SOUTH AFRICA: From Oppression to Opportunity
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BENJAMIN S. ROSENTHAL LIBRARY

Presented by Queens College Art Library as part of the Year of South Africa programming at Queens College. Curated by Sevastoula Kasparian, Paul Remeczki, Suzanna Simor + Alexandra Lee Small, with contributions by Alexandra de Luise, Donna Schultz, Robert Dourandi, Tamara Evans, Bruce Levenberg, Miguel Matos, Fitzcarl Anthony Johnson Reid, Lea Salzano, Amanda Samaroo + Daniel Sangemino.

Barham Rotunda Object Listing (by Case/Shelf/Item)

SOUTH AFRICA: LAND and PEOPLE (Case 1)

Located at the southernmost region of Africa, with almost 2,000 miles of coastline along both the Atlantic and Indian oceans, rich in symbolism, and possessing an astonishing topography of majestic mountains, deep valleys, dense forests, arid deserts, vast savannas, and lofty plateaus, South Africa has become famous for its biodiversity and especially for the maintenance of its natural habitats and wildlife preserves that are home to an amazing array of flora and fauna. The north eastern province of Gauteng has been designated the Cradle of Humankind since the discovery of some of the oldest archaeological and human fossils sites in the world. The population of South Africa is descended from tribal ties and foreign settlers and encompasses a variety of ethnographic sources, as is borne out by eleven official languages and the cosmopolitan spread of cultures to be found within the country’s borders. Due to the diverse origins of the local culture, the cuisine found in South Africa reflects the cookery practiced by indigenous peoples as well as migrant cuisines introduced during the colonial period. There are still a number of rural inhabitants fused to their cultural traditions who lead simple, impoverished lives. Urban lifestyles reflect those found in Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. Ten years after its first democratic election, South Africa is signaling new nationalistic ambitions for its people and its artistic production.

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 C592SL
1/1/2  PAINTING – AFRICA – SOUTH AFRICA  Ndebele: Johanna. Mural on back wall of the Mkwebani home (detail, artist seen through the window).
Queens College Art Library Picture File

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 C592SC

1/1/4  PAINTING – AFRICA – SOUTH AFRICA  Ndebele: home wall decoration.
Queens College Art Library Picture File

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 C592SP

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968.81 B817S

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7394.T73 C68 1986

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - NX653 .S66 F67 2008

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT764.T75 L9 1980

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - I74SO

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT23 .C5 1965

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7394.T73 C68 1986

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 M141S

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 P312L

HISTORY, POLITICS, SOCIAL COMMENTARY  (Case 2)

Bantu-speaking settlers moved southward from the Limpopo River starting about 2,500 to 3,000 years ago displacing the original Khoisan speakers. The southernmost group of Xhosa people also migrated and, as earlier inhabitants, were displaced or assimilated. The Bantu-speaking people were the dominant ethnic group at the time the Europeans settled in South Africa in the mid-16th century. At various times, South Africa was controlled by Dutch-speaking settlers (also known as Boers or Afrikaaners) and the British. By 1931, modern-day South Africa owed its allegiance to the United Kingdom, though still under both Dutch and British colonial rule. Although the government voted to become a republic in 1961, apartheid continued, and the African National Congress became a major factor in the resistance movement.

The end of apartheid in 1994 brought about the need to create a “new South Africa” that fostered a national identity via reconciliation, social transformation, and nation building. Promotion and use of strong, prominent symbols, such as the national flag, a new anthem, and commemorative holidays based on recent history, are aimed at recasting power structures and encouraging community development as a way of erasing inequities of the past. Although spatial and psychological boundaries of apartheid continue to exercise influence on people’s consciousness, the principle of the “freedom and security of person” firmly stated in the South African constitution has granted all constituents the opportunity to forge new relationships within the pluralistic society. South Africa, comprised of linguistically and culturally diverse communities, stands at the crossroads of trying to tune its political spectrum in a country faced with economic growth and ideological transition. As it goes beyond the achievement of democracy, South Africa has become a hotbed of political action with domestic policies reflecting the push and pull of the competing constituencies of urban and provincial cultures.

