

## Johannesburg South Africa 2019 – A journey along memory lane

By Heidi Trautmann

47 years have gone by since we have last set foot on South African soil, sons Otto and Robin being 4 resp. 2 years old when we left the country to return to Germany. A trip along memory lane in the true sense of the word, we visited all those places where we had lived and have special memories of. One of the main reasons was to reconnect with Helen Sebidi, the woman who had helped me with household scores and to care for my children.



It was in Edenvale in 1970 with Robin just born, left: Otto in the arms of Helen...



She had held Otto and Robin in her arms from day 1 when I came out of Queen Vic Hospital in Joburg and she loved them dearly and it is after the youngest one that she called her youngest one also Robin.

Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi, an incredible woman, a woman of my age, who has had the strength and the will to overcome all barriers in her life to arrive at where she is today: a woman, an artist, a human being, much admired and loved, and honoured and decorated by the President of her country and many other institutions. She has been entrusted with many assignments in her life. Now she is one of the 'Elders', people of educational institutions turn to for advice. Ten years ago I wrote an article on her life on the occasions of a biography that was published at that time. Please click to read it.

<http://www.heiditrautmann.com/category.aspx?CID=3181167358#.XXyWX9UzaUk>

The trip was planned shortly after my husband's death (Oct 2019), a trip we had wanted to do together for years but never somehow managed to carry it out. So I decided to finally do it and take the two of my sons, who were born in Johannesburg, with me in order to open the door for them to this country of beauty and in those days of many racial problems, which we, as so very young and naïve people, had not realized fully in the first beginnings.

Johannesburg and its surroundings, the many 'suburbs' – they are no longer suburbs, they are small cities of their own right – with the beautiful architecture – where the rich and privileged lived – however all these suburbs were alive with dense alleys and avenues of old majestic trees, and they still are, alleys of flowering trees, jacarandas, flamboyant and bottle brush trees etc. plane trees, pines and other needle trees. Joburg citizens are proud of their biggest man-made forest and I had always admired it. South Africans are great in landscaping and garden architecture, there is no doubt about it.



This link shows Johannesburg and the many 'suburbs', interesting to see.  
<https://www.google.com/maps/place/De+Korte+St,+Johannesburg,+2000,+S%C3%BCdafrika/@-26.1845015,28.0351977,17z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x1e950c195fb1e5df:0xec66c95bbd9f080!8m2!3d-26.1934839!4d28.036571>

Joburg or Jozi some say, has a mild climate, winter season, the dry season, when we have summer here on the Northern part of the globe, and summer

time and rain season starts in October till April, perhaps, with the general climate change, things have changed there too.

I joined my sons in Munich where we took a South African night flight direct to Johannesburg – ten hours of ice cold air condition, on our return flight I wisely put my poncho on and a shawl around my neck.



Tembo Airport – still at the same place but no longer the small hall but an enormously wide terrain, and there Helen and her son Robin were waiting for us, and we shouted from joy and Helen's voice was so loud that everybody turned around and applauded to our reunion. Wonderful.

We hired a car and drove from Kempton Park, along the eight lane highway into Johannesburg. Wow. The net of highways around Johannesburg .. and to connect to other cities is unbelievably dense and perfect, they are in good condition, and even through rush hours I never experienced a complete standstill. And we found so many ways



to avoid traffic jams. Space and early city planning. We hardly saw any old cars.





We passed Edenvale, the last place we had been living at and came well through the early morning traffic. On our way from the airport we had breakfast at the Zoo Lake, at the famous Moyo Restaurant. We came to love the place and went there more than once; it is absolutely charming, full of architectural surprising details, quite artistic. We had a huge sandwich loaded with avocado chunks and on top a fried egg, it looked mouthwatering.



The Zoo Lake as such has always been a centre point for the arts. Helen had her very first exhibitions at Zoo Lake after she had been taken up into the circle of artists; it is a still active open group of artists, they call themselves Artists under the Sun...

