

ON BEING AN ART DEALER – OBSERVATIONS OVER TIME –
THE VICISSITUDES OF RUNNING A GALLERY



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During 1959 to 1961, my mother was a partner of the [Queen's Hall Art Gallery](#), Johannesburg. The building's owner was Rabbi Merkin who made the premises available rent-free, provided transport and his driver when needed. [Fred Schimmel](#) helped to put up walls and lights. I used to spend most of my luncheon time at the gallery, but was not involved at all in the gallery, except attending some of the openings and meeting a few of the artists or clients. Jeremy Taylor just back from abroad would entertain us informally occasionally, practising his “Ag Pleeze Deddy”, and Pino Cattaneo used the small office to paint. The gallery had to close in early 1961 as Rabbi Merkin wanted to use the gallery space for a restaurant to make money – the upstairs floor was used by PACT's ballet group for a while.

Gallery 101 got its name at the suggestion of [Zandberg Jansen](#) over a cup of coffee at the [Chesa Coffee Bar](#) in Johannesburg - “101” sounded much better than “103” which was the number of the second room to be occupied by the Gallery on the first floor of Rand Central, a building just completed and owned by Cyril Hofman. Next door to the Gallery's premises was the Head Office of the Progressive Party with constant to and fro by all PP leaders. Zandberg Jansen promised that he would get Adolph Jentsch for the opening exhibition, but somehow this did not materialise. Thus it was a show by [Jan Buys](#).

Irma Stern who at that time was on a painting trip in Spain, had made a firm written commitment to hold an exhibition of her new paintings at the recently opened Gallery 101, Johannesburg, during 1961, on her return from Spain. However, unbeknown to the gallery, she had meanwhile made other arrangements with the Adler Fielding Galleries in Johannesburg. Gallery 101 started legal proceedings against the gallery and the artist, however in view of impending legal implications, it was agreed by all parties involved that Gallery 101 would be showing a retrospective exhibition of 101 original graphics during 1962, this being [Irma Stern's](#) 100th solo show, and that the show at the Adler Fielding Galleries could proceed. In retrospect, this was the best venue to show the artist's powerful work! When I went to the opening of Irma's show at the new Adler Fielding Galleries on 1st November, 1961, Aubrey introduced me to her as he did with all visitors – Irma quite vehemently asked me to leave her show! I did and came back another quieter day to view the exhibition when she wasn't around.

[Armando Baldinelli](#) invited us many times to his home and to meet his friends. One particular evening I remember specifically in the early 1960s was when Dr Joel Cohen, well-known collector, showed all present his latest discovery from the USA, the IUD “Lippes loop”; he thought he needed to share his excitement as if we had been his medical students!

I personally met [John Schlesinger](#) a few times when he came to Gallery 101 in the early 60s to look around or purchase some art from us. I also met him once at Armando Baldinelli who often had a gathering of friends in his home. John was then accompanied by tall P.R.C. - quite a contrast in sizes!

In early 1962, through a chance meeting in Johannesburg with the first wife of Tom Oerder - the son of [Frans Oerder](#) - I was introduced to the Oerder family in Pretoria. There were enough works belonging to Tom and his sons to choose from so that we could arrange two big memorial exhibitions in 1963 and 1964! A lot of the unframed drawings and some Dutch master etchings and Japanese woodcuts from Frans Oerder’s Estate were just lying in a pile on the floor where one of the sons kept his motorbike!

During 1962, my mother and I called one day at Zandberg Jansen at his home in Dawnview, Germiston as we had been authorized to collect a painting by an artist from SWA, Fritz Krampe, which had belonged to the Administrator of SWA and had been illustrated by Zandberg in some publication. The trouble was that he failed to return the painting in spite of many requests. We took delivery of this work and at the same time took possession of a small work by Elsa Dziomba he had not yet returned and which was conveniently on his desk!

In June, 1962, [Gerda von Maltitz](#) exhibited her watercolours at Gallery 101. Zandberg Jansen did a review on this show for one of the Johannesburg newspapers. The headline was “Not worth reviewing”; this brought a great number of visitors to the gallery, the best publicity to bring the crowds!

I often visited Taffy Whippman in his Eloff Street framing shop with downstairs gallery – he had his studio at the back on street level where he used to offer a cup of coffee to his visitors, while painting. I saw him once making out of a canvas he had painted and which did not satisfy him 2 paintings by cutting the appropriate parts off the original!

In 1963, Gallery 101 organised [“The Gallery 101 – U.A.T. Competition”](#) – all names of the artists who entered a work to be judged had been covered up by the gallery as the works were to be judged on merit, not according to who made it. The judges were Prof. M. Bokhorst, Esmé Berman, Monty Sack, The Hon. Justice V.G. Hiemstra and Zandberg Jansen. When all was judged, Esmé asked me why we had covered the name; it was obvious that the winning entry was by Sydney Kumalo! Imagine everybody’s surprise - the artist was a relatively unknown person, Johannes Petro van der Walt.