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1787 .W66 2000

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ1981 .K64 1998
Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1165 .L75 2005


Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ1911 .C67 1986

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ2720 .A58 B38 2011

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - PN6071.A77

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT763 .H44 1979

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT764 .B8 W56 1989

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT763 .S7734 1988

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1719 .S67 1997

Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - B M271N

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1945 .H43 1990

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ1981 .G53 2003
Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT747 .S6 C65 1987

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1182 .C43 2011

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT777 .E27 1988

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - HF1613.4 .Z4 U67 1987

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ1911 .S69 1985

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT764.E3 H84

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT764 .E3 D63 1984

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1058 .B53 B86 1992

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT944 .J657 M36 1984

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1798 .E83 1997

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1756 .T88 1996
Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT761 .C3 1953

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1757 .M36 1991

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1924 .M37 2013

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PT6525 .J65 1996

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT763 .B55 1984

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT763 .C542 1990

**TRANSITION, MODERN SOUTH AFRICA  (Case 3, Shelf 1)**

South Africa’s remarkable struggle for freedom from the harsh imprint of European colonization and segregationist ideology has spawned an explosion of internationally acclaimed art, literature, theater, and social commentary that celebrates the diversity of a shared cultural and political memory that could have originated only in post-apartheid South Africa. Protected with a non-discriminatory constitution, South Africa has a three-tier system of government headed by a president elected by the parliament and a strong judicial system that consists of magistrate, supreme, and constitutional court divisions. Faced with a mixed economy in a pluralistically diverse and segmented country at the moment when South Africa was readmitted to the international community in 1994, the government of South Africa seized on its reinstated trade rights to join the global trade system. At home, the government stabilized the economy by advocating cooperation and mutual consensus among the business, government, and labor
communities so that the economy could flourish. The South African government has been anxious to strengthen cohesion among its regional citizens by instituting economic stabilization policies by investing in local empowerment councils. Internationally, the collapse of socialism resulted in deregulation and permitted liberalization that reduced trade barriers and increased aid and foreign investments. It has also looked at its long-term political and economic role in relation to the broader African continent. Social and economic problems remain in South Africa as non-racial constructs are replacing former racial ones, but the government is exploring strategies such as economic empowerment and encouraging rival factions for public office in its commitment to nation-building.

Queens – Stacks Level 5 - PN6071.A77 1986

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - HQ799 .S5 M49 1986

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1848 .B44 1994

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1768 .W66 2000

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - JQ1981 .W66 2000


Queens - Juvenile Level 4 - 968 M154N

LITERATURE (Case 3, Shelves 2+3)
In a country that proudly celebrates its cultural diversity and constitutionally sanctions 11 official languages, there is bound to be an agglomeration of literary styles based on the social identities of individual communities. Even with the overturning of the apartheid paradigm and the national government’s engagement in the process of nation-building, regional communities have retained and even strengthened their literary rootedness and identity. What may be seen as appealing to different regional audiences actually provided the necessary vacuum for Afrikaans literature to become one of the strongest forces challenging the government’s political policies to become the “national” literature of South Africa. Authors such as André Brink, J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Doris Lessing, Nelson Mandela, Alan Paton, et al. have enriched world literature with writing about the courageous human spirit and the achievements of the South Africans. While themes of racial strife preoccupied South African authors during the era of apartheid, concerns about AIDS, alienation, corruption, crime, identity, materialism, poverty, tradition vs. modernization, security, and unemployment have emerged in contemporary literary dialogues.

South Africa’s social and political progression across the decades provided the ground-swell and shaped the course of poetic genre that rose from recitation of oral forms of indigenous praise poetry traditions (B.W. Vilakazi) to apartheid poems (Muthal Naidoo) to loyal resistance (N.P. van Wyk Louw) to political and ethical responsibilities (Antjie Krog), and literature about the celebration of humanity (Zakes Mda). South Africa’s poets continue a rich narration of themes manifested in its wealth of cultures and particular histories that span the pre- and post-colonial periods.

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.3 .C58 Y68 2003

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.3.P37 C79 1948

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9354.3 .G7

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.2.S37.S7
Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR6031.L25 M45

