

Koloane notes the significance of this exhibition for the three founding Bag Factory artists:
People realised that a new kind of urban expression was happening. It had nothing to do with the sentimental work that was expected from township artists. Our work dealt with human nature and everyday subjects that had to do with being present in the city. A new symbolism emerged in our work.

The Bag Factory grew from strength to strength, and today is one of the most celebrated artists' studios in South Africa. In addition to master printer Mark Attwood's The Artists Press, with whom many of the Bag Factory artists produced editions of works, notable past and present studio artists include Allan Alborough, Bongzi Dhlomo-Mautloa, Kendell Geers, Kay Hassan, Ezrom Legae, Joachim Schönfeldt, Durant Sihlali and Andrew Tshabangu. **Rory Bester**

Above:
Sihlali, Durant (1935-2004)
Old Pimville Mtsamoso, Last Remains 1974
Watercolour on paper, 25 x 77 cm



Four township views

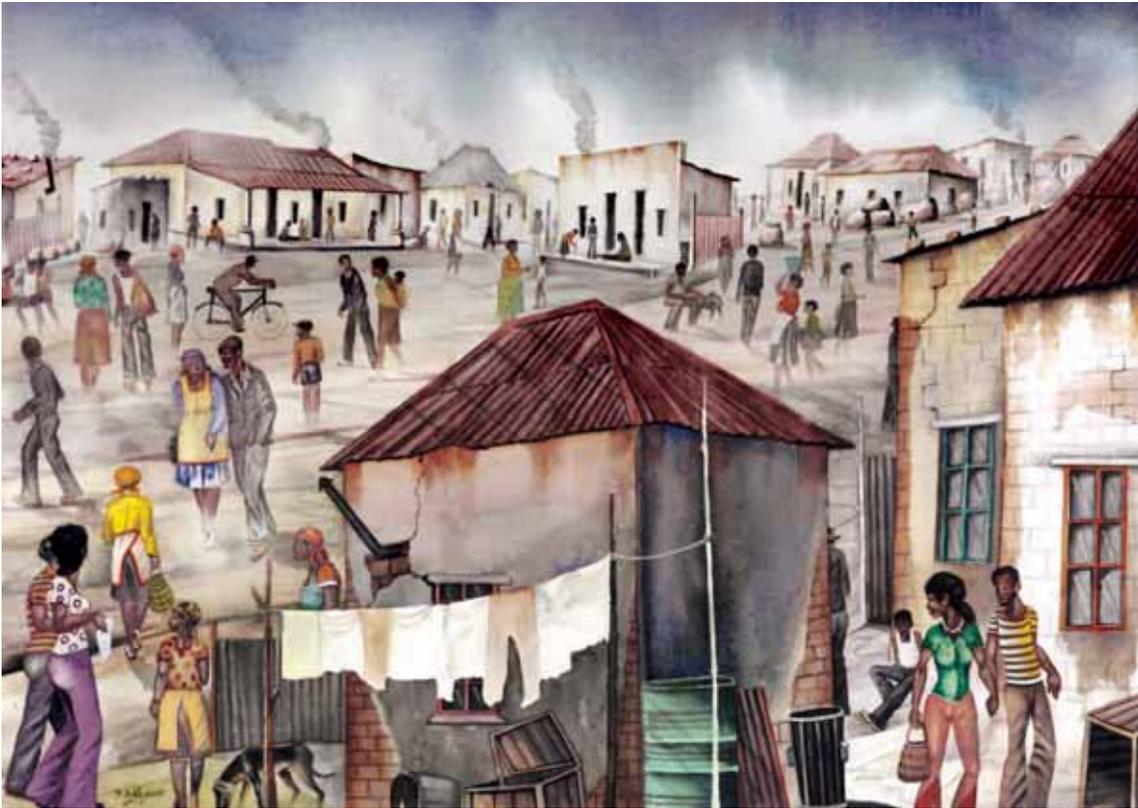
The work of many black African artists revolves around the collective memory of people trapped in environments not of their choice. Township settlements were primarily created as labour conduits for industrial and domestic purposes and, in accordance with the policy of racial segregation of the time, were often situated within 20 kilometres of major cities and towns. And this was long before the National Party government introduced the apartheid system. After 1948 there were further forced removals to township settlements situated on the fringes of cities. Most of the township dwellings comprised row upon monotonous row of matchbox-size houses, and the four-roomed dwellings were allocated irrespective of the number of family members. Gerard Sekoto, John Koenakeefe Mohl and George Pemba were among the first artists to depict the social conditions under which communities existed, as well as their day-to-day activities in township spaces. Rural-based communities have over the years migrated to the urban areas in the quest for better living conditions: "Thousands of Africans arrived in Johannesburg in the 1930s and early 1940s boosting the black population by 100 per cent. Housing, however, remained minimal."¹