Around 1963, my Mother and I visited Pino and Hermine Cattaneo at their home – Hermine who did very sensitive paintings on wax and puppets, was rather dramatic in her reactions – I could hardly suppress a discreet smile at some stage, Hermine blew up and felt I had insulted her, and we were asked to leave. That was it.

Around 1964 Dr. K. Helmut Silberberg from CapeTown whom I had met earlier in his gallery in Martin Melck House, was visiting us in Johannesburg – I remember my mother asking him if he wouldn’t like to open the forthcoming [Kenneth Bakker](#) show at Gallery 101 – he replied

“don’t you know I am the most hated dealer in South Africa” and obviously turned it down. The show was opened by the Hon. Dr. William Nicol instead.

Though I visited Alexis Preller with my mother at his home “Bombeya” below the Hartebeespoortdam two or three times and he often came to visit us at Gallery 101, we never managed to have an exhibition of his. Over the years, we only managed to handle a few of his works, pity!

Herbert Coetzee was having an exhibition at Gallery 101 in August, 1965. There was already a big crowd at the gallery, but neither paintings nor the artist were to be seen. We had to ask the visitors to be patient, Herbert had phoned us not long before that he was stuck with his car on the way to Johannesburg and would try his best to arrive not too late! I have never had this experience before; we finally were hanging the show with all the opening night visitors present!

During the mid-1960s, openings at Gallery 101 were a great event, society ladies would regularly be photographed for the society pages in the press. One particular lady – Mrs Al. - always made sure that she was in the picture almost every time – the press had enough after a while; as a result there were no more press photographers attending such openings!

During 1965 to 1970, the time Gallery 101 handled the works by [Gordon Vorster](#), we went many times to his farm at the Juskei and Crocodile River junction and enjoyed his company and the many grill parties with his friends like Emil Nofal, Len Lindeque and Jans Rautenbach, and the free-flowing semi-sweet Lieberstein! Two farms away – at Ivivi - lived [Johan van Heerden](#) with his French wife Jacqueline, a weaver.

Gordon Vorster joined the Gallery 101 stable when he badly needed money for his stone-crushing works in the area; his machinery had collapsed and needed to be fixed. I remember him driving us over the land to show us this place and the surrounding area of Riverside Estates in his old battered Willys Jeep which had no brakes, very scary! This area embracing 40 small holdings became the [Oori Private Nature Reserve](#) over time.

Gordon Vorster had a good understanding of how other painters did their works – once when we visited him at his home, as a challenge, he produced paintings in the style of Walter Battiss and others, all within 20' – they really looked as if done by those artists. Gordon did not apply a signature, but I wonder what he did with them in the end! At some other time, he painted works under two other names, in their own individual style; one style was signed “Inyoni”, the other style he signed “Clack”, his mother's maiden name. Gallery 101 carried a few of these paintings on consignment, none sold and Gordon took them back.

I remember Gordon once having a big bonfire on his farm, burning a pile of his drawings and paintings he did not like anymore! I also remember a very wide painting on board of his which was unresolved. The solution was to cut it in two parts in the proportion 1:2 and sell each part duly signed by Gordon!

Middle of 1966, my Mother and I drove to the Eastern Transvaal to visit the Ruth Everard-Haden family on their farm in Bonnefoi near Carolina to get some works and discuss an exhibition – we stayed overnight in a caravan for visitors near their main house. Unfortunately, they had committed themselves to a big exhibition at the Adler Fielding Galleries, Johannesburg, which was to open in February, 1967, without mentioning this to us before visiting them. Alas, we returned to Johannesburg empty-handed.

In 1966, getting works by [Andrew Murray](#) together for his show at Gallery 101, I had collected 3 paintings but left them overnight in my car parked in the street in Hillbrow where I

was living, properly hidden from sight, yet in the morning they were gone, someone had broken into the boot – the paintings were never to be found again!

Around 1967, Dunhill provided free cigarettes on opening days, graciously presented by two models, brought to the gallery by Colin Sayers in Dunhill's special Rolls Royce. By the early 70s, only cigarettes were dropped off by him for selected openings.

For a very short period during the mid-60s, Ricard had a few promotions of their aperitif at openings of Gallery 101.

