



**NATIONAL GALLERY
OF ZIMBABWE**

**Kingsley Sambo and Vincent Van Gogh:
Afro-German Expressionism at the Rhodes National Gallery, 1957-1977**

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Abstract

It is a peculiar fact that should one delve into the pre-history and early days of modern black Zimbabwean art, one will find a great deal of information about modern art history itself, little known stories of considerable significance such as the story of Vincent Van Gogh, Kingsley Sambo and Rhodesian Afro-German Expressionism. Moreover, a number of specimens of this tradition were acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1963. For contemporary African art, this acceptance into the inner sanctum of modern art remains an unprecedented act of recognition.

**Introduction:
Hiding in the Light**

According to the late Thomas Mukarobgwa, the Workshop School painters who had worked at the Rhodes National Gallery in the late 1950's and 1960's, they had all studied modern art contrary to accepted wisdom. In fact, the Director, Frank McEwen was so passionate about the modern art on display in the National Gallery during those years that he led them from work to work expounding upon why they were so important, why they were "good" and what the painters were trying to achieve through the use of structure, color and brush stroke (see Kasfir 1999:71).

McEwen's official story was very different. He claimed that he had begun by simply supplying art materials to the gallery attendants, and any other artists who wanted to paint at the gallery, and that this simple act had led to the spontaneous emergence of a new form of "Afro-German expressionism". As he wrote: "Firstly I gave painting material to my African gallery attendants. The results were astonishing. An Afro-German expressionism was born -- a reverse process . . . (1991:3). The first of these painters included Kingsley Sambo, Joseph Ndandarika and Thomas Mukarobgwa who are the best known of these painters. Others were Lucas Ndandarika, Christopher Chabuka and Charles Fernando.

Contrary to McEwen's claim that all these men had begun by painting in a child-like manner, they all had painted in widely varying styles prior to turning "mysteriously" to a diverse form of Afro-German Expressionism, in his view closest to Kochoska though in retrospect closer,

in general, to Van Gogh at least in Sambo's case. Mukarobgwa was the exception in that his earliest paintings were indeed child-like, then executed in classic Nyarutsetso style and later evolved into a "child-like" form of expressionism.ⁱ In contrast, it was Joseph Ndandarika who was perhaps the most adept painter as Barr himself noted. Fortunately, Ndandarika's accomplished use of expressionistic/impressionistic technique can be seen in the flair with which he executed the Nyanga landscapes and tryptichs reproduced in Timothy McCloughlin's article "Zimbabwean Landscapes and Cityscapes: Some Examples from Zimbabwean Painters and Writers in English" (1997:85-104). These paintings were also illustrated in the MoMA catalog *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968).ⁱⁱ Though Mukarobgwa and Ndandarika could be studied in equal detail, this article focuses to a greater extent on Kingsley Sambo as the connections between his work and those of Van Gogh are the easiest to document.

Kingsley Sambo

Sambo (1944-1977) was an amazing modern artist. He has two oil paintings in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. They are titled *After the Rain* and *Balancing Rocks* and both were painted in 1962. As these paintings reveal, though others in his corpus do so even more, he was inspired by Vincent Van Gogh in more ways than one. Moreover, his life was also prematurely put to an end with a gun – though not his own.ⁱⁱⁱ In any event, Sambo was clearly inspired by Van Gogh's expressionistic technique, his use of bright primary colors, his obsessive interest in nature and motion in nature and especially by his frequent use of himself as a model. The main difference between Van Gogh and Sambo was that one suffered and the other did not – at least that was, until the end for Sambo did not survive the war of independence. He was murdered near his farm in Dewa, close to Rusape, in 1977.

Sambo, Mukarobgwa and Ndandarika achieved unprecedented success in 1962 when Alfred Barr, the first Director of the Museum of Modern Art, bought several paintings for the museum after attending - and in fact opening the First International Congress of African Art (ICAC) in Salisbury. In fact, to this day the only works of modern African art to be found in the MoMA collection are seven oil paintings of Rhodesian Afro-German Expressionism. Four of these paintings are by Thomas Mukarobgwa, one is by Joseph Ndandarika, and two, as already mentioned, are by Kingsley Sambo. The paintings by Mukarobgwa are titled *Very Important Bush*, *River Coming in the Middle of the Bush*, *Dying People in the Bush* and *View You See in the Middle of a Tree* and the painting by Ndandarika is titled *Bushman Running From the Rain*.