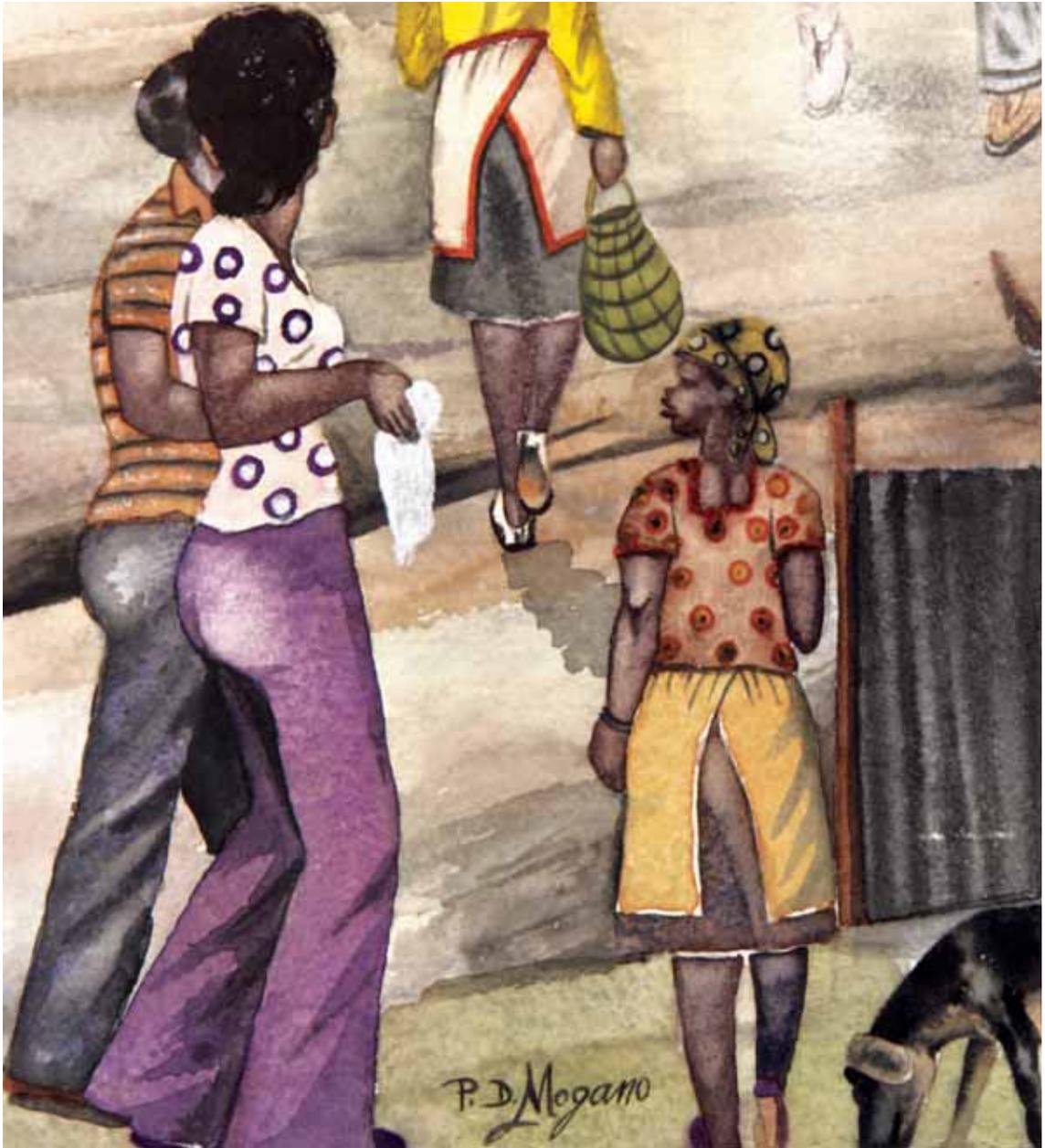
Established in 1912, Alexandra township, north of Johannesburg, is one of the oldest township settlements in South Africa. It is an enigma that has defied apartheid legislation despite the fact that numerous inhabitants were forcibly removed to various newly erected settlements. Alexandra, because of its proximity to the north of the city, has unofficially become the gateway to the city of Johannesburg for migrant workers from Limpopo and Mpumalanga, as well as Zimbabwe and beyond. Similarly, Cato Manor, also known as Mkhumbane, became the cultural hub of Durban townships. Among the townships affected by the forced removals was the legendary District Six in Cape Town. The inhabitants had freehold rights to their properties. The removals also reinforced the apartheid notion that urban townships were communities of temporary sojourners in the city, with their inhabitants' homes and roots in the rural areas.

