

## **Background information**

### ***Good Hope. South Africa and The Netherlands from 1600***

#### **Layout**

The exhibition will occupy all ten top-floor galleries in the Rijksmuseum's Philips Wing. Designer Tom Postma has taken on the design of *Good Hope. South Africa and The Netherlands from 1600 onwards*.

#### **Cabo de Boa Esperança (1600–1652)**

What did South Africa look like before the arrival of the Westerners and what was the first contact between the Dutch and the Cape of Good Hope residents like? Who lived in the country at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese and the VOC? Six boulders are on display: three with drawings by the San, South Africa's oldest residents, and three with Portuguese and Dutch inscriptions.

#### **Confrontation in the Cape (1652–1700)**

The Dutch period in the Cape began in 1652. It was during the first ten years, the era of the first commander, Dutchman Jan van Riebeeck, that the foundations were laid for the future relationship between the Netherlands and South Africa. What did the small settlement look like? What happens when white folks come to live in a black country? VOC traders exchanged tobacco and beads with the local Khoikhoi population (whom the Dutch abusively called 'Hottentots') in return for their cattle. The Khoikhoi fell victim to alcoholism and at the same time lost their cattle and noticeably their dominance. VOC maps on the walls that show the Cape's development can only be admired. There are also exceptional drawings on display showing the daily life of the Khoikhoi and there is an imposing San cloak.

#### **'I am an Afrikaner' (1700–1800)**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Netherlands continued to extend its influence and left its mark on South Africa in particular. Dutch house façades appeared in the villages, grapevines were planted by the Huguenots (French protestants reaching the Cape via the Netherlands). Accompanying all of this, the Khoikhoi's territory kept on shrinking, which resulted in interminable conflict. The Dutch language gained a firm foothold in the Cape, spoken by Dutch 'free burghers' who called themselves 'Afrikaners'. The slaves, 'imported' from Africa, Madagascar, India and Indonesia from 1658 onwards, brought with them their cultures, languages and religions to South Africa, contributing to the melting pot the land would later become. None of these groups was homogeneous: sexual relations between Khoikhoi, slaves, ex-slaves and European colonists were for a long time considered completely normal.

The exhibition displays 'Cape furniture' (with Dutch, Cape and Javanese influences), drawings of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Cape townships, portraits and Cape families' luxury items. Paintings showing enslaved people, slave yokes and a slave bell provide an impression of South Africa as it would remain for centuries: a predominantly white minority lording it over the rest of the population.

### **A seven-metre long, 18<sup>th</sup>-century panoramic view of Table Bay**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the explorer Robert Jacob Gordon (1743–1795), a Dutchman of Scottish descent, undertook several scientific expeditions to the South African interior. These journeys gave rise to an impressive collection of sketches of the country's people, flora and fauna, with as the highlight spectacular panoramas (more than seven metres long) that are very rarely exhibited. The exhibition's largest gallery is dedicated to the work of this explorer, who was the first person to make a detailed study of the country and its inhabitants. During his journeys he negotiated between the colonial farmers and the Khoikhoi, San and Xhosa. Even the giraffe skeleton is on display that Gordon sent to Stadtholder Willem V, which is usually on view in the Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, and which has now been reconstructed here bone by bone.

### **South Africa in the nineteenth century: a country adrift (1800–1900)**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the history of South Africa would become increasingly complex. The British took Cape Town in 1795, bringing to an end the Dutch colonial era, but not the presence of the Dutch descendants, called 'Boeren' (Boers – South Africans of Dutch, German, or Huguenot descent) and 'Basters' (Bastards – mixed race). The Boers founded their own republics, the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Flags metres in length, bibles and embroidered bonnets symbolise the 'Dutch' South Africa the English encountered when gold and diamonds were discovered there. Rare 19<sup>th</sup>-century photo portraits show descendants of Dutch folk of many shades in South Africa with surnames such as Waterboer, Potgieter and Kok, and also of the many African races whose lives were radically changed by the presence of the Boers and the British.

### **The Boer War, a South African war (1899–1902)**

The Boers fought against the British in the Boer War, which lasted almost three years (1899–1902) and cost the lives of about 80,000 people – Boers, British and Africans. The goal was the preservation of the independence of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, which in the end failed. In the Netherlands, there was an immense upsurge of sympathy for 'our cousins' in South Africa. Even Queen Wilhelmina received the Transvaal President Paul Kruger in her palace. Souvenirs, prints, busts and Kruger memorabilia vouch for his immense popularity. In the Netherlands, nationwide collections were organised for 'Uncle Paul' and the 'kith and kin' in South Africa. Through spy holes in the wall, the visitor can see the other side of the Boer War: photos of battlefields and (British) concentration camps. A small bag with *concentration camps* on it, that was part of an Amsterdam girl's party dress, attests to these camps.

### **Apartheid**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was the century of apartheid in South Africa. People were ever more strictly segregated on the basis of the colour of their skin by laws, rules and banning orders. The exhibition shows this segregation of a complete society in sculptures, photos and posters. Ed van der Elsken mercilessly photographed the relationship between white and black in 1959 and 1968. In 1952 the historical bonds and friendship between the

Netherlands and South Africa were still extensively commemorated by both countries. But even at that time the black population was protesting against the oppression, which in the following years would only escalate, resulting in bloody riots in townships such as Sharpeville (1960) and Soweto (1976). The exhibition recollects the fierce anti-apartheid campaigns in the Netherlands. Shell, the Makro and the company Outspan (oranges) were accused of supporting apartheid. Klaas de Jonge and RaRa instantaneously became household names in the Netherlands. A Shell petrol pump cut off by the RaRa is on display as well as – these days very rare – a bench bearing the text ‘Net Blankes / Whites Only’. Due partly to the international boycott against South Africa, Nelson Mandela gained his freedom in 1990 and apartheid was abolished. Many will remember his legendary visit to Amsterdam.

The colonial past is still experienced and criticised in South Africa. In 2015, for instance, the statues of Jan van Riebeeck and his wife in Cape Town were hung with protest boards: “I stole your land, so what?” And so the exhibition begins and ends with Jan van Riebeeck, the man who will forever be associated with South Africa.

### **1994 by Pieter Hugo**

One gallery is devoted to the photo series *1994* by the South African photographer Pieter Hugo. Hugo portrayed the *born free* generation, the children born after 1994 – the year in which apartheid was abolished. A selection of eleven large portraits is on display.