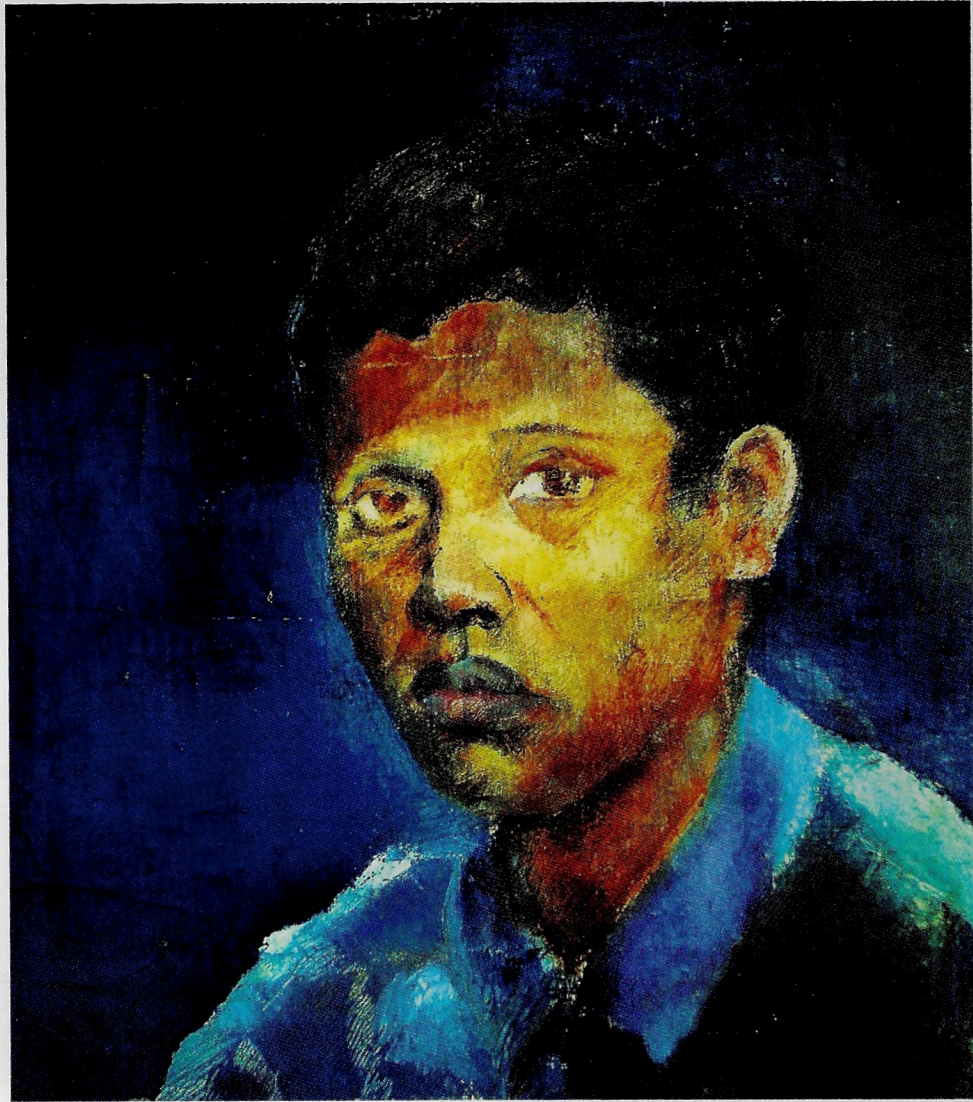


Albert Adams

23/6/1929 - 31/12/2006

A Tribute



Self portrait (date unknown) – collection Ted Glennon

I brought to Art

I sit and meditate.

Desires and sensations

I brought to my art

Some things half seen

Faces or lines;

And of imperfect loves

Some memories unsure

Let me give myself up to it.

It knows how to fashion

A form of beauty;

Almost imperceptibly

My life completing,

Impressions combining,

And Combining the days.

Constantine P. Cavafy (1863 – 1933)

* Read by Michael Forbes Young at Albert's funeral on Wednesday 10th January, 2007

Albert Adams

Family and friends in South Africa could not attend Albert's funeral in London. His family and friends abroad cannot attend his memorial service in Cape Town. This tribute is an attempt to salute together this remarkable man.

It is a matter of some satisfaction that Albert Adams had the opportunity to become better known in South Africa, the country that shaped him and shaped his work. But there is much more that is to be known about both Albert Adams, the Artist and Albert Adams, The Man.

This tribute is dedicated to Albert and to Edward Glennon, his friend and partner of 44 years. Together they reached out across continents. It is also an indication of their generosity and their commitment that Albert's existing work as well as their private art collection have been gifted to the people of South Africa. As he lay dying we resolved to do everything that we can to ensure that the legacy he bequeathed South Africa reaches a wider public. Albert's work was life-affirming, thoughtprovoking and often, disturbing. For his work to have been compared with that of Francisco Goya and Pablo Picasso is high praise indeed. In many a conversation, and as evidenced by his work, Albert wanted us to

engage - sometimes gently, often radically - with what is happening around us.

Albert's work echoed Picasso who, in defence of his painting *Guernica*, said:

"Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war."

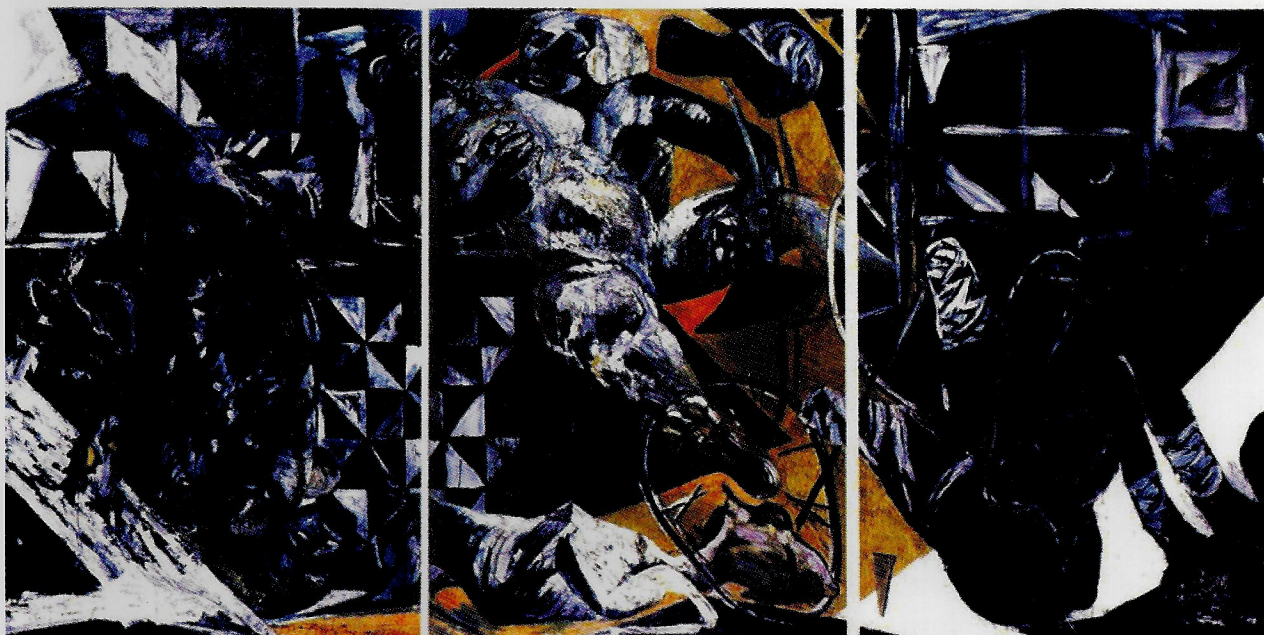
Albert fought a war against injustice; against ignorance; against anything that diminished the human spirit.

There are family and friends who, due to time constraints could not be contacted for contributions to this tribute. Albert Adams is an important part of our history. We hope that this will be recognised. Albert Adams was a true son of South Africa and a true internationalist.

The images, as these appear in this tribute, in no way do justice to Albert's work. For justice to be done, there is a need for a high quality publication at some time in the near future. We thank all those who contributed to this memorial booklet, notably Marilyn Martin for her assistance at short notice and the printers who have done their best under the circumstances and with tight financial constraints.

Lorna and Graham de Smidt

Brighton, January 2007



South Africa, Oil on board, 1959

Collection: Johannesburg Art Gallery



Albert Adams who, like Clarke, was taught by Hendrik Esterhuizen at Livingstone High School. This photograph was taken in Camden Town, London, 1971, by George Hallett

In an article headed *EAGER STUDENTS AT ART CLASSES FOR COLOURED*s that appeared in the Cape Argus on Wednesday 8 October 1947, reference is made to "... a bright eyed schoolboy, Albert Adams, who comes all the way from Athlone for the classes. He has drawn ever since he can remember."

The Argus article refers to evening art classes organized by the artist John Coplans, at St Philip's School in Chapel Street, District VI Cape Town.

The artist Albert Adams passed away on Sunday 31 December 2006 in a London hospital where he was receiving treatment for cancer of the lung. He was 77.

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa on 23 June 1929, he moved to Cape Town, while still very young, with his mother. Interestingly, one of the small boy's favourite possessions at this time was a toy monkey, which many years later was part inspiration for a series of images of a man with a monkey on his back.

Albert attended primary school classes at St Mark's in Athlone, Cape Peninsula. Later he went on to Livingstone High school in Claremont where he had

art tuition from Mr. Hendrik Esterhuizen, an able and encouraging art teacher. Finally Albert attended Hewat Training College in Roeland St, Cape Town.

In a letter to me sent from London in 1953 the Cape Town sculptor Louis Maurice, studying as he said as a sort of independent student at the Slade School of Art, mentioned the fact that he had been informed about Albert Adams' application to the Slade and that the institution would be accepting him as a student.

In the following years, after Adams left South Africa for London, occasionally there was correspondence between him and me, in which we kept up with what ever was taking place in their respective lives.

On 29 January 1956 Albert gave his address as Connaught Hall, University of London. He spoke about his having visited art galleries in various Dutch and Belgian cities during the holidays. A lot of hitch-hiking was done in the south and north of England, as well as in Denmark and Sweden and down to Germany and Holland. There were visits to north and south Ireland as well. But he also wrote "I've been working like hell on my summer compo, which won me a prize". He mentions "Besides traveling most of the time like a tramp I've been working like a devil at school. We are particularly busy right now with the exams just around the corner. I've so far passed my Anatomy course which makes me feel partly a doctor; my geometry course which almost led me to study Pure Maths and several History ones. History is the subject I am majoring in, besides Painting and Etching and Drawing. The course is a pretty stiff one, but delightfully so".

Sometime afterwards, Adams mentions in a letter that he attended a summer school in Austria which had been directed by the famous artist Oscar Kokoschka. Later their friendship led to the internationally renowned artist recording a speech especially for the opening of an exhibition of works by his young friend Albert Adams in a Cape Town gallery. According to Cape Town critic Neville Dubow, Adams' first exhibition in the Argus Gallery, Cape Town in the late 1950's showed brilliant emerging talent. Just over a year later in November 1960 the same critic discussing an exhibition in the Argus Gallery refers to the essential theme of the work as being that of an artist in search of himself, in the throes of finding himself. This is never an easy subject matter and indeed it can be a tedious process for the spectator if the artist is not a gifted one, but in Adams' case it becomes fascinating.

In 1960, five works by Adams were included in a collection of graphics by South African artists that

was exhibited in Yugoslavia and in 1961 an aquatint print Young Man was included in the South African Graphic Art Exhibition in the São Paulo Biennale in Brazil. An exhibition of South African Graphic Art shown in Munich, Germany in 1961, again included work by Albert Adams.

After the initial period of art study in Europe and visits home to South Africa, Adams become resident in England. He subsequently taught at several comprehensive schools in the East End of London. Once he referred to this engagement as an amazing experience. In time he also become visiting Lecturer, serving for 18 years at the City University of London.