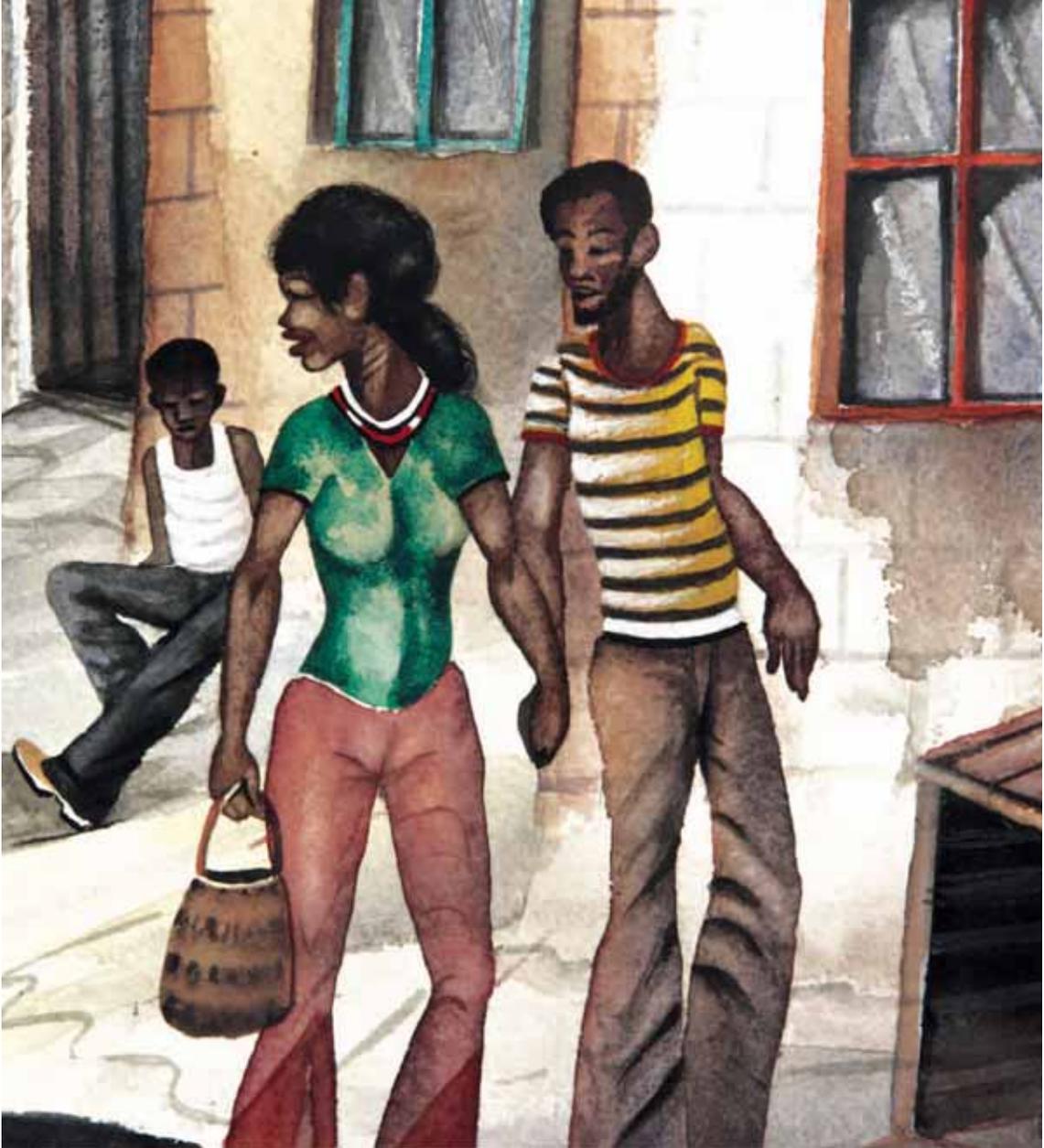
The painter Phoshoko David Mogano was born in the Pietersburg (now Polokwane) area, but sojourned in Alexandra township when he arrived in Johannesburg. Mogano received tuition from Cecil Skotnes and Sydney Kumalo, respectively, and his undated *22nd Avenue, Old Alexandra Township* appropriately captures the polyglot ramshackle cottages and smaller mud hovels. The composition, a bustling hive of people milling around the street and plumes of smoke spewing out of chimneys, was rendered long before the township became suffocated by the bizarre and surreal sprawl of high-rise hostel structures and residential flats that sit cheek by jowl with the shanty dwellings that sprout overnight.

