevolent white liberals

By the time the apartheid system of governance ended in South Africa in 1994, the new multicultural democracy inherited problems of the past which had to be dealt with under the new dispensation. Among them was a biased museum archive that mainly focused on European art (Van Robbroeck 2015) and that of South Africans of European descent, with the omission and erasure of Black artists in the history of the nation. This was a result of several calculated steps taken in the interest of the white 'consciousness' ideology promoted before 1994. As art historian Elizabeth Rankin observes, books that documented South African art started emerging in the 1930s and none of them paid attention to Black artists. This was accompanied by the absence of art by Black artists in public collections. Instead of advancing the cause of the marginalised Black majority, in 1946 for example, the white-dominated press questioned and protested the acquisition policy of the Johannesburg Art Gallery on the premise that it neglected white Afrikaner artists. After South Africa severed ties with the Commonwealth in the 1960s, and when the Pretoria Art Museum opened, there was a strong focus on South African art by white artists, underwriting the nationalism of the new Republic (Rankin 1995b: 59-61).

The marginalisation of Black artists was a result of a systemic and systematic process applied in the five decades when racial segregation policies were in place, leaving South Africa with structural inequalities permeating every aspect of life in the nation. While this was the government's official policy, a few notable exhibition projects comprised only of modern Black artists took place in the late 1980s in the countdown to the end of white dominance. I am persuaded to think that Ricky Burnett's *Tributaries: a view of contemporary South African Art* (1985), Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition* (1988) and Elizabeth Rankin's *Images of Wood* (1989), for example, were only acceptable in a public space like the Johannesburg Art Gallery, in the case of the latter two, because the white community was reckoning with the "winds of change". These came not only from within South Africa, but also as part of intensifying pressure from outside as support for the apartheid system waned in the aftermath of the Cold

War era.[39] This sentiment is echoed by art historian Anna Tietze, who in her book *A History of the Iziko South African National Gallery: Reflections on Art and National Identity*, highlights that "in the politicised climate of the 1980s, black art finally began to receive significantly more public attention in public exhibitions" (2017: 158).[40] Conservative whites had to slacken their oppressive grip and to reconsider their position in order to be accepted by the international community. In the case of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the radical approaches of Christopher Till, who was the director at the time cannot be downplayed.

The changes in the media voices and the shift in the approaches of the institutions that are highlighted above altered the perceptions of the hardliners and laid the foundations for a shift in notions of what modern contemporary art would become in South Africa. Coupled with these shifts was a significant rise in African voices who engaged with the politics of the time. The artists who were emerging out of Rorke's Drift, for example, were "socially aware and ready to take community roles" (Rankin 2011: 252). They were well prepared for the challenges of contemporary art. Thus, "this duality of social responsibility and artistic innovation marks South African modernism in a distinctive way" (Rankin 2011: 252).

Also unique to South Africa is the idea that "decolonization, which in most of Africa represented the moment that the freed black creative power [rose to prominence], did not occur in the same way" (O'Brien 2013: 22). While African nations were gaining Black majority rule the doctrine of white supremacy known as apartheid was being meticulously systemised and implemented to the smallest detail of the mundane for the longest period (Matsinhe 2011). Before the Second World War, the white minority Afrikaner nationalist regime became a sovereign state with the British Empire. It also proclaimed its emancipation from another aspect of colonial dominance in culture as is reflected in public art collections of the time and "the

[39] International pressure on South Africa started almost three decades before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The global campaign against the status quo in South Africa was spearheaded by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which was formed in 1959, demanding that Britain withdraw its support for the regime ruling the nation and that British consumers boycott goods from the southern African country (Gurney 2000). The movement intensified its campaign in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacres in 1960. As a result, South Africa was forced to leave the Commonwealth in 1961, and the United Nations – through its Special Committee Against Apartheid – imposed an arms embargo in 1963 (Hoskyns 1964). South Africa was suspended from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and expelled from the games in 1970. The International Conference for Economic Sanctions Against South Africa took place in the 1960s, and the academic boycott of South Africa also commenced. In the 1980s the Free Nelson Mandela campaign intensified and in 1986 the Artists Against Apartheid Freedom Festival in London attracted more than 250 000 people. The Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute was also well attended.

[40] Anna Tietze highlights that these exhibitions were "influential in helping rethink the position of Africa within the South African art world" (2017: 158). Tietze adds that it was also in the same decade (the 1980s) that Black artists' work featured at the then Grahamstown National Festival of the Arts (now the National Arts Festival in Makhanda). Attendees of the Festival in 1985, 1987 and 1988 encountered art by Black artists drawn from the collections of Fort Hare and Wits universities. In 1988, the renowned Namibian printmaker John Muafangejo, an alumnus of Rorke's Drift, was selected guest artist of the festival (Rankin 1996).

neo-classical forms favoured for public buildings – in the ostensibly neutral modern architectural style of its gallery buildings" (Rankin 1995b: 59).[41] However, while the takeover of South Africa by the Afrikaner administration in the middle of the twentieth century boosted the country's industrialisation drive in an economy that further marginalised or excluded the country's Black majority population, the little progress that had been made by the Blacks over the years, especially by the New African Movement, and those who were enrolling in the missionary schools that "facilitated the creation of a Westernized Black petit bourgeoisie" were reversed by an apartheid administration that introduced Bantu Education, making forms of learning both separate and unequal (Sidogi 2022: 57). With time Grace Dieu Mission shut its doors. Forced removals in Sophiatown terminated the Sophiatown Renaissance, a constellation that included influential individuals like Miriam Makeba and Bessie Head (Masilela 2006: 31). There were also forced removals in District Six in Cape Town.

Under apartheid, the administration in Pretoria prohibited any forms of interracial exchange and promoted a programme of separate development that neglected the areas or spaces inhabited by the Africans. The minority regime was able to build institutions and impose Afrikaner culture on the nation because it had excessive and absolute power over other cultures. The playing field was uneven. Even to this day, if there is nation that exudes characteristics of what Rodney (1973) qualifies as "uneven development" in society, because of the legacy of apartheid policies instituted by the fascist Afrikaner nationalist administration, it is South Africa. These differences impacted negatively on every facet of Black South Africans' life, including art, with the white community dominating the art "institutions and the markets" (Nicodemus and Romare 2003: 68). Moore (1952: 672) asserts that "there are certain social conditions that favour the growth and flourishing of art, others that destroy or inhibit that growth". Indeed, the differences in the development and nature of art are still quite visible between the 'white areas' which receive sponsorship and the neglected Black township areas.

[41] The Afrikaner administration went on to build its own tertiary education institutions, including universities, and to dictate what was taught in the schools, which were also developed along racial lines. In his analysis of its implementation and perfection of the system and what it was able to achieve as a regime claiming independence from Britain, the Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani, in the T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture for 2017, at the University of Cape Town, argued that, "it is no exaggeration to say that Afrikaans represents the most successful decolonizing initiative on the African continent" (Mamdani 2017), controversially citing the implementation of the language as a model to consider, and an example of what African administrations ought to replicate if they are committed to the goal of total decolonisation and to implementing Africa-centred initiatives for the Africans. However, what Mamdani appears to not explain is how such an independent African nations would be able to realise an initiative of that magnitude without the oppressive infrastructure in place i.e., the violent machinery and draconian legislation that enabled the apartheid regime to forcefully achieve its goals.

As enunciated by Nicodemus and Romare (2008), in South Africa modernism appeared in three forms, namely, "settler modernist" considered an offshoot of Western art, "black modernist" structurally kept out of the provincial apartheid art scene, and the problematic category of "township art".[42] Most white artists simply saw themselves as an extension of the vast European empire, and like their European avant-garde counterparts, mostly harboured "the same demeaning, primitivist ideas about Black Africa" (Okeke-Agulu 2021: 12). Most of them took over from where 'explorer-artists' like Thomas Baines (1820-1875), who painted vast unoccupied African landscapes justifying colonial occupation, had left off. Even though white artists like Maggie Laubser (1886-1973), Irma Stern (1894-1966), Maurice van Essche (1906-1977), Walter Battiss (1906-1982), Alexis Preller (1911-1975) and Cecil Skotnes (1926-2009) radically shifted their practice and assumed a South African and an African identity, their work remained principally within the Western canon, showing the influence of twentieth century European movements like Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism and Surrealism (Pissarra 2006).[43]

[42] 'Township art' is a collective term that was "widely applied [loosely and without distinction] to black artists of the fifties, sixties and seventies" (Van Robbroeck 1998: 3) living in the townships (or 'urban slums') and therefore meant to be recording or depicting the life of the township dwellers in South Africa. Art historian John Peffer states that it "was a form of collective memory that constituted a body of evidence about the working and living conditions of urban black Africans in South Africa" (2009: 34). The term has since come to be regarded as pejorative, and "for some it stands for works by untrained persons, composed from discarded materials, using bright, industrial-quality paints and substances, with bewildering compositions and juxtapositions based on themes of township life. The National Museum of African Art (1999) argues that in a more thoughtful evaluation, township art becomes synonymous with resistance art, reflecting black South Africans' struggles under the apartheid system" (Smithsonian National Museum of African Art 1999). This opinion is also supported by Gavin Younge in his text, *Art of the South African Townships.* However, that view is contested by Van Robbroeck who the term is more of a "geographic rather than stylistic signifier", arguing that it "glosses over major stylistic differences" and reduces urban black artists to "one homogenous and faceless category" (1988: 3 & 13).
According to Elizabeth Rankin, "This may have been encouraged by the market, because initially 'township' art appealed to the liberal English-speaking sector, which apparently experienced a sense of philanthropic gratification in supporting a form of art that emphasized the gap between its own privileged lifestyle and the deprivation of black urban areas. It was probably as much an awareness of the white market as a sense of social consciousness that led some artists to seek out derelict shanty towns to paint in preference to the more suburban parts of Soweto. But 'township' art usually presented itself in a palatable picturesque style that stressed the colourful vitality of community life in Soweto, which explains why it has continued to sell well in the popular white market." (Rankin 1990: 27).

[43] While landscape painting of this nature was a dominant feature in the work of white artists in South Africa, Africans were generally discouraged from painting landscapes, urged to portray fellow Black people instead. Tim Couzens captures an anecdote of a white admirer of John Koenakeefe Mohl's art who discouraged him from painting landscapes, advising him to depict figures of his people in poverty and misery instead, to which Mohl responded, "But I am African, and when God made Africa, he also created beautiful landscapes for Africans to admire and paint" (Couzens 1985: 254). While Mohl pursued the art form out of choice, in neighbouring Mozambique, for example, Black artists were co-opted into it through a colonial artistic training system. Musicologist and art historian Alda Costa (2018) highlights the case of local Black artists like Jacob Estêvão (1933-2008) and Elias Estêvão (1937-1960?), Vasco Campira (b. 1933), and Agostinho Mutemba (b.1937) who were trained to portray landscapes the European way under Frederico Ayres (1887-1963). Although they went on to exhibit work in Portugal and Mozambique, Costa considers them victims of a system that denied them a chance to paint their own experiences. Unlike Mohl, whose work is recognised in post-1994 South Africa, the work of the Mozambican nationals is almost forgotten in their own country because their depictions do not speak to the ideals and spirit of Mozambican identity and nationalism in the present.

The Black artists who were mostly trained in the mission schools and mentored by white artists formed the core of the 'pioneers' of Black modernism. 'Township art' was a problematic colonial construct that bunched together art produced by Black people based in the urban areas. This categorisation was meant to deny the achievements of the artists, relegating their products to objects made for the tourist market, with most of it being mass produced and sold at giveaway prices.

Even in that era, some art dealers, too, saw the need to include Black artists in their private collections, exhibitions, and sales. As Rankin (1995b: 68) observes, "Harold Jeppe of the Lidchi Gallery, for instance, published a book on South African art in 1963, with six entries for black artists [including Sekoto], which might well have encouraged early acquisitions in this area in the 1960s." In the same vein, the Campbell Smith Collection of modern art in South Africa, put together by Bruce Campbell Smith and spanning the years from the 1920s, provides the "country's most comprehensive, coherent, and valuable database of artists who suffered from systematic neglect during the apartheid era" (Van Robbroeck 2006). Regardless of these progressive gestures, in South Africa "the place reserved for the 'black' artist in the 'universal space' of High Art remained marginal … the African artist's irredeemable blackness declared his uncultured savagery and rendered his mastery of Western culture mere mimicry" (Van Robbroeck 2008: 220). In other words, even these endeavours did very little to radically shift reactionary perceptions.

Besides those emerging from institutions like Rorke's Drift, Grace Dieu and Polly Streets, which were all nowhere near what white institutions offered in terms of standard (Nicodemus and Romero 2008), more and more Black painters and sculptors appeared, turning to the modern idiom, employing the materials, and adopting formats that appealed to Western dictates and tastes. With the elite institutions not welcoming them without clearance from the Minister of Education as dictated by the legislation, these artists remained confined to few marginalised institutions, participated in limited exhibitions, and were generally excluded from national art collections. Their practice continued to be relegated to the ethnographic categorisation, and the result was their exclusion from the emerging national canon (Van Robbroeck 2006). Their marginalisation was compounded by the lack of interest they received from writers, which meant that not much of their work was documented.

Some of the available literature on Black modernism in South Africa (Martin 2000, Butler 2000, Klein 2014) largely credits white liberals' work and efforts through the various art institutions they set up. This gives the impression that without the white liberal enablers the

Black artists would not have made a breakthrough on their own. As reasonable as they appear, such arguments perpetuate the marginalisation of Black artists such as George Pemba and Moses Tladi, who are important to the development of modern Black art in South Africa, even though they operated from the peripheries. In a master's thesis titled *On Distance: From Art History to Ernest Mancoba,* Ralphs reveals that:

> A large majority of white writings about South African art and artists of the twentieth century reveal an allegiance to a Western modernist episteme rooted in Enlightenment and positivist philosophies, as well as to shifts in the empirical sciences, notably anthropology.
>
> As such, most of these writings are informed by racialised assumptions, and they do reveal an element of 'othering' their subjects. It does not help that Black art critics are still very few in a subject still dominated by whites and a canon still perceived through white Western lenses and heavily based on Western philosophy (Ralphs 2007: 29).

As it stands, the discourse about the emergence of early Black modernist masters in South Africa places a lot of emphasis on the role played by white liberal allies in mentoring and giving exposure to the Black artists. Thus, regardless of the status quo of restrictions from interracial interaction that impacted on the different trajectories of development in arts between the races during apartheid, white liberal patrons like Brother Roger, Sister Pauline, Alexis Preller, Judith Gluckman, and Cecil Skotnes were prepared to circumvent the system and bridge the gap by breaching the artificial yet lawful racial divide. They continued to befriend, sponsor, educate and promote Black artists. This is why Proud (2006) argues that it is difficult to talk of 'black art' in South Africa between the 1920s and 2005 without acknowledging the role played by white patrons, and emphasises that the latter should be seen as the indispensable "shadow" in the "text". Most of the time, these liberals did so at great personal risk. If caught, they could be arrested and could serve jail sentences for breaking the petty apartheid laws.

On the work of institutions like Polly Street and Rorke's Drift, art historian Mario Pissarra argues that South African history could benefit from a comparative framework pitting them against precedents on the continent. Arguing that it would be interesting to see where or who he drew inspiration from for his work at the Polly Street Centre, Pissarra claims that Skotnes's teaching methodology, which was an attempt at balancing new techniques and ideas with "supposedly authentic African consciousness, can be compared with earlier interventions by expatriates in Africa, mostly but not exclusively in the colonial period … Margaret Trowell in Kampala, Pierre Romain Desfosses in Elizabethville (Lubumbashi), Pierre Lods in Congo Brazzaville and Dakar, Ulli & Georgina Beier in Oshogbo, and Frank McEwen in Salisbury"

(Pissara 2009). Interestingly, as the art historian highlights, their "pedagogical methodologies represent various degrees of 'non-directive' intervention, which have been severely chastised by post-colonial critics for their paternalism" (Pissara 2009). Indeed, the post-colonial critics referred to desire to see this reception of Western art in modern African art acknowledged as "a dialectical between cultural traditions and artistic archives" (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009: 15), as it was a form of exchange between the interacting cultures.

Pointing out the existence of what she calls "an element of racial patronage" with the whites preferring to buy "art that has recognisable black content", Elizabeth Rankin acknowledges that "the white market has exploited black art to its own ends," with some of the "well-intentioned sponsors" ending up dictating, perhaps unconsciously, "what Black art should be like." She argues that the flip side of the coin is that white patronage "has provided the context within which a vigorous new artistic tradition has evolved." She further states that "the influence of white patrons on artists is of course in no way uncommon in the history of art: [but] it is the South African situation that taints the relationship between black artists and white patrons and lays their interaction open to misrepresentation, whether it takes the form of promotion or exploitation, mentoring or manipulation" (1990: 31). However, as highlighted by Proud (2006), artist and critic David Koloane has gone on to question the benevolent legacies of individual white liberal mentors and sponsors arguing that they are "descendants of the settlers" or "strangers who shed more tears than the bereaved". Singling out Skotnes, Koloane "maintained that Polly Street reflected apartheid values by offering a training for black artists different from that provided by white institutions" (Nicodemus and Romare 2008: 65).[44] However, Koloane's claim cannot stand unchallenged when one considers that Polly Street was only a part-time recreational centre without the means to implement a formal curriculum. Moreover, the white liberals' significant contribution in mentoring Black artists cannot just be dismissed, by virtue of their burning desire to correct the distortions existing in the discourse even without much reasonable justification.

Butler (2000) and Miles (1997), to a large degree, credit Sister Pauline for Kekana's development as an artist and for most of the important decisions that defined his career path. Likewise, Manganyi (1996: 30) credits "the good office of Brother Roger" for introducing

[44] In his own article, and to substantiate his claim, Koloane quotes Louis Maqhubela stating, "I was always at loggerheads with Skotnes on his insistence that black artists did not require any kind of tuition because of their natural ability to paint. What annoyed me most about this fallacy was that it did not seem to apply to white artists, but only to us blacks." Koloane also quotes from Durant Sihlali, who appears to suggest that some of the artists joined Polly Street not to be taught from scratch. He had himself enrolled from Chiawelo Centre in Moroka Township (1989: 219).

Gerard Sekoto to an art gallery in Johannesburg – the Gainsborough – for the first time. “It was from Alexis Preller that Sekoto received his first tubes of oil, while Judith Gluckman took it upon herself to teach him how to use oils on canvas” (Manganyi 1996: 30). Maurice (2012) even argues that without the help of these white liberal benefactors and collectors, Sekoto probably would not have become a significant figure in history.

In the interview I had with Voti Thebe in October 2018, he also revealed that his mentor, Lazarus Khumalo, used to tell him of the help he got from another South African white liberal artist named William ‘Bill’ Ainslie in his time at Cyrene Mission outside Bulawayo. This shows that the involvement of white liberal mentors in facilitating connections to the broader art world also occurred in Zimbabwe. However, the story is a different one when we factor in patrons like Tom Blomefield of Tengenenge and Roy Guthrie of Chapungu Sculpture Park because they were basically middlemen chasing after profit. History should also be wary of art historians like Hans Fransen (1982: 359) who seem to exaggerate their role by claiming that Black art existed almost exclusively because of the white liberals’ benign interest – teachers were white, art administrators were white, the gallery directors were whites, and so were the critics and buyers. This claim is also made by Stevenson and Bosland (2008: 19), “the success of the modern black artists was almost entirely dependent on Europeans who judged, promoted and guided the reception of their work”.

Indeed, the white liberals who risked their lives supporting Black artists during the years of apartheid played a crucial role that cannot be ignored. They often helped with raw materials for artists to use in their practices, provided spaces for artists to operate, and established the sometimes complicated networks through which the artists could market and sell their work. Whether they always did so in good faith or others exploited the artists is not very clear. Documenting the stories of the early modern artists in South Africa without acknowledging the significant contributions of these white liberals would amount to reinventing history. However, that there are artists who still made it without them shows that it was possible to thrive without their help. Having them around helped some artists make a breakthrough, nonetheless.

### 1.7. South Africa's revisionist projects

When the liberal white artist-teacher Cecil Skotnes tried to introduce traditional African forms[45] of sculpture, common on the continent, at Polly Street Arts Centre in Johannesburg, his Black students resisted the initiative in favour of painting.[46] Skotnes's idea could have been to work with the local artists from a point that was familiar to them. It is not as if South Africa had no reputable sculptors prior to the establishment of the Polly Street Centre, as artists coming out of earlier institutions like Grace Dieu had embraced the discipline. However, Skotnes's message could have been received in the same manner as that of any patronising colonialist trying to uphold the fetishised 'tribal', 'primitive' and 'authentic' 'African traditions' which entailed that African art was "often presented synonymously with spiritual beliefs and tribal practices from 'the dark continent'" (Wade 1997: 25) and was not supposed to be tainted by Western influences. Peffer (2009) and Rankin (1996), argue that the market, a direct result of South Africa's high levels of industrialisation when compared to the rest of Africa, influenced that resistance by the black artists. However, this argument is problematic in that it treats South Africa as an outlier on the continent. Albeit this is mostly a result of an unconscious decision by the South African intelligentsia, it still feeds into "the notion of South African exceptionalism [which] is a current so strong in South African studies that it can be said to have taken on the character of a prejudice" (Mamdani 1996: 27). Otherwise, as Jacobs and Magaziner (2018) emphasise, for a country once viewed as a beacon of African optimism, post-1994 South Africa is like any other independent African country grappling with corruption, the relentless challenges of a brutal capitalist system, failures at service delivery, the stifling of democracy (Marikana), staggering youth unemployment levels, etc. Instead, I prefer the argument expressed by Nicodemus and Romare that Black South Africans resisted the initiative because sculpture reminded them of crafts that were the closest to art they were exposed to under the Bantu Education curriculum in schools. Moreover, "Skotnes soon found out that with the disappearance of South Africa's material culture and the industrialisation and urbanisation of the black population, the urban black artists with whom he worked had virtually no knowledge of the traditional culture of the continent" (Nicodemus and Romare 2008: 64).

[45] Elizabeth Rankin indicates that Cecil Skotnes was so profoundly influenced by African art that he shifted to producing colourful etchings on panels. He also became a member of Amadlozi (Zulu for 'spirit of the ancestors'), which was a group in which Sydney Kumalo was initially the only Black artist. Other group members were Edoardo Villa, Cecily Sash and Giuseppe Cattaneo. They were later joined by Ezrom Legae and Ben Arnold. The group was promoted by Guenther (1990: 27).

[46] While this initiative of Skotnes' faced resistance, it is interesting to note that some of his students like Sydney Kumalo and Ezrom Legae went on to become successful sculptors.

Therefore, instead of continuing making art that appealed to Western tastes, in painting they saw an opportunity for experimenting and to embrace modernity.

I have already discussed the important role of the white liberal mentors in undertaking the risky business of helping the Black artists and influencing their decision-making in the difficult climate of apartheid. However, there were two revisionist exhibitions that provide a spin to this narrative. As argued by Van Robbroeck (2006), Ricky Burnett's *Tributaries* in 1985 and Steven Sack's *The Neglected Tradition* in 1988 proved that there had been a long history of modern Black art running parallel to the dominant white canon that had not been acknowledged all along. The two exhibitions exposed Black artists working outside the influence of the white liberals. The exhibitions came about as some visionary curators started to revise museum and gallery culture by shifting the focus of collections, and mounting exhibitions that began to redress the omissions of South African art history from the 1980s in response to artists who criticised the apartheid system (Rankin 2013). Interestingly, Mdluli (2015: 45) argues that the fact that *Tributaries* was held in an old market owned by the Johannesburg City Council, in a building (now housing Museum Africa) "space constructed specifically for it" instead of the traditional gallery or museum space means that "the curator was not challenging conventions of what goes into these spaces". In other words, if *Tributaries* was meant to disrupt the norm, then it was supposed to take place right at the centre in one of the established institutions like the Johannesburg Art Gallery, not in a space specifically constructed for it.

Moreover, there were huge losses to Black modernity due to forced migrations. These were mostly experienced in the years of the oppressive apartheid system. Even though some of the artists were helped to go into exile by the white liberals, others made the hard decision to leave South Africa on their own. Artists like Ernest Mancoba, Gerard Sekoto and Dumile Feni ended up in exile, while Kekana emigrated to Southern Rhodesia. In 1948 the white Afrikaner National Party implemented a divide and rule policy which was a slap on the face of the equality that European missionaries and the white liberals had been preaching and teaching (Klein 2014). Ironically, the doctrine was rooted in Calvinism and the Afrikaners saw themselves as "God's chosen people" and had the support of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa.

Faced with the divisive and racist apartheid policies that deprived them of any opportunities to progress in life, a lot of Black "people chose exile, others were forcibly driven out, some left for philosophical reasons, some for moral considerations, others quite simply to survive" (Anderson 2001: 14). They were never completely safe as "the National Party government was

intent on intimidating its intellectual class both at home and abroad" (Manganyi 1996: 116). Those who were in neighbouring countries had to constantly be on the lookout for apartheid spies. They often had to move from one town to another, or even to move between countries as narrated by Sisonke Msimang in *Always Another Country* (2017) where exiled individuals and families were constantly on the move. Some saw their new homes in the neighbouring countries being bombed to ashes. Even as far away as Europe, South Africans who had fled from home could still be targeted. "Among those the regime continued to torment was Gerard Sekoto" (Manganyi 1996: 116). Unlike what Nigerian art historian Jaji Muyideen Adio states, in the case of South Africa it was not merely out of "the zeal to be world-class artists" that these artists found themselves in "Europe and the Americas for inspirations and sustainability" (2015: 1).

When I interviewed Christopher Till in October 2018, the former director of the NGZ (then the director of the Apartheid Museum), reminded me to be cautious with the claim that South Africa has important lessons to impart to Zimbabwe, highlighting that the recognition of the Mancobas and the Sekotos is quite a recent phenomenon dating back to only about 30 years ago when *The Neglected Tradition* exhibition took place at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, where he was the director at the time. In those days, Till tried to expose and promote the Black artists who were not appreciated. He emphasises that even now those artists are still undervalued by auction houses that are only now waking up to the idea that there is value in the work of the Black modernists. However, even though the recognition of the Black modernists is quite a recent phenomenon, it should be noted that a lot more exhibitions, which Proud (2006) recognises as 'sequels' to *The Neglected Tradition* have taken place over the years. These include Gerard Sekoto's *Unsevered Ties* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1989, a retrospective exhibition on Gerard Bhengu at the Tatham Art Gallery, and another one on Ernest Mancoba and Sonja Ferlov Mancoba at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1994. A George Pemba retrospective exhibition also took place at the Iziko South African National Gallery in 1996. *Land and Lives*, on early Black artists was at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1997. This was followed by a Dumile Feni retrospective from 2004 to 2005 at the same gallery. Also, in the late 1980s seminal art publications like Gavin *Younge's Art of the South African Townships* and Sue Williamson's *Resistance Art in South Africa* were published in 1988 and 1989 respectively.

I deliberately highlighted the two texts above as an entry into a discussion on the next important revisionist project which took place at Iziko SANG from 24 September 2005 to 19 March 2006.

This was the *ReVisions: Expanding the Narrative of South African Art*, an exhibition of the Campbell Smith Collection[47] curated by Hayden Proud. Unlike the two texts which excluded many important artists associated with the Polly Street art project in Johannesburg and artists influenced by the Black Consciousness movement of the 1970s, *ReVisions* was quite inclusive.[48] The exhibition was followed by a 360-pages catalogue with essays and artist biographies contributed by academics, art historians and curators, including Gabi Ngcobo, Mduduzi Xakaza, Ivor Powell and Mario Pissarra. In the preface of the book, the curator and editor Hayden Proud indicated that what inspired Bruce Campbell Smith to embark on the journey of collecting the work of the "neglected" black artists were the two seminal exhibitions already discussed above, i.e. *The Neglected Tradition* and *Tributaries*. Citing the lack of funds and the inefficiency of highly bureaucratic institutions like Iziko South African National Gallery (ISANG), Proud lamented their failure to appreciate the value of collections as easily as a "highly informed and flexible private individual" like Smith would (2006: 11). The Campbell Smith collection is well-planned and collected by an individual making conscious and intentional decisions as Smith is a collector with a fine arts training background (ArtThrob 2005). The *ReVisions* project was quite important in that it demonstrated that revisionist work can also be carried out by private citizens, instead of leaving the task to be the responsibility of public institutions. Collections of public institutions tend to take long to transform.

As recently as 2015 I viewed *Unearthing Moses Tladi* at the ISANG. The exhibition included the work of Gerard Bhengu and George Pemba, as well as sketches by Herbert Read, who was his patron in what ISANG termed an "in-context" approach, offering a context in which to compare Tladi and his contemporaries (Gordon 2016). Also ironic is the fact that for Tladi, who first exhibited his works in 1931 and 1933 at ISANG, making him the first by a Black artist to be exhibited in the gallery, the only major work written on him is by Angela Read Lloyd the daughter of Herbert Read, meaning his work continues to be seen through the Read family lens (Gordon 2016). The then curator of the Michaelis Gallery, Nkule Mabaso, was not pleased by the exhibition, which she saw as an attempt to deny Tladi "his rightful place in

[47] The collection currently housed at the Norval Foundation in the Steenberg area of Cape Town. On its website, the foundation refers to the collection as the "Bruce Campbell Smith's Revisions Collection".
[48] Featured in the show were artists from figurative traditions of painting, printmaking, drawing and sculpture. They included Gerard Bhengu, Trevor Makhoba, Sthembiso Sibisi, Maggie Laubscher, Amos Langdown, Arthur Butelezi, Mizream Maseko, George Pemba, Gerard Sekoto, Dumile Feni, Billy Mandindi, Peter Clarke, Neville Lewis, Gregoire Boonzaier, Marianne Podlashuc, Selby Mvusi, Irma Stern, Gladys Mgudlandlu, Sydney Khumalo, Louis Maqhubela, Tommy Motswai, Alfred Thoba, Noria Mabasa and Johannes Segogela.

South African Art History" (Mabaso 2015)[49] by basically diluting his outstanding work with other artists' work. Importantly, it is when this kind of engagement happens between the curators and the critics that revisionist histories are generated.

Although revisionist exhibitions and histories have been occurring over the years in South Africa, it appears a lot more still must be done. At the official opening of an exhibition of the Fort Hare Collection at the Ann Bryant Main Gallery in East London on the eve of Africa Day in 2018, the curator of the collection, Vuyani Booi, revealed that this was the first time the collection was being exhibited outside the De Beers Centenary Art Gallery.[50] In the collection are works by early modern masters like Pemba, Sekoto and Feni among others. In March 2019, the same collection, which was declared a National Cultural Treasure in 1998, featured at the Standard Bank Gallery in Johannesburg in *A Black Aesthetic: A View of South African Artists (1970-1990)* exhibition. Notably, the exhibition, "which attempts to reposition their [black modernists] expression within the larger South African art historical narrative and redefine ways of discussing their work – challenging notions of what constitutes South African art history" (Same Mdluli 2019) was being presented outside the Eastern Cape for the first time since 1992. That it took so long for such a national treasure to be viewed publicly by the nation baffles the mind. This lends credence to Christopher Till's claim that revisionist exhibitions and histories are quite a recent phenomenon on the South African arts scene.

Mdluli's show was important as it aimed to highlight injustices of the past, especially the marginalisation of the Black artists. However, it stirred a fierce and sensational debate when art critic Athi Mongezile Joja critiqued its curatorial approach, indicating that the show "lacks rigour" and reinforces some of anthropologist Professor E.J. de Jager's "shoddy dispositions" when he collected the work and compiled a catalogue of the work in 1992 in the apartheid era (2019). Mdluli did not take the criticism lightly and was compelled to respond in an article titled *Black Art: Its place in the sun,* castigating Joja for failure to grasp the long-term goals of

[49] Sometimes it also does not help that in trying to write artists such as the South African early landscape painter Moses Tladi into history in the post-apartheid years, they are not accorded their own space, instead their work is 'cluttered' with or alongside that of white artists who did similar paintings as happened with the *Unearthing Moses Tladi* exhibition at the Iziko South Africa National Gallery at the end of 2015, prompting the curator, writer and academic Nkule Mabaso to pen an unapologetic critique titled *A Special Exhibit of horror vacui: Moses Tladi at ISANG* in *ArtThrob*. In the article, Mabaso states, "Hanging Moses with/in relation to the other painters to give a sense of comparability or some kind of lesson, denies one the complete pleasure of enjoying Tladi's brilliance sans comparison … The realism and imagination in his paintings is diluted by the didactic display, which reduces the paintings simply to the visible subject/object of trees. The one to one Tladi for Pierneef relation – a tree for a tree if you will – feels like a set-up in which Moses is intended to be proven as a modernist." (Mabaso 2016).

[50] Perhaps Booi was referring to the first time the work was being exhibited as a collection considering that individual works had been loaned out in the past. *The Neglected Tradition* exhibition for example, showcased some pieces from the collection.

the exhibition and for the patriarchal tone of his response (Mdluli 2019). Her response was met with another response from Joja, this time via the Africanah.org site, in a piece titled *Forget Criticism: A Response to Dr Same Mdluli* pointing out what he felt was the convenient dragging in, misrepresentation and even manipulation of David Koloane's views in her response. Though it appears to have degenerated into a personal exchange as signified by Mdluli's reference to Joja's "patriarchal" tone, I view this type of dialogue as necessary as it helps shape a nation's art canon.

When South Africa became a multicultural democracy in 1994, most donors withdrew their support from community arts centres and channelled it to an inclusive government with progressive policies (Pissara 2006). That ensured that drastic inequality continued, with no level playing field for the white and the Black art scene (Nicodemus and Romare 2008). As such, Araeen (2000b) opines that multiculturalism or cultural diversity does not always lead to transformation when it comes to the question of representation of the marginalised groups in the arts. He states that "white faces can easily be replaced by black, brown and yellow faces" but multiculturalism still tends to preserve the status quo or even promote the divisions it is meant to address as institutional power and structures remain unshaken. Araeen even cites Slovenian psychoanalyst and philosopher Slavoj Zizek who claims that "multiculturalism is a new form of (liberal) racism" (Araeen 2000b). Thus, while new spaces have opened to multivalent expressions of black identity, and the revisionist projects have emerged in post-apartheid South Africa, there is still much more to be done, for the previously disadvantaged racial groups to get to the same level as the privileged and dominant minority cultures that specifically consider themselves offshoots of the West. Even though revisionist projects are happening, they are still neutralised by projects of the resistant white establishment that maintains white structures and dictates the dominant discourses. This recognition of the previously marginalised artists in South Africa is what my thesis argues for Zimbabwe to look up to and possibly draw inspiration from, or strive to imitate, in an endeavour to bring to the fore the profiles of the overlooked Black artist-teachers.

### 1.8. Lessons for Zimbabwe from South Africa

Governments of the newly liberated states in Africa embarked on a decolonisation drive in which artists played a crucial role in helping build new national identities. This initiative was complemented by a rise in government patronage to the arts. The ideal example of this being

Senegal under the leadership of Leopold Senghor. Zimbabwe entered this phase relatively late (post-1980) and South Africa much later (after 1994) when compared to the rest of the continent that had realised African majority rule in the late 1950s and 1960s, a phase known as "the decade of independence". While the government of an early independent Zimbabwe has been praised by Africanists and pan-Africanists for setting an example in prioritising and providing education for its citizenry, that the curriculum recognised the arts as just a footnote is a fact that is glossed over most of the time. A missionary school like St. Faith's High, where sculptor Job Kekana was stationed and where he continued to work from his workshop within the school premises until he died in 1995, did not even offer art history or fine arts among the subjects studied. In South Africa Black modern artists, albeit under the yoke of apartheid oppression, had always been inspired by Black consciousness and nationalism, and were up to date with developments on the continent. Yet, when South Africa became a multiracial democracy, its government seems to have invested more in arts and culture compared to Zimbabwe, which had gained independence more than a decade before it. In the process, the Black modern artists who had been submerged under the toxic tide of apartheid resurfaced as curators, art critics and academics and made strides towards revisiting their histories.

If South African art history has its own glaring shortfalls as highlighted earlier, then why embark on this comparative study with Zimbabwe, let alone use it as an example to follow? I still maintain that when it comes to the recognition of Black modern artists, South Africa has lessons to impart to Zimbabwe, as it has produced many revisionist projects (Peffer 2009, Manganyi 1996) in the form of writings and exhibitions that attempt to correct these histories, such as *ReVisions*, curated by Hayden Proud in 2005 (discussed before). "In attempts to recover the history of Black culture in South Africa, scholars have been energetically engaged in researching the past anew, a process initiated by liberal scholars long before the demise of the apartheid state" (Rankin, 2013: 73). Proof of Rankin's claim can be seen in the fact that when compared to his appearance in Zimbabwean modern art discourses, Job Kekana is more visible in South Africa, where he actively participated in exhibitions of the South African Academy from 1930 to 1942, despite the racial 'native' label ascribed to Black people. However, interestingly, Kekana's visibility still pales in comparison to that of his contemporaries, such as Gerard Sekoto and Ernest Mancoba. As such, Proud (2011: 42) concludes Kekana is "an artist yet unrepresented in the Sang [Iziko South African National Gallery] collection" where his contemporaries are well represented.

Indeed, when compared to Zimbabwe, the multiracial democracy that is South Africa offers ideal spaces for artists, supported by "policies of the new dispensation" (Pissarra 2006) to take on sensitive issues and stimulate discussions around them, resulting in restorative reconstructions of existing histories. For example, the District Six Museum in Cape Town usually carries archive-based documentary exhibitions around the forced removals that happened in the area in the 1960s. The museum – launched on the 10th of December 1994 as the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre – also annually commemorates 11 February 1966, the day when District Six was declared a White Groups Area,[51] through staging events. Through them stories of the victims are heard, and new histories are generated. That culture of robust government and institutional support is not present in Zimbabwe, where as early as in 1985, Enos Chikoore, the then Minister of Local Government and Town Planning sanctioned the removal of Adam Madebe's sculpture[52] situated near the Bulawayo Municipal Tower, arguing that "it offends African tradition… impairs the 'dignity' of the city [and] its presence could pervert and corrupt Zimbabweans" (Parade 1985: 21). Moreover, in 2010 the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo saw its doors being shut down by state security agencies shortly after the official opening of Owen Maseko's *Sibathontsisele* exhibition,[53] which was meant to steer dialogue on Gukurahundi, a dark phase in the history of post-colonial Zimbabwe in which about 20 000 Ndebele people were targeted and killed by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade, a special force of the Zimbabwe National Army. "Shortly after the exhibition opened both Owen Maseko and the Director of the Gallery Voti Thebe were arrested" (Coltart 2010). This means it is even difficult for curators to address some sensitive histories of the past in the Zimbabwean context.

An increase in the number of inclusive exhibitions and publications on art in South Africa has led to a significant increase in the visibility of Black artists at both national and the international

[51] Prior to the forced removals, District Six was a thriving diverse community painting a picture which was the antithesis of the racially segregated society that apartheid stood for. As stated on the museum's website, "On 11 February 1966 it was declared a white area under the Group Areas Act of 1950, and by 1982, the life of the community was over. More than 60 000 people were forcibly removed to barren outlying areas aptly known as the Cape Flats, and their houses in District Six were flattened by bulldozers." See District Six Museum website. It must be noted that the institution's conception preceded first democratic elections in 1994. The District Six Foundation was established in 1989, collecting the stories and artifacts unveiled at the official launch of the museum.

[52] Titled 'Looking to the future', Madebe's sculptural piece of a naked man with his genitals in the open was fashioned out of scrap metal. At the time Madebe was an art teacher at Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre.

[53] Owen Maseko's exhibition, documenting and restaging the famous 1980s Gukurahundi genocide in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe, opened at the Bulawayo regional branch of the NGZ on the 25th of March 2010. The artist was arrested the following day. In another form of censorship, newsprints from the Bulawayo-based state-run Chronicle newspaper were used to cover the ground floor of the gallery where the exhibition was for half a decade long, while the artist stood trial.

level. This is also complemented by an increase in the number of Black-owned galleries like Gallery MOMO in Cape Town, and, in Johannesburg, StopSign Art Gallery in Maboneng, Sosesame and Map Contemporary in Melville (Pissarra 2006). The acquisition policies of these institutions, and their conceptualisation of art challenge the unequal canonised discourse. Yet Zimbabwe still has only a handful of private galleries, which are in Harare. It is as though nothing happens in the rest of the country. Historic publications like *MOTO*, *Parade* and *Horizon*, which carried sections on art, have since stopped publishing due to the country's persistent gloomy socio-economic climate.

Added to that, the arts ecosystems in South Africa's key capital cities continue to expand by attracting private patrons who are either building new institutions or sponsoring existing ones. As arts writer Mary Corrigall indicated in the *Sunday Times* of 12 January 2020:

> The last decade saw a flurry of new museums and art foundations open; from The Wits Art Museum to the Javett Art Centre, the Nirox Foundation to William Kentridge's Centre for the Less Good Idea, to the A4, Maitland Institute, the Norval Foundation and, of course, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art (MOCAA).

These art spaces usually come up with cutting-edge exhibitions, with some of them curated by individuals from different parts of the continent. Corrigall (2020) goes on to state that more than 23 new galleries opened in the major cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg within the same decade, with bigger galleries like Goodman and Stevenson even expanding beyond the borders of South Africa. The same cannot be said of Zimbabwe, which is not witnessing an expansion in the density of gallery spaces in its main cities. However, Corrigall's narrative of success cited above should also be used to critique developments on the continent post 1994 when South Africa became a multicultural democracy. As economist Alois Mlambo argues, South Africa simply maintained its "traditional role" as "the region's hegemonic power", pursuing investment and trade policies "perceived by its neighbours as being deleterious to their interests", and "continues to use its considerable economic power to peripheralise the smaller countries surrounding it" (Mlambo 2000: 1-2). As a result of these economic disparities, art from Zimbabwe is accessible in mainstream South African institutions, and some artists have migrated to South Africa.

Moreover, almost each major university in South Africa has a fine art department. Besides the 'studio crits' that students receive in these institutions, the departments usually have art gallery spaces where students have an opportunity to exhibit their work. The same cannot be said of Zimbabwe, where aspiring artists still rely mainly on the art school of the NGZ and Harare

Polytechnic College. Of all the government-run universities that continue to expand throughout each one of the country's ten main provinces only Chinhoyi University of Technology has a distinctive fine arts department, which is more into design. Overall, what the nation needs are more public museums, more private collections, a few more commercial galleries, at least an auction house, more art schools, arts funding bodies, and a vibrant art press. These will help expand and strengthen the country's arts ecosystem.

But why South Africa when the thesis is about overlooked artist-teachers in Zimbabwe? My argument is that the developments in the field of art in South Africa have had and continue to have an influence on developments in Zimbabwe. This can be seen through the exploits of a number of individuals who worked in both countries and are central to this thesis. Among them, the Scottish artist-teacher and Anglican missionary Canon Edward Paterson, founded Cyrene Mission after a career stint in South Africa. Sister Pauline,[54] a former colleague of Paterson at Grace Dieu Mission, persuaded her mentee, the South Africa-born artist Job Kekana, to follow her to Rhodesia where he founded the Kekana Art and Craft school at St Faith's Mission near Rusape. Barnabas Ndudzo – a student of Kekana – briefly taught master mould-making at a school in Boksburg before being snapped by the Federated Union of Black Artists Arts Centre (also known as the F.U.B.A. Academy) in Johannesburg (Seretse 2007). The same applies to John Hlatywayo who left Chipinge to receive art training at the Polly Street Arts Centre in Johannesburg before coming back to teach in Zimbabwe. The connections between the two regional neighbours of South Africa and Zimbabwe are too strong to ignore. There were also other individuals who either settled in the then Rhodesia or established strong ties with people in the country. Selbourne Charlton Sobizwa 'Selby" Mvusi, taught art at Goromonzi High School before moving to Ghana (Miles 2015). Bill Ainslie briefly taught at Cyrene Mission. He was killed in 1989 on the way from a Pachipamwe Workshop that had taken place at Cyrene.[55] Brian Bradshaw was an artist and Professor of Fine Art at Rhodes University who was appointed the Director of the National Gallery of Rhodesia in 1974 (Hogge 1976) and ran the affairs of the institution as an absentee director based at the university institution in

[54] Sister Pauline (1883-1954) was born Florence Edith Grace Terry. Her father was a carpenter and cabinet maker. She trained as a teacher in England before moving to South Africa in 1915 where she joined Grahamstown's Community of the Resurrection. She was appointed an artist-teacher at Grace Dieu Mission in 1925 where she took over the Carving School from Canon Edward Paterson and oversaw it up to 1938. Among her students was Ernest Mancoba. In 1938, she left Grace Dieu for Grahamstown before moving to St Faith's Mission in Rhodesia. She was joined by Job Kekana in 1944 and they worked together for almost a decade before she passed away.

[55] Ainslie's art was a form of activism. He became a close friend of Dumile Feni, and the two attracted and mentored many other artists. His friends in the African National Congress adopted Ainslie's model and implemented it in the townships, effectively bringing people together. For more, see Gardiner, M. 2019.

Grahamstown, South Africa. Christopher Till, who went on to run the Johannesburg Art Gallery, and to found the Apartheid Museum, and recently the Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria, was the Director of the NGZ from 1980 to 1983.

To this day, art and artists move, and art programmes still happen between the two countries,[56] even though the migration of the artists has overwhelmingly taken the north to south direction[57] due to the unequal distribution of opportunities, with financial remittances mostly going in the opposite direction. South Africa currently offers more lucrative opportunities for artists' careers to flourish than economically challenged Zimbabwe, which nonetheless continues to punch above its weight by producing some of the region's most creative artists. I especially appreciate the strong attempts at rewriting and correcting a distorted art history canon, especially regarding "artists that suffered from systematic neglect during the apartheid era" (Van Robbroeck 2006), that continue taking place in South Africa through revisionist exhibitions and writings. Importantly, comparison with conditions elsewhere helps reveal shortcomings and areas that need to be improved. Making a case for "the need to develop a comparative critical practice" in a paper titled 'Chalk and Cheese, or Yam and Potatoes?' art historian Mario Pissarra highlighted that "South African art history could benefit from a comparative analysis with other African examples; but also, how African art history would benefit from such an approach" (2009). I believe Zimbabwe can draw valuable lessons from that.

Importantly, by arguing for Zimbabwe to draw inspiration from South Africa, I am not losing sight of some revolutionary developments in the art sector being spearheaded by some artists and cultural practitioners in the country. A few of them have come up with independent and decolonised art initiatives and spaces in the mould of South Africa's Bag Factory. Examples of these spaces are Dzimbanhete Arts Centre, spearheaded by artist and teacher Chikonzero Chazunguza, artist Admire Kamudzengerere's Animal Farm, Misheck Masamvu and Gina Marxim's Village Unhu, and the Njelele Art Station.

[56] South African universities do train Zimbabwean artists and writers. Although many Zimbabweans exhibit their work in South African galleries, occasionally South Africans do the same in Harare and Bulawayo.
[57] In this case, the north to south journey denotes going across the Limpopo River from Zimbabwe to South Africa.

### 1.9. Africa's soul searching

I make a bold call for an African reading of art from the continent, informed by African ancient philosophies and thoughts of contemporary writers. Shona,[58] the language widely spoken in Zimbabwe, has profound philosophical teachings imparted through folklore (*ngano*). Besides that, a revolution unfolded in the indigenous literature of the country prior to its attaining independence, beginning in 1956, a year before the National Gallery officially opened. In that year, Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso*, the first Shona novel was published. It was followed by Herbert Chitepo's *Soko Risina Musoro* published in 1958. Many other prominent writers such as Bernard Chidzero, Thompson Tsodzo, Giles Kuimba and Patrick Chakaipa joined the fold (The Herald 2015). Their writings engaged the theme of modernity and directly addressed colonialism. While some were optimistic that colonialism would deliver the Black peoples into modernity, others protested it. These were serious thinkers. Among them were Herbert Chitepo, who became the country's first Black lawyer, and Bernard Chidzero at one time independent Zimbabwe's Minister of Economics. To substantiate that there is something profound that can be drawn from these writings and help enrich our critical thinking and writing on art, Raphael Chikukwa, for example, themed Zimbabwe's pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019 on Chitepo's *Soko Risina Musoro*.

In *The De-Africanization of African Art*, a recently published book he co-edited with Pfunzo Sidogi, scholar Denis Ekpo (2022) delves extensively into a concept he terms 'Post-Africanism', which he considers Africa's assimilation and synthesis of the best that the world has to offer with the continent's own philosophical and cultural maxim. Only by embracing this idea, according to the author, can Africans make modernity work for the continent. According to Ekpo, this reimagination is needed now because discussion on African modernism, through concepts like Pan-Africanism and decolonisation, have always been framed in the Africa versus the West binary, or the idea of tradition versus modernity, which has failed to transform the situation of stunted and frustrated development, or poverty and deprivation the continent has been stuck in over the years. He states, "Modern African art, powered mostly by the anti-colonial ideologies of cultural nationalism and Afrocentrism, has been largely complicit in the subversion of the modernity project in Africa" (2022: 1). In the preface of the new book, co-editor Sidogi writes, "A de-Africanized art in Africa must provide

[58] Shona is Zimbabwe's dominant language. I am aware that it overshadows other languages in the country. As such, I am merely citing it as an example. Otherwise, I full support the equal promotion and use of Zimbabwe's sixteen official languages.

alternative visual narratives that empower Africans to take on the baton of modernization from Asia, who showed us the way during the latter half of the twentieth century, so that the twenty-first century can truly live up to its billing of being the century for Africa" (2022: xv). While these ideas seem sound, I find them problematic. The continent still has many issues and problems that need redress, such as land ownership and inequalities based on capital ownership, that Ekpo and those who agree with him appear to be asking Africans just to overlook and move on. Moreover, they seem to ignore the role of the hidden Western hand behind the rise of the Asian Tigers in the Cold War period – the need for a capitalist buffer around 'socialist' powerhouses of China and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. To ask Africa to just grab the "baton of modernization" from Asia and progress forward seems like an idea that is not practical.

While I am not totally buying into Ekpo's proposal above, I would not run the risk of throwing the baby out with the bath water. I find some of his ideas constructive. In a paper titled 'The Abolition of Africa's Modernity', he indicates that "the real predicament of Africa's modernity/modernism is how we keep on blaming the West while keeping back and doctoring all the unpleasant facts that point to our native failures and weaknesses" (Ekpo 2005: 426). From that position Ekpo enunciates that "rescuing African modernity/modernism should be viewed as a battle against the bewitchment of the mind of the African by Negritude, Afrocentrism, anti-imperialism, modernism and postcolonialism" (Ekpo 2005: 426) since the protagonists of these schools of thought appear to be fighting for recognition in the so called universal mainstream which is a Euro-American canon anyway. In agreement with the art historian is Oguibe who, in 'The True Location of Mancoba's Modernism', also argues that there is too much "preoccupation with Eurocentrism" in the contest for modernism, which he sees as "a contest for a place in Europe's narrative of the world" (Oguibe 2005: 419).

In his seminal essay, 'African Modes of Self-Writing', Achille Mbembe identifies two main points of view by writers from Africa and the diaspora that are responses to the Western perceptions and formulations of Africa, namely "Afro-radicalism" and "Nativism". For now, I will focus on the former. According to Mbembe, Afro-radicalism is rooted in Marxist and the nationalist ideologies that express the need for resistance, autonomy, and emancipation. Central to this school of thought is that Africa is oppressed and therefore can be liberated through socialism and revolution. The question to be asked is 'Who is the oppressor?'. For a school of thought that finds a solution in the socialist utopia, the oppressor must be the West and its capitalist agenda. Writers like Walter Rodney, Thandika Mkandawire and Archie Mafeje are

the key proponents of this theory. Likewise, in *The Revenge of the Minkisi*, an essay accompanying *Azibuyele Emasisweni*,[59] an exhibition which sought "to carry decoloniality into the visual and performance arts", sculptor Pitika Ntuli argued that even the key thinkers of the Duke School of the Decolonial Turn/Option, "Mignolo et al call for 'epistemic disobedience' because they are constrained by Western thinking and recognize those they seek to disobey as their leaders" (Ntuli 2020)Their discourse, according to Ekpo (2005: 427) "is founded upon a negritudist and nostalgic view of Africa, against a conspiratorial and adversarial view of Europe and modernity".

There are several artists on the continent and in the diaspora who subscribe to the positions discussed above. In South Africa for example, the decolonial school of thought became a rallying point in the aftermath of the #RhodesMustFall protests initiated at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and went on to spread throughout the country's tertiary institutions, and as far beyond as Oxford University in the United Kingdom, which also had a statue of the arch-imperialist on its campus. Postcolonial conditions in liberated African countries inform most of the art produced by their artists. If we acknowledge that these two and a few other positions highlighted above are retrogressive, what would be the way forward, the stance that pulls Africa out of this cultural quagmire? Artist and writer Rasheed Araeen poses a wordy alternative question thus:

> Faced with the ingrained denigrating, primitivising proclivities of the western critic, the big question is, is it worth it for Africa to fight for a place in universal [Euro-American] modernism. It is puzzling then to see African artists fighting to catch up with the West, or seeking Western validation (Araeen 2005: 423).

Denis Ekpo laments the "paucity of Africa's real contributions to artistic modernism" on the same level as the contributions of Africa's literary giants like Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Leopold Senghor, Tutuola Chiek, Hamidou Kane, for example (Ekpo 2005: 424). I think there is a point to draw from the African literary gurus that Ekpo mentions above, despite Masilela's assertion that "African languages could not have been facilitators of entrance and comprehension of this new historical experience [of modernity]" (2006: 32). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has always advocated for a three-language policy, with the African mother tongue

[59] Nominated in the 'Best Digital and Educational Programme' category, Pitika Ntuli's exhibition won the 'You-2 Award', one of the two People's Choice awards of the seventh annual Global Fine Art Awards for 2021 in Paris. In *Azibuyele Emasisweni*, each bone sculpture was accompanied by a poem or a song by 33 collaborators, including renowned writers Homi Bhabha and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, musicians Simphiwe Dana, Zolani Mahola and Yvonne Chaka Chaka, and South Africa's Minister of International Relations, Naledi Pandor, reflections and theoretical analysis with retired judge Albie Sachs, and academics Ashraf Jamal and Thembinkosi Goniwe, and many others from various disciplines. The exhibition was curated by Ruzy Rusike, curator of the Melrose Gallery.

occupying the prime spot, then the lingua franca – which can be a regional language like Swahili – and lastly English or French. As he states, mastering these languages in this order helps us realise that English and French are not the bearers of knowledge and intelligence. In his words, "We shall write in African languages, we shall invent in African languages, African languages will be talking to each other."[60] For the longest time, the work of African artists has been discussed, theorised, and explained in concepts and thoughts that are alien to the continent. As such, even though Africans have been making important work for ages, their work, informed by diverse African thought, was kept out of the modernist canon because its meanings lie outside the parameters of the narrow Euro-American mainstream. Based on this assertion, I make a call for Zimbabwean cultural practitioners to look for inspiration within their society as indicated at the beginning of this section.