In Sambo's self-portrait reproduced in the catalog *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968), produced by the International Council for the Museum of Modern Art, an African dandy stares out at us from the land of the dead. Indeed, Sambo's power of achieving verisimilitude is evident in the photograph of McEwen and the painters in the Workshop School (see Figure 1). The artist can be seen on the far right hand side at the back of the group. Self-assured, he looks over the scene in which his work is the focus of attention and clearly McEwen's pride and joy. The painting is typical of Sambo's joyous expressive depictions of dance and as McCloughlin (1997) describes - the considerable sense of cultural freedom that prevailed in the early 1960's in Southern Rhodesia - before the darkening of the political and social landscape and the onset of the war which raged through the 1970's culminating in independence in 1980.

Kingsley Sambo had once been a successful cosmopolitan who in better days, in the 1950s, used to drive an Austin Healey dressed in the flashiest suits and ties money could buy. Later in the 1960s he painted lively expressionistic paintings while under the influence of *mbanje* (marijuana) and alcohol as the painting *Smoker's Vision* in the catalog *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968) clearly alludes to. The colorful highly expressionistic study uses pinks, greens and purples and thick expressionistic impasto daubing to evoke a wonderfully dense sense of sensory distortion. Sambo's *Smoker's Vision* was acquired by Armand G. Erpf an important figure in the French art world.

In fact, it is little wonder then that Kingsley Sambo is best known of as “Cyrene’s Rebel” (see Gronn 2003). As a child, he had shown a talent for drawing. Naturally, he was sent to Cyrene Mission to study art with Canon Paterson (1895-1974) where Paterson predicted that Sambo would become a cartoonist because of his wit and facility (Hava 1984). In time he became a wealthy free spending urbanite, a cartoonist working for the *African Daily News* in Salisbury, now Harare, though Paterson ultimately had to replace him because of his growing interest in painting women in the nude. Sambo was ultimately as ill fated as Van Gogh, that is in his early death. However, in stark contrast to Van Gogh’s miserable life, Sambo lived life to the fullest.

In 1962 when the Rhodesian Government banned the *African Daily News*, Sambo was suddenly out of a job. He did the natural thing, being from the Rusape area and being a Paterson student, and joined the group of artists working at the Rhodes National Gallery which had opened five years earlier on July 16, 1957. All the evidence point to the fact that Sambo was inspired by Frank McEwen’s lectures, by the several stunning exhibitions of modern art held at the National Gallery in the early years and especially by the books to be found in the gallery’s library and elsewhere. He bought books on art, completed a course in art through correspondence and frequently visited Helen Leiros, the Zimbabwean painter and art teacher where he spoke with her about modern art and studied her many books (see Hava 1984). Drawing in a masterful way upon these resources, Sambo immediately established himself as one of the premier painters alongside Charles Fernando, Thomas Mukarobgwa (1924-1999) and Joseph Ndandarika (1944-1990) – all of whom came from the Rusape area.^{iv}

Ultimately, when one thinks of the history of modern art in Zimbabwe then, one should always keep in mind that the young members of the Workshop School at the Rhodes National Gallery in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s had been exposed to modern art to a degree which is difficult to comprehend without an informed perspective on the extent and quality of the shows held at the Rhodes National Gallery in the early years.^v Whether it was Moore or Rodin, Matisse or Picasso, German Expressionism or Fauvism, Cubism or Pointillism - they had seen it all.^{vi} Moreover, while artists such as Kingsley Sambo, Charles Fernando and Joseph Ndandarika embraced art and the city for the creative doors which were flung wide open for them. They were non-practicing Catholics devoted to jazz, young men who loved the city life and the sinful modern pleasures and freedom it offered. Indeed, as anthropologists would understand it, they were Benjaminian *flanneurs*, and Zimbabwean equivalents of the Zairean *sapeurs*.

Searching for Sambo

Sambo’s expressionism had been something of a mystery to me for many years because so little had been written on him. Indeed, I suspected the source of his inspiration but could not confirm it. And while in the field in Zimbabwe from June 1990 until April 1992, I had gone on a wild goose chase and came up with very little. However as it turns out a great deal of information on Sambo was available in the mid 1980s in that his remaining works and books were right there all along at his parents’ home near Rusape and there had even been a remarkable retrospective of his work at the National Gallery in 1984 (again, see Hava 1984). At that time however, I did not know this.