Because of geographical distance and because he visited South Africa infrequently, and of course, without fanfare, there are many who quite unfortunately are unfamiliar or unacquainted with the striking work of Albert Adams.

His one-man exhibition at the university of Cape Town Irma Stern Museum in Rosebank in 1994, as well as his much larger one man exhibition in The South African National Gallery in Cape Town in 2002, created a great deal of interest locally. It would be good and appropriate if South African art galleries acquired work by this very important artist. This would be appropriate because Albert Adams is undeniably part of our own art history.

Although in his artwork Albert Adams tackled a wide variety of subject matter, the nude, landscape, still-life, portraiture, people etc, he was very much moved, even disturbed, by the human condition. In more recent visits to South Africa he was interested in whatever social changes had taken place. In conversation he expressed his curiosity about people's attitudes and reactions to each other, about differing political dimensions. When he we were participants in the 2000/2001 residency programme The Hourglass Project: Baggage at the Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers in Balgovan, KwaZulu-Natal, Adams worked on the theme of "Man and Ape on a Tightrope", a series of drawings or graphics inspired by reflections on his visits back to a South Africa caught up in the newness of the democratic process. The series of images, variations on a theme, are striking, strange, intriguing, thought-provoking.

Questioning himself as well as everybody else, Adams asks "Can BAGGAGE be something we cling to unable to let go - or unwilling to discharge? Is it our BAGGAGE which distinguishes us? Is our

BAGGAGE at once our glory and our Damnation?"

Justice Albie Sachs recalls how after a separation of about 50 years he and Adams accidentally encountered each other in Belgium a year ago. At the time Adams was having an exhibition at the University of Antwerp. One of the works that was included in the Antwerp exhibition, a work based on the theme of the Man with a Monkey, was generously donated by the artist to the collection of the Constitutional Court in Pretoria. This work, the artist remarked to Justice Sachs, could also be linked to the toy monkey of the artist's childhood so long ago as well as to the fact that South Africans are free but for many individuals the monkey of their political past still remains tethered to their persona.

After the experience of working on the Man and Ape prints at the Caversham Press, the artist, in retrospect, made the statement: "As important as the journey to the Caversham was, what I have found since I left is that the journey has allowed me to travel deeper into myself."

Albert Adams had numerous exhibitions in various countries in Europe. He also travelled considerably, India having been a favourite destination.

Those who knew him will remember him with much affection. He was a warm, elegant, tasteful person, who enjoyed good company, good food, good wine, good music. He was well read, possessed a zest for life and was a wonderful raconteur. He also had a marvellous sense of humour. To have known him was an enriching experience.

Peter E Clarke - Friend and fellow artist
Oceanview

Western Cape, South Africa



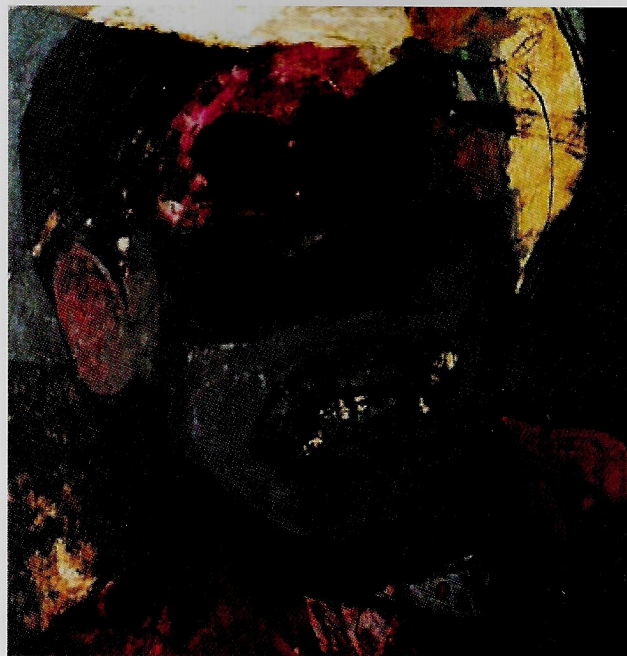
Celebration, oil on canvas

Albert Adams died of lung cancer in London on 31 December, rather suddenly and unexpectedly and at a time when a retrospective exhibition at the Iziko South African National Gallery and the Johannesburg Art Gallery was being discussed. Born in Johannesburg, he had lived in London since 1960. South Africa offered Albert Adams much confusion, frustration and pain – from the time that he had to sneak in and out of his mother’s domestic worker room as a child, to being refused entrance to the Michaelis School of Fine Art because of the colour of his skin and the vicissitudes of life in Cape Town. There were, however, positive and formative influences – an art teacher and principal at Livingstone High School, German émigré friends of Irma Stern who recognised his talent and encouraged him, art classes with Peter Clarke and at Hewat College.

Adams won a scholarship to study at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, left in 1953 and never looked back. Another scholarship took him to the University of Munich in Germany and a time with Oscar Kokoschka in Salzburg, Austria. He produced prints in studios in the United Kingdom and South Africa and participated in exhibitions in those countries, as well as in Belgium, Brazil, Germany and Yugoslavia. He was a lecturer at the City University in London for eighteen years, retiring in 1997.

While being a second class citizen in his country of birth during the apartheid years, Adams’ prodigious talent was recognised. Neville Dubow reviewed his first solo exhibition in Cape Town in 1959 and observed that it was “... remarkable for two things – the pronounced technical ability to express himself fluently in several media, and more particularly the tremendous emotional intensity behind that expression. The combination of these qualities is rare in first exhibitions. They speak in this case of a talent well above the ordinary and a training to match” (*The Cape Argus*, 30 October). *Cape Town Harbour* in the Iziko South African National Gallery permanent collection dates to this year.

Adams’ 1960 exhibition in Cape Town comprised graphics and water-colours; again Dubow referred to his “...brilliant expressionist technique” and compared the quality and intensity of his etchings to that of the great Spanish artist, Francisco Goya. The influence of Kokoschka was profound, as was that of Francis Bacon and Pablo Picasso. Adams spoke of the tightrope that an artist walks between the emotions which direct the creativity and the objectivity required in the development of the work. Informed by his training and fuelled by his long, self-imposed exile, Adams managed this walk throughout his creative life.



Celebration, oil on canvas

The political awareness that he acquired at Livingstone High School, the disillusionment and the sense of alienation remained with him, yet he never lost sight of the present and the relevance of art to society. This was revealed in an exhibition at the South African National Gallery in 2002, where Adams showed recent paintings and works on paper. The series called *Celebration* alluded to the *Kaapse Klopse* (Cape Minstrels), but they were anything but jolly, festive, celebratory works; on the contrary, the mask-like, distorted faces were angry and menacing – the dark side of ‘carnival’ and of life. Created in London between 2000 and 2002, all the works referred to post-apartheid South Africa and the challenges, dangers and threats that came with political change. Adams’ most recent work, showed to us at the National Gallery only a few months ago, were powerful comments on the war in Iraq.

We salute a great artist, whose passing seems untimely, too soon somehow – he was too youthful, energetic and inspired to go. Yet we are grateful for a body of masterly works left behind, works that will continue to challenge, enrich and move. On a personal note, I will remember Albert’s charm, beauty, wit and elegance, the intelligence and insight he brought to conversations on everyday life, art, politics, in fact any subject matter. I will remember his generosity of spirit and his unwavering commitment to his art, and I will miss his presence in my life.

Marilyn Martin

Director of Art Collections, Iziko Museums of Cape Town

Siggi and Rudi

and Albert

and the

Russian Posters

a tale of expatriates and of extraordinary generosity

London: Late Summer of 1979: We move to Delancey Street, Camden Town. Three doors down live Albert and Ted; at first just two gentlemanly neighbours with fine hats and coats and two Beagles – and with an elderly and somewhat exotic lodger in their basement flat. Over two decades – Gill and I lived there until the Millennium – we became good friends and we came to understand, respect and enjoy their passion for collecting antiques and art. Albert often had a good story around this or that item in their collection. This is one of them and of the modest role I played in its final chapter.

Berlin: the late 1920s: Siegbert Eick (Siggi) is a buyer for a large department store. Rudolph Von Freiling (Rudi) works as a window dresser for the same store. They became friends, decide to live together. They support left-wing politics but do not join 'the Party'. Both had a passion for contemporary graphic art. They collect works from all over Europe.

The early 1930s and the onset of Nazi control of Germany: Siggi is Jewish. Siggi and Rudi decided to leave Germany. They emigrated to South Africa. They are able to bring their collection out with them. They made some of their living in Cape Town by dealing in graphic art – Siggi in particular.

Soviet Union 1941–'45: Two years into World War 2, the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact has collapsed. Nazi Germany has invaded the Soviet Union.

Cape Town 1941–'45: Communist party members and sympathisers the world over raised money for the Soviet war effort. Siggi and Rudi did this by holding exhibitions of their art collection in their Cape Town apartment. Visitors paid a small entrance fee to see the works.

The post war years, 1946/47: the Kremlin sent tributes and gifts via their overseas Communist Party branches to all those who helped the Soviet war effort. Siggi and Rudi thus received four posters as their gift from the Soviet Union. These posters are wartime, anti-Nazi propaganda: large hand-printed works which were made to be displayed in shop windows in Soviet cities and towns.

Cape Town and Berlin, 1950s: Siggi and Rudi befriend an aspiring, young, local artist who works for a shop display firm – Albert. Siggi, now eligible for war

reparation funds, leaves South Africa and returns to West Berlin. The posters and much of their collection stays on in Cape Town with Rudi.

London, mid-late 1950s: Albert, with Rudi's encouragement and financial guidance, had come to London to study painting at the Slade. In the late '50s Albert won a German State Scholarship to study Graphic Arts at Munich Academy and during this period he regained contact with Siggi. Albert returned to London and set up his studio here. Gradually, he made a living from his painting and his graphic works but also from part-time teaching. His reputation grows. He kept in touch with Siggi (in Berlin) and with Rudi (in Cape Town).

By the early 1960s: Albert and Edward Glennon (Ted) had together bought their house in Camden Town. In Berlin, Siggi became too old and frail to live on his own: he entered a nursing home and died there soon after.

London 1970s: Albert and Ted see the need to bring an ageing but indefatigably 'bohemian' Rudi over from Cape Town to live in the little flat in the basement of their Delancey Street home. The posters and the graphic art collection come to London with Rudi – who stayed on with Albert and Ted in London until his decision in the late 1980s to return to Hamburg where his nephew lives. The posters and the art collection then travel to Germany with Rudi.

Hamburg, mid 1990's: Rudi dies peacefully in a Hamburg nursing home. His Will leaves his art collection, including the posters, to his friends Albert and Ted. With their permission, Galerie Brockstedt frame the four posters and exhibit them at mainland Europe art fairs before they are sent over to London from Germany.

London 2001: The gallery contacts Albert and Ted to arrange shipment of the posters. During the Summer months, Albert had shown me photographs of these four posters and told me their story. The posters arrived back in London in the early Autumn of 2001. At that time I was Head of Chelsea College of Art and Design and with Liz Ward, my college Librarian, I arranged to visit Albert and Ted to see the recently arrived (and truly remarkable) posters. The idea of a loan exhibition at the college is mooted and agreed – and Albert suggests that the Imperial War Museum should also be approached – to consider accepting the posters as a gift to their collection from Ted and himself. In February 2002: my art college exhibited the four posters for the first time in the UK: some sixty years since they had been displayed in the shop windows of Soviet city department stores. The Imperial War Museum gratefully received Albert's and Ted's gift.

