

4 artists from Stellenbosch

AT The Gowlett Gallery, Long Street, four artists from Stellenbosch are exhibiting their recent work; they are Hardy Botha, Jochen Berger, Bridget Simons and Louis Jansen van Vuuren, and they have something in common in their personal responses to the current national mood.

Hardy Botha has caught the idea, figuratively floating in the contemporary air, that was previously caught by the fellow artist Erik Laubscher in his important and large painting called Fragmenting Cloud, to all intents and purposes a nuclear explosion in the air. Hardy Botha, in his version, has nine paintings called Blast and numbered from 1 to 9.

Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the series contain a picture within a picture, the inner picture an acknowledged nuclear explosion, the outer pictures of two containing fragmented organic creatures, the other two simpler fragmented forms.

Nos 1 to 4 and No 9 of Blast are of complete fragmentation of the objective world. As the consequence of such nuclear blasts upon living organisms is damage to genes and therefore mutation in species, the last work in the series, a large and effective painting of ideas, is called Spermutasie.

Where Hardy Botha looks into the future and reflects the emotional discomfort afflicting South Africa, Jochen Berger looks to the past with pictures called Artificial Landscape, Human Landscape and Human Situation, protecting himself from past experiences by not looking below the surface or, if he dares to look, seeing a lesion.

Bridget Simons has a series of paintings combined with collage and constructions called Windows, giving upon a depressed and rather seedy world, ending with a construction called Fall, a woman falling through space, the epitome of insecurity in the classical behaviourism of J B Watson.

Louis Jansen van Vuuren's response to the prevailing mood is ironic, summed up in the punning painting with the punning title Vir die Reën en Vir die Teef, and the animal in it, even if distressed, is not running away.

Other significant paintings are his large Do You Live In The Sky? and his Euridiki, with fragments of mirror stuck around the central figure which thus becomes viewer as well as viewed.

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