Instead of fighting for inclusion in the Euro-American modernism canon, Ekpo suggests that there is need for "an Africa-originated socioeconomic as well as theoretical framework that will facilitate the apprehension, recognition, rehabilitation and promotion of the modernist achievements and contributions of original African artists". Could this alternative approach be "nativism", an idea Achille Mbembe dismisses as "a fake philosophy founded on the neurosis of African victimhood" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a: 63)? As postcolonial theorist Benita Parry (1994) explains, nativism employs the same categories and the same vocabulary used by the dominant discourse, Euro-American mainstream modernism in this case, to subvert, undermine, and decentre it. I do not have an answer as to whether this approach would be the response to the problem of Africa's marginalisation from the mainstream, but it is certainly worth considering. Pitika Ntuli's work is underpinned by the need to draw inspiration from precolonial Africa or from a return to a people's past; what contemporary Zimbabwean essayist and novelist Panashe Chigumadzi (2021) calls the "Sankofa dialectics", or what Amilcar Cabral (1973) calls a "return to source".

Again, in the essay accompanying *Azibuyele Emasisweni*, Ntuli is specific about the intention "to pick up our interrupted traditions of art making and praxis in an African way, hence 'return to the source'. The exhibition seeks to encourage young artists to paint, sculpt, write poetry and drama based on their realities and responding to their urgent needs for self-expression" (Ntuli 2020). Precolonial empires like the Munhumutapa, with its headquarters at Great Zimbabwe, the Benin Empire, Dahomey, and many others had artistic forms that were violently

[60] For more, see Khelef, M. 2018.

disrupted by the colonial enterprise. These are the sources that Ntuli is calling for the contemporary artists and African writers to reconnect with.

The idea of drawing inspiration from African early sources is a project African art historians can embark on and stay true to even when based in Euro-American institutions and locations. The stories of artists like Mancoba and Sekoto provide invaluable lessons for the emerging generation of art historians. When the Native Affairs Commissioner asked Mancoba to specialise in an "indigenous art trade by selling all sorts of pseudo-tribal figures for tourists" (Obrist 2010: 375-6), the artist ended up moving away from an environment that accorded him second-class status to one that he knew would accept him albeit he would need to stay true to his African roots to thrive. The same applies to Sekoto who felt "isolated as a 'black' artist" (Koloane 1989: 213) in his country of birth. Both moved to a cultural capital that had other artists and thinkers from the diaspora, such as C.L.R. James, keen on promoting African discourse (Thompson 2005). I compare their journey and impact to that of African academics and writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and other diasporic theorists.

### 1.10. Conclusion

This chapter defined modernism and acknowledged that in its narrow Euro-American context, it simply silences modernisms from other parts of the world, particularly Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Through philosophies of critical thinkers from Africa like Chika Okeke-Agulu and Salah Hassan, and many others from the Global Souths I advocated for the acknowledgement of plural and entangled modernisms. I discussed modernisms in South Africa and the problematic ways that still punctuate the subject. However, what is interesting about South Africa is the idea that even before the attainment of multicultural democracy in 1994, some artists, curators and art critics had already began to question and shake the canonised modern art history and the discourses around it by bringing in the work of the then excluded or neglected Black modern artists. Even though a lot more still has to be done, I still argue that Zimbabwe could draw inspiration from an imperfect South Africa when it comes to the inclusion of its marginalised Black artist-teachers.

# Chapter 2*:* Modernity in Zimbabwe: Encounter with the West

## 2.1. Introduction

The introduction of Western modernism in Zimbabwe cannot really be separated from the colonisation of the country by Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company (B.S.A.C.) on behalf of the Queen and the empire of Britain. The company obtained a series of treaties and concessions enabling it to occupy the territory, albeit facing fierce armed resistance in the western parts of the country. The occupation of the territory brought different independent, interconnected, ethnic states under the control of a single central colonial administration, forming a country named Rhodesia,[61] after Rhodes himself. Many nations were also split into two as the process of creating new countries paid no respected to the existing ethnic-nation boundaries. Robert Smith Moffat, an early missionary who was welcomed as a friend by King Lobengula of the Ndebele State proved to be a wolf in a sheep's skin as he facilitated the colonisation of the country, aiding Rhodes's messengers to obtain a treaty that sealed the effective occupation of the territory by Rhodes. In the colonial state of Rhodesia, missionaries like Canon Edward Paterson and Father John Groeber then pioneered the establishment of Cyrene and Serima Mission schools respectively, which were the first institutions to teach art formally to Black people in the country. In these institutions, local artists were introduced to new forms of art, besides the woodcarving they were used to seeing in their communities. Besides Paterson and Groeber, there were also other white expatriates like Alex Lamberth who helped found the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre in Bulawayo, and Tom Blomefield who provided his farm for the Tengenenge Workshop in Guruve. Although they appeared on the scene slightly later than Paterson and Groeber, Blomefield and Lamberth also went on to play a crucial role in the development of modern art in the country.

In this chapter, I examine the role played by these missionaries and expatriates in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. I start by examining the societies of precolonial Zimbabwe and their art. I argue that the locals already had their own modes of art, especially woodcarving, which the missionaries and expatriates were able to build on. In line with the overall focus of this thesis, the Cyrene and Serima Workshops, and the Mzilikazi Arts Centre

[61] Zimbabwe was named Rhodesia in 1895, became Southern Rhodesia as part of the Central African Federation and Rhodesia between 1953 and 1963, and Rhodesia again from 1964 to 1979, and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979, then Zimbabwe on attaining independence in 1980. Reflecting on the history of the shift in names during the colonial period and its aftermath helps retain a sense of chronology in the developments over the period of study.

were instrumental in producing the local modern artist-teachers who went on to make a significant contribution to the development of art in Zimbabwe.

### 2.2. The art of precolonial Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean landscape is adorned with pottery sherds and rock paintings dating to what many historians have referred to as the 'prehistory era'. In her seminal text titled *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, author and scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith problematises the term (prehistory), arguing that "what has come to count as history is a contentious issue for many indigenous communities because it is not only a story of domination; it is also a story which assumes that there was a 'point in time' which was 'prehistoric'" (Smith 1999: 55). She goes on to elaborate that used in this context, the 'historic' is then understood to be the time 'tradition' breaks with modernism, or the epoch coming in the aftermath of the 'primitive' societies. In the context of southern Africa, the term 'prehistory' has been used to describe the era in which there were no historical records in written form. History and cultural teachings and norms were passed from one generation to the next through oral traditions. However, the idea of associating African cultures with orality and European societies with literacy is contentious, as there were early literate Africans before Europeans occupied the continent. The Nigerian Professor of Philosophy Rt. Rev. Msgr. S. Iniobong Udoidem argues that:

> The problem, in my opinion, is not the lack of written philosophical tradition. After all, Socrates, the celebrated Greek philosopher, is said to have written nothing, yet his philosophical ideas have been immortalised. The basic problem is that African philosophers have lost touch with their philosophical heritage by discarding the oral traditions of their people and the rudiments of the tradition of African art, history, science, and technology (Udoidem 1987: 103).

Although the precolonial history of Zimbabwe is mainly described in terms of the rise and fall of the Iron Age empires and states, namely Great Zimbabwe, the Rozvi, the Torwa and the Ndebele (Mazarire 2009: 1), there were many small, fragmented, and mobile autochthonous Khoe-Sān communities outside their frontiers, and before them. These were the first known indigenous peoples to occupy the Zimbabwean plateau and the greater part of the southern African region. These peoples left a plethora of rock paintings, seen on the bare granitic surfaces, in caves and rock shelters in different parts of the country, and as far beyond the borders as the Cederberg Mountains of the Western Cape and Drakensberg Escarpment of KwaZulu-Natal in the western and eastern parts of neighbouring South Africa respectively

(Bonneau et al. 2017). The paintings at Silozwane Cave in the Matobo National Park[62] in the western part of Zimbabwe are the most elaborate example (Fig. 2.1). They show recognisable animal and human figures. Hunting scenes depicting humans, animals, and weapons, as well as battle scenes, can be read from the paintings. Societal ritual activities and shamans or healers in a trance and at work are also depicted in these paintings as is seen through the mythical figures with both human and animal features. Elsewhere, in other parts of southern Africa Khoe-Sān paintings even show contact with the first European colonists (de Greef 2016). While studying and analysing these sites makes sense to archaeologists and historians, our perceptions usually have little meaning or significance to the locals who revere these spaces as sacred.

Fig. 2.1. Part of the Khoe-Sān rock paintings at Silozwane Cave in Zimbabwe's Matobo National Park. Source: Matobo Hills Lodge.

[62] Matobo is a gazetted national park under the control of the Parks and Wildlife of Zimbabwe. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site with the highest concentration of rock paintings in Zimbabwe. Regardless of all these national and international conservation-related categorisations, Matopo's significance to the surrounding local communities is intangible. They respect it as a living site for their Mwari (God) represented by the four shrines of Njelele, Dula, Dzilo and Bembe (Ranger 1997: 70). It is also in the Matobo Hills that Mzilikazi, the founder of the Ndebele State, is buried. Cecil John Rhodes also opted to be buried in the same hills, either to deliberately desecrate the site, or because he wanted his remains to be interred next to those of the founder of the all-powerful and conquering Ndebele Kingdom which he had colonised (Maylam 2005).

Our challenge is to fully understand the Khoe-Sān art, which should not be scrutinised through the Western lens of trying to make sense of abstraction and realism,[63] or as "innocent playthings" Arbousset (1852: 25), but ought to be understood "in its own terms – as a cultured representation of the Khoe-Sān world as the Khoe-Sān people knew it to be" (Mguni 2004: 187). The paintings had "social and cosmological meanings" (Matenga 2011: 125). As Mungwini (2017: 165) elaborates, "the challenge then is to get into the minds of these geniuses to try and read their minds as transcribed in their works of art which today constitute our only available text since the creators have long gone". What is unique about this art is that, compared to modern art done on canvases and sheltered indoors in museums, cathedrals and collectors' homes, the shadings and colour – believed to have been made from a concoction of different soils and minerals, such as iron haematite, chrome and lime, plant juices, animal blood and fat – have withstood the test of time and survived different weather elements for generations (Walker 2012).

Other rock paintings have been discovered in the mountainous parts of the Eastern Highlands, as well as the granitic outcrops of Domboshava and Mutoko to the north-east. Some are yet to be discovered and documented.[64] The Khoe-Sān communities were famous for their use of rudimentary stone tools. Therefore, they have at times been referred to as Stone Age communities. They also made pottery.

The Khoe-Sān communities were later dispersed by the larger Bantu[65] or Nguni communities which include the Ndebele[66] and the Shangaan/Xangana of the south-eastern lowveld of Zimbabwe. Unlike the fragmented and nomadic Khoe-Sān groups, these were large, powerful, and complex groups which mostly moved with large herds of cattle. Some of them were

[63] David Lewis-Williams, for example, who dedicated decades of research to Khoe-Sān rock paintings, which he compiled in his book, *A Cosmos in Stone: Interpreting religion and society through rock art* (2002) applies findings from studies on Upper Palaeolithic caves of Western Europe to the Khoe-Sān rock paintings to reach the conclusion that they were shamanistic in nature. He did this despite the significant spatial and temporal distances between the two locations.

[64] I remember seeing a few in the scattered hills surrounding the villages of Buhera District in Manicaland Province where I grew up. I have not come across any documentation on them yet.

[65] These communities are believed to have trekked southwards from the equatorial Western and Central regions of Africa. Based on common words and elements in their languages, linguists Malcolm Guthrie and Achille Émile Meeussen concluded that the languages developed from one language termed the Proto-Bantu (Spuy 1990). Today, some of their languages include clicks, which developed over the years because of being in contact and/or mixing with the Khoe-Sān communities. The Shona are believed to have come to Zimbabwe from the north. Because the Ndebele, who are also a Bantu society, arrived on the Zimbabwean plateau much later than the Shona groups, and they were moving northwards from Zululand or Nguniland, they are also sometimes referred to as a Nguni group.

[66] Founded by King Mzilikazi of the Kumalo Clan, later succeeded by his son King Lobengula, the Ndebele included the Rozvi, Kalanga, Birwa, Tonga, Sotho, Nyubi, Venda – all brought together through conquest, assimilation, and incorporation.

stratified societies with well-defined internal social hierarchies and centralised leaderships.[67] They had privileged ruling classes and large organised armies. These groups were famous for building massive drystone wall royal kraals or homesteads for their rulers on higher ground as is the case with Mapungubwe in South Africa, Great Zimbabwe and later Khami near Bulawayo. These complex states were almost like the empire-states of Dahomey and Ashanti in West Africa. Great Zimbabwe's reign as the capital of a powerful state is believed to have lasted for 800 years, from CE1000–1800 (Chirikure et al. 2017). The sophisticated and artistic architectural constructions of their capitals were a marvel. Not only Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and Khami, but several other drystone-wall Zimbabwe sites[68] scattered over the Zimbabwean plateau like Manyanga, Dhlodhlo and Naletale (Fig. 2.2), are remnants of these socially stratified and centralised precolonial kingdoms that existed side by side (Chirikure 2019a).[69]

[67] Zimbabwean archaeologist and art historian Peter Garlake (1982: 1) explains that Great Zimbabwe, for example, "was a considerable human achievement, evidence of the acquisition and management of a huge and docile labour force, of prolonged political stability and economic prosperity".

[68] According to archaeologist Innocent Pikirayi (2001), the studies that establish a correlation between language and ceramics is common in southern African archaeology, giving rise to what is known as the 'Zimbabwe Culture', which also includes shared architectural styles, spiritual beliefs, and other symbolic and spatial features, for example, a subsistence farming lifestyle. Such studies have revealed distinct ceramic traditions like Gumanye, Harare and Musengezi. Mazarire (2009: 9) states that the Zimbabwe sites "can be traced on the Zimbabwe plateau, and in the Save valley to the east, into Mozambique, and as far as Madagascar". Gamba and Kiteve in present-day Mozambique were identified in Portuguese sixteenth-century records as having typical Karanga dynasties' characteristics.

[69] According to Peter Garlake (1994), there are over 250 zimbabwes or 'houses of stone' scattered over the Zimbabwean plateau and spilling into South Africa.

Fig. 2.2. Naletale Ruins in the Central Region of Zimbabwe is an example of a drystone capital of a complex Iron Age Zimbabwe state. What is unique and impressive about the wall at Naletale is that it carries the most dominant elaborate patterns associated with drystone wall constructions i.e., chevron, single and double chequers, dentelle, and herringbone. Source: World Monuments Fund.

Unlike the ever-mobile small Khoe-Sān units, these societies had bigger population groups and generally followed a sedentary lifestyle. They used iron implements to fight, hunt and farm. They had large herds of cattle. The division of labour was well defined in most of these societies, as women performed certain chores like farming and raising the children, while other specific tasks like fighting in the army and hunting were preserved for men.[70] However, the Great Zimbabwe State's internal social structure might have been slightly different as it "has no demonstrable evidence of division of labour or occupational specialisation, with dedicated spaces for metalworkers, weavers, stone masons and so on in different parts of the settlement" (Chirikure et al. 2018: 1072). The pottery of these societies was dominated by the linear herringbone motif and other decorations. Archaeological discoveries at Great Zimbabwe which include glass beads, Arabian glass, Chinese celadon dating back to the sixteenth century, and Near Eastern earthenware is proof that the occupants of the site had access to foreign goods (Chirikure and Pikirayi 2008). They most probably had established long-distance and foreign trade ties with the Arab traders stationed at Sofala in Mozambique. The Arabs, who acted as

[70] The female soldiers of Dahomey in West Africa and Queen Nyamazana of the Swati as a military leader of a Nguni ethnic group were exceptions to this categorisation.

middlemen, were in contact with the Chinese societies and traders whose goods they brought to African shores. As was the case with the Kingdom of Benin, an equally complex society in West Africa known for its bronze spiritual sculptural art forms, Great Zimbabwe had the famous soapstone carvings in the form of "supernatural composite creatures of mythology" (Garlake 1982: 57)[71] (Fig. 2.3.), serrated bronze spearheads, double iron gongs, and "stone bowls (Fig. 2.4.) in relief with plaited band and tendril motifs, wooden vessels with signs of the Zodiac, and simple vases" (Plangger and Diethelm 1974: 8).

Garlake (1982: 1) highlighted that Cecil John Rhodes "recognized the considerable propaganda value of the evidence of ancient foreign settlements, preferably white and successful and with Bible origins, would have on settlers who hoped for more prosperity" on the territory north of the Limpopo. Capitalising on the claims of the German explorer and treasure hunter Carl Mauch (1837-1875), who, after visiting the site in 1871, thought that he had discovered the biblical city of Ophir (Garlake 1973: 62) because to him the architecture was too complicated to be the work of the locals, Rhodes then commissioned archaeologist Theodore Bent to excavate Great Zimbabwe to validate Mauch's claim. He also sent missions to scurry through the archives of Rome and Lisbon for documents with information on the site. Moreover, Garlake (1982: 1) explains that Rhodes also had "Richard Hall, an enthusiastic propagandist of the settler cause in newspapers, lectures and exhibitions, and a fanatical advocate of immensely old biblical origins for Great Zimbabwe, appointed curator of the Ruins expressly to instruct important visitors in his theories." In the end, Rhodes acquired many antiquities from the site, including the soapstone Zimbabwe bird still in his Groote Schuur residence in Cape Town (see Fig. 2.3.).

### *2.2.1 Zimbabwe bird figures and their significance*

A total of some 13 soapstone carvings of Zimbabwe birds were mined from the Great Zimbabwe site, six from the Sacred Enclosure and the other seven were on the Zimbabwe Hill (Matenga 2011: 130).

[71] The soapstone bird carvings found at great Zimbabwe have both human and bird features.

Fig. 2.3. The Zimbabwe Bird (left) and its replica at the former residence of Cecil John Rhodes (Groote Schuur) bequeathed to South Africa. Image: Michelle Mlati.

Fig. 2.4. A segment of a stone bowl from Great Zimbabwe. Iziko South African Museum. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

The meanings of the birds continue to be a subject of speculation. However, "most researchers agree that the birds represent birds of prey, but it is not possible to identify the species because the carvings combine human and avian elements; beaks with lips on some, and four or five toes or fingers on all (raptors have three forward and one back)" (Hubbard 2009: 110). Two of the birds likened to the carvings are the bateleur eagle (*chapungu*) and the fish eagle (*hungwe*), and both are considered sacred by the Shona people. Zimbabwean historian Aaron C. Hodza was one of the earliest local scholars to interrogate the possible meanings of the bird sculptures. He argued that in Shona there are specific birds and animals that are sacred like the *chapungu* because early Shona people were of the belief that their ancestors transformed into *zvapungu* (plural) after death. The scholar adds that because of its sacredness, upon seeing a *chapungu* hovering above the Shona sit down, clap hands, and speak to the ancestors asking for guidance, in the following verse:

*Tichengetei vasekuru,*
*Onai tiri parwendo rurefu,*
*Bvisai zvinokuvadza munzira,*
*Kuti tifambe takasununguka.*

Look after us, Oh Grandparents,

Just see, we are on a long journey,

Remove (for us) from the path all dangerous things,

For us to travel freely.

Of the alternative, Hodza explains that the *hungwe* is considered sacred because of its black and white colours. Combining a black and a white cloth produces what is known as *jira rehungwe* or *fuko remudzimu*, which is a cloth given to the spirit medium (Roberts et al. 1982: 57).[72]

Matenga (1998 and 2011) also discusses the possible local meanings of the birds and what their form is. Although he favours the *chapungu* over the *hungwe* because of its universal spiritual significance as a messenger among the Shona today, he admits that both are revered by them. As such the carvings are derivative of either of the birds.[73] That *hungwe* is the totem of a significant population in and around Masvingo Province complicates the meaning further. It is not clear whether the people with that totem are the descendants of the people who built the monument, resided at the site, and carved the mysterious sculptures. As such, it is no surprise that Matenga (1998: 13) refers to historian David Beach lamenting the fact that a countrywide oral tradition exercise which had taken place in the early days of colonial occupation omitted the inhabitants of the then Victoria Province (present-day Masvingo Province). That was possibly a missed opportunity to gather local interpretations. Historian Thomas Huffman (2007) simply believes that the supernatural Zimbabwe Birds represent an attempt by the leaders of Great Zimbabwe to claim a spiritual connection to a deeper past.

What has been written about the soapstone bird sculptures of Great Zimbabwe is mostly from an archaeological perspective (Andersson 2020). However, what is not in doubt when we look at the carvings is the artistic ability of the unnamed ancient sculptors. This is substantiated by Sibanda (2015) who recognises that the state represented the pinnacle of sculpting as a form of artistic and cultural expression in precolonial Zimbabwe. This sentiment is also emphasised by Garlake (2002) who indicates that the sculptures are too complex to have been the imagination and work of an individual artist, and to have been derived from merely observing actual birds. Moreover, they defy any categorisation to a particular known artistic tradition and need to be

[72] For more, see Roberts et al. 1982.

[73] Even the official Government of Zimbabwe web portal reflects this ambivalence on the meanings of the birds. It highlights that the "Zimbabwe birds represent sacred or totemic animals of the Shona – the bateleur eagle (Shona: *chapungu*), which was held to be a messenger from Mwari (God) and the ancestors, or the fish eagle (*hungwe*) which it has been suggested was the original totem of the Shona." See Government of Zimbabwe 2022.

viewed in more than the narrow Western sense as art objects to be fully appreciated. While I do agree with Chikukwa (2015) that they are part of a tradition of sculpture, carving and painting that the Shona ancestors passed from one generation to the next, I do contest their link to the 'Shona Sculpture' tradition that has existed in Zimbabwe from the 1950s to date. The latter is the invention of Frank McEwen, Joram Mariga and the group of artists at the National Gallery School (Pearce 1993, Zilberg 1994, 1997) who conveniently made the connection as a way of Africanising a new modern art form with heavy Western input for it to be accepted as genuinely rooted in the traditions and history of the country. Although the resident local culture had its own religion whose essence was enshrined in art as suggested by Mudyiwa and Mokgoatsana (2021: 6), contemporary artists who also link their sculpting practice to that of Great Zimbabwe by invoking the spirits of the stone and traditional religion tend to do so without solid evidence of what the art at the site represented. As Omatseye (2010) observes, it is also possible to contest the notion that these birds were of a spiritual significance as art from early African societies was quite multifunctional. Mungwini (2017) too argues that not all art from the traditional African societies belonged to the religious category. Historian Roberts (1982: 54) concludes that what ought to be embraced as:

> The real achievements of Shona material culture have been in representational carvings [like the Zimbabwe Birds], and attractive geometric decoration [as in the chevron pattern] and anthropomorphic or zoomorphic embellishments of functional objects [and that] Shona traditions aesthetic expression is manifested in the decorative embellishment of utilitarian items. Basketry, pottery, woodcarving and beadwork carry patterns which show a strong sense of design essentially geometric in nature.

Although the Shona art forms have been explained in terms of both spirituality and spiritualism, it should be noted that the Ndebele, on the other hand, were recognised for their decorative embellishment of utilitarian items. These include their rondavel decorations that were inscribed both on the inside and the outside of the walls, and bead aprons that were unique.[74] Ndebele women also painted on their bodies.

### 2.3 The colonisation of Zimbabwe: The introduction of Western Modernism

The present-day southern African nation of Zimbabwe is sandwiched between the perennial Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers to the north and south respectively. It shares borders with Zambia to the north, Mozambique to the east, South Africa to the south, Botswana to the south-west

[74] Since 2014, the Bulawayo-based Amagugu International Cultural Centre has tried to revive the tradition of decorating the rural homesteads through the 'My Beautiful Home/Gcomba Indlu Ngobuciko Competition' held annually from April to September. See photo gallery on Voice of America. 2014.

and Namibia to the west. Zimbabwe owes its present boundaries to the British capitalist mogul and arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes and his B.S.A.C. Like the rest of its regional counterparts and most of the countries making up the African continent as we know it today, Zimbabwe's map was carved in the late nineteenth century and soon after the European colonial powers gathered in Berlin in 1884-1885 to plan the partitioning of the continent in an 'orderly' manner thereby quelling most of the tensions and likely clashes among themselves emanating from the Scramble for Africa, as the fierce competition and sudden rush for colonies is known. The boundaries they came up with were "drawn by Europeans, for Europeans and, apart from some localized detail, paid scant regard to Africa, let alone Africans" (Griffiths 1986: 204). Not even a single indigenous African individual was present at the conference.

Both the scramble and partition of Africa were quite disrespectful to the indigenous communities populating the continent. The European colonisers largely dehumanised existing frontiers as they did not pay respect to the traditional African kingdoms and nations (Griffiths 1986). There had been hierarchies among the several African kingdoms, as lesser societies either paid tribute in return for protection from the more powerful nations or others had simply submitted to greater powers by way of conquest. Other nations were traditional allies tied by kinships born out of royal marriages as was the custom for centuries. However, with the establishment of European colonial boundaries, clearly demarcated units of administration placed formerly autonomous communities under paramount chiefs handpicked by the colonisers. Rival nations were bunched together under a single alien leadership as happened between the Shona and the Ndebele under the B.S.A.C. Hitherto united nations were also torn apart as people in borderlands were left on both sides of the international colonial boundaries (Werbner 2002). For example, half of the Kalanga nation found themselves in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) with the other half confined to Bechuanaland (Botswana). The Tonga community of the Zambezi Valley were divided between Northern and Southern Rhodesia. This happened throughout Africa. In the central African region, the people of Rwanda and Burundi found themselves being passed from one colonial power to the other. From being a German colony, they were passed to Britain, then to Belgium which embarked on a mischievous experiment of grouping people into Tutsi, Hutu and Twa 'tribal' groupings based on physical attributes like complexion and height (Corey and Joireman 2004). That naive 'scientific' experiment of 1935 sowed the seeds of discontent that resulted in the 1994 Rwanda genocide, in which over 800 000, mostly Tutsis, were massacred within a period of one hundred days.

*2.3.1 The role of missionaries*

Missionaries had reached the Zimbabwean plateau half a century prior to the arrival of Cecil John Rhodes' concession seekers, the B.S.A.C. and the Pioneer Column.[75] The London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) had a mission station at Inyati 40 years before Zimbabwe became a colony, albeit mission centres and schools proliferated in different parts of the country after effective occupation by the colonisers. Its founder, the Reverend Robert Moffat, had established friendship ties with King Mzilikazi of the Matabele Nation while the latter was still south of the Limpopo River on the journey to the north (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b). As noted by Ned Paterson in one of the *Cyrene Papers* (1945), Moffat had then passed through the site where Cyrene Mission, which laid the foundation for the development of modern art in Zimbabwe, was to be built in 1939, almost a hundred years before, on his way to visit Mzilikazi. The friendship ties between Mzilikazi and Robert Moffat were passed on to their sons, Lobengula, the heir to the Matabele throne, and John Moffat who followed in his father's footsteps in doing missionary work. On 11 February 1888, the missionary signed the Moffat Treaty with King Lobengula, which stipulated that the Matabele nation was not going to enter into agreements with other imperial powers without consulting the B.S.A.C. (Goodwin and Strack 2009). In return the Ndebele State was promised British protection. In a way, the Moffat Treaty marked the first step in the colonisation of Zimbabwe. Disguised as friendship or a diplomatic initiative, the treaty proved to be a calculated move that created the ideal conditions for British occupation of the territory by keeping at bay the other rival imperial powers.

It was this relationship that Cecil John Rhodes exploited as he turned to the Reverend Charles Daniel Helm of Moffat's L.M.S. to help secure the Rudd Concession of 1888. Helm played the role of an interpreter for the Ndebele King and Rhodes's representatives Charles Rudd, Rochfort Maguire and Francis Robert Thompson. The Reverend Helm also put his signature to the document as a witness (Maenzanise 2008). The Rudd Concession granted mineral rights over the territory "with full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure the same" (Gauntlett 2010: 26). Maybe, had the negotiation process been left in the

[75]The first recorded interaction between the leaders of the Monomotapa Empire and a European missionary was in 1561 when the Portuguese Roman Catholic priest named Father Gonçalo da Silveira reached the court of the Munhumutapa. Matenga (2011: 135) describes him as a "Jesuit zealot who converted a number of people, including the son of the Munhumutapa". In his book, *A Political History of the Munhumutapa* (1988), Zimbabwean historian Stan Mudenge indicates that Silveira was then executed on the night of 15 March 1561, on the direct orders of the Munhumutapa. This happened after the king's Arab friends defamed Silveira. Following that, the Portuguese made several failed attempts at occupying the empire between 1569 and 1577, and heavily interfered in the empire's internal succession disputes, helping the exiled Gatsi Rusere retain the throne, and in turn he donated silver, gold, and copper mines to them, and allowed them to build churches and promote Christianity.

hands of the concession seekers or the B.S.A.C. alone, chances were there could have been bloodshed, as Rhodes was determined to secure the territory at whatever cost. Even after securing the treaties the occupation of Zimbabwe was not easy for the colonisers as there were fierce wars of resistance by the Ndebele between 1893 and 1894, followed by another one from 1896 to 1897, known as the First Chimurenga/Umvukela, that united both the Ndebele and the Shona under the spiritual leadership of Mbuya Nehanda[76] and Sekuru Kaguvi.[77]

It is important to acknowledge that when the colonisation of the Zimbabwean plateau[78] occurred, as effectively sealed by the hoisting of the British Union flag at Fort Salisbury by the B.S.A.C. in September of 1890, the settlers were imposing their rule on nations that had rich artistic traditions as highlighted above. Interestingly, both curator Raphael Chikukwa and writer George Shire, in articles they contributed to the *Five Bhobh* exhibition catalogue, pointed out that painting started in the 'prehistoric era' as is seen through the ancient works on the rock surfaces of Matobo Hills, Murehwa, Mutoko, Glen Norah Harare, Nyamakurira, the Great Dyke, Gandami Hills, as well as throughout the countryside of Chinamhora and Musana (Chikukwa 2018; Shire 2018). However, much as the two authors want it to appear that there was a continuation in the early painting traditions, evidence from archaeological studies contest the linking of the Bantu (Shona) communities to these paintings. It is known that the rock painters were the Khoe-Sān, who were mostly displaced by the Bantu groups who pushed them further away to the fringes and dry areas like deserts in southern Africa. This helps explain why, even though the Shona and the Ndebele make use of the Matopo Hills as a shrine to their gods (ancestors), there remains a disconnect between their religious practices and the rock paintings in the area. Nonetheless, in terms of precolonial art forms, both the Ndebele and the Shona evidenced artistic practices, as seen in Ndebele decoration of their houses, and the production of decorated pottery or ceramics by both groups.

Artistic expressions of Bantu groups changed as people were converted to Christianity by missionaries. In most cases they were instructed to abandon 'pagan' ways and even burn

[76] There have been at least four individuals known to have carried the spirit of Mbuya Nehanda in the history of Zimbabwe. Otherwise, the original Nehanda was the daughter of the first Monomotapa in the 1430s. Charwe Nehanda Nyakasikana was the medium (*homwe*) carrying the spirit of Nehanda in the 1890s, and was instrumental in the First Umvukela.

[77] Sekuru Kaguvi (also spelt Kagubi in isiNdebele) was known to be Nehanda's spiritual husband. Nehanda and Kaguvi were the voices of Mwari. Like Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi was also hanged by the colonial administration.

[78] The term was popularised by the Zimbabwean historian David Norman Beach to refer to the area stretching between the Limpopo River to the south and the Zambezi River to the north. For more see on page 7 of Beach, D.N. 1984.

'unholy' symbols. Missionaries played the crucial role of persuading the autochthonous population to turn their back on African traditional customs and structures, and embrace Christianity. That project was made possible by the introduction of mission schools and Christian churches. Some of the known early mission schools were Empandeni Mission near Plumtree, which was established in 1887, Chishawasha Mission of 1891 and the Dominican Convent School in Harare, which started in 1892.[79]

Even though they were introduced much later when the country was effectively a British colony, Canon Edward (Ned) Paterson's Cyrene and Father Groeber's Serima missions were not that different from the other mission schools that came before them. In fact, Cyrene and Serima were founded at a time when Western education had already been embraced by the locals, and among whom a middle class was emerging with a desire to be educated and acquire skills that allowed them to be employed in different sectors that required literacy. In doing so they were rejecting and abandoning indigenous practices. That assimilation of Western values probably explains why Cyrene had to turn away some students right from its inception, as the turnout was overwhelming (Paterson 1940). However, there was one important difference between Cyrene and Serima when compared to the rest of the early mission schools. Founded by missionaries who saw it necessary to evangelise through art, these two schools offered the discipline in art workshops, an early contribution to art teaching in Zimbabwe.

Because of the significant role played by the missionaries and expatriates in the teaching of art "the history of art in Zimbabwe is particularly connected with the workshop as a central institution of the local artworld" Scherer (2013: 182). Workshops were also set up in cities like Harare and Bulawayo and in the peripheral areas like farms and the countryside. An example in Harare is the Farai Sculpture Centre, which was later renamed Canon Paterson Art Centre. It was opened by Ned Paterson in 1971 (Chikukwa 2015). Alex Lamberth founded the Mzilikazi Arts Centre in the city of Bulawayo in 1963 in the Matabeleland region. The Vukutu and Tengenenge workshops were in Nyanga and near Guruve respectively. The latter was founded on a tobacco farm belonging to a South Africa-born white farmer named Tom Blomefield in the Guruve area. The former was an extension of the National Gallery workshop.

[79] Professor Hebert Chimhundu, a Zimbabwean linguist, states that there were about seven missionary societies that operated in Zimbabwe, a figure slightly higher than those in the country's neighbours at the time. The London Missionary Society operated in the Matabeleland region, where they established Inyati and Hope Fountain Missions in 1859 and 1870 respectively. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society established eight mission stations between 1891 and 1897. The Catholics established Chishawasha near Harare and operated at several stations in Manicaland. The American Methodist missionaries operated at Mount Selinda and Chikore Mission in the Chipinge area. The Dutch Reformed Church staked its claim in the then Victoria Province (present-day Masvingo Province), the area in which Great Zimbabwe is located (Chimhundu 1992: 98-99).

In these workshops, artists could interact, compete, and mentor or inspire each other. While these workshops were strategically located and had exhibition places, others were just spontaneous and experimental, and mostly emerged out of "the desire to withdraw into a romanticized environment" (Scherer 2013).

*2.3.2 The nature of workshops*

The art workshops that emerged in Zimbabwe took two forms; there were those started by the European missionaries and the others started by European expatriates. Like the workshops set up in other countries on the continent of Africa, they were recognisable based on certain characteristics. According to von Lintig (2014: 92):

> The term 'workshop' in African art history may designate a physical location or sometimes, in a broader sense, describe different local art styles … The existence of a workshop is sometimes reconstructed on the basis of the outward appearance of the objects, when little or no information about artists is available … Cyrene and Serima are examples of colonial era workshops set up by cultural outsiders, who brought their own beliefs or philosophies into play while providing technical instruction.

In the context of Zimbabwe, the term referred both to a particular physical location and, to an extent, style. The artists from Cyrene, for example, were known for painting in a figurative and naturalistic fashion because their mentor, Canon Paterson allowed them to draw inspiration from their own surroundings and communities. Thus, the artists could work from what they knew and that which they were observing. To this day, the Cyrene style is distinct for its African motif and for backdrops that resemble the local Matopo Hills landscape or environment in paintings and relief carvings. At Serima, the artists mainly used wood as a medium in sculptures, with borrowed influences from West African masks that Father Groeber is thought to have exposed the artists in his stable to. The two missionaries, whose approach was to evangelise through art, integrated their European philosophies with local knowledge as they allowed the artists in their workshops to retain their own agency by allowing them the freedom to express themselves. The chapel murals at Cyrene and the sculptures at Serima functioned like the mosaics and paintings in early European churches which "told bible narratives and explained the sacraments to illiterate worshippers in an easily read visual language" (Randles 1997: 74).

The same cannot be said of the artists who worked under Frank McEwen at the National Gallery Workshop, where their patron appears to have exercised excessive control over them and determined what was or was not good enough to convey the message that McEwen himself wanted to convey to the world. Although distinct individual artistic styles were embraced in

the stone sculptures produced at the school, the work had a 'universal' interpretation fitting the 'primitive', 'tribal' and 'authentic' African art[80] categories for McEwen and his European consumers' own satisfaction. At some point McEwen relocated the artists to Vukutu in the countryside of Nyanga, away from Salisbury where, according to McEwen, they would have had the opportunity to interact with foreign collectors and could easily be influenced by 'tourist tastes.' The other workshop was established by Tom Blomefield at Tengenenge. Unlike at Cyrene and Serima, at Tengenenge artists had no instructor. They mentored each other. That their practice and production were driven by the competition to sell is the main reason McEwen referred to their art as 'airport art'.[81] Of the Tengenenge Workshop, art historian Tony Monda (2018) had this to say:

> Tom Blomefield is eulogized for having 'persuaded' his farm workers to, 'try their hand at sculpture' purely for altruistic reasons; out of concern for their livelihoods and after he became aware of a huge deposit of black serpentine (rock) situated on a hill on his farm. This, however, is a fallacy. His farm workers were already sculpting part-time on their own. It is their initiative that lit the down-and-out Rhodesian tobacco farmer Blomefield's path to fame and fortune.

If we are to consider Monda's explanation above, it can be argued that Blomefield just happened to own a property that had the raw material for sculpting. Driven by the potential to earn income from an alternative source at a time when Rhodesian tobacco farmers were impacted by international embargos imposed on the country, all the farmer did was to make his property available to artists who were already sculpting and were ready to mentor their peers and the young ones.

These white male founders of workshops in Rhodesia were products of a "Western European Tradition" notorious for favouring "the white, upper-class male creativity and patronage" (Salomon 1991: 350) at the expense of everyone else. In Zimbabwe they came across similar social conditions, in the form of a patriarchal society that allowed them to further that system, but this time promoting the work of Black men instead. Although women emerged out of the Tengenenge Workshops many years later, they were initially completely out of the picture. Unlike in the formulation of the Western canon where women modelled as subjects, in these workshops they were not involved at all. Unlike Cyrene Mission, which was an exclusive boys' school, Serima had both men and women. However, Father Groeber never considered women

[80] I have already made attempts to unpack some of these problematic terms in the first chapter.
[81] More will be said about the workshop at Tengenenge later in this chapter, and McEwen's workshop in Chapter 3.

for his carving classes. Nevertheless, even though these schools catered for a select few, their efforts in founding workshops and initiating the teaching of art is commendable as "it was uncommon for any school in Rhodesia to offer art and craft as part of the educational programme for all pupils, and more so that the school should cater for Black students" (Randles 1991: 4).

## 2.4 Missionary workshops

### *2.4.1 Ned Paterson's Cyrene Art Workshop (1939-1953): his philosophy and teachings*

It is not feasible to write about Canon Edward (Ned) Paterson and his time at Cyrene Mission without reiterating certain views that have been raised by a few other writers (Chikukwa 2015, 2018; Morton 2003a; Randles 1991, 1997; Wall 1982; Walker 1985; Zhou 2017; Zilberg 2013), otherwise I would be reinventing the history. Like those before me, we are all drawing and analysing information from the series of letters or reports known as the *Cyrene Papers*, which Ned Paterson generated between 1939 and 1953 to inform and update those who were interested in the developments at the Anglican Mission School. He also wrote these papers to solicit donations for the upkeep of the mission station from well-wishers who were mostly members of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts – a title often shortened to 'the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' (S.P.G.) – in England and from around the world. True to the character of revisionist effort, the critiques and analyses may differ, but we are all developing our thoughts around Paterson's records, which have proved to be the key primary archive in unlocking the story of Cyrene Mission. As such, my contribution supplements what other art historians and critics have written. Through these papers, Paterson left his representation well-articulated. As Raphael Chikukwa emphasised, "it is now up to us" to interrogate that legacy and look at its relevance as we now attempt "to tell our stories as Africans" (Chikukwa 2018, personal communication, October 10). A collection of the *Cyrene Papers* is kept at the NAZ, where it can be accessed by researchers.

Of all the missionaries and expatriates who were involved in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe, the name of Edward Paterson features most prominently. The work he did was extensive. Although Paterson is most remembered for founding, developing, and catapulting Cyrene Mission on to the world stage through a robust marketing of its art, he was also involved in the introduction and development of art at three other schools after he left Cyrene. The three institutions were all in Harare. They were Chirodzo, Nyarutsetso and the Farayi Sculpture Centre, which is now known as the Canon Paterson Art Centre. Moreover, he also served as a member of the Board of the National Gallery between 1953 and 1974 (Walker 1985). Morton's

statement (2013: 74) that in his time at the Farayi Sculpture Centre, Paterson flirted with sculpture as an art form as he "dreamt of resurrecting the soapstone carving found at the Great Zimbabwe archaeological site" leaves me wondering what he intended to do differently from the Stone Sculpture movement that already occupied the centre of the nation's art canon. Unlike at Cyrene, Paterson also started to teach female students in Harare.

Due to the crucial roles he played in these institutions, Paterson's influence goes beyond Cyrene. Writer Barbara Wall (1982: 38) acknowledges this fact:

> Thus, even without the man, the work continues, and to a large extent, the wealth of African art produced in Zimbabwe today owes its existence to his original impetus, even in cases where the artist has never met the man, but only heard his name.

That his name is mostly associated with Cyrene is not surprising as the Mission School was his initiative and the workshop his most successful "experiment in art education" (Randles 1991:4). The 15 years Paterson spent at Cyrene were longer than the shorter stints he had at the other three institutions. Although in some years he would get assistance from other white expatriates who came and left Cyrene, Paterson and his wife were ever-present as they pulled the strings and oversaw the day-to-day business of the school. Although Cyrene Mission is known for its art workshop, it was not established as an art school. It was devoted to the teaching of practical subjects like elementary agriculture, carpentry, building and woodwork (ILAM. 1949: 29).

Fig. 2.5. Ned Paterson carved the pulpit in the Johannesburg Cathedral in wet cement in 1928. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

Fig. 2.6. A Cyrene Mission student holding a sculpture of what appears to be a Ndebele warrior holding a shield in one hand and a spear in the other. Next to him is life-size bust of a Black boy, and on the shelves are several small sculptures made from wonderstone, the medium of choice at the Cyrene Workshop. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

Fig. 2.7. Canon Paterson and his students at Chirodzo in the 1960s. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson

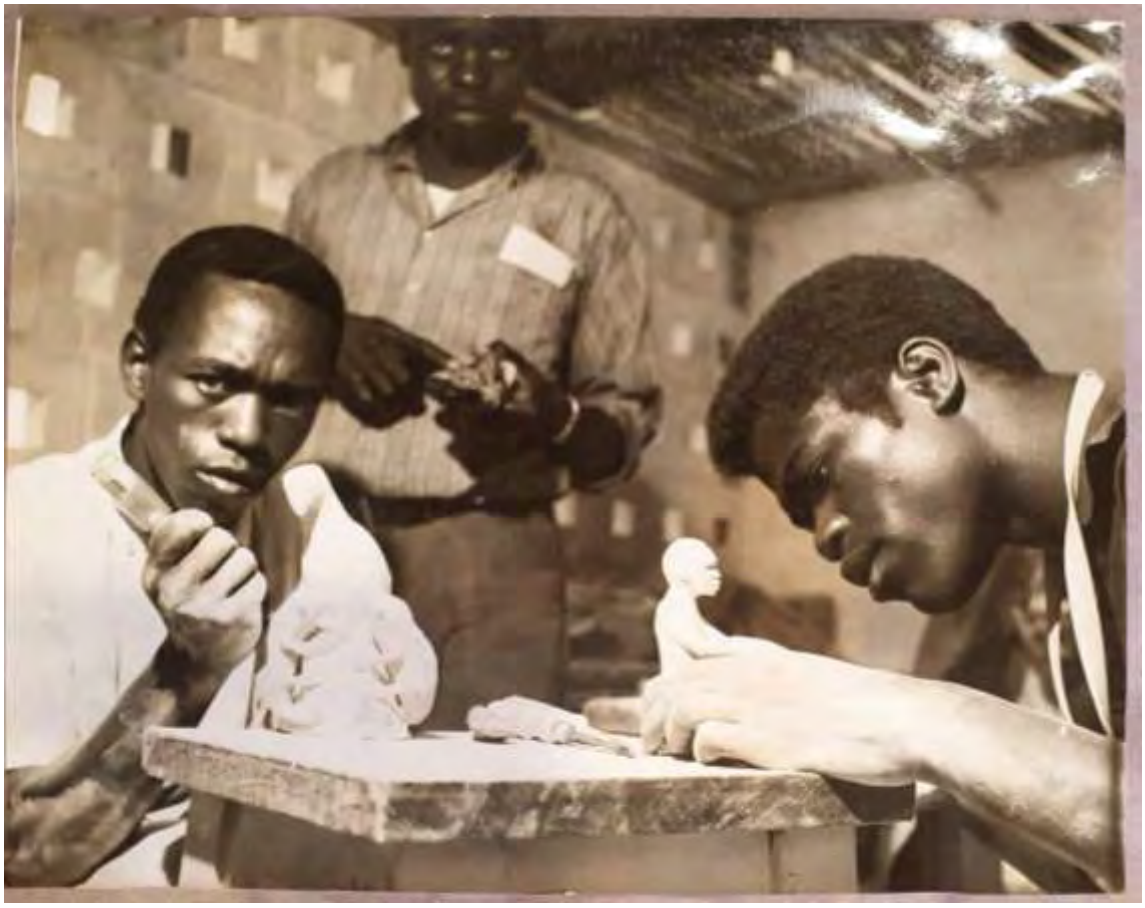

Fig. 2.8. Stephen Mubaiwa and Richard Chiwasa of Nyarutsetso sculpting soapstone. Image taken by the Rhodesian Government Information Department for a television appearance. 6 March 1968. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

Ned, as Paterson was affectionately known, came from the United Kingdom. Born in the city of Aberdeen at the beginning of January 1895, he was a man of Scottish descent. He only arrived in South Africa in 1901 and at the tender age of six after his father, who was a grocer's assistant, had decided to migrate the family in search of new opportunities in a warm climate that suited his weak lungs (Wall 1982). The family sailed southwards and crossed the equator to settle in the Southern Hemisphere. They settled in Noupoort in the Karoo. Because of the lengthy migration journey, Ned was not in school for a very long time. He also left early, at the age of fourteen and went on to fight in the Namibian and East African campaigns in the First World War. In the battlefield he wore the coloured Murray of Atholl kilt, which he was quite proud of, as a member of the Transvaal Scottish Regiment. He was posted to East Africa as an instructor of the King's African Rifles, a regiment of black troops. At the battlefront, he was appalled by the way Black soldiers were treated. Soon after the war he became the (Acting) Town Clerk of Brakpan, a position he resigned from in protest of the levels of corruption (Walker 1985).

Soon after the war, Paterson was quite fortunate to be granted a veteran's scholarship, which saw him going to study at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, England, between 1920 and 1923 (Morton 2013b). Having been an atheist for a while he surprisingly joined the Transvaal diocese of the Anglican church upon his return to South Africa in 1924. He taught at Grace Dieu in 1925, an Anglican teacher training institution for Africans near Pietersburg.[82] That is where his artistic influence was first felt, as he introduced the students to relief carving,[83] which became the trademark of the school. In 1926 he enrolled at the Theological College of Grahamstown where he was ordained a deacon on the completion of his studies in 1928 (Rankin 2003). After briefly working with Canon Wilfred Parker in the townships of Johannesburg, he was appointed the Priest-in-Charge of the English Church Native Mission in Potchefstroom in 1931. He remained there until 1938. In 1939 Ned Paterson founded Cyrene Mission, 32 kilometres south-west of Bulawayo. He was stationed at the institution overseeing its day-to-day business up to 1953. One of those who assisted him briefly was the South African William Bill Ainslie, who taught at the mission from 1961 and 1963 when he decided to return to South Africa (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24).

According to Elizabeth Castle (2015: 35), while at Cyrene Mission, Bill Ainslie "refused to follow the constraints of a specific style of teaching which focused more on rehabilitation and craft. He made an attempt to free the students from those boundaries, by offering them large scale paper and different materials. He wanted them to explore and express themselves." One can understand why the school's focus had been on "rehabilitation and craft" as most of its art students were physically challenged. However, whether the idea to encourage students to express themselves was solely Ainslie's is debatable, as Paterson was also known to encourage, rather than to teach, and he did so without imposing Western ideas (ILAM 1949: 20). Despite Monica Seeber (1980: 44), who is a researcher, publisher and consultant, describing the art produced at Cyrene as exhibiting some elements suggestive of antecedents outside Africa, and having "strong overtones of European Primitivism and the jungles of le Douanier Rousseau, while the sculpture has an archaic monumentality reminiscent of Romanesque stone carving,"

[82] Although Ned Paterson had a short stint at Grace Dieu, his idea of decorating the church with wood sculptures and relief carvings was further developed under Sister Pauline, who trained Job Kekana to become one of the institution's main carvers. Kekana, who enrolled at the institution in 1934, looked up to Ernest Mancoba, who was at Grace Dieu when he arrived, as his role model. Thus, although Kekana was not taught by Paterson directly, he benefited from the missionary's ideas, passed on by Sister Pauline. Kekana went on to introduce the same style of carving at St. Faith's Mission in Rusape in the then Southern Rhodesia, at an art school that he founded.

[83] The *Macmillan Dictionary* (online) defines relief as "a style of sculpture in which the artist forms shapes in stone, clay, metal, wood, etc, so that they stick out slightly from their background." Available: https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/bas-relief [Accessed on November 28, 2021].

Zilberg (2012) reiterates Paterson's claim that there were no pictures of Western art displayed on the walls of the classroom (Zilberg 2012). Ncube, who is one of the two art teachers at Cyrene, supports this sentiment that Paterson let his students express themselves based on what was familiar to them, highlighting that there are no tall buildings or urban skyscrapers in the work, but tall trees, shrubs and grass on the rocky surroundings (Ncube 2018, personal communication, October 23). However, Carole Pearce (1993: 92) argues that Paterson might not have allowed his students much freedom as he also censored them, substantiating that argument with an incident in which the *Visitors' Guide to Cyrene* (1990) quoted Paterson instructing a student named James Ratumu to replace a "most potent-seeming ram with an innocuous lamb in the painting of the parable of 'The Good Shepherd'."

Of the art styles and forms which appealed to Paterson, Pearce (1993: 91) states that his "taste was formed from an amalgam of influences; ancient Chinese, Vorticist and the Arts and Crafts Movement, a peculiarly British response to the Victorian aesthetics which developed in the mid-nineteenth century." This might explain why he did not impose Western styles on his students, despite his British background and art training. Paterson, whose vision was for the emergence of an indigenous style, spoke of his own approach as "the encouragement of art" through "the absence of teaching", words which were echoed in the words of his former student, Lazarus Khumalo, who recalled that, "Paterson did not tell us what to do. He wanted us to do what we felt … He let the imagination run" (Evens 2020).

A direct reading of the *Cyrene Papers* reveals that Paterson was more than just a missionary, as he had many other interests beyond evangelisation. Walker (1985) describes Paterson as a priest, artist, archaeologist, linguist, teacher, writer, and a family man. Indeed, he had a knack of analysing and commenting on the history of the area he was in as he scrutinised the establishment of the Ndebele nation and its dispersal and forcible incorporation of the various ethnic groups occupying the area, and its obsession with war names for prominent individuals like Mzilikazi (meaning one who spilled blood) and for places like Bulawayo (meaning the site of slaughter). He would discuss politics and social issues of Matabeleland within the context of the nation of Rhodesia. At times he would even criticise the Rhodesians and their white colonial government where he felt they were treating the Africans unfairly. He also delved into archaeology as he found the Khoe-Sān rock paintings in the Matabeleland region fascinating. To feed into his passion for archaeology he even collected some of the Stone Age implements associated with the earlier communal societies that had existed in the area prior to the arrival

of the Ndebele who were migrating north, fleeing Zululand during the Mfecane or Difaqane[84] period. Most priests would have found it difficult to do that as they just focused on their trade. Wall (1982) argues that Paterson was able to divert into other aspects of life because he had been an atheist for an earlier part of his life.

At Cyrene Mission, Ned Paterson enforced the use of English as the medium of communication. What he was striving for can be appreciated better when one considers he arrived in Matabeleland from South Africa, where he had witnessed the emphasis of different ethnic languages and cultures to the detriment of the local population. The policy was implemented as a 'divide and conquer' strategy aimed at keeping the different ethnic groups separate by stressing their differences instead of appreciating the common uniting elements. That experience might have informed the decision to implement a language of unity at Cyrene (Wall 1982). That idea seemed ideal as Cyrene was an institution with a cosmopolitan outlook with its students drawn from a wider catchment area stretching beyond the Matabeleland region. The students came from the greater Shona areas that make up the midlands, northern and eastern parts of Zimbabwe. There were even international students from the neighbouring British colonies of Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Therefore, it was pragmatic for Paterson to put the emphasis on English as the medium of instruction mainly because the language served the purpose of uniting these diverse peoples by providing a common ground.

In his book, *Decolonising the Mind,* the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o strongly advocates for the promotion and use of indigenous languages as "he considers the destructive role English and other European languages play in subverting the indigenous cultures of Africa" (Norton and Macpherson 1997: 642). English, French and other colonial languages help deepen the colonial effort and enforce the empire's dominance and pretentious universalism. Interestingly, in the context of Cyrene Mission, perhaps Paterson still embraced the students' diversity, as there appears no evidence of attempts to sideline the African languages. It is possible that the students had no difficulties learning from each other as southern African languages and cultures

[84] Mfecane is a Zulu term meaning 'destroyed in total war', and the Sotho version of it is Difaqane which translates to 'hammering' or 'forced migration or removal'. The term refers to explosive wars originating in the Zululand in the second half of the nineteenth century involving the Khumalo or Ndebele, the Zulu, the Mtethwa, the Ndwandwe, the Thembu, the Qwabe, the Mshali Mngadi, and the Mpondo. The Pedi, Sotho and Tswana were also affected as they lay on the path of the Ndebele on their journey northwards. The scattering of the Nguni groups altered the course of history of many African states from the eastern Cape up northwards to as far as Lake Malawi and Tanganyika (Marks and Atmore 1980). Mfecane has been defined as 'the great crushing' by those who put emphasis on the killings or 'the great scattering' by those focused on the movement of ethnic groups that came out of Zululand at the time.

have a lot in common. It appears Paterson's motive was not to negate African experiences, which he seemingly valued as is seen through his appreciation and praise of the Ndebele traditional rondavel wall paintings, and his idea to encourage the students to draw and paint from their surroundings instead of corrupting them with examples of Western art traditions (Paterson 1947a). The appreciation of African languages is evidently visible in the use of Shona and Ndebele expressions on the murals in the chapel. The murals also depict a non-urban environment that was the students' world. In the murals there are no large buildings nor vehicles, but just hills, rocks, tall trees, and a gathering of people enjoying traditional brew (Fig. 2.14.). Moreover, the school was named after Simon of Cyrene (Fig. 2.16.), the "biblical figure from Cyrene in North Africa who carried the cross of Christ" (Randles 1991: 4).