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/www.artunderthesun.co.za/>



Here Helen is among the artists of the group, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left, her first art teacher on the right, half a century ago.

They organize a yearly art festival and also a music festival which we visited while we were there. I will talk about it later.



We arrived at the place which I had rented, two cottages in Parkview, in Roscommon Avenue, with the already mentioned beautiful tree alleys, at the moment of arrival still without leaves but one week later fully green, spring was there with our arrival. Disconcerting, however, were the high walls along the properties with high voltage wires on top, all over the cities, however less in rural areas. These high security measures had not been in our times.



Our two cottages in a separate garden with separate entrance and behind high walls but we felt immediately at home.

I think the best way to go about is to go day by day.

In the afternoon of our first day we went to see Helen and Robin at their house in Parktown just around the corner, a nice area full of old trees again, and there we had coffee and were shown around the house and the garden. Helen told us that it has not at all been easy to get this house



written into her name, the neighbours refused to have her next door but here her Gallery Everard-Read helped her with expertise. She is now owner of this beautiful piece of land.



The first years she had lived and worked in the garage only, because the house was run down and in need of repair. Only this year, when she had received my letter that I would be coming with my sons, she had a stroke of good luck and could sell two big paintings which enabled her to



renovate the house; it was not finished when we came but we could see what it would be like and she said, now we would know that we always had a home at her house, just as she had had with us years ago. Her studio is still in the garage with drawers full of graphic work and paintings on paper. She said she slept there on the floor, it was the time after her nearly deadly accident with

the artist Bill Ainslie with whom she had worked together and who died in this accident, that was in the 80s. Her back was broken. Around the garage she had planted vegetables which she used for herself and Robin and which she offered to the neighbours as a sort of sign of peace. Her garden is nicely done and in the swimming pool she grows pumpkin and melons. Helen dresses very consciously to underline her status and character and she often wears national dresses which gives her a very special important air. We had an immediate bond again, older and wiser, but still had the same language. Otto and Robin were quite impressed and respected her but as she tried to exercise an educational tone they would rather go their own ways together with the other



Robin, the three understood each other very well and we heard them laughing together and enjoying themselves.

In the evening she took us to one famous family restaurant established in 1975: Mike's Kitchen, very nice and good food. Here we were for the first time confronted with parking control, secured areas where you left your car under supervision. Wherever we went in the following days, if it were at the super market or malls, art galleries or

restaurants, there were watchmen and you paid them some Rands when leaving.

So that was Day 1 and we went to bed in our comfy cottages and the next morning we had our breakfast that we found ready in the fridge, with fruit, eggs and everything. We sat in the garden under the spring sun with the Jasmine blossoms spreading their perfume.

**Day 2, August 22:** The second day we went, with Helen and Robin, to see the famous traditional art gallery, the Everard-Read Gallery, founded in the early years of last century, it is the oldest art gallery in Africa. I have been following them throughout many years on the internet as I knew that they represented Helen Sebidi for many years, so I was quite curious to finally visit the place in Rosebank and to meet with the owner Mark Read. Do find their story under the following link and also what they wrote about one of their artists, our Helen Sebidi. In the beginning, Helen



said, she was very suspicious of having an agent taking care of her affairs but in the end she realized that they were her friends.

<https://www.everard-read.co.za/gallery>

[https://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/artist/MMAKGABO%20HELEN\\_SEBIDI/biography/](https://www.everard-read-capetown.co.za/artist/MMAKGABO%20HELEN_SEBIDI/biography/)



The gallery is architecturally well designed and the sculptures of their collections are well placed and are in harmony with their background. There was a very interesting and inspiring exhibition running when we were there and we spent some wonderful hours in the gallery's rooms. Some school classes in blue uniforms – age perhaps 15 or 16 – had a day for the arts with their teacher and



I listened to their remarks on the artworks. How well behaved they all were and how interested. Mixed classes, and the black students looked so self-confident ... and my thoughts wandered back to the years of apartheid when young black people had no traces of self-confidence in their appearance.

