

A black and white artistic photograph of a woman's face and upper torso. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her hair is pulled up into a bun. She is wearing a dark, possibly black, garment. In the foreground, a complex, white, metallic-looking structure resembling a cage or a piece of industrial machinery is superimposed over her face and neck. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a somber and intense atmosphere.

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viewing by appointment

ENQUIRIES

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Zanele Muholi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1972–

*Vika III, The Decks, Cape Town,
Somnyama Ngonyama series*

accompanied by a Muholi Productions certificate of authenticity signed by the artist, dated 2019, numbered 8/8 and inscribed with the artist's name, the title and medium
silver gelatin print on paper
sheet size: 70 by 58 cm; 73 by 60,5 by 4 cm including frame



LITERATURE

Jareh Das (2021) *Ocula*, Zanele Muholi Stakes Their Claim, online, <https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/zanele-muholi-stakes-theirclaim/>, accessed 30 January 2025, another example from the edition illustrated.



Zanele Muholi is one of South Africa's most recognisable and celebrated artists. Emerging onto the South African art scene in the early 2000s with work that offered stark documentary witness to the life experiences of black LGBTQIA+ peoples, Muholi soon diversified their photographic output to include various forms of portraiture. In 2012, Muholi initiated the self-portrait series *Somnyama Ngonyama* ('Hail the Dark Lioness' in isiZulu). Now widely acclaimed, the series is characterised by the artist's generous streak of improvisation and play.

Muholi typically uses whatever garments, fabrics and adornments are at hand to produce each portrait. Muholi's playfulness is counterbalanced by the weight of associations: a helmet recalls the Marikana massacre of 2012, and a head crowned with pencils an apartheid-era test used to determine racial classification. The portraits are adjusted in post-production to amplify the tonalities. Although devoid of locality and context, the makeshift studios for these portraits are irreducibly linked to the many international cities Muholi has travelled to.

Vika III and *Zine VIII* were produced in London during the build up to Muholi's Covid delayed solo exhibition at Tate Modern in 2020. *The Guardian* described the exhibition as 'epochal' and praised Muholi's self-portraits for their 'extraordinary graphic force'¹

This series was conceived 'to encourage individuals in my community to be brave enough to occupy spaces – brave enough to create without fear of being vilified,' and '[t]o teach people about our history, to rethink what history is all about, to reclaim it for ourselves – to encourage people to use artistic tools such as cameras as weapons to fight back'. Key to the project is the artist's own self-image. 'I wanted to use my own face so that people will always remember just how important our black faces are when confronted by them.'²

1. Laura Cummings (2020) 'Zanele Muholi review – portraiture as activism', *The Guardian*, 8 November: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/nov/08/zanele-muholi-tate-modern-review-southafrica>
2. Renée Mussai (2018) 'Zanele Muholi On Resistance', *Aperture*, online, <https://aperture.org/editorial/muholi-interview/>, accessed 26 February 2024.



Zanele Muholi

SOUTH AFRICAN 1972–

*Zine VIII, Sydney, Australia,
Somnyama Ngonyama series*

accompanied by a certificate of authenticity
signed by the artist, dated 2020, numbered 7/8 and
inscribed with the artist's name, the title and medium
silver gelatin print on paper
sheet size: 68,5 by 56 cm; 72,5 by 59,5 by 4 cm including frame

LITERATURE

Eskenazi Museum of Art (2023) SCHEMA Annual Review, Indiana: Eskenazi
Museum of Art, another example from the edition illustrated on page 18.





Tafadzwa Tega

ZIMBABWEAN 1985–

Maidei

signed twice and dated 2021 on the reverse
acrylic and stencil on canvas
130,5 by 120 by 4 cm, unframed

EXHIBITED

Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea, Milan, *Zumbani*, 2022.
The Investec Art Fair, Cape Town, 2022.

A key work within his acclaimed 2022 exhibition *Zumbani*, at Mimmo Scognamiglio Artecontemporanea in Milan, *Maidei* reflects the rich dialogue between the artist's deeply rooted African identity and contemporary expression.

Rooted in postmodern African portraiture, *Maidei* is a vivid meditation on self-reflection and identity, rendered in his signature bold palette and intricate pattern work. Born in Harare, Zimbabwe, and now based in South Africa, Tega's practice explores themes of memory, migration, and cultural heritage, drawing from personal experiences and broader African diasporic narratives.

In this composition, a woman sits at a vanity, gazing into a mirror. The reflection – both familiar and slightly distinct – invites contemplation of the dualities within the self: the outer appearance versus inner essence, the present versus the remembered. The richly patterned background – a tapestry of vivid blue, orange, and yellow florals – envelops the figure, grounding her in a space that feels both personal and symbolic.

Zumbani marked Tega's inaugural solo exhibition in Italy, a milestone he navigated remotely due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The exhibition garnered overwhelming acclaim, culminating in a sold-out collection with works acquired by prominent Italian collectors and even a distinguished American bank. Tega reflects, 'The best thing for me was the opportunity for people to interact with my work.'¹

The resonance of *Maidei* extended to the Cape Town Art Fair, allowing Tafadzwa to reconnect his artistic journey with African audiences. 'Africa is my land, so I wanted people here to be able to see it too,' he shares.