Colin Cina – artist and Professor Emeritus in Fine Art at the University of the Arts – London
Vienne, France, 2007

Bro Albert

You will be greatly missed by all who have been blessed by your presence, either as a friend, or in my case, as both a friend and a colleague. Your easy-going, kindly smile and the value of your brilliant comments in front of a painting were inspirational and now irreplaceable. It always made me wish that we could have met decades ago when the earth was young; when the likes of Dumile Feni, Sidney Khumalo, Durant Sihlali, "Mjax" Ngatane and so many others were still walking the earth, engaging in the mystical aspects of creation. You could have added immensely to the growing minds around you then.

The power and the beauty of your paintings and drawings will be a signpost for our future generation of artists at home and elsewhere. As Dumile said of our San rock painters: 'They left footprints'. So have you.

U Tatomkulu u mkentante ubexabise ukuthi "Uvuthelwe phakathi njenge vatala". Mna ndithi Hamba Kakuhle nwenga ka Adams! Umsebenzi wakho nokuzola kwako kusikhumbuzisa ukuba ubukhulu abubangwa. AmaThsaka athi "Ndabezitha"!

Amandla!

Louis Maqhubela - Artist, London

Vital and involved, a man of many talents whose creativity ran through everything he did.

Three images:

Albert with Ted, over a steaming stove, offering divine dinners - Afro/Indian/Euro fusion, in their beautiful dining room.

Crowned with battered brown trilby Albert passes our window, late, portfolio under arm, returning from his printing workshop.

A cheery wave!

Outraged Albert, marching through icy London, two million of us saying "NO" to Blair's Iraq war.

Youthful, concerned, brilliant, kind and empathetic - with a wicked sense of humour and a shout of laughter - Albert we love you.

From **Belinda and Tim Bruce-Dick**, Lecturer in Contemporary Architecture - City University, friends and neighbours for over

30 years Camden Town.

London, 2007

Albertova licnost se visoko uzdize iznad sredine iz koje on dalazi grleci sve one koje je sretao ...

Albert's personality transcended his background and embraced everyone he met; an artist whose soul sang an integral sense of justice, fairness and human decency, with visual harmony entwined with his inner strength in every creative step he took ... and above all constantly in tune and in accord with nature... never too far and never too close.

His inspirational creativity, striving for constant perfection was very intense and very infectious.

I shall miss him terribly but his countenance will shadow every creative step I take, indebted with utmost gratitude.

... Albert ce mnogo nedostajati ali njegova tolerantnost i pordska ce pratiti svaki moj novi korak, dugujuci mu nezmernu zahvalnost.

Biljana Tesic - Artist

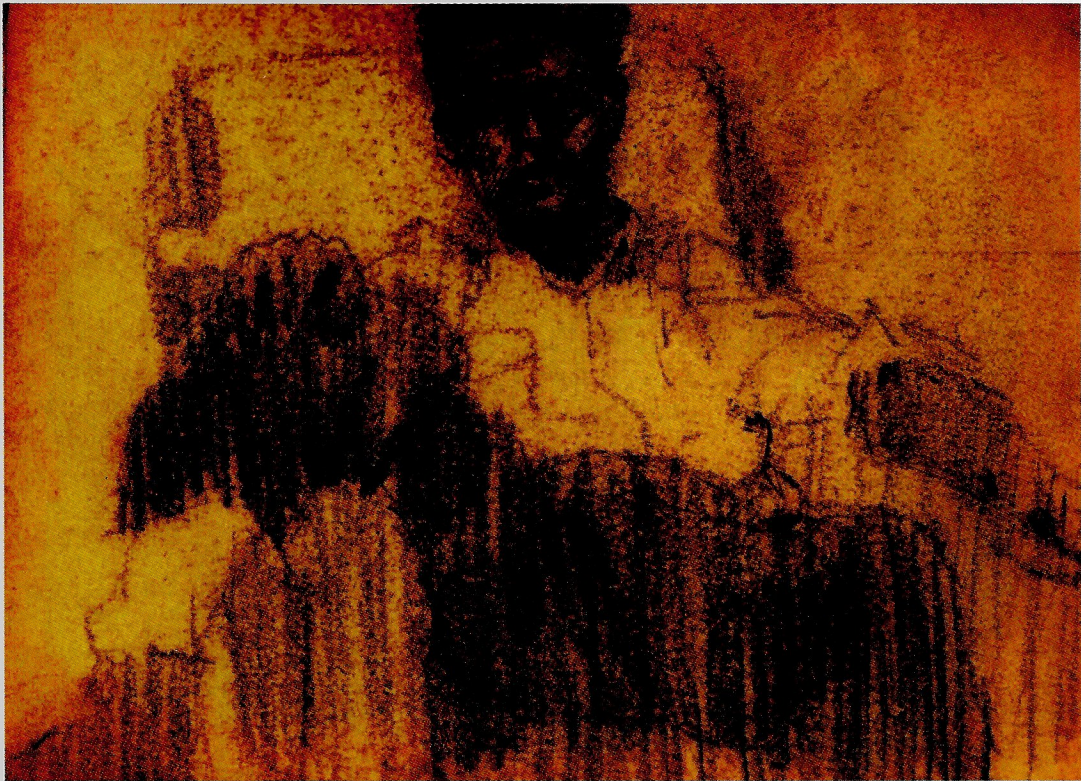
Sarajevo/London

Albert always worked in the same place in the print room, and always worked on big plates. He produced image after image of the same compelling intensity: the apes, the animal or human creatures, the images of incarceration all came clearly from the same place - somewhere well beyond the sheet of metal they inhabited - and addressed you again and again with the same questions; they looked back at you with the same insistence and refused to let you off the hook.

The blackness and richness of these images also reflected the intensity with which the plates were worked. Sometimes Albert worked away at the metal until it fell apart, until the acid bit holes in it. "I'm going to Black-and-Decker it", he'd say. The laugh that accompanied this statement of intent was energetic, dedicated and unsparing; at times I thought I glimpsed a kind of rage behind it.

Albert was an inspiration to me. I've been thinking about what this actually meant, in concrete, physical terms. Perhaps instead of "inspiration" I should have said reference point, or something like that - the steadiness of his creative purpose had (and still has) something magnetic about it. When I was struck with doubts there was always the sense of Albert steadily going about his work. If you were going to be poetic about it you could hark back to the notion of a lodestar, the true star sailors used to find their way across oceans. But then that might suggest a grandeur or pomposity about Albert that would be very wide off the mark. What was truly inspiring was the plain fact of his dedication to his work. There were jokes, of course. Albert's fantastic, resonant laugh; a sense of his huge enjoyment of things. But he was always working.

Susan Mackervoy, London



Albert Adams by Harold Riley

18th January 2006

Albert Adams and I were young students together - we lived in adjacent rooms in Connaught Hall a London University Hall of residence. I remember how cold ~~the~~ it was and seemingly at times - so alone. That Christmas was his first in England and he had nowhere to go so my family invited him to come and stay with us in the North of England, in Salford, Manchester. We grew to love him, and his gentleness and kind manner touched everyone. His drawing and painting was clearly influenced by the German Expressionist school and his style was only forming so I know that so little of his work remains from that time at the shade. His painful experiences when he returned to South Africa marked him, and planted a seed that fuelled his work in London, until he died. I will always remember him as my friend and fellow artist - and I know I will miss him until we meet again.

The Riley Archive, Albion Place, The Crescent, Salford M5 4NL.
Tel: 0161 925 9880 Fax: 0161 736 7654 Email: riley.archive@haroldriley.com

Harold Riley

In Albert's art one can discern the influences of German Expressionism, Neue Sachlichkeit and the art of Francis Bacon – but these influences were, I believe, fully assimilated into a vision that remained devoted to his South African roots. It was a vision of probity – devoid of sentimentality and nostalgia – and, yet, infused with a celebratory quality of life-affirming values. As a person, I shall remember Albert for his graciousness, his dignity and his wonderful sense of humour.

Joe Dolby

Curator of Prints and Drawings

Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town



LION.
PASTEL
52" x 62"

Magical stories in Delancey Street

Albert, and 5 year old Ian and Michael disappear upstairs, Albert to tell a story, and two enraptured little boys eager to listen. Hundreds of years ago Chinese cabinets were taken out to sea to be lacquered to prevent dust from spoiling the finish. Small voices asking "Did you row the boat Albert?" and Albert's great hearty laugh almost drowning out Ted's call that dinner was ready.

Thank you Albert for being you.

Andrew and Suzanne van der Heyden

Cape Town

Albert Adams heeft in januari 2005 een zeer succesvolle tentoonstelling gehad in de Universiteit Antwerpen. Een van de thema's op deze expo was bagage. Bagage moet hier zowel letterlijk als figuurlijk beschouwd worden ...

Albert Adams had a very successful exhibition at the University of Antwerp in January 2005. One of the exhibition's themes was luggage. Luggage to be taken both literally and figuratively. Albert Adams inflicted a long period of exile in Europe on himself. While he gathered diverse artistic experiences and impulses here, the suffering back home stayed with him. The artist walking on a hammock: a striking metaphor for his artistic predicament. And as he revealed to me in London: the monkey celebrates the remembrance of a toy monkey that he cherished as a child and that was often a consolation for him. He often drew and painted caged animals, sometimes caught in a snarling power game. These images strongly suggest a threat. But this holds true for most of his works. Cases in point are "The Cyclist", where the heads have been effaced, and the cycle "Celebration", where joy and sadness meet in close encounter.

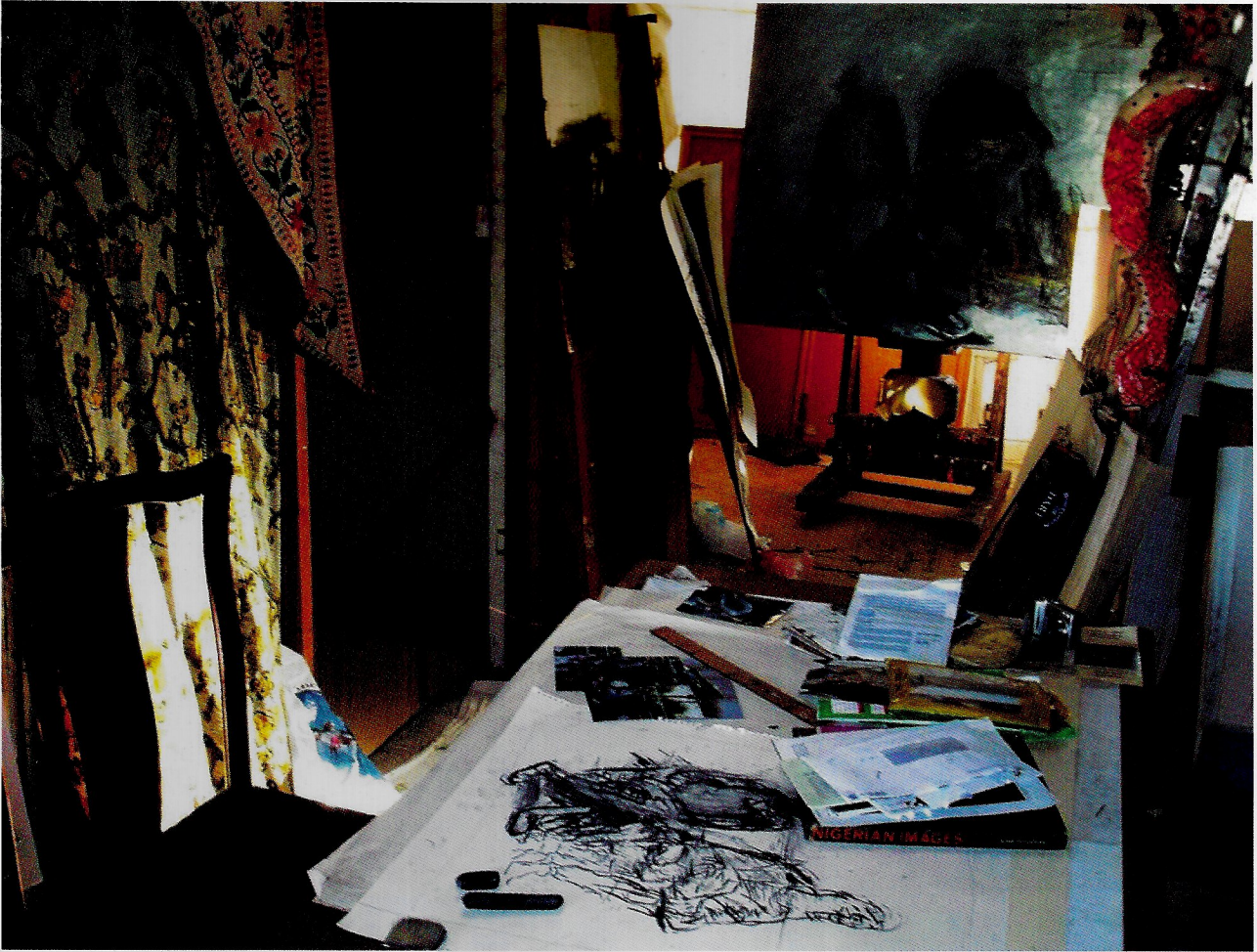
Albert Adams completed a long voyage, both mentally and physically. We'll miss his quietly impressive presence and his soft words. But his oeuvre will keep confronting us with a great artist.

