



FRED PAGE



RINGMASTER of the IMAGINATION

JEANNE WRIGHT
and CECIL KERBEL

Introducing the Fred Page Biography

Ringmaster of the Imagination

Frederick Hutchinson Page was an artist who spent his life in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He died in 1984 at the age of 76 having produced a body of work which has to date, not been thoroughly researched or publicized other than in one or two academic dissertations. Widely regarded as South Africa's foremost Surrealist painter, Page's work is the record of an extraordinary fertile and inventive imagination which remains largely undisclosed to the artistic public because of his reclusive personality.

Although his work is held in some major institutional collections, the bulk of his oeuvre is held by private collectors. After his death, his memorabilia and many of his works were lodged with the Nelson Mandela Municipal Art Museum in Port Elizabeth. In this book, many of these images will be exposed for the first time, illustrating the development and progression of his talent and the directions which he moved in. Page is unique amongst South African artists in that he practiced in the relative cultural isolation of the Eastern Cape.

He is now beginning to be recognized not only as an important regional artist, but also as an exceptional individual in the context of South African art history. He produced images throughout the Apartheid era and although he did complete a year's formal tuition at the Port Elizabeth Art School, he remained

Cecil Kerbel

Cecil Kerbel met Fred Page in the early 1960s through a cousin who had purchased a Page work. He and his wife Miriam were to visit and retain their friendship with the artist throughout his lifetime, purchasing many works from Page. The couple supported him at local exhibitions and introduced him to collectors, later fostering his relationship with well-known Cape Town art dealer Joe Wolpe, who was to market Page throughout the major period of the artist's production.

Over a period of thirty years, Cecil collected newspaper cuttings, catalogues, reviews and photographs with a view to publishing a biography on Page. He has always championed Page's unique vision and maintained that up until now the artist has not been properly appreciated.

Jeanne Wright

Jeanne Wright has an M A in Fine Art from Rhodes University. She taught modern art history for five years at Rhodes. She has exhibited as a ceramic sculptor for many years and was a member of the GAP Group.

As an independent journalist, she has researched and written biographical monologues on Eastern Cape artists and has also written reviews for local newspapers, national art magazines and specialist criticism for the Grahamstown Festival newspaper Cue. She has been a member of the selection committee for the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum and has served as an adjudicator for a number of Eastern Cape art competitions.

uninfluenced by main stream art movements of the time. Page has recorded in detail the buildings of the inner city of old Port Elizabeth. In a sense, his vision of the city is an historical record of life styles and precincts which have now vanished or been permanently altered.

His work is an extraordinary cross-pollination of formal elements and a dark, saturnine imagination. His lexicon of strange animals, insects, birds and male and female figures engaged in edgy confrontations and configurations are all placed against the backdrop of Central, the area he lived in.

The book provides background information on his life, the early experiments with different media and the development of his mature oeuvre. The text is illustrated in colour with many examples from the earliest works to those made a year before he died. There is some explanation and observation about his intellectual approach to his work.

The book is intended for the general art reader although it will also cater to those who have a particular interest in his work.

Publication Information

Title: Ringmaster of the Imagination
Author: Cecil Kerbel and Jeanne Wright
Pages: 200 full colour
Photographs: ca. 375 art reproductions & photographs
Format: 230mm x 210mm (9.05 x 8.27 inches)
Softcover 250 gsm Magno Satin
Text 150 gsm Magno Satin
Binding: Stitched
Language: English
Published: July 2011

ISBN: 978-0-620-49789-3
Price: R 290.00 including VAT

Published by: Cecil Kerbel
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