A review of his Milan exhibition captures the essence of *Maidei*: 'Look at Tega's works. Look at them carefully. They have the colours of Africa, and that's fine, everyone can say that. They have the colours of genius, like those of Andy Warhol, and that's also very true. They have the symbols of revenge from the racial segregation implemented in South Africa and everywhere in the world.'²

1. <https://nandoscreativity.co.za/2022/03/10/ncx-artist-enjoys-sell-out-exhibition/>, accessed 3 February 2025

2. <https://www.artapartofculture.net/2022/03/03/tafadzwa-tega-zumbani-egologiatecnomagia-tradizione-e-afromania/>, accessed 3 February 2025







Pieter Hugo

SOUTH AFRICAN 1976–

Dambe Fighter, Kano, Nigeria, 2005,
'Gadawan Kura' – The Hyena Men series

signed, dated 2005, numbered 5/5 and inscribed
with the title in pencil in the margin

Archival pigment ink on cotton rag paper
paper size: 112 by 110 cm; image size: 100 by 100 cm



LITERATURE

Pieter Hugo (2012) *This Must Be the Place*, New York: Prestel, illustrated in colour on page 145.

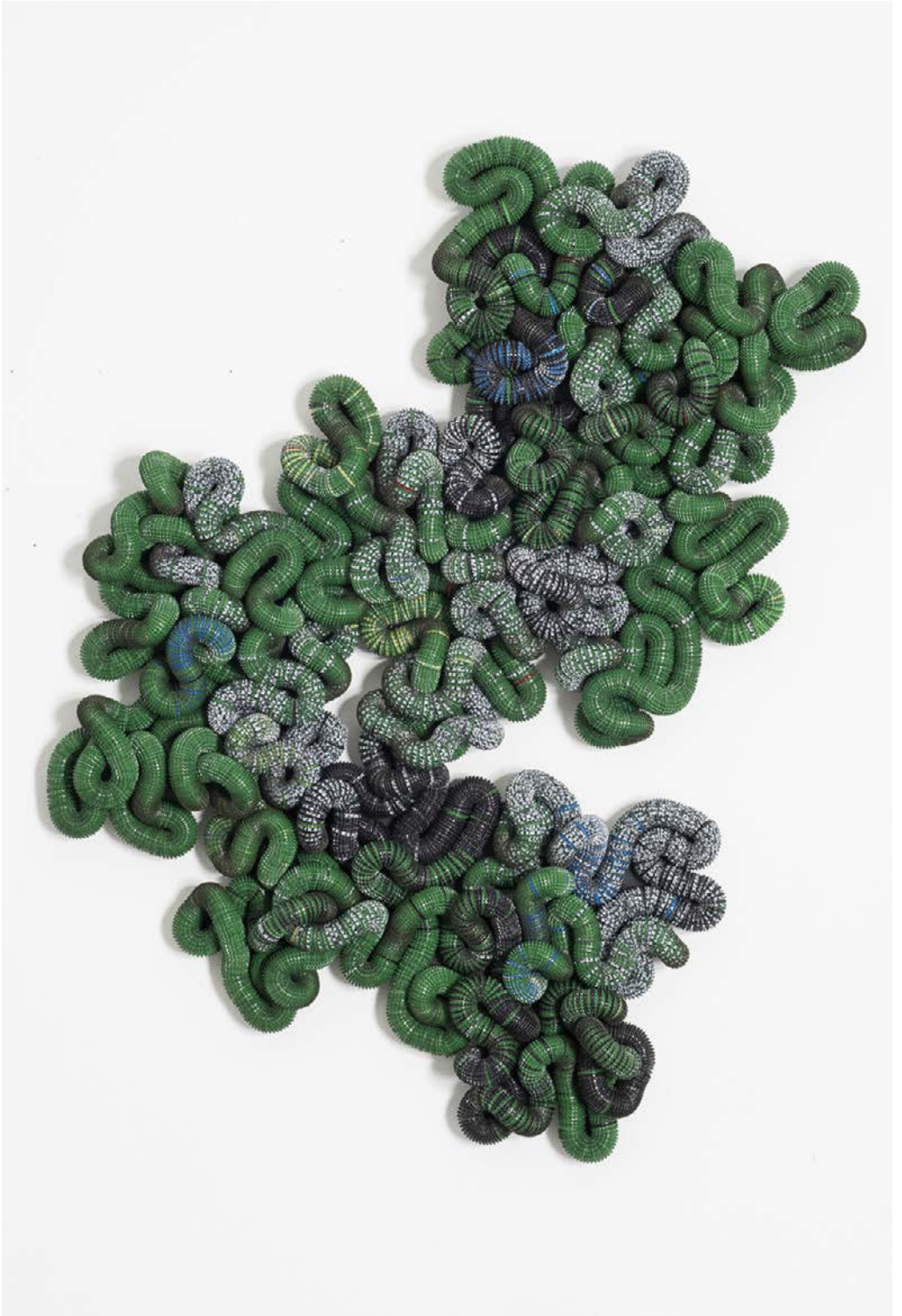
EXHIBITED

Stevenson, Cape Town, 'Gadawan Kura' – *The Hyena Men*, 22 February to 23 March 2006, another example from the edition exhibited.