Small wonder that Albert Adams belonged to the same family of mind as the legendary freedom fighter, Justice Albie Sachs, whom he knew already from childhood onwards. Justice Sachs became a passionate connoisseur of the fine arts and successfully integrated them into the public life of the new South Africa, while concurrently remaining a paragon of soft-spoken wisdom.

Both eminent men are linked for us in their shared commitment to universal values.

... Albert Adams heeft zowel geestelijk als fysiek een lange reis achter de rug. We zullen zijn rustige verschijning en zijn zachte woorden missen. Maar zijn oeuvre zal ons steeds confronteren met een groot kunstenaar.

Ernest van Buynder, President of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, 2007.



Albert's studio in the attic of his and Ted's Delancey Street home and his work in progress
Photographs by Graham de Smidt



I remember Albert as the older cousin who studied at Livingstone High and Hewat College and then went on to study fine arts in London (having been rejected by U.C.T.) He went on to lead a successful life in his adopted country.

A beloved and loving son, Albert visited his mother frequently and tended her in her last days.

A willing and gracious host to family and friends in his Camden Town house.

Betty van der Heyden,
Cousin

Cape Town, January 2007

My first meeting with Albert was at St Bride's Church in Fleet Street, where as a chaplain of the Guild of St Bride

I officiate at services from time to time. As a "Durbanite" we talked much about South Africa and about Cape Town which I know through my ministry with the Mission to Seafarers, a "harbour" for seamen since 1899.

Albert was a deeply spiritual person who, himself, was a seafarer in a metaphorical sense. He sailed across the oceans of life – often in stormy seas, often alone, often lonely never fearful of visiting and exploring those places seldom visited. It was a joy and a privilege to know him.

The Revd Canon Bill Christianson
Secretary General
The Mission to Seafarers
London, January 2007

St Brides, Fleet Street
Photograph: Edward Hill

Siegbert Eick had a party in 1957. Albert decorated the garden, I was the barman. In 1959 I bumped into Albert in a London theatre. He and Ted became family and Albert became Stefano's godfather. We have remained friends for 50 years. Albert is part of my soul.

Basil Smith - friend, London 2007

In August you came to say good-bye. You showed one work-on-paper after the other. They cried out unanimously against aggression perpetrated in the Middle East. Unexpectedly there was a flashback. You faced the headmaster in his office and said defiantly: 'I will only meet Eleanor Roosevelt as one of the other prefects, not separately'.

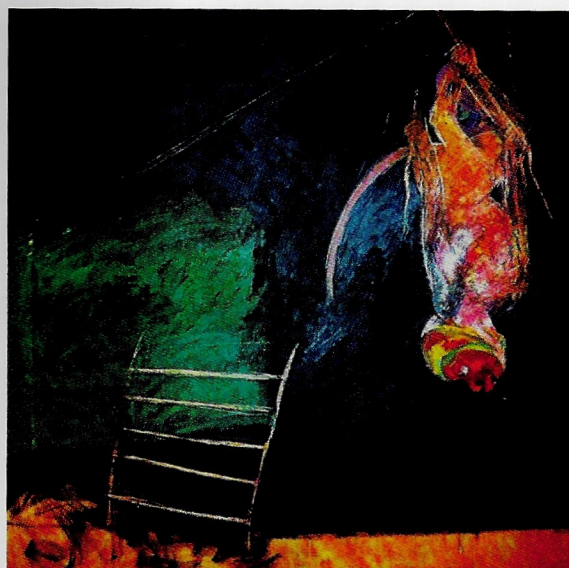
Dankie Albert, you valued lives.

Elza Miles – Art Historian
Johannesburg, January 2007



I can't be sad about Albert because whenever I think of him, I smile. We shared a love of going around junk shops and buying old objects and small bits of furniture. We liked similar things – earlier rather than later. The thing he was most proud of – and pleased with – was a Spanish box he found many years ago in the street: damaged and missing bits, he loved it as it was. It had survived neglect, and its beauty, for Albert, was intact. I enjoyed Albert's sense of fun and selfirony, but he was also serious and brave, especially around the subject of racism. He stood up at a performance of the Black and White Minstrel show, at the height of its popularity, and berated both actors and audience for partaking in what he understood was a disgrace. He never turned his back on a racial slur, but stayed to confront the bully. I met Albert through the printmaking class we attended at Morley College, both of us enthusiastic 3rd age students, and it was always a pleasure to see his battered old hat – the one that was placed on his coffin – was there on the hat-rack. I knew that we would have an interesting day. He wanted to know what you thought of his latest work, and he was in turn generous and insightful with his own thoughts about yours. More recently, I think about his deep love of India, not his country of birth but his ancestral and, I think, spiritual home. As he lay dying, he spoke of his wish to take his friends there, where we would all take tea on the veranda. He spoke to me also of an object he saw there on a recent trip, a wonderful carving of Shiva, that stayed vividly in his mind, and that he wished he could trade for all his objects. Albert loved good and beautiful things. My last memory of him was as he lay in hospital, insisting that Ted go home and bring back a decent bottle of wine, which of course Ted did, only to be scolded by Albert for neglecting to bring the appropriate glasses to drink from. Whatever the glass, here's to dear Albert, stylish to the end.

Charles Carey. London. January 2007



Some fifteen years ago, Adelaide and I were invited to an exhibition of work by a Ladysmith, Natal artist. She, the artist, very kindly invited us to a lunch in her honour. There we met a distinguished-looking man with typical South Indian features. It was Albert and in chatting to him we learnt that he was from Cape Town, though born in Johannesburg, and that he had come to London, years ago, to pursue his career as an artist.

We informed Albert that we too are originally from Johannesburg, now settled in London, at which point he confided in us that he had virtually no knowledge about his paternal relatives. All he knew was that his father carried the surname of Peters. Beyond that he knew nothing. When his parents separated, his mother returned to Cape Town, taking the young Albert with her. He expressed a desire to trace his father's family.

Further questioning established that he was born in End Street, Doornfontein. He was both pleased and puzzled to discover that I knew not only his father and his two half-sisters. He was delighted to know that his grandfather was an Anthony Peters, a Tamil Catholic who had been brought from India to work as an indentured labourer on the sugar plantations around Durban. When released from this backbreaking work, grandfather Peters joined a span of labourers used to lay the first railway line from Durban to Johannesburg. He eventually settled in Doornfontein and found work as a waiter.

Anthony Peters became a friend of the family. My mother, also a Catholic, came from Kerala and together, we worshipped at the Catholic church in Kerk Street, close to where we lived. Albert was tickled to discover that I could even tell him what brand of cigarettes Grandfather Peters smoked.

As an adult, I saw less and less of Grandfather Peters

until the 1956 Treason Trial hearings which, given the large number of accused, was held in the Johannesburg Drill Hall. Grandfather Peters often arrived with a packet of sandwiches which he ate by himself. There was now enough information for a delighted Albert to start rooting around some more.

Years later Albert phoned us in a state of great excitement. He had been watching a BBC documentary on the history of indentured labour in South Africa. His grandfather's name appeared on the passenger list.

Over the years Albert visited South Africa several times. He tried, and sometimes succeeded in contacting the few people who had retained their connection with the Catholic Church and who would or could have known his father and grandfather. Albert's search for any remaining paternal relatives was not easy. Apartheid legislation, notably the Group Areas and Race Classification Acts succeeded in fragmenting families who, by government dictat, were dispersed, often boxed into government designed racial pigeon holes and compelled to confine themselves to separate amenities.

In 2006, Albert was on the verge of meeting his half sister, Mary who, by sheer coincidence, had married the brother of one of my old school friends. Sadly, Mary died before Albert could make contact. Rita, the other half-sister could not be traced. It was of some satisfaction to Albert that he had got as far as he did in tracing his family and was looking forward to making further efforts, especially since Mary was heard to have had five children.

A visit to Albert and Ted, his long-term partner, was always an absolute delight. They entertained 'in style' and their beautiful house and garden, with its antique furniture, artworks and general décor a pleasure and a privilege to enter.

Albert as a person was important to us. So too was his art. It reflected both anger and hope. He was personally affected by the arrest and imprisonment of his cousins, Lesley, Betty and Doris and the imprisonment of his friends, especially Neville Alexander. He was an ardent opponent of Apartheid and it is good to know that he lived long enough to enjoy the freedoms provided by the new democratic government.

We loved Albert very much and memories of Albert, in the company of the gracious Ted Glennon, will remain with us forever.

Paul and Adelaide Joseph – Friends
London: January 2007



Albert Adams by Harold Riley

After the Slade, Albert Adams eschewed the traditional garret, cheerfully opting for the cheaper basement. In this chilly work-space, so ill lit it might have been under Store Street, he created some luminous murals on Biblical themes. Although over the ensuing half century of our friendship I have been more conscious of Adams's impressive gifts as a lyrical and satiric artist, last summer on a visit to his airy studio above Camden Town I was struck by the continuing inspiration Adams found in Sacred Art and Scripture, Christian no less than Hindu. Looking at his disturbing studies of locusts I commented: 'Surely, they are ravening more than just the Republic?' 'And not just Africa', Adams replied, 'I am thinking of the genocides and the political corruption that plague the whole earth'. At which our minds were flooded by memories both of St John's terrifying vision in Revelations and of the Hindu belief that ours is Kali Yuga, the Age of Chaos.

Peter L. Caracciolo, former resident of Connaught Hall and sometime Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Royal Holloway College, London University.

Dear Friends,

In all senses of the word, there was something so graceful about Albert that the poet Hopkins would have rejoiced over him. Well perhaps, he does, indeed, do so even now: "As kingfishers catch fire!"

Yours,

Peter C.

"At this time we reminisce on times spent with you Albert (and Ted) and the profound effect you had on both our lives; the privilege we had to sojourn at your gentleman's abode. Aesthete, cook extraordinaire, artist (painter and more recently printmaker) of note. But most importantly, a fabulous friend."

Alexis (Childrens Art Centre) and Derek Hanslo,
Cape Town, South Africa

The moment I met Albert in London in the early sixties brings to mind not only the image of a young and irrepressible artist but also, endearingly, of the colourful and noisy parrot who both shared his bed-sit and found its reflection in his paintings. Already the painter and his environment were an artistic fusion, and this remained the case for the rest of his life.

I knew no one who could react so vibrantly to everything around him, not just in his paintings but in his conversation, his acquisitions and, not least, his cooking. An invitation to his house in Delancey Street was an experience of cosmopolitan complexity - everything of museum quality from all parts of the globe on which Albert could speak with erudition and conviction. But all this could be very misleading. Underneath Albert's sophistication was an anger fed by a sense of social injustice.

