chronology

1886 Magdalena Maria Laubser born on the wheat farm, "Bloublommetjieskloof" on 14th April. Eldest of the six children of Gerhardus Petrus Christiana Laubser and Johanna Catharina Laubser (née Holm).

1893 Attends farm school, Rocklands, and takes piano lessons privately.

1897 Attends Bloemhof Seminary, Stellenbosch. Art as a school subject is taught by Miss Wilson (later Mrs. Rowan) in accordance with the conventional methods of the time.

1901 Interrupts her education to give her brothers the opportunity to study. Enjoys the freedom and spaciousness of farm life. Devotes time to needlework and attends singing lessons in Cape Town under Mrs. Vincent. Meets Beatrice Hazel, a realistic romantic style painter who introduces her to Prof. Edward Roworth.

1903 Attends painting lessons for two months under Prof. Edward Roworth. Meets W. R. Burns who stimulates her interest in English literature. Paints from postcards.

1909 Works included in the SECOND ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FINE ARTS ASSOCIATION.

1912 Visits family in Pretoria.
Employed as a governess on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Wolmarans in Ermelo district, Transvaal.
Teaches Art and Needlework at Ermelo.
While on vacation in Durban, befriends Jan Hendrik Arnold Balvé, (Consul for the Netherlands in Durban 1903—1913) shipping-line owner and successful businessman who offers to finance her and her sister, Hannah’s studies overseas.

1913 Travels with Hannah to the Netherlands in October to study music and the visual arts.
Resides in Laren. Befriends Ida Mees, a Dutch actress and Frederik van Eeden, author and poet of the eighties. Anton Mauve’s studio is at her disposal. Befriends Frans Langeveld, a Dutch landscape painter and Laura Knight, English painter of horses and circus scenes.

1914 Leaves the Netherlands for England to continue her studies at the Slade School of Art, London.
Studies under Professor Wilson Steer, W. W. Russell and A. MacEvoy, who notice her strong compositional talent and ability as a portraitist. In order to retain her individuality, she refuses to paint while studying. Models numerous busts in clay and develops a control of form to be utilized in her painting.

1915 Returns to South Africa. Visits the farm Oortmanspost purchased by her father in 1914.
Returns to the Slade School in London.
Friendship with painter Arnold Balvé (son of J. H. A. Balvé) who studied at the Academy in Antwerp and was influenced by Vincent van Gogh and Hans Vollmer.

1918 After the First World War 1914-1918, travels with the Balvé’s to Italy. Passes through Southern Germany where she is introduced to the work of the German Expressionists. Paints together with Arnold Balvé in Italy, particularly at Torri-del-Benaco and San Vigilio near Lake Garda.

1919 Leaves England for Antwerp, Belgium.

1920 Resides and paints near Lake Garda in Italy and in San Vigilio. Undertakes short visit to South Africa.

1921 Returns to Italy in February. Towards end of year again visits South Africa.

1922 Arrives in Germany. Numerous works with German motives and oil sketches from nature as well as harvesting scenes are executed. Contacts and befriends Irma Stern in Berlin. Secures lodgings at Fräulein Finck’s pension near Tiergarten where she meets numerous members of the diplomatic corps. Paints portraits and attends music concerts. Befriends pianist Wilhelm Busch and the Swiss Otto Gloke. Introduced by Arnold Balvé to Prof. Jächels, a portrait painter under whom she studies in Berlin. The works of the expressionists, Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, Frans Marc and Eric Waske, stimulate and clarify her aim. Befriends Schmidt-Rottluff. Accompanied by Irma Stern, undertakes a sketching tour of three weeks to the Baltic Sea.

1924 Death of J. H. A. Balvé.
Returns to Cape Town in November and settles at Oortmanspost.
August — Exhibits FERDINAND POSTMA-BIBLIOTEK, POTCHEFSTROOM.

1924 Exhibits ARGUS GALLERY, CAPE TOWN.
or Finds herself surrounded by a Victorian atmosphere where all are sceptical about her work.

1925 First exhibition in CAPE ARGUS GALLERY — Art critics write disapproving critiques (Bernard Lewis (Brander), Melvin Simmers and L. L. van Oordt.). Meets D. C. Boonzaier (cartoonist for Die Burger) and sculptor Moses Kottler.

1929 A close friendship with Mieke Siegers, the new Dutch teacher at Kliphuewel, Malmesbury, leads to an introduction to Prof. and Mrs. P. Serton who encourage her to hold an exhibition in Stellenbosch in September. (Assisted by Prof. A. C. Celliers and Dr. Koos Botha.)