*'A Dambe boxer from Kano, Nigeria, standing feet firmly planted, right hand swathed in the traditional cloth-and-cord glove of the Dambe fighter, nose showing all the signs of the pugilist's trade. The portrait is a deeply moving meditation on machismo, resignation, and vulnerability, the boxer seeming to draw together all of these qualities in the steady gaze he directs at the camera.'*¹

1. Art Africa, Pieter Hugo, <https://artafricamagazine.1.org/pieter-hugo-4/>



Chris Soal

SOUTH AFRICAN 1994–

A Line to Listen To

2024

found bottle caps and electric fencing cable on board

height: 116 cm; width: 95 cm; depth: 12 cm





William Kentridge

SOUTH AFRICAN 1955–

Landscape with Billboard

signed and numbered 68

charcoal on paper

56 by 75,5 cm excluding frame;

87 by 104 by 4,5 cm including frame

PROVENANCE

Acquired from the artist, and thence by descent to the current owner.

This undated charcoal drawing distils motifs and ideas central to William Kentridge's celebrated drawing practice. The composition centrally depicts a hoarding in a sparse landscape with dissimilar trees and an empty bench. These elements are staged as much as observed beneath a leaden sky featuring tendrils of moisture that offer no replenishment to the parched landscape. The blank hoarding, far from saying nothing, offers a rich invitation to consider Kentridge's drawing processes as well as speculate on the pronounced influence of cinema on his overall practice.

Kentridge's landscape drawings frequently include blank cinema screens, billboards and other infrastructures of communication. The early drawing *Flood at the Opera House* (1986) provides an important clue as to their visual origin. Kentridge's drawings from the 1980s were, in the main, darkly toned and depicted people, animals and things crowded together in theatres, cafes and suburban redoubts. The surrealistic bourgeois decadence they recorded was a correlative of social decay. Trees were introduced later, in 1998, when he made the animated film *Stereoscope* and adapted Monteverdi's 1640 opera *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* for the stage in New York. The late 1990s was a period of spectacular international ascendance for Kentridge. By this time his drawing practice had undergone noticeable shifts, both in style and content. In 1989, Kentridge presented the *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City after Paris*, the first animated film in his on-going Drawings for Projection series. The demands of his artisanal filmmaking process, which eschews computers, favouring instead evolving a scene for the camera on a single piece of paper through erasure and redrawing, inevitably changed his drawing style.

Among other changes, his scenography became less claustrophobic and collagistic, and also more recognisably of Johannesburg. Of his decision to venture beyond the safe bourgeois redoubts of his early Weimar-inspired drawings, Kentridge has stated: 'I started calling myself an artist in my thirties when I discovered not just the necessity but the pleasure of drawing the landscape just to the south of Johannesburg, to the south of the leafy suburb I lived in. And also when I discovered the pleasure of a soft chamois leather dipped into charcoal dust and wiped across the white surface of the paper, leaving not just a train of dark charcoal grit on the paper but also of a darkening sky above a light horizon.'¹





There is striking continuity between Kentridge's rich understanding of his drawing process and the things he portrays. 'Charcoal and paper are not perfect substances,' writes Kentridge in *Six Drawing Lessons*. 'Charcoal can be erased easily, but not perfectly. The paper is tough and can be erased, redrawn, erased, and still hold its structure – but not without showing its damage. The erasure is never perfect.'² The same broadly holds of the human interfered landscape in this composition. 'It is a landscape that is explicitly social. It is also temporal – everything in the landscape has the signs of having been put there and having been made – all features have the potential to be unmade.'³

Kentridge's billboard unavoidably operates like a blank screen for projection, a familiar motif from art history that encompasses artists as diverse as Jeremy Wafer and Hiroshi Sugimoto. The blank screen is a bountiful subject, inviting deliberations on leisure, spectacle, industrial fabrication, technology, light and time. But what does it propose in relation to Kentridge's drawing? One possible answer involves the artist's abundant love for film.

Kentridge has directly quoted filmmakers Dziga Vertov, George Méliès and Federico Fellini in his work. A suite of drawings from 1985 variously depicts Ingrid Bergman, Humphrey Bogart, Marlene Dietrich, James Dean and Groucho Marx. In 1998, when Kentridge exhibited at the Drawing Center in New York, curator and art historian Michael Rush wrote a penetrating review linking Kentridge to the avant-garde tradition of French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard. The history of film, like its companion history of art, is a replenishing source for Kentridge.

1. William Kentridge & Jane Taylor (2018) *That Which We Do Not Remember*, Sydney: Naomi Milgrom Foundation. Page 102.
2. William Kentridge (2014) *Six Drawing Lessons*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Page 95.
3. *William Kentridge (1998), 'Felix in Exile: Geography of Memory'*, in William Kentridge, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (ed.), Brussels: Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles. Pages 95–96.