First I went to Rusape as I had heard that Sambo had painted a mural in the courtyard of the Balfour Hotel, the former owners having been his patrons and the hotel bar having been his favorite haunt (see Huggins 2001:20). But to my horror, when I got there I found that the new owners had long since painted over the mural with whitewash in their zeal to “improve” the condition of the courtyard and the garden. So I just sat there deflated in the hotel courtyard in the winter sun, and sharing my Castle Lager with Sambo’s ghost got a little drunk. But the goose chase was not yet over.

Over a year later during fieldwork, I was visiting with an artist in Harare and marveling at his newly painted triptych drying on the clothes line. The painted sheets were billowing gently

in the summer breeze as the sun streamed through the lovely intensity of the expressive freedom of splashes of glowing primary colors. The effect was a visual spectacle, something akin to the transformative aesthetic experience of visiting Chagal's windows in Jerusalem on a sunny day - but in motion and abstract, somehow even more innocent and wholly free. Later that warm but breezy summer's day, the artist told me an amazing if tragic story.

When he had first moved to the country in the late 1970's it had been very hard to find canvas, especially stretched and mounted - and they were very expensive. One day someone drove up his driveway and offered him a large trove of mounted canvases. Not having a clue of what they were, not knowing then who Kingsley Sambo was or what his paintings looked like, he bought them for a song and happily painted over them. Today, beneath the loveliest African wildflower still-lives you can imagine, Sambo's spirit survives. Wild flowers! And please do keep in mind, that when the subject of painting wild flowers comes up, art critics and art historians usually smirk and head for the door.^{vii} Anyway, the wild goose chase was not yet over as I relate towards the end of this article. But first, back to New York.

Alfred Barr's Correspondence with Frank McEwen, 1962-1963: MoMA's Acquisition of Afro-German Expressionism^{viii}

After visiting the Rhodes National Gallery in 1962, and giving the opening speech at the First International Congress of African Art (ICAC), Alfred Barr, the first Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (henceforth MoMA) was eager to have examples of this "Afro-German Expressionism" in the MoMA's collection. The subsequent correspondence between him and McEwen can be found in the Barr archives in the MoMA and there we learn that he wanted more information about these artists and their paintings. However, contrary to McEwen's assertions, Barr suspected that artists like Ndandarika, Sambo and Fernando must have had prior training involving exposure to modern art. Moreover, he needed biographical information and in particular, he needed more information for the museum archives about what the artists had intended to convey in these works. Unfortunately, as far as the archives reveal, no such information was ever forthcoming.

In one undated letter, it would seem from early 1963, Barr notified McEwen that the paintings had finally arrived safely and that he would present them to the Museum Collection's Committee the next week. He added that he urgently needed the artists' addresses in order to ask them questions about the works and that he wanted to publish photographs of the works in the forthcoming catalog of the collection though the delayed response pre-empted this. In addition, he asked for the notes on Thomas Mukarobgwa's paintings that McEwen had promised to send him.

Barr's letter reads:

His [Mukarobgwa's] verbal associations with his pictures are so rich that they are really important for our files and possibly publication I assume that he would not be able to write his own notes since I remember you saying that he depended a good deal on the stimulus you gave him by asking questions. I suppose that what he says may not be accurate but at least it would be highly interesting.

The letter continues with an exceptionally revealing few sentences about the complications at hand relating to all these artists which he very cautiously broached as regards Ndandarika.

I don't remember clearly for instance what you said about the extraordinary painting by Ndandarika, *Bushman Running from the Rain*. Did you say that when he painted this picture Ndandarika had had no training but had retired to

the bush with brush and canvas bringing this painting in for the show, much to your surprise?

The painting is so sophisticated except perhaps in drawing that its hard to believe he hadn't considerable art training. What training had he actually had and what other works of art had he produced when he painted this picture?

At the MoMA, Barr was not alone in his suspicions.

In 1968, in official MoMA correspondence,^{ix} Betsy Jones wrote the following to the publicist Judy von Daler about the press release for the upcoming traveling show organized by the Museum's International Council:

I think it is misleading to say that the artists have never seen any of the Western art. Frank lists in his *New African Art from Rhodesia* catalog a series of shows beginning in 1957 which included old masters from the Louvre, Tate etc., "modern masters," shows of Picasso and expressionists who demonstrate the influence of African art. Even though some of the artists in our traveling show may not have seen these shows they have probably had access to catalogs of them, to books on Western art or simply to reproductions in magazines. They may not have seen actual works, but the implication that the statement that they have never seen Western art is that they could not possibly have been influenced by it. I think it is possible; even probable.