According to Morton (2013: 99), "Canon Paterson was the most prolific art educator in Southern African (if not in African) history." While Morton's bold claim can certainly be debated, Paterson's impact in the many institutions he was involved in, both in South Africa and Zimbabwe, cannot be contested. He had an edge over other missionaries, expatriates, and locals in charge of art institutions in Rhodesia and beyond in that he had a solid network of connections in different parts of the world. "He was able to get his students' work exhibited widely in Rhodesia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America" (Morton 2013: 59). The network was vital in marketing Cyrene art to the world and in turn that allowed the school to be self-sustaining. Some of the work was on show at the South Africa Association of Arts exhibitions in Johannesburg, where it "created a small furore" (Swanzy 1946: 118) and in Cape Town in 1946. Even more important for the school was the visit of the British King and Queen (Fig. 2.9.) and their daughters in 1947, as it brought much-desired publicity to the school (Glencross 1949). The visit really put Cyrene on the map, as it received wide coverage in the local and international press.[85] Lady Tait, the wife of the Rhodesian governor, was so impressed by the exhibitions of art from Cyrene that were held in Salisbury and Bulawayo that she became an important link in efforts to market the school as well. She had some work taken to London where it was exhibited at the Royal Watercolour Society Gallery and the Central School of Arts and Crafts for two years and then shipped to the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Paterson 1950). Paterson attended the official opening of the

[85] The positive reportage of the visit brought more visitors to the mission school, some of whom had no appreciation of art whatsoever, but just desired to look at the cup from which the Queen Mother drank tea.

exhibition in the United Kingdom in 1949. The Queen Mother was present too. The gallery was crowded throughout the fortnight that it was open to the public (Evens 2020).[86]


Fig. 2.9. Canon Edward Paterson with the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother at Cyrene Mission observing Cyrene students at work. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

[86] Jonathan Evens goes on to state that the work generated so much interest due to its distinct vibrant vivid colour, and the detailed descriptive words Paterson applied to the work, for example, sheets "crammed to the sky with every imaginable sort of detail: rocks, trees, animals, villages and people".

Fig. 2.10. The first Cyrene exhibition in Bulawayo in 1943. Ned Paterson brought the students to the town hall to demonstrate that they were the actual artists. However, these exhibitions were not accessible to the local Black population. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

Art was taught among other subjects at Cyrene. Right from the beginning it was not central to the curriculum of the school, even though it became crucial because it brought income. I would argue that Paterson, in some ways, was a man ahead of his time, as he foresaw a problem that is still posing a challenge to most governments in Africa today. In teaching art, his aim was to empower Africans living in the countryside in a bid to counter rural-urban migration (Morton 2013b). His diagnosis of why many school leavers opted to move into urban areas where they would even end up unemployed, was mainly because of the nature of the subjects taught in the schools. Most of them prepared students for office jobs or to work in existing industries. Not much was offered to prepare them to start their own projects. Based on this philosophy, Paterson made sure that Cyrene Mission offered subjects that prepared its graduates to be self-employed or to create opportunities for others. Besides art, building, agriculture, and carpentry

were the cornerstones of the Cyrene curriculum. As the school developed over the years agriculture and art became very important in that they sustained the school by earning income.[87]

Among Paterson's biggest contributions to the development of modern art in Zimbabwe was to produce some of the nation's finest modernists who went on to become prominent Black artist-teachers. It was the artists who came out of this art workshop who became the first artist-teachers and therefore the forerunners of modern art (Zhou 2017). Among them were Lazarus Khumalo and Sam Songo, who went on to teach at Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre in Bulawayo. There was also Kingsley Sambo who became Paterson's assistant at Nyarutsetso in the 1960s (Chikukwa 2015). Adomech Mbenge Moyo became the first African teacher in occupational therapy in Southern Africa (Paterson 1951). Joseph Ndlovu became the first Black artist-teacher in southern Africa when he became part of the teaching staff at Hope Fountain Mission (Walker 1985).[88] These artist-teachers went on to produce more artists in different parts of the country. It is therefore not surprising that Zimbabwean art historian and curator Jonathan Zilberg credits Paterson for laying the foundation upon which Frank McEwen, who became the first director of the National Gallery, was able to build (Zilberg 2013).[89] "As early as the 1930s modern Zimbabwean artists had been carving in stone and wood, painting murals and producing a very fine tradition of linocuts as recorded for posterity in the S.P.G. Cyrene archives in London" (Zilberg 2013: 12). In fact, his impact goes beyond the borders of Zimbabwe as is seen through one of his students, the Zambian Ransford Sililo's murals at Livingstone Airport. Another of his students, Richard Rashidi, had been sent by Malawi's department of education (Randles 1997) hoping that he would return and possibly replicate what he had learned from Paterson.

Paterson also had faith in the power of imagination and creative potential of individuals regardless of their physical challenges. Through enrolling and training people with physical disabilities, like Sam Songo who was crippled and Lazarus Khumalo who was a polio victim, Paterson really raised society's awareness of the fact that disability does not mean inability (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24). Because of him, people in the

[87] However, Terence Ranger in *Religion and Landscape of Cyrene*, featured in Zilberg's *Revisiting the L.A.S.S.C.O. Collection* (2012: no page) argues that Paterson promoted art more as Cyrene Mission was established in the Matopo region, which is drought prone, albeit the locals attributed the persistent dry spells to the anger of Mwari/Mwali (God) over the establishment of a Christian station near the Matopo (Njelele) shrine.
[88] Some of these Black artist-teachers will be covered in Chapter 5.
[89] Frank McEwen is the subject of Chapter 3.

communities around Cyrene Mission became more appreciative of every member of their society.

### *2.4.2 More than just the Chapel and its Murals*[90]

Fig. 2.11. The Cyrene Chapel walls are decorated with murals, both on the outside and inside. According to Randles (1991), the chapel, of simple rectangular plan some 6 metres wide by 11 metres long, was designed by Father Baker CR before the school opened. Cyrene Mission School. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

In the *Fifteenth Cyrene Paper*, Canon Paterson (1949: 7) presents a breakdown of the fee structure at the Cyrene Mission: the Rhodesian Government provided 45% of the fees, the students paid 35%, and the school paid the remaining 20%. As such, the sale of art brought income that helped sustain the school and cater for students who were either not able to raise the required fees or to reward those who excelled in their schoolwork. As a result of the "education with production" philosophy of the school, agricultural output and the furniture coming out of the carpentry project equally contributed to the sustenance of the institution. However, it appears that so much energy was channelled to the sale and export of art that it

[90] Although the chapel falls under a region managed by the NGZ branch in Bulawayo, it also falls under the management of the Department of Archaeology at the Natural History Museum, which is a regional component of the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe which oversees all historical buildings in the country. The chapel was declared a national monument in 1987.

became the primary motive for making it. Seemingly pointing out the fact that the institution shipped out most of its art, the then Chief Curator of the NGZ, Raphael Chikukwa, highlighted the alienation of the Cyrene-produced artworks from the local Black population thus: "During my visit to Cyrene in the past, I learnt that there is very little to show for its success, and that most of the art exhibitions were never accessible to African audiences during the colonial era" (Chikukwa 2015: 17).[91]

Interestingly, the point Chikukwa raises is a problem Canon Paterson, the founder of the school, was aware of. Acknowledging it in the *Fifteenth Cyrene Paper*, written soon after the institution's 14th exhibition held in 1949, the evangelist admitted, "… we never have had one [exhibition] for the African people, who [the Africans] had read our successes and met individual artists but never had the chance to see what we can do as a school." Paterson went on to explain that they had just held only one exhibition in the Bulawayo Location (Native Village) where 1200 Africans turned up for the show in three hours, and afterwards only thirty "enthusiastic" ones remained scrutinising the work (Paterson 1949: 7). Judging by the number of people who attended the exhibition in the Bulawayo Location, clearly the work would have been popular among the Black people. They would have been inspired by what their kith and kin were doing at the mission school, albeit they probably lacked the financial means to purchase it. As Sidogi (2022: 63) elaborates elsewhere, Black patronage of the arts was not possible under the capitalist system as "Blacks were condemned to being labourers." As such, it was not feasible for the work to be purchased by the artists' own society so that it would become their own heritage.

While Paterson's international links helped him export Cyrene's output, the initiative deprived Zimbabwe of work that should have been available and easily accessible in local institutions. However, contrary to Chikukwa's assertion that there is nothing to show at the mission school, Ncube, one of the institution's art teachers, cautions us not to underestimate the importance of the chapel and the murals on its walls, which he sees as a place where art students derive their inspiration. He explained that he usually takes groups of art students for lessons at the chapel, a process akin to visiting a shrine for rituals and guidance. He does not lament the fact that

[91] In Revisiting the L.A.S.S.C.O. Cyrene Collection (2012: no page), Jonathan Zilberg comments that "the school moved to Bulawayo in 1978 during the Liberation War and the property was taken over as "Fort Godwin" by the Rhodesian army." However, what happened to the art at the institution at that time is an aspect no scholar has covered.

there are no other paintings or archives in the school, considering that the sale of art helped sustain the institution at the time (Ncube 2018, personal communication, October 22).

The chapel at Cyrene is a wealthy archive that still offers much more to visitors interested in art. The art in the interior and outside it comes in different forms, which include free-standing sculpture, relief carvings on the door and the bench legs carved in the same way as pews in some churches, and the colourful murals of Black figuration on the walls. In the murals, local traditional clothing, various local objects, local natural features like rivers, anthills, mountains and vegetation are conspicuously visible. Complementing the images are written texts in English and the main local languages, Chishona and isiNdebele – all written in a stylish and artistic manner. While delivering the inaugural Annual Lozikeyi Lecture[92] titled *Painters, Projectors and Priests* in 1998, historian Terence Ranger described the painting project at Cyrene Mission as the "first successful attempt to capture the Matopos" (Ranger 2012). The historian had earlier addressed this subject in a way that gives context to the above remark, indicating that the nineteenth century travellers and painters like Frank Oates and Thomas Baines who portrayed colonial landscapes in the manner or "concept they had learned in Europe" had not attempted to paint it even though they had passed through the area (Ranger 1997: 60-61). Surprisingly, Oates initially did not find the densely vegetated hilly landscape picturesque enough as it lacked a castle or a hermitage. However, Baines had only failed to do so because he was part of an expedition of Cecil John Rhodes's agents on a mission to sign treaties and seal gold claims in King Lobengula's domain, and were therefore travelling way too fast for him to do sketches of the landscape (Ranger 2020).

What follows is my attempt to describe some of the art expressions found in- and outside the chapel at Cyrene Mission, starting with the font adjacent to the entrance of the chapel (Fig. 2.12.). In our email correspondence, Lisa Masterson, the local director of *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition, who is in touch with Mary Ball Paterson, Ned's daughter, states that the font was carved in memory of Paterson's wife (Masterson 2022, personal communication, June 8). As such, the font would have been made in or post 1944, the year that Mary Catherine Sleigh Paterson, also referred to as Molly, passed on. Masterson's claim clearly aligns with a statement in the *Tenth Cyrene Paper* where Paterson states the intention "to put in our new font as a

[92] Initiated by Yvonne Vera, the then Regional Director of the then Bulawayo National Gallery (NGZ), the lecture provides a platform for artists and intellectuals mostly from Zimbabwe to share insights and reflections on the creative sector. It is named after Queen Lozikeyi, the senior wife of King Lobengula, and an important advisor of the King. She was also referred to as Indlovukazi. Luminaries who have delivered the lecture in the past include the historian Pathisa Nyathi in 2001, Senators David Coltart in 2010 and Welshman Ncube in 1999. For more, see Coltart, D. 2010.

memorial to my wife" (1945: 5). However, art historian Elizabeth Morton (2003a: 75), in her thesis chapter, in what seems a distortion of fact, states that the piece was done in 1942, making it possibly the country's "first modern stone sculpture." Without providing evidence to support her claim, Morton elaborates that this would have been the earliest experiment of working with wonderstone at Cyrene Mission. This misrepresentation of fact is one of many by scholars writing on developments on Zimbabwe's modern art from the ivory towers of Western universities.


Fig. 2.12. The font in the Cyrene Chapel was carved by Ned Paterson. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

It is a Christian tradition to have fonts at the entrances of churches. Designed in different shapes and forms, and made of diverse materials, the fonts serve a purpose as bowls for the baptism ceremony, mostly for the young ones. What is striking about the one at Cyrene is its shape of a local traditional mortar (*duri*) for grinding or processing grains into a semi-solid or powder form. If so, this would have been Paterson incorporating local motifs as "is evident that both Christian and indigenous insights were at work" (Ranger 1997: 70) in the making of Cyrene

artworks. Clearly visible are the human and animal relief carvings adorning the outside of the font. In the middle is the chevron pattern akin to the one found at Great Zimbabwe. Messages are written both on the body and the rim of the font in isiNdebele, with the one on the rim reading "*Ebizweni likababa leleni dodana lelika moya oyingwele*" (In the name of the Father, the son, and the holy spirit).

The image below (Fig. 2.13.) is an old version of the grass-thatched Cyrene chapel probably taken before the fire that engulfed the chapel in 1962 (Randles 1991) showing a mural titled "Nativity Scene" which was done by Livingstone Sango, who was one of Canon Paterson's students. The central figure is one of the Wise Men and to the right are the shepherds and to the left people consulting the central figure to the left. On a tour of the chapel, the then Cyrene Mission School art teacher, Ncube pointed out that the figures depicted in these scenes are mostly dressed in traditional African attire. He also drew my attention to the Black angels hovering above the depicted Black figures. I deliberately used this old image for comparison with the recent photo of the chapel presented earlier (Fig. 2.11.). The current roof is not perfect, but it is a significant improvement from the one below which exposed the murals to different weather elements. Moreover, I am aware of the transformation of the original paintings during the restoration process. As elaborated by Elizabeth Randles, a closer comparison of the recent and the earlier photographs of both the internal and outside walls of the chapel "reveals the insensitive nature of retouching and over paintings made by unnamed 'restorers'" (1991: 5) after the outbreak of fire in 1965. Randles also alleges that at least two murals on the outside are from the 1980s.

Fig. 2.13. Livingston Sango. *Nativity Scene*. Date unknown. Cyrene Chapel in the 1940s. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

The tale depicted below (Fig. 2.14) is another biblical story of a son who asks his father to give him his share of the family's wealth, a herd of pigs in this case, and goes on to squander it. Left with nothing he makes his way back, begs his father for mercy as seen by the kneeling action. The father forgives him and welcomes him back home where the father organises a feast to celebrate his homecoming, a decision which does not go well with his sibling that had remained at home. For this mural, Ncube also reflected on the impressive depiction of typical African landscapes or surroundings and lifestyles familiar to the students. This point is also backed by Randles (1991: 9) that "the prodigal son leaves home in a blazer", an item the students at Cyrene were quite familiar with as it was a part of their school uniform. Serve for the loin cloth around the prodigal son's waist on his return – and probably signifying that he had squandered it all – the dressing in the frame is quite modern. When read from the bottom left corner to the right, there is an interesting sequence and development to the story. There are different forms of festivities as the ecstatic father celebrates the prodigal son's return. A crowd has gathered to

drink and feast in the bottom right corner. In the middle of the frame, the father travels with his sons making stopovers where they would drink and party, and then end up dancing to the tune of the guitar in the upper left corner. Amidst all the above, there are odd scenes of a woman passing by carrying a pail of water on the head, possibly coming from the well or the river, and in the distance a father and son tilling the fields in the upper right corner, with the father driving the oxen with a whip and the son holding the plough. Perhaps it is a reference to the sibling who did not abandon the family. Also, quite conspicuous in this mural is the use of English, chiShona and isiNdebele in the name of the depicted parable. The activities are presented against backdrops of typical grass-thatched African daga (earthen and mudbrick) rondavel structures, on vast stretches of landscapes with trees, rocks, anthills and grass. People are drinking from the traditional calabashes.


Fig. 2.14. This mural depicts the biblical story of the Prodigal Son. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

Students from neighbouring countries in the southern African region were among those at Cyrene Mission. One of them was Raymond Sililo from the then Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). In the mural on the chapel wall (Fig. 2.15.), he depicts Adam and Eve strolling along a path in the Garden of Eden, being watched by a buck in the background. Adam is holding Eve's hand. I would argue that this scene was before they encountered the serpent and before they ate the forbidden fruit because the leaves covering their groin areas are of a tree they are walking past, and they are not holding them at all. Therefore, they are not covering themselves. Like in most of the depictions around them, Ncube also pointed out that the figures in the mural are depicted as Africans and in surroundings familiar to the students. Indeed, this is a form of Black figuration showing a Black Adam and a Black Eve, in the same manner Paterson himself

depicts a Black Jesus in *Risen Christ* inside the chapel (Fig. 2.16.), or in Livingstone Sango's *The Good Shepherd* (Fig. 2.21.). Randford Sililo also went on to do the murals at Zambia's Livingstone Airport (Randles 1997).

Fig. 2.15. Mural of Adam and Eve painted by Randford Sililo. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

Inside the chapel and behind the altar, Stephen Katsande's murals flanking the central figure titled *Risen Christ* by Canon Paterson himself are the most striking (Fig. 2.16.). Paterson's Christ is slightly elevated above the rest, itself a symbolic gesture for a revered figure. This is a Black Jesus dressed in red, white, grey and yellow robes, and framed by a message written in isiNdebele. Based on this example, one could argue that Paterson set an example for the students by portraying a Black figure they could relate to. Around the figure are the eagle, the calf, the lion and the man which are symbols of the four evangelists – John, Luke, Mark and

Mathew in their respective order. To Christ's right side is the figure of Bernard Mizeki, the first Black martyr on the Zimbabwean plateau. He is depicted in red, white and black robes, with hands clasped together in prayer. With the Bible placed on the ground slightly behind him, Mizeki's spear is resting on his hand like someone who is ready to make peace. However, Pobee (2017: 344) argues that the spear in Mizeki's hand serves as "a reminder of how he was killed" in 1896. To Christ's left side is Simon of Cyrene, the Black man from North Africa who is said to have assisted Christ carry the cross on the road to crucifixion. Humbly dressed only in a pair of brown shorts, and barefooted, Simon is depicted carrying the cross, courageously following Jesus (Pobee 2017), walking past an African village with people and houses visible in the backdrop. It is this character that the mission school is named after. Next to Simon is Manche Masemola, the young Pedi Christian martyr killed by her parents in 1928 for her beliefs. She is depicted holding what appear to be three pieces of metal rods and standing next to a mortar and pestle (*duri nemutswi*) for grinding or processing grains. It is this mortar that the font next to the chapel entrance resembles. Masemola has a beautiful skirt and a beautiful cloth around her neck and shoulders. She has an elaborate headdress and beautiful earrings. Her legs are also well adorned with cloth around them. On Mizeki's side stands an alert warrior holding a spear and a colourful shield. His elaborate headgear and clothes are quite alien to any of the Nguni societies of southern Africa though. Besides Christ, whose head appears in a brown halo, the quartet appear in white haloes making their faces more pronounced. Except for Christ, their backgrounds are the typical local surroundings.

Fig. 2.16. Canon Paterson's Risen Jesus flanked by Stephen Katsande's Simon of Cyrene, Bernard Mizeki, Manche Masemola, and a warrior. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

A story repeatedly highlighted by art historians like Elizabeth Rankin and Elizabeth Morton is that Paterson is the one who introduced relief carving at Grace Dieu Mission around 1925. Sister Pauline then took over from him and carried on teaching it to Job Kekana and other students who enrolled at the institution years later. Over the years scholars have touched on the murals at the Cyrene Mission chapel (Morton 2003a, Zhou 2017, Zilberg 2012), with Elizabeth Randles' *Cyrene: The Chapel Murals* in 1991 being the seminal study as it is solely devoted to the medium. Lately, there has been a focus on Cyrene paintings, following the launch of *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition in England in 2020 and its travel to Zimbabwe in 2021/2022. The multiple reviews written in Europe, U.S.A. and Zimbabwe, as well as coverage on BBC World Africa and Al Jazeera say a lot about the work produced at the institution. However, there has not been such effort dedicated to the relief carvings in the chapel. This is mostly because they have remained in situ, and can only be exposed to the world through scholarly output.

Besides painting, carpentry and woodcarving were practised seriously at Cyrene Mission. These can be seen on the six-panel door at the entrance of the chapel (Fig. 2.18.), the church benches (Fig. 2.17.). The six-panel door is unique as each panel tells a different narrative. The one below (Fig. 2.19.) portrays a baptism scene, probably that of a Black John the Baptist,

within an African context as seen through the Black people witnessing the scene. It is also within a rural context that the students were familiar with, as seen through the rocks, animals and trees in the backdrop. According to Morton (2003a), the six-door panel was carved by Sam Songo. Interestingly, the author claims he did so under the supervision of Job Kekana who had just come back from his three-year training at Sir John Cass in the United Kingdom in 1966. Ncube (in the picture in Fig. 2.18.), also indicated that the panels capture the surroundings of mountains and dense vegetation of the Matopo Hills adjacent to the mission school.


Fig. 2.17. Relief figuration on one of the benches at Cyrene Mission. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

Fig. 2.18 and 2.19. Asa P. Ncube describing the six-door panel of the chapel. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti, and a close-up shot showing a baptism scene in one of the six panels on the door. Courtesy of Lisa Masterson.

The mainstream narrative regarding the work produced at Cyrene Mission is that Paterson narrated the stories from the Bible and let his students express themselves in the work by drawing and painting from their familiar surroundings. What is often not highlighted, which I came to realise by observing some of the murals and carvings like the one on Father Gonzalo da Silveira (Fig. 2.17.), is that the founder of Cyrene Mission taught his students the history of Christianity in Africa. I have come to this conclusion after noticing the representation of characters who contributed to the spread of Christianity on the continent. Among them, Da Silveira, Mizeki and Masemola. The Portuguese evangelist Da Silveira was the first European missionary to reach southern Africa when he arrived at the coast of Sofala in 1560. He went on to interact with the Kings of the then all conquering and powerful Munhumutapa Empire on the Zimbabwean plateau. One of the bench-end carvings has Modumedi Moleli, a teacher, evangelist and a Christian martyr who worked for the Methodist church in the areas of Mashonaland. Known for founding the Nenguwo Training Institute (presently Waddilove High School), Moleli was martyred in the First Chimurenga liberation struggle of 1896-97, just "five days after [the murder of Bernard] Mizeki" (Pobee 2017: 344). There is also one dedicated to

Philip Quaque (at times spelt Quaicoe) who was the first African to be ordained as minister of the Church of England (Anglican) in present day Ghana. The African martyrs Bernard Mizeki and Manche Masemola are also depicted in Katsande's murals highlighted earlier in Fig. 2.16.

That the Cyrene Chapel, with its relief carvings and murals, albeit the latter was restored at some point, are still standing is a miracle in itself, considering that they survived an outbreak of fire in 1962 (Randles 1991). They also survived the occupation of the school by a battalion of the Rhodesian Army at the height of the country's liberation struggle from 1978 to 1980, risking the destruction of the whole school since the Matopo Hills adjacent to it became the centre of the nationalist struggle (Ranger 1997). In that phase, the Rhodesian Army temporarily renamed the school Fort Godwin. The historian Terrence Ranger added, "I found Cyrene chapel moving, both for the surviving murals and for its travails during the nationalist period and the Gukurahundi repression in the 1980s" (Ranger 1997: 67). Having closed in 1978, the school only reopened in 1982, in the middle of the Gukurahundi ethnic cleansing massacres in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions in an independent Zimbabwe. To that I will add surviving the current onslaught of occupation by illegal land invaders aligned to the ruling ZANU–PF party since 2000. The state-controlled Bulawayo based *Sunday Times* of 8 March 2015 published a Deed of Transfer 1704/87 issued by the Ministry of Lands on 14 November 2014, indicating that the Government of Zimbabwe had enlisted the Cyrene Mission farm for takeover under its ill-planned Fast-Track Land Reform Programme. The *Newsday Zimbabwe* of 1 August 2022, revealed that despite the Anglican Church winning court battles to evict the occupiers, the government is not willing to remove them from the property.[93] Lastly, considering that the open eaves of the chapel's roof are not long enough to shield it from weather elements like the persistent sun of the western regions of Zimbabwe and the summer rains, neither the chapel nor the paintings were designed for posterity (Randles 1997).

### *2.4.3 Engaging sociopolitical matters: 'The Stars Are Bright'*

The true extent of the Cyrene archive of artworks in the Western world, in South Africa, as well as locally in Zimbabwe is not exactly known, as some of the work has been "purchased and dispersed into private collections" (Randles 1997: 73) as Paterson "was actively selling

[93] This complex scenario was exposed when Swithern Chirowodza of the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change accused the government of pretending to help the Anglican Church in Figtree, Matabeleland South to help drive away the invaders. In a response to the Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services secretary Nick Mangwana's tweet celebrating the 'homecoming' of artworks from Cyrene Mission in the wake of the opening of *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition at the NGZ in Harare, Chirowodza stated, "Property rights must be restored to the Cyrene Mission. Trying to fool the UK is a lie that all is well at Cyrene Mission when the farm was long seized by invaders. Court victories for the Anglican Mission have not been respected" (Nkala 2022).

some of the works as they toured" (Zilberg 2012: no page) and therefore most of it is unaccounted for.[94] Zilberg himself shared numerous works from Cyrene on his Facebook page on 14 February 2014 and again on 15 December 2014, openly inviting interested scholars to engage with it. The recent discovery and exhibition of rare works by young artists from Cyrene, which were said to have been boxed up and stored in 1953 in an annexe or basement of the St Michael and All Angels' Church[95] in Shoreditch in London where they were 'forgotten' for years, is a case that substantiates my claim. As Evens (2020) elaborates:

> There they stayed, forgotten, until 1978, when the church was deconsecrated with the site and its contents were put up for auction. Bought initially by the London Architectural Salvage and Supply Company, the collection is now under the care of The Belvedere Trust, and is being exhibited for the first time in almost 70 years.

The works were exhibited in 2020 in *The Stars are Bright: Zimbabwe through the eyes of its young painters from Cyrene (1940-1947)*, at the Theatre Courtyard Green Rooms on Bateman's Row, an exhibition co-curated by Georgia Ward, Chiedza Mhondoro and Jessica Ihejatoh.[96] The title of the show came from Musa Nyahwa's work in the exhibition, which is dated 1945. The show had 25 large and 50 smaller works handpicked by the co-curators. The works are said to have been created at Cyrene Mission between 1942 and 1947, when the students were aged between ten and twenty years old. According to Evens (2020), the works were part of the "two hundred large paintings, 1200 small paintings, plus wood-carvings and stone sculptures," which had been brought to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts by Ned Paterson in 1949.[97] "The exhibition then toured England for three years before going to Paris and New York, followed by a second exhibition in London in 1953" (Evens 2020).

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[94] However, "of the original collection (taken to London in 1949), later folios dating to around 1945 have been acquired by The Bodleian Library in Oxford UK and at The Smithsonian Institute in Washington. A scrapbook of a further 200 paintings dating to the early 1950s is held at the library at Central St. Martin's School of Art in London" (Zilberg 2012: no page).

[95] In his 1997 paper titled 'Making Zimbabwean Landscapes: Painters, Projectors and Priests', historian Terence Ranger explains that most of the work that Patterson had shipped to the London had not made it into the 1949 exhibition because the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel wanted pictures of "the Gospel seen as though it had been delivered by a native Jesus to the native people of this country" and as Paterson explained, there were only a few of such images. The second exhibition at the London Central School of Arts and Crafts consisted of only first-year work. In an article published online recently, Zimbabwean art critic Nyadzombe Nyampenza considers that the works in *The Stars Are Bright* show are part of the remaining 600 from the consignment of around 1500 artworks that Paterson shipped to the United Kingdom and concludes that they might be the spoils "deemed materially inferior to the rest" and calls it a "twist of fate" that they have now "been thrust back into the spotlight" (Nyampenza 2022). Indeed, the best works from the consignment lie somewhere in private collections.

[96] Unfortunately, the co-curators of the exhibition did not produce a catalogue of the works in the show. My correspondence with their 'duty manager' resulted in their emailing me a brochure.

[97] The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel selected and exhibited 'Christian' works, the rest of the work was exhibited at the London Central School of Arts and Crafts.

In the *Fifteenth Cyrene Paper*, Paterson reveals and explains the reasons for shipping the works abroad. The first motive was the need to measure their work against that produced in art schools in Britain at the time. Secondly, he desired to know what the opinion of experts in touch with both modern art and art history would be. The third goal was quite controversial coming from the S.P.G., Cyrene Mission's principal sponsor, which expected or demanded to see "evidence of the cultural advance of Africans in response to Christian teaching, to correspond with the deposit of Christian Art made by native Christians in India and China" and this was going to serve as "visible return to England", instead of "putting something into the native", the British empire was "drawing something out of the native" (Paterson 1949: 3).

Regarding the first goal, instead of being compared to the work of English students of their age group, it is interesting that when an exhibition of artworks from Cyrene opened in London in 1949, it was compared to the *40 000 Years of Modern Art* which opened alongside it. That exhibition featured some of Europe's greatest artists like Picasso and Matisse. As Lisa Masterson and Neal Hovelmeier (2022) state:

> Critics unanimously preferred the Cyrene works which they saw as "effortless" [compared to] the more modern pieces that were produced "consciously and after prolonged thought." Critics praised "the alertness and restlessness of style, the sincerity which comes from the heart and not the intellect, the brightness of colours, the lack of inhibition." The Lancaster Daily Post declared it was "shorn of all humbug."

While the first and second goals can also be measured against the points raised by Masterson and Hovelmeier above, it is the condescending tone in the excerpts they extracted and quoted that does not sit well with me. In them is a dismissal of the thought process the Cyrene students went through while producing the carefully thought-out work they did.[98] Even if Paterson just read Bible stories for them, as stated by art historians who have written on Cyrene, translating that onto the paper in a visual language punctuated by elements drawn from the local environment is an exercise that required some serious thinking. To contest this patronising and anthropological Western framing, I shall turn to Sam Songo's *The Death of Ananias and Sapphira* in Fig. 2.20. and Livingstone Sango's *The Good Shepherd* in Fig. 2.21. I would argue

[98] I am particularly drawn to the carefree use of the term 'effortless'. According to Montero (2016: 180 & 187), three aspects namely medium, representation and process must be considered carefully for us to refer to a work of art as 'effortless'. "We may appreciate represented effortlessness of the sculpted torso, painted hand … and so forth without necessarily feeling either that the process of creating the representations is effortless or the medium itself is effortless… If we understand extremely well how difficult the process [of making the artwork] really is, this may lessen or destroy our ability to perceive the medium as effortless."

that the third goal on the expectations of the S.P.G. embodies the 'White Saviourism' problem that I elaborate on in Chapter 5 in the section on Sam Songo.

In the Bible story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5, the couple sell church property and contrive to conceal part of the returns from the sale. The husband is the first one to encounter Peter and the congregation. Upon asking him why they decided to keep a fraction of the earnings Peter goes on to tell Ananias that he had deceived God, not the people around him. As a result, Ananias collapses to death. In Songo's depiction of the encounter we see young men carrying Ananias's lifeless body to its final resting place. To the left we see Peter facing Sapphira. From the way she is leaning backwards, it is possible that she is also collapsing to death as in the Bible narrative. In this case Songo portrays Sapphira with her back to Ananias to show that she had not witnessed what had happened to her husband. Instead of a building with congregants in attendance, the scene in which this happens is a natural undulating terrain with trees scattered on a rocky outcrop, characterised by massive boulders and balancing rocks sandwiching patches of green grass. Mountains can be seen in the distance, and so are clouds on the horizon.

Fig. 2.20. Sam Songo, 1947, *The death of Ananias and Sapphira*. Watercolours on paper. Source: Spitalfields Life Books Ltd.

Livingstone Sango's *The Good Shepherd* portrays a Black Jesus tending to his flock of sheep which are dispersed in the foreground, and a buck (*mhembwe*) resting under a tree while the other one is rubbing its body against the tree trunk in the background. Christ's black hair and beard are quite visible. He is wearing white robes and sandals, with His worship stick lying across the body. The stick resembles the ones carried by members of the local Johanne Masowe apostolic sects, which are independent African churches, some of which were instrumental in the nation's liberation struggle. Also visible in the scene are African wading birds (*kondo*) to the Messiah's right and guinea fowl (*hanga*) in the background. Playing on the boulders in the background are little rock rabbits (*mbira*). The antbear (*sambani*) has already dug into the anthill. Also visible in the middle of the picture are what appears like two spotted cats, which could be leopards (*mbada*), one of them ready to pounce on the resting buck.

Fig. 2.21. Livingstone Sango, 1945, *The Good Shepherd*. Watercolours on paper. Source: Spitalfields Life Books Ltd.

In the two artworks above, Songo and Sango portray landscapes that they are familiar with, possibly the revered landscape of the Matopos. This can be seen in the way they present the rolling rocky outcrops, albeit in quite different shapes and colours. From the shapes and forms of the rocks to the colourful trees in both artworks, and individual leaves on trees and animals

presented by Songo, making these works must have been an arduous and time-consuming task which required prolonged periods of careful imagination and practice. While the critics quoted by Masterson and Hovelmeier did well to appreciate "the alertness and restlessness of style", they were insincere to discard "the intellect" in the work. These artists where thinkers who observed and deeply understood their environment to be able to present it in the manner they did.

Of all the many reviews written on *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition so far, in his review titled *The Stars Are Bright: An exhibition that captures the zeitgeist of its period*, art critic Nyadzombe Nyampenza made an effort to prove that the students at Cyrene Mission engaged the social and political developments in their country. He says so despite highlighting oppressive legislation passed around and at the time that are not so obviously visible in the work of the students. A common feature in the paintings that Nyampenza draws our attention to is the depiction of the homes and villages in the work. The writer argues that the limited space around the homes is "the antithesis of the large commercial farms and ranches owned by white settlers" (Nyampenza 2022). With this work being produced in the aftermath of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which condemned the local Black population to the rocky areas where they were congested with little space for farming, the students did their best to capture their everyday life. The subtitle of the exhibition is *Zimbabwe through the eyes of its young painters from Cyrene (1940-1947).* To read too much into this title and expect refined observations and astute socio-political analysis and commentary from inexperienced nine to nineteen year olds who were still learning their trade within a missionary school, is to put too much weight on their shoulders.

Moreover, through Samuel Manaisi's *The Raiders* (Fig. 2.22.) and Lot Dungene's *Mzilikazi meeting Dr Moffat* (Fig. 2.23.), I argue that the students at Cyrene Mission were aware of their secular history as well.[99] Manaisi depicts the scene of four warriors walking across an undulating landscape with women, girls and cattle that they have supposedly captured from another group. The landscape is also not very different from the others I have described earlier. In the history of southern Africa, raiding expeditions were common among the Nguni ethnic groups. In the history of Zimbabwe, the Ndebele Kingdom in the western parts of the country is known to have embarked on raiding expeditions. Dungene's work documents the artist's imagination of the interaction scene of King Mzilikazi of the Ndebele and Robert Moffat of

[99] I use the term 'secular history' since I discussed their awareness of the history of Christianity in Africa when I focused on the relief carvings earlier on.

the London Missionary Society. Moffat's dressing is Western, even though he is depicted with fairly short dark hair. His mode of transport is a horse-drawn wagon. In front of the grass-thatched rondavels is a gathering of four women, seemingly sharing a drink. They are possibly the King's wives, two of them with babies. To their right is a warrior armed with a spear and a shield. In the backdrop is a shepherd tending to the goats. The rest of the backdrop is punctuated by an undulating colourful terrain of valleys and spurs due to the rock outcrops. The environment is also marked with grass and shrubs, and scattered tall trees. The homesteads are distant from each other as was the case in rural Rhodesia.

Fig. 2.22. Samuel Manaisi, 1947, *The Raiders*, Watercolours on paper. Source: Spitalfields Life Books Ltd.

Fig. 2.23. Lot Dungene, *Mzilikazi meeting Dr Moffat*, Watercolours on paper. Date unknown, Image: Debbie Sears C. Courtesy of The Curtain Foundation.

Through the artworks in *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition and a thorough examination of the murals, sculpture, and carvings at the Cyrene Chapel, we learn that the art practice of students was not only about biblical depictions. They engaged many other subjects of the time and in history. This explains why most of them never had trouble going to teach at secular institutions like Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre and the then Bulawayo Art Gallery. What is still to be explored is whether they were fully equipped to be teachers, as Cyrene Mission was not a teacher training institution like Grace Dieu in South Africa. In the recent conversation I had with him, Voti Thebe stated, "What I am not aware of is whether they were educated formally or trained to become artist-teachers, or they were just groomed to become so. They probably just had the skill. Some of them taught at Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre, which was just a skills-training centre with no art theory taught at the place" (Muvhuti and Thebe 2022). Nonetheless, what is clear is that the teachers who emerged out of Cyrene were well-rounded individuals who engaged different subjects.

### *2.4.4 John Groeber's Serima Workshop (1950s)*

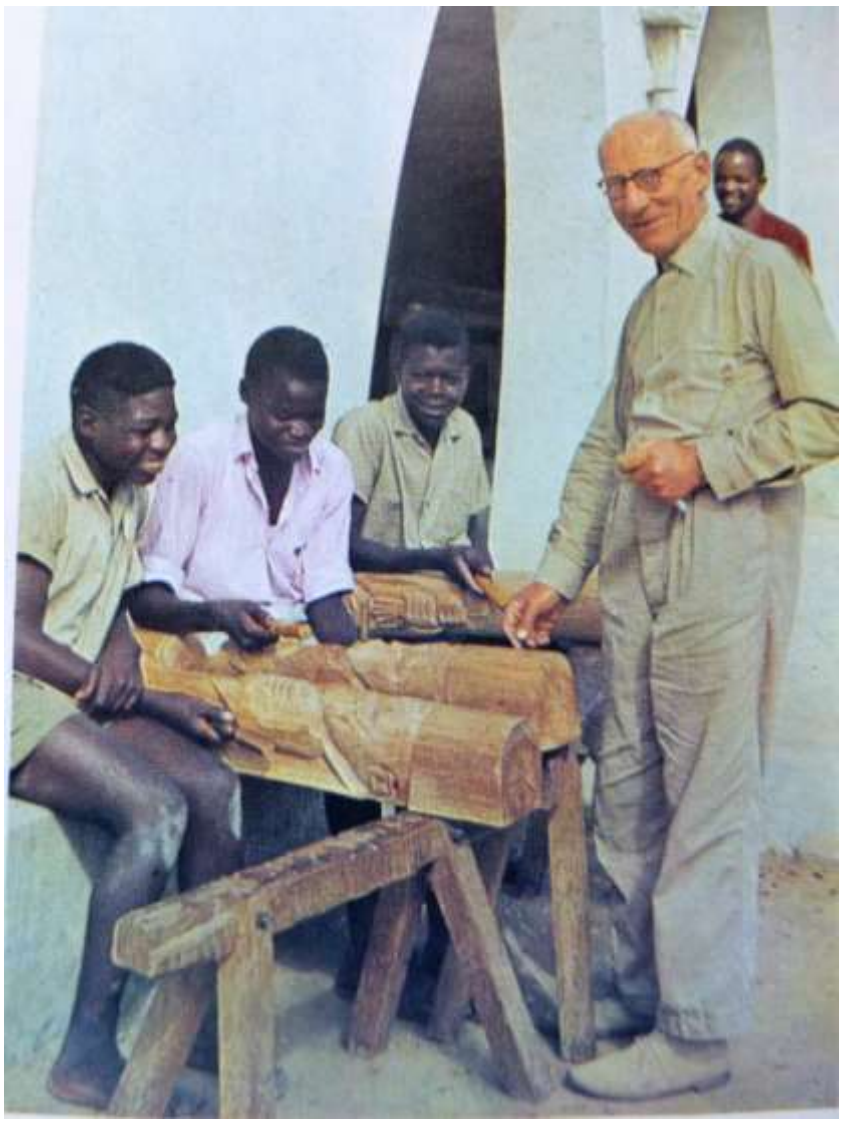

Fig. 2.24. Father John Groeber with his students at Serima Mission. Courtesy of Mike Tucker of ZimFieldGuide.com.

The story of Serima Mission is centred around Father Groeber, the Swiss missionary who built the school from scratch. The institution is located 50 kilometres north of Great Zimbabwe and is found 30 kilometres off one of Zimbabwe's busiest roads linking the Harare, the nation's capital city, and Beitbridge, the gateway to neighbouring South Africa. Unlike Paterson of Cyrene who left a substantial archive of the *Cyrene Papers* series upon which the story of Cyrene Mission is built, Father Groeber did not leave written records to rely on. All he left are the buildings and the artworks he and his students made. As such, reconstructing the Serima history is an exercise that requires extra effort and demands that one be imaginative around the

bits of information that exist in the fragmented archive. To make matters worse, the generation of artists he taught is almost gone.

Father Hans John Groeber was born in 1903 in the city of Basel in Switzerland. He obtained a diploma in architecture, before attending art school in Lucerne. Upon moving to Rhodesia in 1939, he marked the beginning of his great journey as a missionary on African soil, and of art and creativity in the country, at the Regional Seminary in Salisbury (Dachs and Rea 1979:138). He then undertook apprenticeships at various mission stations namely Chishawasha, Driefontein near Mvuma, Silveira in Bikita, St Benedict's and St Joseph's in the Chirumanzi area, as well as at Gokomere and Fort Victoria. As highlighted by Zhou (2017: 55), he was never stationed at one school for longer between 1940 and 1946, managing to complete six building projects in that period. At Silveira Mission, he taught schoolboys to draw and carve (Plangger and Diethelm 1974).

The Swiss Bethlehem Mission then commissioned him to build a Catholic mission centre at Serima Reserve[100] under Chief Serima (Walker 1985). The project commenced in 1948, and by 1955 the boarding school was completed. He then started building the church in 1956 (see Fig. 2.25.), finishing its exterior by 1958, with the interior only decorated eight years later in 1966 (Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana 2021: 4). The church has a huge steeple (Fig. 2.26.) at the back. Whether in the middle of a countryside outpost like the Serima station or in congested urban spaces, steeples are a common identity feature and an aesthetic symbol of the church. They come in different shapes and sizes. Most of them have a metal Christian cross on top, serving as a crucifix symbol, and at times also shielding the building from lightning strikes. In some churches, steeples also hold the bell, amplifying the projection of the sound as they are free from being obstructed by other buildings. Usually mounted at towering heights so that they can be seen from a distance, steeples perform the purpose of drawing people's attention to the church. The inspiration for the towering steeples seems to derive directly from the Bible, as is seen in the book of Psalms. and in Proverbs: "Raise me up, set me on a rock, for you are my refuge, a tower of strength against the foe" (Psalm 61:3-4) and "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Towering over the surrounding rural community landscape, with its smaller grass-thatched countryside homes,

[100] The 'reserves' were areas where the Africans – who were displaced from prime land, which was then apportioned among white settlers – were resettled or 'dumped' by the colonial regime. Such areas were usually not arable, but rocky and located in the Lowveld regions that received low rainfall like the Gwai and Shangani Native Reserves. Such tough conditions worked well for the government and the white capitalist class as the Africans residing in the 'reserves' would be forced to go and seek employment in the mines or urban areas and on the farms as migrant labourers. Therefore, such areas were designated labour reserves.

the St. Mary's steeple serves as a reminder of where people can go to communicate with their Lord. It is decorated with carvings of angels done by Nicholas Mukomberanwa, who is one of the most prominent sculptors to emerge out of the institution. The faces of the angels are of Black people. Their bulging eyes look downwards to make eye contact with the onlooker on the ground. They are holding different materials or instruments, with what appears like a bow and arrow, a kudu antler horn trumpet (*hwamanda*) and a modern vuvuzela-shaped trumpet (*bhosvo*). These faces and the materials depicted are something the local community would resonate with as they could see themselves represented in the form of these angels.

Fig. 2.25. St Mary's Roman Catholic Church at Serima Mission School. From the outside the building looks European and modern. However, the interior decorations are quite African. Courtesy of Mike Tucker ZimFieldGuide.com.

Fig. 2.26. The huge steeple at the back of the church at Serima Mission. Courtesy of Mike Tucker of ZimFieldGuide.com.

With his vast knowledge in architecture and construction, albeit without a degree, Father Groeber embraced the opportunity to design and build something from scratch, and according to his taste. He had to build an entire mission station, which included a residential unit, boarding school, and the church project.[101] Since he was operating on a limited budget, he made use of local materials (Morton 2012). However, as much as he tried to Africanise the structure, as is seen through the locally inspired sculptural decorations, the traces of Romanesque designs in the architectural style do reflect his background in European-style architecture.

As the principal of the new institution known as the Serima African School, he had the opportunity to start and implement an art curriculum "based on his own needs and interests" (Morton 2020: 300). However, unlike Paterson at Cyrene Mission, Father Groeber always stated that Serima was not an art school, and it was never his intention to train professional

[101] According to Mutuka (1989), although the institution had both male and female students, only males were involved in the construction of the school. They performed the task in exchange for accommodation at the institution.

artists (Plangger and Diethelm 1974). That probably explains why the institution never got to produce work on the scale Cyrene Mission did, or to market and export it as well. There were no exhibitions of art from Serima as there were for Cyrene. This also explains why Serima did not attract as much local and international attention as Cyrene. As such, Serima never became an institution sustained by income from art sales as Cyrene was. The artworks made by its students had a sole function, to decorate the institution and the church in a way that spoke to the community around the institution, serving as a useful teaching aid in imparting the gospel to a society that largely could not read and write. Father Groeber was not in favour of adorning the institution with images and models resembling Western Christian art. For this reason, the project at Serima was unique, as the Catholic Church had a habit of importing the images and sculpture displayed in its institutions. Most Catholic churches in colonies had images of a white or foreign Jesus.

According to artist Tapfuma Gutsa,[102] "to get to the hearts of the people the church had to Africanise. Hence, the Africanisation of the church and the strong presence of the Ugandan masks" in the institution.[103] As a result of this drive, even Father Groeber's practice is said to have shifted as he started seeing "his own artistic talent and tradition as something inferior which had to be abandoned" as he tried to "foster an art that was Christian in subject matter but still traditional in the treatment of the material and in the mental background from which it originated" (Plangger and Diethelm 1974: 18&19). The Africanisation project easily took off, as Father Groeber was building on material that local artists were familiar with and on a practice that was not alien to the local community. As Randles substantiates, "the art of woodcarving enjoyed a long history in traditional culture, practiced with skill in the decoration of household and ceremonial objects" Randles (1997: 72). To this, Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021: 6) further elaborate:

> The belief in icons and images is, however, a common phenomenon, particularly within the Shona, particularly Karanga traditional spirit worldview that largely dominates the area around Serima Mission. Fundamentally, all the vaKaranga people around Serima Mission are African by culture and Christian by choice. For that reason, the influence

[102] Commonly referred to as Sekuru Gutsa by Zimbabwe's arts community, Gutsa is an artist who belongs to what is known as the 'Second Generation' of Zimbabwe's artists, with most of them being sculptors working with stone. However, his practice disrupts the traditions of Zimbabwe stone sculpture as his work is conceptual, and not driven by 'the spirit of the stone', the usual myths employed to explain the genre, and he incorporates other materials in his practice. He served as the Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe (2010-2011). Although he was at Driefontein from August 1978 to August 1979, Gutsa had the privilege of working with Cornelius Manguma who had taught alongside Father Groeber both at Serima and at Driefontein.

[103] This comment by Sekuru Gutsa is interesting because no Ugandan scholar acknowledges the existence of a known tradition of figurative masks from pre-colonial Uganda.

of the resident Karanga culture and religion in the role and impact of religious art may not be overstated.

Earlier I discussed the significance of the Zimbabwe Bird among the Karanga people in the area of Masvingo, the same people being referred to by Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana. Plangger and Diethelm (1974: 20) also concluded that through his project Father Groeber would have found it easier to connect with the Karanga people because they are generally "great masters and lovers of verbal art" and as such they would have easily accepted "reflecting their philosophy in life" in figurative Christian art.

Although he cherished the Serima Mission project the most, Father Groeber, aged 65 at the time, found himself being transferred to another mission station. However, Morton (2012) states that in 1971 Father Groeber is the one who abandoned Serima, protesting the efforts of the diocese to commercialise the project.[104] He moved to Driefontein Mission in Mvuma. Even though he offered specialised training to the students who excelled in art, the primary motive for engaging in the practice was to beautify their school. The art was more decorative and folkloric (Lieros 2018, personal communication, October 13). Father Groeber loathed Christian art[105] which he thought was "nothing but an import and cheap imitation" (Plangger and Diethelm 1974). As such, and like Pierre Romain-Desfosses who founded the Atelier d'Art de Hangar in Elizabethville, now Lubumbashi, in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1950, he did not like his students to be corrupted by exposure to Western art and the uniformising aesthetics of white masters (Kangai and Mupondi 2013: 193). He followed the avant-garde view that African art had to express itself in African iconography (Pearce 1993). In fact, artist Tapfuma Gutsa, who had access to Father Groeber's drawings at Driefontein, stated that he could see the heavy influence of the cubists in the work. Although Serima's focus was religion, Father Groeber had to institute a curriculum in which the study of African masks was integral (Gutsa 2021, personal communication, April 22). He also preferred that his students should be inspired by nature and the local environment, as is seen in the statues, pillars, and relief carvings at the mission station.

[104] Sekuru Gutsa gives a slightly different version to Morton's claim. He states that the idea of Father Groeber Africanising the institution, as stated earlier, did not go down well with the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church which had to exile him from the institution where "he would be kept under arrest" and not cause any disruption by challenging the ways and norms of the church. However, Serima always had a special place in his heart. That explains why his grave is the only one that exists in the churchyard at the school.

[105] In Africa, the early missionaries employed Christian art as illustrations to provide visuals that would help the illiterate followers comprehend the Bible's sophisticated written text. Thus, the art served an evangelical purpose. Although he established Serima as a missionary school like Paterson's Cyrene Mission, the art produced by Father Groeber's students did not necessarily follow the Bible script.

Like Paterson of Cyrene who was also an evangelist, Father Groeber would read and explain scriptures for his students, and they would draw from their understanding and experiences. Fig. 2.27. which depicts the "feeding of the multitude", an incident described in the Gospels of John, Matthew and Luke, is an example of a painting derived from an imagination of the biblical scene. In the story Jesus instructs his disciples not to go and buy food to feed the masses that had followed him. Instead, he blesses the five loaves of bread and the two fish that a boy had brought to the scene. The painting captures the moment Jesus looks up to say a prayer with the disciples observing and the observant multitudes in the backdrop waiting in anticipation of the miraculous feast. The painting could have been done by Father Groeber himself, as the cubist traces are clear in the depicted figures. Unlike the painted murals of Cyrene, done with the local landscapes in the backdrop, the murals at Serima are just floating images without a solid backdrop. Moreover, the painting was done using different natural earth colours.


Fig. 2.27. Miracle of five loaves and two fishes. Courtesy of Mike Tucker of ZimFieldguide.

Unlike Paterson, Groeber opted to teach them by way of exposing them West African masks. In hindsight, the use of West African masks was an insult on local culture, considering that the

Shona already had an established long sculptural tradition (Chikukwa 2015). However, the problem with that logic is that, even if the people Groeber was dealing with were indeed the descendants of the early sculptors at Great Zimbabwe, there are no visible traces of people on the Zimbabwean plateau carving masks. Groeber himself arrived in Southern Rhodesia at a time when the sculptures at Great Zimbabwe had been smuggled out of the country and there were no similar samples in society that the locals could refer to. However, the existence of specialist sculptors carving implements like the traditional headrests (*mitsago*) cannot be ruled out. It appears that what drove him to start the atavistic workshop at the mission was not the obsession with the 'authentic' African art through the European lens as most expatriates did at the time, but the need to spread the scriptures employing an art form the locals could relate to.

Even though Chikukwa (2015) states that Father Groeber believed in Karanga culture,[106] and used the language as a medium of instruction in his interactions with the students, the claim appears to be at odds with one made earlier by Plangger and Diethelm (1974: 20) that even though he was the instructor, he "did not understand Shona customs and literature, traditions and customs" which he merely distorted. This might explain his fascination with West African as a step back to the ideal of the 'authentic' African art and a sign of disrespect for local traditions. However, Tapfuma Gutsa stresses that Groeber purportedly not understanding Shona customs is "an unnecessary exaggeration" as he was trying to connect with the locals and their culture. He highlights that the success of that effort can be seen in the work of some of his prominent students like Nicholas Mukomberanwa and Gabriel Hatugari, who went on to make work inspired by Shona spiritualism (Gutsa 2021, personal communication, April 22).

Some of the best-known artists to emerge from Father Groeber's workshop at Serima were Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Joseph Ndandarika, Tapfuma Gutsa, Gabriel Hatugari and Ernest Bhere. Chikukwa stresses that even though there have been attempts to identify individual artistic efforts, "the work was [generally] done anonymously and collectively, which remains problematic" (2018: 47) as it is difficult to assign authorship to the individual artists and appreciate what they could produce. Nonetheless, Gutsa (2021, personal communication, April 22) argues that only a few works, among them Cornelius Manguma's *White Madonna* can be assigned to a particular artist.[107] This is also supported by Randles (1997) who singles out Cornelio Manguma's *Virgin and Child* and Gabriel Hatugari's *Our Lady* as two more works

[106] Serima Mission was established in the then Victoria Province (now Masvingo) where the dominant ethnic group is that of the Karanga, a Shona sub-ethnic group.
[107] Randles (1997) also identifies a few works that were produced by individual artists, for example, Cornelio Manguma's *Virgin and Child*, Gabriel Hatugari's *Our Lady*.

that are assigned to individual artists. Of the individuals named above, some went on to be key pillars in the workshop that Frank McEwen established at the National Gallery, as well as important players of the 'Shona Sculpture' movement. Mukomberanwa and Gutsa, for example, made a name for themselves in the development of modern art in Zimbabwe. Importantly, there was a Black artist-teacher named Cornelio Manguma who worked with Father Groeber. The two went on to establish a school for carving at Driefontein when they left Serima. Manguma continued to teach for years after Father Groeber's death. However, at Driefontein, the focus of their students' work shifted slightly as they made traditional figures with the idea of preparing the students to feed into the commercial market where they would be operating at centres like Victoria Falls and other places accessed by tourists (Gutsa 2021, personal communication, April 22).

Serima developed its own tradition. Key to that tradition was the use of local materials, especially wood which had had a long history of use for carving by the local communities (Randles 1997). The wood used for carving was from the local surroundings. Paintings were done in natural earth colours of local soils. It was in keeping with the local environment and way of life. Quoted in Plangger and Diethelm (1974), a Harare resident named Wilfred Tichagwa seemed to suggest that the church at Serima was unique in that it was "a big sacred shrine of the old", a place where the spirit of Christ and God were worshipped in the presence of the ancestors of the Shona. Such a mission station could attract a lot of people from the local community as it was not a strange place for them to worship at. They could identify with it.

Mudyiwa and Mokgoatšana (2021: 3) who appreciate Father Groeber's incorporation of African art and architectural ideas in the construction of the church at Serima conclude, "Never in the history of Catholicism in Zimbabwe has there been a clergyman so gifted in architecture and artistry as Father John Groeber." Among his valuable contributions to the development of modern art in Zimbabwe was to reinforce the importance of woodcarving, a medium passed through generations among the Shona and other Bantu communities, and to make the art form stand among the high art alternatives.

Earlier in this chapter I examined the role of the missionaries in helping to secure friendship treaties and signing concessions that led to colonial occupation. They also were instrumental in persuading and preparing Africans to embrace Western education and convert to an alien religion in the form of Christianity. In doing so, they were instrumental in the desecration of local belief systems and weakening traditional power structures. The roles played by both Robert and John Smith Moffat, as well as Reverend Charles Helm in that regard is clear.

However, both Paterson and Groeber arrived at a time when the colonial power had affirmed total grip over Southern Rhodesia and draconian legislations like the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 had been passed, dispossessing the locals of their land. It is a bit of a surprise then to see Chikukwa (2018: 42) arguing that both Paterson and Groeber "managed to fulfil their colonial mandate (of) spreading the word of God through art". Rather, I would argue that through setting up these institutions they "laid the foundation for the emergence of a modernized Black class of painters and sculptors" (Ntongela2022: 31), some of whom became artist-teachers. They created an atmosphere of hope in a society already divided along racial lines.