Robert Hodgins

SOUTH AFRICAN 1920–2010

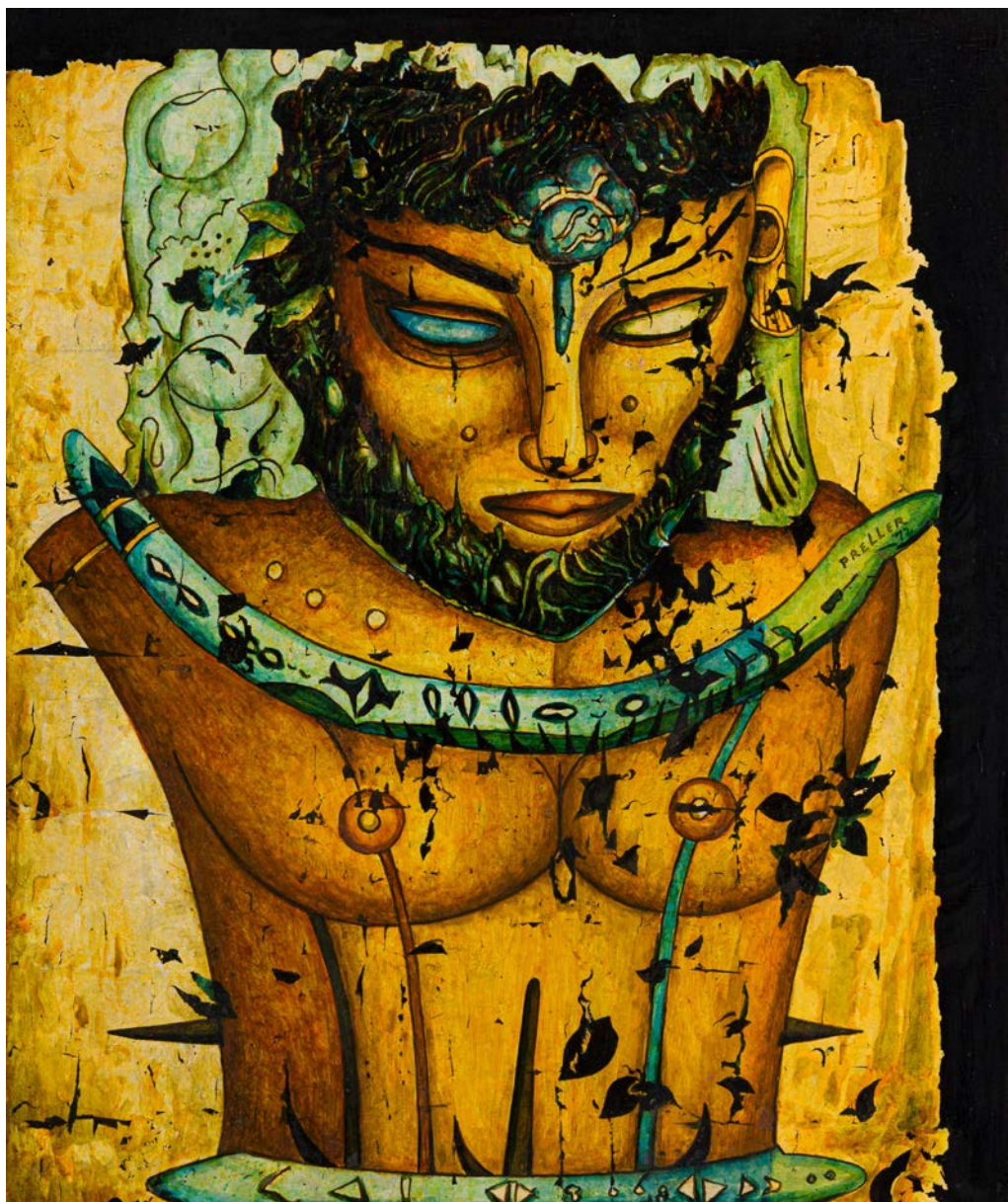
Ishmael

signed, dated 1997/9, and inscribed with the artist's name, the title, medium and 'He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him ...' on the reverse
(Note: The Biblical Ismael was the eldest son of Abraham.)

