

= Maggie Laubser =

Maria Magdalena Laubser , known as Maggie Laubser (14 April 1886 ? 17 May 1973) was a South African painter and printmaker . She is generally considered , along with Irma Stern , to be responsible for the introduction of Expressionism to South Africa . Her work was initially met with derision by critics but has gained wide acceptance , and now she is regarded as an exemplary and quintessentially South African artist .

= = Early life and education = =

Maria Magdalena Laubser was born on the wheat farm Bloublommetjieskloof near Malmesbury in the Swartland , a productive agricultural area in South Africa . She was the eldest of six children of Gerhardus Petrus Christiaan Laubser and Johanna Catharina Laubser (née Holm) . Laubser 's youth was dominated by the rural and pastoral and she delighted in this carefree existence .

After attending the farm school Rocklands , she left for boarding school at Bloemhof Seminary , Stellenbosch , where she was introduced to the art of drawing . She returned to the farm in 1901 , and during a visit to Cape Town she met Beatrice Hazel , a realistic romantic style painter , who introduced her to Edward Roworth , giving impetus to her desire to study painting .

In 1903 she convinced her parents to let her go to Cape Town once a week for singing lessons . The difficulty of travel and the low opinion her mother had of her mezzo @-@ soprano voice discouraged her , but it was at this stage that she started painting on her own .

She studied painting under Roworth in Cape Town for two months of 1903 , during which time she received a silver medal for her work . By 1907 she had become proficient enough to be elected to the South African Society of Artists (SASA) and , in 1909 , she was represented at the annual exhibition of the SASA and the Fine Arts Association of Cape Town . By 1910 , she had her own studio in Strand Street , Cape Town .

During a 1912 visit to her nephew , Gert Coetzee , in Pretoria , she took up employment as a governess on a farm owned by the Wolmarans family in Ermelo district , Transvaal , where she also taught art and needlework . While on vacation in Durban with a friend , Sophie Fisher , she befriended Jan Hendrik Arnold Balwé (Consul for the Netherlands in Durban 1903 @-@ 1913) , a shipping @-@ line owner who offered to finance her and her sister Hannah 's studies abroad .

= = = Holland and England = = =

Laubser and her sister left for Europe on 4 October 1913 , initially living in an artists ' colony at Laren , Noord @-@ Holland in an area called het Gooi . She met Ita Mees , a concert pianist and Frederik van Eeden , author and poet . She also befriended Laura Knight and Frans Langeveld , both painters . In the last years of his life , Anton Mauve (1838 ? 1888) , who was an important influence on Vincent van Gogh , lived in Laren . Maggie worked in the studio he established there .

At the outbreak of World War I she went to London . She initially stayed in Huntingdonshire and then , in October 1914 , moved to a London hotel and registered at the Slade School of Art for the period October 1914 to March 1919 . Henry Tonks , Walter Westley Russell and Ambrose McEvoy taught her drawing , while Philip Wilson Steer lectured her in painting . It seems that she never painted during her time at the Slade , instead concentrating her efforts on drawing of portraiture and figure studies . Maggie returned to South Africa briefly in 1915 to visit the new family farm at Oortmanspost , near Klipheuwel in the Cape Province and again in March 1919 , after her studies were concluded .

= = Early career and travels = =

= = = Belgium , June 1919 to September 1920 = = =

She left London on 6 June 1919 for Belgium , staying at Antwerp and the Villa Chenes in the Nachtigalen Lei in Schoten . She befriended Arnold Balwé , son of her patron , who studied at the Academy . She might have accompanied Balwé as an occasional student , as is evidenced by a number of nude studies sketched during this period . There is also some evidence that she came into contact with the art of Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter during a stay in Munich in 1919 .

= = = Italy , October 1920 to August 1921 = = =

She travelled with Balwé to Italy in August / September 1920 and lived and worked at Torri del Benaco and San Vigilio on the Garda Lake . During this time the couple was supported financially by Balwé 's father and this gave them freedom to work on paintings for possible exhibitions instead of sale . A large number of signed and dated works from this period give some support to this .

J. H. A. Balwé had been ill towards the end of 1920 , and Arnold Balwé and Maggie accompanied him to Bad Kissingen in mid @-@ April 1921 , where he died in April or May of that year . After Balwé 's death Laubser 's meanders took her to Venice , where she visited the Doge 's Palace (June / July 1921) , then to Milan and , on 18 August 1921 , back to Germany . On 19 September 1921 she arrived in Cape Town on the Union @-@ Castle Line .

= = = Germany , November 1922 to November 1924 = = =

Laubser was issued with a visa by the German Consulate in Cape Town on 16 November 1922 and was installed at Kurfürstendamm 40 , Berlin by 1 January 1923 . Her address had apparently changed to Kurfürstendamm 43 , Berlin by 23 January 1923 . She looked up Irma Stern and they undertook a trip to the Baltic Sea at Ahrenshoop for three weeks in July 1923 . After trips to Weimar and Bavaria and another change of address from Kalckreuthstrasse 5 to lodgings with a Fräulein Finck at Von der Heydt Strasse 1 , south of the Tiergarten , which she obtained with the help of her friend Kate Mädler , she settled down to the cultural life of Berlin . She met members of the diplomatic corps , painted portraits and attended music concerts . She befriended pianists Wilhelm Busch and Otto Glöckle .

