

# farewell museum art group



*Members of the Museum Art Group, which held its final exhibition at the National Museum during March admire a painting by Eric Laubscher. They are: Lotte White (left), Ida Pepler and Dora Scott (right).*

"I wish someone would say just how much Ida Pepler has done for Bloemfontein," Lotte White said to me as we were watching the final preparations being made for the Museum Art Group's final exhibition at the National Museum. Ida won't talk about herself. "She has been the driving force behind the group." Dora Scott told me, showing me paintings worth at least R13 000 that, through Ida's efforts, the group has been able to give the National Museum for its permanent art collection.

"It was Ida who travelled to Johannesburg and Cape Town, seeing the latest exhibitions, buying worthwhile works, negotiating for artists to exhibit their work here," Mrs Scott continued.

Ida Pepler was one of the founding members of the Museum Art Group, which started in 1968 with Reneé le Roux, architect Elsie Keyser and Jean van Heerden. Later Dora Scott and Lotte White joined the Group.

The group's target was to have three or four large exhibitions each year, with smaller, one-man shows in between. The first large exhibition Ida organised was known as the Cape exhibition and

featured works by artists such as Jean Welz, Irma Stern, Nerine Desmond, Maggie Laubscher, Gregoire Boonzaire and Cecil Skotnes.

The Transvaal exhibition soon followed, and the group formed links with the Peter Stuyvesant Group — enabling them to hold the Barlach-Kolwitz exhibition. Santam's collection also found its way to the city.

Although a non-profit organisation, individual artists were charged a small commission for exhibiting. With this, Ida Pepler found her way clear to buying works by Bettie Cilliers-Bernard, Hardy Botha, Cecil Skotnes, Alex and Marianne Podlashuc, Jan van Meijeren and Reneé le Roux, among others — forming a valuable core collection for the National Museum.

But now Ida Pepler and Lotte White are leaving Bloemfontein, and the Museum Art Group will be no more. The group's dissolution is saddest, perhaps, for Dora Scott. "If it hadn't been for the group, Bloemfontein would never have seen the art it has seen," she said. "It filled a desperate need here. When it's gone, what will take its place?"

(Condensed from an article by Gaye Davis, *The Friend*, 18 March 1981)