As Derrick Huggins writes then, "[E]ven when history is deliberately rewritten to erase and eradicate one or the other culture, it is the arts that are indelible and provide the beacons that mark the way from the past to the present" (2001:29).

From Van Gogh to Kingsley Sambo: The Power of Affinity and Influence

Let us go back to the wild goose chase. Recently, I discovered a Sambo in the last place I suspected. To my great surprise, the goose chase finally ended in my father's house in Texas - last Thanksgiving. As it turns out, Kingsley Sambo had been my late mother's favorite African artist – besides Joseph Muli and John Hlatawayo, something I never knew. On seeing the signature and realizing it was a Sambo, and taking the painting down and turning it around, my father and I found a poem in Sambo's own Gauguin-like flowing hand which reads:

Here I sat
I beheld with wonder
What time had done
This Marshy-Land:
The Landscape –
Of my childhood

Wild Flowers^x

This tradition of penning a poem for paintings has a long history and it was none other than J. M. W. Turner who was perhaps most famous for this attempted cohabitation of the sister arts. Fortunately, Sambo was a far superior poet to Turner. Moreover, as I will show in more detail below, Sambo's sources and emulations were often explicit. In fact, he seems to have repeatedly made allusions to his inspirational engagement with modern art history explicit in his work

assumedly to leave the trace and make it known that he was a modern artist working within that larger tradition – a beacon linking beacons. In fact, it is possible to prove the direct link to German Expressionism through this painting as shown below.

One Van Gogh painting is of particular interest for the purpose of establishing a particularly potent link between Van Gogh and Sambo. In this we find that Sambo's Wild Flowers turns out to be directly inspired by one particular painting by Van Gogh - his most famous paintings – *Field with Poppies (Champ de ble, les coquelicots)* painted in June 1888. If one closely studies this historically enormously significant painting (acquired by the Kunsthalle Bremen in 1911, see Cantz 2002:83), it is especially interesting here, beyond the obvious influence to observe how Sambo has carefully controlled and extended the use of white strokes and the identical treatment of the pansies. Clearly Sambo was inspired by this painting and masterfully made one small section of the painting his own.

This is fascinating formally as this was the only painting of Van Gogh's which did not constitute a focused and unified whole as he related in a letter to his brother Theo (ibid:82). What Sambo has done here however is to do just that – to create a unified whole through focusing on this one field. His faithfulness to the original explains why the composition flows sharply to the left virtually extending itself outward of the bounds of the frame energetically speaking, exactly as in the original. It is touching for me how delicately and with what sophistication he has managed to make it African through the minor figures of two women fetching water in the center of the painting, just to the left.

The reasons why this painting and the original is so interesting does not end there. There are several. *Field with Poppies* was the first painting Van Gogh painted after leaving the hospital in Saint-Remy. In fact, it was painted just outside the walls of the hospital such that Hatje Cantz was able to study the lay of the land and analyze how Van Gogh had modified the landscape to achieve particular ends. But far more important than this, after the painting was acquired by Gustav Pauli for the Bremen Kunsthalle it became the focus of a furious national debate over “the doctrine of the unities” and the charge of favoring foreign art, a debate which had begun earlier in 1905 (see Nierhoff 2002:148).

The subsequent controversy over whether French artists, especially Van Gogh, were perverting German artists rendered Van Gogh the most controversial painter of the time and had a major impact on the early twentieth century history of modern German art as Barbara Nierhoff, Andreas Strobl, Dorothee Hansen and Angelika Wesenberg relate in scintillating detail in their chapters in Cantz's book *Van Gogh: Fields* (2002). As it turns out, German Expressionism was a French infection sparked by the viral effect of the exhibition of Van Gogh's works at the Kunsthalle in 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1911 and this painting *Field with Poppies*, partly because of its astronomical price, was at the center of the scandal. Worse still, several of the French artists exhibited in Germany shortly thereafter were known as the Fauves (the “wild beasts”) who believed in color as the primary vehicle for the expression of internal subjective states.

