

ADOLPH JENTSCH by Olga Levinson

Introduction

Adolph Stephan Friedrich Jentsch was born at Deubell, a suburb of Dresden, on Friday the 29th December, 1888.

The German Reich, created by Bismarck from twenty-six German states, had been in existence for only seventeen years. 1888 was a difficult year in Germany, with the death of both Emperor Wilhelm I and his successor. This resulted in the crowning of Wilhelm II, who dismissed the 'Iron Chancellor' two years later. Queen Victoria was in the fifty-first year of her long reign. Disraeli had been dead seven years, leaving Great Britain the richest of the big powers. Franz Josef was Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. A French engineer called Eiffel was busy with a tower for the Paris Exhibition of the following year. Emile Zola was the most influential and widely read novelist in France, while Sarah Bernhardt was also at the height of her fame. Tchaikovsky was depressed at the unenthusiastic reception of his Fifth Symphony at its first performance in St. Petersburg, where it was completely ignored by the press. Richard Strauss was third conductor of the Munich opera, and Nietzsche published *Ecce Homo* that year. Picasso was a child of seven, while Einstein, two years older, was learning the fundamentals of mathematics at a school in Munich. Only three years previously the first motorcar, Karl Benz's three-wheeler had stunned bystanders as it dashed around Mannheim at some thirteen kilometers an hour. Although Cezanne was painting in the revolutionary new 'objective' style that was to earn him the title 'father of modern art', he was almost unknown. Rodin, on the other hand, was famous and preoccupied some eight years already with figures and scenes for his monumental door *The Gate of Hell*, which was to fascinate him till the end of his life. It was the year in which Paul Kruger was re-elected President of the Transvaal, and Cecil Rhodes was re-elected to the Cape Parliament, becoming Prime Minister two years later. The 'scramble for Africa' was a comparatively recent development. Only four years previously Bismarck had established a colony in East Africa and raised the German flag in South West Africa. No member of the Jentsch family could ever have foreseen any connection between the infant born in Dresden and the infant colony of German South West Africa - but that was where the boy was destined to make his home and his name.

Family Background and Student Years

'Every human being comes into the world just once, as something unique' Nietzsche

Adolph Jentsch stems from a religious and cultured background. On both sides of the family there were many high-ranking dignitaries of the Lutheran Church - seven generations in the paternal lineage, including his father, who was an Oberkonsistorialrat at Chemnitz. His brother, Heinrich, became a Doctor of Philosophy and then, following the family tradition, also entered the Church. During the Second World War he was brutally murdered by the Russians when they overran the village where he had his parish. Adolph Jentsch too is imbued with a deep religious and moral sensibility.

His grandfather was a learned man with several doctorates, his grandmother a wealthy woman, who did much good work for charity. They had five children, and their three sons received an excellent education. Adolph's father, Stephan, married Adele Rosenthal, the beautiful only daughter of an Evangelical Lutheran pastor in Thuringia, Pfarrer Rosenthal. She had eight lively brothers, all of whom became students at the University, and as the family was very musical, they formed their own family choir. Adele had a fine singing voice, and it is probably from her that Adolph inherits his love of music. Not surprisingly, his favourite composer is Bach with his sacred compositions and quest for truth.

Stephan and Adele Jentsch had five children - two daughters and three sons. Adolph, the second child, was their eldest boy. He was sent to the well-known gymnasium of the Brudergemeine Zinzendorf, at Nieski. This school was founded by the Count of Zinzendorf, an eighteenth-century religious and social reformer who had offered asylum on his estate to a group of refugees fleeing

from Catholic persecution in Moravia. Religiously motivated, the Gymnasium and village had a pleasant family atmosphere where adults were addressed as 'Brother' and 'Sister'.

After completing his schooling, Adolph Jentsch embarked upon a career in art, for which he had already shown considerable talent. He entered the Dresden Staatsakademie für Bildende Künste, where for some six years he received a thorough grounding in the arts, mainly under Gussmann, Kuhl, and Zwinscher, who taught him painting.

Jentsch still recalls the careful study they made of classical Greek art with its ideals of beauty, balance and harmony. The students had to draw life size sketches of the famous Polyclitus sculpture Doryphoros (The Spearbearer) with its perfect proportions of the ideal male form, or Golden Mean (Goldene Schnitt), as Jentsch describes it. Transparent paper was placed over these drawings and upon this they then had to outline the muscles.

Among the students Jentsch got to know at the Academy were Max Pechstein, Kurt Schwitters and George Grosz, all of whom were to become famous for their special contributions to modern art. (Pechstein was seven years his senior, Schwitters a year older and Grosz four years younger.) Attached to the Academy and under Otto Gussmann, were several studios (Meisterateliers) reserved for the most promising students (Meisterschüler). Pechstein was given such a studio and several decorating commissions, among which the ceiling at the Industrial Art Exposition. His work proved too outrageous for the architects, who toned down his violent reds. After being awarded a travel grant of 1200 marks. Pechstein left the Academy. Subsequently Jentsch was given his studio, and was also honoured with a medal - the Königlich-sächsischen Staatsmedaille für Kunst und Wissenschaft - as well as a travel grant. There in his studio, untroubled by financial considerations owing to a State allowance, Jentsch was free to work as he liked. He frequently assisted Gussmann with decorating commissions for public buildings. He recalls that Gussmann, who was small and fat, found difficulty in climbing the scaffolding to paint, and so the students very often did the painting for him, according to his design. Among the more important commissions with which Jentsch helped, were the Dresden Rathaus (City Hall) and a popular restaurant at the time called Italienisches Dorfshen (Italian Village).

In those days Dresden, a picturesque eighteenth century city of Baroque architecture, had a well-deserved reputation as an art-loving centre, and gave (million marks annually for artistic purposes. It encouraged all forms of cultural life and attracted many visitors. It is noteworthy that one of the two main branches of German Expressionism, Die Brücke (The Bridge), was founded in Dresden (1905-1913). The other, Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), originate in Munich (late 1911-1913). Dresden's Museum of Ethnology had some remarkable primitive art from Africa and Palau. (The Palau Islands near New Guinea in the Pacific had belonged to Spain, but became German in 1899). This primitivism had a significant effect on the work of Kirchner, Pechstein, Nolde and other members of the Brücke movement. Dresden 's Art Gallery was the foremost in Germany, with many fine works by the old masters that were closely studied by the art students. One of them - a self-portrait by Rembrandt - had a positively hypnotic effect on young Jentsch.

He would sit in front of it, marvelling at the brilliant use of light and shadow. It showed an ordinary-looking, flabby man whose round face was lit up in the half darkness. One hand held a pen, the other an open book and an inkwell gripped by two fingers. The light fell only on the face, the hands and the book.

Jentsch was fascinated by the 'grip' of the hand. It seemed to him that Rembrandt had not painted the hand as a realistic object, but had used it to demonstrate his personal experience in the act of gripping, his personal command in obedience of which the physical act took place. Jentsch believes this force of the ego is the essence of the creative personality. The eyes had so powerful a gaze that the whole character of Rembrandt seemed to thrust itself upon the young observer. He was fascinated by the movement of life and spirituality achieved by the composition and colour tones. The painting seemed to emit a springboard of form, which forced him to walk along it, jumping at the end, at the artist's will. He was a prisoner of Rembrandt's eyes. The tension the great master had had experienced while painting was transmitted to Jentsch. He had a feeling of falling into the depths of the painting, of not seeing Rembrandt any longer, but of being seen by him. 'How clear his spirit must have been to give out so much strength,' thought the young student.

Another experience that was to affect him greatly was a visit to an exhibition of ancient Chinese art. There he was able to study the paintings of China's golden age of art, from the eighth to the tenth century. He never ceased to wonder at the masterpieces painted at the Imperial Court of the T'ang

dynasty, during the period that the greatest Chinese landscape art was created. There were examples of both types of ancient Chinese painting - hanging pictures and horizontal hand-scrolls that were usually kept rolled up. When the latter were shown, they were opened slowly, piece by piece, so that the viewer had the sensation of travelling through the landscape in a manner impossible with framed work. Jentsch marvelled at the masterly calligraphic style of these paintings - the deft brush strokes of the artist who had to work quickly and decisively on silk, unable to correct or erase. Above all, he was drawn to their contemplative attitude to Nature, in which the depiction of the landscape was less important than the revelation of the artist's past experiences and innermost being. (In this subjective sense they had some thing in common with the mood of some of his colleagues, who were giving vent to their emotions in a new expressionistic style of painting.)

From that time onwards he became increasingly absorbed in Chinese art and also in philosophy.

Circumstances were to take him to the solitary South West landscape, where man's smallness contrasts vividly with the hugeness of Nature. There he felt much more than in Germany - the insignificance of man. He himself became just such a tiny human pinpoint as those depicted in the Chinese landscapes (usually a farmer, sage or fisherman), whose very minuteness serves to reveal the infinite. As he grew older, the Chinese influence became stronger.

While Jentsch was completing his schooling, and during the early years of his studies at the Dresden Academy, a climactic development that helped to change the whole course of art took place in his home town. This was the emotive revolt of a group of young painters against the Establishment- an event which gave birth to the passionate, humanistic and colourful form of art later to be termed Expressionism. Jentsch was strangely uninvolved - unlike some of his fellow-students - and continued to work in his own conservative way, but it was not to leave him untouched.

Jugendstil, Expressionism and Chinese Art

'All we are is a result of what we have thought' Sartre

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw a sudden blossoming in almost every sphere of human activity, including the arts. Long accepted theories were confuted and traditions questioned. With this liberation came a fresh orientation. As a result of the economic and political expansion into Africa, Asia and Oceania, interest was aroused in their cultures, folklore and art as a source of inspiration. The opening of trade with Japan in the middle of the century had provided a great stimulus to Western painters in search of a fresh art formula. Japanese woodcut prints influenced many of the Impressionists, and especially affected Van Gogh and Gauguin. The spirit of the Orient had a considerable impact on Western art.

