

MSS Acc 191

**UNISA LIBRARY MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTION**  
**Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials**  
**1974-1983**  
**Inventory**



Marié Coetzee

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### Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials 1974-1983

#### Introduction

Maria Wilhelmina (Marié) Wium was born in Senekal on 13 September 1920. She graduated with a BA degree from the University of Stellenbosch in 1940 and soon afterwards started her career at the National Library in Pretoria. During this time she studied part-time at Unisa and completed a Diploma in Library Science. Marié was married to Piet Rautenbach from 1949 to 1974. The couple had two daughters and two sons.

Marié Rautenbach purchased her first Battiss painting in 1970. From 1973 until she retired in 1980, Marié was employed as a librarian by the University of Pretoria. She met and befriended Walter Battiss through John Wickens, a fellow librarian and mutual friend. During the seventies Marié Rautenbach purchased several Battiss paintings, silk screen prints, books and also commissioned him to paint an oil study of her youngest son. As friends of Battiss, Marié and John Wickens often visited Battiss at his home in Menlo Park, Pretoria. Battiss corresponded with both Marié Rautenbach and John Wickens during his many travels abroad. (See the *John Wickens Collection MSS 140* in the Unisa Archives.)

Walter Battiss died in 1982 and Marié Rautenbach in September 2002. She bequeathed her Battiss paintings to her children.

### Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials MSS Acc 191

#### 1 Box, 0,1 linear metres

Renée Roos, Marié Rautenbach's daughter, donated the correspondence (22 items), copies of sketches, invitations to Battiss exhibitions and photographs to the Unisa Library Archives in 2013. She compiled a short biography on her mother which was added to the Collection (see item 1).

The *Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials* (MSS 191) compliments the *John Wickens Scrapbook of Walter Battiss Materials* (MSS 140) in the Unisa Archives. There are many references and cross references to both Marié and John in these accessions. Together with the *Walter Battiss - Dacre Punt Correspondence* (MSS189), these Collections provide the researcher with some insight into the weird and wonderful life of the remarkable, talented, creative and enigmatic artist. In many cases the Battiss correspondence, and even the envelopes, are beautifully illustrated. Battiss was a master calligrapher and his handwriting often varied from one letter to another. In his correspondence with Marié Rautenbach, he wrote about experiences abroad, family, friends and even his impatience plant. He comes across as a kind and sympathetic friend - *your letter consoles me that friendship can help cure* (item 2.5). Battiss shared his thoughts on art and his Fook Island philosophy with Marié. *The true artist knows more than the eye sees. Is the evidence of our own lives, of the birth and death of the flesh, not at once a reminder of our own flimsy material existence; and are the arts not the visible shadows of the invisible spiritual presences that inhabit temporal man* (item 3). His humour is delightful. *I'm the only man in S.A. to be refused admission to a one-star Free State hotel* (item 3).

The *Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials* (MSS 191) is of great research value to scholars interested in the life and artistic career of *Walter Battiss: Gentle anarchist* (see 5.5).

Cite as: **Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials, Accession 191 in the Manuscripts Collection. Unisa Archives**

## Marié Rautenbach Collection of Walter Battiss Materials

### Inventory

- 1 Marié Rautenbach
  - 1.1 Biography of Marié Rautenbach, compiled by Ms Renée Roos, 2013
  - 1.2 MW Rautenbach's R400 check, to pay Walter Battiss, 1 September 1975
  