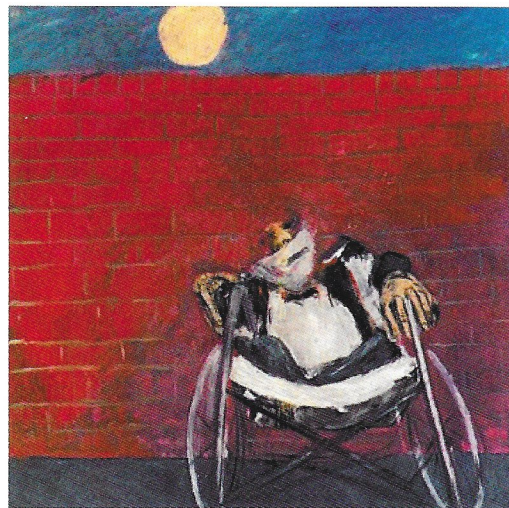
In many ways Albert made the world more beautiful, but this was never at the expense of what he saw as his duty to speak up for what was morally important. Art for Art's sake was not on his menu.

Michael Forbes Young

London, January 2007

Like dozens of fellow South Africans visiting or passing through London over five decades, I was very generously given refuge in the home of Albert and Ted in Camden Town. When I arrived at the tube station, Albert was waiting, in his long, dark cashmere coat and taupe-coloured 1930's trilby hat from Lock & Co - debonair and, at 76, still insisting on helping me trail heavy cases to the house. Albert had, together with Ted, made London home, having been driven from his race-riven native land. In his last few years in London however, he began to feel the tangible rise of bigotry and, he said, he felt more at home in India than he did in London. Perhaps this consciousness of the persistence of deep pain beneath life's surfaces informed the spirit of his creative work? Hamba Kahle Albert.

Shaun Viljoen



Celebration, oil on canvas

Collection of Iziko SA National Gallery

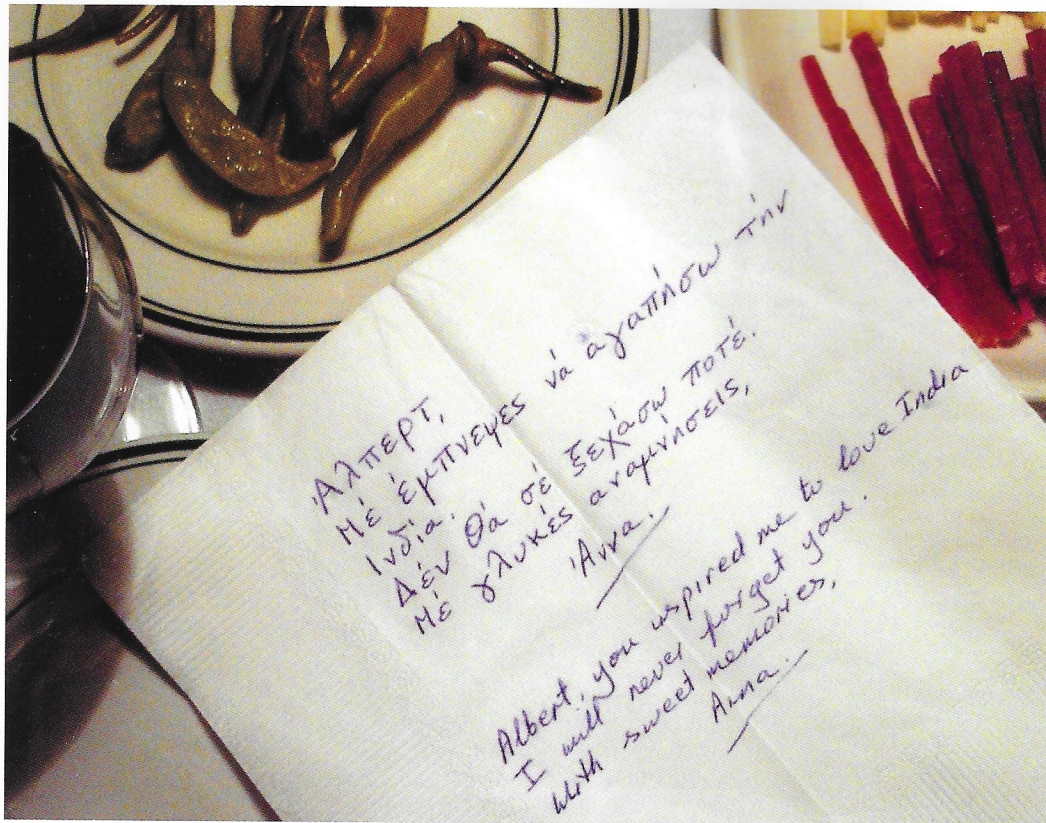
I am wholly unqualified to say anything about Albert Adams as an artist as I am a lawyer in Mumbai. But I knew Albert since when we were both students in London in 1953/4. We lost touch for some time but met every year for the past 7 or 8 years when he visited India. Albert, Ted, my wife, Sita, and I spent many enjoyable days together and last year she accompanied them on a trip to Kutch, in Western India, famous for its traditional crafts.

He was a fine man, like few others, with vast interests and a great tolerance and an understanding of life that few possess.

We were both looking forward to his visit here later this year, but it was not to be.

We shall miss a very good friend and a wonderful person.

Atul M. Setalvad. Senior Advocate.
Mumbai - India



Anna Lymbouri – proprietor, Daphne (the restaurant), Bayham Street, NW1

I see Albert now as I saw him for the first time, many years ago – his trilby hat on and wearing a beige trenchcoat with dark trousers and of course, smiling. At Morley College Print Dept. where he produced his etchings, his ideas were in the form of charcoal drawings and they were the point of departure for his etchings. We discussed mainly technical matters and had little time for other subjects. I always wanted to know the meaning for him of different recurring elements in his images: baboons, beards, bicycles, tightropes and their origins in his old life. I visited him in his studio before his last trip to South Africa. Pinned on the wall he had newspaper cuttings of violence, war and suffering. Surrounded by his paintings, drawings and prints, we talked for hours. He told me about some ideas he wanted to work on – images of violence used as patterns in prints, looking like wallpaper. We decided that when he came back we would meet more often as artists and debate what was not technical. It never happened.

Now I think of Albert, his profound humanity; his deep concern about the suffering and the injustice in the world. Albert the humble and unassuming person; Albert the artist with his profound power of expression.

Marc Balakjian
Morley College, London

Albert played a very big part in my life. As far back as I can remember he was always a part of our family. Albert and Ted were always there at those important family gatherings, from our baptisms to our birthdays, our weddings, anniversaries and even my own children's baptisms and birthdays.

As a child I remember going to Albert and Ted's parties with my parents, sitting on the stairs with my brother Stefano, eating a plate of curry and watching all the adults chatting, laughing and enjoying themselves. Albert's warmth, generosity and zest for life was abundant. Coming from an Italian family, my mother taught us to appreciate food so we were quite at home there. Later, when I was able to invite Albert and Ted to our various 'food' events Albert always took an interest in the dishes. He was not only a pleasure to eat with but a joy to cook for.

Albert also loved to dance and I have wonderful footage of him at my wedding getting very hot as he moved around the dance floor with that huge smile and infectious laugh. Albert, with his poise, dignity and presence, was also the obvious person to read the homily at my mother's funeral mass.

As an adult, wife and mother of 4 year old twins, life has become hectic and I can see now how selfless and generous Albert was, always finding the time and making sure that he was there at our family events. Albert combined kindness, warmth and creativity. He was always interested in our lives and I am privileged to have known him and humbled to have been part of his.

Antonella Sutton (nee Smith) - London

We mourn the passing on of Albert Adams, an exceptionally talented artist of international renown. Despite many obstacles Albert was able to pursue further studies at the Slade School of Art in London where he developed his exceptional talent. His remarkable achievement is an inspiration to us all, especially to our aspiring young artists at Livingstone and in South Africa.

Livingstone High School is very proud indeed to have played a part in Albert's development and to have him as an Alumnus. He will be remembered with respect and appreciation for the readiness with which he was prepared to share his accomplishments with us.

Rhoda Hendricks

Retired Principal of Livingstone High School
Cape Town

Albert's mom and my mom were two of the eight sisters in the Adams family. In the 1940's, I was a six-year-old with two younger brothers. Eleven-year old, Albert was our occasional babysitter while my mother was at her domestic service job. My cousin, Albert took great care of us and entertained us. I remember on one of these occasions when he drew a large map of Italy in the sand outside for us. "Great Heavens", I thought, "this is actually a place in the world - not a shoe"!

Albert was such a doting and talented cousin. He used to paint lovely faces on my worn-out dolls. I also recall that years later when I was ill in bed, he brought me a copy of Boccaccio's, Decameron. Whenever I visited London, Albert always remained my loving older cousin. He still took care of me. How I miss him.

Doreen Sarah Leitch - Cousin

Toronto,
Canada

January 18th 07

Dear Ted,

I am so sorry to hear of Albert's sudden death. I had no idea that he was so ill when I met him at the graphic studio in White River. As you know he was working on a very powerful & exciting set of works there.

I have seen very little of his work, but what I have seen, has always impressed me with its stern, solemn & in a sense, unforgiving (and rightly) so powerful & potent a voice. It was delightful to sit with him & Judy Mason & others, eating drinking and talking happily in the cool evening. It is good to know that his work will now be shown & celebrated at the National Gallery in Capetown

How dreadful must be your loss. Please accept my sympathy & understanding.

Yours sincerely
Cecily Sash.

Cecily Sash, Artist, Presteign, Wales

ہماری فاملی آلبرٹ آدم کو کریب بیس سالوں سے جانتی تھی اور انکی دوستی ہمارے لیے بڑے عیجاز کی بات تھی۔ وہ بڑے نیک اور صاف رحوں اور صحائف تھے۔ انکے ساتھ ہماری ملاقاتیں جو بمبئی میں ہوئی اور جو انکے لندن کے گھر میں ہوئی ہمارے دل میں کبھتی یادوں کی ترہ محفوظ رہی۔ وہ ہمیں ہماری دکان پر اپنے دوست بڈ کے ساتھ اکسر آتے رہتے تھے اور وہ ہماری انٹیف کی دکان کو بہت پسند کرتے تھے اور ہم بھی انکے آنے کا بیچینی سے انتظار کرتے کہ انکے تجربے اور باتوں سے ہمیں بھی بھوت کھ سیکھنے کا موکا ملتا تھا۔

ہمیں انکی کمی ہمیشہ محسوس ہوگی۔ انکی جگہ کوئی بھی لے سکتا۔ ہم اللہ سے ڈا کرینگے کہ وہ اپنی رحمت سے حنت کے آلہ درجوں میں جگہ دے۔

Our family was very fortunate to have a friend like Albert Adams. He was one of the most gentle and kind people we have ever known. Always very polite, soft spoke and hospitable. We will always treasure our meetings with him in Bombay and his wonderful home in London.

He was very fond of our antique shop in Bombay where he along with Ted visited us so often. We would always look forward to his visits as it gave us a chance to talk to him and learn so many things from him. ✽

We will all really miss him and pray that Allah grant him Jannat.

Farooq Issa and family, Mumbai, India

The death of Albert Adams is another sad and devastating loss for the South African art community.

Although I have been privileged over the past couple of years to handle a number of Albert's finest works I feel very fortunate to have met him on his last trip to South Africa. We spent two wonderful hours discussing his work at my gallery in Johannesburg. Although spending only a short time together it felt as though I had known him for many years.

Today as I write this I still feel his presence, particularly when gazing at a wonderful painting I own titled RESURRECTION which was painted shortly after his arrival in London from South Africa in 1960.

Albert may be gone in body but his spirit and presence will remain in his many wonderful works and in the memories of those who knew him.

Warren Siebrits – Gallery Owner
Johannesburg, 20 January 2007

One Oak is the home in Gibbon Avenue, Athlone, where Albert spent his early years. His grandparents, Alexander and Ann Adams, raised their thirteen children and several grandchildren in this house- now owned by Norman Adriaanse – one of the grandchildren.