We met Mark Read and his daughter in their office; they were interested to learn about our relationship with Helen Sebidi, how we had met and lived together in the 60s/70s, and how it came about that Helen became interested in the arts. Helen and I told him about our past and what we did together. I gave him one of my books about North Cyprus.



Opposite from the Everard-Read Gallery was another big gallery plus another smaller subsidiary of the Everard Read Gallery. There was an exhibition of two artists from Zaire, very interesting, we met them and had a good talk. One complete day for the arts, they were very happy to meet Helen Sebidi in person.





Rosebank is a posh place and we went there more than once, especially for shopping and finding presents for the dear ones at home. We

had coffee there in one of the nice street coffee places and we saw beautiful black people walk by, beautiful and smiling and self-confident, this was something we had to get used to. I mean, in North Cyprus we have many students from African countries at our many universities, just as beautiful, but to come to Johannesburg where we have lived in the apartheid days, and see the new Africans I was really happy to see the change in their faces. I mean, 47 years have passed by now, half a century, and there were changes to be expected.



In the evening of our second day we explored the shopping area near our cottages, how delightful, art and antique shops, super markets, restaurants, Italian and Indian, and others, and it was the Italian we went to that evening and it was relaxing and Otto and Robin said: we feel at home here. We did some shopping, extras for our breakfast, and Biltong, sundried meat as a present for home. As we went home we came across many beggars again, but you cannot save them all; one gave to old and disabled people.

However, they have big problems, the South

Africans, Robin Sebidi had told us about it; the foreigners, as he called them, the Africans from all over Africa, they come to Johannesburg, often on foot, across the savannahs with its wildlife and despite its dangers, and come to live in certain suburbs where others of their kind already live under poor conditions, and they stand on crossroads, red lights, and beg, carrying boards saying that they are hungry. In the beginning Otto opened the windows and gave them money, when Robin Sebidi said, look, they go and buy alcohol or drugs; we don't want them, they bring crime and diseases. And there is crime, we were aware of it while we were in Joburg and Pretoria. A drug dealer had shot a taxi driver who had approached him asking why he would sell drugs to the kids, he just shot him as an answer....and in revenge of this crime, all taxi drivers came together and were uprising and fighting this gang of drug dealers in a certain area of Pretoria and it spread, the news spread and came to other places and there were street fights in Hillbrow and Yeoville in Johannesburg against 'the foreigners' and I am sure you read about it too. How will they solve this problem? There is a huge wave of migration going on in the world, what will be the outcome? Nobody knows.



### Day 3, August 23:

Here we are on day three.... In the morning we went through many of Helen's art works in her studio to select some for us to take with us, I had been given money to purchase some art works, and so we spent this morning admiring all the so very different techniques she had been experimenting with, oil on canvas and



paper, pastel on paper, printing, very expressive and modern, she called it playing, etching, lino cuts....and then her clay sculptures.... She had had many teachers, had tuition abroad and scholarships, and she took everything 'on board' but stayed true to herself. Who can say that of him- or herself? It is hard work to find one's road and place and in many academies students copy their teachers in order to get good marks. I am so glad that one day in our time, I told Helen, you must take a local teacher, don't copy other Westerners. That is what she has done with her life and her vision. She has realized that you must find to your roots and recognize yourself and stay tuned with nature, and that is her vision, she now tries to teach the young people, her students, and her village people in her home place.



On this third day we had planned to visit all the old places where we had lived and worked in the 60/70s; the first place where we had rented a nice house was Auckland Park, in 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, not far from the bus station on Jan Smuts Avenue,



where we used to take the bus into the city to go to work. Later we bought a Vespa and much later a small green Mini Cooper Station on which I later made my driver's license. Auckland Park has changed a lot. Fancy place, the coffee houses were full and in the evenings, we were told, jazz would sound through the streets. We did not find the house but the residential area has not changed much except the high walls.



