

## SUMMARY

This thesis entitled *The contribution of Erich Mayer towards the establishment of an aesthetic consciousness and the promotion of an art identity in South Africa to the end of the 1930s*, is a study of the ideas, ideals and contributions of the German-Jewish artist Erich Mayer concerning the establishment of a national art identity in South Africa. Mayer was born in Germany in 1876. Because of ill health he came to South Africa, where he settled in 1898 and developed an affinity with the Afrikaner pioneers in the rural areas. This natural connection with the Afrikaner pioneers was the main motivation behind his participation in the Anglo-Boer War.

With his sound European background and training at various art academies in Berlin and Stuttgart, he soon realised that a knowledge of European art history or any awareness of an aesthetic consciousness concerning the fine and applied arts was sadly lacking within the general South African community and more specifically amongst the early Afrikaners. As a student, Mayer developed a keen interest in traditional German arts and crafts, which, according to him, contributed to the specific national Germanic character. This interest prompted him to conduct research and document examples of folk art among the Afrikaners as well as other indigenous communities, in an attempt to establish an aesthetic awareness in South Africans, and more specifically among Afrikaners. Mayer was of the opinion that the development and marketing of these cultural objects and artefacts would contribute towards a unique art identity with a strong South African national character.

Apart from his interests in the fine and applied arts, Mayer also researched the vernacular architecture, furniture design and household articles of both Afrikaner pioneers and Africans. He travelled widely in South Africa, researching his interests and presented lectures on these themes which he published in newspapers and magazines in an effort to create an awareness of the rich indigenous folk art.

### KEY TERMS:

Anglo-Boer War; German internment; Folk Art; national art identity; aesthetic consciousness; Afrikaner nationalism; Afrikaner culture; land; landscape painting; J.H.Pierneef.