



Sekoto pioneer of art in the modern idiom, was a member of the PEDI tribe and was born in 1913¹ on a mission station near Middelburg² in the Transvaal where he received his school education. He subsequently trained as a teacher at the Anglican teachers' training College, *Grace Dieu* Pietersburg district. In the course of his training (1933) and short teaching career he came into contact with artistic influences⁴ and decided to become an artist. He received encouragement⁵ from Rev. Roger Castle of St Peter's School Rosettenville Johannesburg who conducted part-time art classes for interested African students in his own room at the school.

cartoon - Sekoto at the part-time art classes at St Peter's

2. In 1939 he exhibited with Brother Roger's students at the Gainsborough Gals. Jhb. His contribution aroused interest and he was persuaded⁷ to submit an entry to the S.A. Academy. There followed a one-man exhibition in Pretoria which brought him to the attention of art-lovers in the city. By 1947 it had become his ambition to go to Paris⁸; a Pretoria patron provided the necessary funds and, following his first one man exhibition in Jhb., he left SA for Paris⁹. Life in Paris was by no means easy for the struggling artist; in order to support himself he undertook cabaret work, playing the piano and guitar in night spots, which undermined his health and eventually landed him in hospital.¹¹

cartoon - Sekoto playing the piano and guitar in Paris night spots.

3. In 1948/9 his inclusion as the only African artist on the travelling Overseas Exhibition of SA Art stimulated interest abroad. He became a familiar figure of the Bohemian Quarter, known by his bok-beard and corduroy jacket. He divided his activity between portrayal of the local scene and frequent nostalgic recollections of African township subject-matter. Sekoto was the first SA Black artist to merit critical attention from overseas. Much enthusiasm was aroused for his colourful paintings of the Urban African scene. He has remained in Paris. The most notable overall qualities of his work are the way in which he uses colour, his unconventional viewpoint, and the way he handles forms through distortion and perspective. His subject-matter has remained to a large degree African Life, but due to his absence in Paris, it has acquired a certain idealized quality and also a certain fashionable slickness - his work has inevitably been influenced by his Paris environment and a loss of precise memory of Africa and his source of origin.¹⁷

cartoon- Sekoto painting in Paris wearing corduroy jacket and sporting bok-beard.

or one of his paintings which can be found in 'Contemporary African Art in South Africa' by E.J. de Jager