ANNO 1695

# La Motte

*a culture of excellence*

## *Deurdagte Reis – 'n viering van vrouekunstenaars*
## *Thoughtful Journey – a celebration of female artists*

# *Florence Zerffi (1882 – 1962)*

Zerffi is in 1882 in Londen gebore en het in Londen en aan die Königliche Kunstgewerbeschule in Berlyn onder die leiding van prof. Emil Doepler gestudeer. In 1916 het sy na Kaapstad verhuis en sy is kort daarna tot lid van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaarsvereniging verkies. Sy het aan verskeie groep-uitstallings deelgeneem, met inbegrip van dié van die Kunstenaarsvereniging van Suid-Afrika. Met haar betrokkenheid by kunskringe was sy 'n kollega van ***Nita Spilhaus***, met wie sy bevriend geraak het.

Van 1921 tot 1924 was Zerffi die Bewaarder van die Michaelis-versameling in die Ou Stadhuis. Na hierdie aanstelling het haar deelname aan uitstallings van die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaars-vereniging tot 'n einde gekom en sy het verskeie uitstallings saam met ***Ruth Prowse*** gehou.

In 1924 is Zerffi met die kunstenaar Harry Stratford Caldecott getroud. Deur die jare het die egpaar gereeld saam uitgestal, met hul eerste gesamentlike uitstalling in 1925. Caldecott het een van Zerffi se gunstelling-onderwerpe vir haar skilderwerk geword. Hul style was volkome teenoorgesteld – Zerffi s'n was die resultaat van haar Duitse opleiding, terwyl Caldecott s'n invloede van die Franse skool getoon het.

Na Caldecott se dood, in 1929, het Zerffi private kunsklasse by verskeie hoërskole in Kaapstad begin gee. Johannes Meintjes was een van haar leerlinge wat as 'n kunstenaar in Suid-Afrika beroemd geword het.

As stigterlid van die *Nuwe Groep** in 1938 het sy gereeld saam met die groep en alleen uitgestal. In 1953 het sy ook aan die Rhodes Century Exhibition in Bulawayo deelgeneem.

Dit was by haar seun Oliver se troue in Engeland gedurende 1956 dat Zerffi besluit het om na Londen te verhuis. Sy het tot haar dood, in 1962, daar gewoon.

** Die Nuwe Groep (1937 - 1953) was ongetwyfeld die invloedrykste van alle kunstenaarsgroepe wat tot die tagtigerjare in Suid-Afdrika aktief was. Stigterlede was slegs aangespoor deur 'n begeerte om die uiters swak toestande waarin hulle hul vaardigheid beoefen het te verbeter. Die groep is in 1937 gestig toe 'n aantal Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars ná hul studies in Europa na Suid-Afrika teruggekeer het. Lidmaatskap was slegs op uitnodiging en net professionele kunstenaars (hulle moes reeds minstens een solo-uitstalling aangebied het) is genomineer.*

*Die eerste uitstalling is op 4 Mei 1938 in Kaapstad geopen. Werke van sewentien Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars is vertoon. Daarna is uitstallings gereeld in Kaapstad, Stellenbosch, Pretoria en Johannesburg gehou. Die laaste was in 1953, in Kaapstad.*

*Die doelwitte van die groep het die volgende ingesluit: Om kunstenaars en vaardigheidslui bymekaar te bring in 'n poging om standaarde te verhoog, kunstenaars in finansiële nood by te staan, kunstenaarskoöperasies te vorm om kleinhandelmateriaal teen kosprys in te voer en om uitstallings, waarvan die standaard volgens 'n stelsel van keuring beheer sou word, te hou.*

*Stigterlede: Gregoire Boonzaier, Freida Lock, Terence McCaw, Lippy Lipshitz en Walter Battiss.*

Zerffi was born in London in 1882 and studied there as well as at the Königliche Kunstgewerbeschule in Berlin under Prof. Emil Doepler. In 1916 she moved to Cape Town and was, soon after, elected as a member of the South African Society of Artists (SASA). She exhibited in various group exhibitions, including those of the SASA. Having been involved in art circles, she was a colleague of ***Nita Spilhaus*** and the two soon became friends.

From 1921 to 1924 Zerffi was the Keeper of the Michaelis Collection in the Old Town House. Following this appointment, her participation in SASA exhibitions came to an end. She then held various exhibitions with ***Ruth Prowse***.

In 1924 Zerffi married artist Harry Stratford Caldecott. Over the years the couple exhibited together on a regular basis, with their first joint exhibition in 1925. Caldecott became one of Zerffi's favourite subjects for her paintings. Their styles were complete opposites, as Zerffi's was the result of her German training, while Caldecott showed influences of the French school.

After Caldecott's death, in 1929, Zerffi started conducting private art classes at various high schools in Cape Town. Johannes Meintjes was one of her students who became famous as an artist in South Africa.

As a foundation member of the *New Group** in 1938, she exhibited regularly with the group as well as on her own. In 1953 she also took part in the Rhodes Century Exhibition in Bulawayo.

It was at the wedding of her son Oliver, in England during 1956, that Zerffi decided to take up residence in London, where she lived until her death in 1962.

** The New Group (1937 - 1953) was undoubtedly the most influential of all artist groups active in South Africa until the 1980's. Founder members were concerned only with a desire to improve the very poor circumstances amidst which they plied their craft. The group was founded in 1937, when a number of SA artists returned from their studies in Europe. Membership was only on invitation and only professional artists (defined as having had at least one solo exhibition) were nominated.*

*The first exhibition was opened in Cape Town on 4 May 1938. Works of seventeen South African artists were on show. Thereafter exhibitions were held on a regular basis in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Johannesburg. The last was held in Cape Town in 1953.*

*The objectives of the group included the following: To bring together artists and craftsmen in an effort to raise standards, to help artists in financial difficulties, to form artists' co-operatives to import retail materials at cost and to hold exhibitions all over the country, the standard of which would be controlled by the method of selection.*

*Founder members: Gregoire Boonzaier, Freida Lock, Terence McCaw, Lippy Lipshitz and Walter Battiss.*


Bronne / Sources:
Berman, E. 1970. *Art & Artists of South Africa.* AA Balkema: Cape Town.

Zerffi, Florence (1882 – 1962)
*Hermanus Harbour,* 1919
Olieverf op bord / Oil on board

Versameling / Collection:
Rupert Kunsstigting / Rupert Art Foundation, Stellenbosch

Zerffi, Florence (1882 – 1962)
*Railway Station,* 1923
Olieverf op bord / Oil on board

Versameling / Collection:
Rupert Kunsstigting / Rupert Art Foundation, Stellenbosch