1929 Exhibits STELLENBOSCH.
Achieves official recognition when works are purchased by the Union Government for Embassies in Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and United States of America.

1931 Nov. FIRST TRANSVAAL EXHIBITION at MACFADYEN HALL OF THE TRANSVAAL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE (now the University of Pretoria). Exhibits MARTIN MELCK HOUSE, CAPE TOWN.
Undertakes sketch tours: Waenhuijserkraans (Arniston), Langebaan, Gansbaai, Elim. Visits the Transvaal, paints on a farm in
the Standerton district and near Nelspruit, Kaapmuiden and Irene, the Orange Free State, where she paints in the Ficksburg district, and Natal.

1942 Exhibits ARGUS GALLERY, CAPE TOWN.

1944 After the death of her parents, settles at the Strand, Cape, at "Altyd Lig".

1945 May: Exhibits SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN. June: Exhibits CONSTANTIA GALLERY, JOHANNESBURG.

1946 Receives Medal of Honour for painting from the South African Academy of Arts and Science in November. May: Exhibits CONSTANTIA GALLERY, JOHANNESBURG.

1947 Receives the Oscar award for painting from Die Vaderland.

1948 March: Exhibits DERRY'S GALLERY, CAPE TOWN.

1948 June: Exhibits BLOEMFONTEIN, ORANGE FREE STATE.

1949 Feb.: Exhibits ARGUS BUILDING.

1949 Exhibits CONSTANTIA GALLERY, JOHANNESBURG.

1950 April: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1952 April: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1952 Sept.: Exhibits PRETORIA.

1953 Oct.: Exhibits WHIPPMAN'S GALLERY, JOHANNESBURG.

1954 May: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1955 May: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1955 Sept.: Exhibits TECHNICAL COLLEGE, PRETORIA. S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS.

1957 May: Exhibits ARGUS GALLERY, S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS.

1957 Death of her brother Gert. Experiments with abstract forms.

1959 Elected an Honorary member by the South African Academy of Arts and Science.

1959 April: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1959 Sept.: Exhibits PRETORIA.

1961 Sept.: Exhibits HENRI LIDCHI GALLERY, DURBAN.

1965 May: Exhibits S.A. ASSOCIATION OF ARTS, CAPE TOWN.

1965 Aug.: Exhibits HENRI LIDCHI GALLERY, DURBAN.

1968 April: Exhibits SILBERBERG GALLERY (FESTIVAL OF THE SOIL).

1968 Nov.: Awarded the South African Association of Arts Medal.

1969 RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION, SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL GALLERY, PRETORIA ART GALLERY AND JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY.

IMPORTANT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1909 Second Annual Exhibition of the Fine Arts Association, Cape Town.

1922 Twenty first Annual Exhibition, S.A. Society of Artists, Cape Town.

1929 Inaugural Exhibition of the "Federatie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging (F.A.K.")", Bloemfontein.

1932 First S.A. National Gallery Annual Exhibition, Cape Town.

1933 Second S.A. National Gallery Annual Exhibition, Cape Town.

1936 Fifth S.A. National Gallery Annual Exhibition, Cape Town.

1936 Empire Exhibition, Johannesburg.

1937 Art from the Commonwealth Exhibition, Royal Institute Galleries, London.

1938 Orange Free State Society for Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Bloemfontein.


1948 Exhibition of Contemporary South African Paintings, Drawings and Sculptures, Tate Gallery, London.


1952 Exhibition of Contemporary S.A. Art, Van Riebeeck Festival, Cape Town.


1952 Venice Biennale XXVI, Venice.

1953 Central African Rhodes Centenary Festival Exhibition, Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia.

1954 Venice Biennale XXVII, Venice.


1956 First Quadrennial Exhibition of South African Art. Association of Arts, Cape Town.

1958 Academy for Arts and Science Festival Exhibition, Stellenbosch.

1959 Still Life and Flowers by some Women Artists of the Cape Peninsula. S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town.


1960 Festival Quadrennial Exhibition of S.A. Art. Association of Arts.


1964 Third Quadrennial Exhibition. Association of Arts.

1966 South African Art of the Twentieth Century. Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

1966 Annual Exhibition Eastern Province Society of Arts and Crafts.


1967 Cape Art '67. S.A. Association of Arts, Cape Town.