

Mr. Cairns

NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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WASHINGTON, July 30: David E. Finley, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced the opening of an exhibition of South African contemporary art in the National Gallery on July 31. The exhibition, which will continue through Labor Day, is sponsored by the Government of the Union of South Africa, and was selected by the Union Department of Education in collaboration with the South African Association of Arts. The exhibition opened at the Tate Gallery during the autumn of 1948, and was shown in Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, and Ottawa.

In preparing the exhibition, the South African Selection Committee considered more than 1,000 works and eventually chose 145 pictures and sculptures, all from private collections in South Africa. Forty-three painters and ten sculptors are represented. Twelve of the painters and three of the sculptors are women; one artist, Gerard Sekoto, is a Bantu (Native African), self-taught, now studying in Paris.



As background and introduction to the contemporary works, the exhibition contains 19 pictures of historical value. This group includes one picture of particular interest, "Table Bay, 1720" by Kirkhall, which once hung in the offices of the British East India Company. Others depict early scenes of Table Bay and Cape Town, historical episodes, character studies, hunting, war, farming and other topics of early South African interest, dating from about 1850 to 1902.

The contemporary section of the exhibition consists of paintings in oil, water color, pen and wash, gouache and tempera, as well as drawings in pen, pencil and charcoal. Also included are 25 pieces of sculpture, consisting of wood carvings, bronzes, stone and marble. As described in the catalogue, the exhibition covers many phases of South African life. There is the characteristic "tawny aridity of the winter", as shown by Pierneef's brush; the "ferment and heat of the tropics", portrayed by Irma Stern; the provocative individuality of the works of Walter Battiss, a well-known authority on Bushman paintings and the author of several books on the subject; and the simple dignity of the urban life of his people, expressed in the works of Sekoto.