The next place along our memory lane was the German School in Parktown, its history is a long and interesting story: <https://dsj.co.za/history/?lang=en>

Markus, the eldest son went to the German School, first in Hillbrow and later in Parktown. We, the parents took part in the organizing of the activities, such as theatre, balls and especially the School Bazaar which took place once a year and still does. I still remembered some of it, especially the big hall where we danced, where the Millowitch Theatre had come from Germany with a play and another year also some classic singers with the musical 'Im Weissen Rössl am Wörthersee' by Carl Adam Zeller; we organized the entertainment on site with buffet etc. For the School Bazaars, I remember that we did 'Sauerkraut and Schweinshaxn', 300 pieces!!



And we peeled potatoes by the tons..... I had the Champagne Bar with sandwiches another year and I went to all German-owned businesses to beg for bread and articles for the bazaar: Astoria Bakery – which still exists today, Robin took us there and I bought a good Astoria bread - they gave me many loaves in those days for the bazaar.



**The German Club in Edenvale, not much has changed over the many years**

The school is a multicultural school today, all in uniform, all good looking. On our walk through the school we met a teacher of my sons' age and she said that she would remember our name and also the oldest son, they must have been in the same class; she also remembers the festivities I was talking about. Her name is Frauke Dirr. What a nice coincidence!....

From there we went to Edenvale, the last place we were living happily together until we had to go back to

Germany. It has grown into a city by itself and also there I did not recognize our house in Diaz Avenue. But then, we visited the German Club in Edenvale and there memory came back, the tennis court, the small swimming pool and the garden and even Otto, the elder of the two sons, had images in his head of this place, nearby was the place where he took judo lessons.



On our way back to Joburg we passed by Hillbrow and Yeoville, and it was a shock, it is the places where the immigrants from all over Africa reside, it is dirty and I would not go there on foot or by night. In Yeoville we had lived in a flat for over a year and that is where we met Helen



Sebidi for the first time; one of her relatives who worked in the building as a

cleaning man, introduced her to us, and she won our hearts immediately with her good laugh which came from the centre of her body. What a day that was. We had a nice easy meal at our cottage in the garden and went to bed early.

**Day 4, August 24:** A day reserved for Soweto

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soweto>

A sad chapter but it belongs to Johannesburg history and so we went. It is still a vast area with simple small huts but it is clean and supported by the government. It has become a tourist



attraction, especially because of its 1976 uprising of students and the death of Hendrik Pietersen who was shot although he had nothing to do with it; there is a memorial for him there and a museum with many photos and films about this day. Otto had read about it before and knew the background. We passed the school where the





students had started from – they had just peacefully demonstrated for the introduction of the English language as language of tuition instead of Afrikaans – and were on our way to Nelson Mandela's house. Long rows of people were queuing



and we waited patiently. The long street was crowded with local sales people, artists and craftsmen, and we bought some small items to take home to remind us of this day. Young people and children were dancing and singing in groups. When Nelson Mandela was finally released after 27 years in prison, we followed the news daily. We had known the then President Frederick de Klerk who had the insight to make this step for a democratic country. Nelson Mandela became the hero of peace for many people, especially young people worldwide, we had listened to his famous speeches. Unfortunately he did not have the successors who directly followed him who would lead the country on with the same



determination and recognition.

**Day 5:** On Sunday, 25 August, we went to Marapyane, Helen's and her family's home for many generations. Our Robin was baptized there 45 years ago at the Catholic Missionary Station while at the same time the burial of a Chief of the village was celebrated. I still have in my ears the gospel-like songs we heard in the small church sung by the village people. The priest was from Regensburg and so were two sisters working at the hospital. It was an unforgettable



What the village looked like in 1971.  
Left: Village ladies cooking the old way: mealie pap and meat....



good talk. For Helen, her grandmother played

a very important role, she mentions her in all her interviews and she states that all she knows is from her grandmother; she was a strong and powerful woman to whom all came from her village for advice.