The term Expressionism was coined in Germany in April 1911 when Manguin, Marquet, Derain Puy, Braque, Firesz, von Dongon, Vlaminck and Picasso were exhibited at the XXII exhibition of the Berlin Sezession as the “Expressionists” (Vergo in Gowing 2004:834). It was first explicitly defined the next year by Richard Reiche at the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne. Reiche understood Expressionism as a technique of simplification and enhancement of expression through rhythm and color (ibid:835). The style only became fully German during the First World War and today, of-course, Expressionism is understood to be specifically German, thus the term German Expressionism. After the war, Hermann Bahr in *Expressionismus* (1916) “Germanized” it further by claiming Goethe as the aesthetic source in that it was understood to be driven by the inner world of the emotions rather than the senses.^{xi}

By the early 1920's the remaining Expressionists had transformed themselves into Objectivists after which the Bauhaus movement, with Kandinsky at its head, took Germany off in

a new direction before modernism and abstract art met its death at the hands' of Adolf Hitler.^{xii} Thus, when suddenly in 1962, a new form of Expressionism, Afro-German Expressionism appeared in the unlikely context of Southern Rhodesia, and by artists said to have no training in art and no exposure to modern art, the claim was met with some suspicion. For example, as related earlier in this article, Barr's letter reveals he was not at all convinced that Ndandarika had not had any previous training. Today with the benefit of hindsight, we do know most certainly that Ndandarika was not the untrained artist and bush mystic or "wizard's" apprentice that he has been portrayed to be ever since. In fact, the legacy of his sculptures pale in comparison to his sensational expressionistic landscapes and the same is the case for Thomas Mukarobgwa's work. This is and especially the case for Sambo's wooden "tokolosh" sculptures one of which is now in the Frank McEwen Collection in the British Museum.

Lessons for Historical Legacies

Lastly, I believe that Sambo left us another message of his art historical allegiance. In the photograph of the Workshop artists published in *New Art from Rhodesia*, he has positioned himself as the edge of the group, as an outsider, though his painting of ecstatic African dance is the focus of attention. More importantly still, he is self-consciously posing in three quarters – Van Gogh's favored angle for his self-portraits. Between Sambo's subtle and sophisticated invocation of Van Gogh and McEwen standing proud behind Sambo's work in the midst of his protégé's, a magic self-referential circle presents itself.

Indeed, influences are essential to the creative process as T.S. Elliot understood it in his article "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *The Sacred Wood* (1920). In fact, without Japanese Prints Monet would not have become Monet, without pre-Colombian sculpture Moore could not have become Moore (Braun 1989) and without the archaeological and ethnographic specimens in the Musée de l'Homme, Picasso could not have become Picasso. In this, McEwen was somehow completely misguided by his commitment to the ideology of historical purity and Barr intuitively realized that there was an explanation behind the apparent similarities between Rhodesian Afro-German Expressionism and German Expressionism.

Despite this, the fact of the matter is that Frank McEwen was the pioneer and patron saint of modern art in Zimbabwe. Yet his attempt to sweep Western influence under the carpet and indigenize modern Rhodesian African art was eerily consonant with Julius Meier-Graefe's notions of purity in *Der Fall Bocklin und die Lehre von den Einheiten* [*The Bocklin Case and the Doctrine of the Unities*] (1905, see Nierhoff 2002:148). This earlier attempt in Germany to unify and purify German art, to efface foreign influence and nationalize creativity and art history was recapitulated in McEwen's purification of Rhodesian Afro-German Expressionism by denying the fact that it was a such fascinating phenomenon precisely because it was an Africanized expression of a venerable European tradition.

Conclusion

The modern African artists considered in this article, mainly Kingsley Sambo, but peripherally Joseph Ndandarika and Thomas Mukarobgwa, had the unique privilege of working and exhibiting in a gallery that McEwen claimed he had first conceptualized with Le Corbusier. It was a building which was heralded in *Aujourd'hui* as one of the most advanced museums of its day. In fact, McEwen's greatest contribution to Zimbabwe was inspired Le Corbusier's famous modernist idea that buildings are machines for living in and that this African national gallery would be a machine for art-ing (see McEwen 1962). Certainly, in 1957, one might have expected to find a building such as this gracing the left bank of the Seine but not Queen Victoria Street in Salisbury, now 20 Julius Nyerere Way.