During this industrial boom a spontaneous avant-garde movement aimed at the synthesis of architecture and decoration sprouted almost simultaneously in different countries under different names. It was known as Art Nouveau in Belgium, Secession in Austria (where it enjoyed particular popularity), Liberty Style in Italy and Jugendstil in Germany. It was comparatively short-lived, lasting only from about 1895 to 1905.

The actual 'father' of this movement was the British poet and painter William Morris, who wished to break down what he regarded as the artificial barrier between fine arts and the applied arts. He laid emphasis on natural decoration, pure colour and handwork. When the Belgian Henry van de Velde reorganised the Weimar Academy in 1900, he used the English craft school as a model. His successor, Walter Gropius, retained some of these features when he converted it into the Bauhaus in 1919.

Jugendstil owed something to Post-Impressionism and also drew inspiration from the Orient. It freed artistic decoration from academic rigidity, developing new dynamic flowing forms. The characteristic linear arabesque was partly derived from nature, partly semi-abstract. Adherents of Jugendstil founded a magazine, *Jugend*, in 1896 to expound their views.

Jentsch was undoubtedly influenced by the Jugendstil movement through some of his professors, and especially through Kuhl, a decorative painter. Later he and many of his colleagues were engaged

upon various Jugendstil commissions. Among Jentsch's contemporaries, Pechstein was often torn between his work as a decorator and that as an Expressionist, Jawlensky, Franz Marc and some of the other Expressionists also had a Jugendstil background.

Jentsch grew to manhood during a period of exciting artistic developments in Germany that began in his home town. When he was about seventeen years old the young artists Kirchner, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff and Bleyl formed themselves into a group which they called Die Brücke - a 'bridge' between artists in revolt against academic values. They lived and worked together in a converted store-studio on the Berlinerstrasse in Dresden, sharing everything from painting materials to models. Later they were joined by Nolde, Pechstein and Müller. They virtually jolted German art into modern times.

In this Bohemian atmosphere of hand-made furniture, murals, batiks and carvings, they painted and revitalised graphic work. They discussed art, philosophy and politics, and so great was their communal feeling and idealism that sometimes they did not even bother to sign their names to their work. The latter was characterised by violent colours, a sense of doom, figural distortion and emotional humanism.

In 1906 Die Brücke held an exhibition of paintings, and then one of graphics, in the showroom of a light-fitting manufacturer. Neither exhibition made the slightest impression upon the public or press. Undeterred, the artists found more suitable premises in the Richter Gallery a year later. This time there was a reaction - distinctly unfavourable. A storm of derisive criticism was showered upon them. Still they persisted. In 1910 they held another exhibition in the same gallery and issued their first illustrated catalogue with woodcuts. The following year they left for Berlin, where there was greater artistic activity.

A sensation had been caused in Berlin when the Berlin Secession refused works of twenty-seven young artists. A Salon des Refusés was set up in an empty store, and out of this grew the New Secession, which included members of both Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter. This latter group - the name means 'The Blue Rider' - was a group of painters in Munich. They were Kandinsky, Jawlensky, Marc and Macke, and were later joined by Paul Klee and Max Ernst. Their work was also emotional, expressive and intuitive, with a symbolic use of colour, but more intellectual and rational than that of Die Brücke. In their empathy with nature there was something of the simplicity and natural wonder embodied in child art, or in primitive and folk art.

Der Blaue Reiter was not a group in the same sense as Die Brücke - living and working together - but its members held a collective exhibition in Munich in December 1911 which proved to be an historic occasion in contemporary art. The following year they exhibited in Cologne, then held a final exhibition in Berlin. This was sponsored by Herwarth Walden, a dynamic member of the esoteric circle espousing the cause of non-objective art. He had founded an avant-garde paper called Der Sturm in 1910 (this ran until 1932); he also used this name for an organisation in Berlin that promoted young artists, and his travelling exhibitions did much to spread knowledge of the new revolutionary trends in art.

These young painters were reputedly first termed 'Expressionists' by Wilhelm Worringer in an article that appeared in Der Sturm of August, 1911. Worringer's writings played an important part in the development of Expressionism. In 1907, in his very influential article 'Abstraction and Empathy' Worringer had declared that 'all art is basically subjective' and that 'the most important element in creation is intuition'. He suggested 'a will to abstract' and attempted to replace classicism by Oriental influences. Bergson's Creative Evolution, which appeared the same year, supported this view and similarly influenced the Expressionists.

Jentsch was not unaffected by these attitudes and shares some of their views. He too believes that art is subjective and intuition most important. He once observed: 'Artists, unlike scientists, are irrational. What they attain intuitively, science is unable to do. Science cannot produce artistic, moral or religious values. Landscape painting especially is a form of art that offers the opportunity to reveal experiences of the spirit intuitively. My painting is pure intuition concerning the essence of life. In the arts all the spiritually vital experiences are gained intuitively. My experience of the landscape is shown in the spiritual vision which I put into my painting. Intuition is the spring of my painting - arising from my inner self. It is an instant matter. Intuitively seen results are directly solved results. They are the personal results of the spirit, won by way of personal experience. I as a painter experience very exactly the forces of life through the intuitively trained spiritual eye.'

Jentsch was almost twenty-four years old when Kandinsky's epochal book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art) was published in December, 1911. It had a tremendous impact on the art world, running into several editions and being translated into various languages. As its title indicates, it is concerned with the spiritual qualities and 'inner compulsion' in art. Kandinsky contended that the inner world of man was the real source of his artistic creativity. This was also the belief of the old Chinese painters, whose landscapes were the philosophical symbols of their inner necessity, the expression of their souls. It was certainly a view that found a response in young Jentsch.

Kandinsky believed that inner compulsion is the basis of both small and great problems in painting, and that artists were seeking the road which would lead them away from the external to the internal basis. He felt that a work of art has power to create spiritual atmosphere and that it is only from this standpoint that one can judge whether it is a good work of art or bad. If its form is poor, it is too weak to call forth spiritual vibrations. It is well painted only if its spiritual value is complete and satisfying.

It is interesting to note here that as early as the fifth century, when the great Hsieh Ho outlined his famous 'Six Canons of Painting', he regarded spiritual expression as the most important. This attempt to reconcile the outer and inner worlds also absorbed the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato.

There is no doubt that some of these thoughts percolated through into Jentsch's reflections on art. As a student and young painter he lived in an intellectually satisfying era in which articulate artists postulated their theories. The Kandinsky-Marc *Blaue Reiter* almanac appeared in 1912 with various thought-provoking essays. Marc wrote on contemporary art problems in Germany, while Kandinsky discussed the problem of form. In a later article in *Der Sturm* Kandinsky declared: 'A work of art consists of two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist: this emotion has the capacity to evoke a similar emotion in the observer . . .' Jentsch knew this to be true, as he had experienced it in his reaction to Rembrandt's self-portrait.

Kandinsky compared painting to music as a means of communication. Jentsch also regards art as a way of communicating. 'Art,' he explains, 'is an abstraction, a type of shorthand, a medium like a language. It is merely decorative if it lacks spirituality and vitality. Art is the reflection of the artist's existence and experience. The painting itself is unimportant to him, a by-product, incidental. What is important to him is the process. This is like a bridge from artist to painting.'

Kandinsky too spoke of metaphysical bridges where he wrote: 'Being connected with the body, the soul is affected through the medium of the senses. Emotions are aroused and stirred by what is felt. Thus the sense is the bridge, i.e. the physical relation, between the immaterial (which is the artist's emotion) and the material, which results in a work of art. And again what is sensed is the bridge from the material (the artist and his work) to the immaterial (the emotion in the soul of the observer).'

This concept is reflected in Chinese art, where a painting is considered complete only when the artist is able to reproduce in the observer the mood in which he painted the picture. Jentsch is much concerned with conveying the mood in which he paints. He reiterates: 'I do not paint the landscape: I paint my mood, my inner condition and experiences.'

But while the depiction of subjective reality and empathy with Nature, so characteristic of the Expressionists, affected Jentsch, their emotive tensions and violent use of colour were completely alien to his character. Jentsch has a strictly disciplined, controlled and peace-loving temperament. He is far closer to the harmony and serene philosophical contemplation of nature embodied in Chinese art, where many of the artists were patricians from a background of refinement and wealth, and others were monks. Moreover, like the Chinese, he feels that colour is merely an accessory adding to the decorative value of a painting, but is not of primary importance.

Feininger declared: 'I don't paint a picture for the purpose of an aesthetic achievement, and I never think of pictures in the traditional sense. From deep within rises an almost painful urge for the realisation of inner experience. . .' Pechstein observed that he painted not what he saw in Nature but what he felt. Jentsch constantly confirms this attitude. There is in him too something of Jawlensky's deeply felt cry: 'Art is a longing for God.'

It was certainly in the spirit of his age that Jentsch like Franz Marc, turned to Oriental art and philosophy.

Travels and Art Commissions

“He who acts is always without conscience; only he who contemplates has conscience.” GOETHE

Paris was the heart of the art world at that time, where all the various iconoclastic 'isms' flourished. It was the dream of every young painter to go there, and Jentsch was no exception. He was therefore excited when he was awarded a travel grant that enabled him to tour most of Europe and see some of its art treasures.

He arrived in Paris at about the same time as Chagall, and spent a full and happy year there. Braque and Picasso, influenced by Cezanne and primitive art, had fathered Cubism, and were in the middle of their experiments with geometrical forms and inverted perspective. Only a few years previously Picasso had painted his epoch-making *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*. These painters took their subjects to pieces and then put them together again in quite a different way to create a new reality from a many-sided point of view, disregarding all the old conventions.