## 2.5 Workshops initiated by expatriates

### *2.5.1 Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre*

Built by the Bulawayo City Council in 1963, the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre remains one of the few institutions to have developed entirely in a Black community. It is in Mzilikazi Suburb, a few metres from Barbourfields Stadium and Mpilo Hospital. Prior to its opening, Alex Lamberth,[108] an art teacher who founded the school, offered classes in painting under the terraces of the stadium in the 1950s and early 1960s. At that time Pat McAllister and Janine Mackenzie introduced pottery classes at the back of Macdonald Hall (Williams 1986). Therefore, the school was born out of the amalgamation of the two projects. To this day, the institution is famous for its watercolour paintings and ceramic sculptures. Regarding Mackenzie's contribution, Voti Thebe acknowledged that it was quite unusual but refreshing to find women teaching art at the time. (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24).

Like Paterson of Cyrene and Groeber of Serima, Lamberth encouraged his students to draw inspiration from their surroundings. However, Chikukwa (2015) argues that the two missionaries implemented measures that arrested the growth of art by selecting to employ a brand of teaching that produced and promoted work that had not been 'corrupted' by Western influences. Even though Chikukwa emphasises that their practice ensured that the country was left with no protest art reflecting the country's status quo at the time, a closer examination of the practice of the artists at Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre suggests otherwise, as they

[108] The founder, Alexander George Lamberth, was born on 23 January 1911 in Beccles, Suffolk, in the United Kingdom. He was educated at Sir John Lemman Grammar School in Beccles, before moving to Culford School, which is located a few miles from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. He left school in 1929 and went on to enrol at Hornsey School of Art, followed by St Martins School of Art, then Lowestoft School of Art, and the Royal College of Art. He came to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1960. He founded Mzilikazi Art Centre while employed by the Municipality of Bulawayo City Housing and Amenities. (Lauryn Arnott: Facebook, 19 May 2020).

presented a record of what transpired in their city. Court (1992: 44) describes the "watercolour and terracotta" work rooted in the daily struggles of the community as "township realism".[109] Since they were inhabitants of an urban environment at a volatile time characterised by uprisings and strikes, some of the art really documented the problems of the time. In that respect, Justin Mutungwazi's *Zhee Riots Series* of 1960 stands out. In the work he portrayed the protesters and the anti-riot police sent by the government to deal with these protests. Some of the institution's graduates became so politically conscious that they ended up joining the 1970s liberation struggle movements as cartoonists and painters, and even fighters (Williams 1987).

Besides the locals, some of the institution's students came from neighbouring countries. Among the household names that emerged from this school are: Henry Tayali from Zambia,[110] Stephen Katsande, John Balopimuses, Basil Mazibuko, Titus Sekgoma, Mary Mabogo, Lazarus Khumalo, Sam Songo, Kaufman Ndlovu, Taylor Nkomo, Adam Madebe, Charles Msimanga, Raschid Jogee, Berry Bickle, Esther Nhliziyo and Mutungwazi. Unlike Cyrene and Serima, which recruited male students only, there were women in the group at Mzilikazi. This was a sign of progress in a country where the few institutions that were offering fine art in one form or another, exclusively catered for males.

### *2.5.2 Tom Blomefield's Tengenenge*

Tom Blomefield, who died on 8 April 2020, in Enschede in The Netherlands at the age of 93 (Akuda 2020), was a seasoned tobacco farmer of South African origin. His farm was in Guruve, 150 kilometres north of Harare and along the Great Dyke.[111] It was named Tengenenge after a nearby river (Joosten 2001). The name is a Korekore word which means "the beginning of the beginning" (Chikukwa 2015: 27). His ashes were interred in a Bernard Matemera sculpture at his farm on 6 December 2020 in a ceremony led by the Nyau, "a secret society of the Chewa that specializes in a culture and infuses it with dance and song" (Akuda 2020). Blomefield was a member of the Nyau sect.

[109] This form of art was the same as what was termed 'township art' in South Africa in the sense that their practice recorded the condition of life of the Black people living and working in the neighbourhood of Mzilikazi.
[110] A painter of both abstract and realism works, Tayali's family moved from Northern to Southern Rhodesia when he was young. They settled in Bulawayo, where his talent was noticed by Alex Lamberth, one of the founders of Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre. "In 1958, when Tayali was 15 years old, Lamberth arranged the Bulawayo City Council to sponsor his first solo exhibition, which was also the first ever exhibition put on by an African in Bulawayo" (Mulenga 2017).
[111] A geological belt that stretches from north to south in the middle of Zimbabwe. It is rich in mineral resources including coal, chromium, gold, iron ore, nickel, and the platinum group of minerals.

Even though Scherer (2013) states that Blomefield turned to art as an alternative to generating income during the droughts that were negatively impacting on farming in the 1950s, most writers (Chikukwa 2015, Zilberg 2013, Morton 2012, and Sibanda 2015, among them) and Blomefield (1988) himself agree that he turned to art because of the economic hardships caused by the international economic sanctions imposed on Rhodesia due to Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1965.[112] Many of his workers faced the prospect of losing their jobs and would probably leave the area in search of opportunities elsewhere. Left with no earnings from tobacco exports, he had to look for alternative ways to counter the crippling effects of the embargo and save or sustain his project. With the help of a Malawian farm worker named Leman Moses, he "turned his farm into a sculpture park" (Kangai and Mupondi 2013: 198). The Tengenenge Workshop, as the project was known, started in 1966. Even though he had come from an artistic family (Joosten 2001), Blomefield learned to sculpt from Chrispen Chakanyuka (Blomefield 1988).

Among the sculptors who emerged from the workshop were his former farm workers from Malawi, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania, as the local Shona people were reluctant to undertake farm work (Joosten 2001). Instead, they preferred to work on the small pieces of land they owned. Blomefield (1988) revealed that Tengenenge sculptors were made up of three groups; the farm's full-time residents, part-timers from neighbouring farms and rural farmers who were lured by the presence of some exhibition space[113] and therefore brought their works from within the thirty-kilometre radius of the farm. Even though these categories mixed as a community on the farm, the diversity of their cultures expanded the mythological themes in their practice as is seen through the Yao abstractions and Chewa monolithic figures from Malawi and Zambia, and the diverse local expressions (Abraham 2002). Because of the multi-ethnic and multinational nature of its community of sculptors, "Tengenenge serves as a counter history to the inventive and reductive framing of 'Shona Sculpture' as a modern 'tribal' art revival" (Zilberg 2001b: 79). Some of the famous names that emerged out of the Tengenenge workshop were Leman Moses, Manzi Akuda, Ndali Wilo, Josiah Mailolo, Henry Munyaradzi, Bernard Matemera and Daminien Manhuwa. According to Scherer (2013: 181), "what

[112] The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) from Britain was declared on November 11, 1965. For more on U.D.I., see Watts. C.P. 2012.

[113] Besides the farms like Tengenenge, the countryside of Zimbabwe is made up of smallholder farmers living in villages where farming is for subsistence purposes. They produce just enough to sustain the family and sell extras. The exhibition space at Tengenenge is the area where sculptors parade their wares. For the farmers from the surrounding areas, this then is a central place where they easily interact with collectors and tourists.

distinguishes Tengenenge from other sculpture workshops in Zimbabwe is the absence of formal training and guidance by teachers."

Blomefield did not teach anyone, he just opened the centre to encourage others (Lieros 2018, personal communication, October 13). The crucial role he played was to provide the tools needed for sculpting, food to feed the sculptors, offer exhibition space and to help market the work – initially through the National Gallery and directly to South Africa at a later stage. He just happened to be in the right place at the right time. The black serpentine stone used for the sculptures was available in the area (Huggins 2018, personal communication, October 13). The same sentiment is echoed by the former Director of the NGZ, Christopher Till, who states that Blomefield "was just a farmer who just happened to have the stone on his farm" (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). So, starting the project was not a difficult thing to do. Training at the farm was irregular as Blomefield allowed the artists lots of freedom. Occasionally he would introduce competitions to encourage the artists to keep working.

Initially all the work that was produced at Tengenenge was marketed through the National Gallery. However, the former tobacco farmer did not like McEwen's suggestion that he should focus only on the crème de la crème of his sculptors. He preferred to work with everyone who came to sculpt or brought their work as part of a big family. This was mainly because Blomefield, who cannot be compared to other art dealers like Roy Guthrie who had an eye for art and therefore would select the work carefully, was just interested in the mass market of tourism (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). Then there was the scandal that embarrassed McEwen, as it was played in the media. Through the South African *Sunday Times* in November of 1968 and Rhodesia's *Sunday Mail* the following month, "Blomefield accused McEwen of stealing his artists, and McEwen refused to deal with Tengenenge as he believed that Blomefield was not straight in his dealings with his artists" (Sibanda 2015: 42). Then, in 1970, the former tobacco farmer also learned that McEwen had organised the *Sculptures Contemporaines de Vukutu* exhibition in *Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.* What angered him the most was that 15 of the 25 artists whose work was on show were from Tengenenge. He wrote a scathing letter to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery and revealed it to the nation through the media as well (Joosten 2001).

Although the above dispute reveals that McEwen and Blomefield had a fallout because the former did not act in good faith, Sylvester Mubayi (1942-2022), a first-generation sculptor[114]

[114] The term refers to an earlier generation of sculptors who practiced between the 1950s and 1980, mainly working in soapstone. Among them were Henry Mukarobgwa (1924-1991), Thomas Mukarobgwa (1924-1999),

states that Blomefield was also not honest in his dealings with the artists. The relationship he had with the artists at Tengenenge was an exploitative one. According to his testimony, Mubayi claims that his sculpture *Antelope Man* was sold for £500, of which Blomefield gave him only £14 and pocketed the rest. The fallout forced Mubayi to abandon Tengenenge and go to work with McEwen at the National Gallery Workshop (AVAC Arts 2020).

Compared to the stone sculptors emerging out of the National Gallery workshop, the artists at Tengenenge had more freedom as their work was not curated or carefully selected by an overseer like Frank McEwen, who desired to maintain a certain standard to satisfy the Euro-American eyes the work was meant for. This explains why Zilberg (2006: 6-7) concluded that the work was quite diverse and did not belong to a stylistic unit. Moreover, since its artists had mostly been former farm workers, they were the most diverse, as the farms – just like the mines – of Rhodesia thrived on migrant labour from the country's regional neighbours. As such, Zilberg concluded, "In this regard, the Tengenenge works are in fact markedly interesting for the individuality of approaches taken by each artist, for the range within their production and particularly for their sculptural confidence and three-dimensional qualities."

**2.6 Conclusion**

A closer look at the work of Paterson's Cyrene and Groeber's Serima workshops reveals that the two missionaries used art teaching and practice to evangelise. However, their workshops were different in that at Cyrene the art was sold to sustain the school, whereas at Serima the art decorated the institution and has remained in situ over the years. This explains why, except for the murals on the walls of the chapel at the mission school, the relief carvings on the door and the benches, and a few works of stone sculpture like the font, most of what remains of the art that was produced at Cyrene is located outside Zimbabwe. Tobacco farmer Tom Blomefield turned to art to earn income for his workers and himself to beat the tough economic times the country was going through after Great Britain and the United States of America led the international community in imposing economic embargoes on Rhodesia. His relationship with the artists on his property was an exploitative one in which he pocketed a huge chunk of the sales at the expense of the artists. The Mzilikazi Arts Centre was set up by Alex Lamberth and Janine Mackenzie in the predominantly Black urban environment in Bulawayo. An analysis of

Henry Munyaradzi (1931-1998), Fanizani Akuda (1932-2011), John Takawira (1938-1989), Joseph Ndandarika (1940-1991), Nicholas Mukomberanwa (1940-2002), Bernard Matemera (1946-2002), Boira Mteki (1946-1991), Moses Masaya (1947-1996), Bernard Takawira (1948-1997), Lazarus Takawira (1952-2021), Richard Mteki (1947), Joram Mariga, and many others ('Shona Sculpture'. contemporary-african-art.com).

the philosophies of these institutions shows that they were set up as platforms for local Black artists to unleash their potential, express and empower themselves. Interestingly, these expatriates believed that locals had artistic talents of their own that just needed to be provided with the right platforms to thrive. Therefore, they set these workshops to help 'release' that talent. In their approaches to arts education, they let their students work from what they were familiar with, their experiences and their environments. These missionaries and expatriates were key players in setting up the platforms that produced some of the nation's finest early modern artists and artist-teachers. The efforts of Father Groeber and Ned Paterson in particular, were instrumental in laying the foundation for Frank McEwen's workshop at the National Gallery as will be explained in the next chapter. Moreover, Ned Paterson and Tom Blomefield were key players in exposing the nation's artistic traditions to the world through promoting and marketing it. Importantly, they left records that are important to Zimbabwe's art history. As such, "there is no art history of Zimbabwe without Serima, Cyrene, Tengenenge and the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre" (Chikukwa 2018, personal communication, October 10).

# Chapter 3. Frank McEwen and the Birth of a Local Modern Art Movement

## 3.1. Introduction

When Frank McEwen arrived in Southern Rhodesia in the 1950s, he deliberately downplayed the work of missionaries and expatriate art educators who had come to the country before him and established institutions like Cyrene and Serima Mission Schools, which were teaching modern painting and wood sculpture. Instead, he established the National Gallery School prioritising and promoting the stone sculpture[115] produced at the workshop, and later that which came from other workshops like Tengenenge and Chapungu.[116] By embracing the stone medium and conveniently linking the new practice to the stone sculptures found at Great Zimbabwe, he helped redefine the local artistic scene by establishing an art form the nation could identify with on the global arts scene. Importantly, unlike other artworks coming from different African countries only accepted into Euro-American museums as ethnographic objects, the stone sculpture from Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was accepted as modern art. The irony of it is that some of the artists he worked with were graduates of the missionary institutions whose contributions he downplayed. The artists shrewdly equipped McEwen with the myths and folkloric stories he needed to explain and market the art to the world. Thus, he sidestepped existing art traditions[117], and helped start a modern art form, collaborating with artists in his workshop, favouring and promoting art with a degree of abstraction to meet the expectations of the Western art market, establishing a medium for the nation, and making a name for himself. In doing so, he sidelined artists whose practice fell outside what he canonised, especially those who worked with wood and followed a fairly conventional naturalism like Job Kekana and all the artists at Kekana's school in Rusape, and the white Rhodesian painters whom he regarded as "sunset and jacaranda tree, Sunday painters".[118]

[115] Although serpentine remains the most popular medium, some sculptors reject it in favour of varieties like quartz, sandstone, verdite, granite, steatite, and others. Some of these are tough to work on and therefore require a lot of patience and more time. The main advantage with these rock varieties as a resource is that they are available throughout the country. While the technology employed in the carving process varies from one artist to the other, the final products usually combine human and animal forms, and are mostly conceptually explained applying mythology and folklore, which are central to the lived experiences of the Shona people.

[116] The Chapungu Sculpture Park was founded by Roy Guthrie in Salisbury in 1970. According to Oyekan Owomoyela, Guthrie's intention in starting the project was "to provide a working outlet for sculptors adversely affected by the war for independence; it thus complemented the Tengenenge Community as the only private galleries devoted to stone sculpture in the country. Its relocation in 1985 to the present site is an eloquent testimony to its success. Its early beneficiaries include Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Boira Mteki, Joseph Ndandarika, and Sylvester Mubayi" (2002: 62).

[117] In this case I am referring to the artistic practices that had been established at Serima and Cyrene Missions and which defined and dominated the art scene in Southern Rhodesia at the time Frank McEwen arrived in the country.

[118] See David Chudy (1916-1967), Paintings and Sculpture catalogue, page 60. Available: www.davidchudy.com [Accessed June 21, 2021].

McEwen was a controlling and manipulative patron who jealously guarded the artists in his stable and kept them away from the gaze of the public, especially that of the media and the tourists.[119]

### 3.2. A brief biography of Frank McEwen

Born in Mexico in 1907 to a French mother and British art-dealer father, Frank McEwen was brought up in England. He received elementary education at Mill Hill School in London before moving to the French capital, Paris, where he attended the Institut d'Art et d'Archaeologie at the Sorbonne for his tertiary education. According to Frank Willet, a leading Africanist and the former Director of Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, it was while in Paris that he studied traditional African art,[120] mainly from West Africa and Congo (1971). In the French capital, he also established strong network ties with "artists active in the 1930s avant-garde, (and) patrons, who were also frequent collectors of African art" (Kasfir 1999: 68). Among them were the highly acclaimed multidisciplinary artists that included the Spaniard Pablo Picasso, the Frenchmen Henri Matisse, Georges Braque and Joseph Fernand Henri Léger, the German-born art collector Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who became one of France's most noble art historians, the Romanian avant-garde poet, essayist and performance artist Tristan Tzara, and the French surrealist writer and ethnographer Julien Michel Leiris.

By the time he opted to move to Salisbury, where he became the first director of the Rhodes National Gallery,[121] McEwen had already become a household name in European modern art circles. While serving at the arts office of the British Council for France between 1945 and 1955, he had organised major exhibitions for Europe, the Americas and Australia (Skogh

[119] McEwen was against the mass production and reproductions that artists might be attempted to engage in to meet the demands of the tourist market. Therefore, he would shield the artists from being 'contaminated' by the tourist art market.

[120] The problem with this categorisation is the implication that art comes from "a specific, bounded culture without outside influence" Larkin (2014b: 16). This is a problematic term rooted in what Kasfir (1992: 41) refers to as the "legacy of the Victorian past" and is based on the "socio-evolutionary idea that some cultures are disappearing" which is not the case. The term is also based on the assumption that the precolonial African societies were isolated entities with unique material culture, yet we can trace contact with Asian and Middle Eastern traders along the Indian Ocean coast, for example, centuries before the Europeans arrived on the continent, and that contact would have impacted on their practice somehow.

[121] The bequest of £30 000 "in trust of the people of the colony" to establish an art gallery and art museum in Salisbury by Cecil John Rhodes's friend and colleague, Sir James McDonald, in 1943, as highlighted on the National Gallery of Zimbabwe website, could have had influence on the naming of the institution. Established under the National Gallery Act of 1952, the National Gallery "was designed by a local architect firm, Montgomerie and Oldfields, students of Le Corbusier, the Swiss-French pioneer of architectural modernism" (Zvomuya 2021) and its construction was overseen by the Salisbury City Council. Frank McEwen was appointed the Director of the Rhodes National Gallery in 1956 and oversaw the completion phases of the construction process. The National Gallery was officially opened on 15 July 1957. The name of the institution changed to the National Gallery of Rhodesia in 1972, a year prior to McEwen's resignation. For more, see: Hellman, A. 2016.

2001). Art lovers in London were able to see a show that featured the works of Picasso and Matisse as McEwen brought their work to the British capital.[122] His impeccable curriculum vitae as a curator included the massive *French School 1900-1950* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1951 (Ritchie 2016). Moreover, between 1938 and 1956 he had established himself as an art reviewer and art historian in Paris. He also briefly lectured at the Ecole du Louvre.

The British colony of Rhodesia was not the first African adventure that McEwen was to embark on. He had spent the war years of the early 1940s in French-occupied Algeria, serving as the liaison officer at the Allied Forces Headquarters (The London Times 1994). It is interesting to note that same colonial Algeria also left an indelible mark on the life of Martinican-born Frantz Fanon, the revolutionary psychoanalyst and political philosopher who laid the foundation of the Black Consciousness ideology and movement. While in exile, albeit a few years after McEwen had left Algeria, Fanon fought on the side of the Algerian national liberation movement against France. Although McEwen might have come to Rhodesia "to carve a niche for himself in the stone sculpture tradition" (Sibanda 2018, personal communication, October 9) as the 'discoverer' and promoter of an 'authentic' art form in a nation he believed to have 'no art tradition', the idea of his founding a non-racial art school and promoting local Black artists could have been born out of what he saw as the unfair treatment of Algerians by the colonial power, or years spent in the art institutions of multiracial Paris. According to Yaëlle Biro, an associate curator of African art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, McEwen "had grown disenchanted during the 1950s with the European art scene and, especially, with the school of Paris, with which he was closely associated" and therefore "in African art, McEwen found a source of artistic renewal" (2014: 39). Biro elaborates that he believed the National Gallery would be successful considering its location and the connections he had. However, by focusing on and promoting art by the indigenous peoples he ended up incensing the white Rhodesian establishment, which desired to cling onto the ideology of racial segregation.[123]

McEwen's greatest achievement was to oversee the completion phase of the construction of a world-class art gallery in Rhodesia and to bring the world's attention to the institution through

[122] Albeit not necessarily for the first time as the two artists and others had been included in Roger Fry's Manet and the Post-Impressionists exhibition in November 1910.
[123] I discuss this further later in this chapter when I talk about I.C.A.C.

exhibitions[124] that featured respected modern European artists and works from other parts of the world. Tied to the gallery was the establishment of the non-racial Workshop School for art at a time when the ideology of white supremacy prevailed in the politics of Rhodesia and South Africa, two neighbouring nations with a significantly large population of whites in the region. As a disciple of Gustave Moreau's teachings that "discouraged direct instruction, instead of reaching one's inside for inspiration and creativity" (Kasfir 1999: 68), he gave the artists at the institution the leeway to express themselves creatively.

In initiating such a project on the continent, he was in the company of the Frenchman Romain Desfosses who founded the *atelier d'art* "LeHangar" in Elisabethville, Zaire (now Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo); Father Marc Stanislas, the Belgian founder of the Ecole St. Luc (later Academie des Beaux-Arts) in Kinshasa, Zaire; Frenchman Pierre Lods who started the Ecole de Peinture Poto-Poto in Brazzaville, Congo Republic; Portuguese architect and painter Pancho Guedes in Mozambique; Peder Gowenius of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, who started the Rorke's Drift project in the 1960s, and many other expatriates who opened art schools on the continent of Africa. They all consciously assumed the role of the father figures and "believed in an innate African artistic imagination, one radically different from Europe" (Kangai and Mupondi 2013: 196). To add to this list of white males were women like Margaret Trowell, who was the director of the Makerere School of Art in Uganda, and Ulla Gowenius, who co-founded the Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre. They all felt it was their calling or duty to help reawaken the talent they believed to be concealed in African memory – passed on from one generation to the next – and to nurture or shepherd it to fruition. Thus, their Workshop Schools appeared to connect to art practices before the conquest of African social formations, even though the artistic productions in these centres were centrally influenced by occidental art education, or at times by the presence of the works of European masters in their workstations (Fillitz 2012). Their mode of operation followed the British colonial model of 'Indirect Rule' in which the coloniser seemed to put faith in the existing local structures of traditional chieftainship. However, "compared to other workshop operators and patrons in other parts of Africa, McEwen managed, but did not play the artist role himself, or put an artist in charge" (Kasfir 1999: 78). This was surprising because

[124] As indicated on the National Gallery of Zimbabwe website, McEwen is said to have organised in the region of 80 exhibitions in the Rhodes National Gallery's first five years. These included regular loans from institutions like the National Gallery in London and Tate Modern, among the oversees lenders.

he was also a gifted painter (Zilberg 2012). His workshop outlasted many. Its model still lives on.

An ever-widening rift between McEwen and the white Rhodesian art community, especially in Salisbury,[125] which accused him of sidelining them, and later the Smith-led regime which targeted McEwen for his socialist inclinations, saw him becoming discontented with life in Rhodesia. In 1973, he resigned, packed his bags, and left for England, marking an end to a 15-year voyage as the director of the National Gallery. For a few more years he continued to promote Zimbabwean stone sculpture from his new base. On his death, McEwen, who was also a collector of art, left a collection of 44 pieces[126] of stone sculpture and pottery that included works by some of the artists he had worked with – Joram Mariga, Locardia Ndandarika, Sylvester Mubayi, Bernard Matemerera, Henry Munyaradzi, and Nicholas Mukomberanwa. "The sculptures in his collection clearly follows his interest in Primitivism and African 'myths' and 'magic'. Unfortunately, the collection was donated to the Museum of Mankind in 1996, by his widow Ann McEwen. It is now in the custody of the British Museum" (Muncke 1997:10).

[125] Like South Africa at the time, Southern Rhodesia had segregatory policies. Instead of keeping on exhibiting art by white European masters and that of white Rhodesians, McEwen upset the status quo by promoting sculpture by the local Black artists from the Workshop School at the National Gallery.

[126] Of the 44 pieces, 37 are stone sculptures and one wood, with the remaining six being unusual clay sculptures. For someone who turned down an artist like Job Kekana, whose main medium was wood, it is surprising that McEwen would have Kingley Sambo's wood sculpture in his collection. A detailed breakdown and analysis of the work in the collection, and the artists involved, is offered by Jonathan Zilberg in 'The Frank McEwen Collection of Shona Sculpture in the British Museum' (2006).

Fig. 3.1. Edom Ndoro. Untitled. Circa 1968 Serpentine. Image: The British Museum.

The sculpture in Fig. 3.1 by Edom Ndoro is in the Frank McEwen Collection. Its medium is the green serpentine commonly used by the Zimbabwe stone sculptors. A closer look at it reveals combined human attributes (arms with fingers, breasts, a stomach, and folded legs), and animal features, those of an eagle in this case (the head with a crest, the eyes and a beak, with the hidden hand resembling a wing). These are typical characteristics of the work carved by artists in the National Gallery Workshop started by Frank McEwen, as Director of the National Gallery.

### 3.3. Frank McEwen in art history

No other individual has written more about Frank McEwen over the years than the Zimbabwe-born cultural anthropologist Jonathan Zilberg.[127] Therefore, in assessing McEwen's role in creating a modern art canon in Zimbabwe I draw from the writings of several other authors who are either in agreement with Zilberg or challenge his position on the subject by identifying more with McEwen's thoughts. Through a critical engagement of McEwen's writings, Zilberg's Ph.D. thesis titled: *Zimbabwean Stone Sculpture: The invention of a Shona tradition* reveals "the complexity subsumed in the construction of a tradition rooted in essentialist conceptualizations of ethnicity and history and heavily inflected by early modernist and symbolist ideas of art as sacred" (1983: iii). The author disputes McEwen's claim that he was working with untrained artists (Zilberg 2012). Together with artist and writer Pat Pearce, Zilberg writes extensively about how McEwen dismissed the role of early missionaries by choosing to ignore their contributions in the development of art and in grooming a crop of sculptors whom he dismissed as mere woodcarvers (Pearce 1993; Zilberg 2006). It is this claim which I build on to illustrate – in the fourth and fifth chapters – that this development kept certain artists out of the canon and consequently at the peripheries of the nation's mainstream art history. Likewise, their contributions as artist-teachers have barely been recognised by art historians who have not attempted to contest McEwen's legacy.

Categorising Zimbabwe stone sculpture as a "bourgeoise commodity", Zilberg states the three conditions that provided fertile ground for the art form's rise, which are that: it was a cultic phenomenon, it had no relation to modern art, and there was no local antecedent to the art form in modern times (Zilberg 2012).[128] McEwen's own words appear to confirm Zilberg's

[127] It is important to note, if only in passing, that in his paper 'The Three Conditions in the Invention of Shona Sculpture' (2012), Jonathan Zilberg goes to the extent of presenting an image of his mother, flanked by First Generation 'Shona' Sculptors Joseph Muli, Joseph Ndandarika, Nicholas Mukomberanwa and John Takawira, to prove that not all white Rhodesians were against the Director of the National Gallery's initiative to promote stone sculpture, as Frank McEwen himself claimed. To make his point, Zilberg declares, "I react with such vitriol when I read the standard junk, academic and popular McEwen promoted, about how white Rhodesians universally despised Shona art and did everything they could to destroy his project" (2012: no page)

[128] In agreement with Jonathan Zilberg's claim that 'Shona Sculpture' was born a "bourgeoise commodity" is Marion Arnold who concludes that 'Shona Sculpture' is not really traditionally Shona but has a complex identity and is the product of a transitional society, in which the motivating influences have been commercial and European" (Schofield 1981: 49). This, despite Schofied describing Arnold's book, *Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture*, as "sympathetic to the subject" (ibid). Also, in agreement with this view is R.S. Roberts who states, "What is indicated, unfortunately, is a 'hot house' of European-inspired production motivated by commercial or 'arty' considerations, in a small segment of the country conveniently focused on Harare as the art and curio centre of the country" (1982: 53).

assertion. Writing on stone sculpture in the catalogue of the inaugural exhibition at the National Gallery in 1957, McEwen stated that, "From the beginning it was obvious also that, in a country where there was no art, neither traditional nor contemporary, a school must be made to arouse latent talents and to form a new, non-traditional culture." This is a sentiment that he was to repeat over the years, either because he genuinely believed in the claim that the country had had "no art" prior to his arrival, or he was just consistent in peddling the fictional narrative he had invented.

Having made this claim at the inauguration of the National Gallery's first exhibition, *New Art from Rhodesia,* in 1957, McEwen repeats it in 1963, describing Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) as "a country where there was no art, neither traditional nor contemporary" (Seeber 1980: 44). He reiterated this in 1972, stating that "apart from the stone carvings of Great Zimbabwe (ca. 1500 A.D.) there seems to have been almost no carving in the region. Artistic spirit of the area had been displayed only in its superb music" (McEwen 1972: 8). In agreement with McEwen is Monica Seeber, a researcher and consultant, who states that, "the black population of Rhodesia was, in 1957, artistically 'barren'. The Shona peoples, the largest tribal group in the country, had a rich tradition of music and dance, but practiced no visual art form; although their ancestors had been stone carvers, the Shona had not been active sculptors for at least two hundred years" (1980: 44). She states this, even though Cyrene and Serima Mission were in operation a few decades prior to 1957. Lisa Muncke finds the way McEwen had to develop that "mythology and folklore of his own" fascinating (1997: 9). Even though he always appeared to be regurgitating what his artists had told him about the work, McEwen must have devoted time and effort to learning about the culture of the Shona people as that would have been a necessary precondition for him to sell and sustain that narrative.

In his Ph.D. thesis titled *Following the Stone: Zimbabwe Sculptors Carving a place in the 21st Century Art Worlds*, Lance L. Larkin highlights "how the stone sculpture was framed by European patrons as a Modernist art that valorised indigenous beliefs in contrast to the Rhodesian colonial regime's oppression" (2014b: ii). As someone with connections in the Western world, McEwen was able to provide "venues for validation of black Africans' creativity within museums and galleries—the 'fine art' world" (Larkin 2014b: 239), and "most reviewers (and patrons) have accepted these meanings and re-inscribed them, in effect creating a tradition heavily based in European fantasies of Africa" (Zilberg 1994: no page). I take this line of thought further by highlighting that McEwen's approach and judgement were not just a personal initiative and therefore all responsibility should not be heaped on him. As a white man

born and raised in the West, he was the product of a system, and of the colonial project that perceived art from Africa, and that of other places outside Europe, through Western Eurocentric eyes and thought that fetishised and valorised such products. He was a product of the time.

Even if we were to be persuaded to maintain McEwen's claim that he worked with untrained artists and therefore produced 'authentic' art, an idea which has been challenged by Pearce and Zilberg in separate writings, Marshall Mount, in his book *African Art: The Years Since 1920s* makes a compelling argument that McEwen's claim is compromised by the museum environment where the artists worked and received criticism, which had on display paintings and sculptures from Europe, and that no artist working in such surroundings could afford to remain uninfluenced by the unfamiliar styles and techniques (1973). A consideration of these thoughts and arguments makes Zilberg (1995: 3) reach the conclusion that "'Shona Sculpture' provides an unusual case in which we can examine authenticity, as it is simultaneously accepted in some quarters as a modern African ethnic art form distinct from tourist art, while rejected in other quarters as a species of tourist art in disguise." What is somewhat clear about this art form is the convergence of "two strands of modernism, one based in indigenous culture and the other in foreign-driven institutions – [which] variously coexisted as separate platforms for artistic creativity, but they are simultaneously intertwined" (Salami and Visona 2013: 4). This applies to McEwen's Workshop School at the National Gallery, as well as the workshops at Tengenenge and the Cyrene Workshop, as all had white patrons.

In assigning much credit to McEwen for the birth of the stone sculpture art form and its promotion based on the mythical notions advanced to validate it as Zilberg does throughout his writings, and going to the extent of dismissing the artists' spiritual explanations as "unrealistic mystification of creativity" (Zilberg 1996: 191), what is lost is the agency of the artists who were part of his workshop or those at Tengenenge and elsewhere. In addressing this issue, which appears to elude the author, I find the Zimbabwean educationist and psychoanalyst Constantine Ngara's insights quite helpful. In a paper titled 'Creative vision and inspiration of Shona stone sculptors', Ngara, who has carried out studies on the correlation between creativity and giftedness among the Zimbabwean stone sculptors, argues that creativity has a social context and as such the idea of talking to stones or listening to their inner spirits for guidance, as claimed by some of the artists, are constructions of reality for the artists in their local environment. Ngara elaborates that Shona culture views talent as *shavi* (spirit for-) which is "characterised by immensity and intensity of motivation, passion and energy of the individual. Hence, talking with stones expresses extra cognitive phenomena responsible for producing

creativity" and therefore fulfils the assertion psychoanalysts tend to agree on "that creative individuals have incredible insights that can significantly inform us about the development of their talents" (Ngara 2010: 190). This is a theme I expand on as I also challenge Zilberg on his grasp of Shona culture, albeit I do so not necessarily to validate McEwen's claims and explanations.

In a paper titled 'The myth of Shona Sculpture' (1993), Carole Pearce makes a damning critique of the artists who came out of the early workshops in Zimbabwe. Be it at Cyrene and Serima, or the National Gallery School, the artists were never taught history of art or critical appreciation of their work and that by others. These artists could produce 'traditional' or 'religious' work as required by their patrons and the market, but they had no knowledge of the criteria applied in the selection and censorship of their work. Pearce therefore concludes that the methods applied by the promoters of modernist Black art left the artists "in a terrible blindness." Of McEwen in particular, the author says he advised the artists under his stable to abandon realism and express Shona myths, thereby heavily restricting them from experimenting and being creative. In summary, Pearce laments, "although artists speak through interviews, the interviewers and commentators are invariably White. Black Zimbabweans have yet to produce an independent aesthetic critique of 'Shona Sculpture'" (1993: 94). It is a sentiment I agree with and would argue is not restricted to artists, considering the dearth of Black art historians and critics from the country. On the matter, writer Alois Vinga sums it up as follows:

> In attempting to find a lasting solution to the dilemma Doctor Tony Mhonda observes that unless and until indigenous Zimbabweans become patrons of our own art and literature, we shall continue to ask questions. We need to demystify the myths of Zimbabwean stone sculpture and award it its true identity and definition (2016: online).

It is unfortunate that to this day, there are only a handful of Zimbabweans interested in art history and based in foreign institutions. None of the local universities offers the degree programme.

### 3.4. The International Congress of African Culture (I.C.A.C.)

McEwen worked hard to elevate and promote African art, and the image of the National Gallery on the world stage. One such initiative that managed to capture the world's attention was the International Congress of African Culture (I.C.A.C.) which he organised and hosted successfully at the then Rhodes National Gallery from 1 to 11 August in 1962. Subtitled the

"First Biennial International Congress of African Culture", the conference encompassed visual art, music, dance, and architecture and "was the first congress on the broader subject of African culture to be held on the continent" (Murray 2018: 74). The main attraction was a large exhibition of sculpture which opened on 1 August and lasted until 30 September.[129] Of that exhibition, "McEwen claimed it was to correct the anomaly of exhibitions of African art being held outside Africa" (Nzewi 2013: 217). Thus, the conference was important in centring Africa, and importantly so on African soil. According to art historian Daniel Magaziner, "the conference had two underlying purposes: first, to exhibit and examine African traditional art, and second, to consider the impact of African art and culture on the twentieth century beyond the continent" (2015: 274).

The conference, which saw experts on African art and culture from around the world descending on Salisbury, was attended by 38 delegates from three continents. They included Alfred Barr, who was the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, U.S.A.; William Fagg of the Department of Anthropology at the British Museum; Pancho Guedes, a Portuguese architect based in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), Mozambique; William Bascom, the director of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, U.S.A.; Jean Laude from the Sorbonne in Paris, France; Roland Penrose, a surrealist painter, co-founder and president of the Institute of Contemporary Art (I.C.A.) in London, accompanied by photographer Lee Miller; James Porter from Howard University, Washington; Pearl Primus, a dancer and choreographer from the U.S.A.; Udo Kultermann, author of various books on modern architecture; Vincent Akwete Kofi from the Winneba Teacher Training College, Ghana; the Romanian/French Dadaist poet and performance artist Tristan Tzara; John Russel, a critic for *The Sunday Times* at the time; Selby Mvusi, a South African artist and educator who was based in Kumasi, Ghana; Hugh Tracey, a South African musicologist; Pierre Guerre, a collector from Marseille, France, and the Nigerian historian and vice-chancellor of the University of Ife, Saburi O. Biobaku.[130]

[129] According to Percy Zvomuya (2020), the "main show was accompanied by satellite exhibitions, which demonstrated 'African influences on the School of Paris and consequent influences on international schools'; 'African influences in Brazil'; 'African influences in the West Indies'; 'African influences on North American Negro art' and 'Contemporary African art from most parts of Africa (south of the Sahara)."

[130] Critiquing the list of attendants, the Nigerian art historian Okechukwu Odita states that the festival was run and dominated by Western Europeans applying Western philosophy on how Africans should investigate their own heritage (Odita 1987). For more on I.C.A.C., see National Gallery of Salisbury, Rhodesia. 1962.

Fig. 3.2. Frank McEwen (dressed in black and kneeling) poses for a photo with some of the 38 delegates at the International Congress of African Cultures at the Rhodes National Gallery (now National Gallery of Zimbabwe) in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, in 1962. (Source: Simbao et al. 2018: 6).

By then, the conference could only be compared to the "*Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs* in Paris in 1956 and Rome in 1959" (Murray 2018: 74), as no event of such magnitude had taken place on African soil, even in the newly independent states of Ghana and Nigeria, and yet it was taking place in a British colony a few years before Smith's regime unilaterally and illegally declared independence from Britain (Zvomuya 2017). Despite the fact that the congress took place in a country still firmly under the grip of colonialism, in an institution under the directorship of a Briton, and "funded by a British ruled white supremacist state" (Magaziner 2015: 274), a closer look at the exhibition and the subject it engaged with, and a scrutiny of the invited guests "allow us to redefine the event as more subversive, almost anticolonial in tone" (Biro: 2014: 39). Therefore, it is not surprising that Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, the Nigerian curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, credits McEwen's exhibition for the conference as having "instituted a format of large-scale exhibitions in Africa, which was built upon and expanded at the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar (Senegal) in 1966" (Nzewi 2013: 217). In agreement

with this sentiment is Odita (1987) who states that important lessons were drawn for conferences that followed on the continent. However, I.C.A.C.'s stature in African art history was eclipsed by Leopold Senghor's Festival of African Art and Culture (F.E.S.T.A.C.) in Dakar in 1966 (Zilberg 2012) due to the writings generated by the latter. As such, quite contrary to Magaziner's (2015: 276) claim that "at Salisbury the ethnologists' primary concern was how to prevent African artistry from deteriorating under pressure from tourism and industrialisation, which combined to produce what McEwen called 'airport art'",[131] I.C.A.C. was a ground-breaking event that set the pace and imagined the course of art events on the continent many years after it. It was futuristic.

Highlighting what he describes as "the conference's disconnect", Magaziner queries McEwen's positionality[132] in remarking on "our great African culture" in his opening remarks for the congress (2015: 275). The art historian also points out that the work selected by William Fagg for the exhibition "was only from Western and Equatorial Africa"[133] yet it was supposedly "representing 'ancient' African achievement" (Magaziner 2015: 275) with nothing from southern and East Africa. Although I agree with the art historian on the lack of representation for East Africa, and would even add the omission of North Africa, for a discourse that centred the continent, Biro highlights that the "Non-Traditional African Art" segment of the exhibition featured artists such as Kingsley Sambo[134] and Thomas Mukarobgwa, who were from McEwen's Workshop School at the National Gallery, and the congress also showcased the works of Mozambique's Alberto Mati (2014: 41). The region was under-represented, but to speak of the absence of art from southern Africa as though it was completely left out of the picture is not an accurate depiction of what transpired. Nonetheless, "comments from contemporary artists who attended showed they were not consulted from the planning stages" (Odita 1987: 345).

[131] According to Hay (2008: 124) categorisations such as 'airport art' are based on the perceptions of "modern consumers of Euro-America, and nowadays, Asia as well".
[132] Frank McEwen was a white man, a British national, and therefore an outsider when it comes to African culture.
[133] The "Ancient African Art" section showcased art from Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo. Most of the work had been borrowed from African, European, and American lenders. The section on "African Influence upon Western Schools" featured several works borrowed from Penrose, a Picasso specialist. The works included Picasso, Brancusi, Paolozzi, and others. For more, see Biro, Y. 2014.
[134] According to Elizabeth Randles, McEwen compared Sango to German Expressionist Kokoschka in terms of conception, texture and pigment, but qualified this comparison with a remark "… there is no direct influence, but phenomenon which makes art a mystery" (1997: 71).

The timing of the congress and the unfolding political developments in Rhodesia posed a huge challenge for McEwen.[135] However, he hoped that the congress would "inspire more understanding, but in Rhodesia at that time exhibiting African and Western artists together as equals and highlighting the influence of Africa on Western culture were perceived as subversive" (Biro 2014: 41). Pat Pearce, the late England-born artist and writer, who was based in Rhodesia at the time and who assisted McEwen with logistics during the congress, revealed some of the obstacles the National Gallery's director faced at the time, which threatened the success of the event. Firstly, "African nationalism was gaining momentum and none of the authorities (including the Board of the National Gallery) wanted to have a congress of this nature in Salisbury" (Pearce 1998: 22). Secondly, even when the conference got underway, the whites in Salisbury paid no attention to it, and historian Terrence Ranger had to write a letter to the *African Daily News* lambasting them for not attending and reminding them that "Zimbabwe is not just ruins" (Zilberg 2012). Even though the *African Daily News* covered the event extensively, the state-owned *Rhodesia Herald* hardly reported on it. Finally, when the congress was underway, there was an incident in which a white café owner opposite the National Gallery refused to serve coffee to the Ghanaian guest Vincent Kofi, and the incident was reported in the *African Daily News* under the headline "No coffee for Kofi". Despite all the obstacles, Pearce concluded that the conference was "a new experience in complete integration and national equality inside the walls of the National Gallery. It was an oasis" (Pearce 1998: 22-23).

Besides the I.C.A.C., McEwen also organised big concerts and parties at the National Gallery. The Hiroshima Panels exhibition by the Japanese couple Iri Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu opened at the National Gallery in November 1957.[136] Herbie Mann and his Afro-Cuban jazz orchestra were brought to Rhodesia's capital in 1960 (Rhodesia Herald 1960). He did his best to educate the people in Salisbury through public lectures at the gallery, opening a library, and showing different films. However, such activities were only accessible to people in and around Salisbury, in an otherwise predominantly rural society (Garlake 1987). McEwen was quite consistent when it came to organising exhibitions, which was the primary motive of opening

[135] Since 1962, Southern Rhodesia had been under the leadership of a hardline conservative party which, when pressured by Britain to accept Black majority rule, went on to declare the nation a republic on 11 November 1965, effectively cutting ties with the mother country, and leading the United Nations to impose sanctions on the country.
[136] As stated on the exhibition flier supplied by the NGZ, the show captured the horror of the atomic bomb which fell on Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945. The body of work was composed of ten panels of about 7.3 m x 1.8 m. On them were paintings of nude dead and dying figures in ink on rice paper. The panels were completed by Maruki and Akamatsu in January 1956. They had been exhibited widely in Japan and Europe before making it to Southern Rhodesia.

the gallery anyway. In the first seven years of operating, the National Gallery had hosted at least 10 exhibitions per year, bringing the total to no less than 70 (Rhodesia Herald 1964).

### 3.5. The Workshop School

When the Rhodes National Gallery opened in 1957, the institution had a Board of Trustees that "envisaged the gallery as a place for showing European art" (Brokensha 1994: 99). In the beginning McEwen fulfilled this ambition by bringing in exhibitions of some of Europe's most accomplished modern artists of the time. The inaugural exhibition was titled *From Rembrandt to Picasso*. It included masterpieces by European artists within that expanse of time, the likes of Moore, Matisse and Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, and a selection of Italian Renaissance artists (The Herald 2017). It was followed by other exhibitions of European masters that were borrowed from institutions like Tate Gallery, the National Gallery in London and Musée du Louvre. He also exhibited the works of white Rhodesian artists including Thomas Baines,[137] a man who arrived in Rhodesia armed with a gun and a paintbrush (Ranger 1997). Baines portrayed vacant lands like the one in Fig. 3.3. The work appears to suggest that the British colonisers occupied land that was being was unoccupied and not even yet 'discovered' by the locals.[138] In this 1959 painting he depicted the two-channel rapids above Cahora Bassa to the north-east of present-day Zimbabwe.

[137] According to Terence Ranger, "Baines went on to become the main producer of visual images of the nineteenth century Rhodesian landscape. Reproduced in huge numbers, his paintings have come to shape our own imagination of the time and space" (1997: 61).
[138] To use the colonisers' favourite word, like in saying "David Livingstone discovered the Victoria Falls", failing to acknowledge the locals who led him to the majestic Mosi-oa-Tunya.

Fig. 3.3. Thomas Baines. Date unknown. Title unknown. Source: ZimFieldGuide.com.

In trying to meet the expectations of the Board, McEwen had paid very little attention to the indigenous arts, which he could have not known by then. However, as time passed, and sensing that the institution was not truly representative of the nation, McEwen saw an opportunity to shift the status quo. “In pursuit of the idea that the African must come back to the vernacular, traditional art and innovate it, without relying on stylistic borrowings from Europe or North American art” (Fillitz 2002: 216), he started an art workshop at the gallery which was a “manufactory for stone sculpture, a local idiom” (Biro 2014: 39). He immediately became a champion of indigenous artists by promoting the art coming out of the new school, to the dismay of the art-loving Rhodesian white minority who were keen to keep the nation’s majority Blacks at the bottom of the country’s social ladder. As the arts academic John Picton states, “One cannot ignore that history, especially when colonial education systems informed by apartheid deemed art not a fit subject for black African people” (2005: 7).

For someone who had attended one of the finest art schools in Paris where he had trained in art history and painting, McEwen surprisingly had little admiration and respect for formal art education. He saw art schools as formal institutions that destroy art by smothering it at its birth by requiring students to conform to rigid set standards that included adhering to outdated curricular and enforced obligatory hours of attendance. As he once remarked, “any person with

a degree of manual skill, whether creative or not, can remain in an art school and dilute and distort its collective atmosphere while promoting the general plagiary" (McEwen 1968: 88). As such, the workshop he founded at the National Gallery was the antithesis of that system. It had no curriculum to be followed and the artists would only attend when they felt the urge to do so. At the Vukutu Workshop,[139] an extension of the art school that he helped establish in the remote mountainous eastern highlands of Nyanga, he romanticised on the idea that the artists would work in the bush under their favourite trees.

Philosophically, McEwen was influenced by "Focillon's notions of the archaic and the primitive in art, as well as Carl Jung's theories of the collective unconscious" (Kasfir 1999: 68). He seemed to subscribe to the "romantic image of cultural purity" (Fillitz 2012: 213) and was therefore convinced "that the knowledge of stone carving had been dormant within the Shona people for many centuries", having been disrupted and suppressed by colonialism (Skogh 2001: 189). This was not surprising as McEwen was a product of "the western art world [which] wrongly considered that African art was something of the past – static, fixed in traditions, unchanging" (Murray 2005: 6). To him colonialism was a form of bondage that had disrupted or even destroyed the indigenous way of life, including artistic expression. As such, the workshop offered the artist the platform to break free from that bondage. "The workshop's purpose was to release the creative energies which were thought to lie deep within these individuals" (Kasfir 1999: 50). That is why, in his writings on the Workshop School and explanations on the work coming out of it, he always emphasised that his method was not to instruct the workshop artists, but to draw out their concealed 'spirit of art' by encouraging them. Certainly, like that of the missionaries and expatriates who founded art schools in Africa, McEwen's enterprise was seen to be trying to produce new artists in what the West percieved as "the cultural desert of Rhodesia" (Beier 1968: 89).

As the workshop flourished, McEwen enabled his artists to exhibit at the National Gallery, in the region and internationally. The exposure he afforded them was also accorded to stone sculpture artists from other Workshop Schools including Tengenenge and Chapungu. Thus, he

[139] While McEwen argued that the artist could work better in the natural setting, the real reason for him to habour or hide the artists at Vukutu in Nyanga was to keep them away from patrons, tourists, critics, and the media, lest they talk about their own work in a way that distorted his version of the 'authentic' art. It can also be argued that the move was motivated by the desire to keep them away from buyers and therefore to preserve his position as the sole middleman for National Gallery Workshop artists. The exploitative relationship between the early modern artists and their patrons within the context of Zimbabwe is one that Voti Thebe (in a personal interview with the author) alluded to, stating that the artists received only a smaller percentage of the sales.

played a crucial role of showcasing or promoting local art[140] from Rhodesia beyond the nation's boundaries for external validation as the work was hardly appreciated locally (Willet 1971). Even more significant is that some of their pieces became part of the collected image of the nation as they were acquired for the national institution's permanent collection. Thus, instead of splashing exorbitant amounts of money on expensive art as had happened in the acquisition of the £5000 paid for the Gainsborough painting in 1965 (Rhodesia Herald 1965), the National Gallery went for more affordable local art. Spending locally became crucial in the post-1965 austerity years. However, this does not hide the fact that McEwen still snubbed art from the Cyrene Mission Workshop which was already accepted in many parts of the world as it did not fall within his parameters of traditional 'Shona Sculpture'.

### 3.6. The Shona people and 'Shona Sculpture'

The stone sculpture produced in the McEwen-run Workshop School at the National Gallery became known as 'Shona Sculpture', a term believed to have been coined by McEwen himself in his attempts to convince the world that the art form originated "from Shona people's cultural traditions and folklores" (Ngara 2010: 182). Yet under this art form, artists from various backgrounds were pigeonholed in a single uniform cultural basket as though their individual creative potential and styles did not matter. To gain a better understanding of the contentious concept of 'Shona Sculpture', one needs a bit of context on who the Shona people are. As Pascal Mungwini points out, "doing justice to African traditions involves reading them within the context of their history" (2017: 49).

Shona is a collective noun denoting a congeries of Bantu-speaking ethnic groups that include the Zezuru, the Korekore, the Manyika, the Karanga and other smaller groups of people occupying the greater part of Zimbabwe, outside the western Matabeleland region (Hughes, Kuper and van Velsen 1954). These groups share many common cultural traits. Like 'African identity' which is, in part, a product of the European gaze (Appiah 1992, Skogh 2001),[141] Shona culture was only formed or named when the various ethnic groups encountered other nationalities and cultures. The term came into the frame only in the late nineteenth century, as an insult used to describe a group of people known as the 'vaNyai' (highland settlers) (Mazarire 2009: 2). The term, which was originally derogatory, is believed to have been coined and

[140] I employ the term 'local' loosely to include the work of artists from neighbouring countries who were part of Tengenenge and Chapungu.
[141] This view is not an attempt to take away the human dignity and respect from people of African descent.

bestowed by the Ndebele ethnic group that settled in the western part of the country in the first half of the nineteenth century.

A factor that distorts the history of the people collectively known as Shona is that their ethnic labels changed depending on which region of the country they migrated to. This is elaborated by Mazarire (2009: 4-5) thus:

> What could be 'Karanga' at Great Zimbabwe (1290-1450), could be 'Togwa' (1450-1690) in the north-west and part of the 'Mutapa' (1450-1902) in the Dande and Zambezi regions of the north, and later 'Rozvi' (1690-1830) in the south-west. The resurgence of the Karanga populating the central and southern parts of Zimbabwe is just another stage in an unfolding process.

However, these different groups had existed side by side sharing a common language, albeit with slight variations based on different dialects. They also shared some traditional customs and belief systems beyond the borders of present-day Zimbabwe into the surrounding countries. However, the British colonial administration cemented the use of the noun Shona as they employed it to define the above-named ethnic groups collectively. To try and eliminate the variations based on dialects the colonisers went a step further to introduce what was known as 'Standard Shona' into the school system,[142] something which has lasted to this day.

Because of its origin's associations with the various local ethnic groups encountering the Ndebele and later the British, "the name Shona is much more recent, although in historical terms the people to whom the term was applied were already in existence on the Zimbabwean plateau" for thousands of years (Mungwini 2017: 52). Historian Dennis Norman Beach says the name only came into effect in the 1830s, which is about half a century before the chartered company colonised Zimbabwe on behalf of Britain and its Queen (1984: 52). Importantly, Mungwini (2017: 55) acknowledges African agency in allowing this 'European construct' to take shape as the locals willingly accepted and owned the term. They embraced it to define that which differentiates them from the groups outside their cluster. Thus, the local groups were not just bystanders while the British were inventing and establishing their Shona collective identity.

Although they share a common culture, traditional customs and belief systems, colonial efforts to standardise their traditions failed dismally. To this day regional variations of these are visible if one closely scrutinises every one of these ethnic groups collectively referred to as the Shona. A person who speaks Chibudya from Mutoko in the north-east can hardly understand a Ndau individual from Chipinge in the south-east for example. Nonetheless, "in its modern sense

[142] For more on this, see Doke 2005.

Shona is no more than a reference to a dialect, and in its political context to the country's more populous ethnic group" (Mazarire 2009: 3). In this context, "Shona is the culture and language of over 80% of Zimbabwe's population whereas 14% are Ndebele and 5% are Whites, Asians, and others" (Ngara 2010: 182).

By naming the Workshop School's artistic production 'Shona Sculpture', McEwen simply followed what Kasfir (1984: 163) refers to as "an anthropological 'one tribe-one style' model". Thus, the art tradition had to be from a single ethnic group. However, as I highlighted earlier, the "misleading collective noun" (Mazarire 2009: 10) Shona covers several different ethnic communities with different dialects spread over the greater part of the Zimbabwean plateau. Within these groups are assimilated individuals from other parts of Zimbabwe and those from neighbouring countries who came into the country as farm labourers and mine workers in the colonial period. It is also difficult to tell the difference between Shonas and Ndebele in areas like Lower Gweru, for example, which are boundary areas and therefore areas of cultural diffusion where the ethnic groups intersect. In the essay "Contrasting Views on 'Shona Sculpture'", historian R.S. Roberts argues that except for a few individuals coming from different areas to enrol at Serima and Cyrene, there are hardly any 'Shona' sculptors from the rest of the country (Roberts et al. 1982), even in some of the areas identified as Shona, as the inhabitants of those places never engaged in that art form. The author elaborates, "the vast majority of all Shona sculptors … come from a narrow area bounded by Guruve, Chinhoyi, Harare, Rusape and Nyanga" and concludes that this fact even renders remote the intimate connection between 'Shona Sculpture' and Shona religion and culture, and attempts to link the art form with the shrines of "Great Zimbabwe far to the south and the Mwari cult far to the southwest" in the Matopo Hills (Roberts et al. 1982: 52-53). Julie F. Codell, an art historian, stressed the importance of naming, which she describes as "one of the pleasures of consumption as well as production", in securing "meaning that must be policed, asserted, and re-assessed" over time, which is evident through the ways the term continues to be contested (2003: 25-27). Therefore, though the term Shona hardly defines a community that is neither culturally nor linguistically homogeneous, employing the term offers an illusion of continuity with the past. Not so surprisingly, "people continue to use it because there is still value to the term in certain circles" (Sibanda 2018, personal communication, October 9).

