

# Frank Spears



Frank Spears was born in England in 1906, where he studied art, music and drama in Birmingham and London. In 1949 he did a study tour of the United States. He now lives in Kenwyn in the Cape.

Spears has shown overseas and regularly in South Africa. He was included in the 1960 Ghent Exhibition of twenty selected South African painters, in the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition, Bulawayo (1953), the van

Riebeeck Tercentenary Exhibition, Cape Town (1952), the 1963 Sao Paulo Biennial and the 1966 Venice Biennial.

His work is represented in the South African National Gallery, the William Humphreys Art Gallery (Kimberley), the Graaff-Reinet Gallery and in many private collections.

His exhibition at Gallery 101 opens on October 7th.





In his paintings Frank Spears is chiefly concerned with four things: humility, unity, purity of colour and quality of pigment. These requirements preclude slap-dash work and call for sincere, well thought-out compositions and, as near as possible, faultless technique. His work covers still life, particularly flowers, portraits, figure studies and abstract Impressionism. In his abstract work he finds it necessary to have a subject, whether it be a physical object, a poetic idea, or the sound of music. This idea is developed with exactly the same approach that he uses when painting a still life or a figure study.

Frank Spears has always been fascinated by the scope offered to painters by still life subjects, all of which have spiritual entities and values of their own, worthy of study and perpetuation. Flowers particularly speak to him of the eternal verities: birth, flowering and death (or as Gauguin put it- "Whence come I, what am I, whither go I"). For him their whole existence is filled with mystery and movement and although at one moment they are flamboyant, they are never without the prime virtue of humility. The word 'humility' means a lot to him and he doubts whether a truly worth-while work of art can exist if it is not based on humility - humility towards the subject, humility towards the materials and humility towards the Muse. Because he has this inward vision many of his flower paintings approach abstract spiritual designs.

He has also been concerned with music as a subject and has allowed an intuitive pattern, induced by live music, to develop under his hand into a harmony of colours, an experience which has been one of the most exciting things ever to have happened to him.

Poetry and the integration and disintegration of cities and buildings has also influenced Spears. "When I stand in the Roman Forum or in a Grecian city, I experience physically the welling-up of human endeavour, the spilling of human blood and the indestructible spiritual patterns created by man and his buildings, whether they have been physically destroyed or not. It is very difficult

to title such paintings and I have had to repeat myself by calling them: "FABRIC OF A CITY."

The clown attracts him, too, primarily because the clown is the epitome of human frailty and kindness. If his clowns are sad, it is because it is a sad thing to be a clown but a noble thing to be one in the service of other people.

He has recently returned to portrait painting and feels that this is a branch of art which has been sadly neglected during recent years. For him a portrait does not mean a photographic likeness, but a picture resulting from a study of an individual human spirit.

There is a mysticism in all Frank Spears' work, an intense personal feeling and a rich and glowing colour sense.

(opp. page) *Yellow Roses.*

(top left) *Magian.*

(above) *Portrait of Wendy.*