Jentsch was greatly drawn to the work of Cezanne, who painted his Impressionistic landscapes in the open. He admired the masterly manner in which Cezanne gave expression to his belief that everything in Nature is created according to three basic forms -the sphere, the pyramid and the cylinder. He was also interested in the Barbizon School - the 'modern primitive' Rousseau, Millet and Corot, all of whom did so much to free landscape from its academic shackles, where a classical association or some moral basis had been necessary to justify it. It was really only in the nineteenth century that landscape art as such was accepted for itself.

In Amsterdam the young artist made his way at once to the Rijksmuseum to see the Rembrandts. Again he experienced that sense of losing his identity in the light emanating from the spirit and inner life of the famous painter. He was also able to study the great Dutch landscapists Hobbema and Ruisdael, and admired the way they managed to convey unlimited space on a very limited canvas.

When he went to London he visited the Tate, the National Gallery, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, where he saw the works of Blake, and those of Wilson and Gainsborough, who pioneered English romantic landscape painting. He was particularly appreciative of the genius of the two great English landscape painters of the nineteenth century, Constable and - more especially -Turner.

Upon his return to Dresden he was able to compare what he had seen with the paintings of Germany's own notable landscape painter, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), who spent most of his life at his easel in his studio in Dresden. There he evoked romantic and dramatic visions of moonlit seas, mountain peaks and abbey ruins, with cloud, rainbow or early morning light effects.

Jentsch meditated on all these impressions. It struck him that forms of art are dependent on their particular cultures and time. Every culture goes the same way: it grows, it flowers and it dies. All these different stages of development are shown up in art. Every kind of art goes with its kind of culture. Different styles of art are born with the cultures to which they belong. They are born with them, grow old and die with them. But art as a form of expression will always exist. A new cultural epoch would say something new in the medium of the eternal language of art. It would find a new angle in its particular experiences.

It was strange, however, that it did not matter who the landscape painter was, whether Corot or the old Chinese artist Hsia Kuei - Jentsch always saw in their paintings the personality of the artist. The actual landscape as such did not move him.

Back in his Meisteratelier Jentsch was kept busy with various commissions. He belonged to an artists' association and his recreations included skiing and rowing, at both of which he excelled. Then the First World War erupted, a war that was to change the world completely.

Jentsch volunteered for the Jager-Reserve, but after a period of service in the water-filled trenches of France, he was lamed by rheumatism. He was forced to spend a miserable and painful year in a

military hospital at Neustadt, so badly affected that he could not even paint. But this misfortune was also his good fortune, saving him from the bloodbath that killed so many of the most gifted young men of his generation, including Marc and Macke.

Jentsch returned to the quiet haven of his studio in Dresden. In 1920 he married an intelligent, strong-willed and capable young divorcee, Anne Ilgen. They opened a small factory that made spray-containers for perfume. She managed the factory while he painted. In 1921 they had a son, Christoph, their only child.

The marriage was reasonably happy at first, but gradually, because of their completely different characters and interests, their paths diverged. Over the years the rift continually widened.

In 1927 Jentsch illustrated a children's book which is interesting only inasmuch as it reveals a characteristic trait of Jentsch that has remained with him throughout his life. This is the matching of works. The illustrations on facing pages have a special harmony or accord with each other; just so today Jentsch is extremely careful and very particular indeed about complementing paintings that he hangs for exhibition. He compares this to the harmony in music, where any dissonance is disturbing. Once a visiting art expert wanted to buy some aquarelles for a gallery. Jentsch had carefully placed the paintings in pairs, and when the visitor pointed out at random odd paintings that he desired to acquire, Jentsch was adamant that he buy them in their matching groups - or not at all!

Jentsch was away from home frequently, having joined a large firm of interior decorators in Czechoslovakia (then Bohemia). The firm was owned by a wealthy German-speaking Czech, and apparently run on Jugendstil lines. The owner employed architects and about a hundred specialists in various fields of applied arts, including experts on furniture, carpets, lighting, mosaics, wall-papering, curtaining and painting. Jentsch, as the Malermeister, had a studio and several assistants. He advised on colour and supervised the decorative painting. He travelled extensively throughout Czechoslovakia and also worked on commissions in Germany.

Because of the favourable exchange of Czech currency as against the German mark, which continually and frighteningly kept dropping in value, Jentsch was comparatively affluent. He remembers how he and a colleague from the same firm returning home were able to live like kings once they reached Germany. Travelling by train, in high spirits, they threw all their clothes out of the window, and replaced them with a completely new wardrobe.

"It was like a dream," he recalls. But later, back in his studio in Dresden, it became a nightmare.

Escape from Politics

'It is in the intense moments of existence that we touch reality, especially in the moments of painful decision. In making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos, with which one chooses. Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity and thereby in turn the personality is consolidated' KIERKEGAARD

The 1920's were years of disillusionment in Germany. The overthrow of the Imperial regime was followed by chaotic inflation and unemployment. In art, Expressionism, which had by then become accepted, gave way to another trend called Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). In the prevailing anarchic post-war spirit of discontent it took the form of protest and cynical criticism of bourgeois morals and taste. People and events were portrayed with cold objective reality to convey the artists' socialist and humanist sympathies, as in the works of Dix, Grosz, Beckmann and Kanoldt.

In some cases disillusionment turned to repudiation of the world, escapist art or shock techniques. (Grosz led a Dadaist group in Berlin, Max Ernst and Arp one in Cologne, and Kurt Schwitters one in Hanover.) Another form of objectivity derived from Cubism and aiming at a synthesis of the plastic arts spread from Holland to the Bauhaus. Called De Stijl (The Style) and based on abstract geometrical design, it enjoyed some support in Germany, mainly in the field of architecture and furniture.

By the 1930's, after an era of political and economical turmoil and extremism, there was a swing to the right. National Socialism began to gain strength with frightening momentum. Nazism slowly

infiltrated all spheres of life, including the arts. In 1933 Goring closed down the famous Bauhaus, which had been such a creative force during the fourteen years of its existence. He condemned it as 'the breeding place of cultural Bolshevism'.

Artists were harried and persecuted and dismissed from teaching posts. The Expressionists were among the first to suffer. Campendonck and Klee were discharged from the Dusseldorf Academy; both fled the country. Beckmann was denounced and also left Germany. Schlemmer was dismissed from the Academy in Berlin-Charlottenburg; Kandinsky went to Paris, Feininger to the United States. Rohlf's works were seized and he was not allowed to exhibit. Pechstein was forbidden both to paint and to leave Germany to accept offers elsewhere. Barlach and Kathe Kollwitz were denounced, and even Nolde was prohibited from painting.

In 1937 the Nazis held an exhibition of 'degenerate art' in Munich. This included many paintings by Kokoschka, Heckel, Nolde, Feininger and Kirchner (who committed suicide the following year). Kokoschka (who fled successively to Austria, Czechoslovakia and England) painted his famous Self-Portrait of a Degenerate Artist in protest against Nazi persecution.

Painting turned back to insincere, second-rate naturalism and picture-postcard realism on sentimental and nationalistic themes. It became intolerable for any self-respecting artist to work under these stifling and inhibiting conditions. Among those who longed for freedom and tranquillity was Jentsch. Then - quite suddenly - an avenue of escape was opened up to him.

Mrs Jentsch had a cousin, originally from Dresden, who had settled in Egypt. He was a businessman called Richard Dietterle, who ran an import and export agency. He had lived in Egypt from 1895 to 1914, when he left with his family for a holiday in Germany. There he was trapped by the outbreak of the First World War.

During hostilities he was sent as a liaison officer to Macedonia, where he met a wealthy tobacco merchant whose organisation had branches throughout Europe. This subsequently led to Dietterle's taking over the management of the Dresden branch, which distributed Turkish tobacco to the various cigarette manufacturers. He became friendly with the young Jentsch couple, and often went on skiing holidays with Jentsch, their favourite resort being the Mittenwald.

Dietterle had two daughters and a son Helmuth, who was the youngest in the family and had studied agriculture. Owing to the difficult conditions and political turmoil in Europe, he expressed the desire to farm in Africa. His father, believing that the climate in East Africa was unhealthy, decided on the former German colony of South West Africa.

So in 1927 young Dietterle set off, thinking at the time that he would only be away for a couple of years. But he was so impressed by the vast territory and farming potential of the country that, desiring to remain permanently, he suggested to his father the purchase of a farm. His father visited the territory to investigate the possibilities, and equally convinced, he decided to buy a farm called Kleeforte, some 96 kilometres from Windhoek in the Seeis district.

Kleeforte was an attractive, undeveloped stretch of land of some 16500 hectares, with picturesque mountains, open plains and lovely natural springs - important in a country desperately short of water. The name of the farm was derived from the wild clover growing in the mountain passes.

In 1930 the elder Dietterle sold his business interests in Dresden, and the family moved to South West Africa. There they settled down happily to breeding Simmenthaler cattle and karakul sheep. They were delighted by the spaciousness of their little 'kingdom' and its wildlife - kudus, gemsbok and ostriches and the occasional springbok.

Richard Dietterle kept up a correspondence with the Jentsch family, and one day invited Jentsch to pay him a visit. It was a perfect opportunity for the painter to leave his depressing surroundings. Because he refused to accommodate his art to National Socialism, he was finding it increasingly difficult to obtain commissions. At that time he did portraiture as well as landscapes. When a competition for Dresden landscapes was organised, he submitted an oil painting, since it was a 'no signature' contest to forestall accusations of favouritism. It still amuses Jentsch to recall the official discomfure when it was discovered that he was the winner.