Albert arrived at One Oak at the tender age of five and grew up surrounded by younger aunts and uncles and the odd cousin. The grandparents had moved from Newlands to Athlone at a time when the Cape Flats was 'opened up for Coloureds'. His grandfather was a coach painter and Quma Adams took in washing. Emma Adams worked in service as did most of her sisters. Her brothers attended Trafalgar High in Cape Town and became traffic policemen, plumbers, but the girls left school after standard four.

To his cousins Albert was always somewhat of a mystery. He was seldom around at holidaysspending time with his mother at such times – and he was older than most. When he went to Livingstone High, he left One Oak and boarded with friends in Grassy Park. We were all very excited whenever he visited and held exhibitions in S.A. but his experience differed radically from ours and we could only admire him.

His mother visited him on several occasions over the years and he remained the apple of her eye. He is much admired for the love and care he gave her, especially during her last months.

Elizabeth van der Heyden – Cousin, Cape Town

Even as a child, Albert was always a teacher –he taught me how to knit pineapple stitch. At night, one of our favourite games was that Albert would tie a towel around his head, fakir style, blow out all the candles but one, and then spook us into screaming fits, where we jumped madly on the beds, creating quite a din. My Ouma (grandma) would then call out to Oupa in Afrikaans: "Azanna, Azanna, go and see what the heck the kids are up to!" Oupa would then come into the bedroom with his belt. But before he could mete out punishment, we would quickly put spit on our eyes and cheeks and howl that we were only crying.

Albert and I grew up as brother and sister, and always loved one another.

Isabelle (Bellie) Berman
Cape Town

I am Albert's godson and son of Basil Smith. Basil married Teresa, our Italian mother, in England. We grew up very much in an 'Italian household' where the family was central. In this context, Albert and Ted formed part of several of our large family occasions. Albert and Ted also attended my mother's funeral nearly 8 years ago, at which Albert delivered a very moving tribute.

Albert was a warm-hearted and convivial man - an excellent listener who made people feel very comfortable. This was balanced with being a very good raconteur, who was able to hold people's attention. These qualities, in my experience, are rarely both present in one person but were clearly evident in Albert. Albert reciprocated by inviting us to warm, friendly gatherings at his home in Camden, London. Again, both Albert and Ted made great hosts and they were also great cooks. I will always remember Albert's South African dishes, particularly 'bobotie'(?).

He was a reliable constant in my life and I will never forget Albert.

Stefano Smith – Albert's godson
Edinburgh

Albert was my cousin and I now own the house in which he grew up. Albert never forgot his roots. The family refers to the house as "ONE OAK". The Adams grandparents originally owned 'ONE OAK' and this is where most of the grandchildren, including Albert, grew up or visited on Sundays. He was very interested in the Adams family tree and did extensive research into their origins. We spoke about the "old days" for hours. My wife, Rose, always reminds me that one's early upbringing plays an important part in one's life. Our grandmother looked after all of us while our parents worked.

My memory goes back to the end of 1959/early 1960. Albert gave two friends and me a few interesting lessons in water colour painting at the time. He had just returned from his studies and worked in a studio in Cape Town. He was very generous about these lessons, everything for free. All we had to do in return was to obtain models for him to paint from the Bokmakierie area on the Cape Flats where we lived.

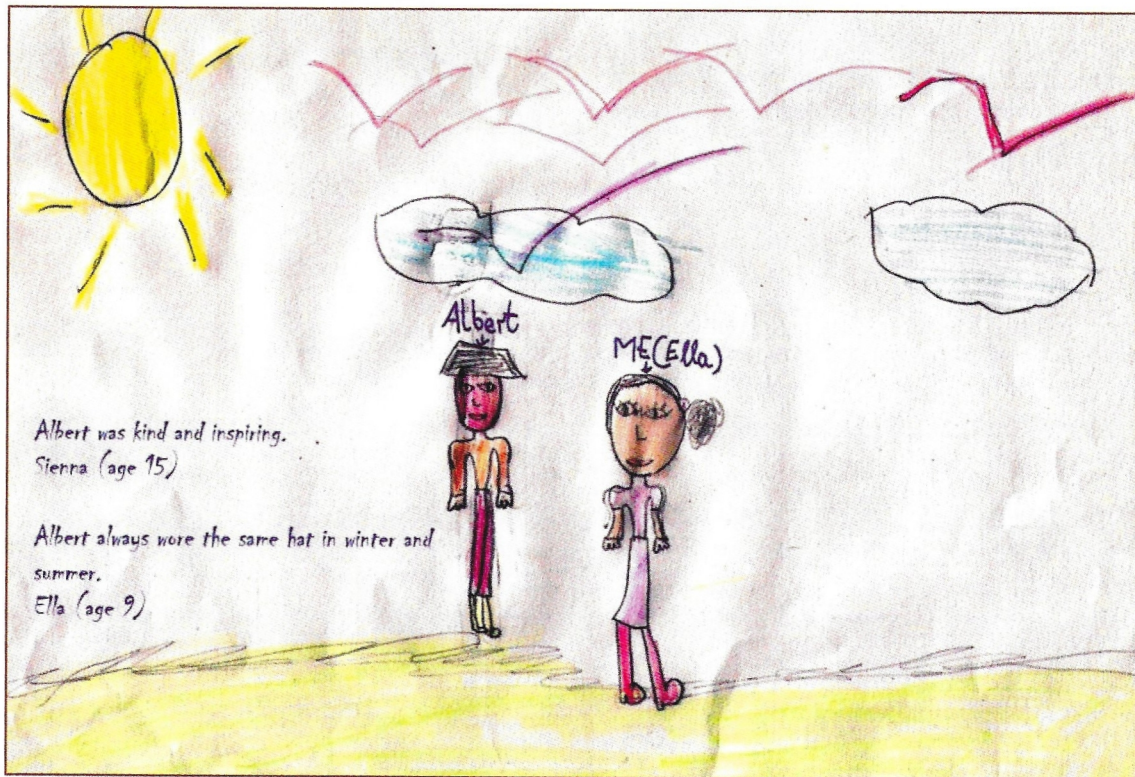
Then there was the time when he "spoke up for me" in 1994. It was just before the 1994 election. I was the only one in group of ANC party supporters who said that I was not taking part in the election because of my non-collaborationist standpoint. The group attacked me for this, but before I could be torn apart by the group Albert simply said 'Surely, every individual has the democratic right to his own opinion?' I was mercifully left alone ... I thought to myself "how lucky I was to have someone of Albert's calibre around since I would never have been able to express myself as calmly and as eloquently.

Norman Adriaanse – Cousin, Cape Town

My fondest memory I would say was his kindness toward me and my two children. He always had time to answer their questions. He was a specific inspiration for my oldest daughter who has a strong interest in Art. We both admired the way he continued to work and lecture and inspire. He was our friend and neighbour. We shall miss him.

Robyn Piccioni

Sienna 15 Ella 9



Albert held a special place in our hearts, even though we were miles apart. With his vast knowledge we could chat about most anything. Our times together were always motivational and encouraging.

May he rest in peace. We will always have fond memories of him.

Denise Joseph - niece

Cape Town

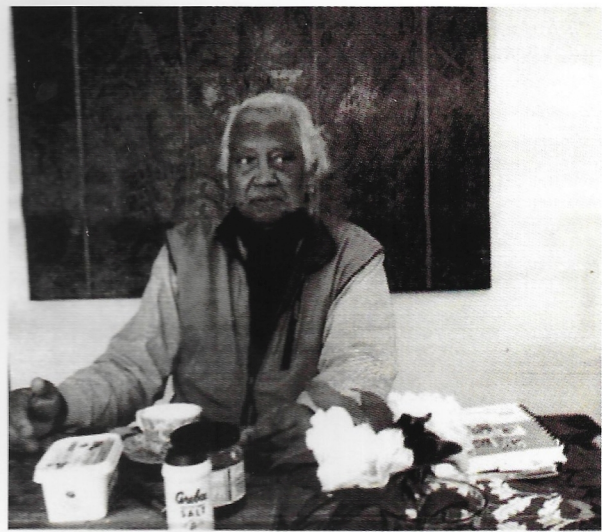
Dear Ted

I am writing to say how sad I am about Albert's death. I am also writing to say that I feel very honoured that I was able to spend time with him recently. It was so nice doing very ordinary things with him like taking my dogs for walks and Albert told me about the dogs you used to own. I am glad that I was able to take him to meet Clive Kellner and Warren Siebritz as I think that they had not met Albert before, although they had spoken to you. He also enjoyed the artist proof studio and said that maybe he could work there next time.

I feel that I do have some kind of history with Albert, starting when he first stayed with me in Durban about six years ago - we went to the Documentation Centre to look through the lists of indentured labourers who arrived from India, in search of his father. I think that he really enjoyed Durban with its "Indian" atmosphere and my home with its avocado and mango tree and the curry we ate together.

It was so nice to meet you and to have had supper with you both, as well as Ursula and Gilbert in London last year. I was part of the Visiting Arts programme and doing a collaboration with the Jamaican/ English artist Joy Gregory. Both Joy and I enjoyed our evening with you very much.

Bronwen Findley, Durban



Albert in my kitchen, after breakfast.
Keep in touch, Ted. I am thinking of you.
with love from
Bronwen

In 2003 Albert joined the Protea Dance Group – a group of mainly older South Africans. He approached his square dancing as if it was a work of art. He knew the rules of dance and was particular about technique.



He embraced his dancing with enthusiasm and joviality. He was lively, agile and full of verve. He certainly made a valuable contribution to this traditional dance form. He danced his way into our hearts and he did, actually, when dancing, take his hat off.

Elsa Perez, Sheila Gilmore, Myrtle Friester, Neville Galliet, Yvonne Laboudier, Edith Deppa and Ellen Lebete on behalf of the Protea Dance Group, London: January 2007.

ALBERT ADAMS
selfportrette van die tong

In 'n reeks rame teen 'n muur van die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsmuseum (SANK) struikel 'n mansfiguur onder die gewig van 'n bobbejaan. Die harige dier is ontdaan van onheil, maar dra antieke krag en onverskrokkenheid met hom mee. Soms lyk die bobbejaan soos die man se redding, soms soos sy verdoemenis.

Op party merk jy vrees in die man se oë, in ander lyk hy gehipnotiseer deur sy dierlike bagasie, selfs verblind.

Albert Adams (72), 'n Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar wat al langer as vier dekades in Londen woon, glimlag sag toe hy sy hand uitsteek. Dis net sy silwer hare wat 'n aanduiding van sy ouderdom gee. Want sy vel is glad, sy gemoed oop, sy klere klassiek Europees, sy aksent warm-aartappel-in-die mond Brits.

Hy is tydelik terug in die Moederstad vir sy tentoonstelling in die SANK en om sy ma (99) in 'n tehuis vir verswakte senior burgers te plaas.

"Ek weet nie hoe lank ek gaan bly nie, want ek sal nooit kan slaap terwyl my ma nog verward in haar nuwe omgewing is nie. Sy het amper elke jaar vir my in Londen kom kuier. Maar ek, as ek hier in die strate stap, dan weet ek verbygangers sien my as 'n besoeker. Ek is nie meer 'n Suid-Afrikaner nie. Ek was nog nooit 'n Suid-Afrikaner nie."

SELFPORTRET I – SUID-AFRIKA

"Ek is in 1930 in Johannesburg gebore. Toe ek vier was, het ek saam met my ma, suster en 'n sagte speelgoed-bobbejaan, my trooskombers, Kaap toe gekom. Ek het by my ouma gaan woon omdat my ma 'n inslaap-huishulp was. Ek het nooit 'n pa geken nie.

"In my ouma se huis was ek geskok oor hoe baie kinders daar gewoon het. Toe het ek skelm oorgeslaap waar my ma gewerk het. Ek moes stilletjies insluip as die mense eet en soggens weer weg wees voordat hulle opstaan. Dit het 'n groot invloed op my lewe gehad. Ek het gedurig alleen in my ma se buitekamer geskuil – die gevoel van inkerkering, beklemming. Ek moes myself vermaak en het 'n potlood opgetel.