Nor could one have imagined in the most surreal version of Borgesian magical realism that a show such as *Rembrandt to Picasso* could have been held to inaugurate a new national gallery in Africa - the Rhodes National Gallery. On that occasion, a multitude of masters graced these walls for six weeks from July 16th through September 1st 1957.^{xiii} It was there that Kingsley Sambo first came face to face with Van Gogh's self-portrait lent by the Rijksmuseum. McEwen himself pays homage to that inspirational moment with this tribute to Van Gogh in the inaugural catalog:

To continue the march of art up to the present day, we must return to the 1850's. At the time of the death of Turner in those hotbeds of experimental ideas, such as Paris, new schools, like waves of original thought, followed in quick succession. Each wave broke with a scandal only to be classified later as a new aspect of universal truth. Thus that poor and abandoned outcast, van Gogh, continues to inspire the pilgrimage of millions to his hallucinating works.

Out of those millions, it was not only Sambo who has remade Van Gogh in his own joyous image for young children all over the world are inspired in art classes to create their own magical versions of Sunflowers and Starry Night.

All these historic events which transpired in this building, the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, might be hard to believe today, especially in terms of the fact that few contemporary African artists will find it very easy to enter into the inner sanctums of modern art such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In any event, despite history's bitter fruits and faded horizons, Sambo, Ndandarika and Mukarobgwa's paintings are aging raisins, sweet, hiding in the dark in the MoMA's remote storage unit. Unknown in New York, they await liberation. But back at the bottle store Dewa, Sambo's ghost, and his family and friends, are perhaps humming along to what may well have been his favorite song - "starry, starry night . . . paint your dreams in colors bright"

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Notes

ⁱ It is arguable that this very quality is what explains the popularity of Mukarobgwa's work as in the discourse of creative genius in modern art, it is the "rawness" of the instinctual creativity of the "primitive" and the "child" which is held up as sacrosanct and as models for emulation (see Fineberg 2002).

ⁱⁱ It is notable that even Derek Huggins, who is one of the most knowledgeable persons on the subject, believed that Thomas Mukarobgwa was untrained (2001:19). I also was under this impression until I came across a painting signed with Thomas Mukarobgwa's unmistakable signature Thomas Mu. The painting belongs to June Levy and is a classic example of the child art produced under Canon Paterson's and his tutor's guidance at Chirodzo from 1958-1961. For illustrations of Paterson and his students surrounded by such work, see Walker (1985:64) and Randles (1997:76). The question remains as to how such a situation could have occurred as Mukarobgwa began working at the National Gallery in 1957. The only plausible explanation that I can think of is that Mukarobgwa was simultaneously working with Paterson or some of his students which is entirely plausible considering that the vast majority, in fact virtually all of the first artists exhibiting in the National Gallery and incorporated into the Workshop School were Paterson's students. In fact, Paterson was later placed on the Board of the National Gallery.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to Elizabeth Morton (2003), Kingsley Sambo was executed by guerrillas for being a "sell out" because Europeans used to often come looking for him to buy his paintings.

^{iv} As R.S. Roberts notes, historically and anthropologically speaking, the most significant fact about the emergence of modern art in Zimbabwe is the highly restricted networks and the fact that the vast majority of the early artists, excluding "Paterson's discoveries" (McEwen's term) came from very limited geographic locations, namely from the Rusape-Nyanga area and the Guruve region (1982).

^v See the NGZ catalogs for *From Rembrandt to Picasso* (1957), *The Atlantic Foundation Exhibition* (1960/61), *Art Reproductions for Schools* (1961). In addition, other exhibitions of modern French and Italian painters were shown in 1963 (see Hava 1984).

^{vi} Marshall Mount in *African Art: The Years Since 1920* (1973/1989) best summarized the importance of this when he wrote that Frank McEwen "feels African artists should remain free from the 'corrupting' influence of Western Schools and express instead their innate African qualities . . . " but that "McEwen's approach . . . is compromised by the museum environment in which the artists work or at least receive criticism. Painting and sculpture from major periods in the history of Western art and European-influenced, white Rhodesian work are displayed prominently on gallery walls. It would be a rare artist who could remain untouched when faced with this wealth of unfamiliar styles and techniques" (Mount 1989:119).

^{vii} Indeed, Frank McEwen began his career painting wild flowers in Southern France which he sold in Goupils and Co. in London in the 1920's.

^{viii} In The Barr Papers in the Smithsonian's *Archives of American Art* in New York there is a fascinating record of Barr's visit to Southern Rhodesia. Heretofore unknown to art history it is a fascinating record of their relationship and work together. There are twenty two photographs of the ICAC conference and of Barr's tour.