But the future looked bleak and cheerless, both for personal and political reasons. Jentsch therefore eagerly grasped the offer that would enable him to break his bonds. On February 22nd, 1938, he arrived in South West Africa - never to return to Germany. There, at the farm Kleeforte, he spent his first few months of painting in South West, revelling in the vast open spaces and endless horizons. This was the freedom and harmony for which his spirit had yearned: unspoilt Nature and - above all - peace.

A New Life in Africa

'Harmony and accord are the roots out of which art is created.' Confucius

South West Africa is a vast, sun-bleached land. The dry river-beds, freckled with small bushes, wander wistfully through plains of tall yellow grass, thorn-trees and scrub. The huge domed sky changes mood from tired blues to resentful yellows.

During the day the searing sun strikes the naked hills like a ruthless spotlight, probing their stark contours. But as the sun sets, casting long grey shadows, a cool breeze soothes the aching earth, erasing memories of discomfort, heat and dust. When night falls, the myriads of stars are trapped in an intricate web of grotesque thorn trees.

There are no clearly defined seasons. The sun shines through spring, summer, autumn and winter. The slow, dreamlike rhythm of the barren earth induces a feeling of timelessness, of eternity.

This was the land that Adolph Jentsch made his home - a land where he felt like a blade of grass in the immensity of the universe. As he gazed at the distant horizons, like lilac smudges sketched with a pastel crayon, he experienced an exhilarated sensation of complete freedom, of empathy with nature, of exquisite harmony.

Because he believes that the emotional state of the artist is important, he never paints when he is upset, when there is a feeling of tension - as had happened too often in Germany. He then always lays down his brush. 'A painter who is harmonious within himself will create something harmonious,' he says. 'Within light there is harmony and disharmony. Man sees the harmonious appearances in life both from within and from without. It is from the visual landscape and the fantasy of the painter that he gets the essence of a harmonious vision of the landscape. The inner light gives form to his memory, and with this vision he sees the whole world around him in one glance, including experiences of the past. Harmony is freedom, a form of redemption, a world law. It fulfils. While painting, I experience this movement towards harmony. I experience space. Confucius declared that the saints of ancient times did not feel the need to sacrifice this life for a higher life, but were happy and satisfied within themselves, expecting nothing more, since they had attained complete harmony.'

Jentsch's withdrawal from society, from the turmoil of politics and from responsibilities to the community and domestic life, is actually in accord with Chinese tradition. When Chinese artists entered monasteries or lived as hermits, they were not regarded as eccentrics or religious maniacs or misanthropes. On the contrary, their behaviour was conceived as being highly ethical. It was understood that daily trials and tribulations should be discarded in the search for harmony of the soul and tranquillity of the spirit.

When Jentsch arrived in South West, there were no tarred roads in the country areas, and the poor communications made travelling a hot, tiring and dusty adventure. People were thrown back on their own resources. It was a country where friendship was as precious as water. Jentsch was fortunate indeed, soon after his arrival, to make the acquaintance of Gebhard and Dorothee von Funcke, who were destined to become his lifelong friends.

Courteous and gracious, they are both descended from old and well-known families in Germany. The von Funckes were wealthy landowners and officers of the Kaiser. Gebhard's father was a lieutenant-colonel of the second Guards regiment, of which Gebhard too later became an officer. While still very young, Gebhard fought in the First World War. However, he inherited the family's love of the land, and yearned to have his own farm. Owing to the difficult circumstances in Germany after the war, this seemed an impossible dream, and so he emigrated to South West Africa in 1925. His fiancée, Dorothee von Alvensleben, followed him a year later. They were married in Swakopmund two days

after her arrival. The von Alvenslebens were also well-to-do landowners, with a sprinkling of diplomats, scholars and officers.

The young couple's new homeland was rough and untamed. The farmhouses were scattered over the vast countryside like lonely beacons, lost in a great wilderness. But in spite of the comparatively primitive conditions and their straitened circumstances, they accepted everything with genteel insouciance and good humour. No matter how crude the farmhouse, they were always able to give it an air of refined elegance and tradition with their few pieces of antique silver and precious porcelain, and the family portraits of well-bred ancestors.

Jentsch and the von Funckes were immediately drawn to each other when they met at the Dietterle farm. The von Funckes were neighbours of the Dietterles', farming cattle and karakul sheep at their farm Helena. This was also an attractive place, with hills and plains and a variety of game. Sometimes Jentsch went to paint there, staying with the von Funckes for a while. From the top of a mountain he could look out across an immeasurable distance to the sandy expanses of the Kalahari.

Dorothee asked Jentsch to paint the grave of her mother, who had been buried on the farm. She had shared her daughter's life - for five years in their simple home - a great contrast to her previous elegant surroundings. But they managed to improvise successfully. They concealed the primitive mud ceiling with beautiful drapes, and hung a signed photograph of the Kaiser on a long nail, so that it would not be eaten by termites. Many years later the Kaiser's grandson Prince Louis Ferdinand visited Jentsch and the von Funckes at Brack, and was completely charmed by the unexpected discovery of 'Grandpa' on the wall of the lounge.

The von Funckes grew to love their farm Helena and stayed there for fifteen years, hopefully sinking borehole after borehole in a vain search for water. Then a dreadful drought hit the country. Early in 1941 the von Funckes were forced to sell their waterless land, and the Kraffts - a farming couple with whom both Jentsch and the von Funckes were friends - invited Gebhard to manage their farm Protea. There the von Funckes were happily reunited with Jentsch.

Jentsch, in the meanwhile, had held an exhibition of his paintings in Windhoek in 1938, from the 8th to the 22nd September, in the Blue Room of the Grossherzog Hotel. It was opened by the Administrator and drew a record crowd of art lovers.

A preview critique that appeared in the Windhoek Advertiser is worth quoting, as it gives an excellent idea of the paintings displayed in the first Jentsch exhibition in South West Africa. The critic divided the paintings into four groups. In the first group of three paintings, he felt, the artist was expressing his soul and the impressions that the mass-effect of the landscape had made upon him. At that time Jentsch gave titles to his paintings, a habit he subsequently dropped, just calling them generally South West Landscape. However, the titles do serve to inform us as to his subject matter.

According to the critic, the painting called Ruhe (At Rest) depicted 'trampled grass, thorn bushes and the distant hills before the setting of the sun, leaving the artist with a feeling of the complete restfulness of nature, which he has wonderfully conveyed... In Die Wolken kommen (The Clouds Gather) and Einsamkeit auf der Steppe (Solitude in the Steppes) the mind is seized with a sense of the vastness of the landscape. In the latter picture a feeling of loneliness grows out of the wide and unlimited spaces. It is something which the older transport drivers have experienced as day by day they plodded with their team of oxen over the veldt. This sense of awe and vastness of space and loneliness have strongly affected the characters of the pioneers of the veldt and their successors. The understanding of all this comes when contemplating this wonderful picture...'

The first group, according to the review, reflected 'the reaction of a highly artistic and sensitive mind to essential aspects of our landscape. It expresses as it were the quality in nature that almost overwhelms the mind of puny man.' In the second group the paintings called Aloe in Blüte (Aloe in Bloom), Wo das Gras weht (Where the Grass Waves), Wolken (Clouds) and Rote Düne (The Red Dune) left the onlooker 'with a sense of exhilaration in the joyous contact with mountain and veldt'.

The third dealt with the following themes: Heim kehrende Schafe (Homecoming Sheep), Derherbergende Kameldorn (The Sheltering Camel-thorn Tree), Karakulramme (Karakul Rams), Vor Tagesanbruch (Before Daybreak), Nach dem Regen (After the Rains), Hackiesdorn im Juni (Hookthorn in June), Windhuk vom Norden (Windhoek from the North) and Kugelbusch (The Round Bush). 'Here the artist is the observer of what we may call the objectively beautiful,' wrote the critic.

He then classified the fourth group as having a special aesthetic element. 'The landscape has an impersonal 'beauty of its own in Kaktuspflanze (Cactus Plant), Eingang de rPforte (At the Entrance to the Mountain Pass) and Dammerung auf dem Feld (Twilight on the Veld).'

He ended by saying: 'An aesthetic pleasure of high quality is in store for all of us who have a thought beyond the daily needs of life, and Mr Jentsch has put us South Westers in his debt through his contribution to our inner and artistic life. His art is true and deep and takes us away and above the petty routine of our materialism.'

After this exhibition, Jentsch travelled around the arid southern part of the territory, painting its vast plateaux and strange, flat-topped mountains or tafelberge. The landscape fascinated him with its deeply eroded canyons, sparse vegetation, scattered scrubby bushes and the occasional tortured kokerboom clinging precariously to the burnt, inhospitable and stony slopes of a hillside.

In mid-February 1939 Jentsch made an artistically fruitful and happy stay at the farm Eirup, which belonged to a farmer named Richard Schroder. It lies some 80 kilometres north-east of Mariental, bordering the Kalahari desert, and to reach it Jentsch had to travel a road that is crossed several times by the Auob River. Because of the good rains the river was in spate, and the car was held up at several places by floods. This used to be a typical South West experience after the rains, when the usually dry river-beds overflowed and motorists had to hitch up their clothes and wade through the water, testing its strength and depth. If these were considered favourable, combined man-power was necessary to push the car across the river. Sometimes, when this failed, a span of donkeys or oxen was provided by the nearest farmer to help pull stranded vehicles across. Jentsch joined in the fun, wading through the water and pushing with the others and enjoying this novel adventure.