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9358 .S68 1996

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9345 .W66 2003

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.3 .G6 J8 1982

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT779.955 .R36 A3 1989

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1756 .S63 1990

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PN6071 .A77 F67 1987

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT779.955 .M36 A35 1985

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - DT761 .J25 1966

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR6023 .E833 A6 1988

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.3 .G6 C7 1991

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT764 .W47 C73 1986

**MUSIC, THEATER, FILM, DANCE (Case 4)**
The current South African music scene is defined by a mélange of sounds, styles, and forms reflecting the inclusiveness found in the country’s mandate for social harmony. Indigenous arrangements that emanated from unique tribal and folk forms utilizing native instruments (such as mouth bows, rattlers, reed flutes, scrapers, and Venda drums) have been an inspiration for the blending of mbaganga rhythms and maskandi sounds found in contemporary Afro rock, hip-hop, jazz, and pop. Underscored by internationally prominent artists, such as Miriam Makeba, Hugh Rampolo Masikela, Bobby van Jaarsveld, Mandoza, et al., and promoted through music festivals that can be found throughout the country, popular present-day sounds defy traditional descriptions. Today’s musical styles flourish, frequently fusing the sounds from indigenous musical instruments and modern guitars, banjos, pianos, and saxophones, along with South African traditional (mgqashiyo, mbaqanga, marabi) music, conservative gospel, Afrikaans music, and neo-traditional (Xhosa and Kwaito) music using synthesizers co-mingled with American jazz, to awaken and transcend their heritage to become a global phenomenon with international appeal.

A wave of local theatrical talent imbued with inspiration filled the void when South Africa was in an academic and artistic boycott in the mid-1980s. Theater productions relied on South African-inspired stories and reserves without input or knowledge of trends from abroad. Today, all South Africans are able to experience indigenous dance and drama, cabaret and burlesque, as well as classical opera and ballet, in spaces designed for the performing arts. The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown has grown substantially, and now over 50 venues are available to showcase the best in performance and visual art in South Africa.

Likewise, South Africa has been steadily building a vital film industry that over the last decade can boast of several prestigious film awards in the best foreign language film category. Furthermore, South Africa’s spectacular vistas, brilliant light, and excellent climate have provided viable location sites and a wealth of opportunities for the international film community.

The culture of dance in South Africa mirrors the rhythmic sounds and revelry found in the country’s multi-cultural musical expressions. The local and imported aesthetics of dance, which include classical ballet, span the spectrum to create new dance traditions that are uniquely South African in spirit. Particularly South African is the gumboot dance. Miners wore Wellington, or gum, boots to protect
their feet from polluted water in the mines. The miners, forbidden to speak, communicated by slapping their boots and rattling their chains. From this practice developed this special dance expression.

Queens - Media Ctr. DVD Level 1 - GV1705 .G86 2000

Queens Music - Score - M1834 .G5 1968


Queens Music - Sound Recording - LP 6134

Queens Music - Sound Recording - LP 6135

Queens Music - Stacks - ML 3451 A25 T7

Queens Music – Sound Recording - LP 4912.

Queens Music - Score - M1680 .L15 E3

Queens - Media Ctr. Video Level 1 - M1834 .R49 1988

Queens College Art Library Picture File
Queens Music - Stacks - ML 350.5 K6 1990

Queens College Art Library Picture File

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9354.3 .A8

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT1768 .N42 H64 1994

Queens - Stacks - Level 5 - PS3507.U629 B4

Queens – Stacks - Level 5 - PR9365.35.N4 R6 1974

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PN2981.5 .L37 1985

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9366.6 .S67 1993

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9361.2 .K78 1999

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PN2988 .S56 W6 2006

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.F78 B6 1971.

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PR9369.D5 M37

ARTS and ARCHITECTURE  (Case 5)

Historic architecture in the form “beehive” and circular tribal huts with thatched conical roofs and deep verandahs to the polychromatic wall art on sun-dried clay of the Ndebele are among the many witnesses to the celebration of art, nature, ritual, and life that have descended down to modern times. The span of artistic endeavor in South Africa bridges the prehistoric in the form of rock reliefs and cave paintings [their publications on display in cases on Rosenthal Library Levels 4, 5, and 6] to visual representations depicting the struggle for national liberation to post-modernist installations depicting metaphors for the re-construction of identity and memory. Contemporary South African art covers all genres and explores experimental, edgy art activities that reference the deconstruction of historical myths and psychological traumas experienced by South Africans over time in an attempt to create a new society. Photography, graphics, and especially printmaking readily lend themselves to social and political commentary, as witnessed by artists’ experiences made manifest in their art. Politically loaded anti-authoritarian themes have become very popular in the major cities.

As one of the more culturally and financially affluent African countries, South Africa has experienced an ongoing construction surge that displays a remarkable diversity of architectural styles. Architecture, as expressed, for example, in the Sandton Convention Center, Carlton Towers, and on Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, plays an important role in the visualization of the political and cultural values of nationhood. The construction of modern skyscrapers and the preservation of local traditional architecture reflect the balance the South African government is striving to achieve in developing and maintaining the strong cultural aspects of a progressive nation.

