

Above:  
**Nxumalo, Vusumuzi Derrick** (b.1963)  
*Tugela Mountain View* 1992  
 Silkscreen on paper 7/30, 78 x 60 cm

Opposite:  
**Sebidi, Helen Mmakgabo Mmapula** (b.1943)  
*Don't let it go* 1991  
 Silkscreen on paper 6/14, 59.5 x 85 cm

On the other hand, Hodgins has executed his work using a visual expression that is more obviously influenced by modernist conventions. Though very subtle, Hodgins still has recognisable anthropomorphic gestures in his work. The dominant characteristic in *Encounter* is a daring colour scheme with contrasting warm and cool tones, which are rendered in an intensely coded fashion. This device is also apparent in Sebidi's *Don't let it go* (1991). However, in rendering her figurative vocabulary, she has made use of a number of distortions.

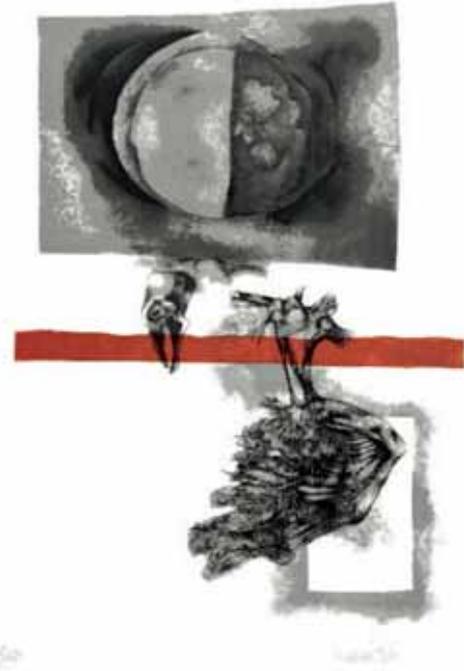
In both Nxumalo's *Tugela Mountain View* (1992) and Jali's *View from the Caversham Press* (1994), a somewhat naturalistic portrayal of landscape scenery has been employed. The palette consists of a very well-balanced combination of warm and cool colours. In both works the artists have paid immense attention to detail, especially in their depictions of foliage. The harmonious combination of detail and colour rendered in each of these two works has a therapeutic effect on the viewer.

**Themba Shibase**





Left:  
**Mbatha, Eric** (b.1948)  
*Walking and Talking* 1992  
 Lithograph print 7/35, 50 x 34 cm



Right:  
**Legae, Ezrom Kgobokanyo Sebata** (1938-1999)  
*Quarter to Twelve Implosion* 1986  
 Silkscreen on hand-made paper 69/100, 53,5 x 38 cm

Opposite:  
**Hodgins, Robert** (b.1920)  
*Encounter* 1986  
 Silkscreen on paper 69/100, 45 x 60 cm



Piet Mondrian

Two Figures 1930

## David Goldblatt (b.1930)

A pile of rocks in a seemingly endless, emptied-out terrain of thorny scrubland, depopulated and vast. There is something desperate about the image. Yet, in this unassuming pile of rocks, there is also a relic of human effort, perhaps even love. One rock painstakingly lifted and placed upon the pile of other rocks beneath the unforgiving sun. The desire to mark the land with some evidence of a life. Were it not for a particular pair of eyes, this intriguing structure could easily have disappeared into the background, camouflaged by an eternity of sameness. But it is just the kind of thing that would capture the imagination of David Goldblatt, stopping him in his well-worn tracks.

When Goldblatt, who has been documenting the changing political landscape of South Africa for more than five decades, began photographing in post-apartheid South Africa, he set himself the task of going to every intersection of latitude and longitude and finding a subject within 500 metres of that point. "I had to find a subject within that space and this was one of them," he says.<sup>1</sup> "It was a cold, rainy day in the Karoo and I was very grateful when I found it. At first I thought it was a cairn, perhaps marking an old survey point, but an African man who came into the Goodman Gallery one day said it was probably a grave. It's a very desolate place and it's very likely that it is a grave, but there was nothing around it to indicate that."

This image, along with the other three Goldblatt photographs in the South African Reserve Bank Art Collection, was published in a book called *Intersections* (2005), the first publication of Goldblatt's personal colour work and explorations of post-apartheid South Africa. The cairn/grave image forms part of a series of photographs of modest, makeshift personal memorials or markings of human passage – an extension of the public monuments that formed an integral part of his *Structures* series. "I am awed by the randomness and absoluteness of these intersections of living beings with death and the land," says Goldblatt. "And I am moved by the need of people somehow to mark the connection of their loss with that place and the ineffable."