Jentsch had actually planned to spend two weeks with the Schroeders, but the rains made the road impassable, isolating the farm, and it was three weeks before he was able to depart. During that period he painted the first of his outstanding Eirup landscapes. The farm offered a wonderful variety of natural colours with its yellow grass, brick-red Kalahari dunes and white limestone areas. All this contrasted vividly with the intense blue sky. The feeling of spring after the rains, as the Kalahari blossomed, was a rare and moving experience for the painter. He was fascinated by the big plains of glimmering yellow-flowered dubbeltjies (*Tribulus terrestris*; wild, mat-like plants with devilish thorns) that miraculously appeared after the first rains. They lay like a splash of sunshine covering the red dune-sand. He painted a large oil of this enchanting scene and also did several aquarelles, not only of the typical Kalahari duneland, but also that part of the farm that is a limestone area with huge vleis and springbok grazing in an idyllic setting. However, while Jentsch admires the beauty and grace of wild life, he has never been attracted to painting game, finding complete fulfilment in the unspoilt landscape.

Jentsch also stayed for a while at the farm Orab, with the von Klenzes. Mrs von Klenze (Irmgard, Countess Hoensbruch) was a talented artist who delighted in having the painter as her guest.

In June Jentsch returned to Eirup, making a longer stay with the Schroders. The farmhouse has a tower of fifteen metres high, and Jentsch loved to paint from the top. This presented a magnificent vista to the west, of the so-called 'Kalkland'. He would arise before dawn every morning, clad in a thick brown coat as protection against the freezing air. Armed with brushes and stool, he would climb the stairs to the top of the tower. There, in solitude, he would revel in the inspiring sight of the sun rising over the dew-touched desert land. After a while the Schroders would entice him down from his tower with a cup of hot coffee. Then he would relax and enjoy his breakfast in a happy mood with his friends.

Occasionally Jentsch would accompany Richard Schroder when he drove to inspect the Outposts on the farm. Then, if Jentsch was attracted to some place he desired to paint, Schroder would take him there early the following morning and arrange to fetch him at nightfall. Jentsch painted five oils there, four of which belong to Schroder: Erdkugel, Farmhaus Eirup, Morgensterne and Kalahari. He also did a number of aquarelles on the farm.

The farm manager, the young count Graf zu Castell-Rudenhhausen, was an amateur artist. He greatly enjoyed the occasions when he could accompany Jentsch on his outings. Jentsch wore a loose-fitting white gown splashed with paint, and amongst his paraphernalia was a large, paint-daubed umbrella. When he reached the desired place, he would fix the umbrella firmly in the earth. Then, sitting in its

shade with his gown spread about him, he would open the box and take out his painting materials. He usually greeted the count with a humorous 'Good morning, my dear colleague'.

All his hosts regard Jentsch as the perfect house-guest - considerate and fitting easily into the daily routine, amusing them with his dry sense of humour and droll expressions. Schroder recalls how Jentsch in his modest way somehow always created a special atmosphere around him. At night there would be interesting discussions with him as he smoked his Havana cigar. Schroder related that he could discourse on a wide variety of subjects.

In between his two visits to Eirup, Jentsch was invited by Claude Wecke, a well-known karakul pelt buyer, to accompany him on his rounds in the southern part of the territory. Wecke introduced Jentsch to various farmers who offered him hospitality. Jentsch stayed for a while at the farm Vrede, which belonged to a friend of Wecke's called Adrian Esterhuizen. There he painted two fine oils of the spectacular view from the mountains overlooking the vast expanse of the desert sands of the Sperrgebiet - the 'forbidden' diamond area.

The veld was in full bloom - as only the desert can blossom overnight after the rains. As they went on their way, Jentsch occasionally asked Wecke to stop. He would then paint a watercolour from the lorry. One of these aquarelles hangs in the Wecke home at Wlotzka's Baken, a small holiday resort on the desert coast.

After his second stay at Eirup Jentsch visited Luderitzbucht, Helmeringhausen, Aus and the Schwartzrand. He painted several more large oils and many aquarelles of the landscape, as well as of the karakul sheep, called the 'black diamonds' of South West.

Back in the Windhoek district, Jentsch was the guest of the Schmerenbecks at their farm Claratal, where he painted more oils and aquarelles. Some of these hang in the Schmerenbeck home, together with an oil that they bought at his first exhibition.

Jentsch was also invited by the Bergmanns to their farm Schenksverder near Okahaudja. He gave lessons to their artistic daughter Ursula, who later became a professional painter and sculptress. He stayed too for a while with the Meinerts at their farm Okapanje, in the neighbourhood of the Dietterles' farm. Then the Kraffts invited Jentsch to paint on their farms. He thought he would be away for about four weeks. Instead it was seven years! Four of these he spent at Protea with the von Funckes. It was there that their long and wonderful association began: one which endures until this day, and in which their home became - and has ever since remained - his home.

The Landscape and Harmony

'To overcome the self by deep meditation means redemption, the mystical unity with the universe. There is nothing big and nothing small, nothing is important and nothing unimportant; a flower has as much meaning as Buddha.' Otto Kummel

Marianne Krafft was delighted to have as her guest the Meister, as they began calling Jentsch. They often used to go out painting together in the very early mornings. Upon their return to the farmhouse they would put their watercolours into mounts and display them on a special wall reserved for this purpose in the lounge. The Meister would smilingly say: 'The pearl must not be shown without a setting.' Then he would criticise their work.

Sometimes - but not very often - they had visitors. One such person was a doctor from Windhoek who used to pilot his own plane, landing it in the dry river bed. Occasionally a visitor would buy one of Jentsch's paintings. They drove to Windhoek only about twice a year for their requirements, as they could usually obtain these from the shop at Dordabis. They therefore led a very secluded life.

Marianne was the daughter of August Stauch, the railwayman who had discovered the first diamonds in South West Africa and become a millionaire. Later, owing to various circumstances, he lost everything -except one of his farms, Dordabis.

Marianne had been brought up in Berlin while the Stauchs were still wealthy and celebrated, and had developed an interest in art. She studied under the famous Swiss professor Johannes Itten, who had

run an art school in Vienna and then taught at the Bauhaus at the invitation of Gropius. Later Itten opened his own school in Berlin, and Marianne was his first pupil, painting under his tutelage for four years.

In 1930 Marianne married a Russian emigrant, Nicolai Krafft. Owing to his ill-health they decided to settle in the sunny climate of South West Africa on the farm Ibenstein, which had been part of the family farm at Dordabis.

One day when they were painting on top of a large hill, a messenger arrived to tell Marianne that her husband had been arrested. The Second World War had broken out and the Government was interning all men suspected of being Nazi supporters. Sometimes innocent people were denounced through personal spite, and this is what happened to Nicolai. He asked Jentsch to remain on the farm so that his wife and two small sons would have some protection. Jentsch readily agreed. Nicolai was released after three months and 'farm interned'; but they still pressed Jentsch to stay on with them.

A little hut was built for Jentsch on the mountain to protect him from the wind and sun as he painted. It had a piece of canvas over it and was closed on three sides. It was easily dismantled when Jentsch had finished with any particular landscape. After he had selected another site it was set up again. Jentsch also had a special box made for his paintings which he placed on four stones for protection. He would open the box and actually paint in it, with his canvas or paper lying flat, and his colours alongside with the tins in which he mixed them. Like the Chinese landscape painters he never uses an easel.

When Marianne decided to paint some outdoor murals, Jentsch with all his experience was able to give her some valuable advice. They visited the apothecary in Windhoek together and bought the necessary ingredients. Then he showed her how to use casein in the process. It was all so well prepared that these murals (centred around Herero figures) have withstood sun and storm for more than thirty years.

When the von Funckes arrived at Protea in January of 1941, the lives of Jentsch and the Kraffts became fuller. The von Funckes spent almost every weekend with them, arriving in a blue and yellow cart drawn by two fine horses. They drove along the corrugated, dusty country road, oblivious of all the discomforts. They might have been a couple taking an outing in their carriage and pair on Unter den Linden in Berlin.

The five of them amused themselves together, acting out charades and inventing theatrical pieces at which they were both players and audience. Jentsch was usually the audience, criticising their performances and encouraging them with observations on their improvement.

Sometimes they would all go to Dordabis to help make sausages and polony after a pig had been slaughtered. Mrs Stanch, who came from Pomerania, was well known for her delicious Pommersche Wurst. Sometimes they went for a picnic, settling beneath a large, shady tree.

The farm had a wonderful vegetable garden, containing everything imaginable - from asparagus to artichokes and strawberries. There were always fresh cream, cottage cheese and delicious mutton. Variety was given to the menu with game - mostly kudu and springbok- and wild birds like guineafowl, francolin and pigeons. They were adventurous in their cooking and enjoyed experimenting with all sorts of recipes, especially Russian and French. Sometimes they would hold a cooking competition. After stoking up a good wood fire in the stove, they would each prepare some speciality. Then they would critically sample everything. Jentsch was usually declared the winner.

In the evenings there was often music. They had an old-fashioned gramophone with a handle for winding it up, and some classical records which they never tired of playing. They also read a great many books. There was a cosy study with bookshelves all around, right up to the ceiling, laden with books on every subject imaginable. In winter they sometimes sat in big easy chairs around the fireside, holding discussions on a wide range of subjects - from art to graphology, and especially philosophy, about which both Jentsch and Nicolai were very knowledgeable. Jentsch was interested not only in Chinese philosophy, but also in thinkers like Martin Buber and Leibniz, with his concept of a pre-established harmony of the universe.

What with reading, music, theatricals and conversations the friends were never bored for a moment. They amused and enjoyed themselves - and the years just flew past. Later Marianne was to say that

it was only when she went overseas after an absence of ten years that she suddenly realised with a shock that -like Stravinsky's soldier - she had grown ten years older in the meantime.

Whenever it was particularly cold in the early morning, the Meister would put on a heavy military overcoat that had once belonged to his brother Martin, who had been a major in the regular German Army. As Martin was much taller than Jentsch, the coat trailed to the ground. In amusement Nicolai took a photograph of him in this outfit, complete with his tropical helmet and scarf to protect him from the sun and flies. Somehow this got to the authorities, and because of his military appearance in the photograph, the painter was interned on the farm at the end of 1942.