oil and charcoal on canvas

122 by 91,5 cm excluding frame; 127,5 by 97 by 4,5 cm including frame





Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

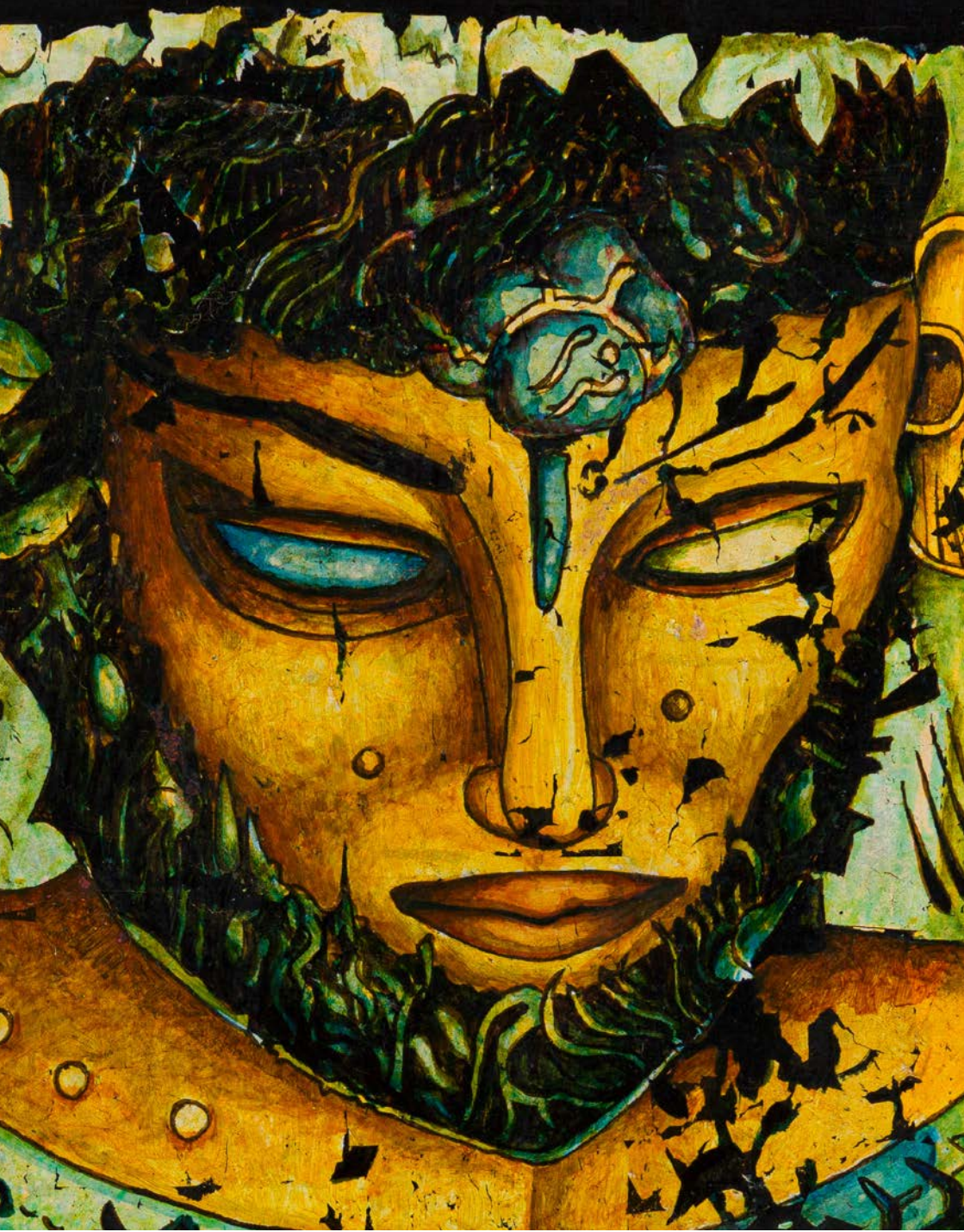
Icon Barbare

signed and dated '72; inscribed 'Adam' on the reverse

oil and gold leaf on panel

60 by 50 cm excluding frame;

100 by 83,5 by 5 cm including frame



EXHIBITED

Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, *Alexis Preller Retrospective*,
24 October 1972 to 26 November 1972, cat. no. 184.
Norval Foundation, Cape Town, *Alexis Preller: Mythical Lexicon*,
30 November 2023 to 17 November 2024.

LITERATURE

Esmé Berman (1972) *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, Pretoria: Pretoria Art Museum.
Illustrated in full colour on page 184 and in black and white in the list of images.
Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009) *Africa, the Sun and Shadows, Volume II, Collected Images*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing. Illustrated on page 231.



Alexis Preller's *Icon Barbare (Adam)*, an oil painting with gold leaf, is a direct quotation of his powerful 1969 intaglio *Adam* which was purchased in the year of its completion by American collectors and only resurfaced in 2016 when it was returned to South Africa for sale on a Strauss & Co auction. That important intaglio therefore did not appear on Preller's 1972 Pretoria Art Museum Retrospective. He did, however, include *Icon Barbare* and, significantly, reproduced it as a full-page colour plate in the exhibition catalogue.

In the earlier intaglio, *Adam*, the biblical first man, is rendered with a powerful physique. The structure of his chest alludes directly to the idealised body type of the ancient Greek kouros figures, while the verticality of the seemingly suspended body refers obliquely to an early crucifix sculptural tradition, where the arms were separately attached and were frequently lost.

In *Icon Barbare*, the downcast head has an ambivalent proto-Christian/pagan quality. The 'empty' eyes allude to classical bronze sculptural prototypes that have lost their inlaid detail, revealing their sculptural artifice and emptiness. Unnervingly, in the painting the eyes are different, the transparent wash in one being blue and the other pale green, an anomaly that has mystical associations relating to a spiritual awakening. In the prominent, heavily encrusted third eye, which generally implies a state of higher consciousness in Asian art, Preller almost surreptitiously inserts small pictograms of a figure and a serpent, symbolic of 'original sin', innate human fallibility.

The Christ-like beard and hair are ambiguously transformed with green and leaflike tendrils thus assuming a pagan quality. The transmuted presence feels more like an icon of Pan, the Greek god of nature, of fertility, the mountains and wilds. The head and torso appear transparent on a field of flecked gold, edged on two sides by deep black.

