

BELGRAVIA GALLERY

Mandela: The Man with Africa in the Palm of his Hand

The Times

Jack Malvern and Sam Lister

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In an astonishing gift of nature, Nelson Mandela holds Africa in the palm of his hand. A hand print of the former president of South Africa seems to reveal a depression in the centre of his palm that is the shape of the African continent.

The Lithograph, which went on sale yesterday at the Belgravia Gallery in London alongside new works by the Prince of Wales was created by Mr Mandela in February after he had apparently left an accidental smudge while working on drawings of Robben Island, where he spent most of his 27 year jail sentence.

Mr Mandela was working in his studio when he rested his hand on one of his paintings, covering it in acrylic paint. When he wiped his hand on a clean piece of paper, the image of Africa that appeared inspired his publisher to turn the hand print into a series of lithographs.

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Lori Reid, a hand analyst and author of *The Art of Hand Reading*, said that the Africa silhouette was an extraordinary apparition. “The centre of our hand concerns our worldly affairs. It is very interesting in a symbolic way. It is almost as if the continent is imprinted on his soul.”

Anna Hunter, the owner of the Belgravia Gallery, said that the image appeared only in prints of Mr Mandela’s right hand: “It is not there on his left hand. It is quite spooky when you look at it.”

She added that Mr Mandela, 84, had told her that it was his intention to become a “full time artist” when he retires after completing the second volume of his memoirs.

The right hand lithographs of which there are 1,000 signed limited editions, are priced at £2,150. The money raised will go to the Nelson Mandela Trust, a fund for orphaned, homeless and HIV positive children. The gallery is also selling 100 limited editions of three lithographs by The Prince of Wales. The prints, of views of Scotland, are priced at £2,250, or £6,000 for a set of three. Proceeds go to the Prince of Wales’s Charitable Foundation.

Speaking from Mr Mandela’s law offices in Johannesburg yesterday, a spokesman for the trust described the astonishing moment that he and colleagues saw the handprint for the first time.

“We were all just so surprised to see it,” Nadim Waja said. “It was just amazing. I don’t think anyone in the world can stand up to Mr Mandela’s grace and humbleness and all his achievements for Africa. Seeing the image of the continent like that in the centre of his hand, one can only think it was meant to be.”

45 Albemarle Street
London W1S 4JL

Tel: 020 7495 1010
Fax: 020 7629 1247
www.belgraviagallery.com