By that time he had moved over to the von Funckes at Protea, where he remained until 1946. Strangely enough this enforced isolation was a happy period in Jentsch's life. He delighted in the climate and the wonderful light, ideal for a landscape painter. He would arise at 4 a.m. every morning to go out to paint. He felt it was necessary to experience the night in order really to appreciate the life-giving light. Before his ever astonished gaze the circle of heaven and earth would become visible -the shadow of the earth in the sky. It exalted him to witness the great forces of Nature at work.

The landscape - unspoilt and undisturbed - was a daily experience that never ceased to enthral him. He could see the origin of form in earth and sky in a togetherness of movement. There was a similarity in the outer life and in his inner being that complemented each other. He felt the effect of the pure creative power in the landscape, just as he felt this creative power working in himself.

Sometimes he would decide not to paint, but just to sit on his camp-stool all day looking out at the awe-inspiring panorama in meditation. He realised how greatly he enjoyed his solitude. It brought him close to himself. It was necessary for a sensitive man to be able to get away from the masses, to live his inner experiences without being disturbed. The solitary man or hermit is able to develop this inner life, to become aware of himself. He thought of how prophets went into the solitude of the desert to seek concentration and wisdom. Solitude forces one to think.

He pictured his colleagues in the big cities of Europe, confined in crowded centres. He was experiencing something they would never know. The solitude of the eternal landscape around him was important for the freedom of his spirit as a painter. Individuals like himself who love being alone experience the ultimate truth only in contact with the landscape. Truth lies in simplicity, which is stronger than complexity. He agreed with Goethe's observation that 'the true master proves himself by his restraint'.

His art could only flourish away from worries and sorrow. His spirit became depressed when life placed a load on him and burdened him with its riddles. Art, science, philosophy and religion made it easier to carry this load. A shadow fell from the shelter and dulled the bright white of the canvas, tight on its frame in the wooden box. Jentsch continued to sit. He continued to look. The air flowed around him. He smelt the strange harsh breath of the desert. It gave him an inner serenity and happiness just to gaze at the vast expanse and beauty of the landscape. Very far away there were the last sharp lines of the mountains, the furthest heights that limited his vision. The wide plains before him seemed to be flowing. The crust of the earth glowed in the light. Unimaginable stretches of land lay in the sun. Close beside him were bushes, grass and undergrowth.

As he sat there, high on the mountain, he saw two eagles divide the light arc of the sky. They flew from the rocks behind him into the serene air of the morning. They flew almost without using their wings, dark against the sunshine. They seemed to be swallowed up by the infinite height of the sky. He knew those eagles. They appeared every morning.

Midday. Noon. Everything was quiet around him, spreading hotly. The hard stones burnt. The light flowed over the hours. There within the light of the landscape he became very aware of the light within himself. His thoughts followed his eyes. His spirit carried him wherever he wished to go with his vision. Through the process of painting his thoughts became visible in his spiritual eye, melting into the spirit of the landscape.

He thought of how the landscape painter does not live on his own, but lives with and in his surroundings - a harmonious inner life blending with the essence of the landscape. In this union he learns the true values of art.

Jentsch's frame of mind that grew out of the force of his solitude is visible in his paintings. The direction of his spirit reveals his character and is mirrored in his work. He describes the landscape, which in turn describes him.

Inner Concepts and Forces

'Pottery is made from clay, but the emptiness within is the real meaning of the vessel.' Lao Tse

After the war, in 1946, Gebhard von Funcke accepted an offer to manage a large farming complex belonging to Mr Robbie Blake, who resided in Cape Town. Meister Jentsch, of course, went with the von Funckes to their new home - a farm in the Naukluft which lies in the south-western part of the territory.

One of the reasons why the von Funckes were attracted to this proposition was that the Naukluft is a singularly beautiful and paintable landscape, with mountain peaks rising to some 2 000 metres. From the time that Jentsch came to live with them, the von Funckes had always considered the painting possibilities of an area before its farming prospects, with a charmingly impractical attitude.

Jentsch especially loves the solitude of the mountains. The Chinese call landscape Shan-Shui, which means mountains and water - the two basic forms of the earth. These are a feature of the Naukluft. Jentsch was delighted by the wild primeval grandeur, the rugged dolomite rock walls that conceal caves with ancient rock art - the so-called Bushman paintings and engravings. It is a dramatic and noble sight with deep ravines, narrow gorges, natural springs and streams. The Bushmen, some of whom still lived there at the time, used to twist together the thick creepers and the roots of the dense vegetation in the valleys to make ladders for climbing the sheer rock faces. Baboons frequented the area, barking their harsh defiance of man from the cliff fortresses.

In 1894 the Naukluft had been the scene of a battle between the German military forces (the Schutztruppe) and the Witboois, a Nama tribe led by their remarkable visionary leader, Hendrik Witbooi. There were graves of both German soldiers and Nama combatants, as well as thousands of old cartridges - grim reminders of the bitter struggle that had once taken place there.

Perhaps because of these associations, the imaginative Dorothee sensed an evil spirit lurking in the mountains, and sometimes when she heard the rustling of the thick carpet of dry leaves, it seemed like the stealthy approach of footsteps. Once she was startled by what sounded incredibly like yodelling, which brought back memories of childhood holidays in Switzerland. Then she saw Ovambo shepherds, silhouetted against the sky on the mountain tops, calling to each other in a pure and lovely cry, an expression somehow of joyous human contact.

The von Funckes treated Jentsch rather as if he were a wild bird that would languish in captivity. They respected his desire for freedom and privacy, and never imposed upon him any feeling of obligation or constraint. To this day, after more than three decades of living together, when the von Funckes and Jentsch address each other they do not use the intimate du, but the less familiar and more respectful Sie.

West of the Naukluft are the sands of the Namib - the bleak, wind-swept desert which has the highest dunes in the world. Some of the Naukluft rivers wind a dry, desperate course into this barren area, petering out in an incredible oasis such as Sossus Vlei. This lies in the prohibited diamond area, or so-called Sperrgebiet. Jentsch, however, is not adventurous and never explored these desolate regions, but contented himself with the vistas on the farm - a great contrast to the other areas in which he had painted. Here he completed several oils and aquarelles which show great vitality.

Then came another move. The von Funckes and Jentsch all went to stay on the Vollmer farm Teufelsbach, which Gebhard managed for some six months. This lies between Windhoek and Okahandja, and presents quite a different landscape. When the farm changed ownership, however, they decided to leave, attracted by a new possibility.

On the farm Binsenheim, 62 kilometres east of Windhoek, there is an outpost called Brack which has a little farm store that offered von Funcke the potential for a modest living. The South West Administration was busy constructing a bridge nearby, and there were many Ovambo workers

engaged on the project, so that the business prospects held promise. In addition the landscape is attractive thorn-tree savannah with tawny grass, aloes, acacias and great, rolling hills stippled with scrubby bushes. Near the farmhouse is the dry, white, sandy bed of the Skaap River, trimmed with a green edging of camel thorn and other trees.

So in August 1947 the von Funckes and Jentsch settled finally at Brack. The farm belongs to a company of which Mr Wilfred Metje, who stems from a well-known pioneer family, and his wife are the principal shareholders. The arrangement between them and the von Funckes is more a matter of friendship than of business. In this cordial understanding the von Funckes are happy and grateful to be living in attractive surroundings that accord with their needs and inclinations, and which they gladly share with Jentsch.

Besides the small farmhouse and store, there is an old deserted cheese factory which was closed during the war. This has become Jentsch's private gallery, where he hangs his aquarelles to display them both for his own purposes and for the many art lovers who arrive there from far and wide to pay tribute to the Meister.

Jentsch receives his visitors in courtly fashion, and after Mrs von Funcke has served tea and cakes, he takes them to the 'gallery'. John Paris, who was then Director of Cape Town's National Gallery, described his impressions of the paintings displayed there as 'rows and rows of tiny, white-framed watercolours... delicate washes of tint with dots and dashes and calligraphic strokes written on them, telling the story of air and distance, about dawn and dusk. The great land becomes an album of leaves of paper. Only Pierneef and Jentsch among Southern African artists have set out to invent a written language with which to describe their particular pattern of land.'

When Jentsch heard that his studio in Dresden with some valuable paintings and Chinese objets d'art had been destroyed in an air-raid during the war, his bonds with Europe were finally and irrevocably severed. He has now lived at Brack for more than a quarter of a century with the kind and unworldly von Funckes. There is the graciousness and dignity of a bygone age - unhurried, untouched by the tempo of modern life - in this warm circle of friends with their pets, Bolle the dachshund and Pushkin the cat. There they live simply and frugally, without even electricity, but with charming courtesy and unflinching consideration for each other. Their few treasures and photographs of the past harmonise with the Meister's paintings on the walls.

Jentsch is a quiet and modest man with simple pleasures - a good cigar, good wine, good music, and sometimes a visitor with whom he can discuss his concepts of art and philosophy. It has been my privilege on many such occasions to share his thoughts with him.

'There are two fundamentals in art,' Jentsch explains, 'the spirit and the thing. As Martin Buber defines it, whatever has form, sound and colour is thing. All things have in common the impossibility of attaining the being that lies outside them. Only man can transcend this. The spirit has no form, while the thing has form. However, the spirit cannot appear, unless it is within the thing, just as wine must be contained in some vessel. It needs the thing to give it meaning. The thing is mortal, while the being (das Sein) is immortal.'

