

Then about 1961 Gerrit Bakker made what he considers his most exciting and important discovery—Swiss-born Heidi Herzog, who had been painting all her life, and destroying everything she wrought. She was a woman obsessed with her art, and in the 16 years she worked in South Africa she almost starved until Gerrit Bakker became her agent and began selling her pictures.

He gave her every encouragement, and by selling her

work enabled her to buy materials and, what is more important, to express herself freely in her art. Gradually, under his benign eye, she began not only to eat regular meals and live in better surroundings and circumstances, but also, at last, to reveal her startling talent, by which her flower pieces have given a new dimension to South African art.

She came—sadly for all too short a time—to full maturity in her work, which shows all the qualities of universal stature. Her pictures are mystical and arresting symphonies in colour and light. They seem basically so naive that any child is attracted to them at once, but in fact they are the product of a highly skilled technician with the artist's brush, who came to her stage of brilliant simplification and emotional power the hard way, the only way—by work, and more work. She painted every picture as if it was her last . . .

From my personal knowledge, I know what Gerrit Bakker put up with in her shrewish, difficult temperament for the sake of her wonderful art. Lesser men would not have tolerated what he did. This waif—a stormy, nagging, often maddening person—nevertheless did mystic and wonderful things for art in this country, due solely to Bakker, whom she worshipped intensely and hated off and on just as intensely.

Heidi Herzog died in February, 1967 in Johannesburg after an unsuccessful open heart operation. Within the few years Bakker had managed to boost her best pictures to prices of up to R600. They found their way into the De Jongh collection, Johannesburg, the Chester Beatty collection in England, and Mrs. Philip Oppenheimer's collection in London.

Though she painted most of her life on the Continent as well as in South Africa, she left only a handful of pastels and oils. This small but rich and joyous harvest she added to South Africa's art is thanks to dealer Gerrit Bakker, who

despite all the nagging and tantrums he had to put up with, declares: “I rate Heidi Herzog as on a level, if not above, any other South African artist whose work I have handled. Certainly she is the equal of Welz.”