### 3.7. The invention of a local modern art movement: a collaborative encounter

McEwen arrived in Southern Rhodesia when the colony had two already established and prominent missionary art schools in Canon Paterson's Cyrene and Father Groeber's Serima.

By then, artists like Joram Mariga and others, who had not attended the two schools, were already experimenting with stone (Skogh 2001: 185). Yet McEwen's name became so prominent in the art history of the nation, where he is seen as a cult figure of Zimbabwean art. What was it that he did for his legacy to end up overshadowing that of the priests who had arrived before him? How did he manage to make stone sculpture the nation's most dominant art form, eclipsing the painting tradition at Cyrene that had already exported work to external markets such as South Africa, France, the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom?[143] The answers to these questions lie in what he was able to do in his capacity as the cultural mediator between artists, their production and practice, and their audience, and how he understood the power of patronage tied to 'cultural capital' (Kasfir 1999). Compared to the missionaries who arrived before him, and were stationed in the countryside, McEwen, as the Director of the National Gallery, occupied a more central position in the nation's capital, where he had unlimited influence over what was happening in the nation's arts. The National Gallery was viewed as a focal point for arts in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Walker 1985).[144] Thus, his sphere of influence even expanded beyond the geographical boundaries of Southern Rhodesia. For the work of the local artists to be seen, understood, and appreciated by the world, someone had to theorise and promote it, even if it meant doing so in manipulative ways. Even though historian Roberts (1982) argues that McEwen merely popularised rather than analysed the work, it appears McEwen fully took advantage of his role to educate the world about the art form in a way he understood and deemed fit.

Even though McEwen did not start and teach stone sculpture, as that honour is given to Joram Mariga and other artists who were already practising it, he started something new in art education in the nation. The informal Workshop School he founded at National Gallery was different from the formal ones at Serima and Cyrene. It became the model replicated by other institutions in the country afterwards. Former curator of the National Gallery Zimbabwe and art historian Winter-Irving (1992: 12) explains:

> The tradition of informal art education which led to the development of the stone sculpture in Zimbabwe was established by Frank McEwen. … It continued at Tengenenge Sculpture Community near Guruve under the direction of Tom Blomefield.

[143] By the time the National Gallery opened in 1957, the artworks from Cyrene that had recently been exhibited in *The Stars Are Bright* exhibition that I discussed in the second chapter, were already stacked at the basement of the St Michael & All Angels' Church in Shoreditch where they were later discovered in 1979.
[144] The colonial federation, which was made up of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi) lasted for a decade (1953-1963). It collapsed with the impending independence of Zambia and Malawi.

> Today[145] it is fostered by the National Gallery, the Tengenenge Sculpture Community, by master sculptors and the more enlightened private gallery directors.

Thus, he initiated and left a legacy which continues to thrive. Through his efforts, stone sculpture coming out of his, and the other workshops, became the nation's most dominant contemporary art form for over four decades (Garlake 1987). The dominance of stone sculpture as Zimbabwe's prime art form was only broken by contemporary artists like Tapfuma Gutsa, who emerged with works with strong insight into culture, amalgamated stone, and wood, and tackled key sociopolitical issues (Lieros 2018, personal communication, October 13). That dominance is only rivalled by the recent surge in the use of found objects. Interestingly, most of the institutions continue to teach the artists informally.

Through his writings as a curator and an art historian, McEwen "managed to blur the boundaries of ethnography and patronage by establishing an intellectual framework for his sculpture to be interpreted within" (Kasfir 1999: 68). According to McEwen, 'Shona Sculpture' was premised on three pillars, namely the mysterious powers of the stone, Shona beliefs in the ancestors and the 'tribal spirits', and the idea that a Shona artist could only do well within his ancestral environment (1972). For the third pillar, McEwen elaborates, "a Shona artist may not thrive as a displaced person" (Kasfir 1999: 8). By stating that there had been no living tradition of sculpture and painting, neither traditional nor contemporary, in Rhodesia when he began by supplying painting materials and sculpting tools to the art gallery attendants (Willett 1971, Mackay 1966), "McEwen was not only actively denying and hiding the larger contribution of those predating local traditions. He was deliberately creating a contrary art form. As he framed it: I was the medium in providing the conditions for an authentic tribal African spiritual tradition" (Zilberg 2002: 20). Thus, with McEwen as its central figure, the National Gallery engaged in the creation of a contemporary local art movement (Sibanda & Broderick 2011). 'Shona Sculpture' is a modern art form with recognisable provenance (Willet 1971).

The artist and former curator of the National Gallery in Bulawayo, Jean Danks (1979) noted that most 'Shona' sculptors were Christians, having been converted to the religion and educated by the missionaries who had arrived in Rhodesia earlier than McEwen. The author singled out Joseph Ndandarika, who claimed that he had lost belief in the traditional doctors through religion and would turn to elders for the traditional folklore that informed his practice. The same could be said of Sylvester Mubayi, who was a member of the Mkaila Sect of the Apostolic

[145] The school at the National Gallery currently employs art teachers who work in a more formal way, adhering to a curriculum. However, art practice at Tengenenge is still quite informal.

Church. Because some of the sculptors were Christian converts like these two, they were likely to have either abandoned the traditional way of life completely or lived in the dual world integrating both tradition and Christianity as some of the Shona peoples presently do. Therefore, the old legends on 'Shona Sculpture' were conveniently revived without the conviction of the artists. Thus, "the mythology comes not from the artist but from an agent (McEwen in this case) concerned to market the work, legitimating it by means of claims that cannot possibly be true" (Picton 2005: 10). That emphasis "on authenticity[146] also put focus on sculptors as a group and not individuals" (Skogh 2001: 194). In the process of creating the impression that the artworks were created by an ethnic collective, individual artists' creative abilities and skills were ignored. Chewa motifs in the work of artists from Malawi and contributions of other immigrants were universalised as part of Shona culture.

Spear (2003) argues that the case for colonial invention has often overstated colonial power and its ability to manipulate African institutions to establish hegemony. In that manner the British Africanist historian Terence Osborn Ranger, whose extensive work covers post-colonial Zimbabwe, agrees that the precolonial and colonial are important historical epochs but goes on to argue that the thinking that a new individual was installed in Africa at colonialism is a myth (Ranger 1993). Both writers agree that tradition is a complex discourse in which the old ways have a bearing on the present. Therefore, to conclude that McEwen invented the 'Shona Sculpture' tradition is to assume that the local sculptors were just "passengers on the ship, or spectators rooted on the terraces" (Mungwini 2017: 64). It was their stories that he was telling the world. Most importantly it was they who embraced the way he was explaining it. Thus, presented with work of local artists and local folklores and myths, McEwen simply had to give primacy to a meaning which spoke "to the creative encounter between the European imagination of Africa and the African's perception of that vision" (Zilberg 2014:19). Therefore, the invention of 'Shona Sculpture' was a collaborative effort of McEwen and the artists he worked with.

To give McEwen sole credit for inventing the canon is to apportion too much power to him. His choices reveal his grooming and background as a typical white male Westerner subscribing to "selection's ideologically motivated constitution" based on European tastes (Salomon 1991: 334). He thought he was correcting or rewriting history, yet was unconsciously leaving the nation sitting with an unrepresentative and distorted narrow account of who contributed to the

[146] Ignoring that even the interaction with buyers leads to the fusion of cross-cultural influences.

development of modern art in the history of Zimbabwe. Tied to this was the gender imbalance, as the institution and the canon he established were dominated by males. Moreover, the practice was associated with a particular ethnicity, based on his idea or understanding of the Shona. As a purveyor of art and culture in the nation, McEwen silenced many other voices that should have been spotlighted.

### 3.8. A critique of McEwen's presentation of 'Shona Sculpture' to the world

An experienced curator, an art historian and art critic, McEwen was a shrewd listener and storyteller or narrator who was aware of the power of concepts like 'tribal belonging' and isolation, historicism and mysticism when employed in writings and explanations of Africa, and especially to construct 'authenticity' (Skogh 2001). The most meaningful way to explain art in African societies that the Western world considered to be 'primitive' was through traditional folklore and myths. That way the African societies and their artistic products would appear 'uncorrupted' by Western and other civilisations. Therefore, it is not surprising that when Joseph Ndandarika and Thomas Mukarobgwa shared Shona mythology and folktales on stones that were inhabited by spirits McEwen embraced it to ascribe meaning to the modern yet 'tribal' stone sculpture movement (Zilberg 2014). In an attempt to explain why the sculptors would base their work on the myths, Roberts et al (1982: 56) elaborate:

> Perhaps it has been the Westerner's taste for the exotic that encouraged sculptors to look for overt explanations in 'tribal folklore' and religion in their work, with the aim of increasing its appeal to a potential buyer. McEwen himself actively fostered this notion, perhaps in an attempt to root the movement in a 'tribal tradition' – in the eyes of the Western art world of the time, the only acceptable basis for any art form from Africa.

What seems indisputable is that the moment he learned about the folklore, McEwen knew he had been presented with the ideal ammunition to execute the story central to what became known as 'Shona Sculpture'. Thereafter, McEwen "used the idea to contend that his sculptors were merely reanimating 'the spirit in the stone' in the course of their work" (Morton 2012) and no one seemed to contest the notion at the time.

Even though the indigenous people of Zimbabwe had practised stone sculpture for generations, what was referred to as 'Shona Sculpture' was not a "nativist creation" as McEwen's influence was written all over it. The art had "no ritualistic or ceremonial function" (Winter-Irving 1992).[147] As soon as McEwen started the Workshop School, he exposed his students to the

[147] While this appears like a valid critique of the work, it is also problematic to assume that each time artists from Africa make work that it has a ritualistic or ceremonial function.

works of Picasso, Moore and other Western masters. International artists were brought to the Rhodes National Gallery for a six-month residency. They would work in the studio and then exhibit the outcome of the residency before returning home. The local artists, who were also working as employees of the National Gallery, helped mount and take down the exhibitions of the European masters, attended lectures and guarded the work (Zilberg 2012). Although this was done to stimulate local artists, they ended up "consciously or unconsciously absorbing influences, ideas and experiences" (Murray 2005: 6). As a result, sculptors like Mukarobgwa, and the Takawira brothers – John and Bernard – had far more in common with Western artists than previously understood (Zilberg 2002). There was no way their practice could remain localised and pure while operating under the circumstances described above. This sentiment is elaborated by Carole Pearce (1993: 86 and 105) who argues that:

> 'Shona Sculpture' owes its origin, form and content to the avant-garde aesthetic sensibilities of an Englishman. It was and is a wholly European, modernist art form taken over and used by black artists for their own ends. … 'Shona Sculpture' reflects, not traditional African values and forms, but the aesthetic preferences of McEwen and the market which his Workshop School created.

However, this connection between 'Shona Sculpture' and European modern art is something that McEwen would never admit publicly. In his numerous speeches, lectures and writings on the art form, he consistently attempted to conceal this link as he always enunciated it with strong references to Shona folklore and myths. That it had to be from a certain ethnic group was a convenient package to help market the art (Sibanda 2018, personal communication October 9).

He repeated the 'tribal fantasies' so often that the world bought into his idea. It was also music to Western ears that expected to hear such mythical stories underlying that which was considered a 'primitive' African art form. McEwen might have stuck to Shona myths for fear of alienating his audience, and not wanting to lose a market for the art form.

However, a comparison to European art forms did not always escape him at times. It was also McEwen who coined the term 'Afro-German expressionism' to account for Thomas Mukarobgwa's colour-rich and atavistic painting style (O'Toole 2018). Mukarobgwa, who was the workshop's first participant, and one of the few who specialised in painting instead of sculpture, remains "the best-known and most talented painter produced in the workshop" (Mount 1973: 120).[148] Mount dissects Mukarobgwa's *View You See in the Middle of a Tree*

[148] Besides Thomas Mukarobgwa, Joseph Ndandarika was the other prominent painter in the Workshop School, albeit he later turned to sculpture.

(Figure 3.4), a colourful landscape oil on board painting depicting interlocking spurs, and concludes that there is resemblance in the execution of the work to that of German Expressionists and the Post-Impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh, particularly in the "juxtaposition of highly saturated, contrasting colours which appear to have been applied with great verve and spontaneity. Contributing to the total pictorial effect is the use of impasto" (Mount 1973: 120). Interestingly, McEwen always dismissed suggestions that there was any degree of plagiarism in this art form and claimed that the similitude between German expressionist painting and the work from the Workshop School was just "an intimate human phenomenon dictated by laws of cosmic harmony" (McEwen 1968: 88). As he understood it, it could be the German expressionists who were drawing their inspiration from an 'innate African aesthetic' (Kasfir 1999: 69). After all, this had happened with Picasso and others who had turned "to outside cultures for stimulation and new ways of seeing" (Murray 2005: 6). Yet, as highlighted by Mount (1973), Mukarobgwa had exposure to Van Gogh's work on display on the walls of the National Gallery where he worked, and it just could not be mere coincidence that he signed his works with his first name, as had Van Gogh. These attempts by McEwen to invoke authenticity, even in painting, were made in a bid to elevate the art coming out of the southern African nation, and afford the art forms an opportunity to be appreciated beyond the borders of the country. "That way, he would not be challenged by European critics as the work was perceived not to be challenging Western cultural structures and establishment. Europeans love stereotypes" (Skogh 2001:183).

Fig. 3.4. Thomas Mukarobgwa, *View you see in the middle of the tree*, 1962, Oil on board. 60.4 x 60.4 cm. Source: Museum of Modern Art website.

McEwen was not alone in the game of manipulating and assigning meanings to African art and amateurish products from the workshops (Nicodemus and Romare 2008). Many other European expatriates who assumed the role of the go-between or broker altered the sociological, economic, political and aesthetic realities in framing and explaining the art to its new audience (Kasfir 1999). That is why there is hardly any sociopolitical commentary in 'Shona Sculpture' and other 'primitive' art traditions from various parts of Africa (Pearce 1993). McEwen and others were conscious of the fact that they were doing it for European viewers, patrons, art historians and critics who were not interested in art that engaged critical

contemporary issues.[149] "Hence you see works by Mukomberanwa, the Takawira brothers, Henry Munyaradzi, Colleen Madamombe, etc. being compared to Brancusi, Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Giacometti, Moore and Picasso" (Zilberg 1997: 32). The art historian concludes that in their writings Europe was always used as the standard to which works and art forms by African artists were compared, hence the categorisation emanated from the "European fantasies of Africa" (Zilberg 1994: 16).

McEwen intentionally invoked the "permanence of culture" theory[150] to explain his project to revive what he believed had been a "profound but destabilized ancient artistic background dating back hundreds of years" (Brokensha 1994: 99). In invoking the "timeless codes of behaviour" (Hountondji 1996: 60), he presented the Shona as people with a strong cultural consciousness, *vanhu vanotevera gwara rehungwaru*, that is, adhering to a cultural legacy (Ngara 2010: 186), referencing the existence of a great stone carving culture of Great Zimbabwe (ca 1500 AD) which he acknowledged had been lying dormant for centuries and was effectively disrupted by contact with external colonial cultures. He argued that "the deep penetration of Western influences during the last century due to explorers, missionaries, and colonizers was followed, contemporaneously, by the massive invasion of the technological world with almost no benefit from evolutionary developments" (McEwen 1968: 19). As such, there seems to have been no continuing tradition of carving in this region by the time he arrived (McEwen 1972). Thus, McEwen saw himself as the catalyst in place to awaken a sleeping giant. He "had come to promote 'Shona Sculpture' as both a revival of an ancient tradition and a cultural struggle in which the artists were reasserting a sense of identity" (Zilberg 2002: 106). That identity had to be directly connected to the ancient civilisation of Great Zimbabwe, even though the bird sculptures found at the site were not art for art's sake but were a form of cultural expression symbolising totems of the Mutapa or of Shona rulers (Mhonda 2004).

[149] Pearce's point is interesting when one considers that there were interesting sociopolitical developments at the time McEwen worked with the sculptors. There was racial segregation, Black people had lost their land, and skirmishes that evolved into a fully fledged liberation struggle had started. However, all that is not reflected in the discipline of 'Shona Sculpture'.

[150] According to this view, which Kwame Gyekye (Gyekye 1997: 233) calls "cultural revivalism", "the key to effectively addressing contemporary problems lies in reclaiming and revitalizing indigenous traditions that have been degraded and suppressed in the wake of colonialism. Therefore, there is need to contest European forms of thought and social organization upon colonized peoples." In the follow-up to his 2020 groundbreaking exhibition *Azibuyele Emasisweni*, academic, poet and sculptor Pitika Ntuli, in a discussion with Judge Albie Sacks, argued that unlike in quantum physics where ideas become outdated, in art ideas continue and develop, building upon the old. Therefore, there is always a need to return to the source as a reference point. However, there must be a good understanding, and a solid connection of the two. That understanding of the two appears missing in McEwen's imposition of the link.

By the time McEwen assumed the role of a Director at the Rhodes National Gallery, Rhodesia was already a thriving British colony. The concept of permanence of culture that he was advancing suggested that Zimbabwean tradition had had a continuous evolutionary development as though it had existed in isolation without any considerable outside influence (Skogh 2001). That way he was not necessarily saying something new, as African art has always been written about as though it was static and always the same, and most reviewers and patrons have accepted these meanings and re-inscribed them, resulting in the creation of traditions heavily based on fantasy (Willet 1971, Zilberg 2014, O'Brien 2013). Even precolonial Zimbabwe was not a monolithic state that could be explained in terms of the rising and falling of nations, itself an exercise in assigning "an order that is seldom there" (Kasfir 1992: 43), but it was so complex that its continuation could only be achieved through fragmentation, and its cultures continued through a process of replication and modification (Mazarire 2009). Moreover, during the colonial phase the nation had many immigrants from the neighbouring countries of Mozambique and Zambia who were mostly working on the farms and in the mines. Some came from as far as Malawi and Angola. Of these immigrants, some were key sculptors in what became canonised as 'Shona Sculpture'. Even from earlier centuries the influence of Khoe-Sān rock paintings, foreign porcelain brought in through long-distance trade on the Indian Ocean coast, and various Bantu groups' ceramic traditions on the ever-evolving cultures of the region cannot just be underestimated.[151] Great Zimbabwe also existed alongside other Zimbabwe cultures as seen through the numerous stone capitals dotted on the Zimbabwean plateau.

Besides marking their leaders' kraals with massive stone wall constructions, the precolonial nations that existed alongside Great Zimbabwe also had established ceramic and woodcarving traditions[152] in common. Based on the sizes, thickness of rim, styles and patterns inscribed on these ceramics, archaeologists and ethno-linguists can make a distinction between the traditions, namely Leopard's Kopje, Khami, Gokomere, Gumanye, Nyanga, Harare and Musengezi,[153] and assign these traditions to different ethnic groups. Besides their functional use for cooking purposes and storage of water, some of the ceramics were either used for

[151] In a recent paper titled 'New Perspectives on the Political Economy of Great Zimbabwe', Shadreck Chirikure highlights that Great Zimbabwe "participated in broader networks of circulation that incorporated the Indian Ocean rim" bringing in commodities from the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia and China. Imports from that trade included Indian and Chinese ceramics (2019: 161-2).
[152] Art historian Elizabeth Randles explains that "the art of woodcarving enjoyed a long history in traditional culture practiced with skill in the decoration of household and ceremonial objects" (1997: 72).
[153] Historians like Thomas Huffman and David Beach wrote extensively on these traditions in the 1970s.

ceremonial purposes or had a decorative function. The latter two reasons have been advanced to explain the possible purposes of the stone sculptures found at Great Zimbabwe. As such, it is surprising that ceramics in Zimbabwe have not been promoted as an art form linked to the nation's precolonial states. Had McEwen been interested in ceramics as an art form, he would have easily invoked the same permanence of culture doctrine in promoting it to the world and Zimbabwe would have been associated with that tradition. Thus, stone sculpture became the mainstream art form due to the tastes and preferences of an individual.

To McEwen art was a venture in which connections mattered. His advantage over other expatriates who were promoting art from within Rhodesia and other in other parts of Africa is that he had a strong network of friends and key people in the arts in Europe and the Americas. 'Shona Sculpture''s "only customers seemed to be white" (Willet 1971).[154] Besides knowing influential artists like Picasso, Moore and others, he was married to a wealthy woman named in Mary McFadden.[155] She raised by an affluent family in the business of collecting art, including that from Africa. As indicated by Gallery Delta's Helen Lieros, "the first Director of the National Gallery was able through his connections to establish the reputation of Zimbabwean art in Europe and the U.S.A., in particular the stone sculpture" (1992:15). This network of connections worked well for McEwen in the years before the heavy economic embargoes imposed on Rhodesia as a response to Ian Smith's U.D.I. in the mid-1960s. Dealing with the outside world became difficult in the post-U.D.I. years as Rhodesia increasingly became a pariah state. The isolationist policies affected every sector of society, including art. Moreover, the Rhodesian civil war was just beginning and was to escalate over the years.

McEwen's agency in promoting 'Shona Sculpture' should not be overlooked. He knew how best to package it. He was a good writer who communicated through various media that included articles in academic journals (1957, 1966, 1968, 1972 and 1991), newspapers and magazines, exhibition catalogues and interviews. Importantly, he knew "how to attract attention through provocative statements" (Joosten 2001: 12). In 1963, McEwen successfully presented 'Shona Sculpture' works at the Institute of the Commonwealth of Nations in London. Between 1967 and 1968 he embarked on an 11-month promotional tour of Rhodesian art in the

[154] This is an attempt to explain his superior reach over Guthrie and Blomefield in Rhodesia, and Guedes in Mozambique, and Stanislas and Desfosses in the then Zaire, among others. The individual who could rival him in terms of connections in the country and abroad is Canon Paterson. However, he was not in as strategic a position as Mcwen was.

[155] Mary McFadden is an American art collector, designer and writer. She married Frank McEwen in 1969. Having set up the Vukutu Workshop together, Mary is said to have sold art to more than twenty-nine countries. After divorcing McEwen, she went back to America where she started the clothing company Mary McFadden Inc. For more, see Leslie Bennetts, L. 1979.

United States of America. On that tour he delivered lectures at several universities. Following that visit, the Museum of Modern Art in New York had an exhibition on Rhodesian art in October 1968 (Rhodesia Herald 1968). Thus, McEwen played an important role in the development, theorising and marketing of Zimbabwean stone sculpture (Skogh 2001: 183). Art historian and curator Zilberg (2002: 107) explains:

> It must be acknowledged that through McEwen's agency, 'Shona Sculpture' and painting achieved unrivalled success in their initial and variable penetration of the inner sanctum of leading institutions of modern art like Institute for Contemporary Art in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Musée de la Ville de Paris, and Musée Rodin

In elaborating the significant role that McEwen and other brokers like him played in bringing world attention to Zimbabwean art and that of other regions in the world, Hirsch (1993) asks why Makonde art, for example, has not become better known and accepted, as the Inuit masks of the Eskimos, or Haitian art, and 'Shona' art from Zimbabwe. To which he asks and concludes:

> Could it be significant that each of the others had a North American or European sponsorship: James Houston for Eskimo Art, Frank McEwen for Shona, and DeWitt Peters for Haitian? Such 'calculated sponsorship' may be required for new art to find the status and audience for which there has been neither prior expectation nor preparation.

It seems the questions posed by Hirsch above had already been responded to by Willet (1971) who had observed much earlier that art produced in the workshops in Africa would probably have taken longer to be accepted as modern art in Western institutions, and to earn global recognition and prestige had it not been for the interventions of the external mentors.

The debate over who started 'Shona Sculpture' in Zimbabwe is almost dead as there is consensus on Joram Mariga being its founding father. For individuals like the Mariga and the Takawira brothers sculpting was a way of following in the footsteps of their elders, *kutevera muronga* (Ngara 2010: 186) or a form of heritage passed through the lineage, *nhaka youmhizha hwedzinza* (Mhonda 2004: 41). It was a tradition passed on in the families and that is why the practice had a sacred place in society. Importantly, McEwen was beyond doubt the initiator of the authenticity discussion within Zimbabwean art. That is why he is recognised as "a father in Zimbabwean art history" (Chikukwa 2018: 47). However, while more credit is given to him, the local sculptors' agency was key in arming McEwen with the Shona myths and folklore that enabled him to disseminate the art form to the world. He was working with artists like

Ndandarika who had been apprenticed to a *n'anga*[156] and to whom the supernatural was likely to be an important theme (Monda 2015c).

While Zilberg (1994: 2) argues that most of "the myths upon which these symbols are based, simply do not exist, especially in literature on Shona religion", I do not necessarily agree with him because he seems to miss a fundamental point when it comes to the traditional and spiritual aspects of the different Shona cultural practices. The art historian could have dug deeper into Shona myths around aspects like totems, black magic, and burial practices. Some of the beliefs and stories obtained in these domains are quite mysterious and therefore not easy to believe, especially so for someone who is not from that cultural group. The author should have reflected on his positionality.

Shona traditions are so rich that they do not only exist in literature. They are also oral. One of the ideas Zilberg dismisses is that of the spirits in the stone. Interestingly, based on his conversations with stone sculptors Ngara (2010: 190) asserts that "talking with stones simply expresses Shona artists' constructions of reality." Ngara also develops his argument by revealing that the raw materials of these sculptors are extracted from mountains that are generally considered sacred shrines, *makomo anoyera*, in Shona culture. It is also easier to understand why mountains are considered sacred when one understands that they harbour caves where important leaders like kings and chiefs are buried. Therefore, the spiritual connection, which McEwen capitalised on, is something that has never been in doubt. However, it should not have been allowed to become the only conceptual explanation for the stone sculpture. This explains why some Zimbabwean sculptors contest these categorizations and demand recognition as contemporary artists working, living, and having to survive against great odds in a transnational milieu (Kinsella 2005)

To this day some key figures in Zimbabwe's arts sector still embrace some of the convenient notions that were advanced by McEwen. For example, while celebrating the repatriation of a part of the Zimbabwe Bird from Germany, Dawson Munjeri the then Executive Director of the National Museum and Monuments of Zimbabwe, made the claim that "the creative genius of the anonymous sculptor of the Great Zimbabwe bird cannot be separated from his artistic offspring Joseph Ndandarika, Nicholas Mukomberanwa, or any of the contemporary artists" (Munjeri 1997: 15). Matenga (1998) and Sibanda (2004) also make that connection while Chikoore (2013) commends Marion Arnold (1986) for her suggestion that stone sculpture bases

[156] Shona noun for a Sangoma or traditional spiritual healer.

its semiotic ideas on the Great Zimbabwe tradition of sculpture. Singling out the "anonymous sculptor", as Munjeri does, is important in highlighting the often-ignored fact that even though most of the early African societies and cultures were mainly communal, they had individual artists even though we cannot name them. However, save for the use of a common medium in stone and the anthropomorphic features in both, the link is not as glaring as Munjeri would like us to believe.

Firstly, that the anthromorphic features exist in the soapstone birds found at Great Zimbabwe and in 'Shona Sculpture' might have something to do with the myths, folklore and totems common in Shona culture. However, earlier in this chapter I touched on the specific geographical spaces the stone carvers in Zimbabwe operate from, or areas where the practice is prevalent. Assuming that the Karanga people around Masvingo have a direct ancestry traceable to Great Zimbabwe, through the *Hungwe* totem for example (see my discussion on the Zimbabwe Birds in Chapter 2), it is very difficult to then understand why they did not inherit the tradition. How is it possible that the tradition then migrated to different ethnic groups in faraway areas to the north like Guruve, Seke and Murehwa, and almost completely deserted the Karanga around Masvingo? Secondly, considering that there are various Shona ethnic groups, as I highlighted earlier, Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika might not even be direct descendants of the cultural group that made the sculptures of Great Zimbabwe. After all, Ndandarika's father was of Malawian origin. As such, Munjeri's claim highlights the extent of gatekeeping practised by McEwen's successors, either at the National Gallery or in the Zimbabwean arts and culture sector in general, who have not attempted to contest his permanence of culture philosophy and many other ideas over the years. What they have done is to safeguard histories authored and authorised by McEwen, and the colonial system in general, further alienating the nation's arts and the ordinary people in the postcolonial state.

Another interesting anecdote was shared by Gallery Delta's co-founder Derek Huggins when he stated that Joram Mariga, whom he acknowledged was the initiator of the stone sculpture tradition, was living in a baobab tree out in the mountainous eastern highlands of Nyanga (Huggins 2018, personal communication, October 13). Mariga was an educated government employee earning a modest income enabling him to afford and have a proper residence where he lived with his family. He could have established that makeshift house on the baobab to help cement the mythical narrative of African art that was uncorrupted by European civilisation. Thus, in this case it was the artist himself who sold the image of still living most traditionally in the bush and being lucky to be 'discovered' by Pat Pearce who took his work to McEwen.

The latter took interest in it, and the 'Shona Sculpture' movement began. It all appears like a fairy tale.

The "Shona artist may not thrive as a displaced person. In foreign environments, because of his beliefs, he loses vital contact with his spirit world" (McEwen 1972: 8). This is one of the many controversial statements McEwen made while trying to explain the stone sculpture coming out of Zimbabwe to Western patrons. This was somehow contradicted by Gallery Delta's Helen Lieros, who still recalls a time she was selected to attend the 1990 Commonwealth Arts Festival and Symposium in New Zealand, together with four other artists who had come out of McEwen's stable of the 1960s, and some from Tengenenge. These were Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Bernard Takawira, Bernard Matemera and Locardia Ndadarika. She remembers them making work from white rocks local to the Pacific Ocean island nation. This was in a workshop with the aboriginal Maori artists. There was no serpentine rock in the area. In Lieros's words, "I saw Africa being transported to the New Zealand panorama, with sheep in the background" (Lieros 2018, personal communication, October 13). This proves that these artists could make work anywhere in the world. What would confine these sculptors to their local environment would only be the resource, their favourite serpentine stone.

In conclusion, in providing explanations and theories for the stone sculpture movement in Zimbabwe, McEwen carefully focused his attention on who constituted the art market. These patrons had expectations that he had to meet for them to partake in the continued promotion and success of the art form. When he constantly repeated the mythical stories borrowed from local legends, they believed him, and the art form flourished. Thus, "a recognizable aesthetic became established and started to repeat itself in response to the market's demands" (Loder 2005: 15). However, McEwen was still learning the culture of the people of the country. Therefore, the complicity of indigenous people of Zimbabwe in providing the mythical stories and embracing McEwen's careful formulation of them should not be underestimated. He would never have been able to make 'Shona Sculpture' a modern art form acceptable to the world if he had any bit of resistance from the locals, as happened to Cecil Skotnes when he tried to teach art preoccupied with African spiritual references, traditions and myths in South Africa (Nicodemus and Romare 2008). Even though the two authors make the argument that the Black South African artists resisted as they operated within a more modern and industrialised context compared to Rhodesia and other parts of Africa, it could also be because they were tired of their traditions being fetishised in a racially divided community.

### 3.9. Attempted erasure of the work of predecessors

In the established art workshops at the missionary schools of Cyrene and Serima, Rhodesia already had thriving art schools producing local sculptors and painters. The work produced by the sculptors and painters from these institutions, which was mostly inspired by Bible stories, was easily the nation's dominant art form. Wood was the main medium for the sculptors. While the art produced at Serima remained *in situ* at the institution, where it helped the church's evangelising mission, that from Cyrene had a market in the country, in South Africa, and as far away as Britain and the United States. However, in his quest to revive and promote stone sculpture, which he perceived as the 'authentic' African art form of the nation, McEwen saw Christianity as a threat to the tradition he was trying to establish and the permanence of culture doctrine he employed to show its connection to the nation's great empire of the past. He therefore paid no attention to the art coming out of mission schools. According to Doreen Sibanda, the Director of the NGZ from 2004-2020, McEwen was aware of 'mission arts' which were mostly in wood and had religious connotations, but it probably would not have been in his interest to promote and celebrate work that had already been there when he arrived. This could be the reason why he never openly denigrated it (Sibanda 2018, personal communication, October 9). To add to that, artist and Gallery Delta co-owner Helen Lieros claims that McEwen could have respected the missionaries, but he had no time for them. Because he was not a religious man, he was just focused on stories about traditions, cultures and roots (Lieros 2018, personal communication, October 13).

Unbeknown to him, some of the artists he worked with at Vukutu were graduates of Cyrene and Serima (Kasfir 1999). They included Mukomberanwa and Ndandarika. That also explains why art historian Zilberg (2013) credits the two missionaries, Father Groeber and Canon Paterson for laying the solid foundation that enabled McEwen's Workshop School at the National Gallery to take off smoothly. This sentiment is also echoed by Picton (2005: 7) who states that McEwen "was able to build upon like-minded prior work of others, including Pat Pearce who was the first to see the new work, and most especially Canon Paterson of the Cyrene Mission and Father Groeber of Serima Mission, who had well-established reputations for encouraging art among local people". The workshop capitalised on the groundwork the missionaries had done. According to Morton (2012), artists from the two institutions who had figured out that McEwen had an open disdain for their formal mission background simply found it convenient to hide that background from him (Morton 2012). A possible reason McEwen might not have wanted to work with mission-trained artists as Morton suggests, is

they would have been able to explain their work, or would not have been easily manipulated to regurgitate the mythical stories supposedly behind the work. However, Morton's claim is contestable since McEwen worked with Sam Songo, who continued to work at Cyrene Mission but was an integral part of the National Gallery Workshop. Moreover, McEwen openly expressed admiration for Lazarus Khumalo and Cornelius Manguma, two other mission-based artists. Even more interesting, those who worked under McEwen continued to explore biblical themes like the 'the Holy Mother or Madonna and Child', and yet the patron still maintained that the art form was authentic.

As he increasingly focused on stone sculpture from his workshop, McEwen established a system that functioned "to create a hierarchy of insiders and outsiders" (Salomon 1991: 348) incorporated some artists coming out of Tengenenge since they also worked with stone but went on to sideline (or 'other') artists who were centred in mission stations and working in media like wood. "Simply put, McEwen not only dismissed the significance and contribution of Paterson but also of other educators and artists in local mission and government art projects such as Sister Pauline and Job Kekana of St Faith's mission and Father Groeber and Cornelius Manguma at Serima" (Zilberg 2012: 21). The Kekana School of Art and Craft in Manicaland, for example, was located on the way to Vukutu.[157] So, it is not that McEwen did not notice that it existed. Moreover, the school was known in the country as shown by its wider catchment area, with students like David Tsungo who came from as far as Bere Township in Mashava, a mining town in Masvingo Province.[158] Canon Paterson had taught painting and sculpting and promoted the work from the Cyrene Workshop in Rhodesia, in South Africa and at institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States of America years before his arrival, but McEwen still deliberately created the impression that what he had achieved was new and unique in the world (Joosten 2001). This elevation of stone sculpture from the National Gallery Workshop School over art from mission schools was easily achievable as "McEwen controlled the National Gallery and had the final say" (Peffer 2009).

Due to his aggressive promotion of the art form, stone sculpture gained prominence in the 1960s, and in the wake of successful exhibitions at the MoMA in 1968 and the Musée d'Art

[157] The marginalisation of Job Kekana and the artists from his school will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

[158] David Tsungo (junior). Correspondence via Facebook. 18 February 2019. (David is named after his late father). Although Mashava is about 320 kilometers from Rusape, that distance is significant for a relatively small country like Zimbabwe and travelling from one to the other involves crossing a provincial boundary. It should also be noted that compared to Rusape, Mashava is closer to either Serima or Driefontein, and Tsungo could easily have enrolled at either of the two.

Moderne in 1970 (Morton 2012), stone sculpture became the art form that the nation of Rhodesia was known for. As Christopher Till, who assumed the directorship of the National Gallery years after McEwen had left states, "Rhodesia was all (about) stone sculpture when I arrived in 1977" (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). Even though the presence of Tom Blomefield, Pat Pearce, Roy and Megan Guthrie meant that McEwen was not the only promoter of 'Shona Sculpture', his name overshadows the others. Chikukwa acknowledges that "although Paterson and Groeber started art schools before the arrival of McEwen, he became the benchmark after setting up the Workshop School" (2019: 49). His name dominates so much of the history of art in Zimbabwe that it often obliterates many others who have been also closely involved (Brokensha 1994, Muncke 1997). Many of these individuals "have contributed at various times and on the basis of their own capacities" (Bourgois 1997:45). McEwen's main advantage over them is what he was able to achieve due to the important position he held at the National Gallery, the nation's prime art institution.

### 3.10. McEwen's downfall

In the later years of his career as the Director of the National Gallery, McEwen faced many problems that seemed to have developed or accumulated over time. Some of them were of his own making, while others emanated from situations he had no control over. His fascination with African art, particularly that which came out of his Workshop School, in a way made him quite unpopular with the white Rhodesian art establishment who felt that the initiative increasingly sidelined the nation's white painters. As McEwen promoted local sculpture and ceramics he was often on the receiving end of a barrage of criticism by white artists for his pan-African sympathy. They believed he snubbed their work, for substandard local work (Rhodesia Herald 1966). "It was McEwen's intention to make the National Gallery a centre of art for all races in a country with racial inequality" (Joosten 2001: 14). As Picton (2005: 7) explains, "McEwen thus found himself facilitating the subversion of colonial mentality through art." The idea threatened the Rhodesian colonial social structures and the nation's status quo. Rhodesia was under white minority rule and the few privileged whites still expected their culture to dictate proceedings at the gallery. They did not hide the fact that they were not amused by the way McEwen ran the gallery. They criticised him through letters to the *Rhodesia Herald* and urged white patrons to boycott the projects of the National Gallery.

After the end of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and in the post-U.D.I. period, there was little McEwen could do to save the National Gallery, which was on the verge of closing due to dwindling sponsorship from its major funder, the government of Rhodesia. The gallery

used to receive a federal grant of £7000 per annum. The Rhodesian government could only commit £4000, which was slightly more than half the expected amount (Sunday Mail 1965). Coupled with that, the entries to the gallery's most famous exhibition, the Annual Art Exhibition, had fallen from 376 in 1958 to 199 in 1961, as Zambia and Malawi had not submitted works. This was mainly because, due to lack of sponsorship, the institution could no longer afford to supply paints to African artists as it had done in the past. It appears McEwen was being diplomatic when he claimed that entries had fallen because artists were "uninspired". He could have stated that to avoid confrontation with the government. However, a contributor named I.A.M. Honeyman castigated McEwen for being dishonest, and for ignoring artists at other institutions as he favoured those from his stable – the Workshop School (Rhodesia Herald 1968). Indeed, McEwen thought the answer to these problems lay in the promotion of stone sculpture, which he had faith was going to sustain the gallery.

During his time, the National Gallery was the main marketing channel for the established and emerging artists (Sibanda 2004). However, in the post-1965 U.D.I. phase and with the nation under economic sanctions, McEwen's monopoly over the promotion of stone sculpture in Rhodesia came to an end as other brokers came into the frame. He faced increasing competition from Tom Blomefield, a former tobacco farmer who initiated the Tengenenge workshop to keep his farm workers with a sustainable source of income in the difficult period. Roy Guthrie of the Chapungu Sculpture Park was also an important broker with connections in South Africa. That meant other styles came in, and the nature of brokerage changed as the two "were not as excessively purist and icons of high modernism as McEwen was" (Kasfir 1999: 78). Blomefield urged his sculptors to make as much work as they could manage. He did not pay much attention to quality. The laws of demand and supply must have led to the suppression of market value as the sculptures flooded the market. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Blomefield initially worked with McEwen until the relationship turned sour. In the end even McEwen's attempts at belittling his rivals and identifying the work they were marketing as "airport art"[159] had minimal effect on the level of completion and in determining what was sold.

For promoting art by Blacks in Rhodesia, McEwen became unpopular with the Board of the National Gallery. When the white Rhodesians, fuelled by racism, and seeking to perpetuate their oligarchy, denied the creative genius of the African (Munjeri 1997), McEwen castigated

[159] Reference to mass produced art targeting the tourist market.

them and lamented their lack of appreciation of local stone sculpture (Rhodesia Herald 1972). However, he realised he was also being alienated by the Ian Smith regime, which suspected him of communist sympathies (Joosten 2001:14). The government even blacklisted him for fraternising with the workshop artists who were Black and "quite close to him" (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). He was perceived as a threat to white Rhodesian separatist principles (Kasfir 1999). "In that period McEwen was harassed by the government and scorned for promoting an art that few white Rhodesians appreciated" (Brokensha 1994: 99).[160] The irony of it is that this occurred at a time when Rhodesia was slammed with embargoes, and concentrated on developing local industries as a sanctions-busting mechanism. The regime thought boosting the local industries would help the nation become self-sustaining, and yet it was not embracing the promising local art industry.

### 3.11. Conclusion

Frank McEwen came to the then Southern Rhodesia in 1957 and revolutionised the arts scene in the Confederation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Although artists from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) also brought their work to the National Gallery in the capital Salisbury, McEwen turned his focus to artists from the Workshop School he established at the national institution. He worked with Black artists from the school to establish what Christopher B. Steiner termed a "pseudospecific" modern art form in which a premediated authenticity displaced the truth (Steiner 1991). He identified the art form with the Shona ethnic group. Stone sculpture became the dominant art form of Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) for over four decades. Applying the information obtained from artists in his stable, McEwen theorised the art form according to Western notions of 'primitive' or 'tribal' art based on local mythology and folklore. As the individual with the most influence in the country's art sector, McEwen sidelined missionaries who had taught art in schools before he arrived, and many other artists who were not working with stone or making abstract art. He also contributed to the marginalisation of artists like Job Kekana who is the focus of the next chapter. In the end, his demise was orchestrated by the white Rhodesian art community which resented his pursuit of 'Shona Sculpture', and their government, which increasingly became suspicious of his close relations with the nation's Black artists and population. McEwen left the country in 1973.

[160] Lance L. Lakin highlights that the "debates in Parliament over closing the National Gallery added to the controversy about the sculpture when government officials stated that there was too much 'Modern Art' being shown in the museum instead of 'European classic artwork.' One Parliament member decried the exhibits of indigenous art, saying, 'How can you possibly ask me to subscribe to [a] culture when I say in my mind it is a monstrosity, it is something conceived by a diseased mind?" (2011: 238).

# Chapter 4. Job Kekana: The Flower that Blossomed in the Desert

## 4.1. Introduction

The jacarandas were in full bloom when I arrived at St. Faith's High School in Rusape towards the end of October in 2018, almost two decades after leaving the institution. I noticed many interesting changes and developments that have transformed the place over the years. However, a lot had also stayed the same, including individuals in charge of the institution and some of my teachers. The huge church building seemed to have shrunk as all the buildings I knew suddenly looked small. My mission was to find out more about Job Kekana, a man I had briefly encountered in 1994 and 1995. As such, I was naturally disappointed to find that the building that functioned as Kekana's workshop was no longer there. Nothing stood in its place, even the bricks were gone from the site, and there was no sign that there used to be a structure in place. The spot was a local version of "Ground Zero". A few minutes after arriving at the school, I went to Kekana's house, where I found a dilapidated structure resembling a deserted place (*dongo* in Shona) from the outside. Even in that state of neglect I was told there were one or two students occupying the house. Save for a bust of Kekana and a framed portrait at the entrance of the computer lab, and the two busts at the headmaster's place, I got a sense that there was little left of tangible materials to memorialise him with. It was Moses Nelson Mukoyi (VaMukoyi) – then headmaster of the school – who described Kekana as "the flower that blossomed in the desert" referring to the community around the school who he saw as not appreciative of his practice outside the relief carvings he and his students did for the local church. VaMukoyi's perception is that Kekana's practice was more appreciated by outsiders than the locals.

I had also visited the NGZ a few days before heading to Rusape. Although the gallery has two sculptures done by Kekana in its permanent collection, no one seemed to have in-depth knowledge on him. One of the senior members at the NGZ was even shocked to learn that he was born in South Africa and only settled in Zimbabwe midway through his life. The dearth of information on him at the NAZ left me surprised and disappointed. It was when I sat down with VaMukoyi and heard him describing Kekana as "the flower that blossomed in the desert" that I started to make sense of the fact that as much as there seems to be little appreciation of his legacy at the mission school, there is not much recognition of him in his adopted country either, despite his significant contributions in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe. This chapter ascertains his relative invisibility and accounts for why there is such a gap in the art history and mainstream canon of the country. I also try to account for his relative invisibility

in his country of birth. While I argue that his marginalisation is mainly a result of internal developments in the art sector and local circumstances in the context of Zimbabwe as a country, I also try not to exonerate Kekana from some of the decisions he made that might have relegated him to the non-canonical position he occupies.

### 4.2. Background

Within the public domain Kekana's memory lives in the few articles written by the New Zealand-based art historian, curator and academic Elizabeth Rankin (2003, 1995a, 1993, 1989 and 2021), with greater concentration on the sculptor-cum-teacher's biography, as well as his work and its conservative style within the restrictive missionary tradition and environment. She extensively discusses Kekana's work in a paper titled 'Africanising Christian Imagery in African Missions', published in 2021. She also shared with me the file she put together, which I am using as the main primary source of information on Kekana. Privately, and at a more local level, his legacy is alive in the memories of the people who lived, worked and fraternised with him in the Madetere community around the Anglican mission school where he was based. Art historian Elizabeth Morton (2013) has looked at the patron and artist bond between Kekana and Sister Pauline of the Anglican Church. She has also looked at his practice under the patronage of the church and concluded that his "art career is in many ways the epitome of the Grace Dieu tradition, and he ensured that it would be carried on through new generations of carvers" (Morton 2013a: 52). In *The Prophetic Nun*, the South African poet, academic and writer Guy Butler (2000) devotes the book's sixth chapter to Sister Pauline, Job Kekana and David Chituku, describing Kekana as one of Africa's best artists. In an obituary written following Kekana's passing, former Curator of the NGZ, Pip Curling (1995) provided a detailed summary of a few of his works, focusing on some of the commissions he worked on while stationed in Zimbabwe. The above-mentioned authors refer to the Kekana Art and Craft School which he founded at St. Faith's Mission, a station of the Anglican Church in a farming community outside the town of Rusape. They also pay attention to and discuss the project Kekana was commissioned to undertake by the Federal Government of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Moreover, these authors highlight Kekana's work in South Africa, and in the United Kingdom where he trained for three years. With these projects occupying centre stage, I try and explain why he is not recognised at the same level as some of his contemporaries in South Africa, some of whom similarly had a fair share of their careers charted abroad (Hassan 2010). In Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Kekana was a voluntary exile as he moved there at the invitation of his mentor

and patron Sister Pauline. However, unlike his South African counterparts like Gerard Sekoto and Ernest Mancoba, who "cherished a Western concept of aesthetic value" (Rankin 1990: 26) and desired to be among other modern artists from different backgrounds in the cosmopolitan cultural hub of Paris, Kekana found himself in a place where he mostly had to create the opportunities himself. Mancoba's and Sekoto's pursuits in a way mirror those of South American "middle-class professionals, artists and intellectuals who lived in Paris due to lack of professional opportunities in their home country" as described by art critic Damián Bayón in 1963 (Jaremtchuk 2021: 500). In his new surroundings in Rusape, Kekana did not have to adapt much as he had a countryside upbringing. It is what he brought to the community that would have excited the locals. In exchange for the practice and art education he initiated in the place, he perhaps only had to learn a bit of the local language and rituals.

### 4.3. The artist-teacher's life and career

Job Kekana was born at Makapan's Kraal near Potgietersrus in northern Transvaal.[161] His father, who was a Protestant lay missionary, was a carpenter by profession. His mother worked as a domestic helper. Kekana lost the sight in one eye as a result of severe sickness as a child. As a young boy growing up in the rural areas, he herded the family's livestock. Time spent in the veldt[162] accorded him the opportunity to experiment with carving. Although Littrell (2001) states that creativity is almost always driven by some external influences, to a young Kekana creativity seemed to come naturally through exploration, and not emulating anyone's work. His father's wish was to see his son receiving a good education. Therefore, even though his father died while Kekana was still young, his mother honoured this wish by sending their son to St. Stephen's Anglican Mission at Rooisloot where he would receive a decent education in a Christian environment (Rankin 1993). He was at Rooisloot from 1928 to1933 (Miles 1997). It was in one of those years that a visiting priest noticed his talent and arranged for him to enrol at Grace Dieu Anglican Mission Diocesan Training College (Rankin 2003).

Former director of the ISANG, Marilyn Martin (2002), argues that factors like the Western education and training that the likes of Kekana, Ernest Mancoba and Gerard Sekoto received, coupled with white patronage in a white-controlled capitalist environment, influenced these precursors of Black modernism in South Africa to aspire to make art in a European fashion. At

[161] Potgietersrus was officially renamed Mokopane in 2003. In 1994 the vast Transvaal Province was subdivided and sections of it became part of Mpumalanga, North West, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, with the northern part of it becoming part of the Limpopo province. The latter is where Mokopane is located.
[162] Open, uncultivated grassland for livestock pastures. Such spaces are communal in most countryside societies in southern Africa.

Grace Dieu, Kekana worked closely with Sister Pauline, building a lifelong mentor and mentee relationship and admiration that would change the course of the sculptor's life.[163] Sister Pauline considered him her most remarkable student (Butler 2000). The carvings Kekana worked on at Grace Dieu were mostly designed by Canon Paterson, who had introduced relief carving while at the institution from 1923 to 1925 (Rankin 2021: 1473). Paterson, who went on to found Cyrene Mission near Bulawayo, continued to send the designs to Sister Pauline long after he had left the Anglican mission station (Rankin 1993). However, some of the designs were internally produced as Martinus Moolman, a teacher at the institution, took over the task. Although artists like Kekana worked within a European missionary tradition, their work blended what they borrowed from Europe with African indigenous mediums and elements, which is Rankin's focus in a 2021 paper cited earlier in this chapter. The fusion of the European and African elements "resulted in a rich genre of work that challenges many prevailing assumptions about modernism, of the modernity and the conception of the modern artist" (Stevenson and Bosland 2008: 9). They were aware and proud of their African identity, as Sekoto, one of the prominent artists of the same generation as Kekana, stated; "I would be stupid to want to become a European" (Manganyi 1996: 65).

Although Kekana and his contemporaries participated in the famous South African Academy exhibitions in the 1930s, the first time for Blacks to do so professionally, their work was always shown in a separate category from that of whites, proving that "racial discrimination even in matters of art and culture was alive and well" (Manganyi 1996: 30). In 1934 his work featured in the 'Native Crafts' category, alongside that of fellow Grace Dieu artists Ernest Mancoba, and Thomas Makenna. In 1935, Eric Chimwaza, Dick Makambula and Kekana, all still at Grace Dieu, took part under the 'Native Exhibits' category, together with Mancoba who had left the institution by then. In 1936 and 1937, the works of Makambula and Kekana were exhibited, and in 1942 Kekana's work featured alongside that of John Koenakeefe Mohl (Spiro 1989). Even though they were "working in the isolating shadow of apartheid" (Minnaar 2011: 160),[164] it appears their main reason for continuing to present their work in the South African Academy exhibitions was that "woodcarving brought fame and income to Grace Dieu" (Spiro 1989: 15). The income was needed to sustain the institution. Moreover, their continued

[163] See the problematics of the Black artists and white patrons highlighted in the first chapter.
[164] Although 'apartheid' became an official policy in 1948, the practice of racial discrimination had started as early as the second half of the eighteenth century when "Dutch colonisers began establishing laws and regulations that separated white settlers and native Africans" (Evans 2009).

participation can also be seen as their way of doing whatever it took to try and unmake their marginalisation.

Artists generally "desire a realm where they are free to realise their creative impulses" (Stevenson and Bosland 2008: 17). Grace Dieu seemed not to offer that freedom as the artists in training at the institution "were alienated from the design of their work" and were required to stick to the conventions of European church art (Morton 2013a: 39). As such, Mancoba and Sekoto saw the place as a dead end, and yet Kekana was quite happy being there as the institution provided the ideal platform for his practice then. Morton singles out Mancoba as one of the rebel artists who went on to abandon the carving and sculpting traditions learnt at the institution to become an illustrious painter after leaving the mission station. About Sekoto, Morton states that he spent time at Grace Dieu doing portraits of his colleagues, yet the institution completely ignored his talents as it had no interest in drawing and painting. The stories of the two artists' journeys reveal the limits of the actual training provided at the institution and how it handicapped artistic development (Morton 2013a). Kekana, therefore, seemed to be the one who stuck to the institution's curriculum and requirements, a factor which also explains why he went on to work as an employee of Grace Dieu from 1936 up to 1939. However, to consider him as the one who completely abided by the traditions of the institution would be to paint a false picture, as he occasionally experimented in stone, a medium outside the conventional woodcarving practice that students at Grace Dieu specialised in. It appears that to him the place guaranteed regular employment through regular commissions and "a concrete demand for religious craftwork with an African appearance" (Klein 2014: 1352). The carvings he made for the churches included pews and pulpits.[165] Combining medieval and African motifs, the pews at St. Paul's church in Port Alfred are an example of Kekana's work, based on designs by Canon Paterson (Morton 2013a).

At Grace Dieu, Kekana worked closely with Sister Pauline, who was his mentor and later became his patron. She had considerable influence over his career over the years as she marketed his work and helped obtain commissions for both secular orders and church work for him (Rankin 2021). Kekana seemed to cherish working with Sister Pauline to the extent of crediting her for helping unearth and nurture his talent. In the artist's words, "She gave me a gift that was hiding in myself" (Curling 1995). Thus, he perhaps believed he would have not

[165] Guy Butler has shared a picture of one of the pews (relief carvings of religious scenes on church bench-ends) done by Kekana. Photographs of the material are meant to be in the Sister Margaret Collection at the Cory Library at Rhodes University. However, the librarians seem not to be able to locate the collection.

scaled the heights he did, had she not provided the help and guidance he needed. When Grace Dieu shut its doors in 1939, Kekana went on to work in Johannesburg. By then church commissions were hard to come by as he had no network of patrons and clients like Sister Pauline. As such, it is not surprising that when she wrote a letter persuading him to move to Rusape (Rankin 2003), Kekana seized the opportunity and embarked on the journey to St. Faith's Mission in 1944. He also probably saw the move as an opportunity "to flee from the government's racial policy of work reservation" (Miles 1997). Curling (1995: 12) explains, "job reservations at the time restricted his opportunities in carving for furniture manufacture and, without the resources of the mission, he had difficulty marketing his work".

However, contrary to the sentiment that the success of the modern Black artists was almost entirely dependent on Europeans who judged, promoted, and guided the reception of their work (Stevenson and Bosland 2008, Fransen 1982), Kekana seemed not to be entirely happy with Sister Pauline. As highlighted by Curling (1995: 11) almost a decade after his arrival at St. Faith's Mission, Kekana left the institution and relocated to the town of Rusape "disgruntled with the feeling that Sister Pauline was exploiting him". Elsewhere, in the Grace Dieu Bulletin of 1948 it was reported that Kekana had departed the Anglican mission environment for Umtali (now Mutare) to set up his own business (Grace Dieu Bulletin 1948).[166] Interestingly, Curling (1995: 11) claims that even before they left South Africa, Sister Pauline sometimes exhibited Kekana's work in Johannesburg under her name and would give him "a few pennies as reward". He quotes Kekana as saying "She was taking something from me while she was giving me something… In life the ones who are clever live on those that are stupid." As Curling, elaborates, the only thing that made Kekana return to St. Faith's Mission were the immigration officials who threatened to deport him since his permit restricted him to the missionary outpost. Being Black, the South African government had not issued him with a passport, therefore he had come on a restrictive permit. That he was not entirely dependent on Sister Pauline is seen through the fact that his career blossomed many years after she passed. However, having worked with Kekana over the years, it cannot be denied that Sister Pauline helped him realise his dream of a professional career.

