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—C.V. Roman, MD (1908)

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About the Cover

Kaapse Klopse

Artist: Gary Frier

Size: 900 x 700 mm

Mixed media on hardboard

Year: 2005

These two minstrels were captured on their way up

Wale Street in Cape Town, South Africa. The contentious Coon Carnival is a yearly minstrel (a singer of folk songs) festival in Cape Town beginning on New Year's Day and continuing into January. Minstrels from America first visited the cape in 1848, 10 years after the then-British colony had abolished slavery but years before emancipation. The American minstrels were white, but they blackened their faces with burnt cork. Inspired, the local variation, organized by local, former slave population, took on a critical tongue-in-cheek festivity, and many songs were written specifically to mock their former masters. The festivities include street parades with singing and dancing, costume competitions and marches through the streets. Since 2002, the local government and business have sponsored the carnival—not without accompanying scandals.

In this portrayal of the two musicians, I wanted to give an unglamorous portrayal of this cultural phenomenon, bearing in mind the history of the people being portrayed—having been slaves in their own country as well as being marginalized politically and economically to this day. The Coon Carnival is much more than the music played in the streets on New Year's Day. To me, it embodies triumph of the human spirit.

Born October 15, 1972 and educated as a graphic designer, Gary has been moved to create art of a more personal nature. Of his work, he says, "I find inspiration in many forms of media and subjects. Creating art for me is about constantly reflecting on my place in the world, discovering how to distill and interpret this interaction with what surrounds me and documenting that personal relationship." With very few opportunities to exhibit his work locally as well as nationally, Gary makes a continued effort to encourage interest in art among his contemporaries by pricing his work "as low as possible" and by forming alliances with NGOs (nongovernment organizations) and cultural institutions such as the Alliance Française. His body of work encompasses figurative abstract and expressionistic styles.

Recently, he has participated in an exhibition at the Alliance Française du Cap, entitled, "Similiar Similarities and Strange Attractors" with world-renowned artist Garth Erasmus; the Picasso in Africa exhibition; and the KKnk festival in Oudtshoorn—Branding Me. In 2004, he participated in Wasanni International Artists workshop in Lamu-Kenya with a large collection of wildlife art for which he continually receives derisive and contemptuous commentary from the local "intellectual" artistic community for not being "high art." He has exhibited at Greatmore Studios, IDSA (Institute for Democracy in South Africa) and Durbanville Cultural Society, Battswood Art Centre, Le Bon Ton, Caledon Museum, Fordsburg Art Studios (Bag Factory) as well as Alliance Française de Mitchell's Plain and, most recently, Alliance Française du Cap in Cape Town and the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK) being held in Oudtshoorn.

Gary's work forms part of the collections of BP regional office, People et Culture organization of Brest France, the Fortis Circustheatre-Scheveningen as well as the Embassy of the USA, Nairobi; and private collections in South Africa, France, United Kingdom, Russia, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and Australia.

To view all available artwork, visit www.friersart.com. Contact Gary Frier at GaryF@friersart.com. Comprehensive catalogs available on request.