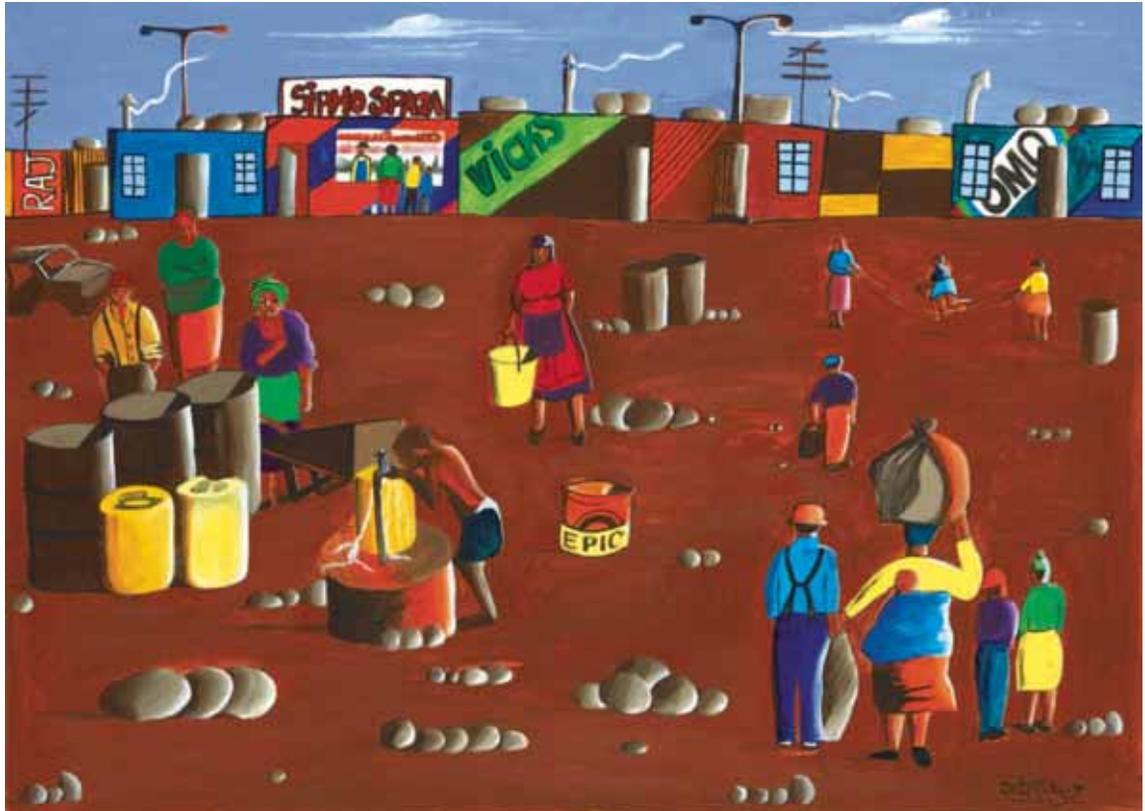
Cato Manor, like Sophiatown and District Six, brought together diverse racial groupings. When the forced removals took place in 1964, Trevor Makhoba was just eight years old. His *Umkhumbane* (1994, p.45) is a memorial to nostalgia and loss. The composition is dominated by the square-shaped building in the centre, which appears to be a public bathhouse, with ventilation slots around the building. In the foreground there are figures in a queue formation leading to the right of the building. In the background on a hilly horizon are rows of uniformly laid-out houses. Makhoba is from a relatively younger generation of Durban-based artists, whose fearless approach to serious issues is often embarrassing to the communities. The artist often explicitly portrays headline news stories, which shout negative messages about crime, HIV/Aids, witchcraft and sexual abuse.