Once, when conversing on religion and art, he said to me: 'A religious painter puts his beliefs into his art. Fra Angelico, who was a true believer, did not only paint angels and saints, but also religious apples and religious flowers, as the expression of his believing self. The Chinese especially are a cultured people who have a form of religion and philosophy expressed purely in painting. They attempted to understand religion and philosophy through their painting. Therefore only the believers and the wise ones painted. Their themes were symbols of religious thinking, elevated into the spiritual. It is wrong to look at their work as mood painting. Where the mood in the painting stops, there the spiritual meaning of the painting begins.'

After pausing a while, Jentsch continued reflectively: 'I pour my deepest feelings into my art. One can always sense sincerity, whether it be in art or prayer. A stuttered truth is still a truth. Take Moses when he returned from Mount Sinai and found his people dancing around the Golden Calf. He fell into a rage at their shallowness, their lack of profundity - the same anger that a painter experiences when he sees the masses worship superficial virtuosity.'

One of the reasons why Jentsch chooses to paint before dawn is to avoid shadows. Like the Chinese, he feels that shadows have a spiritual emptiness, being merely the lack of light. For many years he

had a little hermit's hut on a hilltop at Brack, where he would sit and wait for the dawn, for that wonderful experience when the last shadows of night still lie heavily on the horizon. Day after day he paints the same surrounding countryside which he translates into his own meaningful hieroglyphics - his personal handwriting.

First he finds a view that satisfies, then he opens his camp-stool and prepares not only his painting materials, but himself. His whole approach is Oriental. 'The idea precedes the brush.' Like the Chinese landscapists, who before painting needed some special psychological preparation, such as contemplation, Jentsch too empties his mind of all irrelevancies to make it free and receptive. He knows that the moment cannot be forced. He waits for that inner concentration, that balance before he starts. The eleventh-century landscapist Kno Hsi expressed this when he said: 'In painting any view the artist must concentrate his powers in order to unify the work. Otherwise it will not bear the peculiar imprint of his soul.'

Jentsch regards it as very important to choose the right time to begin and the right time to stop painting. He searches for the spirit of the landscape, experiencing daily the serene joy of apperception, of looking at and absorbing (Anschauen and Erschauen), of identifying himself with the landscape, and sinking so deeply into it that it is almost as if he and it were one. The world inside him harmonises with the world outside. Van Gogh once remarked to his brother that 'to paint the countryside, you must see it not as a tourist, but as someone who has sunk into it as deeply as any potato'. That is exactly what Jentsch has done.

Suddenly something seems to stream towards him as his spirit seeks it out - and in that moment of exquisite unity akin to the act of love, he takes up his brush and paints. Jentsch compares this lightning flash of intuitive seeing to the old, esoteric Japanese art of archery - which is art and not sport, for to the Japanese the actual hitting of the target is of secondary importance. Europeans have lost this intuitive seeing, where the aiming is an inner vision.

'The Japanese regard this aiming as a means of discipline,' Jentsch explains, 'a development towards inner harmony. the archer awaits that moment when intuition tells him to shoot his arrow. The tension in the bow loosens itself very suddenly, and that is the moment of true unity of the archer and the target, which lasts for the time the arrow flies and hits the target. It is a strange experience for the archer, in which he seems to see the target within himself while aiming at the real target, waiting for the two to unite - the world of his imagination and the world of reality. In this unity he achieves his aim. One becomes aware of the great art of insight in the essence of the consciousness of self, which is the basis of all art.'

Once Jentsch commences painting, every stroke of the brush is important, revealing the smallest nuance of mood, the slightest change or weakening in his physical and spiritual condition. He believes that each stroke is singular.

After a while Jentsch stopped painting in oil and concentrated entirely on watercolours - an ideal medium for the flowing, inspired exteriorisation of self in the calligraphic nature of his art. He works quickly and deftly, completing one small section at a time. The years of experience have given him ever more remarkable expertise.

Painting Nature is a form of prayer for Jentsch. Like the ancient Chinese monks, he expresses his deepest beliefs in his art. He speaks his silent prayers in his landscapes. He prays painting. Once a visiting art lover, fascinated by a strange technical effect he saw in one of Jentsch's aquarelles, inquired how he had achieved this. Jentsch replied, 'Do you pray? Yes? Well - do you think of your grammar when you pray?'

Swakopmund and Painting Concepts

'Buddha teaches me to understand myself, and the understanding of the outside world is the purpose of this understanding of self' Paul Dahlke

Jentsch knows the country intimately in all its moods, and is close to its pulse beats - the 'endless plains with the trembling light and air, and also what must seem unpaintable, the transparent night.

He has described the indescribable,' wrote Anton Hendriks, former Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, about Jentsch.

Towards the end of the year, after sudden and unpredictable rains, the land is transformed. The dry river beds become raging torrents and the veld blooms with a virginal, vulnerable purity. So too Jentsch's mood changes. He watches the desiccated browns being transmuted into tender greens, he observes the miracle of the bushes - barbed wire miraculously sprouting shoots and snowy blossoms.

When Jentsch takes a holiday, he does not seek the distraction of other countries. Indeed, he has never crossed the borders of South West Africa since his arrival. Every November he and the von Funckes go for a few weeks to Swakopmund, the quaint, German-orientated seaside resort on the desert coast. There they stay in the quiet, ordered atmosphere of the Prinzessin-Rupprecht-Heim, renewing contacts with old friends of similar regular habits, continuing the undisturbed rhythmic flow of their existence. There they recuperate from the inland summer heat in a landscape where thick fog hugs the desert coast in an early morning and late afternoon embrace; where weird, unique plants like the Welwitschia cling precariously to the inhospitable sands with a tenacious preoccupation to survive.

During his visits to Swakopmund Jentsch renews his acquaintance with Oscar Tuckmantel, whom he originally met in 1938 at the time of his exhibition at the Grossherzog Hotel, where Tuckmantel was on the staff. He was the first to buy an aquarelle at the exhibition, paying five guineas, which was practically his entire month's salary. Since then he has acquired five oils and many more watercolours, some of them Christmas gifts from the artist.

After the war Tuckmantel became the manager of the modest Kaiserkrone Hotel, where he remained for about seventeen years. There in the lounge, dining and reception rooms he used to display Jentsch paintings, both large oils and aquarelles, 'to create an atmosphere'. The paintings also attracted the attention of buyers. Jentsch had meanwhile rented a room nearby where he could stay during his visits to Windhoek. When this was demolished, Tuckmantel gave him accommodation in an out-building adjoining his Klein Windhoek home. It was very plainly furnished, but Jentsch is as undemanding in material comforts as a monk in a cell. Indeed, he lives in monastic simplicity.

Tuckmantel is interested not only in art, but also in music. Sometimes he invited Jentsch across to his house to listen to his collection of classical records, which the painter greatly enjoyed. Then Tuckmantel bought a holiday home at Swakopmund which he humorously calls his Altersheim (old-age home). There he regularly sees Jentsch, and takes him out into the desert whenever the artist desires to paint. First they spend the day beforehand looking for a landscape that satisfies Jentsch. Where Tuckmantel might select some view he believes to be suitable, Jentsch will find aspects that are disturbing, such as a telephone pole, a distant road, or building rubble in the river.

'I want undisturbed Nature in my paintings,' he says. If Jentsch finds a suitable landscape, Tuckmantel fetches him the following morning in the early, cold and fog-laden hours when it is still dark. They then drive out to the site, where Tuckmantel leaves the artist, who dislikes being watched while he paints. Some three hours later he returns to fetch Jentsch, during which period Jentsch - if he is in the right mood - may have completed two watercolours. Once a sandstorm arose after Tuckmantel had left Jentsch. The artist, unable to paint, spent several miserable hours with the fretful wind blowing fine, stinging particles of sand against him, until his body was enveloped in an uncomfortable, gritty film.

When they set off together, Jentsch is always in a state of tension, of anticipation. He impatiently brushes aside the suggestion that he should have a cup of coffee. 'I must paint,' he cries with an urgency of feeling. He is like a musician before a recital, strained and tense. But when Tuckmantel fetches him after his painting is completed, he is in quite a different mood - happy, relaxed and fulfilled.

Sometimes, if the place Jentsch selects is too far from Swakopmund for Tuckmantel to go home and return later, the latter discreetly walks off into the distance, where he sits and waits, refreshing himself with a flask of coffee and rolls. Once when he came back for Jentsch, he saw a jackal sitting quietly beside the artist, observing him with curiosity as he painted. Both painter and jackal were completely at ease, the jackal having been Jentsch's companion for some two hours.

A few years ago, when producing a film scenario I had written on Jentsch, I drove him to Swakopmund, and there as we walked we had several chats on art. I asked him what he thought was the true meaning of a painter's work.

'It is to create his reality,' he replied. 'Reality contains the present and the past, the living and the mechanical. Now take that wave. The valley changes into a crest. The crest fills and climbs. the crest foams and breaks into a new valley. The wave presents a lively spectacle. In the picture we have before us we have at the same time its activity and our reactions as observers. This also occurs when an artist paints - simultaneous creativity and effect. The only difference is that the artist's painting is formed by a personal will, while the waves act mechanically through an outside force. The painter himself provides the power, creating it out of his own will. The wave only shows that there is an outside force that moves it. The painter experiences reality and he experiences it always anew, only at one particular moment. It is his reality in the moment of conscious seeing. He thinks with his eye. The wave, on the other hand, forms without experiencing. The painter can experience his personal reality because he is conscious of himself. Where there is personal seeing and absorbing (Anschauungen) there are also personal experiences. The landscape painter as apperceiver creates the landscape through his experiences. When he looks at something, he creates form - fusing the looking and the object. In my life I concentrate on those moments in which I can paint my reality.'