- 2 Correspondence from Battiss to Marié Rautenbach, 1976-1979
  - 2.1 Post card from Honolulu, dated 11 May 1976, about music and islands
  - 2.2 Letter from Hawaii, dated 7 July 1976, on the beautiful landscape, water colour paintings and John Wickens
  - 2.3 Letter from New York, dated 14 September 1976, thoughts on New York and London, Murray Schoonraad, Fook Island, John Wickens, Giles Battiss, Gerrit Hilhorst, Ivan Katzen, world travelling and human friendship
  - 2.4 Letter from New York, dated 28 September 1976, in which Battiss expressed joy that Marié Rautenbach was planning to visit the USA
  - 2.5 Letter dated 1976 about Karin Skawran's inaugural lecture, friendship that can cure and his world trip
  - 2.6 Illustrated card, dated 31 March 1977, in which Battiss wished Marié *strength & happiness in adversity*
  - 2.7 Letter from Nederland, Colorado, dated 26 July 1977, about the Rainbow Festival, New Mexico, poor whites and *Hippy-poverty*
  - 2.8 Illustrated letter and envelope, dated 5 and 6 August 1977, from Colorado in which Battiss sympathised with Marié Rautenbach on losing her sight in one eye. He also writes about his family in South Africa, his Colorado landlord and South African friends who live abroad
  - 2.9 Illustrated birthday letter, dated 13 September 1977, *met liefde aan Marié*
  - 2.10 Illustrated letter from Colorado, dated 28 September 1977, about a self-drive 27- day journey through five states in the USA, American food, Denver Art Museum and Red Indian paintings
  - 2.11 Illustrated card, dated 19 November 1977, about his impatiens plant and a student jingle that Marié sent him
  - 2.12 Illustrated letter from Boston, dated 13 June 1978, about Battiss' Bradford exhibition and Cape Cod
  - 2.13 Illustrated letter from New York, dated 14 July 1978, about Sullivan Island, a painting of New York, family in South Africa and the Boston art exhibition *Pompeii 79 AD*
  - 2.14 Aerogramme from Tahiti, dated 21 August 1978, about the landscape and Paul Gauguin 1848-1903
  - 2.15 Post card from the USA, dated 27 September 1978?, about his art and travels
  - 2.16 Illustrated letter from Papeete, dated 16 July 1979, about life on the Tahiti Islands, Fatu Hiva, green landscape and doing art every day
  - 2.17 Letter from the USA, dated August 1979, about Sullivan Island, Tahiti, Hawaii, South African coastal towns and Pamela Cullinan
  - 2.18 Undated letter about the NOW Fook Island philosophy, feelings of emptiness and art which gripped him like drugs
  - 2.19 Undated illustrated letter and envelope with Fook Island stamp and a 10 aks bank note
  - 2.20 Undated illustrated note *Precious Marie, sorry about your voice ....love Walter*
  - 2.21 Undated envelope addressed to *Marié*

- 3 *BATTISS, some letters for Marié and John*  
Privately published for Fifty Emigrants to Fook Island, Pretoria, 1982  
Handwritten fragment (5 pages)
  
- 4 Pen sketches, *Fook Nooks* and label (copies)
  - 4.1 Moroni, Grand Camore, September 1974
  - 4.2 Moroni, Grand Camore, 24 September 1974
  - 4.3 Baobab, Moheli, 25 September 1974
  - 4.4 Mayotte, 25 September 1974
  - 4.5 Moroni, 26 September 1974
  - 4.6 Fook Island bird, 20 September 1975
  - 4.7 San Francisco, to John with love, 13 July 1976
  - 4.8 Apart from Art, the grape is in the Cape, 17 December 1977
  - 4.9 How I got across the USA, 1977
  - 4.10 Get well card for Marié inscribed, *Marié will turn the Valley of Desolation into the Valley of Rehabilitation*, February 1978
  - 4.11 Sketch of elephant and people sitting under a tree inscribed *Vir Marié, veel liefde, Walter, 23 September 1979*
  - 4.12 Man from space falling in Karoo, inscribed *love to Marié*, 1980
  - 4.13 Grahamstown picnic for Marié, undated
  - 4.14 Sketch of a man and a woman, undated
  - 4.15 Sketches of a Muslim man and a mosque with boats in the background, undated
  - 4.16 Get well card for Marié inscribed *Fook birds on the way to Fook Island passing over the Cape*, undated
  - 4.17 Sailors and passengers on a boat, undated
  - 4.18 Girl under the moon, undated
  - 4.19 Fook Nooks, inscribed *To Marié, yours Walter*, undated
  - 4.20 The Yellow Caravan, Pam's Produce, undated (colour copy)
  
- 5 Exhibitions and price list
  - 5.1 Invitation to opening of Walter Battiss exhibition, Hoffer Gallery, Pretoria, 1 February 1978. Inscribed *To Marié, I look like a Russian spy, Walter*
  - 5.2 Invitation to a comprehensive exhibition of the art of Walter Battiss, Pretoria Art Museum, 26 September 1979. Inscribed *Vir Marié, luv, Walter*
  - 5.3 Walter Battiss exhibition, Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, 1983. Portfolio of five Fook Lucky packet reproductions (empty, packet only). Large format, see Mylar pocket adjacent to shelf
  - 5.4 Typed price list of Walter Battiss paintings, with note *all works done during 1981 and 1982*
  - 5.5 *Walter Battiss: Gentle anarchist*, undated press cutting about Battiss' exhibition at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg
  
- 6 Photographs
  - 6.1 Photograph (colour) of Walter Battiss
  - 6.2 Photograph (colour) of Marié Rautenbach
  - 6.3 Studio photograph of Walter Battiss, copyright Eddie Tuinder (Large format, see Mylar pocket adjacent to shelf)