Helen had gone to her village by bus two days ahead of us in order to get everything organized, as she said. And as we arrived around midday on Sunday, we were greeted and received like long lost relatives, with a great party and with music and dances by the young students. There is a young leader and teacher who teaches the young folk the old dances and songs, also in order to keep them away from mischief and smartphones, he said with a smile.

The women of the village, especially those of her wide family, have been cooking all day, mealie pap, meat, vegetables and salads; we had brought 20 l red and white wine in boxes, soft drinks, cakes and flowers. And speeches were made of welcome and thank you and Helen told them

experience. On that occasion we visited the entire village, admired the paintings on the walls, and I visited Helen's grandmother in her thatch-roofed house, so clean and so cool. We had had a







again the story of our friendship, introduced Otto and Robin as her boys, and then we ate and celebrated. Helen showed us her own house she had built with her own hands from mud when she was in the village after we had left and she had to look after her grandmother who had fallen sick. She is very proud of it. Behind this one she has now started to have a big one built from stone which is going to serve as the Foundation House which she is about to establish. The former culture minister is helping her with judicial advice



and to bring everything into the proper form; this building is meant to house students and teachers for workshops in the arts, in craftsmanship, in history, in humanity... to bring it to the point.

Her vision is: Back to the roots, money corrupts, don't chase after money but after the true values of life, only then you will have the respect of others and respect for yourself. This vision of hers she brings forward in all meetings, workshops and interviews, in universities, on television and for books. She has asked me to become a member of the board of trustees, I would have bitterly disappointed her if I had said No to her request.



The house is nearly finished, the roof will be a traditional thatched roof, and the walls around the house will be painted in the

old way. She expects me to come for the opening. We shall see, if I will still be able to do so. Tale Masepe, her friend and advisor, had come with us to Marapyane. The doors for the house are still in Joburg, two of them we have seen at her house and the others are under construction, i.e. being carved by one of her Zaire carpenters, a master, we have visited his workshop in Johannesburg, photographs later.

**Day 6: 26 August, Monday:**

Helen Sebidi is expecting a lady from UNISA University who is leading a project under the general title of 'Rethinking Thinking'; it is about to change higher education with regard to indigenous knowledge, with other words within the framework of Helen Sebidi's vision: Back to the roots; the local people are running after models of Western culture and are getting lost along



its road; a balance between old and new values is to be found. For this reason they have invited ten Elders to help them to find this balance, to learn from their experience and their wisdom. It covers themes of art, theatre, dance, poetry, legends, nature laws etc. etc. Why for example can architectural elements of old tribes not be included in modern architecture. The country is full of legends, why not include them in literature, theatre, fashion, etc. The old fact that our future is based on the past as infrastructure is

valid over all times.

<https://www.litnet.co.za/rethinking-thinking-modernitys-other-and-the-transformation-of-the-university/>

It is also to bring education to the rural areas to avoid migration to the big cities where young people are lost and coming under bad influence, eventually. Not new but always valid. It was a fruitful talk and I learnt a lot about South Africa and its goals.



Here some of the awards and the ceremony with President Thabo Mbeki



After this meeting we decided on all the paintings we would be given, books we would be taking with us, catalogues, posters, photos and other memorabilia; Helen would write notes and sign the





paintings while we would be in Pilanesberg to meet Africa's 'Big Five' (Lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard). We were also shown her awards given to her by the country's president and by other countries and institutions, altogether seven! What achievements, a long road she has walked.

We had a lovely lunch at Moyo's at Zoo Lake again which we enjoyed and Helen was in good form and would not stop talking and laughing. We were happy. In the late afternoon before retiring to our cottages, we went for a glass of wine in one of the nice street cafés around the corner of our cottages.