Opposite and details overleaf:
Mogano, Phoshoko David (1932-2000)
22nd Avenue, Old Alexandra Township Undated
Watercolour on paper, 52.5 x 73 cm









Above:
Twala, David (b.1950)
Mandela Park 1999
 Acrylic on board, 49 x 69 cm

Opposite:
Makhoba, Trevor (b.1956)
Umkhumbane 1994
 Oil on canvas-covered board, 44.5 x 60 cm

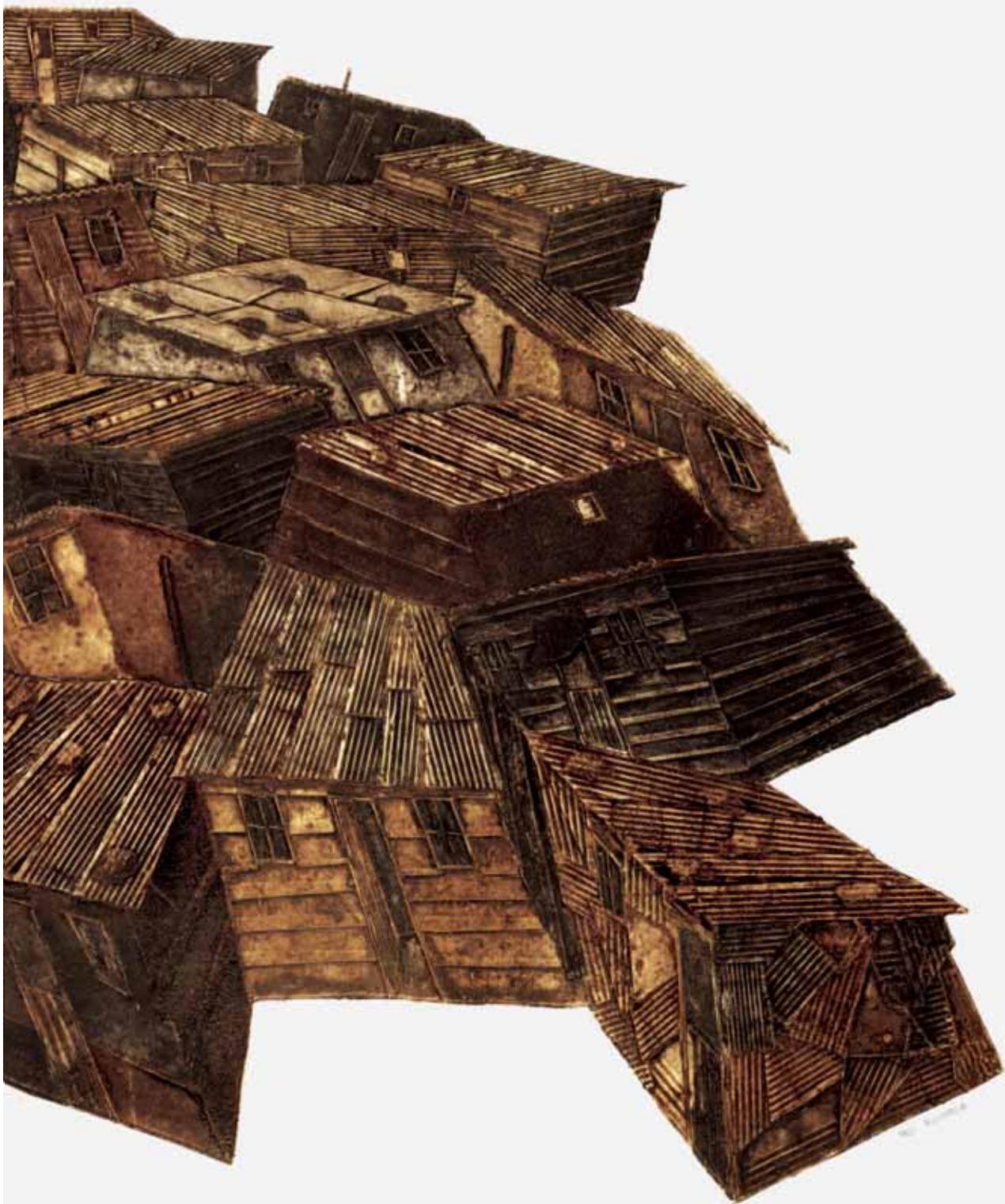
Overleaf:
Khumalo, Vusi (b.1951)
Ekuthuleni Informal Settlement Undated
 Mixed media intaglio print 6/10, 103 x 160.5 cm

David Twala's *Mandela Park* (1999), in contrast to the work of Trevor Makhoba, is a colour-drenched composition of primary colours whose overt stylisation even has the stones in the street arranged according to size. The figures from the top to the bottom of the canvas are also arranged in an orderly fashion. Twala's choice of title foregrounds the irony that the inhabitants of informal settlements, who are victims of forced removals and lack any basic services, name their settlements after popular struggle heroes: Joe Slovo, Chris Hanani, Winnie Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. Twala's *Mandela Park* appears to be a replica or composite of similar settlements in the Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.