While Kekana carried on doing commissioned work in Rhodesia, the most significant project (by its stature) he did only came in the 1950s when he carved the ceremonial mace and the coat of arms to mark the official opening of the Federal Parliament of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, an

[166] Annual Report. March 1948. Vol 8. St Faith's (C.R. Community Annals)

event which he was invited to attend as a guest of honour (Miles 1997). This project, which I will discuss later in this chapter, appears to have helped him secure the documentation he needed to settle in the federation and to travel abroad. As such, when he secured a British Council Bursary and the Beit Trust Award in 1960, he went to Sir John Cass College, School of Art and Crafts in England where he enrolled for courses in stone carving, modelling, casting, and pottery (Fig. 4.1).[167] He also enrolled at Camberwell College of Art where he learnt to cast bronze (Miles 1997). He had three solo exhibitions at Rhodesia House in London in 1962, at Cambridge University in 1963 and in Solihull in 1963, where visitors admired his 'African' expression (Fig. 4.2). While in London, he also had the opportunity to visit galleries in England, Paris, Rome, Florence, Venice, Vienna, Munich and Brussels. On his return, Kekana founded the Kekana School of Art and Crafts at St. Faith's Mission where he was stationed until his death in 1995.

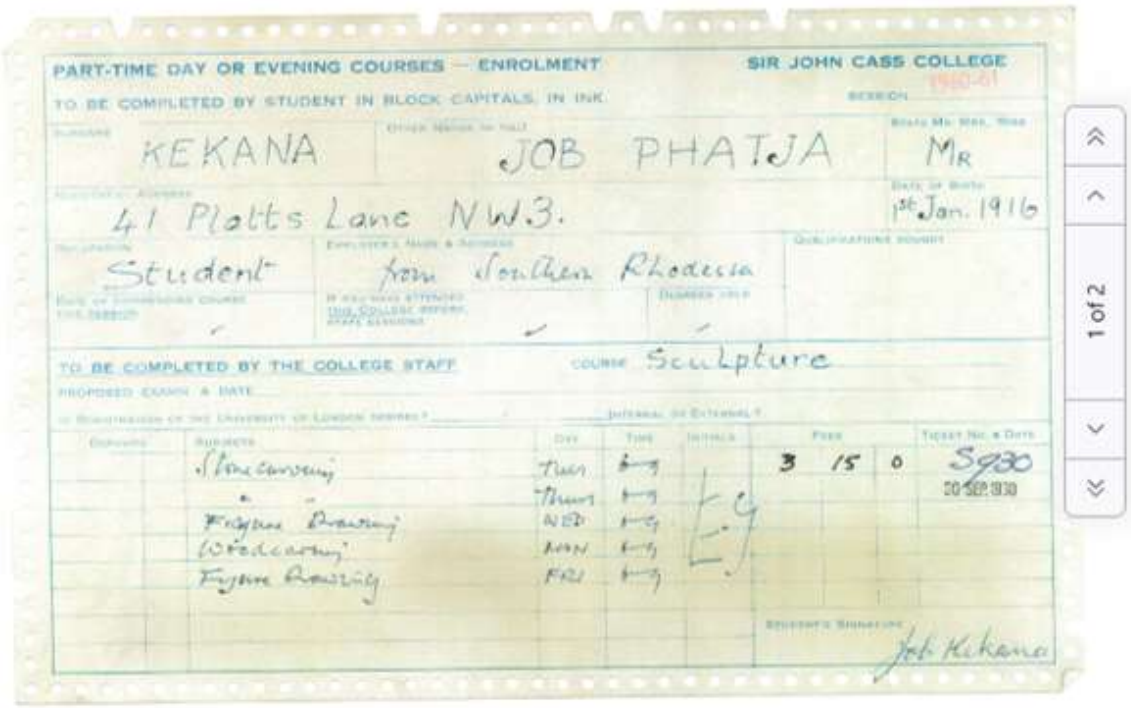
PART-TIME DAY OR EVENING COURSES — ENROLMENT
SIR JOHN CASS COLLEGE
TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT IN BLOCK CAPITALS IN INK
SESSION 1960-61
KEKANA
JOB PHATJA
MR
41 Platts Lane NW3.
1st Jan. 1916
Student
from Southern Rhodesia
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COLLEGE STAFF
COURSE Sculpture
PROPOSED COMM. & DATE
Stonecarving
Figure Drawing
Woodcarving
Figure Drawing
Tues
Thurs
WED
MON
FRI
3 15 0
S930
20 SEP 1960
Job Kekana
1 of 2

Fig. 4.1. Job Kekana's enrolment card at Sir John Cass College for 1960-61. Courtesy of Peter Fisher, Special Collections Manager, London Metropolitan University.

[167] Job Kekana's enrolment card at Sir John Cass College for 1960-61 shows that he studied Stonecarving, Woodcarving and Figure Drawing. His enrolment card for 1961-62 shows he took up Modelling as a fourth subject. He maintained these subjects in 1962-63 and did only Modelling in 1963-64.

Fig. 4.2. Job Kekana at his exhibition in Solihull in 1963, Kekana is seen holding a bust of Bernard Mizeki, with a Madonna and Child sculpture he made in England in 1958. With him are visiting priests who were based in Tanganyika (Tanzania). Courtesy of Elizabeth Rankin/Wits Art Museum.

### 4.4. Milestones set by Kekana

Kekana's most significant contribution to the advancement of modern art in Zimbabwe was the founding of the Job Kekana Art and Craft School at St. Faith's Mission in 1965, in the Madetere area on the fringes of Rusape. Although it was opened at an already established Anglican mission station, the art school proved to be important as it offered a lifeline to young men from the local community and beyond, who enrolled for lessons in drawing and woodcarving. Kekana opened the school with funds sourced from the British South Africa Company and the Beit Trust. The initiative was quite successful as some of his prominent students and colleagues, including David Chituku, David Tsungo, brothers Guy and Gregory Mutasa, Gumiso Makoni, Justin Nyamupanda and Barnabas Ndudzo[168] went on to make a name for themselves. Guy and Gregory Mutasa are still practising in Zimbabwe, with the former still based in the farming community around the mission school. Ndudzo moved to South Africa where he joined the Federated Union of Black Artists (F.U.B.A.) academy as a

[168] Barnabas Ndudzo "is famous for his full-sized naked human figures as well as striking realistic and expressive busts. His son Shepherd is also an accomplished sculptor" (Owomoyela 2002: 64)

teacher, but left because of the nation's volatile political situation. He then settled in Botswana where he went on to mentor several artists at Gallery Ann and at Thapong Visual Arts Centre. The sculptor went on to become Botswana's most recognised woodcarver to the time of his death,[169] a legacy that his son Shepherd has carried on. Others are just remembered by their surnames, such as Kabuu, Hamadziripi, Dhliwayo, Chin'ono and Jura. (Mukoyi 2018, personal communication, October 15)

Fig. 4.3. Job Kekana (left, back row) with the first group of students at the Kekana School of Art and Craft (1965-1967). With him in the back row are Maynard Makoni and Amos Giritiwe. In the front row are David Chituku, Cleopas Ndaweta and David Dhliwayo.[170] Courtesy of Elizabeth Rankin/Wits Arts Museum.

The minutes of a meeting held in Rusape on 6 February 1965, which was attended by the representatives of the Beit Trust and Kekana, reveal that the Job Kekana Art and Craft School was going to be run professionally and overseen by appointed board members who reported to the Director of African Education in Rhodesia. The school's patron was Lady Virginia

[169] The Federated Union for Black Artists (F.U.B.A.) Arts Centre was established in 1978. For more on Barnabas Ndudzo's career, see Seretse 2007.
[170] Edited out of the photo might be Kekana's wife. Professor Elizabeth Rankin revealed via email correspondence that at the time she met him, he had a pile of photos in which he had cut out his wife (Rankin 2022, personal communication, July 24).

Courtauld. Among the Board of Governors were Archdeacon D.P.V. Mason, Mrs G.C. Bowden and John C. Beaumont. It was Beaumont who helped Kekana secure funding from the Beit Trust. Mrs Broderick oversaw the general supervision duties, a role she was paid for. The institution even employed Francis Matema as a general hand responsible for the day-to-day housekeeping and cleaning duties. With the help of an agreement with the nearby Jairos Jiri Association, which catered for the physically handicapped and ran a clinic, the Kekana Art and Craft School enrolled adult males with disabilities who could use the clinic in the event of emergencies. Although the school was for adults, they were not permitted to stay with their wives or families in the boarding facility. Admissions to the school were quite rigorous. The applicant would send a carving, and then would create another carving in the presence of the director (Kekana) to prove that he could work with wood and as testimony that the one accompanying the application was not made by someone on the applicant's behalf. For the whole year, the school would only shut down six weeks prior to Christmas and for another week after the December Christian holiday, allowing the students to spend the holidays with their families.

Not much has been said regarding Kekana's teaching philosophy, even though Morton (2013) has portrayed his career as a continuation of the Grace Dieu tradition and as will be revealed later, one of his students referred to him as a missionary (Mutasa 2018). Speculatively, Kekana is most likely to have taught his students the basics of drawing and naturalistic woodcarving, without necessarily influencing them to work within the missionary tradition or imposing his Christian values on them. This can be seen in the fact that they turned out to have interesting careers making diverse work. Barnabas Ndudzo's sculptures mostly portrayed historical traditional African figures and the quotidian lifestyle practices of the people around him whereas Guy Mutasa's broad and dynamic practice has included controversial political commissions mostly for the administration in Harare. Based on the outputs of the two, it appears Kekana mentored them into open-minded artists able to openly assess and interpret their surroundings. The community hall and centre that Kekana's school occupied were constructed around 1950. Accommodation for the students was secured from the Diocese of Mashonaland and it was agreed that the premises would be repossessed should the Diocese require it back. This solves one of the puzzles I encountered, as Guy Mutasa, one of Kekana's prominent students and in 2018 a councillor of the local community, is of the impression that the deal for Kekana to occupy the community hall and centre was between him and the community members who had constructed it with the help of an unnamed donor (Mutasa 2018,

personal communication, October 18). This, however, creates the impression that in repossessing the premises from Kekana, and handing them over to St Faith's Mission school, which argued that the community hall and centre were on its farm, the Anglican Church backed the school which had more students from all over the country over Kekana's institution which mainly catered for locals. The community versus school situation is even more interesting when one considers the current scenario whereby even though the school has students from the local community, the fees for the boarding accommodation facilities is beyond their reach. As such, students from the local community live at their homes and have at times been blamed for lowering the pass rates in a school that pursues excellence.

Although the current St. Faith's High School is one of the top schools in Zimbabwe where many parents in the country desire to enrol their children,[171] it is a young institution compared to Cyrene and Serima Missions as it only became a secondary school in 1966.[172] The Anglican mission station that is central to the school was established in 1888 and a primary school only came into the picture in 1902. As such, the mission of founding an art school in the area was important in that it was the first initiative to bring students who were not in primary school to the area. It is a development that brought more attention to an otherwise little-known mission station in a peripheral countryside farmland community.

Although the school was quite small, as only a handful of students enrolled there, the act of founding an art institution, in the context of Zimbabwe, is only comparable to that of missionaries like Canon Paterson who founded Cyrene Mission and introduced art at the school, and Father Groeber who brought art to Serima, as no other Black artist or teacher did that in the then Southern Rhodesia. Both Cyrene and Serima were also in the remote areas of the country. To this day the St. Faith's Mission station remains an isolated outpost due to its geographical location in a farming community away from the main railway and road communication grids. Before St. Faith's Mission became the prominent institution that it is today, Kekana's school and work were instrumental in promoting the place's image and status. As the Grace Dieu Bulletin of 1945 highlights, the mission station "became known far beyond the bound of Southern Rhodesia"[173] as the artist took up commissions from outside the country.

[171] For more, see Bulawayo News24. 2019.
[172] For more of this history visit the school's website.
[173] Annual Report. March 1945. Vol 7. St Faith's (C.R. Community Annals). CR stands for 'Community of the Resurrection'.

The other important work that Kekana did was to carve "the ceremonial mace for the official launch of the short-lived Federal Parliament of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland" (Klein 2014: 1348). The Federal Assembly was launched on 28 June 1954. This work was one of the commissions he undertook that were beyond the range of the church influence (Rankin 2003). Since the work symbolised the coming together of the three territories, in addition to its traditional significance, the federal government made sure all the three nations had an input in making the work. The wood was extracted from Nyasaland, and went on to be processed in Northern Rhodesia, and then it was carved by a recognised sculptor based in Southern Rhodesia (Mtepuka 1956). Surprisingly, Kekana was not paid for the work as it was considered an honour to serve the administration (Miles 1997). That also speaks highly of his character as an artist not just chasing after money. However, the opportunity brought significant benefits as it enhanced his popularity and helped him establish a relationship with the ruling elite, something that would have helped him access the funding that kick-started the school project a few years later since the Beit Trust was aligned to the colonial government. It also helped him secure the Rhodesian passport he had always struggled to obtain from the government. However, the mace only proved to be "a provisional place holder (as) shortly thereafter the mace was in fact replaced by a gift of the Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland [as the work was probably considered] too African to epitomize colonial governance" (Klein 2014: 1348). While Klein's speculation makes sense, it is also possible that Kekana had been advised that his piece was only a last-minute temporary replacement as he did not speak of its fate as an injustice.

Fig. 4.4. The Ceremonial Mace. Commissioned for the official opening of the Parliament of Rhodesia in 1954. Wood. Courtesy of Elizabeth Rankin/Wits Art Museum.

The original design of the mace was plain and simple. However, Kekana, who is said to initially have declared that he would not apply any aberrations to the provided design,[174] ended up adding "crisscross trelliswork" to the mace (Miles 1997: 109) as had been suggested by Sister Pauline.[175] Kekana had entertained Sister Pauline's input and suggestions while working on the mace. Unfortunately, "the ceremonial mace was to be the last piece Kekana worked on while Sister Pauline was alive. She died a few months later" (Butler 2000).

The carving of the mace was Kekana's artistic "breakthrough" (Morton 2013a: 53). It was "the crowning glory of his career" as it catapulted him "into the ranks of the greatest artist in Southern Africa" at the time (Mtepuka 1956: 65). As Kekana himself explained, the mace was a common tool of significance in the cultural set up of a traditional African society. In his

[174] As stated in Elizabeth Rankin's notes in the Kekana file at Wits Arts Museum, the artist told her that the mace was designed by Canon Edward Paterson, and yet the Grace Dieu Bulletin (1956) names a certain Mr. Richardson as the designer of both the mace and the coat of arms.
[175] Elizabeth Rankin, file notes.

words, “the mace represents a knobkerrie,[176] like at the Chief’s kraal is used to keep order. It is a patriarchal symbol of preserving order and peace”.[177] That it is carried by young men emerging out of the initiation school as in Zulu and Xhosa cultures, or sometimes used as a walking aid by the elderly considered the embodiment of wisdom to whom the society turns for guidance and peace, means the mace meant more to the Black colonial subjects of the federation than to its colonisers. I have already pointed out that the mace did not last long and speculated on the reason for its removal. However, Kekana kept a working relationship with the government which later granted him a passport. This is seen through commissions he carried out for the administration some years later which included the coat of arms carved in the post-U.D.I. phase, around 1965 (Curling 1995), which hung behind the Speaker’s chair in the house of parliament. Prior to that, Kekana’s coffee table had been presented to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother of the then British Empire when she came to officially open Kariba Dam in 1960 (Rankin 2003: 86), (Fig. 4.6. and 4.7.)

Fig. 4.5. Job Kekana. Coat of Arms of Rhodesia. 1965.Wood. Courtesy of Elizabeth Rankin/Wits Arts Museum.[178]

[176] Explaining the item on Cape Talk Radio, Professor Hlonipa Mokoena describes the knobkerrie as a short wooden club with a knob at one end. It can be used for hunting small animals and for ceremonial purposes. He states that young men today walk around with it as a fashion symbol. He argues that the idea that it is a weapon for killing is colonial. More can be found at: https://www.capetalk.co.za/articles/260937/knobkerrie-more-than-just-a-weapon

[177] ‘The order of the Mace’. Grace Dieu Bulletin V(3). December 1956, pp 14-19.

[178] The Coat of Arms was to be hung behind the Speaker of Parliament’s chair in the House of Assembly in Salisbury. He used Mukwa wood for this project.

Fig. 4.6. and 4.7. Job Kekana made the coffee table that was presented to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1960. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

The coffee table presented to the Queen Mother was quite detailed, with two segments seemingly presenting rural life, characterised by a traditional gathering before a chief, the grass-thatched rondavels, livestock and headers, ironsmiths at work and wild animals like a giraffe, eland, a buck, and scattered trees. The other two segments depict what appears to be modernised life, marked by a church gathering, a teacher speaking to young children, an industrial scene with modern machines, an aeroplane flying in the backdrop, electric masts and cables. Through it Kekana seemed to show his reading and appreciation of society's transformation over time. The coffee table was presented as a gift from the chiefs in Southern Rhodesia. This is interesting considering that the colonial regime had disrupted the traditional African state structures within the country. As such, the majority of the said chiefs were colonial collaborators masquerading as legitimate traditional leaders. They were on the Rhodesian regime's payroll.

### 4.5. Place and subject formation

In an essay review on 'Shona Sculpture', author Aaron Hodza (Roberts et al. 1982: 54) states that "the expression of any artist is a microcosm of his material and psychic environment, and

will reflect to some degree his social background." As such, for me to fail to discuss the area around St. Faith's as a place is to put a veil over the marginalisation of rural communities in colonial Rhodesia and in an independent Zimbabwe. This relationship can be fully grasped when one understands the neglect of areas in the Matabeleland provinces and the Chipinge District for example, by the government of Zimbabwe. In a feature on artist Hugh Mbayiwa (b. 1973), who hails from rural Mhondoro to the south-west of Harare, journalist Valencia Govindasamy commented on what Jaremtchuk (2021: 502) qualifies as "the bleak conditions for professionalisation" of the arts in certain locations. Govindasamy (2014) states that the artist's "rural background has presented challenges for Mbayiwa's making it in the art world as opportunities do not knock on his door often. He has also found it difficult to travel to search for an art market."

In attempting to explain the scenario of unequal places I turn to Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's geohistory of art, a theory that explores the role of geographical factors in time and history (Kaufmann 2005) and explains the correlation between place and subject formation, or how and why some geographical locations that artists operate in tend to expose them and their work to the world more than others. This idea is explicated in terms of the centre and periphery relationship, with the former being a place that comes with certain advantages that the latter lacks (Kaufmann 2008). This somewhat simplistic centre-periphery relationship is not just unique to certain parts of the world as it is seen in operation almost everywhere. In Zimbabwe, artists tend to move to Harare and Bulawayo. The rest of the country simply cannot compete with the two cities in terms of infrastructure. Even in a slightly more developed country such as South Africa, the attraction of Cape Town and Johannesburg to artists is not even in question.

This notion is also backed by Moore (1952: 672), who explains that "there are certain social conditions that favour the growth and flourishing of art, others that destroy or inhibit that growth". Thus, central to this theory is the claim that there is a correlation between the differences in the status of artists and specific social and political situations (Laude 1966). In their "social structural theory of fame" study that focused on how modern artists attained fame in twentieth century Europe, Mitali and Ingram (2018) concluded that social structure shaped an artist's fame through three channels, namely; creativity, others' perceptions of the artist's creative identity and access to promotional opportunities. Likewise, Camile Regli (2019) affirms that "artists and intellectuals move to big cities, the so-called creative and cultural clusters where there is greater economic stability, wealth, more movements of people,

monuments, established institutions, and cultural manifestations that influence and give the watchword for market trends."

Because Kaufmann's theory which is based on the centre-periphery dualism is old and in the author's words, represents the "colonizer's model of the world" (Kaufmann 2005: 163), it is tempting to see it as so irrelevant and obsolete that it ought to be discarded. However, one would appreciate its weight when considering the chapters (in his book) which focus on Spanish-speaking South America and Japan, and parts of Eastern Europe that would not fit the ideal description of Western metropoles. It is also a theory that works well when applied to unequal places marked by structural violence as in the case of South Africa (Richter 2019) where the physical demarcations exist as a legacy of the apartheid era. Nonetheless, even when applied in that case, it fails to account for the fact that creativity and innovations can still happen and thrive in seemingly peripheral areas without a network of complex institutions associated with the centre. Moreover, intellectual output does not respect fixed boundaries based on this dualism.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a scholar of education and critic of persistent colonialism in academic teaching and research, critiques the idea of "the centre (system of power) and the outside (empty land; periphery; away from the centre; non-existent)" as concepts that mark a "specific spatial vocabulary of colonialism" constructed around the idea of distance from the centre of power, and the Western view of space as "static and divorced from time" (Smith 1999: 52-53). Smith's view is supported by Ruth Simbao,[179] a scholar of art history, who perceives the centre-periphery binary as a "simplistic way of spatializing the world", arguing that "positioned sometimes as a bully place has aggravated our restlessness, called us names, held us bondage and discounted our worth" (Simbao et al. 2018: 251). Instead, Simbao argues for the cosmolocal orientations which "are situationally cosmopolitanism" adopting "the stance of engaging outward whether situated in a village, a city, or anywhere in between" recognising that places have little meaning as isolated entities in a networked world (Simbao et al. 2018: 252 & 256).

Embracing the above-highlighted arguments by Smith and Simbao, and discarding "the lingering legacy of 19th century anthropology" of perceiving "the village" as supposedly static, stuck and underdeveloped (Simbao et al. 2018: 260), I realise that Madetere, the area where Kekana was based, can be many things to different people. With a shopping centre, a primary

[179] Simbao's paper cited here is on specific cultural festivals in Zambia.

and a high school, a clinic and a church, it has never been rural in the traditional sense. It has always been cosmopolitan in outlook, considering that students and teachers from different places in Zimbabwe and beyond come in and out. St. Faith's sister schools converge at the centre, partaking in the Anglican Schools Association games.

One realises that Kekana exuded what Simbao frames as cosmolocal orientations when one factors his journey in life, as he seemed to feel at home in the multiple locations he passed through. He was raised by a Christian family in rural Limpopo where he herded the family's cattle before enrolling at Grace Dieu Mission. He went on to live in Johannesburg before migrating to Zimbabwe. He trained in England and came back to Zimbabwe. His is a life of someone who refused to be tied down by place. At St Faith's Mission he was a member of the community, an important member of the local church and a leader of the local art school. He assumed multiple roles.

### 4.6. The impact of living on the periphery

Art historian Foteini Vlachou, whose work is devoted to the study of the perceived peripheries, observed that "there is still no consensus on what, when and where the periphery is or has been" (Pezzini 2019: 187). Regli (2019) also substantiates this notion, arguing that the peripheries have become profoundly ambiguous regions. The confusion around the term emanates from the fact that it has been defined in at least three different ways, namely the geographical – focusing on place or space; the temporal or time-based; and in terms of that which has been excluded from the canon. Even though the definition of peripheries is fluid and constantly changing, I will attempt to explain and make use of all the above-stated possible definitions as they all help articulate certain key aspects of Kekana's career. The common factor in these clarifications is that 'peripheries' is a comparative term for a space that can only be identified in relation to another space which is the 'core/centre.' Based on this notion, I contest Vlachou (2016)'s attempts to perceive the periphery as an entity independent of the centre. While Kekana seemed to cherish the greater artistic freedom and independence he had, and was quite productive in the space he chose to settle, his relationship with the centre (Salisbury/Harare) tells a story of "unequal power relations" (Ouaissa 2015: 100) almost resulting in the erasure of his exploits and legacy.

Postcolonial and subaltern studies have denounced the political and social implications of such geopolitical hierarchies of what they deem to be a 'simplistic' centre-periphery theory derived from geographical and development studies (Joyeux-Prunel 2014). The idea is rooted in the

world-systems theory in which the writings of Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein and Samir Amin are key (Worsley 1980). Just like modernism when defined in the narrower and privileged Euro-American construct of the 1880-1940 periodisation (Hassan 2010), such studies associate this model of a binary relationship between the industrialised 'core' marked by First World nations and/or local metropolitan cities juxtaposed with the less developed 'periphery' constituted by Third World nations and/or rural areas. This phenomenon was clearly visible in the colonial years and prior to the collapse of the Soviet Communist Bloc. As such, the theory is seen as one that nullifies agency and fails to acknowledge the creative outputs and modes of resistance born out of the so-called peripheries (Worsley 1980). However, since this model is mainly based on political and economic considerations, it falls short of factoring in social and cultural institutions. Nonetheless, it is not easy to ignore it completely as long as regional disparities as a result of uneven or "asymmetrical development based on space, location and other environmental factors including climate" (Kaufmann 2008: 172) still exist on a global scale and within countries. Linking this model to art history Kaufmann (2008: 176) expounds:

> Notions of the centre and periphery or province are of course present in much art historical literature, where the importance of sites such as ancient Rome, Renaissance Florence, 19th Century Paris, or contemporary New York are deemed important, and other sites consequently ignored, disregarded as dependent on them or provincial, or dismissed as geographically peripheral.

In applying this model, which has been employed to explain regional disparities on a global scale to Zimbabwe, I attempt to interrogate the marginalisation of the outskirts, regions that Vlachou (2016: 12) describes as "non-canonical geographical regions". In doing so, I am acknowledging that Zimbabwe is not a homogeneous state with uniform or even development but has different regions at different stages of technological and infrastructural advancement.[180] Even though it has had successful isolated art workshops like Cyrene, Serima and Vukutu in the colonial phase, and Tengenenge to this day, these spaces that either existed or continue to thrive as outliers within marginalised zones are the exceptions. By employing this theory, I am looking at Job Kekana's career as a reflection of the professionally isolating circumstances he practised in. Even though geographical factors may shift with time (Kaufmann 2005), the

[180] I recognise these regions as at different stages of development because there have been efforts to upgrade the countryside areas in the postcolonial state of Zimbabwe through initiatives such as rural development through land reforms, and the establishment of resource-based 'Growth Points', based on Francois Perroux's 'Growth Pole' Theory. For a critique of this theory on a local scale in Zimbabwe, see Manyanhaire, Rwafa and Mutangadura (2011).

concentration of art activities in Zimbabwe has remained centred in Harare and Bulawayo.[181] These cities have the gallery and museum infrastructure and are convergence zones for the main communication networks compared to the rest of the country. They also attract artists, academics, curators, and patrons, who build networks that have the "potential to shape individual level creativity, [to provide] opportunities and [to mould] an artist's perception in the critical discourse of the period, which we call their creative identity" (Mitali and Ingram 2018: 5). They also potentially have easy access and exposure to information that comes with alternative forms and models important in cultural exchange, cultural transfer and hybridisation. In such places artists "are in close contact with one another and can easily pass judgement on one another's work. Such conditions have a determining and levelling influence on style" (Laude 1966: 135).

When treated as a space of greater artistic freedom and choice, since it is not bound by the artistic traditions that govern the centre (Laude 1966: 135), the periphery is "capable of subverting the categories that have variously shaped and constrained the art historical discipline" (Pezzini 2019: 188). Art historian Stuart Hall advocates for the abandonment of the centre-periphery concept (Hall 2001) arguing that smaller centres found in the outskirts, like St. Faith's Mission, are spaces where new ideas emerge. Thus, countryside workshops are centres too if we are to challenge the notion that there is not only one centre. However, their infrastructure pales in comparison to what obtains in the cities. Kekana seemed comfortable operating in Rusape as he enjoyed the independence that came with such an environment.

An alternative way of defining the periphery is to perceive it in terms of art forms that were excluded from the canon. In this case style and materiality determine the importance of an artist's practice based on what is deemed important at the time. While this way of defining the periphery also encompasses excluded artists living in the metropolitan areas, it is also applicable in Kekana's case as it is for any other artist who practised at a period when art in Rhodesia assumed a unilateral national form based on Frank McEwen's preference for stone sculpture. That meant artists who worked in other media like painting, as was the case with artists emerging out of Cyrene Mission, and wood in the case of the Kekana Art and Crafts School and Serima Mission, were relegated to the peripheries of the canon. The same applied to the painters, mostly white and residing in Salisbury, ignored by the Director of the National

[181] However, this is not just unique to Zimbabwe. In South Africa, for example, what takes place in the arts in the cultural hubs of Cape Town and Johannesburg cannot in any way be compared to what takes place in the smaller community towns of the Eastern Cape or Limpopo provinces.

Gallery. As explained in the third chapter, some of the artists who had come out of these institutions had to hide their credentials, would not reveal any of their links to the missionary institutions, and had to shift their materiality to stone for them to be able to work with McEwen. This also renders credence to art critic Pip Curling's claim that Kekana was so frustrated by the lack of appreciation for his work in his adopted nation that he ended up donating two pieces to the National Gallery in order to be part of the national art archive.

Whether defined in terms of the physical geographical space, temporalities or the destabilisation and deconstruction of the canon, the study of peripheries is important to art history. As Joyeux-Prunel (2014: 7) elaborates:

> It also incites to complicate our art historical narratives with pragmatic research on what happened, who met whom, where artworks circulated, what was written about them, before giving in to the temptation to demonstrate the superiority of one's subject via simplistic [and often naïve] analyses of artworks and discourses.

Although the study of peripheries may not necessarily apply to every artist's situation and career, in the case of Kekana it helps us account for his relative invisibility and exclusion from the modern art canon and history of Zimbabwe and, to an extent, that of South Africa.

### 4.7. The circumstances limiting his fame

Situated in a farming area exactly seven kilometres from the Rusape-Nyanga highway, and 15 kilometres from the town of Rusape, St Faith's Mission is a remote regional outpost detached from the major communication networks of the Harare-Mutare Road and railway line. Therefore, I am persuaded to justify the disadvantages associated with such a limiting environment in terms of the centre-periphery theory that I defined earlier. In what he terms "geohistory of art" the art historian Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann employs geographical explanations to "account for local and regional variations" (Kaufmann 2008: 172), juxtaposing geographically restrictive environments – categorised as peripheries – with developed areas referred to as centres or cores. This characterisation acknowledges these regional differences in terms of economic development, which has great influence over the social standard of life as well. The periphery can also be defined as a temporal concept, qualifying it as a region of delayed or postponed artistic development (Vlachou 2016). I elected to apply this theory fully aware that postcolonial and subaltern studies have generally denounced its political and social implications (Joyeux-Prunel, 2014), as it appears clear to me that "center-periphery differences affect artists' marketability as well as their chances for critical appraisal" (Shaw 2014).

While perceiving St Faith's Mission as a peripheral outpost is certainly based on uneven socio-economic development levels, this classification does not attribute the region's inadequacies compared to others to a relationship of dependence, domination, and exploitation (Ziai 2012), albeit the place is governed by administrative decisions made in Harare like the rest of the country. "One significant feature that distinguishes it from the centre is that the periphery does not possess those institutions or mechanisms that would allow it to reproduce stylistic traits, innovations or aesthetic ideals and disseminate them beyond its own borders" (Vlachou 2016: 11). Even though it is distant from the country's capital cities, it is still a "cosmopolitan space where people with ties to different spaces converge [and as such] the fusion of their ideas challenges and subverts traditional practices" (Mitali and Ingram 2018: 2). Kekana and some of his prominent contemporaries who came out of Grace Dieu Mission were aware of the relationship between centres and peripheral areas, a phenomenon they articulated well in different fora. On his decision to move to Paris, which he understood to be the 'Mecca of Art', artist Gerard Sekoto made it clear that he decided to go where artists of different nationalities converged (Manganyi 1996: Williamson 2009). In the same vein Ernest Mancoba is quoted as saying that his "goal was Paris, for all that this city represented as a centre of artistic concern and responsibility, unique in the world, as I had been told by the artists who had emigrated from Europe" (Obrist 2010: 376). However, as they went on to discover in Paris, even the most cosmopolitan of spaces has challenges of its own. Mancoba and Sekoto did not just fit into the mainstream canon by virtue of being on the ground in the cultural capital. Thus, they still found themselves on the peripheries of the canon, in an environment they perceived to be all-inclusive.

In agreement with the artists' perceptions, art historian Salah Hassan (2010: 469) explains, "1940s Paris … provided Mancoba [and other diasporic artists] with an experiential encounter with the kind of knowledge that triggered his [their] imagination to produce such … work." The artists' statements emphasise the importance of networks forged in a core region where people from different areas emigrate to. Thus, "Paris was seen as the centre of peripheral modernism located elsewhere" (Salami and Visona 2013: 3). On his decision to go and study in the United Kingdom, Kekana said, "I went to see how people carved, how long it took others to make a carving. You need to measure yourself by other people" (Curling 1995: 11). Based on this sentiment, Kekana was aware of the advantages tied to a geographical environment, yet upon his return from London, he still settled at a farm station where he was professionally isolated. The reason he wanted to be at St. Faith's Mission cannot be because that is where

Sister Pauline had persuaded him to come and settle. Rather, he was a visionary who saw and exploited an opportunity to build a school and to grow the arts in the country. He also had no pressure to be settled in another location to get commissions from the church, which came his way even in the seemingly remote station.

Even though St. Faith's was an isolated place with only the church and a primary school at the time Kekana arrived, and therefore with no exposure to opportunities of establishing the same networks an artist based in the metropoles with access to exhibiting spaces and with the potential to mingle with collectors, he seemed to have appreciated it more with the passage of time. It appears the place suited his practice as an artist who was occupied with commissions, and with limited time for making work that would be exhibited in galleries. The commissions came mostly from South Africa and Salisbury, from churches and individuals, and from institutions as far as Nepal and Papua New Guinea. At first, the commissions mostly came through Sister Pauline who had connections all over the world. Years later he still had access to the outside world through his friend Ben Gingell, who was the director of Longman Booksellers in Harare. Gingell regularly sent him photographs of Africans from other parts of the continent to carve. Of South Africa, Kekana himself even maintained that people south of the Limpopo recognised him more on the outside than they did when he was still in the country. Perhaps, the yearning for recognition is a factor that pushed other Black artists out of South Africa at the time as they had no chance of being integrated in a canon that excluded them based on skin colour under the segregationist apartheid system. That Kekana grew to appreciate the modest life at St. Faith's Mission is seen through the crucial decisions he made in the early 1960s. Firstly, he turned down an opportunity to teach at the Sir John Cass College in England where he had studied for three years, opting to go back to the mission outpost. This move can also be read as his way of exerting independence or his refusal to work under someone's authority. When he presented his proposal for the art school he was going to start, the Rhodesian authorities wanted him to open it in Salisbury, which was the capital city, and therefore a vibrant centre easily accessible to foreign visitors (Kekana 1989) touring the nation.

With his mind firmly set on going back to St. Faith's Mission and starting the school at that institution, Kekana firmly turned down their suggestion.

Fig. 4.8. and 4.9. Coat of Arms for Standard Bank of South Africa, and Southern Rhodesia. Mukwa Wood. 1958. Crest for Barclays Bank, First Street, Salisbury. 1958/1959. Mukwa Wood. Courtesy of Elizabeth Rankin/Wits Art Museum.

While stationed at St. Faith's Mission, Kekana also worked on commissions from private sector businesses as evidenced by the coats of arms he did for both Barclays and Standard Banks around 1958/59 (Fig. 4.8. and 4.9.). A closer look at these reveals finer details that can be seen from different angles. The artist had mastered the art of relief carving, which had been introduced by Reverend Edward Paterson at Grace Dieu a few years before Kekana enrolled at the institution.

There were many other Black modern artists who came out of institutions like Grace Dieu and Rorke's Drift in South Africa or Cyrene and Serima Missions in Zimbabwe. Comparing Kekana's work with that of other modern artists of his generation would not necessarily be fair unless we start to appreciate the missionary confines within which he operated. As art historian Pip Curling argues; "His work should surely be evaluated in terms of the religious traditions within which he was working, and for which the accessibility of his art is so well suited"

(Curling 1995: 12). Working on mostly church commissions did not permit "the lively, sometimes crude, stylization of representation that is admired in contemporary rural art, nor the sophisticated experimentation of urban modernism" (Curling 1995: 12). By virtue of having attended an institution like Grace Dieu, artists like Kekana,

> learned to make sculpture in the conservative ambience of the mission school, rather than in a more exploratory 'fine arts' context. … The style they developed for religious works was in the tradition of European church carving and demonstrated its African origin only when black subjects were used to represent biblical figures" (Rankin 1989: 56).

In agreement with Rankin's sentiment above is Curling (1995: 12) who states that Grace Dieu "students were not expected to develop their own designs, as members of the order were considered better fitted to conceive religious imagery appropriately". As such, in the early years Kekana would add African features to his carvings only when instructed or requested to do so.

Even though Kekana was quite comfortable with the numerous commissions he worked on, remaining largely restricted to the missionary environment has not done a favour to the elevation of his legacy in comparison to that of his contemporaries. Their careers flourished in world capitals where they explored other art forms and styles, engaged with topical contemporary political and social matters, exhibited their work in galleries and met other people who promoted their work, including writers and collectors. Sekoto and Mancoba, who both came out of Grace Dieu and found themselves in Paris, provide a suitable example of this distinction. The same applies to Zimbabwean artists like Nicholas Mukomberanwa and Lazarus Khumalo who came out of Serima and Cyrene Missions respectively, and ended up exploring stone sculpture.

While the missionary environment could be perceived as restrictive in comparison to the broader secular art world, remaining within its confines was probably a personal choice for Kekana and others. Refuting the notion that missionary education isolated students from the secular art world, David Chituku, who was Kekana's mentee at St. Faith's Mission, stated that "he had studied the work of the great European sculptors – Michelangelo, Henry Moore, Picasso and Rodin – [and] Sister Pauline got the books for him" (Butler 2000: 76). Pip Curling (1995: 12) states that when Kekana went to Europe he was also able to see "Rodin and Michelangelo, and [he] particularly admired the English carver, Grinling Gibbons". These were sculptors his mentor had talked about. As such, that influence and exposure in education prepared them to explore other avenues as would be done by Gerard Sekoto who had come out of Grace Dieu, and was bold enough to experiment in another direction altogether. Although

Kekana occasionally made work outside the missionary tradition,[182] what kept him within its confines is that he practised at a time when there was "a concrete demand for religious craftwork with an African appearance" (Klein 2014: 1352) and made from local wood. That demand ensured that he earned enough income to sustain himself.

That Kekana did not commit to making more work outside the missionary tradition did not mean he was incapable of doing so. The work he made while in Johannesburg after leaving Grace Dieu was not commissioned and therefore would not have limited him to what he had been trained to do. However, it was the restrictive circumstances he found himself in, like the job reservations plan alluded to by Miles and Curling earlier, that he could not afford to experiment and express himself freely. At the end of his sojourn in England, the work that resulted in three exhibitions in the early 1960s was highly experimental in terms of materiality as it included bronze sculptures, a medium he had not worked in while in South Africa or Rhodesia. The work also included Madonnas with African features which were collected by different British churches (Curling 1995). However, it should be noted his exhibitions in the United Kingdom did not take place in conventional gallery spaces, with one at Rhodesia House and the other at a church in Solihull. It is possible that the work did not get a chance to be seen and appreciated by individuals within art circles.

With his Christian upbringing, it is possible that committing himself to making missionary work was Kekana's way of performing the work of the Lord. I make this claim because Kekana's student Guy Mutasa made it clear to me that his mentor came to St. Faith's as a missionary (Mutasa 2018, personal communication, October 18). While this may sound odd considering what is in the public domain regarding Kekana's education background, it is undeniable that he was an educator socialised in the missionary school environment. As such, he would easily fall into the group Zimbabwean historian and academic Mhoze Chikowero categorises as "the first generation of mission graduates, whom the missionaries had trained to help purvey the gospel of 'modernity' to their people" (Chikowero 2015: 157).[183] Interestingly, Kekana did not consider himself a missionary as is revealed in the Grace Dieu Bulletin (1956: 16), "At the official opening of the Federal Parliament, the Scoutmaster asked him if he is a minister of religion. He said NO!"[184] However, there is a reason why Mutasa, who spent more time under his tutelage, would claim so. Kekana might not exactly have been in the mould of

[182] I employ this term to qualify art that goes along with Christian beliefs and is central to Christian worship.
[183] These trained individuals would go back into their communities and help spread the gospel. It was easier for the community to listen to them and possibly convert as they looked like everyone else.
[184] 'The order of the Mace'. Grace Dieu Bulletin V(3). December 1956, pp 14-19.

Bernard Mizeki,[185] a black Mozambique-born and South African-trained missionary who became the first African Christian martyr on his death in Rhodesia in 1896, but he was one the local Black population could look up to and easily convert to Christianity because he looked and lived like them.

An examination of the personal correspondence between Kekana and Elizabeth Rankin in the 1980s and early 1990s,[186] reveals that his work is scattered throughout the world. However, due to the vast quantity of the artworks he produced over the span of his career, he could not locate it all nor provide a record of some of the work. Neither could he provide the precise years he made some of the work. In one of his several letters to Elizabeth Rankin he admitted he did not keep records (Kekana 1993). Earlier in his career, Sister Pauline did all that for him, and the idea of archiving the work seems to have died with her. The dearth of records on Black modernists is a widespread problem. In his analysis of the work of modern artists of Kekana's generation, art historian Salah Hassan (2010: 469) cites "poor documentation, if at all" as a common phenomenon and a huge obstacle standing in the way of putting together their coherent narratives.

The situation is further compounded by the fact that the NAZ repositories have very little information on Kekana, and this takes the form of a few short newspaper articles that did not really pay attention to his work, but only recorded key events such as the presentation of the ceremonial mace to the federal administration and his death. This is not so much of a surprise in a state where recognition is mainly reserved for key players in the political arena. Moreover, the NAZ is not able to repatriate important records belonging to Zimbabwe, presumably due to weaker legislation (Chaterera and Rodrigues 2019: 90). This is an obstacle in the case of Kekana who attended school and had at least two solo exhibitions in the United Kingdom. The NGZ library also has no records on Kekana's work. That the same institution has information on the Cyrene and Serima workshops, despite the fact that they are located far away from Harare and that Frank McEwen despised them, might be a function of coloniality. Archivists and librarians at the NGZ place value on the legacies of institutions founded and run by white missionaries and expatriates compared to that founded by a Black immigrant. The dearth of information shows that no archives from Kekana's school were deposited in the institution over

[185] Bernard Mzeki is the first African martyr and saint in Zimbabwe. Anglican altars, chapels and institutions in Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe are named after him, with the prominent one being Bernard Mzeki College, a Mission school in Marondera, and therefore a 'sister school' to St. Faith's Mission. There is a mural painting of Mzeki done by Canon Paterson at the Cyrene Chapel. A carved head of Mzeki done by Job Kekana is in Rhodesia House, London (Chawarika and Duncan 2018).
[186] Elizabeth Rankin. Job Kekana File. Wits Arts Museum.

the years. Thus, the non-canonical status of Kekana's practice and artists from the Kekana School of Art and Craft is also cemented by the dearth of records, which could have helped in building meaningful histories even in the absence of the physical institutional infrastructure in the form of buildings, and the scattered artworks.

### 4.8. Unappreciated on two fronts – in South Africa and Zimbabwe

In the mid-1990s, art critic Pip Curling makes a strong case for the appreciation of Kekana's legacy, arguing that "the sustained high quality of his carving and the integrity of his subject matter deserve a level of recognition that they have yet to receive either in his adoptive country or the country of his birth" (1995: 12). Almost half a decade later, the South African poet, academic and writer Guy Butler (2000: 70) expanded the notion, wondering why such an artist with extraordinary skills "has in many instances been overlooked as one of the continent's greatest artists", and the Zimbabwe-born South African curator, writer and former senior curator of the Iziko South African National Gallery, Hayden Proud (2011) sustained the debate by elevating Kekana onto the same pedestal as George Pemba, and lamenting that the former is yet to be represented in the collection of the Iziko South African National Gallery. That Proud made the claim a decade and a half after Curling's statement shows that scholars and institutions in Zimbabwe and South Africa have not devoted their time and effort to his work and exploits for long. The strong representation and recognition of Ernest Mancoba's and Gerard Sekoto's legacies, and that of many others who were pushed into exile in the era of apartheid, shows that it is not South Africa's *modus operandi* to ignore artists who were born in the country and went on to establish their careers outside the nation's borders. However, it is also important to note that both Mancoba's and Sekoto's celebrated legacies in their country of birth are complemented by equally strong legacies in France, their adopted country. The same cannot be said of Kekana who seems to only get recognition as a footnote in the narrative of celebrated artists, let alone art teachers, in Zimbabwe.

In the third chapter I argued that as the Director of the National Gallery, Frank McEwen selected the art to be exhibited at the institution and that to be promoted outside the country. As such, he had the power to determine what was to be part of the country's mainstream canon and that which was to be excluded from it. He was instrumental in making stone sculpture, his preferred medium, the dominant form of contemporary art in Rhodesia and promote it to the world stage as well. He had no time for that which fell outside the art form of his choice. Art historian Elizabeth Morton substantiates this claim when she states that "when Job Kekana visited his [McEwen's] workshop immediately after returning from art school in London, he

was thrown out and not allowed to interact with McEwen's students in any way" (Morton 2013b: 244). In doing so, McEwen also had the power to ignore, push away and sideline artists whose practice fell outside his preferred parameters. Interestingly, many years afterwards, his successors also carried on centring the stone sculpture art form he had put on the world stage. Art Historian Tony Monda (2015b) argues that "over the decades, since the attainment of their independence, much of the art produced in former colonies is inclined to reflect the lingering residual of the colonial legacy".

*The Herald* newspaper of 23 June 1980 carried a brief feature on an exhibition titled *Art Zimbabwe* which was officially opened in Bulawayo by Christopher Till, a former director of the National Gallery and by default one of McEwen's successors. The show, which included rock paintings, ceramics, sculpture, and selected work from Cyrene Mission, also included a piece by Job Kekana. It probably marked the only significant moment he participated in a group exhibition in Zimbabwe. Interestingly, Till revealed that he never encountered Kekana personally, and admitted that the national institution carried on promoting stone sculpture as the main art form (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). Till's statement shows that there was no immediate radical shift in the operations of the National Gallery in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In fact, under the leadership of Till, the national institution is said to have shifted its energy towards "teaching stone sculpture as artists of the Workshop School were aging" (Rhodesia Herald 1980). This is not surprising considering that the nation had adopted a policy of national reconciliation and the National Gallery was one of the many institutions inherited from Rhodesia, with only a change of personnel.[187] Moreover, the institution's focus continued to be on artists in and around Harare and Bulawayo, and not much on those centred at the outskirts, let alone the woodcarvers. Of *Sorcerer* (Fig. 4.10.) and *Abstract* (Fig. 4.11.), the two works of Kekana in the collection of the NGZ, Curling (1995: 11), states that Kekana only donated them to the institution because he was "disappointed that his work had never been acknowledged by the art community in his adopted country." However, according to Lilian Chaonwa, who is the incumbent Conservation and Collections Manager at the National Gallery, the Kekana sculptures were purchased. This is according to the *Draft Catalogue for Permanent Collection on African artists And Artefacts* "which [strangely enough] was compiled by Pip Curling herself" (Chaonwa 2022, personal communication, 15 July). The two

[187] The National Gallery of Zimbabwe Act (Chapter 25:09) was adopted in 1971.

are recorded as purchases from the artist. “The works are undated, with *Abstract* having been purchased in 1986 and *Sorcerer* in 1987” (Chaonwa 2022, personal communication, 15 July ).

That there are such glaring gaps of information on the artist speaks volumes of the gatekeeping culture at the institution. Perhaps the artist did not excite them enough because of the medium he worked in. Indeed, Kekana lived until 1995, that is, more than a decade after the attainment of independence, and therefore, there was ample time to engage with him and his work in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The institution would have a substantive archive on him if it wanted to.

*Sorcerer* conforms to Kekana’s detailed trademark carvings of busts. He produced a number either for sitters who posed for him or for biblical figures. However, with its bird-like figure, *Abstract* could be anything – even a spiritual totemic bird, and therefore could have fitted into the category McEwen and later his predecessor, were interested in. The only reason it would be left out is because of its medium, which is wood not stone.

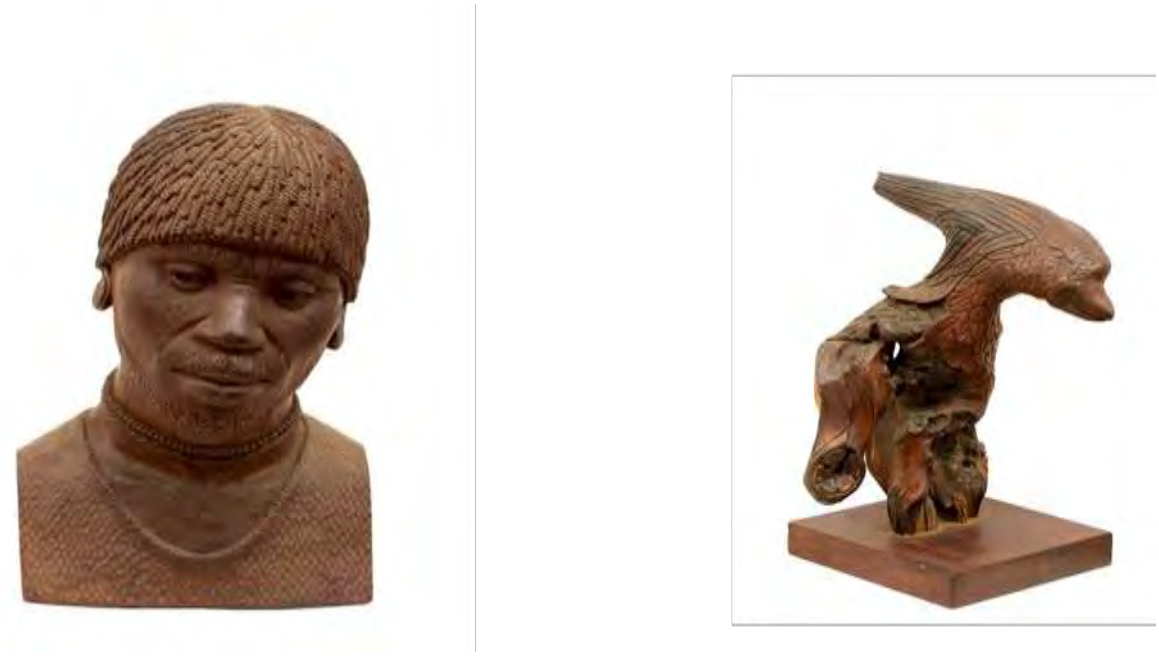

Fig. 4.10 and 4.11. Job Kekana, *Sorcerer*, Year unknown, Wood, 46x26x22 cm, and *Abstract*, Year unknown, Wood, 44x26x39 cm. Courtesy of The National Gallery of Zimbabwe.

The most prominent among Kekana’s contemporaries was Gerard Sekoto, who is remembered as the ‘father’ of Black modernism in South Africa (Peffer 2009). Emile Maurice (2012) details the ways in which Sekoto’s country of birth, South Africa, has honoured his legacy:

> Postage stamps featuring his paintings were issued in 1996; Becker Street in Newtown, Johannesburg, was renamed Gerard Sekoto Street; and he is only one of a handful of

> artists to be awarded the Order of Ikhamanga (in Gold) – an honour bestowed upon him in 2003 by President Mbeki for not only "exceptional achievement in the arts," but also, notably, for his "contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle."

Moreover, the Absa L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award is in honour of him. In France, where he is buried, Sekoto is a recipient of one of the highest national cultural honours, the award of Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters. Although the story has been different for Mancoba, he has had a few solo and retrospective exhibitions in South Africa, including at the National Gallery. Recently, in a 2019 article titled 'Mancoba's genius is at long last acknowledged', Riason Naidoo, a former director at the Iziko South African National Gallery, highlighted and celebrated the artist's first retrospective exhibition, *I Shall Dance in a Different Society*, held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Kekana's participation in the South African Academy exhibitions in the 1930s and early 1940s is on record in South Africa, where there has been an attempt to reposition artists who were marginalised "and frequently not considered to be artists at all" during the apartheid era (Marschall 2002: 56). The problem is that Kekana is one of the artists that South Africa is yet to fully acknowledge. This is also complemented by the silence on his contribution in Zimbabwe where he lived and practised for close to five decades. He has been kept outside the nation's canon based on materiality, not the colour of his skin.

Kekana valued strong personal relations and ties with the people of the community that had embraced him from the time he became one of them. The interviews I had with the village headman VaMaibvisira (VaMaibvisira, personal communication, October 15), reveal that he was well vested in the community's daily business as well as his adopted country's politics. Contrary to Rankin's (1993: 17) assertion that, "during the time of 'troubles' in Rhodesia in the 1970s they (Kekana and his community) were quite cut off in Rusape", Kekana was quite actively involved in politics as a member of the multiracial farm community that had received political education from a Welshman named Guy Clutton-Brock,[188] who was instrumental in turning St. Faith's Mission into a meeting place for nationalists and liberation fighters from as early as the 1940s and 1950s. Another village elder, Mbuya Gwatidzo (2018, personal communication, October 16), went as far as revealing that the community entrusted Kekana with the responsibility of keeping its funds, only for the freedom fighters to assign the role to another member of the community due to Kekana's challenges with mobility and vision. Kekana was a member of the Interracial Association of Southern Rhodesia. After the Speaker of Parliament invited him to the official opening of the Federation Government, and the Prime

[188] For the role he played in the war of liberation, Guy Clutton-Brock was the first white person to be declared a national hero in Zimbabwe. For more on his legacy, see Todd, J. 1995.

Minister invited him to a 'sundowner party' where he mingled with members of parliament following his carving of the ceremonial mace, he could not help but draw comparison between the situations in South Africa and Rhodesia. He commented, "This would not have happened to an African in the Union" (Mtepuka 1956: 66).

That Kekana treasured his ties with the community is seen through his decision to come back to St. Faith's Mission after spending "three years (1960-1963) in London at the Sir John Cass School of Art finally expanding on his knowledge of sculpture and learning to work with bronze" Butler (2000: 67). To substantiate this claim, Rankin (1993: 17) expounds, "Kekana was invited to continue at the London college as a tutor, but he felt he could make a greater contribution in Africa and returned to set up a school for carvers, particularly for those disabled like him, aided by funding from the Beit Trust." Moreover, he turned down the Rhodesian Government's suggestion that he establish the school in Salisbury. Unfortunately, while the same community valued him as a member, like any other rural community in Zimbabwe, it could not do so much for him in terms of appreciating and sustaining his career and legacy as an artist or an artist-teacher.

Over the years, St Faith's Mission has unintentionally undermined Kekana's legacy by failing to preserve it. In the obituary she wrote for the artist-teacher, Curling (1995: 11) had this to say about the school: "Nowhere is there evidence that for forty years there lived and worked at the mission one of the finest sculptors of religious art in southern Africa." The best way to contextualise this assertion is to contrast the experience I had on a field trip to my former school with that at Cyrene Mission where I was guided through the Cyrene chapel and workshop by Ncube, who is an art teacher at the school. Ncube and the other art teachers at Cyrene take turns explaining the history of the institution that centres Canon Paterson's visionary contribution and the work he did with the students, and link that to what current art students in the school are doing to make sure the legacy of the institution's founder will not be forgotten. Compared to that, the first thing that would shock any visitor to St. Faith's Mission is that the workshop building that was central to the Job Kekana Art and Craft School was demolished. As the village headman VaMaibvisira revealed, the bricks of the structure were recycled or used to build other structures elsewhere (VaMaibvisira, personal communication, October 15).