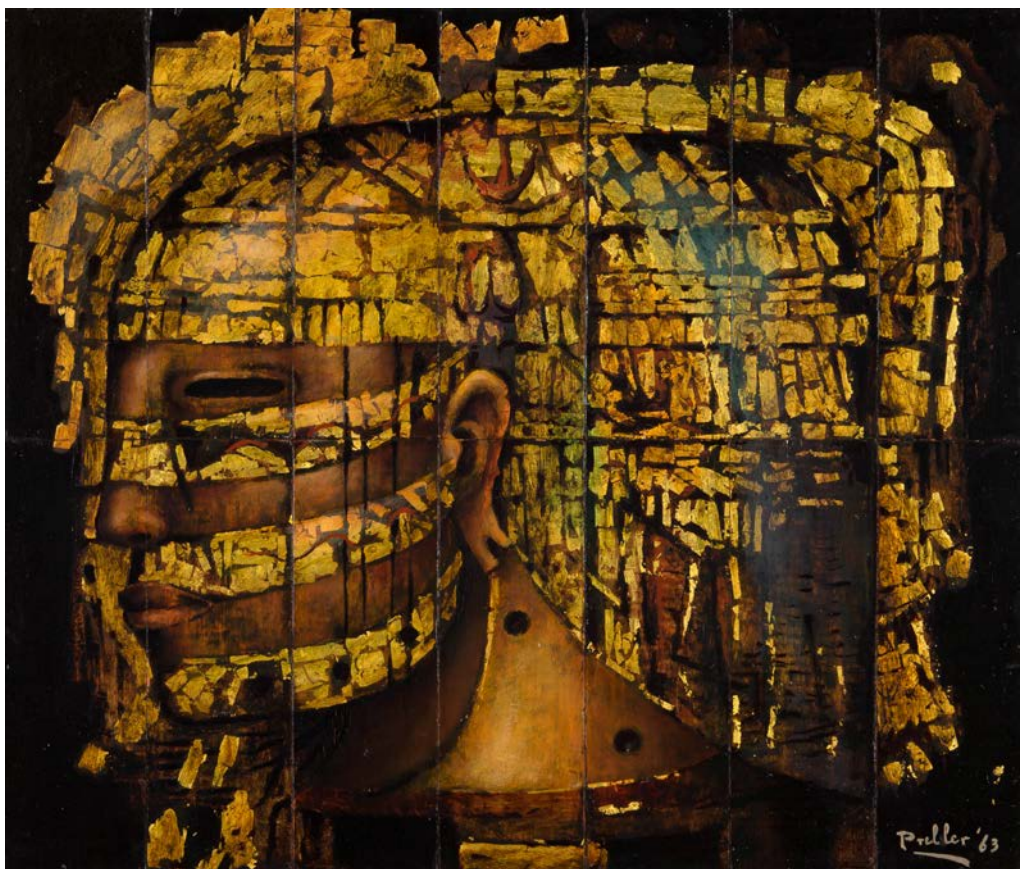
It is interesting to note that Preller collected icons and was particularly influenced by the stylised conventions of these visual adjuncts to prayer. His small *Gold Primavera* (1967) seems similar to the later *Icon Barbare* of 1972 in its Preller-esque evocation of an iconic presence. Here too, in *Gold Primavera*, Preller's prototypical head becomes a stylised female presence. Seen side by side, these sacred male and female manifestations are startlingly beautiful in their contrast.

Karel Nel



Norval Foundation, Cape Town, *Alexis Preller: Mythical Lexicon*, exhibition





Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911–1975

The Great King

signed and dated 63
mixed media with oil and gold leaf on
tongue-and-groove wood panels
46,5 by 54 cm excluding frame;
74 by 82 by 5,5 cm including frame