The cairn/grave image was photographed in the Karoo; the image of Anna Boois with her birthday cake (p.105) was taken in Namaqualand, Northern Cape; and the ruined town in Dithakong (p.123) was photographed in the North West Province. Despite these geographic distances, all three images seem to have arisen from tough, unrelenting territory, where human survival is a triumph in itself. In response to why he is drawn to such austere and ostensibly bleak landscapes, Goldblatt turns to the words of one of his frequently acknowledged literary influences, Herman Charles Bosman, who wrote in *A Cask of Jerepigo: Sketches and Essays* (1964):

About the *vlaktes* [plains] there is no spirit of wanton invitingness. But there is a clinging bitterness and straightbrowed austerity; a stone, sterile bosom that holds out no beguilement. And when the message of these harsh places of the earth has got into your blood, and the mystery of things comes to you unrefined, and not wrought into a pattern, then it is only with an effort, and at first but reluctantly, that you can bring your soul to an acceptance of beauty that has got resilience in it.<sup>2</sup>

Goldblatt's attraction to "these harsh places" might also have something to do with the nature of the tough mining town in which he grew up. He was born in Randfontein, west of Johannesburg in 1930, the third son of Eli Goldblatt and Olga Light who both came to South Africa as children with their parents, to escape the persecution of the Lithuanian Jewish communities in the 1890s. He started taking photographs while at Krugersdorp High School and after matriculation in 1948 set out to become a magazine photographer. But the field was almost unknown in South Africa at that time. "For a year I *sukkeled* [struggled]," he says. "Then I became extremely discouraged and went to work in my father's men's outfitting shop in Randfontein." In 1962 his father died and he sold the family business.

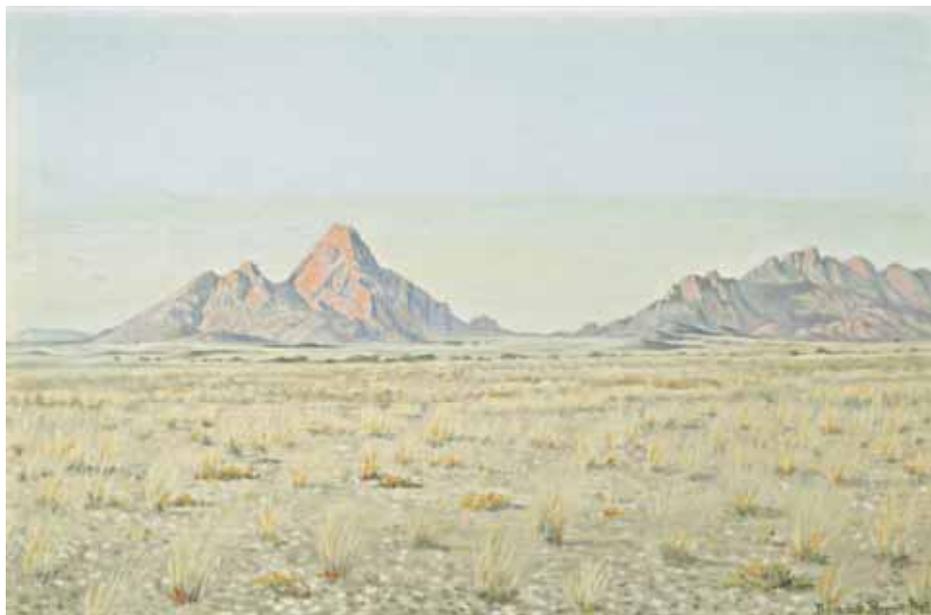
Since September 1963 he has devoted all his time to photography. "To me, the greatest thing was the sense of freedom when I sold the shop. I've never been religious, but I still offer up a *bracha* [blessing] to say, 'Thanks for this liberty'." In 1998 he was the first South African to be given a one-person exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, when photographs from the essay *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then*, were shown. His retrospective exhibition, *David Goldblatt Fifty-one Years*, co-curated by Corinne Diserens and Okwui Enwezor, has been seen in New York, Barcelona, Rotterdam, Lisbon, Oxford, Brussels, Munich and Johannesburg. In 2006 Goldblatt was announced winner of the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography. **Alexandra Dodd**

Opposite:  
Goldblatt, David (b.1930)  
*A cairn, possibly a grave, Leeuwenvalley, Moordenaar's  
Karoo, Western Cape. 24 April 2002*  
Archival pigment ink on cotton paper 1/6, 98 x 123.5 cm