It was in Berlin , from 1922 to 1924 , that she came into contact with German Expressionism and was encouraged by Karl Schmidt @-@ Rottluff . The works of Emil Nolde , Max Pechstein , Franz Marc and Erich Waske were available to her and clarified her ambitions . She singled out Franz Marc of Der Blaue Reiter and Nolde , Schmidt @-@ Rottluff and Pechstein of Die Brücke as significant to her personality , although she would claim not to have been influenced by them . The extent of their influence is evident in that she came closest to the German Expressionist style during these years , in which she produced a series of ten lithographs called Visionen .

On 14 August 1924 she made arrangements with Allison Bros. , London to ship her paintings to South Africa .

= = South African debut and critical reception = =

In November 1924 , Laubser returned to South Africa and settled at Oortmanspost , the family farm . She met sculptor Moses Kottler and the cartoonist D. C. Boonzaier , who introduced her to his son Gregoire , founding member of the New Group , and renewed her friendship with painters Ruth Prowse and Nita Spilhaus . She was asked to exhibit in Cape Town , and was cruelly disillusioned . Her work , like that of Irma Stern , met with fierce criticism , most notably from Bernard Lewis of Die Burger and The Cape Times , who as late as 1931 was able to write of her work in a group show :

" Is there any normal , sane human being in all South Africa who is able to appreciate as a work of art , to enjoy as a picture ... the one sent by Maggie Laubser ? " ? Bernard Lewis

In April 1929 she met P. Serton and his wife , as well as A. C. Celliers and Koos Botha , all of whom encouraged her to have a one man exhibition . Her first solo exhibition was held in Stellenbosch , with support from A. C. Bouman and Con de Villiers . During this time she also met Martin du Toit , who would become a fervent supporter , organising her first exhibition in the Transvaal in 1931 .

= = Empire Exhibition , Johannesburg , 1936 = =

On 3 May 1936 , Laubser 's father died , leaving the farm to her brother , and establishing a trust fund for her mother . Laubser would inherit the balance of the trust fund when her mother died on 20 November 1936 . Although she was treated harshly by the press , Laubser was elected to the selection panel of the prestigious British Empire Exhibition , the convener of which was M. L. du Toit , without her parents living to see this acquiescence to her talents .

The Empire Exhibition was a quadrennial exposition , which in 1936 was held in Milner Park , Johannesburg , and it was representative of the best South Africa had to offer . It was here that Laubser would become familiar with Alexis Preller , who would attract the ire of the critics for his work at the first New Group exhibition on 4 May 1938 . Maggie Laubser would also be a member of the New Group , and present at the exhibition of 1938 .

= = Later years and legacy = =

Maggie Laubser was active from as early as 1900 and continued working uninterrupted until her death in 1973 . The catalogue raisonné compiled by Dalene Marais contains 1784 individual works . Her predominant style of work is generally accepted by many authors to be Expressionist , but there are also identifiable elements of Fauvism at work , and a pastoralism that belie the German Expressionist prototypes to which Maggie was exposed .

After the death of her parents she settled in Cape Town in 1937 , taking a studio in Drie Ankerbaai . In 1942 , she moved to the Strand . She built a cottage there , called Altyd Lig (Always Bright) , in 1947 . On 28 May 1946 Prof. P. J. Nienaber announced that Loubser would receive the honorary medal of the Academy of Arts and Science . In 1947 she received the Oscar award for painting from Die Vaderland , a newspaper . In 1948 , membership of the South African Academy for Arts and Science was awarded to her and the poet Elisabeth Eybers . She continued painting and continued to evolve her style , and in 1959 she was presented with an honorary membership of the Academy of Art and Science . The South African Association of Arts honoured her with a medal in 1968 , presented by Prof. A. L. Meiring .

The South African National Gallery and the Pretoria Art Museum combined to host a major retrospective exhibition of Laubser 's works in 1969 . This was followed in 1987 by a retrospective of early works , again at the South African National Gallery , which ran from 2 December 1987 to 31 January 1988 .

Maggie Laubser died on 17 May 1973 at Altyd Lig . There was an unfinished canvas on her easel .

= = Major collections = =

Maggie Laubser 's works are included in a number of major collections :

South African National Gallery , Cape Town

Johannesburg Art Gallery , Johannesburg

Pretoria Art Museum , Pretoria

Durban Art Gallery , Durban

A. C. White Gallery , Bloemfontein

Hester Rupert Art Museum , Graaff @-@ Reinet

Rupert Museum , Stellenbosch

William Humphreys Art Gallery , Kimberley

Sanlam Art Collection , Cape Town