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La Motte

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

Nerine Desmond (1908 – 1993)

Desmond is in 1908 in Constantia, naby Kaapstad gebore. In 1926 het sy 'n jaar lank grafiese tegnieke aan die Michaelis-kunsskool bestudeer en gedurende 1938 aan die Central School of Art in Londen. In ander mediums het sy haarself hoofsaaklik self opgelei. Media het waterverf vir landskappe en seetonele ingesluit, sy het 'n aanleg vir olieverf en figuratiewe beeldhou getoon en die klem op dekoratiewe en illustratiewe aspekte geplaas, soos duidelik sigbaar in haar ontwerpe op houtpanele.

Desmond het haar eerste solo-uitstalling in 1935 in Kaapstad gehou, gevolg deur ongereelde onafhanklike uitstallings. Sy is beïnvloed deur 'n aantal kunstenaars wat in daardie tyd aktief was, met inbegrip van Gregoire Boonzaier en Freida Lock, en het besonder bekend geraak om haar skilderye van plaasverwante en plattelandse onderwerpe. Sy het vanuit 'n ateljee in Loopstraat, Kaapstad gewerk en jare later ook in Houtbaai en Stellenbosch.

Met die herdenking van die Groot Trek in 1938 het Desmond die Voortrekkers as onderwerp vir haar werk begin "verken". Sy was meer begaan oor die temas van swaarkry en lyding as om uitdrukking aan nasionale sentimente te gee. Op daardie tydstip het sy ook 'n lid van die *Nuwe Groep* geword, maar deur die loop van die veertigerjare het sy haar waterverfwerke steeds dikwels by ander groep-uitstallings saam met die Suid-Afrikaanse Kunstenaarsvereniging, die Women's International Art Club en die Royal Institute of Painters vertoon.

In 1949 het sy na die voormalige Suidwes-Afrika (Namibië) gereis en die land, mense (vroue en stamgenote) en kultuur as inspirasie vir haar werk gebruik. Gedurende 1954 het sy langs die ooskus van Afrika gereis, verken en geskilder. Die Suid-Afrikaanse 1c-posseël (1961) is deur Desmond ontwerp en in dieselfde jaar is sy tot Fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters verkies. Sy het tussen 1956 en 1964 aan al drie Vierjaarlikse Uitstallings van Suid-Afrikaanse kuns deelgeneem, asook aan die Sao Paulo Biennale (grafies) in Brasilië, in 1961.

Haar eerste oorsig-uitstalling is in 1962 in Gallery 101 in Johannesburg gehou en het die tydperk 1947 tot 1962 weerspieël. In 1966 is sy as kuratrise van die Tatham-kunsgalery in Pietermaritzburg aangestel – sy het die posisie twee jaar lank beklee.

As grafiese kunstenaar het Desmond ook die boeke *Tales from the Malay Quarter* deur Izak David du Plessis en *Bantu Tales* deur Pattie Price geïllustreer.

Na haar eerste huwelik was sy ook as Nerine Desmond-Smith bekend. Sy het een seun gehad. Desmond is in 1993 oorlede.

Desmond was born in Constantia, near Cape Town in 1908. She studied graphic techniques for a year at Michaelis School of Art in 1926 and at the Central School of Art in London during 1938. In other mediums she was largely self-taught. Media included water-colours for land- and seascapes, she showed a tendency for oils and sculpture for figurative work and placed emphasis on decorative and illustrative aspects, clearly visible in her designs on wooden panels.

In 1935 Desmond held her first solo exhibition in Cape Town, followed by infrequent independent shows. She was influenced by a number of artists active at the time, including Gregoire Boonzaier and Freida Lock, and became particularly well known for paintings of farm-related and rural subjects. She worked from a studio in Loop Street, Cape Town and, years later, also in Hout Bay and Stellenbosch.

With the commemoration of the Great Trek in 1938, Desmond started to explore the Voortrekkers as subject matter for her work. She was more concerned with the themes of hardship and suffering than expressing any nationalist sentiments. By this time she also became a member of the *New Group*, but through the 1940's she still exhibited frequently, in water colours, in other group exhibitions with the South African Society of Artists, the Women's International Art Club and the Royal Institute of Painters.

In 1949 she travelled to the former South West Africa (Namibia) and used the land, people (women and tribesmen and culture as inspiration for her work. During 1954 she travelled, explored and painted along the eastern coast of Africa. The South African 1c postage stamp (1961) carried Desmond's design and in the same year she was elected as Fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters. She exhibited in all three Quadrennials of South African Art between 1956 and 1964, as well as at the Sao Paulo Biennale (graphic), Brazil in 1961.

Her first retrospective exhibition was held in 1962 at Gallery 101 in Johannesburg, covering the period 1947 until 1962. In 1966 she was appointed as the curator of the Tatham Art Gallery in Pietermaritzburg, a position she held for two years.

As a graphic artist Desmond also illustrated the books *Tales from the Malay Quarter* by Izak David du Plessis and *Bantu Tales* by Pattie Price.

After her first marriage she was also known as Nerine Desmond-Smith. She had one son. Desmond passed away in 1993.

Bronne / Sources:
Berman, E. 1983. *Art & Artists of South Africa*. AA Balkema: Cape Town.
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Photo: Nerine Desmond. Courtesy of SANL (Cape Town) - MSB 150[1]1 Nerine Desmond Collection.

Desmond, Nerine (1908 – 1993)
Basuto Rider, [s.a]
Brons / Bronze

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

Desmond, Nerine (1908 – 1993)
Ballet Dancer and *Woman on the beach*, [s.a]
Brons / Bronze

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