[Mslaba DUMILE-Feni](#) had two powerful shows with Gallery 101 in 1966 and 1967. He used to bring works to the gallery on consignment, the gallery would advance whenever he needed some cash on account of future sales and Dumile would sign an IOU receipt. One day in 1967, Brother Roger, CRR, came with Dumile and challenged us by stating categorically that Dumile had never signed these slips, that they were fake signatures. Dumile never made a remark, but both Brother Roger and Dumile were asked to leave and never to come back. That was the end of Gallery 101 and Dumile who then moved on to Bill Ainslie's centre and [collected his remaining works](#). And yet, years later Dumile phoned me from London and told me he was home-sick and wanted to come back to South Africa – that was beyond our control.

Sometimes, being an employer can be dangerous: we employed during the mid-60s for a short time the wife of a well-known Afrikaans architect, A.H. Unbeknown to us before she had drug problems and could not be retained to deal with clients, so I gave her the sack a few days after she had started work. Her husband promptly came to the gallery, shouted abuse at me and gave me a good slap in the face! I left it at that as he was a bully.

I remember two projected exhibitions I had to cancel or postpone at the last minute. One of them was about Alice Goldin and her proposed second show at Gallery 101 for 1967. I visited her in her studio in Pretoria to select the works, was totally taken aback and on the spot told her I could not show these. She never showed again with Gallery 101! The second artist was Judith Mason

In 1967, my wife-to-be before I knew her, visited a [Esias Bosch](#) exhibition in Gallery 101's downstairs gallery with a friend and was asked by a Swiss grey-haired gallery assistant to leave, as such an exhibition was definitely not for students - the snacks looked too tempting! A year later, the same assistant caught a staff member from Soweto trying to walk out looking rather pregnant – she had tried to steal a Mizzi creation in suede and was as a result promptly sacked.

Gallery 101's main driver in the late 60s was Green Kgope, he owned a trading store near Brits. He used to "borrow" the gallery truck from the garage over the week-ends and to use it as a taxi to Swaziland; one Monday there was no truck in the garage as he had had an accident – he was dismissed.

Another of Gallery 101's drivers, Linton, was one day found by my mother at a street corner selling Mizzi suede berets which were stocked by Gallery 101's street-level gallery. He was promptly dismissed by her.

Gallery 101 purchased three copies of [Walter Battiss](#)' bound „Nesos“, 1968, in an edition of 25, for their stock. My mother proceeded in cutting up one of the bound books and selling the individual serigraphs individually – it was unheard of to do such a thing!

In July 1970, I met Douglas Portway over lunch to discuss us handling his works. Unbeknown to me he had already made arrangements to show his paintings at the Lidchi Gallery – that very morning, on the way to Gallery 101, my wife popped in at the [Lidchi Art Gallery](#) and was shown by Harold Jeppe - who did not know my wife at that time - the paintings he was going to exhibit in September on a group exhibition!

I would have loved to have shown Douglas with his superb abstract paintings, but he was tied to Harold Jeppe and then moved to Linda Goodman's gallery when Jeppe left the Lidchi gallery to work for her; Linda kept the arrangement even after Harold had been given a one-way ticket end of 1971!

On the 1971 show by Willy at the Gallery 101 Hollard Street Branch, a painting, no. 26, was sold twice at the opening, as the first sale by another staff member had not been marked with a red sticker! The next day, there were two invoices for the same picture, so the second purchaser had to be phoned with many regrets offered!

Once we had been invited to a dinner at the Swiss Embassy in Pretoria. The gallerist Linda Goodman was seated next to us, she felt that it was not normal that two dealers were sitting side by side; also that she was Mrs Givon, not Goodman, as labelled on the guest cards!

In 1971, Caroline who was helping at the Gallery 101 Hollard Street Branch was approached by Ian Keogan for information regarding a painting by Maud Sumner he had. She referred him to Mr Haenggi at the main branch. The next day, Ian came for a cup of coffee at the Standard Bank gallery and said that Mr. Haenggi was a very rude man, as he had been cut short on the phone. Caroline invited him to our next opening a week later when she introduced him to "meet my husband, Mr. Haenggi"! From that day on, there was a great friendship between us all. Ian later joined the Everard Read Gallery.

During 1972, [Frank Horley](#) was our manager at the Gallery 101 Hollard Street Branch. Mr Harry Oppenheimer, whom he did not know as yet, purchased a work through him. Frank wrote out the invoice and asked the client for his name and address! I am sure this was the first time HFO had managed to go through galleries unrecognised. A few years later, amazingly, Frank was commissioned by Nicky and Strilly Oppenheimer to paint a mural interpreting Tolkien's Lord of the Rings for their new bathroom at Little Brenthurst which took 5 years; [Stephanie Watson](#) had lost out on this commission; her paintings were hard edge.