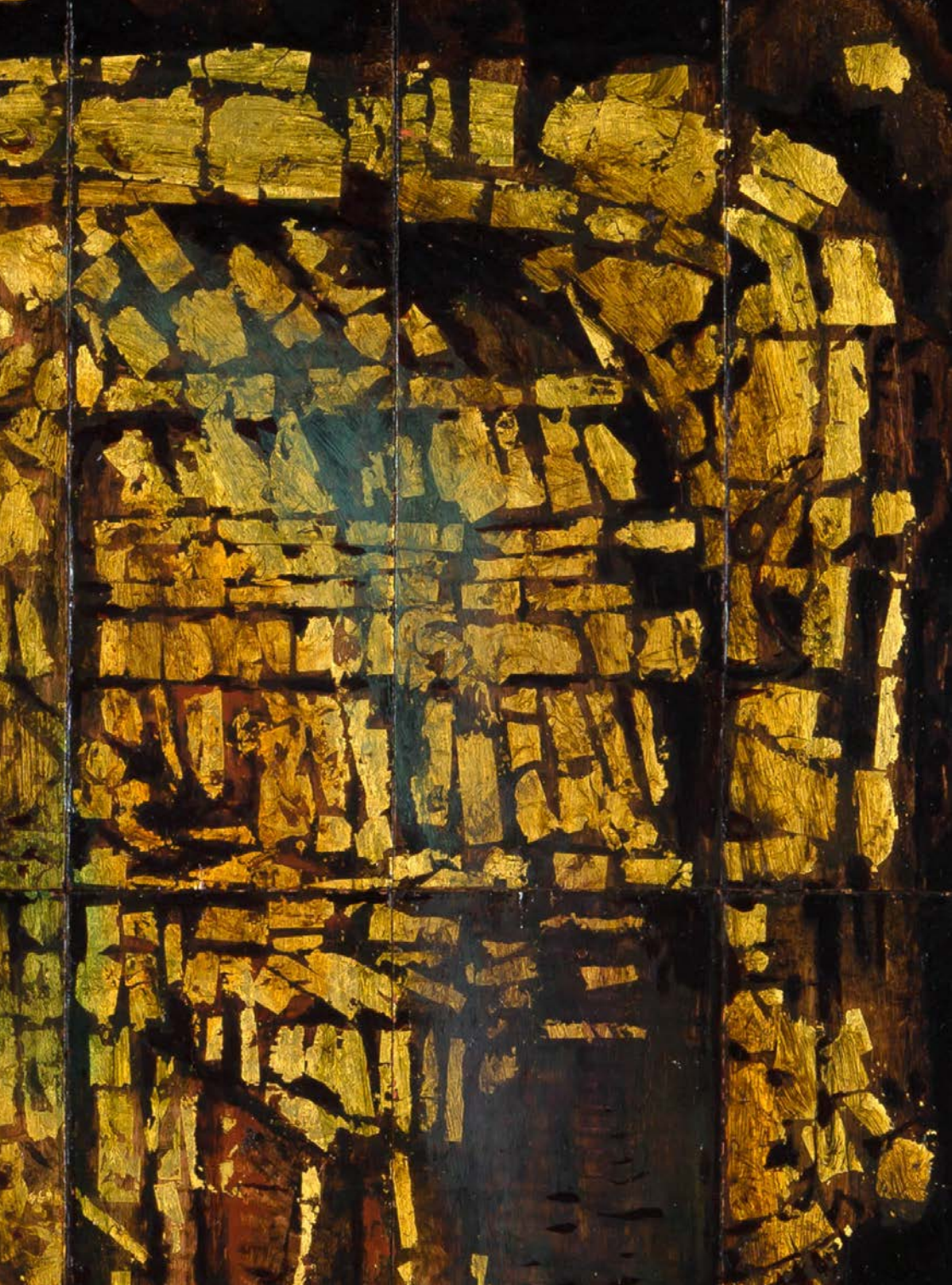


PROVENANCE

Acquired from the artist by his friend Tobie Louw,
and thence by descent.

EXHIBITED

SAAA Gallery, Polly's Arcade, Pretoria, 15 to 31 October 1963. Lidchi
Gallery, Johannesburg, 22 October to 8 November 1969.
Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, Alexis Preller, retrospective exhibition,
24 October to 26 November 1972.
Norval Foundation, Cape Town, *Alexis Preller: Mythical Lexicon*,
30 November 2023 to 17 November 2024.



LITERATURE

Pretoria Art Museum (1972) *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, Pretoria: PAM, illustrated in black and white on page 185, catalogue number 108.

Raymond Hancock Films (1973–1976) 'The World of Alexis Preller', SABC television documentary, available online at www.youtube.com, the work is visible during an interview with Tobie Louw.

Deichmann (1986) *Die Werk van Alexis Preller 1934–1948 en 'n Catalogue Raisonné*, unpublished master's dissertation University of Pretoria, catalogue number 649.

Esmé Berman and Karel Nel (2009) *Collected Images (vol. 2)*, Johannesburg: Shelf Publishing, illustrated in colour on page 202.



Norval Foundation, Cape Town, Alexis Preller: *Mythical Lexicon*, exhibition

Alexis Preller's *The Great King* is the scintillating and golden apotheosis of one of the artist's most iconic themes. Dazzling, enduring, irresistible and majestic, the work comes from the long line of god-kings associated with Preller's visionary kingdoms and Afrocentric mythologies. It was acquired in 1963 by the architect Tobie Louw who, along with his friend and associate Norman Eaton, was one of Preller's earliest patrons. He remained in awe of the work, describing it, devotedly, some years later, in a SABC television documentary.

As with so many of Preller's seminal paintings, the compelling evolution of the central imagery can be traced.

An early precursor, from 1952, was the disembodied *Christ Head* now in the IZIKO South African National Gallery, with its architectural coronet, its masklike features and its narrow, vacant eyes. Later iterations, from 1957, each modestly-scaled and painted on wood, included *The Young King I*, *The Young King II* and *The Young King III*.

Each in strict profile, these boyish kings wore elaborate and damascened headdresses, decorated with symbols, dripping in jewels and embellished with menacing spikes. The visual concept would have drawn on pharaonic models, images of Renaissance rulers, as well as ritual African carvings, including, no doubt, the ebony head, Maasai in origin, in the artist's own collection, that he counted amongst his so-called household gods.

Together, anyhow, the trio suggested a long-

ruling ancestry. *The Great King* fully and dramatically embodied the artist's previous versions of the motif, and brought Preller's god-king theme to a glorious and glittering close. The final rendition is the most intense and the most timeless, and seems to evoke the same power as would an ancient relic, a gilded sarcophagus, or a devotional icon. That its many wooden panels were encrusted in gold leaf, and overlaid with glistening oil paint, only adds to its spiritual strength and ornamental allure.

'This picture is almost fathomless! Everything that one would associate with Africa is there – the gold and riches, all the authority of a dynasty almost 3000 years old, all embodied in this head of such immense power and authority. Finally, you look at the eye – and you realise that it is an absolutely empty shell.'

Tobie Louw





Alexis Preller

SOUTH AFRICAN 1911-1975

Iliad, triptych

each signed and dated '68; inscribed with the artist's name and the title on a Pretoria Art Museum label adhered to the reverse oil and gold leaf on board

- 1) 13,5 by 11,5 cm excluding frame; 39 by 31,5 by 3,5 cm including frame;
- 2) 13 by 11 cm excluding frame; 37,5 by 31 by 3,5 cm including frame;
- 3) 11,5 by 12 cm excluding frame; 37 by 32,5 by 3,5 cm including frame

EXHIBITED

Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria, *Alexis Preller Retrospective*, 24 October to 26 November 1972, illustrated and listed in the exhibition catalogue as cat. no. 141 a, b and c.