By hosting mega-events, South Africa places itself at the forefront of international recognition that serves to construct a prominent South African global identity.


Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - TT860 .M66 1994

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7392 .M66 2002


Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PN6071 .A77 1986

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7380 .F54 2012

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - NE788.6 .S6 M87 2011

Queens - Stacks Level 5 - PN6071 .A77 A77 1986

Queens - Art Periodicals Level 6 - NX587.A6
Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7392 .W55 1989

Queens - Art Periodicals Level 6 - NX587.A6

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N7396.K45 A4 2001

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - NX180 .P67 B57 2013
The San, called Bushmen by European colonists, are the indigenous inhabitants of southern Africa. They, along with the Khoikhoi, speak Khoisan languages, whose sounds include consonants, vowels, and distinctive clicks. The San are hunter-gatherers who have lived a Stone Age lifestyle into the modern era. Today they survive only in the Kalahari Desert.

The San and their ancestors created one of the longest-lived, continuous artistic traditions on earth. The earliest rock art in southern Africa has been dated to circa 24,000 B.C.E., the latest to just before 1900 C.E. Although a small percentage of this art may possibly be attributed to the Khoikhoi and to the Bantu peoples, most of it consistently expresses specifically San ideology.

South African rock art consists of two main types, petroglyphs and pictographs. Petroglyphs, produced by engraving and/or pecking with hard stones, such as quartz, are found mainly on exposed rock surfaces, such as diabase, on the plateau. Pictographs, produced by painting using mineral pigments, such as kaolin and red and yellow ochre, mixed in various binders and vehicles, including eland blood for magical purposes, are found mainly on the walls and ceilings of open sandstone rock shelters in mountainous regions, the most famous being those of the Drakensberg Range. Some paintings, including the oldest so far found in neighboring Namibia, were executed on pebbles and fragments of stone.

Stylistically, the art ranges from naturalistic to abstract. It depicts a variety of subjects, including people and animals portrayed in a number of postures and engaged in a number of activities, and an assortment of abstract and geometrical signs. While some characters and scenes, especially late ones dating after European contact, may merely portray relatively mundane observations in a narrative fashion, most representations visually express the traditional world-view or belief system of the artists and their society. To the San, the secular and the sacred are inseparable. Given their lifestyle and environment, native fauna feature prominently in San rock art. Certain species are believed to be charged with transcendent power. By far the most frequently carved and painted animal is the eland, the largest member of the antelope family. It is the animal considered to be imbued with the most potent and abundant spiritual power of all. As such it figures importantly in San rituals involved with such life concerns as puberty, marriage, hunting, healing, and averting evil. Healing rituals especially involve ecstatic dance and the inducement of a state of trance in which shamans experience hallucinations. Affected individuals are believed to commune with, become inhabited by, and/or transform into therianthropes, powerful supernatural beings part human and part animal. Small elongated figures shown issuing from participants’ heads may be spirits. Abstract and geometrical shapes and patterns depicted may represent entoptic visions seen during trance. Some have cosmological significance, such as renderings of the sun and of the moon in its phases. Hallucinatory trance is also used to conjure fantastic mythical rain animals so that they can be captured and killed so that their spilt blood will wet the parched earth to sustain life.
Queens - Art Folio Level 6 - GN799 .P4 B3

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N5310 .B6253

Queens - Oversize Level 4 - GN803 .C5813 1998

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - GN861 .C68 2001

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N5310 .A4313

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N5310 .A35

Queens - Art Folio Level 6 - N5310.5 .S6 J63

Queens - Oversize Level 4 - GN799 .P4 L46 2004

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - NB1080 .L36 1967

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - DT764 .B8 L48 1981
Queens - Stacks Level 4 - GN865 .S5 L38 1983

Queens - Art Room Use Level 6 - N5310.5 .S6 P3

Slack, Lina M. *Rock Engravings from Driekops Eiland and Other Sites South-west of Johannesburg*. Compiled by Penelope A. Bennett. London: Centaur Press, c1962.
Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N5310 .S53

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT764 .B4 V36 1984

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - DT764 .B8 V56

Queens - Stacks Level 4 - GN861 .W54 1984

Queens - Art Stacks Level 6 - N5310 .W49

*This exhibition on rock art is displayed in three parts on Rosenthal Library Levels 4, 5, and 6*