"My politieke bewustheid het by die Hoërskool Livingstone in Distrik Ses begin. Distrik Ses ... haai, ja, dit lyk my Distrik Ses is nou weer vreeslik in die mode hier ... nou het amper almal die een of ander tyd in Distrik Ses gewoon ... Voor Livingstone, besef ek nou, het ek apartheid as die status quo gesien, dit aanvaar soos 'n kind aanvaar dat hy sal brand as hy aan 'n warm stoofplaat raak.

"Livingstone se hoof en die kunsonderwyser, mnr. Esterhuizen, was briljante mense, maar mal.

Heeltemal gek. Ek het my aanvanklik opgehou met die natuurwetenskappe omdat ek vertel is dit sal 'n beter loopbaan verseker, maar tydens middagetes en ná skool het ek en Peter Clarke kunsklasse geneem. Toe roep die skoolhoof, mnr. Roberts, my eendag en vra of ek iets hoor. 'Hoor jy dit, die geroep? Verbeel ek my, of roep die kunsklas na jou? Luister na wat die kunskamer van jou wil hê.' Dis hoe ek geleer het om the skilder wat jy om jou sien. Ek is van die ou skool, ek bevraagteken nie juis die aard van kuns nie.

"Ek wou by die Michaelis-kunsskool gaan studeer, maar destyds wou hulle nie bruin en wit studente in dieselfde klas toelaat nie, veral nie in die klasse waar naakstudies gedoen is nie! Die grap is natuurlik dat die meeste naakmodelle nie wit was nie.

"Daarom het ek, soos amper alle swart kunsstudente destyds, 'n ticket-writer geword. Dis die mense wat prys-etikette uitgeskryf het. Baie het op die tussenverdieping by die OK Bazaars gaan werk, daar waar die Goue Akker nou is. Jy moes lig van kleur wees, sodat jy vir die kopers wat jou van die grondvlak af kon sien, minstens wit gelyk het. Ek was te donker.

"Toe het ek werk gevra by Dicky Trout se eenmansaak in Pleinstraat. Hy was altyd, altyd dronk. Hy kon my nie vergoed nie, maar het my treinkaartjie betaal. Toe my ouma hiervan hoor, het sy my uit die huis gegooi. Een van Trout se kliënte, 'n Duitser, het my werk gesien en 'n aanbod gedoen om vir hom te kom werk: 'n salaris plus treingeld. Só het ek genoeg gespaar sodat ek na Hewat-kollege kon gaan.

"Toe ek klaar was by Hewat, het hy my aangemoedig om aansoek te doen om 'n beurs om aan 'n Europese kunsskool verder te studeer. In 1952 het hulle Jan van Riebeeck se koms gevier en ek het 'n beurs gewen om 'n jaar lank na die Slade-kunsskool in Londen te gaan."

By Slade het Adams 'n toekenning en 'n beurs gewen om aan die kunsskool in München te studeer. Hy het ook meesterklasse van Oskar Kokoschka bygewoon en teruggekeer na Suid-Afrika vir twee tentoonstellings, onder meer sy eerste solo-uitstalling. Sedertdien het hy in onder meer Joego-Slawië, België, Duitsland, Brasilië, Amerika en Brittanje uitgestal.

SELFPORTRET II – BRITTANJE

"Ná my eerste suksesvolle uitstalling in die Kaap is ek in 1960 permanent terug Londen toe. Soos enige jong mens het ek daarvoor gedroom om die nes te verlaat. En buitendien het ek in die sewe jaar voorheen baie vriende daar in die kunstewêreld gemaak. Ek wou terug, want ek het my vriende gemis. Dit was nie eerstens 'n politieke besluit nie."



Adams was 18 jaar lank 'n dosent in Europese skilderkunsgeskiedenis aan die City-universiteit in Londen en het in 1997 afgetree.

SELFPORTRET III – INDIË

“Toe ek Indië die eerste keer besoek het, het ek 'n enorme verwantskap – grootliks visueel – met die land ontdek. Ek het na die mense gekyk en gedink ek lyk soos hulle, al is ek van Engeland en al voel ek heeltemal tuis in Engeland.

“Ek dink die moeilikste vraag aan enige mens is om te antwoord wie jy is. Ek het myself not nooit as 'n balling gesien nie, want al is ek in Suid-Afrika gebore en getoë, was ek 'n tweedeklasburger wat nooit soos 'n Suid-Afrikaner gevoel het nie. Ek dink ook nie aan myself as 'n Brit nie, want hoewel ek in Europa die eerste keer ware vryheid geproe het, is daar ook antagonisme teenoor vreemdelinge. Ek het myself nooit 'n Suid-Afrikaner genoem nie; eerder gesê ek is van Suid-Afrika.

“Maar bowe alles het ek myself in Indië ontdek; ek het ontdek net ouderdom en opvoeding kan jou help om dinge te verstaan. Ek is 72, maar ek verstaan nog nie. Ek doen ondersoek. Met my kwas.”

Weer 'n hand wat groet, sag en sonder bagasie.

“Weg” sê hy, met verwysing na sy Afrikaans wat verroes het. “But it comes back, especially when I read. Weg ... Gone ...street ...fight?”

“Veg? V-e-g?”

“That's it, yes. Struggling with yourself?”

‘Bagasie Kuns’ deur Johan van Zyl, *Die Burger*, 13 Julie 2002.

An English translation is available from Lorna de Smidt, grahamlorna.desmidt@ntlworld.com

I had the honour to arrive on Ted and Albert's doorstep in London last year, having heard from several quarters that this was a leading and great man in the world of South African art.

Under normal circumstances I would have known of Albert Adams, not merely have heard of him, but I am a South African. And our history, especially our cultural history, is a jigsaw puzzle blown up from beneath. The good part lies in finding some pieces again. To me personally - a "white", Afrikaans-speaking South African - Albert Adams represented one such a piece.

The hospitality of Albert and Ted towards an almost complete stranger was a most memorable vignette in the impersonal stream of consciousness of a chaotic world, and I cherish it. I was in London for a Poetry International event, in my capacity as a poet. We met all too briefly for some days in London in October 2006. This was more or less when Albert started to become ill but little did we know how seriously.

I am deeply thankful that our paths had crossed. I left Albert and Ted with a pang of sadness. Albert took great care to show me parts of London - a city I had last experienced as a child - relating stories of local history but also the history of those South Africans who had been forced by dire political circumstances to make this city of exiles their home. Come to think of it, I might have been one of his last pupils.

The informed humility and the stance of compassionate, askew critique that marked Albert's discourse, on even mundane matters, was touching and charming. I soon realised that this was a man who looked through a chink called the moment aslant, passed over by the

world. That was where he crouched, in dedication, and in quiet self-confidence, touching lightly. The world was his patient. Not the other way round.

He met me half way, in anything that was said. Because I crossed from my side of an inherited divide, he crossed from his. Not once did he sacrifice a shred of indignation but not once did he uncouple this from objective understanding. I actually remember thinking: "This is a good way for a very old world to become fresh again."

One could say Albert died in exile. But without lively, continuous contact with our intellectuals abroad - people like Albert - it is South Africa which is in exile from itself. Albert, go well. Hamba kahle. It was good to meet you. People like you never stop travelling. Places and people need to share you.

Charl-Pierre Naude - Poet, Johannesburg



Abu Graib

Es ist viele Jahre her, etwa in den 70er - Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts, als Rudolf von Frieling nach Hamburg kam, um seine Familie zu besuchen. Mit ihm kam Albert. Wir, meine Frau Ursula (Rudolf von Frieling ist ihr Onkel) und ich, Klaus trafen Albert zum ersten Mal.

Albert, vom ersten Augenblick an herzlich, vertrauensvoll und fröhlich, mit einem Lächeln, nicht über das ganze Gesicht, aber immer in seinen Augen. Von ihm ging eine große Ausstrahlungskraft und ein Charisma aus. Wir waren fasziniert und zugleich glücklich ihn kennen zu lernen. Es sollte der Beginn einer langen Freundschaft werden.

Er kam von Zeit zu Zeit zu uns nach Hamburg und dann erlebten wir Albert, vital, aktiv und immer voller Ideen etwas zu unternehmen. Manchmal konnte man nicht erahnen, was er als nächstes unternehmen würde ...

... In the 1970s Rudolf von Frieling came to Hamburg to visit his family. With him came Albert. Ursula, Rudolf's niece, and I, met Albert for the first time. We were fascinated and, at the same time lucky, to become acquainted with Albert. It was the beginning of a long friendship.

From time to time Albert visited us in Hamburg. He spoke to us about his impressions, what he observed. Sometimes this was a surprise to us. Through his eyes we learned things about our city, a city in which we were born and where we live.

We always visited Albert and Ted with great pleasure. Albert took care of all that had to be done, whether early in the morning or late at night. He prepared and cooked our meals. He told us what bus-stop to use; he knew where to buy cheap socks; or which tube or railway-line to use. He advised us with a smile that came from his heart.

Albert rarely accompanied us. Today we know it was the best way for us to discover London. We also now know that he wanted us to do things for but always with well-meant advice which meant that we never got lost.

There is something more, that was typical of Albert and which we loved. Albert used to speak to Ursula in German, always with an apology for his "bad" German. To me he only spoke in English. Conversation usually took time and often were full of language mistakes, which kept us laughing. What was important is that we always understood each other perfectly.

Albert invited us to his exhibitions openings. There we saw another Albert - the public Albert. He would introduce us as 'his friends from Hamburg'.

We will always remember, after a dinner in Delancey Street, washing the dishes, a task that Albert hated. I was drying a heavy, undoubtedly very old plate. I was filled with fright when I realised that this plate was more than 200 years old. I asked Albert if it was not an extraordinary risk to use such a valuable plate for everyday use. The risk of damage or breakage! Albert looked at me for a long while and then said: "You are right Klaus. This is a very old and also valuable plate. But I think it is better to use such a thing every day, and each time you use it to enjoy its beauty. It is good

for one. What will the plate be worth when once you are dead you never used it or appreciated its beauty."

30 years is a long, long time for a friendship. We say: The time of our friendship was too short.

Danke für Alles was du uns gegeben hast Albert.

Ursula und Klaus Scharlibbe

Hamburg

Albert was my friend, and I feel very privileged to have known him. We sat beside each other at printmaking classes at Morley College, London, and it was wonderful to watch him working. He worked very hard, and seemed to put his heart into every piece of work. He felt very strongly about South Africa, of the past troubled times, and also the present troubles, and he expressed this in his work. He was a complete master of printmaking, and produced some very beautiful pieces of work, each piece coming from the heart. He was a real inspiration. He was also very appreciative about other people's work. I know he gave me a lot of encouragement, and really helped me to keep going, even when I thought my work was not up to much.

Albert was a lovely gentle man, with a great sense of humour, and a wonderful sense of fun. If for any reason he missed a class, he was sorely missed by everyone. Our Classes are not the same without him. He has left a huge void. I know I speak for all the students who knew him, that it will never be the same without Albert.

Norma Synnott

Albert made prints with Stanley Jones at the Curwen and his friendship with Dorothea Wight and Mark Balakjian of Studio Prints led him to join part-time classes at Morley College where they are both tutors in printmaking. He joined Morley College Printmaking Department in 2000 because he wanted to use the medium of etching for several series of prints to be shown in his native South Africa. Some of the first etchings he did at Morley called 'The Incarceration' were inspired by a recent visit to Robben Island, but in all his etchings, the experiences of his formative years in an apartheid society have left an indelible mark. Many of the etchings depict an ape which Albert explains to be memory of a toy baboon he had as a child which 'while journeying from Johannesburg to Cape Town – a permanent move – was my only comforter'. He uses the ape in the series of 'Man on a tightrope'

When Albert joined Morley College as a student about six years ago he was immediately accepted and loved by students and staff alike. He was an inspiration to the students in his hardworking approach and his infinite diplomacy in a crowded workshop situation. He had a wonderful, gentle sense of humour and seemed to develop a special relationship with each of the printmakers at Morley. Tragically, when he died, he was working for a show in South Africa and four museums had already asked for a set of the six etchings that he was making at Morley.