Ekuthuleni Informal Settlement (undated) by Vusi Khumalo is a rendition of a settlement symbolically stylised by a claustrophobic proximity of dwellings, which resemble rusty shipping containers. Khumalo studied textile design and fine art in Sweden, and was responsible for setting up the Dakawa Art Centre, which was moved from Tanzania to Grahamstown, South Africa, when the African National Congress government came into power in 1994. **David Koloane**







George Pemba (1912-2001)

George Pemba worked hard to enter the art world. In 1928, when he was 16 years old, Pemba exhibited at the Feather Market Hall in Port Elizabeth, after submitting two pencil portraits to a local art competition and winning first prize. In an interview with Barry Feinberg, Pemba recalls: "This was the first time I appeared in the newspaper. It was also the first time I wore long pants, made of calico, and takkies."¹

In the same year his father, Titus, was killed in an accident while riding a motorbike. His death put excessive financial pressure on the Pemba family. The mother, Rebecca, struggled to make ends meet, and had to take a job as a domestic worker in a white suburb. After obtaining a school-leaving certificate in 1931, Pemba enrolled at the Lovedale College. Later that same year he had an acute attack of appendicitis that resulted in hospitalisation and an interruption to his studies. Recovering at Victoria Hospital in Lovedale, where his sister was training to become a nurse, Pemba was inspired to revive his drawing skills – learnt from his older brother, Timothy, who drew pictures of animals on the walls of the family home – and produced drawings of his fellow patients.

At Victoria Hospital he met a number of people who would become the pillars of his success as an artist. A matron at the hospital showed one of his works to Ethel Smythe, an artist teaching at the University College of Fort Hare. Impressed by Pemba's work, Smythe offered him a short period of tuition in watercolour painting. Pemba was also given access to Smythe's collection of art books, and became especially interested in the French Impressionists. Shortly thereafter his works were accepted for *Negro and Bantu Art*, an exhibition held in Port Elizabeth in 1931. Pemba drew praise even from the most conservative art lovers and was awarded both first and second prizes.

Pemba completed his studies at Lovedale College in 1935 and took up a teaching post at the Wesleyan Mission School in King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. Although he loved teaching, the salary was not sufficient to cover his family's basic needs, and Pemba found extra work as an illustrator at the Lovedale Press, which concentrated on publishing evangelical and educational material. Pemba illustrated a number of books published by Lovedale, including Henry Masila Ndawo's *Uholishwa* (1947).

Even before apartheid came of age in 1948, racial prejudice had been entrenched in South Africa. Prospective black students were barred from study at many white institutions. Reverend Robert Shepherd, a friend and mentor at Lovedale College, intervened on behalf of Pemba and approached Dr Alex Kerr, principal of the University College of Fort Hare, to raise tuition fees for the artist to further his studies. Dr Kerr got money from the Bantu Welfare Trust, whose purpose was to improve the lives of urban Africans and promote co-operation across the racial divide, and in 1937 Pemba was accepted as an external student for four months at Rhodes University. Pemba's work was entered into the May Esther Bedford Art Competition that same year and won first prize, ahead of runner-up Gerard Sekoto.

In the early 1940s Pemba spent a short time studying under Maurice van Essche in Cape Town, and also met Gerard Sekoto and John Mohl. While Sekoto and Mohl encouraged Pemba to become a full-time artist, he struggled to make ends meet through painting alone and always held other jobs to make a living. These included being a clerk for the Native Administration, running a general dealer's store, and teaching art to children. The year 1979 was an important one for Pemba. It not only marked the assumption of a full-time career as an artist, but was also the year in which he was awarded an honorary Master's degree from Fort Hare University.

Pemba's subjects include portraits and landscapes, drawn from historical events and his own life experiences. His paintings not only capture the individuality and details of Xhosa and Sotho traditions, but also different aspects of township life in the Eastern Cape. Made just after he became a full-time artist, *At the Hospital* (1980) reveals the authenticity of Pemba's style and his maturity as an artist. Drawing on his personal experience of convalescence in 1931, this painting depicts individuals waiting their turn in a hospital reception room. Balanced into a v-shape that focuses the viewer's attention on an open door, the men and women patients encapsulate an emotional range that is so characteristic of Pemba's ability to marry human emotions and responses with the circumstances and particularities of social settings. **Prince Dube**

Opposite:
Pemba, George Milwa Mnyaluza (1912-2001)
At the Hospital 1980
Oil on masonite, 40 x 54.5 cm