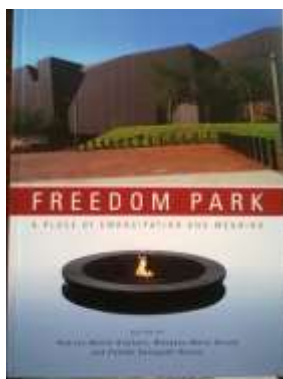
**Day 7: 27 August, Tuesday**

Another day full of impressions, Helen had organized a meeting with the Director of Freedom Park, Jane Mufamadi, who told us



the story of the Freedom Park, from the idea through to its completion; it was officially opened on 22 April 2013. There is a museum which tells the story with pictures and videos. I have been given a book with all the data

from the very beginning, a treasure to have.



Under the following link you find a walk in pictures through the Freedom Park



[https://www.google.com/search?q=freedom+park+pretoria&rlz=1C1GGRV\\_en\\_751\\_751&sxsrf=ACYBGNO7HBmq\\_Q-uzFKKYxq3QzGbBBdKKw:1568782538531&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=HGI0MSjjivy\\_nM%253A%252CwNk\\_88K8cVZNwM%252C\\_&vet=1&u sg=K\\_Q5147EhU1TLzglV5nfQ9WO4nu\\_U%3D&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi7lcGvytnkAhUH0uAKHVmbDMwQuqIBMBx6BAgNEAY&biw=1920&bih=937#imgrc=HGI0MSjjivy\\_nM:&vet=1](https://www.google.com/search?q=freedom+park+pretoria&rlz=1C1GGRV_en_751_751&sxsrf=ACYBGNO7HBmq_Q-uzFKKYxq3QzGbBBdKKw:1568782538531&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=HGI0MSjjivy_nM%253A%252CwNk_88K8cVZNwM%252C_&vet=1&u sg=K_Q5147EhU1TLzglV5nfQ9WO4nu_U%3D&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi7lcGvytnkAhUH0uAKHVmbDMwQuqIBMBx6BAgNEAY&biw=1920&bih=937#imgrc=HGI0MSjjivy_nM:&vet=1)

Opposite the Freedom Park is the Voortrekker Monument which was raised near Pretoria on a hilltop to commemorate the Voortrekkers who left the Cape Colony between 1835 and 1854, constructed beg. 1937. It is a dramatic photo, but dramatic are the still existing differences...

[https://www.gauteng.net/attractions/freedom\\_park](https://www.gauteng.net/attractions/freedom_park)



A golf cart with guide was waiting for us and he took us through the extensive park with native plants only and monuments, such as the walls of names which contain all those who suffered and died in the name of freedom for South Africa. It is a moving story to read how this park was erected, the place was

chosen. A group of native healers were invited to come to cleanse the place from all evil. There is a 'holy place', a circular space around which rocks from every province are planted, you have to take off your shoes when entering this place.

Events take place here in this park and every foreign important visitor is being taken here to pay his/her respect. It left us thoughtful, Helen is a member of the board of trustees, and there is a video in the museum with her speaking.

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/day-reconciliation-celebrated-public-holiday-sa-first-time>

The day of reconciliation is a very important day in South Africa, it is to commemorate the fight against apartheid and it was celebrated as public holiday for the first time in 1995 for racial harmony and national unity. We should have had more time for this place but we were invited for lunch with a writer and publisher back in Johannesburg.



There are many such walls...

The **Wall of Names** currently bears 75,000 **names** of those who died fighting for humanity and **freedom** in South Africa. The **wall** has space for 136,000 **names** to be inscribed. The **Wall of Names** is not constructed as a fait accompli and allows future generations to add the **names** of their deserving heroes and heroines.



What a contrast, we arrived at a place of luxury, a beautiful home of a successful woman, a young woman of extreme beauty and intelligence. Her mother, an elegant woman, had fled her country South Africa in the years of apartheid and revolution against it and went to Uganda where she studied at the university and got married to an Ugandandian; she returned to South Africa with her daughter who has two children... she lost her husband just recently.



We spent some hours of interesting talks and as I had admired the beautiful table decoration of proteas, the national flower of South Africa, Helen and I were given a bunch each to take with us. They had cooked for us an excellent typical South African lunch and we were invited to help ourselves in the big and lovely kitchen where a buffet was laid out; we all went to help ourselves to another helping. Otto and Robin received children books for their children to take with, a book she had published. It was a most beautiful day.