Opposite:  
Jentsch, Adolph Stephen Friedrich (1888-1977)  
*SWA Landscape* 1946  
Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 47.5 cm





### *Namib landscapes*

Representation of Bushveld scenes often includes the compositional placement and prominence of indigenous thorn trees to give a sense of region and locale. Similarly, depictions of Namibian desertscape rely on rock formations, dunes and the temporality of human settlement to identify the particularities of its geographies. Adolph Jentsch was born in Dresden, Germany in 1888. During World War II he travelled extensively in what was then South West Africa (SWA), eventually settling there, and becoming a well-known painter of the country's desert landscapes. He established a vision and style that had many followers in the likes of Josua Nell and Harold Voigt. Jentsch's *SWA Landscape* (1946), a close-up of a desert outcrop, utilises a limited colour palette to create an impressionistic rendering of light and shade. Jentsch's generic title and close-up view are markedly different from Banie van der Merwe's wider view and highly specific caption that details the time of day, names of mountains, closest road and country.

Born in Grahamstown in 1903, Van der Merwe studied part time at Rhodes University, and then settled in SWA/Namibia in 1925. From the period after World War II until the mid-1960s, he was an art teacher at various Windhoek schools. Rendered in a palette not dissimilar to Jentsch, Van der Merwe's narrow band of mountains runs through the centre of the canvas and is framed at the top and bottom by clear sky and scrubland. Where Jentsch and Van der Merwe's landscapes were painted during the period of South Africa's occupation of SWA/Namibia, Josua Nell's landscape was painted shortly after Namibia's independence. Nell was born in Keetmanshoop, SWA/Namibia in 1935 and completed a Diploma in Fine Arts at Rhodes University in the late 1950s. He went on to become a long-serving fine arts lecturer at the same university, and also travelled extensively in his country of birth. Nell's *Kaokoveld Landscape* (1993), while a distant view, pays particular attention to the topographical detail of the seamless rock formation.

Above:  
**Van der Merwe, Banie** (1903-1972)  
*Aandstemming: Groot Spitzkoppe en Pandokberge, Namib, op Hertiesbaai – Usakos Pad, SWA* 1968  
 Oil on canvas-covered board, 51 x 76.5 cm

Opposite:  
**Nell, Josua Andries** (b.1935)  
*Kaokoveld Landscape* 1993  
 Oil on canvas, 91 x 127 cm





Left:  
**Sumner, Maud Eyston** (1902-1985)  
*Pipeline, SWA* Undated  
 Oil on canvas, 89 x 130 cm

Right:  
**Alexander, Keith Savel** (1946-1998)  
*Kolmanskop Sub-manager's House* 1985  
 Oil on canvas, 61 x 91.5 cm

Opposite and detail overleaf:  
**Voigt, Harold Frederick** (b.1939)  
*SWA Landscape* 1987  
 Mixed media on canvas, 91 x 121.5 cm

Born in Sinoia, Rhodesia in 1946, Keith Alexander moved to South Africa in 1965, where he completed a fine arts degree at the University of Natal. Having majored in sculpture, Alexander switched to painting in 1974, producing landscapes and wildlife scenes in oil and acrylic. He repeatedly visited SWA/Namibia in the early 1980s, during the height of the border war that South Africa waged against the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the Angolan army. *Kolmanskop Sub-manager's House* (1985), like a number of his super-realist representations of arid landscapes, has as its subject the abandoned remains of human presence and habitation. Alexander's realism is often as much imagined as it is documentary, and his focus on the grandeur of a house at sea in the shifting dune sands accentuates the vulnerability of human settlements in the desert.

This same sense of transience is captured in Maud Sumner's undated *Pipeline, SWA*, where the drum pipeline and prefabricated housing dominate the bottom half of the painting. Born in Johannesburg in 1902, Sumner studied at Oxford University as well as at various academies and studios in Paris. After World War II she based herself mostly in Paris until her return to South Africa in the late 1970s. Sumner travelled to Israel in the early 1950s and visited SWA/Namibia in 1965. *Pipeline, SWA* is probably from her SWA/Namibian series.

In stark contrast to Alexander's rich architectural detail, and to a lesser extent Sumner's figurative rendition of repetitive block housing, Harold Voigt's *SWA Landscape* (1987) is an abstraction of a geography already simplified by a harsh climate. Born in Johannesburg in 1939, Voigt studied painting under Bill Ainslie. His cerebral abstractions of African scenery often have cement, marble dust and sand incorporated into the paintwork. **Rory Bester**