Besides the few carvings in the church, which are said to have been done by Kekana's students, a line or two on the school's website, the framed portrait and bust done by Kekana, which are

at the entrance of the computer lab[189] are the only tangible materials that remind visitors that there was an established artist based at the school (Fig 4.12 and 4.13). If the school had art on its curriculum, there is possibility that Kekana would have been made the reference point.


Fig. 4.12. A frame at the St Faith's High School installed in memory of Job Kekana and two of his students, and Fig. 4.13. A bust carved by Job Kekana. Installed at the computer labs in honour of the artist. Images: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

In the school, the only person who was prepared to talk about Kekana is VaMukoyi,[190] the headmaster who retired at the end of 2018. Admitting that St. Faith's Mission had not done enough to maintain what Kekana had initiated, he explains:

> He had run an art school that eventually did not exist [by the time he died]. So, I feel he could've been disappointed that art had not been taken up and sustained as a subject [in the school]. He was one soul pushing across a creative idea that the society around

[189] These items were not there when I left the school at the end of 1999.
[190] Moses Nelson Mukoyi joined St. Faith's High School from an Anglican Mission 'sister' school, St. Augustine's Penhalonga (KwaTsambe) of Mutare, in 1991. In the four years that he spent with Kekana at the school, the two became friends. Kekana gave him at least two artworks as a gesture of friendship. A headmaster who also taught English Literature at Ordinary Level, VaMukoyi appreciates Kekana's work and the arts in general.

> him did not fully appreciate which is really tragic (Mukoyi 2018, personal communication, October 15).

The society around him that VaMukoyi described as "not educated enough to appreciate things of value"[191] includes the Anglican Diocese of Manicaland, the school, members of the village, and to an extent the whole country. Even though the society embraced him as someone offering some skills to a few of their children, they were not different from any other community throughout Zimbabwe that does not value art the way it is exhibited for people's enjoyment in other societies, or as a commodity of exchange the way it is bought and sold in urban communities. Because of that, VaMukoyi likened Kekana to a flower blossoming in the desert:

> You know that the desert has got some of the finest flowers, animals and plants. And I had that unique honour of travelling or driving from the Zambian side right down to Windhoek, Namibia. And I was surprised with one or two shrubs and flowers that I saw. The point is the flower in the desert blossoms and dies. Nobody sees it. It has shown its beauty, but nobody's noticed it. It's easy to see Kekana in that light as well.

VaMutasa, who was Kekana's student agrees with VaMukoyi and laments the fact that there was no effort to save Manicaland's oldest art school. For that, he even blames the Anglican Diocese of Manicaland for abandoning the missionary work it used to do in the past in pursuit of profits made from boarding schools like the one at St. Faith's Mission.

Cyrene Mission's edge over St. Faith's is that the NGZ's Bulawayo branch is involved in the maintenance of the chapel. As such, the national institution is responsible for renovating it. There was no effort to reach out to the St. Faith's Mission from the National Gallery, even though Kekana passed away as late as 1995. By then, the nation's gallery continued to promote stone sculpture as it had done in the colonial era. That the old church building at St. Faith's Mission, which has a few carvings produced at the art school, is still standing has nothing to do with preserving the art in it but that it is a revered sacred institution for the community. It is disappointing that when one encounters legacies of some of the country's finest figurative expressionists like David Chituku and Barnabas Ndudzo who came out of the Job Kekana Art and Crafts School, researchers hardly find anything tangible to sustain that legacy in the school.

[191] Indeed, the other two community members – Mbuya Gwatidzo and VaMaibvisira – I interviewed speak of Kekana the community member they valued, and not so much about his practice. There are not many artists who opt to operate in remote areas in Zimbabwe, with the Murehwa-based Tapfuma Gutsa being the most notable exception.

## 4.9. Conclusion

Not many African artist-teachers established formal art schools throughout the continent in the mid-twentieth century and before. Most of the formal art schools of the time were either founded by European and American missionaries or expatriates. It is the schools founded by missionaries and expatriates that are dominant in the art history narrative of Zimbabwe, with very little said about the Kekana School of Art and Craft. Not only that, Kekana's legacy as an artist who carried out important projects deserves more recognition. This chapter contextualised his relative invisibility in the art history of Zimbabwe and South Africa in terms of the space he chose to operate in and the circumstances arising from that environment. To talk of the Kekana School of Art and Craft is akin to talking of a sole proprietorship that meets its demise with the death of its owner. Though some of the school's students who reside in the St. Faith's Mission area, remember the institution with nostalgia, none of them was prepared to keep the institution alive after the death of its founding father.[192] The community and the Anglican Diocese of Manicaland, on whose property the institution was, were also not concerned to maintain the institution.

[192] In the interview I had with him, Guy Mutasa created the impression that he inherited part of the Kekana estate as the rightful heir. He revealed that he kept all of Kekana's tools and he is also looking after Kekana's house.

# Chapter 5: The Selected Black Artist-teachers

## 5.1. Introduction

While at the NGZ one October morning, I enquired about the whereabouts of John Hlatywayo, an artist whose work is in the permanent collection of the institution, and someone who used to teach at the National Gallery School of Visual Arts and Design. I got the following shocking response from one senior member: "His son graduated at our school two years ago. That is the last time we saw him. He is alive. If he was dead, we would have heard the news." I found the response surprising because I expected the staff at the NGZ to be in touch with him.[193] I left for Gallery Delta, where the institution's co-founders, Derek Huggins and Helen Lieros told me a bit about John Hlatywayo and Cornelius Manguma. However, when I brought into the discussion the names of Lazarus Khumalo, Joram Mariga and Sam Songo, Huggins sipped his tea, took a sigh, and responded, "We know who they are. We know they were artists. We just did not know they were teachers" (Huggins 2018, personal communication, October 13). The two sentiments left me thinking and asking questions, considering the way the art history of Zimbabwe has been written, mainstreaming Frank McEwen, the first Director of the National Gallery, and to some extent Canon Paterson and John Groeber, the founding fathers of Cyrene and Serima Missions respectively, as the main and pioneering artist-teachers in the country, with Hlatywayo and Manguma appearing just as a footnote. The respondent at the NGZ showed why there is not much attention paid to the Black artist-teachers. They seem not to matter much. Huggins's sentiment reflects the reluctance, even unwillingness or refusal on the part of cultural practitioners to recognise some individuals as artist-teachers, opting to confine them to the role of artists instead. Why would an individual like Huggins, who has occupied the centre stage of Zimbabwe's art story for more than five decades, and is most likely to have come across some of these artists for that matter, not be acquainted with their contributions in mentoring and producing artists who went on to shape the nation's art history? There were a few Black artist-teachers in the various art workshops in Zimbabwe. Lazarus Khumalo, Sam Songo and Cornelius Manguma were products of Cyrene and Serima Mission institutions and

[193] At Gallery Delta, Helen Lieros and Derek Huggins gave me directions to John Hlatywayo's home in Mbirimi Road in Beatrice Cottage, Mbare. Interestingly, Mbirimi Road is just behind the National Gallery School of Visual Arts and Design when one is walking or driving from Mbare Musika.

therefore had received their training under the guidance of Paterson and Groeber.[194] Joram Mariga was the pioneer artist and an instructor in 'Shona' stone sculpture operating in the areas of Nyanga and in Harare in the twilight years of his career. Crispen Chakanyuka, a protégé of Mariga, taught Tom Blomefield and many others how to sculpt in stone at the Tengenenge workshop (Morton 2013b). Like Job Kekana, who is the subject of the previous chapter, Hlatywayo also emerged from a South African institution, the Cecil Skotnes-run Polly Street Art Centre in Johannesburg. The primary aim of this chapter is to highlight the individual contributions of these selected Black artist-teachers whose legacies are overshadowed by those of the white male missionaries and expatriates they worked with. In doing so, I employ the biographical approach as a methodology.

### 5.2. Much more than a footnote

In the previous chapters I highlighted the idea that various art practices took place in precolonial Zimbabwe. Like many other customs and practices of the early societies, the different art forms passed on from one generation to the other. While some of them developed and mutated into new forms due to the influence of encountering other cultures and the fusion of ideas as people explored other ways of life with new modes of production and existence, others discontinued, like the stone sculpture practice at Great Zimbabwe. The formal missionary school and classroom-imparted education were only introduced on the Zimbabwean plateau at the dawn of colonialism when missionaries arrived and established the 'modern'[195] Eurocentric system of education. Even then, the mission schools were established as isolated outposts in certain parts of the country, leaving most areas outside their spheres of influence 'uncorrupted'.[196] However, that did not mean there were no forms of art teaching going on in the areas that were far away from the mission settlements. Knowledge and skills were passed from generation to generation by practical work, often or sometimes in imitation of mentors and past work, and by word of mouth. It is against this backdrop that my definition of Black artist-teachers is not strictly restricted to those who were educated and trained in the mission schools. My broad definition includes art mentors and instructors who imparted knowledge and

[194] In a recent chat with Voti Thebe on WhatsApp (August 24, 2022), the former Regional Director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo indicated that there is no clear evidence that the Black artist-teachers who emerged out of Cyrene Mission had been trained to become teachers the way teachers were trained at an institution like Grace Dieu Mission, which was set up as teacher training centre, for example. Thebe's own observation and experience under some of them at the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre was that they imparted art skills, but never taught art theory.

[195] Here I apply 'modernity' in the narrow Eurocentric way.

[196] People freely moved or migrated between the areas without mission stations and those that had. In the same manner ideas moved with them.

skills of carving, drawing, making ceramics and sculptures at home or elsewhere in the confines of the countryside and outside the artistic mainstream.

Missionaries like Paterson and Groeber of Cyrene and Serima Missions respectively, and to an extent Blomefield of Tengenenge, played a crucial role in setting up the institutions that taught art both informally and formally. However, I contest the idea of referencing or recognising the Black artist-teachers or instructors affiliated to these institutions merely as a footnote in the art history of Zimbabwe. Some of them are just referred to as mere assistants to the missionaries and white expatriate teachers, yet they played an equally important part in grooming artists at these institutions. The failure to acknowledge their role as artist-teachers lies with the way the nation's art history has been written and presented in the past, and today's gatekeeping culture which has failed to unsettle legacies of the past. What the South African art historian, educator and curator Thembinkosi Goniwe says about his nation resonates with Zimbabwe too: "Black artists engage white practitioners only as image-makers, while the latter have multiple occupations that include teaching, researching, writing, curating, marketing, collecting, and so forth" (Goniwe 2003: 38). There seem to be biases embedded in the definition, recognition, and memorialisation of artist-teachers in the construction of the narratives of art history in Zimbabwe, mainly due to the perpetuation of the old narrative by non-indigenous art historians in Western institutions.

Emerging out of established art institutions like Cyrene and Serima Missions, artists like Khumalo and Songo, and many others, already had their names cast in stone in the mainstream of art practice in the then Rhodesia. They were coming out of institutions which were right at the centre of the nation's arts scene. They were only pushed out of the mainstream mostly due to one man's preferences. Thus, when Frank McEwen took over the administrative post at the National Gallery, he is said to have had little interest in the work of the artists coming out of the mission stations.[197] Driven by his desire to establish an art canon that the nation could identify with and be known for, he pursued his obsession with stone sculpture. As highlighted in the third chapter, some of these artists were shrewd enough to adapt to the new preferred medium and to hide their mission-school acquired credentials to be accepted and be able to work with McEwen. That helped them stay in the business of making art. However, most of those who remained in the mission schools, where they mostly went on to teach art, received little or no recognition from the National Gallery at the time. In doing so they were sidelined.

[197] The story of Sam Songo later in this chapter challenges this notion.

Thus, even though they had made a name as artists, it is their role and contribution as artist-teachers that has been neglected, if not completely ignored or erased, by art critics and historians focusing on the development of modern art in Zimbabwe, and through the culture of gatekeeping among those working in key institutions who have not attempted to shake or upset the status quo. Hence, the notion of the forgotten or neglected artist-teachers. And yet "the notion of an artist who is also a teacher is historically, geographically and culturally common" (Day 1986: 38).

Commenting on art teaching in colonial Ghana and other previously colonised African countries, the Ghanaian painter, printmaker, independent art historian and curator Atta Kwami states that, "during the colonial era, there were two main types of art education: the indigenous workshop or household apprenticeship, and the European-derived art schools" (Kwami 2013: 221). To an extent the same applies to the situation in the then Rhodesia where "colonial models and networks were beginning to affect African art" (Roberts 1990: 246). Institutions like Cyrene, Serima and Driefontein fell into the latter. They were modelled on Western intellectual traits and fully integrated Western methods of teaching and making art. These included painting and printmaking. Sculpture was mainly done in wood because it was the readily available material that the artist-teachers were acquainted with. Interestingly, a common trait in most of these Western modelled institutions is that they encouraged their students to express themselves from their familiar surroundings. To achieve that goal "some colonial authorities tried to repair artistic traditions by engaging Africans to teach arts and crafts" (Roberts 1990: 246). Although the Vukutu Workshop school in Nyanga, for example, was wholly made up of local artists mentoring each other, it is difficult to categorise their art form as indigenous since they were influenced by Pat Pearce who was interested in their work, and Frank McEwen who, together with his wife Mary McFadden, helped export the work outside the country. The same applies to Tengenenge, which had a large pool of local and regional artists but was driven by commerce with Tom Blomefield as the middleman. However, household apprenticeship was a common phenomenon as some artists mentored members of their families.

### 5.3. Apprenticeship and mentorship

At this point it is important to unpack the terms 'apprenticeship' and 'mentorship.' Art historian and curator Sipho Mdanda (2018) tries to define and qualify these terms, albeit with particular reference to the Cecil Skotnes-run Polly Street Art Centre of Johannesburg in the 1950s and 60s. The art historian acknowledges that even though artists tend to use the term (mentorship) often, art historians have not devoted their time to interrogating it fully and applying it to the

field. Therefore, much of the literature that exists on mentorship remains a preserve of fields like the law fraternity and business management or entrepreneurship. According to Mdanda, the art historian who has come close to describing this form of 'knowledge transfer of skills method' is Elizabeth Rankin (1996) even though she describes it as 'apprenticeship'. What underlies this method of knowledge and skills transfer is a hands-on approach of learning by emulation. There was no art curriculum in place and most of the mentees were adults with no art background. Depending on the attitude of the mentor, this was mostly a two-way process in which the one who was teaching also learned something from the mentee. This explains why some of the mentors ended up changing their styles much later in life, or even exploring new art forms through their contact with mentees. Therefore, characteristics such as nurturing, caring, sharing, mutual respect and support were the hallmark of this informal and non-formal form of theoretical and practical transfer of knowledge in workshops of the southern African region.

However, the term apprenticeship has been interrogated by Kasfir (2013) and Adewumi (2019), albeit in the context of Nigeria. Kasfir carried out studies among the Idoma, Kalabari, Ebira and Tiv communities in Nigeria, observing that apprenticeship is quite informal. The number of years an emerging artist tends to spend under the tutelage of a specialist carver varies from three to five years. However, the author cites the case of Areogun (1880-1954) who is regarded as "perhaps the greatest carver" (Kasfir 2013: 366) who spent sixteen years on apprenticeship. During the tenure of the apprenticeship, as Adewuni (2019: 102) observes, the apprentice is "only allowed to produce works according to their master's dictates". Based on this observation, Adewuni argues that such practice is tenable at Serima Mission where artists produced "carvings which were adapted as utilitarian and aesthetic additions" to the institution (Adewuni (2019: 102), as is seen through the Serima church door. After their apprenticeship, artists were free to explore own styles and to use own media as is seen through graduates of Serima who became stone sculptors at McEwen's National Gallery School.

For this thesis and this chapter, I employ the term 'artist-teacher' to describe an individual who imparted art education and/or knowledge to others in the community, both within and outside the classroom. Other terms used interchangeably to refer to these individuals include 'art instructor', 'mentor'. 'artist-cum-teacher' and even 'assistant instructor' as some of them were referred to while working alongside the missionaries and other expatriates. Those who had learned in the two prime and pioneer missionary art institutions still expressed themselves in

unique and original ways to an extent, since the missionaries did not interfere much with their practices. Yet they have remained excluded from what has been considered the mainstream based on Western dictates and the promotion of stone sculpture as Zimbabwe's principal art form in the past. Emerging out of mission institutions, they tended to carry on with the traditions of instruction that had nurtured them. An example being the way Job Kekana carried on with the Grace Dieu tradition of relief sculpture[198] within the missionary confines of St. Faith's Mission, seen in the work of his students many years later (Morton 2013a). Thus, there was no marked radical shift in the work of their students from theirs.

### 5.4. The challenge of posthumous constructions

The main challenge for the chapter is the lack of source material. Of the five, Hlatywayo and Manguma are the only ones who are still alive, albeit I was not able to trace the latter. As such, I managed to track and interview Hlatywayo. Two concepts which can best be integrated with autobiographical storytelling as a methodology in art history qualify my writings on Mariga, Khumalo and Songo. The first is what African American writer and academic Saidiya Hartman terms "critical fabulation", which is a form of creative storytelling that challenges "the violence of the archive and the way power is registered through absences, the obliteration of lives, (and) all the things we could not know" (Hartman 2021). Being of a different generation from the rest of these artist-teachers, theirs is a story I am far detached from, yet employing "critical fabulation" affords me an opportunity to imagine and connect with their past, and therefore a chance to change the course of the future by writing them into history and therefore honouring their legacies (Hamer 2020). In his doctoral thesis, Ciraj Rassool talks of the life story not just being a sequence of facts that happen in the interval between birth and death, but that fiction – "stemming from the creative imagination" (Rassool 2004: 45) – is a part of it. Hartman's critical fabulation calls for the use of 'creative imagination' to fill in the missing gaps in the archive of the marginalised.

Equally of relevance is what art historian Joanna Grabski (2013: 37) terms "posthumous constructions" with the absent artists-cum-teachers not able to offer additional words nor do they have "the option to dispute or elaborate" what I say and write about them as they are long gone. This has prompted Eisler (1987:79) to assert that, "for scholars, the best artist is the dead one (as) there is no fear of talkback." Aligned to this line of thought is Rassool's description of writing biography as "metaphorical theft, stealing that which is not owned" (2004: 47). In

[198] Apparently, relief carving had been introduced at Grace Dieu by Canon Paterson in the short stint (1924-25) he had at the teacher training missionary institution almost a decade before Kekana enrolled.

other words, Rassool reminds us that as individuals, we do not own the facts of our lives as our lives are in the public domain from the time we are born. As such, even in the event that the subject has passed on, the best we can do is to treat the information with utmost respect and to try and stay objective.

In the absence of the artist-teachers in this thesis, I did not fold up as there are alternative ways of reconstructing their narratives. I was able to engage with one or two of their students who are still living. This therefore means I attempt to knit together the somewhat incoherent narratives that exist in other people's memories. I was also able to access information in various scattered incomplete archives. Unless there is more commitment to primary evidence, to the stories of these artist-teachers and to art history in Zimbabwe, it is unfortunate that some of them might end up completely written out of history. Reviving and retaining their stories is an exercise that requires more time and extra dedication. Due to the dearth of written information on them, what remains and needs to be rescued urgently is oral information from an ailing older generation, among them their colleagues and former students. It is a race against time.[199]

Zimbabwe sits with what Pollock (1999: 4) would describe as an "increasingly impoverished" canon, which has over the years relegated the role played by individual Black artist-teachers to the peripheries and completely continues to ignore their contributions to the development of art in the nation. The fact that most of these individuals are no longer present makes the reconstruction of their stories a cumbersome exercise. In their absence, the lack of extensive documentation or archives on them, even from past exhibitions,[200] the reconstruction of the stories and legacies of the neglected artist-teachers is a challenge. It is not easy for me to paint an accurate picture when the protagonists are no more. In cases where the artist-teachers are deceased, what mostly remains in the archives are short biographies which allow the researcher to gain a glimpse of key markers of their careers over the years. The context of culture and personal experiences can help explain certain aspects of their work. There are also newspaper briefings announcing their deaths and sometimes a few statements summarising their practice. The greatest challenge arises when the compiled biographical details are not accurate. In such

[199] These remaining individuals need to be interviewed and their information archived before the knowledge dies with them. On the need for such interviews, art historian Joanna Grabski (2013: 35) elaborates, "In their capacity as documents, interviews accrue value as time passes, memory fails, and conversation partners are lost."

[200] According to Elizabeth Rankin (1995a: 5-6), "the interaction between publications and gallery acquisitions has remained significant. A clear example of this relationship was seen again more recently in the case of Gerard Sekoto, when a monograph on the painter by Barbara Lindop in 1988 was followed by an exhibition of the Sowetan collection of his drawings, housed at the University of the Witwatersrand, then a scholarly catalogue by Lesley Spiro together with a retrospective exhibition of his work at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1989". Such instances have been very few, if any, in the context of Zimbabwe.

situations, interviews involving their colleagues, students, and at times family, are the most meaningful medium to help mine or retain useful information in the process of reconstructing such histories.

Their "absence by death", which is usually registered and represented by these teachers' living students and colleagues, provides a creative opportunity to "generate narratives around absence" (Grabski 2013: 26). By recalling from memory, sometimes corroborated by tangible materials left by or connected to the deceased, their stories are brought to the present. I encountered a few examples of this during my fieldwork. While talking about Job Kekana, for example, VaMukoyi, the then headmaster of St. Faith's Mission, produced two busts that were entrusted to him for safekeeping by the late sculptor's wife. His memory of the late artist and artist-teacher was therefore tied to the tangible evidence of what the artist had produced. Likewise, Voti Thebe took me to the Bulawayo Civic Centre to show me a stone sculpture that was made by Lazarus Khumalo. VaMutasa, who had been Kekana's student, recalled with laughter how Kekana would laugh at him for producing a bust with a skewed face. His memory was reconstructed around that intangible aspect. In these few examples, the deceased and their practice were brought to the present, rendering "absence as a productive space" (Grabski 2013: 26).

South African art historians Same Mdluli (2015), Lize van Robbroeck (2003) and historian Daniel Magaziner (2015) have problematised the use of the biographical method of analysis, particularly in the context of South Africa's early Black modernists. The three writers are in agreement on the idea that referencing the Black modernists in relation to their backgrounds, experiences and beliefs leads to inconsistences, omissions, distortions, and biases. Also that doing so appears to imply or enforce the notion of 'authenticity' or to bring out the 'Africanness' of these artists by putting emphasis on tradition, culture and lifestyles at the expense of the work they did. This point of view is also supported by Salomon (1991: 335) who states that stressing individual biographies "encapsulates those individuals and presents them as discrete from their social and political environments (and therefore) occludes an analysis of works of art as material objects and understanding their formulative role in the dynamics of ideological constructs".

In the field of art history, narrative traces helpful in the construction of biographies can include artworks, archival collections in the form of artist statements, exhibition catalogues and reviews, interviews and academic profilings, diaries, records at the institutions the artist enrolled or worked with, etc. Presented with these materials, I try and present them in a

somewhat organised structure, which includes arranging them in a chronologic manner. Interestingly, Rassool (2004: 49) argues that merely "imposing a narrative structure of events in the reconstruction of the past, as chronological 'history of events' or a life history or placed in a historical context, is not enough". The historian reminds us to take note of the fact that there are "multiple narrations intersecting and crosscutting each other, paralleling and contradicting each other as they compete for the construction of historical meaning" (Rassool 2004: 49). In a direct response to Rassool, Jonathan Hyslop argues that working out facts in chronology is useful as "sequence can have important explanatory value" (2010: 108).

Although seemingly problematic, I find the biographies helpful as a starting point for Black artist-teachers whose work has been kept out of the mainstream, considering that the focus is not primarily on the aesthetic quality of particular artworks they made, but their profession as teachers instead. I find the methodology helpful in the case of the artist-teachers presented in this chapter. With the dearth of archives around them and the focus on their careers, not just the work they made, the biographical approach serves my research well. That the methodology is mainly employed by art historians writing about African artists is contestable, since European scholars have done the same with masters like Picasso and Vincent van Gogh, for example.

Applying postcolonial theorist Edward Said's notion of citation as a methodological tool for studying visual representations in Africa, the Nigerian writer and poet Harry Garuba argues that "by falling outside the archive of representation, the uncited challenge us to read beyond the archive or to 'discover' and highlight the new, alternative archives that may provide discursive authority for these uncited representations" (Garuba 2012: 17). Venturing beyond the archive to bring the uncited representing "the blank space" (Garuba 2012: 17) into the canon entails reconstructing the narrative around their biographies, which may be the only form of archives that can be salvaged, and can be corroborated by people who knew them better, who are likely to be their former students or close family members. Therefore, the biographical approach is important under these circumstances.

At this juncture I will introduce and discuss the careers of some of the individual selected Black artist-teachers, starting with John Hlatywayo, followed by the stories of Joram Mariga, Cornelius Manguma, Lazarus Khumalo and Sam Songo.

## 5.5. John Hlatywayo

### *5.5.1 The formative years*

As stated on the South African History Online site, John Hlatywayo[201] was born at Chikore Mission in Chipinge District in 1928. He grew up in the predominantly Ndau-speaking[202] areas in Manicaland, in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe, close to the Mozambican border. Like many kids of his generation growing up in the then colonial Rhodesia, he dreamt of landing an office job, expecting to meet the expectations of parents and society in sending a child to school, a thought that is still enshrined in the mindset of most conservative elders and parents in the countryside communities of Zimbabwe to this day. While in Standard IV at the Mount Selinda Institute[203] he was drawn to the art classes that were offered by a teacher named Ms Craig[204] whom he describes as someone who "had a timetable for art", albeit the subject was not part of the school curriculum. She supplied all the art materials for the students who were interested in learning the subject. Nonetheless, Hlatywayo states that he and his classmates did not take the classes seriously. At that point, he did not aspire to become an artist. The field was perceived to be a casual activity one would engage in to pass time, not a profession that would generate income to afford a decent living. This perception could also have emerged out of the fact that there were no established artists in the local areas for the young Hlatywayo and the broader society could look up to. That is still the case in many parts of Africa, outside the busy urban centres serving as art hubs.

The Mount Selinda Institute trained teachers. It seemed to attract students from areas beyond the Chipinge district as well. Hlatywayo speaks of the big and physical Karanga boys and men that were at the school. They were likely coming from the Bikita area or some neighbouring districts in the Province of Masvingo where Great Zimbabwe is situated, and where Karanga, a dialect of Shona is spoken. Only those who had passed Standard VI would enrol for the

[201] I visited Hlatywayo at his home in Mbirimi Road at the Beatrice Cottages in Mbare, which is Harare's oldest high-density residential suburb. My interview with him went for more than two hours as I let him share all that he could remember, regardless of whether he stayed within the confines of the questions I posed or went beyond to share other interesting anecdotes. I did this in respect of the elderly artist and in the spirit of ubuntu. I realised this was the best possible way for him to share as much as he could recall. Although he could hardly remember the precise dates, he still told his story in a comprehensive chronological sequence.

[202] Spoken by the autochthons of southeast Zimbabwe around the Chipinge and Chimanimani districts, *chiNdau* is one of the numerous Shona dialects spoken in Zimbabwe. The Ndau ethnic group is divided into two groups, with the other half in Mozambique. Just as in many African societies and nations, the split happened at the Berlin Conference (1884-5) when the Portuguese and the British colonisers sliced and shared the territory among themselves.

[203] The institution began as Mt Selinda Training and Practising School in 1931, set by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

[204] Ivy Elizabeth Craig was stationed at Mt Selinda until 1938. Between 1941 and 1954 she was working in the Chikore and Craigmore Missions.

teacher training course. Most of the Karangas had not passed at that level and were therefore recruited into the school to pursue manual subjects like carpentry and building studies. Straight from class they would go to learn and practise their trade, something which the young Hlatywayo admired very much. In his words, "these guys did valuable work for the school. They were workers."[205] The tables and chairs they produced were sold in Salisbury. Therefore, just like the students at Grace Dieu Mission which was attended by Job Kekana, or Ned Paterson's Cyrene Mission, those at Mount Selinda performed work that brought income that helped sustain the school.

According to Hlatywayo, most of the Karanga students were bullies who did not take well to instructions from the few teachers in the school.[206] They refused to engage in devotions, which was required of them in the mission school. Others were already much older and mature, and were difficult to control. To a certain extent being always on the receiving end of the bullying culture made it easy for Hlatywayo to make the decision to leave the school. An example of the mutiny that he referred to, which also impacted his life, was when Mr. Webb, an American who was the principal of the school, proposed that senior students would remain over the vacation period helping with construction and making furniture as the school was still in the construction phase. The Karangas contested the decision and threatened to beat up anyone who dared to remain and do the work. In doing so they also found allies in the elder students from the Chipinge area. Otherwise, given the option, Hlatywayo and others would have volunteered to remain and do the work to help build their school. As he recalls, "sometimes the Karanga boys could become so unruly that the principal would seek help from the Native Commissioner, who would send the police to the school."

Hlatywayo appears to have been very close to his teachers. He was one of their useful students who had practised both carpentry and building. Therefore, he was useful in more than one way. He claims that his teachers would take him on trips as far as Nyanga in the Eastern Highlands and to the north of Chipinge, where he was tasked to inspect houses under construction, or those that had just been completed. These were buildings that the expatriates who were coming to settle in the area in pursuit of a cooler environment that reminded them of England were

[205] Most of what I am writing on John Hlatywayo's early life comes from my interview with him. I mostly rephrase and analyse most of what he said, and occasionally quote him directly.
[206] I pay attention to this anecdote as it influenced the decisions Hlaytwayo had to make at a later stage.

moving into.[207] Although he was not earning that much from such ventures, he enjoyed them, as he was always rewarded with breaks that allowed him to leave the school and visit his parents back home in the middle of the school term.

*5.5.2 The decision to trek down south*

Although conditions in present day Zimbabwe are different to what obtained in Rhodesia in the 1940s, people still left the country then, albeit not *en masse* as is the case presently. It appears three factors, all associated with his being a student at the Mount Selinda Institute, influenced Hlatywayo to eventually decide to move to South Africa. Firstly, I have already highlighted that he had problems with the Karanga bullies at Mount Selinda Institute. He even pointed out that the bullying "influenced some of us not to desire to go back to school." (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19). The rebellion of the Karangas in front of the Native Commissioner also ended up costing W.D. Webb his job. Hlatywayo does not hide the fact that he greatly respected and admired Mr. Webb whom he was quite close to. He saw the institution losing direction without his leadership and guidance. That could only impact more on the desire to not want to return to the institution. Secondly, even though Hlatywayo admits he had always desired to go and look for work in Salisbury upon leaving school, he seemed to have always entertained the idea of going beyond the borders after listening to the adventure stories shared by Mr. Webb, an American who had been to Shanghai in China before coming to the Chipinge area in Rhodesia. While Hlatywayo did not overstate the impact of the stories, their influence on him could be denoted in the emphasis he put on that detail, which he repeated at least thrice during the two-hour interview. That seemed to suggest he drew something from the stories the principal shared with him and the other students at the school. Moreover, he was generally unhappy with the preferential treatment offered to carpentry trainees compared to the teacher trainees.

Lastly, Hlatywayo talks of a close friend and schoolmate named Nelson Mutanda who had a brother who was working and doing very well in South Africa, and who helped sell the dream of trekking down south to him. South Africa was perceived to be the land of abundant opportunities: "We were told of the opportunities that were there. We were even told that, with the good education we had, we would get good jobs. They told us that we were highly educated" (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19), Hlatywayo recalled with

[207] Attracted to the cool weather, the picturesque mountain heights, cliffs, and waterfalls in Nyanga, Cecil John Rhodes built a cottage in the area in 1896. He would occasionally use it as a retreat. The cottage became Rhodes Hotel in 1933 and is still functional in the present day. Nyanga also has areas that bear colonial names like Juliasdale and London Stores.

laughter. As someone who desired to have an office job like a clerk, that excited him, and it fell within the expectations of the parents too. The worst he could imagine himself doing if he failed to land an office job was carpentry. Having Mutanda as a friend also meant he had someone to travel to Johannesburg with, fully assured that he would not get stranded on arrival as the friend's brother would receive and accommodate the two. In his narrative of the journey embarked on in 1948 Hlatywayo talks of the screening that took place at the Musina border post under the South African migrant labour system. Those who were fit to work in the mines progressed to Johannesburg while the rest were taken to work on the nearby farms. He and his friend were selected for the mines. In Johannesburg they settled in a place called Mzilikazi that had migrant labourers from Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Basutoland. They did light jobs and operations in the mines in Brakpan. However, an impatient Hlatywayo always saw working in the mines as a temporary occupation and a steppingstone to a better opportunity elsewhere.

*5.5.3 Working in the mines, becoming a carpenter*

Hlatywayo left his friend in Brakpan and moved to Pretoria, where he temporarily stayed with his uncle. He got a job at a mineral smelting plant. He took turns with others working in the extremely hot environment with very little protective gear. At the same company, Hlatywayo doubled as a "teaboy" for the white manager. "At 10:00 the teapot would be lowered by a rope. I would wash it, prepare the tea and tie it back on the rope, then it would be pulled up to his office. We would do the same at lunch. I never had a normal conversation with him. That was the relationship we had. I would just wash the teapot and cup and make tea for him" (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19). This revelation by Hlatywayo is not surprising as it reflects on the master-servant relationship based on race relations in the build-up towards apartheid, a form of racial segregation instituted by the all-white supremacist Afrikaner nationalist administration of South Africa that had become a sovereign administration within the British Empire in 1934.

Working at that metal smelting plant helped Hlatywayo network with many other immigrants from Rhodesia. Among them were messengers and those he took turns on the shift with. As a result, they all kept each other updated on possible opportunities elsewhere, albeit others asked for commission to help one get a job. He left the plant and teamed up with his cousin Sigauke, who had come from Chibuwe in the Chipinge area as well, to start their own carpentry business in Sophiatown. The two made furniture. They would work throughout the week, and on Fridays they would try to sell whatever they had made. Although the initial sales were very slow, they

did not give up as they still made enough to be able to pay rent and sustain them in the month. That business grew after a few months, and they started supplying furniture to shops.

A growing business also led to an expanding network. Through it, Hlatywayo met an Indian man who offered him free accommodation in a three-roomed house in another part of Sophiatown. Although he later learned that the Indian property owner had tried to accommodate other people in the house before, but all left as the place was haunted, Hlatywayo jokes and laughs about the fact that he never encountered any problems. While residing at that place he expanded his business to include the installation of closed-circuit television cameras. A chance mention of art in a conversation with one client, a white woman, led to another interesting development. She gave him directions to the Polly Street Art Centre that was run by Cecil Skotnes.

*5.5.4 Time at the Polly Street Arts Centre.*

The Polly Street Arts Centre was established in Johannesburg. From 1952 to 1966, the centre was run by Cecil Skotnes, who turned the Adult Non-European Recreation Centre[208] into a place where artists would train and fraternise, regardless of their background in a racially divided South Africa (Miles 2004). Skotnes was an artist with very little experience as he had just graduated from the University of Witwatersrand (Rankin 1995a). Initially located in downtown Johannesburg, but later moved to Jubilee House in the metropolitan's central business district, the space had the advantage of being centrally located and therefore was quite accessible to people coming from different parts of the city (Sack 1989). Although most art historians who have written about the centre tend to single out Skotnes, the reality is he worked with white volunteers who included Edoardo Villa, Giuseppe Cattaneo, Douglas Portway and others. By virtue of the backgrounds of Skotnes and the volunteers, the teaching style at the institution was generally "international modernist styles" (Nettleton 2011:14), mainly imparted through mentorship or apprenticeship, as the main goal was to fast-track trainees into professional practice (Rankin 1996 and Mdanda 2018). Skotnes persuaded Villa and Cottaneo to mentor artists. The two mentored Kumalo and Maqhubela respectively. Polly Street Art Centre provided studio space and art materials for the artists. It was "a meeting place for aspirant artists, and sought commissions and outlets for the sale of their artworks" (Rankin 1995b: 65). Besides offering training to the Black South African artists, the centre also

[208] *The* term "Non-European" surfaced as a result of The Reservation *of* Separate Amenities Act *No* 49 *of* 1953*,* which legalised *the segregation of public amenities, public buildings and public transport* based on race. As a result of this Act facilities provided for different races were unequal.

exhibited work along non-racial lines. Most of the exhibitions took place in the gallery of German-born Johannesburg goldsmith, Egon Guenther, which opened in 1957.

According to art historian Elza Miles, Hlatywayo arrived at Polly Street Art Centre in 1954, coming from Sophiatown where he worked as a painter (Miles 2004: 36). At the centre, he met many other sculptors and painters such as Ephraim Ngatane, Durant Sihlali, Louis Maqhubela, James Salang, Sydney Buys, George Makgajane, Ben Arnold, Tosby Keipedele, and Samuel Motsoene. Attending the centre regularly between 1954 and 1960, and being a part of that community, had an immediate positive impact on his development as an artist. Sydney Kumalo occasionally joined them. Hlatywayo talks fondly about Skotnes and Kumalo, "I worked with both, learning so much that I did not know in the art field" (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19). From 1952 to 1957 Kumalo was a student at the institution, and was appointed as Skotnes's assistant in 1958 (Peffer 2009 and Powell 2015). It is interesting that Hlatywayo mentions the two as having taught him, yet he joined the institution when Kumalo was still a student. In a way that affirms and reinforces the idea that mentorship was the method of knowledge transfer at the institution, "where black artists could work seriously and acquire professional assistance" (Miles 2004: 42). Of Skotnes, the artist went on to add:

> Cecil Skotnes appreciated what I was doing. He organised an exhibition of my work. Even when he had his own exhibitions, he would include my work, Sydney Kumalo's, one or two blacks, and the rest were whites. That had a positive impact on my career. My first solo exhibition took place at Constantia Gallery and Cecil Skotnes officially opened it. He said a lot of positive things about me (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19).

Hlatywayo recalls that when he arrived at the venue for his exhibition, some of his artworks already had red tags on them, indicating that someone had already bought them prior to the official opening of the solo exhibition. Afterwards, the owner of Constantia Gallery presented him with a business card that John Schlesinger had left for him. "Schlesinger had already seen my work. He wanted to see me at his office. I did not care because I did not know him. I did not know anything," he recalled. Unbeknown to him, Schlesinger was one of the respected prominent collectors of art based in Johannesburg at the time. His vast collection had been acquired from various parts of the world as he attended shows in London and New York as well. It was only months later, when a friend who found him with the card explained who Schlesinger was, that Hlatywayo went to the Carlton Hotel to meet him. Indeed, one of the few easily accessible online archival documents is the Schlesinger South African Art Collection catalogue listing one hundred works which were donated to the then Gertrude Posel Gallery

(now Wits Art Museum) in 1979. On that list are three works by Hlatywayo namely *Group of Men*, *Dog*, and *Caroline Makhasane*. That Hlatywayo took so long to see Schlesinger to an extent explains the situation at Polly Street Art Centre and in South Africa in general where Black artists were fast-tracked into a professional career to survive, but without necessarily receiving sufficient guidance on the business side of art. "Black artists were compelled to develop a marketable style very early on [and unlike their white counterparts who] were given 3-4 year training, without the pressure of commercialism and market place" (Sack 1989: 16). In other words, they were compelled to turn professional before they understood what it meant in a field where connections matter.[209] However, it could also be because Hlatywayo still considered art an activity that supplemented his established carpentry career.

In *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre*, author Elza Miles mentions two other exhibitions that John Hlatywayo took part in as a member of the group from the institution. The first one took place in 1960, at which "the members of Polly Street Art Centre were seen as independent artists at an exhibition of 'Urban African Art' organised by the Johannesburg Committee of the Union Festival" (Miles 2004: 79). In his comments on the show, which appeared in the magazine *Fontein Quarterly* in 1960, Cecil Skotnes is said to have singled out the work of John Hlatywayo and Sydney Kumalo for praise, describing the former as an outstanding painter whose "work has developed from a strict realism [derivative] to a primitive individuality entirely in the European sense i.e. his simplification of forms, his subject matter, his choice of strong, single tones of colour, resembling European primitives like Douanier Rousseau" (Miles 2004: 39).[210] Following another joint exhibition of eight members from Polly Street at the Henri Lidchi Gallery in Cape Town in 1963, Neville Dubow, the former University of Cape Town professor and founder of the Irma Stern Museum, was so impressed by Hlatywayo's work that he highlighted in the *Cape Argus* of 4 July 1963, that "John Hlatywayo shows a firm feeling for organising forms; he is adept in the monotype technique and is perhaps the most skilled craftsman of the group" (Miles 2004: 39). These impressive remarks speak highly of

[209] Researchers Mitali and Ingram (2018) argue that brokerage networks in the art world are more crucial in building an artist's fame and in sustaining an artist's career when compared to creativity alone. However, while their view appears quite valid, it is quite Eurocentric and raises the questions of who places value on artworks, and in whose art world?

[210] This quote by Skotnes seems to imply that Hlatywayo's influence was entirely European. Interestingly, he was only as good as the so-called European primitives. Considering that Hlatywayo himself mentions Kumalo as a mentor, this view totally discards the South African's influence on John's work, and therefore can be read as condescending. However, it is not surprising coming from Skotnes who had been trained via the European canon and only encountered African art quite late, and even went on to shift his own practice to include relief carving and printmaking. That European way of reading art is all he knew at the time.

Hlatywayo's exploits and of how quickly he developed as an artist to become an integral member of the Polly Street group of artists.

*5.5.5 Making and teaching art in Zimbabwe*

In the mid-1960s Hlatywayo went back to Rhodesia and exhibited his works in institutions such as Weld Art 79 and Gallery Delta. As recorded in the *Rhodesia Herald* of 5 October 1964, he was going to hold a second exhibition of his work in the then Salisbury on 15 October, 1964 (Rhodesia Herald 1964). In that exhibition he showcased some of his paintings and "necklace heads" that were made from clay. However, missing in the *Rhodesia Herald* article is the name of the venue of the show. His first solo show in the country was held at Gallery Delta in 1979. That same year, his work, *Woman*, won the second prize at WeldArt 79 in Harare. Over the years, and after the attainment of independence in 1980, Hlatywayo's work continued to be exhibited at the NGZ and at international institutions such as the Pauline Podbrey Gallery in London, WeldArt Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, WeldArt Belfast City Gallery, Billingham Art Gallery and Trispace Gallery in London.[211]

*Man on his way* (Fig. 5.1.) is an artwork by Hlatywayo that is in the collection of the NGZ in Harare. In the painting a man is seen walking away along a path in a typical savanna veld, marked by a backdrop of yellow and brown grass. The colour of grass coupled with the seemingly leafless tree trunks and branches suggest that the painting portrays an autumn scene. The clouds are depicted in an interesting vivid tricolour of red, white and blue all the way to the horizon in the backdrop where the sky and the ground converge. That use of bright colours that reveal details in the scene, even under clouds, suggests that the sun's position coincides with the viewer's eyes. The sun could only be in a patch of the sky where there were no clouds, stacked somewhere out of the frame.

[211] For more on these exhibitions see the Goldsmith, S. 2016.

Fig. 5.1. John Hlatywayo, *Man on his way*, 1990, oil on board 182x122cm. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe.

As recently as 2016, and towards the end of his long career as a multimedia artist, Hlatywayo participated in a two-man exhibition with Tafadzwa Gwetai, a Bulawayo-based contemporary artist who paints and makes collages. The show was presented at the Africa Centre in Great Suffolk Street, London. In *The People's Watchers* exhibition, curated by Steven Goldsmith of InZart, an international trader in African art and sculpture, Hlatywayo supplied metal sculptures that employed curvature to capture emotion in the subject. *Family* (Fig. 5.2.) appears to depict a typical nuclear family under the leadership of the man as the head of the house, characterised by his head towering over that of the mother and the two children. The work can be read as advancing a conservative view of family, seemingly stressing the importance of a modern nuclear family in a society where values are shifting, with some deciding not to marry. A mother or father and child also constitute family, and so does a polygamous union. The work was from a series of abstracted metal figures that Hlatywayo started working on in the early 1990s.

Fig. 5.2. John Hlatywayo, *Family*, 1993, Height: 132 cm. From 'The People's Watchers' exhibition in 2016. Source: InZart: Available: http://www.inzart.co.uk/john-hlatywayo/4578429967.

These two artworks substantiate that Hlatywayo is one of Zimbabwe's most versatile artists who, in his prime, could work with different media and produce meaningful conceptual work. It takes a higher level of expertise to play around with bright colours as he does in the painting and to bend the metal the way he does in the sculpture, and produce such fine works of figuration.

Noticing that few African adults had interest in art, Hlatywayo made pleas for schools in Rhodesia to teach the subject at primary school and in lower grades of high school. He knew children would be interested in experimenting with art and therefore would take to the subject. "When a child scribbles it is his expression of himself and it is from this scribble that creative art comes," he was quoted saying in the *Rhodesia Herald* of 5 October 1964. To Hlatywayo, according to the *Rhodesia Herald* of 8 September 1971, "no education can claim to be complete that does not include teaching of art" (Rhodesia Herald 1971). He had also approached the Salisbury City Council for a building which he could use to start an art centre and where he hoped to teach art to the Africans. When a building off Beatrice Road, near Beatrice Cottages in Mbare, was secured by the National Gallery, Hlatywayo taught at the institution on a part-time basis.[212] By that time Christopher Till was the Director of the National Gallery. As he remembers, "I knew Hlatywayo because I started the B.A.T. Workshop[213] when I worked there. There was an old church which had been deconsecrated and I managed to get hold of the church as a donation to the National Gallery and we started that workshop. Hlatywayo was the teacher at that time" (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). Hlatywayo also taught from his home in Mbirimi Road at Beatrice Cottages. "Some white parents would bring their kids from Chitsere School for lessons here at my home. They were very much interested in art. They saw it important for their kids to learn art. I would not charge them anything. Just like I did with those learning textiles," he recalls.

Besides teaching, Hlatywayo also performed other art-related duties in his country of birth. For example, in 1996 he was on the panel for the annual Heritage Exhibition together with fellow Zimbabweans Paul Wade, Thomas Mukarobwa and Dominic Mkhosi, England's Maryclare Foá and South Africa's Lionel Davis. As quoted in *The Sunday Mail* of 22 September 1996, Hlatywayo indicated, "The panel was very selective, and this is a necessary process to maintain and improve even more the overall impact" (Sunday Mail 1996). He also served on several committees of the NGZ. He continued teaching and making art in independent Zimbabwe until the nation's politics became toxic at the turn of the millennium. There were farm invasions purported to be by local communities, yet greedy ZANU–PF politicians had a hand in them. They were immediately followed by the implementation of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme in 2000, resulting in the takeover of farms owned by white farmers and later by Blacks aligned to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. Hlatywayo recalls, "I had

[212] That John Hlatywayo was not an employee of the National Gallery was stated by Walter Ndundu, who is the current Exhibitions Officer at the NGZ (Ndundu, personal communication, 23 April 2021).
[213] The acronym B.A.T. stands for the British American Tobacco Company.

good clients until Robert Mugabe's government chased the whites away from Zimbabwe. I had a lot of clients, be they foreign or locals. Many of them left with a thing or two that I made for them, including specially designed clothing like jackets. Some came from the United States of America" (Hlatywayo 2018, personal communication, October 19).

Over the years Hlatywayo stopped practising as an artist and teaching as his sight deteriorated. To make matters worse, the optometrists in the Sekuru Kaguvi section of the state-owned Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals could not help him regain it. When I arrived in Bulawayo, I shared Hlatywayo's story with Voti Thebe who suggested that he should continue practising and teaching arguing that doing so would ensure that he remains socially active and engaged, as well as help improve his cognitive functioning (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24).

## 5.6. Lazarus Khumalo

### *5.6.1 The formative years*

Lazarus Khumalo was born in 1930. According to his protégé Voti Thebe, "he was a polio victim" (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24) and as such was physically challenged. This is also explained by Canon Paterson, his teacher at Cyrene Mission, who states in the *Seventeenth Cyrene Paper* that he was "crippled in both legs and one arm" (Paterson 1951: 4). As such, his family sent him to the Bulawayo Native Hospital to undergo surgical treatment to try and correct that disability. Morton (2013) states that Khumalo sought ways to run away from the family because he always believed he was earmarked for death due to that disability. While Khumalo probably would have seen himself as a burden to the family, Morton's claim is surprising when one considers that it was never part of Ndebele culture to eliminate the handicapped members of its society by putting them to death.[214] At the time of his death in 2015 Khumalo was actively involved in helping in research to revive the art history of Bulawayo (1947-2014), a project in which he was collaborating with Clifford Zulu, a curator based in the city.[215] The former Regional Director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe branch in Bulawayo, Voti Thebe, disputes the claim made by Zhou (2017) that the artist-teacher was born into the Khumalo wing of the Ndebele royal family. Thebe states:

[214] In fact, Morton's claim feeds into the problematic notion of the 'primitive' Africans waiting for the 'civilised' by the white saviour coming to rescue them from their 'barbaric' society. I interrogate this notion employing Teju Cole's *The White-Saviour Industrial Complex* (2012) lens when I look at Sam Songo later in this chapter.
[215] Obituary on the National Gallery, Bulawayo, website, August 2015.

> I am reminded of one time when I started saying out his totem, the ancestral praise poem. When I stated Khumalo Dhl'amadoda, he refused. He said there are two Khumalos yet most people these days think there is only one. He said he did not belong to the royal family. The Khumalo Dhl'amadoda is mainly the royal family, the Khumalos of Mzilikazi and Lobengula. Rather, he belonged to this other Khumalo, the lesser Khumalo, not the royal family.[216]

While Khumalo is the clan name of the core Nguni ethnic group that migrated northwards from Zululand during the Mfecane period, and eventually established the Ndebele state, settling in western Zimbabwe, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, decolonial scholar and historian (2008) contests as "narrow and ill-informed" that storyline, which reduces the complex nation to a clan that constituted itself as the ruling class under King Mzilikazi and the heir Lobengula. Although he goes on to dismiss as "old-fashioned" the characterisation of the Ndebele nation as based on a caste system that identifies it as composed of the social hierarchies abeZansi, abeNhla and the Hole, Ndlovu-Gatsheni acknowledges that it emerged from the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single entity. As such, the Ndebele nation is an amalgam of different ethnic groups assimilated on the journey northwards and those incorporated at the establishment of the state. These include the Tswana and the Lozwi respectively, and these groups adopted Ndebele clan names and totems in the assimilation process. As such, it is also possible that Lazarus Khumalo inherited his surname from a family of commoners within the state.

According to Paterson (1951: 4) it was Khumalo's doctor at the Bulawayo Native Hospital, James Robertson, who recommended him to Cyrene Mission. Khumalo enrolled at the age of 17 and went on to do Standard 2. As Paterson (1951: 4) states in the *Seventeenth Cyrene Paper*, Khumalo's condition improved as he ended up walking with the aid of a walking stick, as compared to the crutches that he used at the time he enrolled at the institution. At Cyrene he was one of the students with disabilities who ended up specialising and excelling in art as they had extra time to practice. In addition to the two lessons per week that Paterson offered to all the students, those with disabilities practised their art in the afternoons when the rest of the students were either engaged in construction work, as they helped build their school, or were involved in different sporting activities (Morton 2013b). As Paterson (1953) explains in the

[216] I am aware of Robyn Sassen's critique of Elza Miles' *Polly Street: The Story of an Art Centre* that it spends time offering "too detailed a focus on minutiae." For more, please see Sassen 1995. However, in the case of the artist-teachers I am looking at, I believe it is important to set the record straight as not much has been written about them yet.

*Eighteenth Cyrene Paper*, "Cyrene has always catered for cripples [sic]. They would become some of the best artists, as they had time for it since they did not engage in sport."

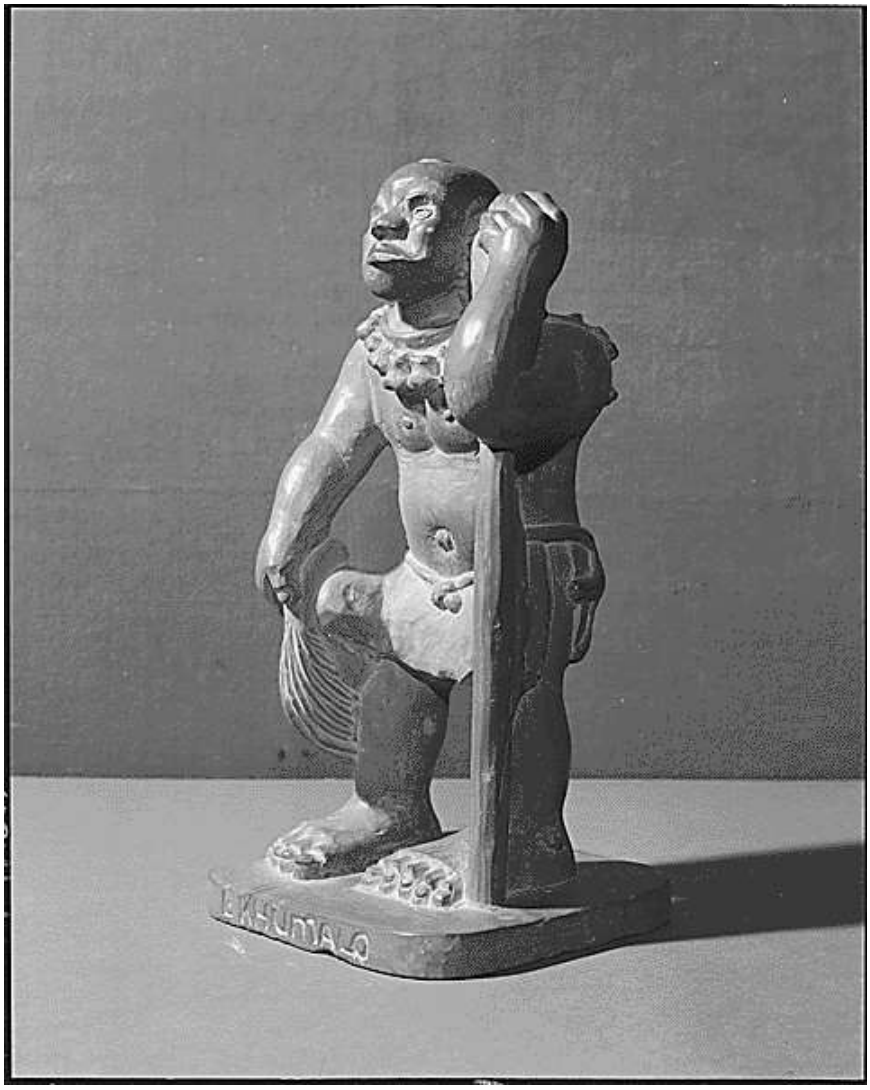


Fig. 5.3. Lazarus Khumalo, *Witch Doctor*, Soapstone sculpture. Source: Harmon Foundation Collection, 1922-1967. National Archives Identifier: 558898. Local Identifier: H-HN-AA-6J-I.

