



Opening of the 'Pel mama' exhibition at the Pretoria Art Museum - 11 November 2009

Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have been asked to open this exhibition of the 'Pel mama' Permanent Art Collection. In doing so, we have to pay tribute to the generosity of a great lover of art, a foreign national, Fernand Haenggi, who left an important inheritance as a token of love for a country where he had spent a good deal of his life.

Since the opening of the Pretoria Art Museum in 1964, there has been a close relationship with the Haenggi family. It started with a donation of a drawing by Frans Oerder to the Pretoria Art Museum by Madame Fernande Marie-Louise Haenggi.

Mr Fernand Haenggi was the co-owner and co-director of Gallery 101, Johannesburg, established jointly with his mother, Madame Haenggi, and operating from 1961. The Gallery 101 Group had at its peak 3 branches in Johannesburg. He left the 101 Group in 1972 to start his own gallery, taking over the Hyde Park Corner Branch in Johannesburg, operating henceforth as Gallery 21 Johannesburg, concentrating on top modern South African and international art.

The character of Gallery 21 was somewhat different from the catch-all character of Madame Haenggi's gallery. Fernand leaned towards contemporary styles in both local and international art. He tended to concentrate on a small group of artists, whom he nurtured and promoted. He devoted energy and effort to fostering his exhibitors, show-casing their work at major exhibitions in South Africa and abroad, publishing books about their work and issuing folios of their graphic prints.

Fernand Haenggi was dynamically involved in the South African art market from 1961 until 1993, and also the driving force behind Pelmama, when he decided to retire and settle in Switzerland, his home country. In 1979, Mr Haenggi organised a Lucas Sithole retrospective exhibition at the Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, which was then shown at the Pretoria Art Museum.

As from 1991, the Haenggi Foundation Inc donated and loaned a number of important art works to the Pretoria Art Museum, in recognition of many years of congenial cooperation. This included works by many exciting South African artists, covering the period of the 1960s to the 1980s. It consisted of mostly graphic artworks and a collection of ceramics. The donation of ceramics represents a considerable addition to the small collection already brought together by the Art Museum, and almost doubled the ceramic collection at that stage. The Haenggi Foundation received a variety of art objects from the collection of Gertrude Agranat. Some of the ceramics that came to the Museum stem from that bequest. From 1991 onwards, the Museum received various artworks on loan from the Haenggi Foundation.

All works of art donated over the years to the Haenggi Foundation by artists or private collectors have been passed on freely to public museums in South Africa, as part of the Pelmama Permanent Art Collection. In 1995, the donation was extended to include works and items from the studio of Lucas Sithole. All the artworks donated and on loan became an integral part of the Pretoria Art Museum's exhibitions.

On the occasion of Mr Haenggi's 75th birthday in January 2009, all works until then loaned to the Pretoria Art Museum through The Haenggi Art Foundation are to be considered freely donated to the Pretoria Art Museum. This gift is all the more meaningful and significant in the light of the financial constraints under which art museums have to deliver, and the lack of funding for acquisitions.

With this exhibition the Pretoria Art Museum, an affiliated member of the South African National Association for the Visual Arts (SANAVA), would like to acknowledge the generosity of Mr Fernand Haenggi for his tremendous donation. The works which we and generations to come may admire in the Museum, thanks to the generosity of Fernand Haenggi, reflect the aesthetic views and personal values of a great lover of the arts. We pay tribute to Fernand Haenggi and thank him for this extraordinary gift to the Pretoria Art Museum.

Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, enjoy the exhibition - I declare it open.

Anton Loubser
National President
SANAVA

11th November, 2009