

Hollard enters art world with a bang



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NEWs of the sale of Paul Emmanuel's masterwork, after-image, to Hollard Insurance sent ripples of curiosity through a room full of Chardonnay sippers gathered for the launch of his recent solo show at Constitution Hill.

The acquisition of such a large-scale work by a young South African artist signalled that the insurance company, not previously known for its corporate collection, had seriously entered the business of art.

The purchase of Emmanuel's work is part of a bold new creative vision that was ignited when Hollard bought Villa Arcadia in Parktown, a grand old Randlord's mansion that functioned for 81 years as the South African Jewish Orphanage.

"The house and property of 16 acres of prime real estate was bought by Hollard last year and is currently being developed into our future office complex," says Hollard's communications manager, Carel Nolte.

The mansion, designed by Sir Herbert Baker, is believed to be the forerunner of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. It was originally owned by Lionel Phillips, who was chairman of the influential Central Mining & Investment Corporation and president of the Chamber of Mines.

The first Arcadia, a compact Victorian villa with Swiss trimmings, is believed to have been built in the late 1890s. Florence and Lionel Phillips acquired it in 1906 but, being part of the busy socialite set, they soon realised that the house



Above, Paul Emmanuel's masterwork, after-image.

was too small for lavish entertaining, and commissioned Baker to design a house for them.

Arcadia was built as a Mediterranean villa, with a number of large reception rooms and a grand loggia — or long stoep — overlooking the northern suburbs. Arcadia still boasts fine craftsmanship, with brass work by George Ness and carved rocco fanlights above each double door, by Anton van Wouw.

In keeping with the heritage of the old building, Hollard has set about developing an art collection to complement its splendour and classic proportions. The quiet driving force behind the collection is Dick Enthoven, a major shareholder at Hollard, who also happens to be one of SA's most inspired patrons of the arts. "It is his passion for art that has inspired the way that the furniture and art has been handled at Hollard's new offices," says Jeannetta Bignaut, special art consultant to the Enthoven family, who has put together the collection. "From the start the art was envisaged as being the central feature of the house."

The Enthovens have made massive contributions to the arts through their family run estate at



Hollard's The Creative Block features a series of small square blocks — intended to spark fresh expression in young artists.

Spier, which hosts an internationally acclaimed arts festival annually.

"At the same time," says Bignaut, "without being too formalistic, the team at Hollard has been deeply involved in the process.

"One of the important guiding aspects in buying art is that people involved with the company on a day-to-day basis are also enthusiastic about the purchases we make.

"The overall philosophy is that a creative thought-provoking environ-

ment, attracts creative thoughtful employees," she says. "Take Paul Emmanuel's work. At first, people are so amazed by the sheer amount of intricate work that has gone into it. This draws them to ask more philosophical questions about why he created it." So far the other major work in the collection is Forensic Theatre: Male Hysteria by Conrad Botes, who is renowned for his very particular "comic noir" style.

But, in addition to celebrating the work of young artists such as Mandla Vanyaza and Siphiwe Zulu, the Hollard collection will also provide a platform for emerging South African concepts and styles.

The entrance hall will feature an installation of contemporary art in beads by artists such as Doreen Southwood and Paul Edmunds, under the auspices of Qalo — a project that pairs skilled beadworkers with fine artists. Another concept, called The Creative Block, will feature a series of 18cm x 18cm square blocks — intended to spark fresh expression in young artists. Both projects are run by Coeo, Bignaut's art consultancy.

Alex Dodd

PAUL EMMANUEL

THE first recipient of the Amperand Foundation Fellowship in 1997 and winner of the Sasol wax-in-art competition in 2002, Paul Emmanuel is known for his sensitive and intimate print-making and intaglio works.

In after-image Emmanuel takes his intricate, immaculate working style to the limit, with tiny detailed marks scratched into an enormous stretch of space (2m x 4.8m) to form the almost photo-realistic landscape. In it he explores the politics of South African militarism, power and patriarchy and their relationship to male identity.

Emmanuel's work sells for between R3 000 and R45 000. For more information contact Les Cohn of Art Source at 082-395-7417; (011) 482-1258 or via e-mail on lescohn@acenet.co.za. Alex Dodd

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Alex Phiso: Fish & Eggs. Oil on board 30 x 40 cm x 200 mm. Signed, titled, 91, 2003/04

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