He will be sadly missed in the classes but everyone will be glad to have had the privilege of working with such a talented artist.

Dorothea Wight

Tutor in printmaking

My first memory of Albert was when our mother brought him to Cape Town from Johannesburg - I was eight years old and Albert was 4 years old. What was significant was that he fitted in immediately with the family. Albert could speak Xhosa and he could do African dancing and singing. This made him very popular with the other children.

He was always a keen gardener, even before school-going age - and complained to our mother when the other cousins picked his flowers! His favourite game was what we called 'secrets' where you could hide a beautifully patterned 'creation' in the ground and covered it with sand. Later at your pleasure you could uncover it again without anybody else knowing about it. This was how Albert dealt with the lonely side of his life.

I remember having to half carry Albert when running away from bullies on our way to school. This was all part of life and survival at that time. At the time we were very poor and Albert, believe it or not, only had one pants to his name! Yet, he was always neat and clean!

Because of the overcrowded conditions at One Oak, some 20 people, and the children having to sleep on the floor, Albert was sent to board and lodge at the Van Dieman's house. Here Albert met the Banderkers, the Raaf's, Rhoda Samuels and many others who later became friends. During the '80's we had a few family hiccups, as happens in many families. But our good relationship resumed in the latter years of his life. We became close again!

Gertie Joseph, Sister - Cape Town

Late one sunny afternoon, in 1952, I met with some fellow students at Denis Bullough's home in Bree Street. They were Bill Curry, Richard Rive, Leonard Dixon and Albert Adams ... Albert, then Head-student at Hewat Teacher Training College, cut a smiling and ebullient figure. It was immediately obvious why he had been elected Head Student. He displayed an air of confidence which made me quite envious. I was in my first teaching post at the Children's Art Centre and still not quite sure where my life was heading, and there was Albert already planning his ... talking about saving up to study abroad.

After that first encounter, we met several times with his friends, Rudolph von Frieling and Siegbert Eich. Albert talked about the part-time job of window dressing which he was doing for a few shops in Cape Town, Paarl and Worcester.

I accompanied him in Rudi's Peugeot on his windowdressing rounds, when he would talk about going to Britain to further his studies at an Art College. He had such a persuasive manner that I seriously considered packing in my teaching job and going into window dressing. (He actually tried to persuade me to take over his job when he was getting ready to go abroad). It was then very obvious that this was no pipe-dream for him, but a fervent desire to go to England.

Albert enjoyed life, loved his clothes, and looked forward to his Sunday morning equestrian jaunts on Muizenberg beach, suitably kitted out for the occasion. He also loved dancing with Rhoda, his dancing partner.

He was a very private person and I only found out here in Britain that he had been refused entry to the Michaelis Art School in Cape Town because of his colour.

With help and advice from Rudi von Frieling, Siegbert Eich and Denis Bullough, he departed for London.

Living in London brought with it challenges which Albert faced with good humour helped with the friendship of Johaar Mosaval.

We met again in London in 1960. As our budget was limited, food shopping in Camden High Street consisted of the cheapest cuts of meat and boiler chickens. Albert never allowed me to become despondent and we spent many Sundays in my bedsit in South End Green Hampstead, glued to an old television set kindly left by the landlord. This was a luxury we could not otherwise have afforded, and my room contained a cooker which his did not!

I was amazed that Albert was able to produce a wholesome cooked meal on an upturned electric fire in South Villas!

When he met Ted, he became more settled and the purchase of 31 Delancey Street, demanded much of their time.

With the lovely kitchen provided by Ted, Albert was able to host many excellent dinners displaying his excellent cooking skills in Indian cuisine.

Always willing to give of his time, he spent many hours helping to manage my garden, which bears witness of his efforts.

There were times when work in his studio demanded his fulltime attention, and he would decline jaunts out into the country or visits to street markets.

Then there were times, especially in the summer when the studio would be too hot, he would then happily spend his time visiting Garden Centres, Health Clubs and Show Gardens, and tending my wild garden! Albert was always deeply concerned about respect for human dignity which was so seriously threatened in South Africa under the Apartheid regime. We had many intense discussions and arguments about what should be provided for future generations in education, and social commitment. I will dearly miss his generosity of spirit, passion for his Art, and his loyal friendship.

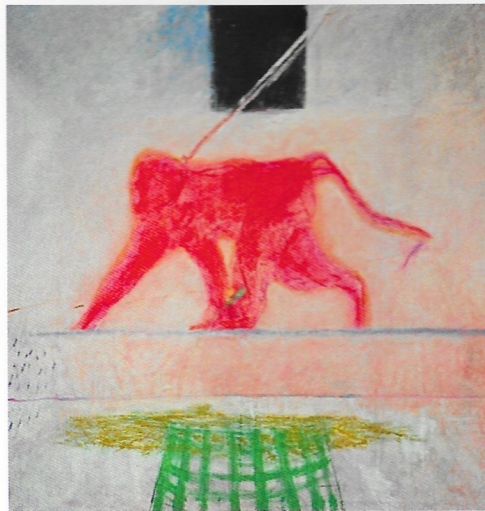
Gilbert Reines, London



Abu Graib

Monkey on a Tightrope

Tribute to Albert Adams, by Albie Sachs



Monkey 2004-5 Collection
of the Constitutional Court, Johannesburg.
Presented by the Flemish
Ministry of Arts and Culture

I wish I could recall the name of Albert's mother, who was a benign and kindly presence in my late childhood. She worked in the home of my schoolfriend, Lennie Hoffmann, now a distinguished judge in the House of Lords, London. After school I would walk up the hill to Lennie's house, where we would play ping pong on the dining room table. When the game was over we would take the net away, and Albert's mom, who looked after the house, would bring us tea and cake, and always say a few friendly words with a smile. Occasionally her son Albert would appear. Although we shared a first name, and he was likeable, energetic, and full of fun, this was apartheid South Africa, and no one suggested that Albert play ping-pong with us. He was there, and he was not there.

A year or two later, when I was at University, Lennie informed me with some pride that Albert was becoming recognized as "a promising young artist." And in the years and decades that followed I would read about this promise being realized. I took special pleasure in learning that he worked with Oscar Kokoschka, and then that his work was being shown with some acclaim in Europe and Cape Town. I assume that from time to time he would read about what was happening to me, and have a similar interest in my progress.

Yet, as I recall, it was only about two years ago that we met again. Professor Jan de Groof, who had invited me to visit the University of Antwerp, mentioned that they were exhibiting work by a Cape Town artist called Albert Adams. I told Jan about my connection with Albert, and the next thing I knew Albert was on a train from London, and we were to meet again.

Before he arrived I hastily looked at his paintings. I responded both to those with bold and warm colours, and to a series in stark black and white. Then I began to discern poignant and distressed images, glowing and intimate artistic engagements with pain.

Finally, Albert walked into the hall. He was elegantly and carefully attired, and spoke with the modulated cadences of an English-style academic. No longer the bouncy, electric kid I dimly remembered, yet warm, very warm. I think we were both on the verge of tears, yet we held back from fully expressing our private emotion in front of our beaming hosts. I was dying to ask Albert if he would consider donating one of his works to the Constitutional Court, but felt too embarrassed to put the question. Later, I discovered that he was aching to offer one, but was afraid this might embarrass me!

Monkey on a Tightrope now hangs over the entrance to the public reading room of the Court's library. Having somehow managed to break through the awkwardness of each not wanting to intrude on the other, Albert and I joyfully arranged for this picture to be sent to Johannesburg. It was large and strong and right for a public place, presenting complicated emotions in an uncomplicated way. Albert mentioned to me that when his mother had left his father and taken him to Cape Town, the only possession he had was a rag-doll monkey, and that the image of a monkey was now surfacing in many of his works. He added that on his return to South Africa he had been thrilled by the wonderful changes that had taken place, yet had not felt really free, and all the time lived with the sensation that he was still tethered.

For users of the Court's library this picture is no doubt just one of the many artworks that make the building glow. For me it has a very personal resonance. It reminds me that late in our lives Albert and I had found something extra in common: we had both discovered L.L.L. - late life love. London was the place where Albert was able both finally to develop his art and express his love for his companion. It also conveys in a poetic way what we have both lived through over the decades. Finally, it serves as a lasting tribute to the integrity, skill and humanity of someone whose memory to me is especially intimate, not because we were close, but because we were kept apart.

Albie Sachs, 30 January 2007

Die kunstenaar steek oor

Charl-Pierre Naude

Niemand ken die sameloop
van die rieële en die irrieële
beter as die kunstenaar.

By daardie punt
aan die oewer van die Lethe
staan Albert Adams
met dié sussende wete:

die boot wat hom gaan oor neem
is deur homself geteken.

(The loose translation):

The artist crosses
Nobody knows the confluence
of the real and the unreal
better than the artist.

At that point
on the banks of River Lethe
stands Albert Adams

with the soothing knowledge
that the ferry he's waiting for
was drawn by himself.)

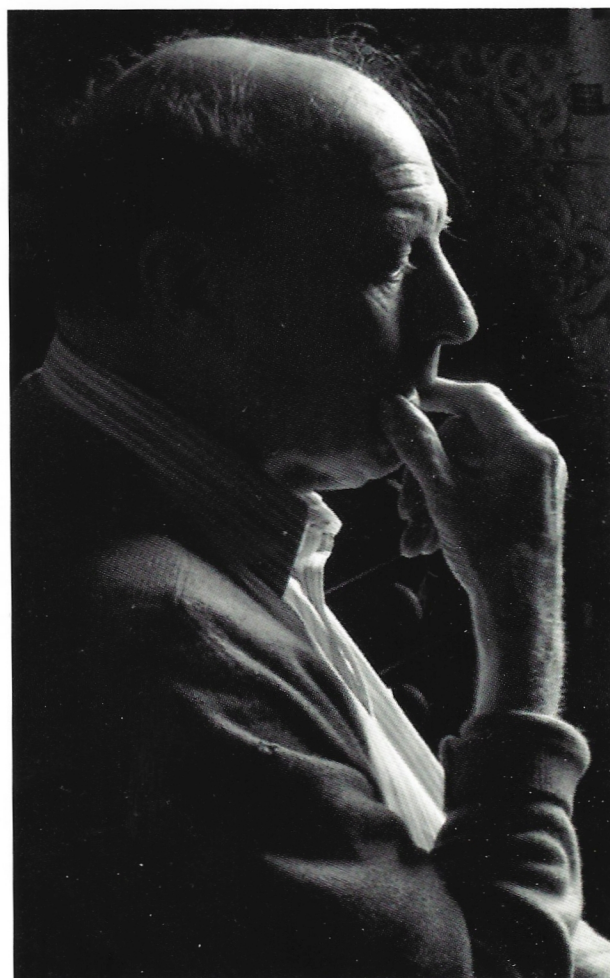
“What more can one say? Albert Adams was a great artist”.

Sharon Lomofsky

South African filmmaker, New York: January 2007

Albert, kept his sense of humour to the end. One day, not long before he died, a doctor said to him "what would you like for lunch today Mr Adams?" The swift reply was "a bowl of clear chicken soup and a glass of chilled Sauvignon Blanc" When I think about it, I must be the luckiest person in the world. To have met, quite by chance, this most amazingly wonderful person, Albert Adams, to have loved him and to have been loved by him, for more than forty years. Long after we are all gone, he and his work will be remembered. South Africa should now honour the son it once rejected. Albert is now at home.

Ted Glennon, 31 Delancey St.
London NW1



Photograph by Graham de Smidt



Photograph by Desmond Francis

Tribute co-ordinated and designed by
Lorna and Graham de Smidt



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