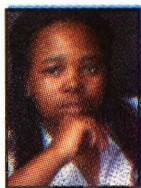


Fresh look at Africa's artists and their history



Books: Great African Artists series

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Publisher: Awareness Publishing

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Art lovers will agree with me that South Africa has produced great and talented visual artists who are under-represented in the history of art.

But that is about to change. Danve Lee has realised that the rich culture of local visual artists needs to be told. Without publications that tell the stories of our own artists they will never get any worthwhile recognition.

A recently published new series of books called *Great African Artists* covers the life of some of the most visual artists in this country. In this series, Lee's clear point and logical style offers the reader deep insight into artists' lives.

In addition, the short profiles have a selection of illustrations of work by the artists and as one sifts through this group of works, one discovers a strong and consistent argument about race relations, religion, traditions and apartheid.

The series of books feature profiles of brilliant artists such as Bonnie Natshalintshali, Noria Mabasa, George Pemba, Peter Clark, Willie Bester, Dumile Feni, Dan Rakgoathe and William Kentridge.

The artists have proved themselves to be

important talents and have contributed to the development of the arts as well as the struggle in South Africa.

The effects of slavery, colonialism and apartheid over which Africans triumphed seem to have left many of our artists scarred. Apartheid denied many artists freedom of expression. At that time most artists were not allowed to exhibit their work in galleries.

Artists such as Feni had to leave the country in search of freedom.

Feni specialised in fine art (drawings using ink and pencil), sculpture (bronze) and print-making to speak his mind. He went to France where he struggled to find his own space and understanding of the system. Some of his works exhibited at the Johannesburg Art Gallery last year

express his sorrow and anger. He died before he saw the freedom he fought for.

The KwaZulu-Natal born artist Ntshalintshali, who died in 1998, was one of the best ceramic artists. What was so striking about this artist's work was the strong influence of the Zulu culture.

Peter Clarke is another talented person who was born in the Western Cape. In spite of apartheid he followed his dreams while finding fame in the art world.

Painting with oils, doing water colours and linocut he spoke his mind about social ills in this country. He has his own unique style of painting landscapes and seascapes, inspired by the sea and mountains in the Cape peninsula.

Bester was a sculptor of note. The book acknowledges the artist's skill and showcases his versatility. He loved metal sculpture and collages using this medium to tell the lives of black people in townships.

This collection is a must-have for those interested in the history of the country's art and artists.

It's very accessible, making it a great teaching resource.