### Day 8: 28 August

It takes no wonder that we spent this day without programme in order to digest the many information. After a late breakfast on our terrace in beautiful spring weather we went to meet Helen again and went off together to Rosebank to do shopping in one of the beautiful shopping malls of Johannesburg, they are really exquisite. South Africa was the forerunner with shopping malls, I often did my shopping in Kempton Park in the first Mall, that was in the late 60s, later with my babies in the pram, protected from any bad weather and dust.

South Africans love outdoor activities, it includes shopping and cafés and it is fun to join this passion.

In the afternoon we went to visit the Zaire carpenter Helen has instructed to do her wooden doors for the Foundation House in Marapyane. We had seen already the ones she keeps at her house for the moment but it was interesting to see the men at work to do the most fantastic carving.



The doors top left are in her house in Joburg, the next ones are under construction; the other work is just to show his skills, a table top, or chairs...



## Day 9: 29 August



From the University Desk: 'The Master Class was joined by Heidi Trautmann, Sebidi's long time friend and former employer who first recognised her immense talent and encouraged Sebidi towards her passion for the arts! Also pictured is programme director for the class, Puleng Plessie (Javett-UP) and interviewer, Thabo Seshoka (ABSA Gallery). .

..

Helen Sebidi had interrupted her master class for the time of our being in Johannesburg but they had arranged a talk at the university which was joined not only by her students but by teachers and other artists. The University in Pretoria, its history goes back to the beginning of last century



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_Pretoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Pretoria)

It was a very interesting morning and after the talks I had the opportunity to talk to some of the lecturers there at a lovely garden lunch, they had prepared for us.

It was a long day again and we had some salad in our beautiful cottages while we got ready for the next day which was our weekend at Pilanesberg, the game reserve in the northwest of Johannesburg in an open volcano, not as big as Krugerpark but just as beautiful.

**Day 11 and 12: 31 August and Sep 01:** I had booked a camping safari... 'in for a penny, in for a pound....' and the car was to pick us up from the cottages at 06.30. We had to pack warm clothes, as we would be doing late afternoon and early morning game drives in an open game truck, although the latter we had not known before. 3,5 hrs drive to get there, one of the park camps, and approaching we came to see the first mountain ranges, rather hills, but beautiful the sight and clear air in the early morning light. We arrived at the camp shortly before ten and left sharp ten for the first drive which was to be three hours.



We were lucky and saw all of the Big 5 (elephant, buffalo, rhino, lion and leopard) except the leopard on the first drive. In the centre of the park there is a lovely dark blue lake where the animals come to, to drink and bathe. It was still early spring and vegetation not fully green yet so we could see far, also thanks to the high truck.

On its website the National Park is described as follows:  
*Pilanesberg National Park is set within the crater of an ancient volcano, formed 1.2 billion years ago by overflowing magma. It covers an area of 500 square kilometers. The landscape and rock formations we see today are the enduring reminders of this magnificent occurrence. Pilanesberg National Park exists in a transition zone between the dryness of the Kalahari and the wet Lowveld*



*vegetation. This rich transitional zone attracts an incredible variety of game animals, flora and fauna that are not often found living side by side. Virtually all of the animal species native to southern Africa can be found here - besides the Big 5 - wild dog, roan, tsessebe, sable antelope, giraffe, water buffalo, hippopotamus, zebras, gnus, hyenas, baboons and more than 360 species of bird.*

While we were out in the bush, our driver had set up the tents, igloo tents, and we took a rest and retired onto the mattresses waiting for the late afternoon game drive which proved to be far more



bitterly cold and we did freeze in the wrapped our shawls around neck and the driver switched on lights and bush to discover animals. The driver good and got excited himself. The via radio and that often caused us to speed up to catch up with the appearance of wild game.



interesting as game came out more from the bush onto the roads and we had a really exciting four hours trip and the light and sun set was delightful and Otto could not stop taking pictures. After the sun had set it became open truck so we face. In the darkness directed it into the and guide was very guides communicated







We were very lucky, families of elephants and rhinos, taking their children out, they came so close that we could nearly touch them, often the males turned around facing our truck giving alarm signs of attack.