One of the briefest opening speeches at an exhibition held at Gallery 101 was by a family friend of [Daniel Miedzinski](#), a shy Professor M. who only said "I do not know why I have been asked by Daniel to open this show as I do not know anything about art; I hereby declare the show open"!

[Moses Bee](#), Gallery 101's one in-house framer, died in May, 1973 on the job in the gallery's framing department on the 2nd floor, Rand Central. A doctor was called, but it was too late. He had been working previously at the Adler Fielding Galleries. We found out he was privately doing framing for artists from Soweto, using the gallery's framing stock and pocketing the money for his own account!

In about 1973, a potential client walked into Gallery 21 in Hyde Park Johannesburg and stopped in front of a painting by [Larry Scully](#); she asked the manageress if we had any works by the artist who was then very fashionable to have in one's collection. She was shown around the gallery and lead back to the very work she had just seen without recognizing the artist – the client promptly bought it.

In January, 1974, we showed 23 graphics by Picasso in our Gallery 21, Hyde Park, including some from the 347 Series. Someone complained to the authorities that we were showing pornography, two inspectors called on the Goodman Gallery mistakenly, Linda phoned us to warn us that they were on the way. I had to draw their attention to the beauty of the lines and the technique and explain that they were erotic art works, not pornography. They left and we had no further trouble! We had 347:174 in our personal collection at home, but unfortunately had to sell it at the time we left SA.

In 1974 our Gallery 21 was an exhibitor at the [Art5'74 Basel](#), the *first SA gallery* to show their South African artists at this Fair. Not only did we have a problem getting all the art works sent from Johannesburg to Basel in time – the box had been delivered to Milano in Italy by error and after intensive research finally got to Basel – but we had problems on the last day. The German gallery which had a booth directly opposite Gallery 21 had already left when we arrived to pack our art works early in the morning, so had our special graphic box containing all our Picasso etchings, [Edition 21 lithos](#) and etchings from [Dirk Meerkotter](#) disappeared from our stand! Luckily on arrival we had insured all the art works exhibited in Basel, so that was a quick sale to unknown, but very upsetting.

Gallery 21 showed again at the following fair, the [Art6'75 Basel](#). The works were then sent on to our new [Gallery 21 in London](#).

In 1976, after closing our Gallery 21 London operations, our London manageress Priska Aves was offered a free trip to South Africa as a final thank you to see the South African art set-up. Our African driver Steven met her at [Jan Smuts Airport](#) as it was known then; expecting a hand-shake he was greeted with a hug and kiss, very inappropriately! Steven refused to take her to the airport when she had to leave again.

In mid-1980, Joe Maseko came to our Gallery 21 and offered to do any painting for us in any style – he then showed us some of his very contemporary works quite unlike what we had seen previously of his – we told him once he had made up his mind on what direction he was going to decide to do, we'd think about it – in any case we did not carry his work.

[Lucas Seage](#), when he brought his large "Found Object" bed construction to our gallery to be submitted as one of the entries to The Haenggi Foundation National Art Competition sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 1981, stated as he arrived that he was sure this would be the prize-winning entry, and it was indeed!

In 1981, shortly after two African visitors had walked out of Gallery 21, I noticed one larger sculpture by Lucas Sithole that had been placed near the exit, was missing. The work recorded on <http://www.sithole.com/SITHOLE-LS7908.htm> however was well-documented and it was soon retrieved.....

In 1981, the Afrikaans sculptor [Hennie Potgieter](#) was most upset that he had received my "20th Arts Anniversary - a personal recollection" circular letter, returned it with the note "what a cheek sending me all this rubbish after you told me years ago you had no room for my sort of sculptures" – his style just did not fit in with our new image at Gallery 21, unlike Gallery 101.

General comments

Everybody was welcome to our exhibition openings, right since 1961 – drinks and snacks were always served, there were no restrictions from our side in spite of the prevailing laws of the country!

Invitations were also sent to the main African art centres and leading African artists, but because of transport difficulties at night, few artists attended exhibitions during the openings and rather visited us during the day.

One could go on and on – there were the usual dud cheques, goods sent to clients to be viewed in their home and not coming back, works sent to private homes over week-ends for selection and all coming back after the party, or post-dated cheques issued that were never met as the client had left for Europe, or valuable smaller works disappearing from the gallery without trace.....besides problems relating to banks or financiers withdrawing their support unexpectedly in July, 1976, the Government unexpectedly increasing taxes on imported art works and many more problems!

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For a view of the various premises 1961 to 1995 go to:

[Gallery 101 Rand Central Johannesburg](#)

[Gallery 21 Johannesburg](#)

[Gallery 21 London](#)

Fernand F. Haenggi



Photographed by Kurt Schlesinger, Johannesburg 1962

ART ARCHIVES SOUTH AFRICA