^{ix} The Museum of Modern Art, New York. International Council/International Program Exhibition Records. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

^x It is interesting to note the sympathetic symbiotic connection between Van Gogh and the Other in these lines to his brother Theo about his affinity for the Japanese and Japanese prints and paintings: “Come now, isn’t it almost an actual religion which these simple Japanese teach us, who live in nature as though themselves were flowers?” The question here is then: Did Sambo read Van Gogh’s *Letters to Theo* and/or was he familiar with Van Gogh’s inspiration and identification? Is there a hidden message in this poem and painting? Even if there is not, it is clear that Sambo, being Paterson’s student, was deeply influenced by the Ruskinian tradition of studying and identifying with nature. His lone surviving notebook provides us with a remarkable record of the importance he gave to sketching flowers and trees.

^{xi} Earlier in 1914, Paul Fechter had distinguished between “intensive Expressionism” and “extensive Expressionism” mirroring Kandinsky’s notion that the 19th Century was “the century of the external” and the 20th Century was “the century of the internal” (Vergo ????:835). Later, the Expressionist slogan “Art comes from necessity, not from ability” was coined by the musician Arnold Schoenberg and a third form of expressionism emerged – “political Expressionism” which was a form of anarchistic pacifism (ibid.:838). Nevertheless, the Expressionists were a diverse group including artists such as Egon Schiele (1890-1918) who was imprisoned in 1912 for his scandalous eroticism and Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) who has called the Super-Fauve or “Die Oberwildung” laying bare the inner man (ibid.:846).

^{xii} It is important to stress the fact that modern art in Rhodesia existed within the colonial context of post-war colonial expansion and rising nationalism. While McEwen’s agenda was a form of proto-cultural nationalism (Zilberg 2001), his rejection of European talent was simply reverse racism. In fact, his agenda created considerable acrimony and those artists whom he rejected were not all the much maligned sunset and jackaranda tree Sunday painters he made them out to be. For example, David Chudy, who according to his wife had paintings in the MoMA, is but one example. His wife, Ellen Chudy, was the most lucid critic of McEwen that I was fortunate enough to get to know. A German Rothschild by birth, and someone who knew Henry Moore and owned a small Moore, she vividly remembered the 1937 exhibition of “degenerate art” in Berlin and recounted to me what a remarkable, if ironic, opportunity it had been for seeing the range of modern art in the early 20th century. Thus McEwen’s Rhodesian critics were not at all the country bumpkins he made them out to be.

^{xiii} The catalog prepared for the inaugural exhibition reads like a detailed primer on European art history. Naming a very few of the artists whose paintings were on display cannot do justice to the list but for effect here are a few of the better known names from the sequential listing (grouped by nationality) in the catalog: Bonnington, Constable, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Sutherland, Turner, Brueghel, Van Dyck, Magritte, Hals, Rembrandt, Van Ruisdale, Van Gogh, Bonnard, Braque, Cezanne, Corot, Courbet, David, Degasm Derain, Dufy, Fragonard, Gericault, Gros, Hartung, Leger, Manet, Matisse, Millet, Monet, Morisot, Pissaro, Poussin, Renoir, Rouault, Sisley, Vuillard, Bellini, Mantegna, Veronese, Kandinsky, Miro, Picasso, Ribera. This show was followed later that year by the first one man exhibition at the gallery. It was the Henry Moore show organized by the British Council which traveled across the length of the entire dominion beginning in Canada and traveling to New Zealand, Australia and South Africa before ending its tour in Southern Rhodesia. Nearly a decade later, the show *Rodin* in 1966 which had 28 works by Rodin and works by Maillol, Degas, Rosso, Gonzalez, Renoir, Bourdelle and Picasso amongst others. In short the classic claim by McEwen that the Workshop School artists had never been exposed to modern art is so ludicrous, so irrational a claim in the face of such evidence that I leave it up to the readers to imagine their own explanations for it.

Moreover, though McEwen later claimed the artists had never had the chance to see books on modern art, his own lines tell a different tale: “Design, architecture, and art in its widest sense from all epochs and countries can be studied in the Gallerie’s library and reading room – from Lascaux cave paintings to the present day, from Vasari to Herbert Read. In the heart of Africa in this centre, a student can keep abreast of his time with reviews from London, Paris, Rome, Rio and New York” (1957:n.p.).