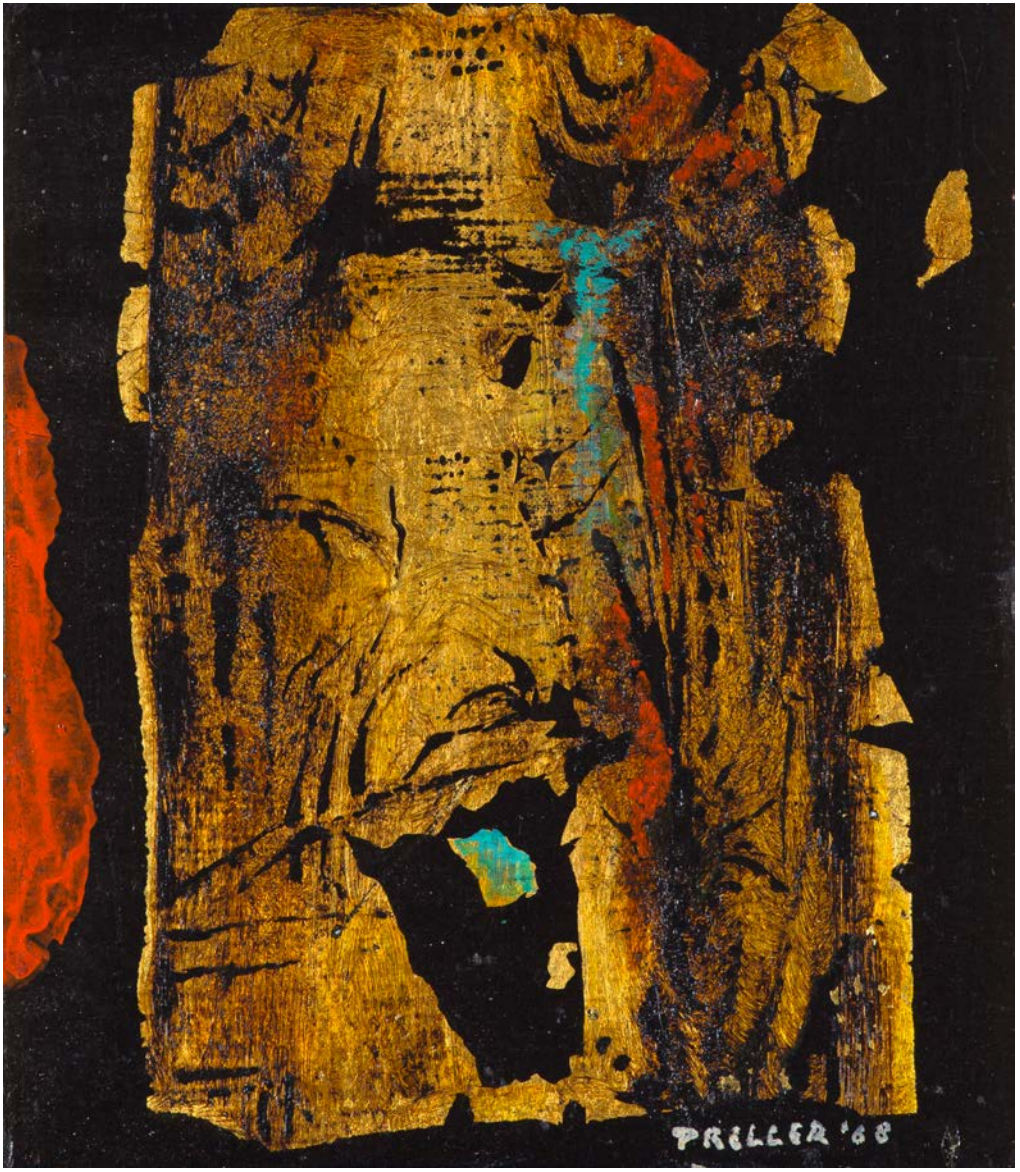


Alexis Preller owned a much-loved volume of the epic tales of Greek mythology from childhood, and his work references these exciting narratives throughout his life. This series of three small jewel-like works is named after Homer's ancient Greek epic poem, *The Iliad*, which tells of the adventures of the kings, warriors, gods, and heroes of the Trojan War. The city of Troy, under King Priam, is besieged by the Greek army commanded by Agamemnon, and the epic poem is a chaotic melee of pitched battles, bloodshed, bravery, plague, treachery, betrayal, fickle gods, feats of heroism on the part of the famed Greek warrior Achilles and the valiant Hector, Prince of Troy, and perfidy on the part of weak Paris, Hector's brother.

Preller's panels are all but abstract – there is a fragment of a war horse in the right-hand panel and the suggestion of a swishing tale and rump of a horse in the left. But this perhaps conveys the sense of the conflict better than more representational means, which might show little more than a single event, a moment frozen in time. Instead, the accent colours that Preller uses – his favourite turquoise, perhaps standing here for both the ocean and the realm of the gods (for paradise in near-Eastern belief systems), and his much-used coral red, perhaps referencing the burning Greek ships set alight by the Trojans, the watchfires of the Greek soldiers' encampments on the plain outside the city walls, and the blood and gore of the seemingly interminable battles and gruesome deaths – evoke more completely the heat, dust, sweat, and noise that the epic poem narrates.



PRELLER '68



PRELIER '68





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