

## THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN THE ART OF PIETER ROUX

Pieter Roux is a young graphic artist working mainly with the etching technique, although his latest exhibition at the Market Gallery in Johannesburg did include some paintings.

Pieter was born in 1961 on a farm in the Rustenburg district. His fond memories of life on the farm act as inspiration for the dream-world he creates in his art; featuring the transformation of animals such as the bull.

His work is the realization of a visual language and is a fine combination of a spontaneous rendering of technique and a certain disciplined control of his media. This is a result of his full-time studies first at the Technicon of Pretoria and later at the Witwatersrand Technicon.

A new addition to the Pretoria Art Museum's print collection is the first panel from the series of etchings, Symphony of Myths. The intricate visual dynamics of this series is divided and consists of five panels.

The first panel is an atmospheric setting filled with a few symbols that can be distinguished as a flying minotaur, a decapitated figure of a winged man, a heavy yet floating egg-shaped head and a flying fish. Represented in the second panel are a rhinoceros, a frontal view of a head, a pair of wings about to disappear towards the bottom of the picture plane and a fish with a lot of eyes and sharp teeth.

Although the next panel features figurative elements it is the suggestive power of the spatial design elements that provides the drama for this

strange and powerful central panel. The amoeba-like shape in the fourth panel is surrounded with energetic organic scribbles, contrasting with formal elements in the background.

The last panel features an antelope on a pedestal surrounded by a scratched surface including a small scratched heart. A harrowed man and his shadow can be seen in the background. This shadow then appears once again in enlarged form in the foreground and is reflected onto the elephant. Above the head of the shadow is a flaming lion with wings. The outlines of a face with a cross on its forehead are seen to one side. Appearing once again is the egg-shaped head which may also be interpreted as a heart with veins.

The motivation behind these symbols have a lot to do with their eventual interpretation. According to an interview with Pieter Roux it became clear that he was visually inspired by symbols that took shape in his mind's eye, spilling out onto his etching plate. Here they underwent another transformation process through the use of the artist's medium and technique. The images in his art therefore have a wide range of meanings, acting on various levels of the consciousness. They embrace his memories, inspiration from nature, religion and other artworks he had seen and that had made a deep impression on him. There is therefore a sensitively conveyed feeling that one is penetrating layers of meaning in an intuitive fashion.

For him the man with wings in the first panel is a memory of the Nike of Samothrace, the marble sculpture from Hellenistic Greece in the Louvre, Paris. The goddess of Victory has been transformed and the emphases has shifted to the headless figure. The minotaur as personification of

the self has a psychological significance pertaining to the collective but also to the individual, hereby implying the predominance of the monster in man, and the tribute and sacrifice demanded of his better self. The minotaur however, is transformed into a floating winged figure, implying spiritualization. This spiritualization is once again symbolized in the fish to which this monster is reaching out with extended hands.

This small panel in this way becomes an evocative document that releases its meaning after repeated and intimate viewing.

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