

CCAC Interview with Jaco Sieberhagen on 03/07/2020 via email - transcript

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Interviewer name (and acronym): Francois Lion-Cachet (FLC)

Interviewee name (and acronym): Jaco Sieberhagen (JS)

Name of translator, if applicable: N/a

Name of transcriber: N/a

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Number of recordings: N/a

Audio file name(s) of interview: N/a

List of acronyms: N/a

START OF INTERVIEW

FLC: Please tell us a bit about where you grew up and how you became an artist?

JS: I grew up in a very traditional Afrikaans family where a love for art and music (classical) was part of our daily bread. After school I went to University and qualified as a “dominee”. I spent a few years in full-time ministry and quite a few years in part-time ministry, while developing my art career. While living in Grahamstown for a few years, I became involved with the art department at Rhodes University as an occasional student, which gave me a taste of what is required to follow a career as an artist. While still in full-time ministry I started with my first sculptures and as time went by the passion and love for art became my full-time occupation.

FLC: Can you tell us more about how, when and why the artwork was made?

JS: The mountains and rivers around Worcester provided me with a treasure of driftwood. As my style developed my aim was to leave as much as possible of the original weathered wood untouched and develop the theme for the specific piece of wood from the expressive feel of the weathered wood. I wanted the weathered wood to contribute to the “story” of the sculpture instead of completely imposing my will on the wood.

I remember while working on the piece of wood that eventually became the “Judge”, the wood had an old and weathered feel to it. While carving the face, I felt that although the wood was weathered, the face should have an inner strength and portray wisdom - the wisdom that only comes with time and experience. From there the idea developed that I could carve the lines of the Scale of Justice into the sculpture. This last element added to the “story” of the sculpture.

FLC: Could you tell us the story of when and why this artwork was donated to the Constitutional Court Trust?

JS: The artist Judith Mason played a major role in the whole process. As a young artist at the time (1999), her involvement with my exhibition was an incredible lift of my creative spirit and motivation to keep developing my art making. She did not only give her time to speak at the opening, but travelled a few days later all the way from Simon’s Town where she was staying at that stage, to spend a morning with me discussing every artwork. With her incredible insight and sensitivity she gave me a better understanding of my own art making and especially the directions she anticipate my art expression will develop in. She also motivated me to trust my instincts and not to be afraid to give expression to my thoughts and feelings.

During that time Judith told me that Albie Sachs contacted her to ask if she could approach a few artists to donate artwork for the Constitutional Court. At that time I already knew that Albie Sachs was an art lover and keen collector of art, because some time before that I met him in Worcester where a selection of his art collection was exhibited at the Jean Weltz Gallery. I indicated to Judith that I was more than willing to donate an artwork. We walked through my exhibition and decided on the specific artwork.

It was a wonderful endorsement of my art when she said the “Judge” should become part of the Constitutional Court’s collection.

FLC: What inspired the title of your artwork?

JS: The specific piece of wood came from the Du Toitskloof Mountains and could most probably be Rooi Els. When working with a piece of wood I always try to rework only a small area of the original wood and use the

expressive nature of the weathered wood to complete the artwork. While carving the face the idea developed of the Judge – weathered by time and experience – the bases for wisdom that is needed by a judge.

FLC: How do you feel about having your work part of the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC) today? Additionally, what does the CCAC represent to you?

JS: A great privilege.

FLC: How do you see art as being connected to justice or human rights in South Africa, or more universally?

JS: “Art makes the blind man see”. This is true on so many levels. Art should open our eyes to see the beauty around us, but should also open our eyes for the injustice that surrounds us.

FLC: Do you have any recommendations on the preservation and presentation of the artwork?

JS: You are doing a wonderful job. I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW