

## NORMAN CATHERINE

Catherine works from a smile to a shudder. When he refers to the Old Testament (*An eye for an eye*), one may react with pleasure to the visual jokes, but one knows that unforgiving and brutal tribal gods have set up snares in which revenge will determine all the bloody and dismembering action. When an artist possessed of such wit contemplates the hell that grows out of a society of puritanical and messily sentimental racists, he will run through the most stunning discords in his search for summations. His colour rips across expectations and camouflages violence; let yourself be seduced by brilliance and flash and you'll be even more shocked in the end by Catherine's logic of horror.

Opinion Poll charts on a checkerboard, with anguished and demented heads, a situation of blocked communication, hatred and fear: it's like an updated Aztec calendar of violence and confusion. The speech balloons run from square to square like the snakes in a game where there are no ladders left. Catherine maps endgame distress with cartoonlike forms (a jokey 20th century vocabulary) which achieve an ironic distancing as absurdity marries despair.

In Hi-Fidelity fun runs onto blade wire, and the pussy with a mike has sharpened teeth to help him survive the members of the endangered species who cavort and sing about him.

This painter has deliberately taken into his work the acculturated art products of his black fellow countrymen - they temper his own western virtuosity. They also lend a new edge to his acid pessimism.

DR. RAYMUND VAN NIEKERK

(Former) Director, S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town, 1987