Be it the carvings, paintings, sculptures, drawings or mosaics, the work that was done by the students at Cyrene Mission depicted aspects of African life as is seen on the walls of the institution's chapel, where Bible stories are depicted from the familiar local landscapes and have Black figures throughout. Khumalo was one of Paterson's students who excelled in more than one medium. *Witch Doctor* (Fig 44.) is a figurative sculpture piece carved out of soapstone. It shows a *sangoma* (healer) standing and holding what appears to be the head of a knobkerrie (walking stick). In the right hand he is holding an *ishoba* made of the tail of either an ox or a cow. *Ishoba* signifies one's status as a *sangoma*, being part of a royal lineage or part

of a regiment linked to the royal house.[217] This is substantiated by Eleanor Ross (2010: 46) who states that, "The ishoba is a flywhisk made from the tail of a wildebeest and carried by traditional healers to signify their authority." The man has a layer of beads around his neck and the shoulders. Beads are also a status symbol. He is dressed in a loincloth (*ibetshu*) usually fashioned out of animal skin. He is wearing a stern face and his anatomical features are clear, including the toes of his feet. The use of the term 'witch doctor' for a *sangoma* reveals what the artist had internalised operating within a mission set up where the *sangoma*'s practice would be associated with evil practices like witchcraft. The posture adopted by the standing man and his muscular body features make the sculpture comparable to Sam Songo's *Prodigal Son* (Fig. 5.9).

Fig. 5.4. Lazarus Khumalo, *Adam and Animals in the Garden of Eden*, 1961, 61x91 cm, Tile (Mosaic). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe.

Another artwork that proves that Khumalo was a versatile artist, comfortable in expressing himself through different media, is *Adam and Animals in the Garden of Eden* which he made in 1961. In the work we see a variety of animals including giraffes, zebras, an elephant, a wild cat that could be a leopard or cheetah, there is a buck or springbok, and a tortoise. A snake is seen in the background. The backdrop is made of interesting overlapping colourful landscape features, including a stream to the right. Based on the Bible story, what is depicted is the

[217] Sikhumbuzo Makandula revealed this to me in a WhatsApp chat on 30 September, 2022. Being a member of the Xhosa ethnic group, Makandula belongs to the broader Nguni cluster which includes the Zulus and and Ndebele, who use the same word for the flywhisk.

aftermath of Eve's encounter with the serpent. Although she is out of the scene, we can tell that Adam and Eve have already eaten the forbidden fruit because the man is depicted covering his privates with a bunch of leaves, in the aftermath of the moment the two human beings realised they were naked.

Cyrene is mostly known for its paintings and colourful drawings, with Paterson's own work having "a simple, Romanesque-like quality ideally suited to carving in stone by sculptors with little experience or skill, a style that allows, for example, the arms to be left integrated with the torso" (Schofield 1981: 52). For most of the work, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, Paterson would read out stories from the Bible and then encourage his students to make work that reflected their understanding and interpretations of the stories. In response, the students adapted the stories to their surroundings, as they drew inspiration from what was familiar to them. Art historian Tony Monda (2015a) substantiates that the African iconography at Cyrene allows us to understand an African pictorial representation of Jesus and other biblical characters. This was not an imposed way of expression, as the artists were given room to develop and express themselves. The diverse works that Khumalo made show that he had mastered all the different media that were taught at the institution.

With a desire to further his art education Khumalo enrolled at Makerere Art School[218] in Uganda, under the guidance of Cecil Todd. He was quite unfortunate in that this move coincided with the era in the mid-1960s in which the Ian Smith-led crown colony of Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from Great Britain (Joosten 2001 and Zhou 2017). As such, the international isolation of Rhodesia impacted its citizens badly. Khumalo was left in limbo, unable to travel back to Uganda after only having spent a year there. As his mentee, Voti Thebe recalls, "when he came back home to see his family, something happened within Rhodesia then. Because of that he could not go back to Makerere to finish his degree. He tried again by all means; I remember when I met him in the 1970s, he still wanted to go back" (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24).

### *5.6.2 Teaching career*

Khumalo was employed by the City of Bulawayo in 1958. At one point described by Frank McEwen, the then Director of the National Gallery, as "the long-proven leader of the Mzilikazi carvers" (Rhodesia Herald 1969). Khumalo had a career spanning five decades as an artist and

[218] I have contacted Professor George Kyeyune, an artist and art historian at Makerere University who said he has not come across Lazarus Khumalo's record at the institution.

a teacher. However, the dearth of information about him and his time at the institution is surprising. It is not clear whether there was never an archive generated or someone tampered with it over the years. The personnel at the centre are too young to have worked with him. While they might not have encountered Khumalo, even though he passed away as recently as 2015, it is surprising that the institution has no system of keeping records and they have no archive to draw from. While the young teachers working there could point to Sam Songo's sculptures scattered in the garden, the centre has not archived work by Khumalo who mostly worked in other media, not the durable stone that was preferred by Songo. Songo was Khumalo's contemporary. A few months later my follow-up with archivists of the City of Bulawayo yielded no tangible results, as they took me from pillar to post even though, as requested, I provided details of the years the municipality employed him. My email correspondence with someone from the City Council's Public Relations Department led to nothing. I therefore mostly depend on Voti Thebe, who was his student, for information on his career as an artist-teacher.

Thebe credits Khumalo for teaching him almost everything that he needed to know about art as a trade and the arts industry in general. I have already discussed the mosaic piece in Fig. 5.4. As Thebe explains, "The other thing he taught me was mosaic, how to lay out mosaic. Yes, he was the one who taught me that technique, and [as such] I made a mosaic piece that is mounted on one of the walls at Cyrene Mission." Prior to meeting Khumalo, Thebe says he had mastered watercolour painting, and that he hated sculpture. However, a chance encounter with Khumalo at the then Bulawayo Gallery changed all that.

As an employee of the City of Bulawayo at Mzilikazi Art Centre, Khumalo taught art to the youths of Makokoba, Mzilikazi and other high-density suburbs or townships. Most of these youths came out of numerous primary schools such as Mzilikazi, Lobengula, Lotshe, St. Columbus and St Patrick's. The problem was that all these primary schools fed their graduates into Mzilikazi Secondary, which was the solitary school to cater for Black children at that level. Therefore, there was stiff competition for places in the school, and many good students ended on the sidelines. As such, most of them enrolled at the art centre because they needed to occupy themselves doing something productive and to learn a trade. "At Mzilikazi art was for the dropouts from the townships. They desired to find them something to do" (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24). It is therefore not surprising to see art historian Elizabeth Morton arguing that the institution trained so many people that some of them went into producing "airport art" meant for the tourists (Morton 2013b). However, while Morton's

point seems reasonable, and while it is easier to ascribe the dismissive Western notion of "airport art" to what the artists produced, learning at the art centre became a way of acquiring skills enabling the artists to survive in a competitive environment and under difficult circumstances. With just one major gallery to cater for everyone in Bulawayo and the outlying areas of the Matabeleland Region, it was not feasible for the institution to cater for everyone. Quality art also ended up sold on the streets and at tourist resorts. However, from the many who learned at the art centre still emerged great artists like Mzondi Dhliwayo, a Shangani from Chimanimani, and James Nxumalo who had come all the way from Swaziland (present-day eSwatini).

Describing the process of teaching art that took place at the centre, McEwen stated in the *Rhodesia Herald* of 11 June 1969 that, "school knowledge is not imposed upon their minds and inversely their latent talent is brought out" (Rhodesia Herald 1969). What this means is that the institution did not follow a stipulated curriculum and fixed rules that a student enrolling in a formal art school would have to undergo. Thebe had this to say about how Khumalo taught him:

> Khumalo used to prefer to work on stone with his student working on stone as well. He would start demonstrating on that piece of stone. Let's say we were doing a portrait. How to go about doing a portrait. You first chip the stone from outside so that it is almost the shape of a head. And then from there you start chipping the eyes and the nose and so on. He would demonstrate but continue with his work. He never touched your work. Once you've reached a certain stage, he looks at it and goes to his piece for demonstration.

Thebe's words show that the mentor would help the mentee find their own expression and niche. Observation and practice were central tenets to the process of knowledge transfer. Khumalo had been taught in the same manner by Paterson at Cyrene. Thebe recalls that there was another individual that Khumalo also credited as having mentored him. That was Bill Ainslie, a South African national who had also worked with Paterson at Cyrene, before the Smith regime deported him back to his country.

I have already stated that Khumalo taught art possibly in a similar way to Paterson who had trained him. In doing so, he was not different from Kekana whom Morton (2013) claims carried on with the Grace Dieu tradition. However, many of Khumalo's works, some of which grace the gardens around the Tower Block in Bulawayo, are soapstone sculptures that do not have much to do with the tradition of paintings which Cyrene Mission is famous for. However, through consistent adherence to African motifs, Khumalo's work mostly reveals that he was a

product of Cyrene Mission. Nonetheless, the shift in his practice were noticeable when these artists was much older and had secured a job as is seen through the work focusing on children that Khumalo did much later in his life (Morton 2013). Thebe also observed that he liked using wood, with olive and mahogany being his favourite types, because of his training at Cyrene (Thebe 2018, personal communication, October 24). However, years later he would also carve in stone, as in the work exhibited in the sculpture garden at the city's municipal offices.

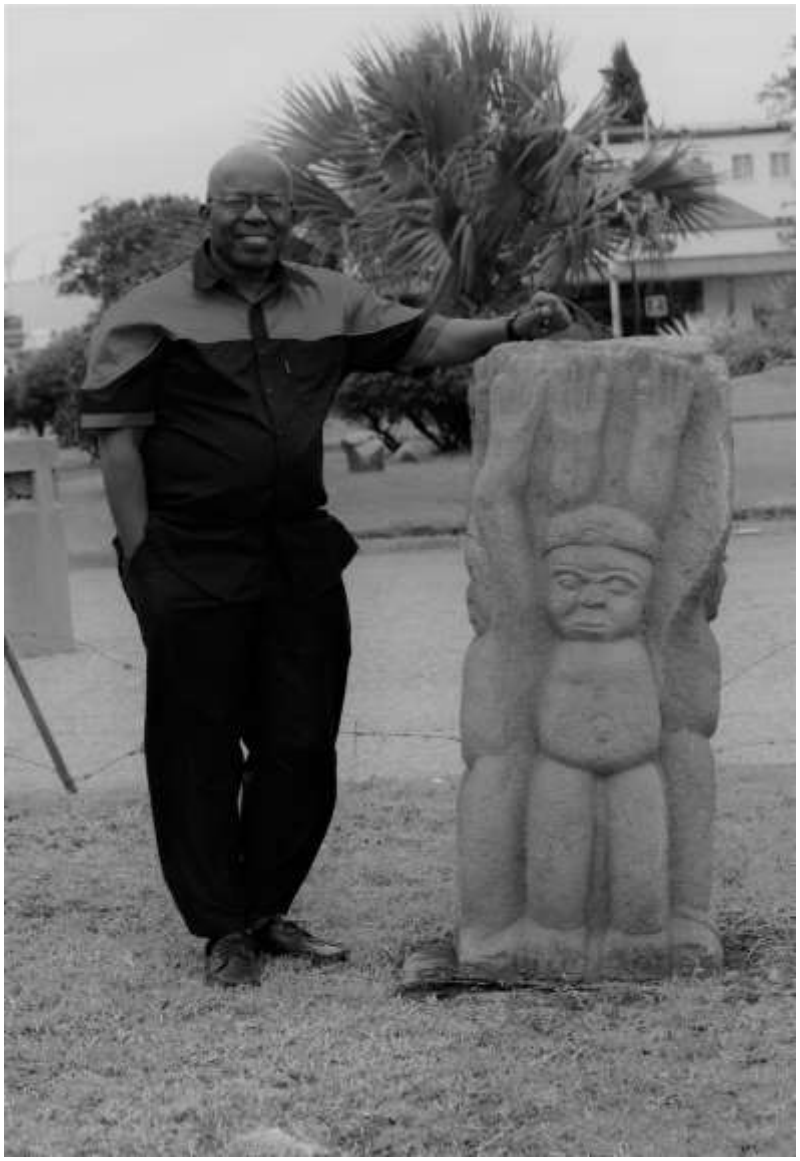

Fig. 5.5: Voti Thebe standing next to a stone sculpture made by his mentor Lazarus Khumalo. Image: Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti.

Lazarus Khumalo became one of Cyrene Mission's most accomplished sculptors. The work Thebe is standing next to in Fig. 5.5. presents four children raising their hands to the sky as if appealing for help, or surrendering, perhaps in a children's game. With the neck almost invisible, bulky legs standing on a pedestal, and a belly, the figures are reminiscent of another

carving done by Khumalo (Fig. 5.3) or the one by Songo (Fig. 5.9.) showing that there was a unique style developed at Cyrene Mission. Thebe showed me the work to substantiate his explanation that sculpting in the medium of stone was not just a preserve for artists in McEwen's National Gallery Workshop.

## 5.7. Joram Mariga

### *5.7.1 The birth of a movement*

It is not even feasible to talk about Zimbabwe's prominent stone sculpture movement or tradition without Joram Mariga at the centre of it. The artist and teacher was probably the nation's most prominent first-generation sculptor. He was the movement's founding father. Connecting him and stone sculpture, Christopher Till recalls, "Joram Mariga is the earliest element of that which I was introduced to when I first arrived at the National Gallery" (Till 2018, personal communication, October 31). Mariga was born in 1927 in Chinhoyi, a city north-west of Harare, to an artisanal family that had great respect for Shona traditions and customs. His brother made mbira, the musical instrument intimately associated with possession spirits and ceremonies (Zilberg 2001a). His grandfather, father and brother were sculptors working in wood, with the grandfather specialising in carving headrests. His mother was a potter and his greatest source of inspiration. The family traded products of their craft within the local community. The father was also a herbalist and healer (*sangoma*). Even though there is no direct evidence that Mariga was mentored into the trade by the family members, other than he himself only being quoted as saying that his mother was his inspiration, the emphasis on the family being artisanal suggests that the skills were passed on in the family. This passing on of certain family traditions through generations is what Ngara (2010) and Monda (2004) explain in Shona as *kutevera muronga* and *nhaka youmhizha hwedzinza*[219] respectively as covered earlier in the third chapter. However, he is said to have taken woodwork classes in school. His experiments in stone carving were successful because he had mastered the skill while working with wood, a trade which was also a family tradition.

Mariga was educated at Goromonzi, and at Waddilove Institute, which were some of the earliest formal schools that accommodated Black students in the colony. They were run by the government and the Methodist church respectively. He received his professional training at the Inyadzi Irrigation Department and ended up on the payroll of the Rhodesian government

[219] Loosely translated as 'following the steps of wisdom' and 'inheriting the clan's creative legacy' respectively.

serving as a "Senior Agricultural Demonstrator in the Ministry of Internal Affairs" (Chikukwa 2015: 24). Mariga continued experimenting with woodcarving in his spare time and imparting the skill to his colleagues, as it was always his intention to improve the conditions of the poor by empowering them through a programme of sculpture, pottery, woodcarving, basketry and *gudza*-weaving[220] for income (Joosten 2001). What was unique about Mariga is that he had knowledge of different materials, how to handle them, and the tools to use, which included penknives, adzes, and hacksaws. Importantly, he also knew how to find the suitable materials.

[220] *Gudza* is twisted fibre from inner tree bark. Different sources list this as being Musasa/Munondo (*Brachystegia / Julbernardia* spp) tree or the baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*). The bark fibres are soaked to soften it before being woven. Traditionally it is chewed to make them even suppler before being dyed and woven.

Fig. 5.6. Joram Mariga, *Resting Hero*, Springstone, 101x66x68 cm. Source: The Richard Handelsman Collection of 'Shona Sculpture'. Available: http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/art/handelsman/misc/gallery3.html

In Fig. 5.6. is *Resting Hero*, an example of the work Mariga would make. The work depicts a giant baboon (*Horomba* in Shona) in a sitting posture with the hands crossing in front and its genitals in the open, between the folded legs. It appears to be watching proceedings in the field in front of it. Unlike the rest of the body, which is left in the natural grey colour of the stone, the fingers, mouth, nose and the ears are smoothened and polished in black. The colour contrast makes these features conspicuous. Notably, like the heroes memorialised in Western and other cultures and in art history, the figure is elevated on a pedestal. However, this one is on a tree trunk, a natural pedestal. Since the work of the stone sculptors in Zimbabwe explores Shona customs and ways of living (*tsika nemagariro*), as well as the myths and legends in Shona folklore, a baboon is not just an ordinary animal. It is a totem (*mutupo*) known as Mukanya which is an identity marker for a certain section of the collective Shona group. People identify with an animal and as such the animal is a sacred and revered figure to the group which identifies with it.

The 'Shona Sculpture' movement probably would not have started, had it not been for Mariga's discoveries and his knowledge. He discovered the green Inyanga soapstone in the Nyatate area in the late 1950s while constructing a road. The discovery kick-started the tradition. As an educated man with a deep understanding of Shona beliefs and traditions, Mariga knew about Great Zimbabwe and its soapstone birds. It was convenient for him to point to the ancestors of the Shona as a form of inspiration. As Sultan (1992: 15) elaborates, "the artist's desire, as well as that of most art critics and some institutions, to link the 'movement' to a traditional artistic past [Great Zimbabwe] is an attempt to achieve acceptance within their own culture."[221] When Pat Pearce showed Frank McEwen, the carvings done by Mariga, the director of the National Gallery was impressed.[222] That led to the birth of a movement. Mariga went on to discover the colourful and much harder serpentine stone after being transferred to Katerere by his employer, the Rhodesian government, in the late 1960s. McEwen liked the works produced using serpentine more than the soapstone ones. Thus, even the change from the slightly fragile soapstone to the much more durable serpentine was Mariga's initiative. In the interview I had with Huggins in October 2018, he emphasised that "Mariga was the initiator of 'Shona

[221] In the second chapter I have tried to demonstrate that there is no direct link between the sculpture tradition at Great Zimbabwe and the 'Shona Sculpture', save for the soapstone material used in both.
[222] The narrative that Mariga's carvings that were brought to McEwen ignited the birth of the stone sculpture movement is corroborated by American sculptor Willard Boepple who claims he heard Mariga telling that story when he attended Pachipamwe 1 at Murehwa Centre.

Sculpture' Movement." As Morton (2013: 245) concludes, "while one cannot discount the importance of various workshop educators such as Groeber, Paterson, or McEwen, the early work and teaching of Mariga in the 1960s ended up defining the genre." One of Mariga's sculptures appeared on a Rhodesian postage stamp released on 12 July 1967 to mark the tenth anniversary of the then Rhodes National Gallery.

*5.7.2 Teaching career*

Mariga's influence as a teacher stretched to many areas that the Rhodesian government transferred him to. Based on the number of centres where he assembled and taught groups of artists, his legacy is only paralleled by that of Canon Paterson, the founder of Cyrene, who went on to teach at three other institutions after leaving the mission school (see Chapter 2). However, Mariga taught much smaller groups at a time. He mentored artists in two different centres in Nyanga, namely Katerere and Nyatate, then in Chipinge and Mutare, before moving to Harare in the post-independence era. The government kept on transferring him to new areas and even harassed him with arrests for allegedly working with the freedom fighters who were trying to liberate Zimbabwe (Joosten 2001). In *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger assert that the colonialists were essentially blind to most of the cultural networks and practices they encountered in Africa. That the colonial administration would do such a shoddy job by transferring him to territories that he was familiar with substantiates the claim by the two historians. All the places the government moved him to are in the Manicaland Province which stretches from north to south on the eastern side of the country, which was the freedom fighters' gateway from their training camps and bases in Mozambique. They penetrated the country from different spots on the border with Mozambique and always had good relations with the local communities. If at all, his deployment to these areas shows how much the colonial government was detached from the lifestyle of the governed peoples and their culture. In all these places Mariga would have been at home with the locals.

Besides Mariga's work in government, he was always determined to empower the local communities through arts and crafts. Joosten (2001: 21-23) lists the several people that he mentored in the different areas. At Nyatate he worked with Frank Vanji, Eric Chigwanda, Richard Chiro, Manyowa Machisa, Clever Machisa, Patrick Manjoro, Bernard Manyandure, Joyce Manyandure, Isaac Mupfurira, Nemiah Mariga, Owen Mariga, Richard Mariga, Robin Mariga, John Matimba, Douglas Sande, Elias Sande, John Takawira, Ndakatsikeyi Manyandure and Fidelis Sanyangare. While working with this group he also maintained

contacts with smaller groups, for example Denson Dube, Mulizani and Ndau[223] who were government agricultural extension workers at a village in Nyanga, and Cloud Nyanhongo, Moses Masaya and Conrad Nyagwande who were sculpting at Nyautare. Even though there was not much interest in sculpting at Katerere, he still managed to build a group that included his sons Owen and Richard, together with their cousin Nemiah, and Fombe and Camady Mandizvidza. In Chipinge, he motivated Pita Katerere, Lungisani Mubariki, Oswald Mandoga, Crispen Murwira and Dunmore Murangwa and many others who were members of the Young Farmers Club to start sculpting and woodcarving. When he was moved to Mutare, he would still give workshops in areas like Rusape, Buhera, Chipinge and Mutare itself. In 1975 Mutare Museum hosted an exhibition of sculptures and crafts by female and male members of the Mutare Young Farmers Club who Mariga had been working with.

Even though the Vukutu workshop started under the tutelage of John Takawira in 1969, it was Mariga who had identified the farm where the workshop was to be established. The project had the backing of Frank McEwen and his wife, Mary McFadden, who bought the farm in 1968, together with Burdett Coutts, who was a collector and businessman (Sibanda 2015). McEwen liked its location as it was hidden from the encroaching tourist trade whose bad taste usually led to mass production of poor-quality art (Scherer 2013).[224] However, the Smith-led administration immediately transferred Mariga to another centre on allegations that he was harbouring ZANU insurgents or freedom fighters. The Wall of Great Africans (2018) – a Facebook page run by Africapedia.com and Roguechiefs.com, identifying as "a pan-African museum telling stories" – appears to suggest that McEwen had a hand in the transfer saga, and deliberately sent Mariga to Chipinge where there were no serpentine deposits. Describing the move as "McEwen's betrayal of Mariga", the curators of the page suggest that McEwen refused to take Mariga to Vukutu, even though he was probably prepared to sacrifice his job and become a full-time sculptor. Prior to that encounter, McEwen and Mariga had had a good mutual working relationship. They had depended on each other, with McEwen promoting Mariga's discoveries and developments. If indeed there was some form of betrayal, it could be because some of the individuals Mariga had trained offered a viable alternative as his replacement and McEwen could now afford to do without him. Nonetheless, the Vukutu workshop only lasted up to 1972, a few months before McEwen left the country in 1973,

[223] No first names of the two in the record.
[224] While some managed to produce work that was exhibited in galleries, others made work that they could sell directly to local and foreign visitors at affordable rates. That the work did not make it into the art institutions does not make it poor-quality work.

because the government saw the project as politically motivated and targeted McEwen for undermining the regime through his support for the locals (Sultan 1992), and accusing him of being a communist.

One of the main stone sculpture workshops in the history of art in Zimbabwe is Tengenenge. The birth of that centre is credited to artist Crispen Chakanyuka and Tom Blomefield who was the owner of the farm where the workshop was located. Chakanyuka, who was a protégé of Mariga, noticed that there was raw stone on Blomefield's farm and therefore informed the farm owner of the importance of the resource in the making of sculptures (Sibanda 2015). Following that, Blomefield himself travelled to Nyanga to learn under Mariga (Morton 2013). I intentionally point out this somewhat remote connection of the beginnings of the Tengenenge Workshop to emphasise the influence that Joram Mariga had on its inception and the extent to which he had influence as a teacher.

As he matured as a sculptor and mentor, the way Mariga taught his students was well choreographed. As acknowledged by Joosten (2001: 15), "he developed a didactic system for sculpting containing directions and a schematic approach for shaping, using the form of an insect as an example (from the) head, thorax and (to the) abdomen." This helped him and his protégés make work that had form and proportion, paying respect to the shape of the stone and drawing from its inner soul. This sentiment is echoed by Morton (2013: 242) who enunciates that he "developed and taught a coherent philosophy of style, form and meaning that was to be decisive in shaping the genre." Mariga, who had great knowledge of Shona culture and tradition, always put emphasis on the diverse Shona customs in the making of the work. That idea was conveniently embraced and seized by McEwen and other patrons who saw it as a marketing tool for the art form.

In the later years of his career, and in independent Zimbabwe, Mariga served as a member of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe's Board of Trustees from 1982 till 1993. He continued to travel around the country teaching stone sculpture until the time of his death in a car crash in December 2000. Mariga's role in spreading the stone sculpture tradition to many remote and underdeveloped parts of the country was outstanding. His name deserves to be enlisted among the Black artist-teachers who did the most for Zimbabwe. The nature of his job as an agricultural extension worker enabled him to travel to many parts of Manicaland in the east of Zimbabwe, albeit at times he was compelled to do so as the government transferred him to some of the areas he covered. Nonetheless, the nature of his job ensured that he went to the

people instead of them coming to him. His legacy in empowering sculptors is seen through the works of the many artists he mentored and already named in the paragraphs above.

## 5.8. Cornelius Manguma

### *5.8.1 The artist*

Affectionately known by his clan name Sinyoro, Cornelius Manguma was born in 1935. He enrolled at the Serima Primary School in 1958 and received his training in sculpture under the tutelage of Father Groeber at Serima Mission. In two separate articles, art historian Elizabeth Morton (2013 and 2020) describes Manguma as Groeber's "most important" and "favourite" student. The priest appreciated the talented sculptor's work so much that he retained him as a teacher or instructor, working together for some years. According to Joosten (2001), Manguma brought the 'African and expressive' carving in his work an aspect that worked well for the church's followers, and converts could easily interpret or find meaning in images that resonated with them. The artist's main medium was wood, a resource that was available locally and therefore easily accessible and less costly. Manguma's sculptures are among the works decorating the walls of St. Mary's Church, a building of importance to Serima Mission, and its surrounding countryside agricultural community to this day.

The relief carvings on the multi-panel wooden door (Fig. 5.7. and 5.8.) shown below are among the works said to have been carved by Cornelius Manguma. The first one is the main door into the church, and therefore a feature that ushers one into the building. The detailed relief carvings on the door panels are almost reminiscent of the ones done by Sam Songo on the Cyrene chapel door, with the difference being that Manguma's etchings are much deeper than Songo's. According to Plangger and Diethelm (1974), the poles on either side of the door represent the five wise and the other five foolish virgins, a story drawn from the parable in Mathew 25: 1-13 in the Bible. In the middle of the door are depicted stories of salvation mostly based on the Old Testament. Fig. 5.8. is a depiction of John the Baptist, portraying a scene of repentance followed by the actual baptism. The heads and the faces are quite big compared to the rest of the bodies, which is typical of the Serima style. While appreciating the aesthetic additions done on a functional object – the door of the church at Serima – Adewumi (2019:102) seems to suggest that the work made under apprenticeship in the workshops belonged to the master, which does injustice to what went on at Serima where even the mentor did not own the work.

Whatever was made by the students and their mentor was for decorating the church, and there for the benefit of the community.

Fig. 5.7. Multi-panel door of the church at Serima Mission, carved by Cornelius Manguma. St. Mary's Church, Serima Mission, Zimbabwe. Source: Zimnative.com.

Fig. 5.8: Detailed panels of the teak wood relief door (in Fig. 5.4.) carved by Cornelius Manguma in 1958, St. Mary's Church, Serima Mission, Zimbabwe. Source: Art & Theology: Available: https://artandtheology.org/tag/cornelius-manguma/

In the years he worked with Father Groeber, Manguma's practice did not venture outside the "rigidly imposed iconography of a foreign Christian tradition" with the work mostly based on Bible stories (Roberts et al. 1982: 55). Interestingly, he still earned recognition and respect at home, even from such an unlikely source as Frank McEwen, who did not seem to appreciate the work done by missionaries and generally disliked sculptors emerging out of missionary institutions, who employed wood as their medium. Following a group exhibition at the National Gallery in 1962, its Director was quoted as saying Manguma "brings a truly sculptural and

African sense of expressive carving to the service of Christian symbols. Happily, his promoters allow him to retain some of his African qualities as a carver" (Plangger and Diethelm 1974: 18).[225] Manguma, who experimented in his work, and saw his career blooming in the post-Groeber era, "began extending himself into secular, freestanding sculpture in the early 1980s" (Morton 2013b: 242). In those years, he also started creating fine art for exhibitions and scaled down on the number of commissions he could do. He drew inspiration from associating with sculptors like Job Kekana and Joram Mariga (Morton 2020) who came from other institutions, and therefore had not received the same training as him. The highlight of his career was probably when he was invited, together with sculptor Joram Mariga, to participate in a three-month sojourn at Parnham House in the United Kingdom in 1982, to a residency awarded by the Commonwealth Institute.

In the previous chapter I quoted Guy Mutasa referring to his mentor Job Kekana as a missionary who had come to evanjelise through art. Whether Manguma became a priest as well is not clear. However, in a short narrative titled 'Tambu's Choice', renowned Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga referred to Tapfuma Gutsa's mentor as "Father Cornelius Manguma" (2006: 127). I put this question across to the mentee who seemed surprised to hear of the priestly title being mentioned for the first time.

*5.8.2 Teaching career*

When the Catholic bishop ordered Father Groeber to go and introduce wood carving at another centre in 1971, Manguma left with him. The reason for the tension between the church leadership and the priest was that the institution was calling for the commercialisation of the art produced at Serima. As such, sending him to initiate another project at Driefontein was a way of exiling him from the centre so that he would not continue to contest the church leadership's decision to try and earn income from the project (Gutsa 2021, personal communication, April 22). Because Manguma was close to his mentor, and they had a great work relationship, they left Serima together and went to start the Driefontein Workshop in Mvuma in 1971 (Zhou 2017). Unlike at Serima where the priest built an institution from scratch, at Driefontein Groeber and Manguma found the infrastructure in place as the institution already had a primary school, and a secondary school that offered carpentry and tailoring – subjects that prepared Africans for self-reliance. From the time Father Groeber's health

[225] Almost every art historian writing about Frank McEwen seems to highlight that he did not like artists trained at mission institutions. Yet, besides Manguma who was based at Serima, the Director of the National Gallery would also include the Cyrene based Sam Songo in some of the exhibitions, as is highlighted by the writers Huebert and Ziegner (2020: 319).

deteriorated, till he died a year later, Manguma assumed charge of the art school that was set up by the Swiss Mission in 1972 (Morton 2013b), a position he occupied for more than 25 years, carrying on teaching woodcarving.

According to Morton (2020), Manguma, who even inherited Groeber's tools and equipment, was careful to retain the basic elements of Groeber's training for some time. As such, the conservative Serima style was implemented under him, in steps starting with drawing, before modelling and lastly carving. The author claims that he even made use of rejects from Serima as models for his students at Driefontein. However, with the passage of time he gradually weaned himself off the Serima style. There was a significant shift from Father Groeber's three-part anatomical proportions. "Using a proportion mannequin obtained from the tailoring department as the basis for instruction, the body was now divided into four equal parts. These ran from the foot to the knee, the knee to the hip, the hip to the shoulder, and the shoulder to the top of the head" (Morton 2020: 304). However, Morton compares the work coming out of Driefontein to that from Job Kekana's school in Rusape and concludes that the former was inferior as Manguma's students had not mastered the art of working with wood grain.

Of the artists Manguma taught at Serima, Nicholas Mukomberanwa and Joseph Ndandarika went on to become prominent sculptors. In the years he spent at Driefontein, Manguma's work shifted from a form that was primarily for projecting and sharing gospel. That explains why most of the artists who graduated with a diploma from the three-year course at Driefontein went into 'airport art'. By the time they graduated they had recorded sales already as some of their works were sold at the school's shop and across the country. However, an exception emerged in Tapfuma Gutsa, a trailblazer of the second generation of sculptors in Zimbabwe, who went on to disrupt and redefine Zimbabwe's sculpture landscape in interesting ways.

## 5.9. Sam Songo

### *5.9.1 Life as an artist*

Probably Cyrene Mission's most prominent student-cum-teacher was Sam Songo. Born in 1929 in Mberengwa District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, Songo was a multimedia artist who engaged in sculpture in materials like soapstone, wonderstone and wood. Watercolour paintings were also a strong element of his practice. His subjects were both religious, based on Bible stories, and secular from his reading of the quotidian and surroundings. In the *Nineteenth Cyrene Paper*, Canon Paterson (1953) states that Songo was

brought to Cyrene in 1946 by Mr Stewart, who was the Chief Inspector of Matabeleland. He was "hopelessly crippled in both legs and his right hand only had two fingers" (Paterson 1953: 6). Of all of Paterson's students Songo was probably the one who mastered relief carving the most as is seen in the multiple works he made. As such he carved the eight panels on the door of the chapel at the centre of mission school. His work was known beyond the borders of Zimbabwe. In August 1954, Songo was featured in *Time Magazine* in an article titled *Art: Wonderstone Wonders*. In the article, it is stated that Songo's *The Prodigal Son* (Fig. 5.9) was a hit among the Cyrene works that were shipped for exhibition in London in the late 1940s. According to Zhou (2017: 71) the piece "earned Songo the Silver Trophy for the best work of art at the first African Eisteddfod and the Cup for Sculpture."


Fig. 5.9. Samuel Songo, *The Prodigal Son*, Date unknown. Soapstone, h. 26 cm. Source: Art and Theology. Available: https://artandtheology.org/tag/samuel-songo/

Carved out of soapstone, *The Prodigal Son* shows two Black figures with short hair. Both the father and son are dressed in animal loin skins (*ibetshu*). The father is embracing the son, who has returned home empty-handed after spending his share of the family's wealth as narrated in the Bible story. The son looks too shy either to face the father or to stretch his arms to embrace him back. The gesture of looking away can also be interpreted as a sign of the son showing respect to the father. In the different Shona ethnicities, and the artist belonged to one of them, looking the elder directly in the eye is a sign of disrespect. The dwarf-like form of the two muscular figures in *The Prodigal Son*, together with the inscription of Songo's name on the pedestal, resemble what is in Lazarus Khumalo's *Witch Doctor* (Fig. 5.2.), which confirms that Cyrene Mission had a unique style of sculpting, either taught by Paterson himself, or from the young artists' influencing each other.

Acknowledging that Songo joined Cyrene as an autodidact, Zhou (2017: 73) credits him for improving Cyrene's style of painting and sculpting as other artists aspired to get to his level. Always challenging himself and not the one to limit his own practice, Songo turned to lino cutting in the 1950s. Zhou goes on to state that upon attaining his Teacher's Diploma, Songo became an art instructor at Cyrene Mission where he was stationed up to 1971. He then moved to Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre in Bulawayo, where he taught a generation of artists who include Adam Madebe, David Ndlovu and George Nene. He transitioned to working more with the medium of stone in the 1970s post-UDI phase characterised by shortages of conventional art materials due to the international embargoes imposed on Ian Smith's rebel regime, a scenario already explained earlier in the case of Tom Blomefield's project at Tengenenge. The stone sculptures dotted around the yard of Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre are said to have been done by Sam Songo. However, the staff at the centre did not allow me to photograph them. Sam Songo died in 1977.

Fig. 5.10. Samuel Songo painting an interior mural in the chapel. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

Fig. 5.11. Ned Paterson and Samuel Songo. Courtesy of Mary Ball Paterson.

### *5.9.2* Pitaniko *and white saviourism*

In March 2012, the Nigerian-American author Teju Cole unleashed a series of tweets in which he interrogated the unequal power relations between the privileged Euro-Americans coming "to help Africa" and the Africans who are not even consulted on matters that affect them. In one of the provocative inventions, he applied the term "The White-Saviour Industrial Complex" to describe the controversial relationship, arguing that to them (Euro-Americans)

Africa is “a space onto which white egos can conveniently be projected,” and a place where Western “emotional needs are satisfied” and where Westerners come to “help them [Africans] because they cannot help themselves” (Cole 2012). Although the tweets were a response to a video on Joseph Kony and the ‘invisible children’ in the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, I choose to employ Cole’s framing as it reveals a systemic problem which dates back to the colonial era and which the Western world hardly reflects upon. The framing is helpful in reading and analysing Westerners’ controversial perceptions and assessments of Songo. That reading also applies to writers and art historians who have written about Songo (Morton 2013, Zilberg 2012), preoccupying themselves with his physical appearance, seeing him as a helpless figure worth of pity and charity, who could only be rescued by Paterson.

In the *Fourteenth Cyrene Paper*, Paterson (1948: 7) narrates the story of the shooting of the 1946 documentary *Pitaniko, the Film of Cyrene*, a black and white film written and produced by Robin G. Last of Gaumont-British (Africa) Pty., Ltd (Davlieger 1998). The filming company had been invited to the country by the Southern Rhodesian Government in 1945 to produce films primarily designed to attract tourists (Rice 2008). Unlike other Gaumont films, *Pitaniko* was funded by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G) (Rice 2008). The film centres Songo as the main actor. In the script a handicapped boy living in a supposedly heathen village is targeted for human sacrifice, as directed by the sangoma, to appease the raging spirits, and save the village from the severe drought. Miraculously somehow, the boy escapes and ends up at Cyrene Mission, saved by Paterson.

It is a story of someone supposedly “passive and marginalised” (Bennett 2020) escaping the purportedly ‘uncivilised and barbaric’ society in ‘dark Africa’ characterised by ‘backward’ practices like witchcraft, ending up in the modern and ‘civilised’ Christian world. According to Rice (2008) “the narrative structure of *Pitaniko* presents a direct contrast between the ‘primitive’ world of local Africans and the civilised society of the colonial powers.” In the film, the African village is presented as a place of “drought and scarcity, nakedness, death and magic” and is juxtaposed with the mission school that has “water and other resources, men who are dressed, development as a sign of life, and religion” (Davlieger 1998: 720). Interestingly, Paterson admits that he did not like the script, acknowledging that it was shot for propaganda purposes. He reveals that he and his students were only asked to cooperate by an institution that helped fund the school. However, the S.P.G. maintained that the film represented a “permanent record of life at Cyrene” and that “The story of Pitaniko, the heathen cripple boy who owes everything to Cyrene is based on fact” (Davlieger 1998 714). The film’s intended

audiences were the British viewers. If at all, the film offers "an insight into colonial ideology" (Rice 2008) and its patronising nature. To the colonisers Africans were subjects and 'objects' meant to be exploited and misrepresented. Their voices did not matter.

Paterson titles the *Eighteenth Cyrene Paper* (1953) "The Sad Story of Sam Songo and his Self-propelling Chair" and goes on to give a detailed account of how he assisted the artist secure his wheelchair by approaching the Rhodesian State Lotteries and the Union Castle Company to help ship it from England. Almost in comical fashion, the priest details how the artist used to ride around the mission paths until a freakish accident that almost ruined him. While the ending was not so rosy, what I get from Paterson's account is the desires of a self-empowered and determined young man who could do things for himself. I see it in the way Songo contacts the company in England after encountering their advertisement of the self-propelling chair in an English newspaper. That he also approached Paterson and almost emptied his own savings to purchase the chair tells a lot about his character. However, Paterson presented the narrative the way he did as the *Cyrene Papers* were meant for a British audience which donated funds to the school.

Earlier I indicated that Songo was featured in *Time* magazine. It was probably the first time a Black artist from the then Southern Rhodesia was to do so. However, the article employed problematic language of the era, characterised by racial tropes and stereotypes, commenting on Songo's health conditions and impairments in the following terms:

> A government school inspector brought him from his farming village to grizzled Canon Edward Paterson, an artist-priest who founded Cyrene in 1940. He was a half-starved boy in grey rags, and so helpless that he had to be wheeled to classes in an old baby carriage. But Sam, who showed surprising aptitude for drawing, soon told the canon: "I can carve." Paterson wisely refrained from giving the crippled young Negro any formal art training. "What I tried to do," said Paterson, "was let him express what was in his eyes and mind."

The idea was to present an African who had defied the odds to be able to produce fine artworks, thanks to the influence and hard work of the white saviour who rescued him. The work that Songo did had nothing to do with his physical challenges, yet that is the only lens through which the Western world chose to view him. Appearing to appreciate the artist's craftsmanship, the *Time* article also stated, "If European artists manage to pull off this harmony, they reckon they're lucky. But with these boys it's natural." The last part of the statement discards Songo's years of training and practice, because in the Western psyche he was the handicapped individual with exceptional inborn talents.

*5.9.3 A contested legacy*

One of the assertions repeatedly advanced by writers and art historians (Zilberg 2012, Morton 2013) who have written on Zimbabwe's art history is that when Frank McEwen started the National Gallery Workshop, he did not like to work with artists that had received a formal academic training in mission schools. Morton (2013b) claims that the artists who had trained with Father Groeber at Serima, for example, had to hide their backgrounds to work with him. She also cites the case of Job Kekana, who visited the National Gallery school after his return from the United Kingdom, and was chased away because McEwen did not want to see him near his students (Morton 2013b). The assertion is challenged by the story of Sam Songo, who did not even have to leave the mission environment to work with the then Director of the National Gallery. Although he remained stationed at Cyrene Mission, Songo was an integral part of Frank McEwen's Workshop School. As a result, his sculptures consistently featured in exhibitions at the National Gallery, as well as in institutions like New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1968, the Museum Rodin in 1971, and London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1972. McEwen was instrumental in marketing the work abroad. If indeed McEwen did not like to work with artists from such a background it is still a mystery why he continued to work with Songo who even worked in a mission station miles away from Workshop School base in Salisbury.

## 5.10. Conclusion

Bringing out the narratives of the neglected Black artist-teachers is far from exhaustive. The selected artist-teachers dealt with in this chapter played the important role of empowering artists by mentoring them. This research advocates for their recognition in the history of the birth and development of modern art in Zimbabwe by including their stories, and therefore making them more visible than they currently are. They ought to be recognised on the same pedestal as the white missionaries and expatriates who taught art in the country, albeit it is hard to tell whether their teaching philosophies were different from those of their white counterparts. In most cases both sets of artist-teachers worked together and depended on each other. Yet the existing archive conveniently relegates one set to the peripheries of the canon. The five I opted to scrutinise in depth in this chapter were chosen due to the availability of information sources. I am aware that in selecting them over the rest, I might appear as perpetuating the silencing of those I left out, but I am still persuaded to believe that this is a meaningful first step. This is the first effort to recognise the contribution of these Black artists-cum-teachers. I admit that more

research needs to be carried out to try and cover all of them. The best way to remember them cannot only be through academia. More should be done to memorialise their legacies, especially in a city like Bulawayo where Sam Songo and Lazarus Khumalo were based, and some of their work is in public spaces. A good starting point would be to rename the gallery rooms of the Bulawayo branch of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, which currently has names that do not reflect the histories of the majority Ndebele people of the city.[226] There is no female name among those brought out in this chapter because women were never accorded the chance to play a significant role in the patriarchal African society in Rhodesia (Paterson 1949), and there were no female artist-teachers at the time. Most of the art institutions that produced the artist-teachers highlighted in this chapter were mostly founded by men, run by men, and were recruiting and training men to be artists and artist-teachers.

[226] Even though some of the exhibition rooms have names like Cyril Rogers, a former Director of the Bulawayo branch of the National Gallery, and Marshall Baron, who was a prominent artist and lawyer from the city, none of the rooms carry names of local Black artists. Instead, names like the Anglo-American Gallery and The Beit Gallery are in place. I once mentioned this to Voti Thebe who suggested I take up the idea to the directors of NGZ in Harare.

## Conclusion

Employing modernism as an analytical framework, this thesis has discussed the hierarchies visible in a conscious system of inclusions and exclusions underpinning the world art canon. The contributions of artists from regions lying outside the Euro-American core are barely recognised on the narrow scale. On the continent of Africa, the dominance of Nigeria, Senegal, Ethiopia and South Africa over all the other nations emphasises these hierarchies. The example of South Africa discussed in the first chapter substantiates that hierarchies can exist even within a nation for certain periods influenced by political and ideological goals of the time, and for specific racial groups. However, efforts by various stakeholders in the art sector to bring the practices of previously marginalised South African groups into the mainstream demonstrate that the canon can be transformed. Using revisionist efforts in South Africa as an example of what can be done to reconfigure the canon, I have managed to make a case for Zimbabwe's overlooked Black artists-cum-teachers whom I believe ought to be more visible on the nation's map of modern art.

The main drive for carrying out this research is the desire to see the contributions of the selected Black artist-teachers to the development of modern art in Zimbabwe fully acknowledged. Job Kekana, Cornelius Manguma, Joram Mariga, Sam Songo, Lazarus Khumalo and John Hlatywayo played an equally important role that they do not deserve to remain a footnote in the stories of Canon Paterson, Father Groeber, Frank McEwen and Tom Blomefield. In pioneering this study for Zimbabwe, I hope serious attention will be paid to them, and more critical discussions around their work emerges. I hope the arguments made in this thesis will be used as the foundation for further serious enquiries by future scholars. Equally troubling, their exploits as artists are also marked by scattered bits of information which no researcher has attempted to put together before.

Each time I reflected on the story of Job Kekana and examine what he was able to do for the community around him and the country at large, I could not understand why no writer from Zimbabwe would choose to focus on him. Like Canon Paterson at Cyrene Mission or Father Groeber at Serima Mission, he founded an art school in the form of the Kekana School of Art and Craft. In Guy Mutasa and Barnabas Ndudzo, he mentored artists who went on to carve careers recognisable among the finest artists from Zimbabwe. In both South Africa where he had a brief stint at the F.U.B.A. Academy and in Botswana where he settled until he died, Ndudzo became one of Zimbabwe's best arts ambassadors. Mutasa's career has been equally impressive, being commissioned to carry out key national projects like the carving of the

Zimbabwe Bird at the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, and lately the controversial statue of Mbuya Nehanda in the central business district of Harare.

The Kekana School having produced students of such a stature, I have always wondered why there is no single study on the school nor its founder's work in Zimbabwe. For instance, Kekana settled in the then Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and through his school, worked hard in a project that advanced the lives of fellow Black people. Like Paterson, some of his students had special needs, yet not much is said about Kekana's initiative to assist and empower such individuals.

For me the answer seems to lie in the discourse of modernism, which I employ as the major theoretical framework that can assist in bringing the selected Black artist-teachers onto Zimbabwe's map of modern art. Through the opinions of various African thinkers, I have realised that in its narrow Euro-American formulation, modernity seems to privilege individuals of certain backgrounds, and this thesis tries to negotiate ways around that problem.

The first chapter of this thesis is a discussion of modernism, foregrounding the thoughts of African writers based on the continent and a few in the diaspora. However, a few Euro-American writers who have made contributions helpful to the histories of the marginalised have also been included. The most important outcomes of the chapter are the need to pay attention to the periodisation of the discourse, as well as to recognise and co-opt multiple and entangled modernisms lying outside the narrow Euro-American core, as highlighted by writers like Okeke-Agulu, Georgis, Enwezor, Oguibe and Hassan. Indeed, Africa proved that it has a role to play in the discourse quite early when Europe's avant-garde saw something that changed the face of art in the first half of the twentieth century. Another highlight of the chapter is the need for centring African languages as a vehicle that transports the continent into fierce modernist debates, as always advocated for by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the need to integrate the best of what we take from other cultures with our own philosophy and innovations, as suggested by Denis Ekpo.

South Africa is a nation that endured a difficult past of racial discrimination under the apartheid administration, which either reversed or literally obliterated and erased the gains Black people had made prior to that phase. The forced removals in Sophiatown in the 1950s for example, disrupted the Sophiatown Renaissance, and the introduction of apartheid itself in 1948 reversed the progress of the New African Movement (Masilela 2006, Sidogi 2022). However, the way a multicultural democratic South Africa has managed to promote and spotlight the work of

some of its previously marginalised Black modern artists for example, is commendable. I make this assertion while fully aware that South Africans themselves still highlight the need to do much more, and are quick to point that the legacy of apartheid still persists. The nation's researchers, intellectuals, curators, museums, institutions of higher learning and cultural workers engage in critical conversations that mould the modernist discourse in ways many of the African countries can only admire. This is not to say South Africa is exceptional, as nations like Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana continue to do well in the arts, nor to deny that there have been a fair share of regressive and shameful moments in the territory south of the Limpopo River.

It is on the basis of the recognisable gains alluded to above that I posit the suggestion that an arts community open to robust debate and constructive criticism and engagement, one that is prepared to do away with the gatekeeping culture, might be what Zimbabwe needs. That way I believe the marginalised Black modern artists of generations past can be given the respect they are due, albeit mostly posthumously. That is the most feasible project that will see the likes of Songo, Khumalo, Manguma, Mariga, and Hlatywayo, as well as the many others I am not spotlighting in this thesis, getting recognition of some sort. They might not receive as much attention as the three dominant white figures mentioned earlier, but some serious research needs to be done on their work, and some retrospective exhibitions are needed for them where possible. I am optimistic that commitment to that aspect will also help challenge the plague of regional inequalities that persists in Zimbabwe's art canon today as it incorporates few artists from Matabeleland.

The second chapter focuses on the violent colonial encounter that created Rhodesia, and later the founding of the Cyrene and Serima Workshops by Canon Paterson and Father Groeber respectively. Art historians interested in the story of modern art in Zimbabwe have written about them (Zilberg 2002, Morton 2013, Murray 2018, Randles 1997, etc). Raphael Chikukwa, the current Director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, has consistently maintained that the churchmen fulfilled their colonial mandate of evangelising through gospel. That they set up the first formal schools teaching modern art to Black locals and others from neighbouring countries is clear. They laid a solid foundation that Frank McEwen was able to build upon when he started the National Gallery Workshop. They mentored the first Black artist-teachers Zimbabwe relied on. In this thesis, I have examined the Cyrene project more extensively, by revisiting the chapel and discussing its relief works in depth, revealing that together with the murals, they transcend the gospels Paterson is said to have read for his students to translate into

works of art. In them I witnessed a much deeper history of Christianity on the continent seen through the figures portrayed. I also revisited the paintings exhibited in *The Stars Are Bright* and noticed that they captured secular contemporary issues and the nation's history. At Serima, the Africanisation of the church through art was central to Father Groeber's project. How the evangelist was allowed to decorate the church the way he did is still a mystery, as most Catholic churches in the region imported sculptures of a Western Jesus, the Virgin Mary and Stations of the Cross.

In the third chapter, on Frank McEwen and the 'Shona Sculpture' Movement he helped build, I challenge the notion that a direct link exists between his project and the earlier stone sculptures from the ancient Great Zimbabwe state. I do so based on evidence from archaeological and heritage studies by distinctive local scholars (Chirikure, Manyanga and Pikirayi) who have dedicated years of committed research to the project. After all, the 'Shona Sculpture' Movement had a significant number of sculptors from neighbouring countries. And in similar fashion, in the earlier chapter I also disputed the passing on of a tradition of painting from the Khoe-Sān groups to the Bantu groups that dispersed them, and therefore to the modern painting canon of the country. Again, evidence from archaeology and cultural heritage studies stands in the way of this connection. What I have failed to grasp, which needs attention, is the idea that while most nations engaged in art forms that responded to colonialism, and at times confronted it, in West Africa and South Africa for example, there seems to be no evidence of McEwen's and Father Groeber's students responding in any way. At least the work at Cyrene shows the students had a grasp of what was going on around them. In the third chapter, I also challenge the notion that Frank McEwen did not like working with artists who had trained in mission schools. Is it not significant that he worked with Sam Songo who was at Cyrene for the longest time, and he did not hide his admiration for Cornelius Manguma and Lazarus Khumalo, two other mission-trained artists?

Earlier in this concluding chapter I have already touched on Kekana, who is the subject of the fourth chapter. The aim of the fifth chapter is to also locate Manguma, Songo, Mariga, Khumalo and Hlatywayo on Zimbabwe's map of modern art. This was the most challenging chapter of the thesis, as I had to work with scattered bits of information. Employing 'critical fabulation' as a method of reconstructing the biographies of these artists helped put a semblance of a cohesive narratives together. Of these artists, those who attended Cyrene and Serima and later taught at the same institutions usually appeared as mere footnotes in the narratives of Canon Paterson and Father Groeber.

As already highlighted above, the major limitation of this study is the use of Western philosophy and terminology that I am trying to manipulate as I apply them to the local situation. Many writers from previously colonised regions (Araeen 2005, Wa Thiong'o 1992 and 1993, Ekpo 2005 and 2022, Masilela 2006, etc.) have engaged this problem before. I consider it one of the major problems of academia that even when one has something new or profound to say, there is need to situate it relative to the writings of those who have written before, whether in agreement with or contesting them. In future, there will be time to theorise the art coming out of Zimbabwe in the literature of the country, particularly tracing what George Kahari formulated as "The Rise of the Shona Novel" (1990).

Secondly, there are many more names of artist-teachers that emerge in scattered texts and through conversations with the Zimbabwean art community. However, theirs is a fragmented archive which needs more time to be put together. What also does not help is the lacklustre cooperation of custodians of these archives in some institutions in Zimbabwe. My experience is that it is easier to get information from the Smithsonian Institute on the Cyrene archive for example, than it is for the Bulawayo City Council archivists to release information on Lazarus Khumalo and Sam Songo, if at all they have it stored somewhere. Even though the two were employees of the council in their tenure as artist-teachers at the Mzilikazi Arts and Crafts Centre, one employee of the council referred me to another who also passed the burden to the next one who did not even respond to the emails, showing that in a bureaucratic system the actual sin is to do the work. I mentioned Paul Wade and Gabriel Hatugari who I hope to research in future.

Art historian Barbara Wall (1982: 38) brings out a few names of Black artist-teachers in colonial Rhodesia as well. These include Adomech Mbenge Moyo who became the first African teacher in occupational therapy in southern Africa. He imparted art and craft skills to patients at a school he established at the Bulawayo Native Hospital. An artwork of his is in the British royal collection. There was also Joseph Muli who was Canon Paterson's student at Nyarutsetso. He went on to establish a successful workshop in Speke Avenue in the then Salisbury. Francis Chindodo also became a teacher at Cyrene Mission before serving students with special needs at the Jairos Jiri Centre. Lastly, James Ratumu and William Mariwi became teachers at village schools after leaving Cyrene Mission (Paterson 1951).

In short, this thesis was able to trace and critique the transformation of the Zimbabwean modern art canon from its foundational phase characterised by the dominance of the Cyrene and Serima Workshops in the early twentieth century. With the appointment of Frank McEwen as the

Director of the National Gallery in the 1950s, the nation witnessed the rise to prominence of 'Shone sculpture', becoming the artform the nation identified with. That rise was due to the art historical and institutional authority McEwen had, as well as his wide network of connections in the Euro-American art world. Stone sculpture from Zimbabwe was accepted as a modern art form from its inception and was not seen as ethnographic objects as happened with sculptures from other parts of Africa. Interestingly, the canonisation of stone sculpture led to the sidelining of other practices like woodcarving at Kekana's school for example. Art historians who have written on Zimbabwe's history of modern art over the years have paid attention to the work of McEwen, Groeber and Paterson, with very little said about the key Black players in the sector. In the body of the essay, I referred to Achille Mbembe's essay on the need for *African Modes of Self-Writing,* and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's call for *Moving the Centre*, as well as Raphael Chikukwa emphasising the need for Zimbabweans to write their own narrative. This research is a response to these calls. The desire to see myself, a Black Zimbabwean, represented in the nation's mainstream canon of modern art, is one of the main drives for this study. Overall, I think I succeeded in reconfiguring the canon to include people who look like me, without having to belittle the significant contributions of the missionaries and expatriates who helped define the course of modern art development in Zimbabwe.

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