

## Villa Kruger : a Museum with no walls

If you drive down Kerk Straat, Prince Albert and turn left into Margareta Prinsloo Road, you are at Skapieseinde - the final destination of the Lambs.

Just before the abattoir, you will stop in your tracks at a triangle of extraordinary sculptures, Le Diable [the Devil], Le Fou [the Fool], le Bateleur [the juggler/ magician] singing a silent sign language, compelling you to enter. The prologue of Hennie Boshoff's choreography. Villa Kruger, the embodiment of Malraux's *museum without walls* is the richly imaginative home of Boshoff and Rossetta Woolf.

A massive mural, covering the whole side of the house shakes you to your senses. You evaluate: the frightening grin of this devil; the granite devil guarding the big gate. You are entering a space where no wall will incarcerate art. The fires of hell reflect the dancing light of the setting sun. A purification - the ultimate reconciliation - is taking place. You stand nailed on between heaven + hell. Opposite, in the West, the glowing sun signals the end of the day, the beginning of the night.



The enigmatic figure of the unnumbered Tarot card at the small gate, the Fool, the marginalised outsider who doesn't fit into any system, is scapegoated. Sacrificial Lamb. The Fool stares out at the abbatoir, and, beyond, Gordon's Koppie, named after Colonel Robert Gordon, who, like Van Gogh killed himself with a gun.

Boshoff quietly throws out parallels, reference points, delving into our collective memories. Decades had to pass before he could end his exile abroad. At Villa Kruger in Clarens, Switzerland, where another exile, Paul Kruger, died, he realized that the time had arrived to return. So began Toorkuns, his pilgrimage to his very beginning.

He came home. This new era is heralded with a stained glass panel on the East side of the house: a calligraphy in Hebrew by Lalou spells Aleph, the first three words from Genesis [and also Boshoff's alias abroad] across the landscape. Boshoff and Woolf have reincarnated, along the skapie's-einde-road, across from Gordon's koppie, the deceased old exile in a newly found metamorphosis.

A Buddha head, staring into the East, a wooden four-faced angel totem accentuate a sacred ambience. The totem, like the mural, was a joint creation by Boshoff, Welcome Danca, Bheki Khambule and Lalelani Mbhele. Boshoff guided the Zulu artists in establishing the first BEE arts company, which they called, after Boshoff, Vulindlela, yet another name, this time honorifically bequeathed to him by the Xhosas - *He who opens the gates*.

Flanking the garden path Jane du Rand's two urns – symbols since ancient times of the womb - celebrate the female life-giving principle. One urn her nurturing aspect, the other her aperture, where the seed of new life is received.. Both urns pulse with the promise of sinful pleasure. Joining this eroticism, under the shadow of a tree in the north garden, a mischievous, coquetish mermaid - created by Rossetta Woolf - invites you to enjoy her supple body. Her sensual, fluid movement involuntarily transports you to sacred places in the region where San artists depicted wind swallows on rock cave walls. These representations used at rain-making rituals, were later assimilated into the waterwoman, and then the mermaid, guardian of the pools. A little further North-East she takes on another identity, again by Woolf – the majestic lion-woman from the tarot, *La force*.

Are the haunting eyes of this regal creature looking at the moving beauty of the mosaic, Hassan Massoudey and Boshoff's homage, *A garden for Vincent*? The Arabic calligraphy resonates with Van Gogh's flowing waves, lines and colours.

Will his soul now dare find peace in the Karoo?



At Prince Albert Road Outa Lappies planted sunflowers for birds in the veld, in honour of the very same Vincent. Creative madmen, outsiders. The calligraphy suddenly dances like the flames which would claim Outa Lappies' life.

The garden resembles the preamble to the holiest of holy spaces in ancient temples. You now enter the interior, the inner sanctum: from West Africa a wooden sculpture, le Roi-Fou, [the Fool King], masks, a theatrical poster from 1894 of a dancing Pan, from Nijinki's estate, the inspiration for *Le Sacre aux Printemps - The Rite of Spring*, more correctly translated, the *Spring Sacrifice*.

A beautiful Buddha, seated cross-legged on the floor, the soles of his feet pointing up. On the east side of the living room you look up, and high on the wall: *Why Not?* by Roser Oduber. The artist has substituted Christ with a naked woman. Nude because she has nothing to hide. If you can exchange places with the crucified, you see her glancing at Boshoff's Green man and Pan. You are again dumbfounded by the energy lines. April jokes originated with the mockery of Christ during his trial. Boshoff explains that the pagan Green Man, also found in European churches from the Middle Ages, heralds the beginning of Spring: camouflaged under leaves, he plays hide-and-seek amongst the shrubs. The April Fool. The Crucified woman's antithesis, as is the open mouthed bronzed Fool whose timeless howl - like Munch's *Scream* - rails against all crucifixions.

Should Boshoff, like the woman on the cross strip himself of his clothes - designed for him by the very top designers - a masterpiece is revealed on his back: the coiled cosmic serpent, supported by a "tree/ladder" of delicate vertebrae. Boshoff had to undergo a tattooing ritual lasting over 33 hours to physically experience the pain of being branded, stigmatised: stigmata across his body.

**Dr Elza Miles, POMP 2012.**

**An abbreviated translation from the Afrikaans by Hennie Boshoff.**