

# Arts and Africa

**BBC** AFRICAN SERVICE, LONDON

No. 118

(6R 53 S118G)

## ANNOUNCEMENT AND SIGNATURE

### ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Welcome to "Arts and Africa". This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey and in this programme we look at the work of a South African statistician, turned sculptor, and we talk to a Nigerian drummer with one of Britain's top pop groups.

### SIGNATURE TUNE

### TETTEH-LARTEY:

Zac Zaltzman is a South African statistician by training. But some years ago he turned his attention to a different set of figures - bronze sculptures. Completely self-taught, he has recently held an exhibition of his work at London's Alwin Gallery where Julian Marshall went along to talk to him for "Arts and Africa".

### JULIAN MARSHALL:

Now we have in front of us here five works you say are representational of your general work. They are abstract sculptures, some of them fairly representational, in bronze. Why did you decide to use bronze as a medium?

### ZAC ZALTZMAN:

The reason why I used bronze was that the originals were done in clay or plaster and these media are very flat. In other words we really can't see changes in detail as easily as you would with bronze. I still make the originals in these other media - clay and plaster, but they're not very strong and clay is temporary, you can lose the shape. At the moment I am stuck with bronze cast sculptures. If there's a shift to another type of image and the bronze doesn't really bring out what I'd like to do, I think it might be worth trying something else.

### MARSHALL:

Now of these five sculptures that we have in front of us, two are reclining, two are standing and one is squatting on haunches. Would it be fair to say that there was something here that was vaguely a cross between a Makonde carving and a Henry Moore, or is that an over-simplification?

### ZALTZMAN:

I think you can say that and I think it's quite fair to say that these

two influences can be seen in these works in front of us here.

MARSHALL:

But are you very much aware of your African background?

ZALTZMAN:

Not really, except that I'm aware of my environment in South Africa. I come from the Orange Free State and over there the landscape tends to be flat, and in some parts of the Eastern Free State there are these jagged out-croppings. As a child I was always fascinated by these and I think that I'm influenced in a sub-conscious manner and I do the work, and that appeals to me. The actual opening out as you approach something and go round it. It either opens out or changes its shape. One can immediately bring back to this environmental experience.

MARSHALL:

Do you sculpt from memory or do you sculpt from figures?

ZALTZMAN:

Neither really. It's as simple as this. I sit down with what I'm going to sculpt - a piece of clay or similar and I begin by making very positive cuts or marks, because I like spontaneity. In fact one of my main modelling tools is an old kitchen knife, which has been the mainstay in my creative work, and when I see a shape coming out I try and preserve that as best as possible. I try not to alter it too much. I try to preserve the freshness and the line and that's what it's all about. I spend most of the time in fact patching up the little holes and things but I try to retain the general shape of it or the lines, as intact as possible.

MARSHALL:

Now what would you like to go through a person's mind when they stand in front of one of your sculptures?

ZALTZMAN:

I would like the opening out of the work to have an effect, for example in this work here at one point you really can't see some of the features, but you really have to move around to see some of the others, and it's this evolving of the shape that I'd like to convey and I'd like people in Britain to experience this evolving of the shape. In other words it's an experience through an angle of 360 degrees. If you put it up against the wall then I would say you're blocking half of it. It's like covering over half a picture, a painting.

MARSHALL:

Are you aware of shapes in Africa as having a different meaning to shapes in Europe?

ZALTZMAN:

I think I am. In Africa I found that the shapes are generally sharper and I think one can trace it to the environment. Again in South Africa we have very bright sunlight and you're bound to get more definition and I'm sure that I retain this influence, even though I never did any sculpture in South Africa.

MARSHALL:

You're completely self-taught are you?

