

PRESS RELEASE

An exhibition of 32 paintings and drawings by Wim Blom opens in Johannesburg (Gallery 101) on October 20, 1969. This exhibition should be of considerable interest as Mr. Blom has not shown his work in the city since 1965.

He has recently spent two years in Spain (1966-68) at his studio on the island of Menorca where all the paintings in this exhibition were done.

Another point of great interest is that the dominant theme for the exhibition is the human figure. This is a new departure for Wim Blom who is chiefly known for his landscapes. This show, however, will be balanced with a fair number of landscape paintings inspired by the island surroundings.

Mr. Blom has come specially to Johannesburg to attend the opening of his exhibition. Two weeks ago he arrived from Italy where he supervised the installation of an exhibition of old master drawings at the Uffizi Galleries. This exhibition comes from the fine collection of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. Mr. Blom is Curatorial Administrator for this large institution. Prior to his stay in Spain, he held the position of Research Curator at the National Gallery.

Wim Blom returns to Italy on October 27 to close the exhibition in Florence from where it travels to The Louvre in Paris.

## INTRODUCTION

Wim Blom's painting has long been concerned with the presentation of diverse aspects of man's environment using architecture, landscape and still life as central themes. These paintings, romantic-expressionist in style, have without conscious prevision led to his present work. It may seem at first sight that there is a break with what went before. But it is in reality a development and a further clarification.

Over the past few years Wim Blom advanced towards greater liberation of his mental powers and form-language as a painter. He has achieved a growing sense of self-perception, discovering within himself latent spheres of interest now exploited for the first time. Thus far the human figure has not appeared in his work. The present predicament of man caught in an era of insecurity and alienation presents a compelling theme and is a challenge to his creative abilities.

His approach is not purely figurative; a strong leaning towards symbolism is apparent. A painting of the Death of Icarus (1967) is symbolic of man and his present dilemma. The humanist approach in conquering space, here personified by the mythical ascent of Icarus, is represented as an impossibility, a failure. A stark white line, like a laser

beam, cuts across the dying figure symbolically destroying the underlying romantic conception. Another work, Man Consumed (1967), a similarly divided canvas, could suggest the gulf between a known threatening world and unknown outer space.

The importance of content in painting has always been of primary concern to Wim Blom. Subject matter, or idea, for him at any rate, must govern the whole approach; expression, style, technique, material, all must be subservient to content.

His earlier lyrical approach now gives way to a more cerebral process of deliberately planning a composition which is often preceded by numerous drawings. In this regard he attaches equal importance to his drawings, many of which are finished works and have no relation to paintings.