We arrived back at the camp about eight o'clock, frozen stiff and I had a quick hot shower to warm up. In the meantime our private guide had prepared the BBQ with salads, potatoes and steaks, what a feast to sit under the African sky after such a wonderful day in nature with the presence of wild game.

The night in the tent was cold but ok. Early up in the morning for another search for wild game but this time with the car we had come in and it was again a wonderful morning with the fresh morning sun on the golden elephant grass. We were lucky again,

unfortunately the lions we had met during these two days were hiding in the bush behind the corpse of a giraffe they had killed; we heard them though. How beautiful the wide and wild savannah is. Our guide and driver Tambo prepared our breakfast next to our tents and we cleared the place... the three tents were stowed away into the trailer, the table and chairs, in no time and around 11 we were on our way back to Joburg. It was Sunday and people were out for a drive, sports, for lunch or flea markets, we passed one of them, they were selling everything, plants and pots, food, etc. also African art and craft.



We arrived in time for the last bit of Jazz Festival at the Zoo Lake but unfortunately all the roads were blocked by police for cars, one had to have a ticket to pass through, so we had to go all around it. But we managed to get there in time to see what it was about and we concluded this day with a meal at our favourite place Moyo.

What a wonderful weekend.

#### Day 10: 30 August, Friday:

There was one day in-between, I have missed it out here. Friday, we were invited for breakfast with Amalie von Maltitz, a sculptor who entertains a studio – the Stalhuis Studio – to which she invites artists to work with her and students she teaches. I was amazed to find such a place



hidden behind the high walls, a small paradise for any artist and artist-to-be, a charming studio, an enchanted garden. Amalie von Maltitz has made her home in the old horse stable as the entire land included the property next door and belonged to the family and which was a farm





in the old days. She is single and lives here in the seventh generation. She was born in Germany but also has Dutch background. She was actually a pilot at the Royal AirForce and – as I have read – as a safari pilot later, which tells a lot about her character. She had studied art and sculpting at Cape Town University and in Germany. She is a fascinating woman.

<https://www.artspta.co.za/exhibitions/year-2015/stalhuis-sculpture-studio>



In the afternoon we met Tale Masepe again who discussed with me again the founding of the foundation for Helen. They will need more foreign members for the Board of Trustees. Here the list of objectives they have put together. It is a very important vision.



## Day 12: 02 September

We are nearing the end of our stay. Taking it easy on this day, we went over to Helen's and looked at old photos, talked about the past and the future, went shopping in Rosebank again, the boys trying South African burgers – Robin said... they are all freshly made and famous – In the afternoon we took a rest in our cottages, were packing suitcases and getting ready for our farewell dinner at...Moyo Restaurant...very emotional.



### Day 13: September 03

Here we go for our last day. In the morning Helen had organised the South African television to come for an interview with the two of us together; she said: “we need to document our meeting after so many years, our reunion, and must let others know of our friendship and the work we are doing, separately but still connected by the spirits that lead us”.

In the afternoon Helen and Robin took us to the airport again, we left the rental car there, and we said goodbye to our friends, or rather family, and left Johannesburg with love in our hearts. I conclude my travel report with some more pictures of Helen Sebidi's work.



**HamburgWorld Trade Fair, Helen doing a painting for her Embassy and left: the colleagues she had brought with her from South Africa**



**Helen at Zoo Lake with her first paintings under the tuition of Mr. Mohl, her first teacher...  
...And Xmas in Edenvale, how young we were....**







“It is high time that we go back to our own fields to tend them....”

Heidi Trautmann, 23 September 2019

With my best wishes to Helen Sebidi, to her family and to bring her dream, her vision to fruition

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