ZALTZMAN:

Yes. I did attend evening classes and I've read, but I have no formal education in sculpture. I think that what one does need is some kind of training or education. It helps one to appreciate the history of art generally and just the very fact of getting to know the techniques, because you have to be able to make the thing stand up and stay up, especially when you do metal sculpture or when you go on to bigger works. I think these considerations come in. You have to know how to actually do it, or at least appreciate how it should be done. So I think it's essential to have a basic training and I really threw myself in at the deep end and I had to learn things very quickly.

MARSHALL:

Are all your sculptures on this scale? For instance this one here stands about two feet off the ground. Do you prefer this smaller scale in working?

ZALTZMAN:

No, not at all. I think it's really the cost of casting which dictates the size of these works. But I am now working on slightly larger works and I'm hoping to enlarge on my work as I go along.

MARSHALL:

Well Zac, I for one hope that you have the artistic success that will enable you to get bigger and bigger with your work.

ZALTZMAN:

Oh, thank you very much.

TETTEH-LARTEY:

Zac Zaltzman talking to Julian Marshall about his exhibition of bronze sculpture at London's Alwin Gallery.

MUSIC: "Working Together" by Clancy.

TETTEH-LARTEY:

Gaspar Lawal is a Nigerian musician who originally came to England sixteen years ago with the intention of studying law or medicine. But his abilities as a drummer were soon recognised on the English pop scene and pretty soon he found himself playing with such famous bands as Ginger Baker's "Airforce". Now, he's joined a new cosmopolitan group called Clancy which consists - besides himself - of one Englishman, an Irishman, a Jamaican, and an Anglo-Nigerian. Clancy have just released an exciting new album and you heard "Working Together", a track from it just now. Alex Pascal asked Gaspar Lawal how difficult it was for him to express his ideas musically as an African in a mixed band like Clancy.

GASPAR LAWAL:

Being that everybody's from a different country you have to learn to understand one another first and then when they come to the music side then we have to try, like if I'm playing with some African band I will play slightly differently from what I'm doing with the band and we're doing, not African songs, we're doing songs based around Clancy.

ALEX PASCAL:

I've seen you all on stage and for me, what sends me is when you take that talking drum, and I'm not complementing you here, but you really steal the show with that beautiful African robe and what not that you've got on there. Do you find that people really respond when you get out there and begin to play the talking drum?

LAWAL:

Yes, because drums of that nature, the talking drum, is very rare, because they don't use it in Europe here and it's like communication, that's what the drum is for, talking drum. We used to send messages with it.

PASCAL:

You really send your messages on stage?

LAWAL:

So sometimes when you play drums those people can always identify with

drums because it's a natural rhythm rather than an electric instrument. So you know being that movement as well. If you go on there and try to prove to them you are the best drummer in the world you can play so much. People probably find it... it's good, but it's boring. One has to put on a little bit of show as well as play the music.

PASCAL:

Now of the many tracks that are written on the LP "Everyday", is that what you call it?

LAWAL:

The album is called "Everyday".

PASCAL:

One of the tracks has been written by you and it's called....

LAWAL:

It's called "Jeka Jose".

PASCAL:

Which means...

LAWAL:

Which means "Do it together".

PASCAL:

Well I'm sure you would like to dedicate a track of that LP to the folk of the entire part of Nigeria and Africa if you had a choice. Well you've got a choice. Which one would you like to dedicate to them?

LAWAL:

Well I still tell them to Jeka Jose, keep on doing it.

PASCAL:

Well from the band Clancy and from GasperLawal to all the folk in Nigeria and the rest of Africa who will be listening, what are we going to say again brother?

LAWAL:

Jeka Jose, which means do it together, do it now and do the best that you can do.

PASCAL:

Thank you.

LAWAL:

Thank you.

MUSIC: "Jeka Jose" by Clancy.

TETTEH-LARTEY:

And that's all from this edition of "Arts and Africa". Until the same time next week this is Alex Tetteh-Lartey saying goodbye and leaving you with some more of that tune from Clancy.

MUSIC: "Jeka Jose" by Clancy.

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