Because Jentsch believes that his physical condition is important to his painting, he practises yoga and does deep-breathing exercises early every morning. He follows Goethe's precept: 'I live on a diet and keep very quiet, so that the objects don't find an elevated soul, but that they should elevate the soul.' Formerly Jentsch used to be able to stand on his head and count to five hundred. At Brack he sometimes swims in a water-tank in the garden. He is also a veteran walker. In Windhoek he still easily walks several kilometres from his room at Tuckmantel's place in the suburbs to his studio in the Art Centre of the Dr Erich Lubbert Stiftung Building, and back. This studio was made available to him for his lifetime by the S.A. Association of Arts (S.W.A.), in recognition of his important contribution to South West art.

The landscape certainly elevates Jentsch. It does not excite him. He remains calm, but it stimulates him, evoking a tension such as Tuckmantel had observed when taking him to paint. He frees himself in his painting. His blood is part of the rhythm of life that he senses around him. By keeping fit, he believes, he can influence this rhythm, and create inner harmony.

The force of his self (Ichkraft) is, according to Jentsch, derived from five interdependent sources -the physical, sensation, perception, differentiation and consciousness. This is based on an old Indian philosophical concept. The ego is meaningless without these stages of development, which are summoned by the power of the 'self', which is the essence of the creative personality. In the process of painting the artist makes his inner force visible. If the paintings make an impression, it is the artist's inner force that makes an impression. To make an impression is to express force. 'My experiences when I look and when I paint show the force within me,' says Jentsch. 'There is also a special force in the painting of those things that have been withheld from the painting. The expression of things seen immediately is not of great value. The force behind it is the main thing - not the object, not the obvious, not the outer, but the inner form. One can explain the measure of force by the inner measure of form. The form of the object is the means to convey higher experience and higher knowledge. I myself become the form. This pictorial conveying of myself depends on my nature, the nature around and within me, and the nature that influences my momentary condition. Painting is an expression of myself. My paintings are me.'

I once asked Jentsch what he thought were the most important qualities in a painting.

He replied without hesitation: 'Spirituality and vitality. As the old Chinese Kuo-Ho-Hsu said, with Ch'i yon (meaning spirituality of the artist) and Shen-Tung (meaning vitality, or the flow of life) a painting can reach the supreme heights of art.'

The Man, the Painter, the Philosopher

'Less can be more; to be quiet is often more than to speak out, because this awakens in a sensitive ear a sound that will never die out.' D. S. Mereschowsky

It is a great art of Adolph Jentsch that he can paint the same landscape over and over - and yet every time it is completely different. Similarly the Chinese painted the same themes again and again - but were never repetitive. Jentsch has this ability because he, like them, is not concerned with the objects in themselves. For the same reason they used Chinese ink and not colour - something which Jentsch too regards as of no vital importance. Objects were philosophical symbols to the Chinese. So, for instance, 'Evening snow on a lake' would be the spiritual symbol of old age. Jentsch, however, does not use symbolism, except perhaps for the moon, which signifies 'the all', the universe.

In Jentsch's cosmic conception of Nature he conveys sublimity - the infinite - by means of subtle suggestion. He is a master of empty spaces which give a special spiritual quality to his work. The art historian Esme Berman declares that the most distinctive feature of his paintings is 'his translation of space into an absolute entity; void is as significant as volume in his work. Like the traditional Chinese painter he does not delineate shapes against a background, but places strokes around the emptiness, thereby encompassing the infinite within the finite scene. . . Description is abbreviated to suggestion; the contours of the landscape are distilled into zones of delicately handled colour-washes in his watercolours, glazes in his oils; the natural features are communicated with minimal elaboration in a range of sensitive calligraphic figurations.'

Jentsch's expressive lyrical aquarelles have become ever more abstract, looser and simplified over the years - and ever more meaningful. This accords with the Oriental concept that when all is filled in, it becomes boring, because nothing is left to the imagination. Jentsch himself regards emptiness as having just as much expression as the painted object, in the same way that silence can be more significant than talking.

'Much that I see in Nature seems immaterial to my painting,' Jentsch says. 'I just leave out what doesn't move me, or mean anything to me. I look - and select. I don't paint anything unimportant by painting it with less attention, or putting it into the background. I just leave it out. The emptiness that comes into being like that is significant. The expression of emptiness becomes effective through those things that surround it.'

This art of insinuation is by no means as simple as it sounds. When a Japanese artist was asked what he found the most difficult part of painting, he replied, 'The space which is to be left unpainted.'

Jentsch works with great sureness and vitality. His solid grounding at the Dresden Academy, combined with more than half a century of experience, have made him a master of the medium of watercolours. Technically he is deeply conscious of the harmony that lies in the Golden Mean or Section (Goldene Schnitt). The Golden Mean shows the relationship of parts according to a law of proportions which was first expressed mathematically and named by Euclid. It is the division of a line or distance in such a way that the smaller part has a relationship towards the bigger part, in the same way that the bigger part has to the whole.

'It is an aesthetic law in the creative force of Nature,' Jentsch explains. 'The eye of the painter finds the Golden Mean intuitively and very correctly. Everything in Nature follows this law - the manner in which leaves and branches grow on a tree, the formation of crystals, the body of a stud horse. Even the heart does not fit into the centre of the breast, but is placed according to the Golden Mean. In a work of art the objects form a harmony according to it. This includes the empty spaces, which have a relationship to the fullness. You can define the Golden Mean as the definite measure of the power of life and harmony. Its rhythm means beauty and creative force to the painter. It is only in the Golden Mean that we have the feeling of a distance being perfectly divided. Life too has its divisions, the parts being related to each other and to the whole. The individual is conscious of himself as a living part of humanity. Every man looks for a measure that is related to him. The life of an artist runs according to the law of the Golden Mean in this way: the smaller part (minor), which is the creative force in the life of a painter, is related to the larger part (major), which is the force of inner harmony in his life, like the greater part (this inner harmony) is related to his life as a whole. This law works through art like heart blood and pulse beats through a man's body.'

Jentsch's paintings reflect this basic measure -the organising and discipline of the creative force in Nature according to the Golden Mean. Jentsch also sees this law operating in nuances of colour and in complementary tones of colour. Pairs of colours which complement each other have a definite, harmonious relationship in an accord of colour similar to the divisions in linear and space relationship. The Golden Mean is the basic measurement reproducing space in any form. This is evident in Jentsch's spatial-temporal landscapes with their huge skies, sometimes two-thirds of the canvas,

which seem to signify man lost in the infinity of time. He is much concerned with nuances, seeing them as the language of the painter through which he shows the visual, the visual depth of space and the perspective of air and distance.

Jentsch views complementary colours as the actual tools of the painter, their effect lying not only in their relationship with each other, but in their being opposites. The harmonious combination of these different complementary colours in Jentsch's paintings gives a satisfying feeling of completeness to his work, of proportion, balance and accord. For instance, he contrasts the yellow group, which is active, warm and penetrating, with the blue group, which is passive, cold and receding. One first sees the harmony of colours, then one feels them. In his oils especially he makes effective use of complementary relationships such as red and green.

Jentsch follows Goethe's famous colour chart with its 'circle of fundamental and complementary colours. He always mixes his colours, regarding pure colour that has not been changed or toned down as of no artistic value. In his opinion the true artistic expression of a painter lies in the variation and breaking up of different colours, and their blending. 'There is a constant flow in painting,' he says, 'as there is in music, the big difference being that sound disappears.'

Grey is very important in Jentsch's paintings. He feels, like Cezanne, that as long as one has not painted in grey, one is no painter. With nuances of grey he creates space and distance. It helps him obtain the basic perspective. 'As the mathematician has the number as a means of measuring,' he says, 'the painter has grey as his standard of measurement, but the painter measures intuitively.'

He points out the wonderful range of greys used by the Chinese watercolourists, from the deepest dark tones to the purest light ones. 'No other colour can achieve the effect of grey,' he says, 'which is singular, having a special stability.' Jentsch mixes his greys skilfully according to whether he wishes them to be dark or light, to be warm or cold. He also adds grey to other colours, saying: 'The air mass that lies between me and the object I see changes the colour of the object. It influences my vision looking through it. The air brings grey into the colour of every colour tone. It gives the effect of perspective.' But just as Jentsch has simplified his sensitive aquarelles, so too has he limited his range of colours. Recently he remarked, 'I paint with only four colours, which ones I don't know until I start.' Sometimes he uses nuances of only one colour. Several of his most moving aquarelles are in fact monochromes. In a strange way this seems to purify and spiritualise his work, revealing more clearly the inner light that illumines it.

Adolph Jentsch might have been a great painter anywhere else, but he certainly would not have been the same painter. He seems to share certain qualities with the land of his adoption - an unruffled independence of spirit, an air of solitude and pristine integrity. He is able to paint in a spiritual oneness with pure, unsullied Nature, which never fails to ignite a spark in his creative spirit. Not only has the land influenced Jentsch - but Jentsch has influenced the land. His arrival in South West Africa gave a new dimension to the art of the territory - and as the doyen of South West painters he still dominates and greatly influences the art scene there today.

South West art can be divided into three main categories. Firstly there is the illustrative work of the early explorers like Thomas Baines, who used descriptive pictures to chronicle the country and its people in those times. Then there is the pioneer art of the early German settlers, mostly of a realistic-romantic genre, such as the paintings of Erich Mayer, Axel Eriksson, Hans Anton Aschenborn, Carl Ossmann and Johannes Blatt. Thirdly there is a group which, although still painting figuratively, shows profounder qualities than the mere portrayal of landscape or wild life. In this category are Jentsch, Otto Schroder and Fritz Krampe.

The unique character of South West Africa - its vastness and isolation - has left its imprint on all its painters. Its art is one that has emerged in spite of difficult circumstances. Pioneer conditions, isolation, recurrent droughts, economic difficulties, a limited buying public, conservative outlook and political uncertainties - all have had a discouraging and inhibiting effect on the development of both the country and its art. There is no contemporary idiom, no abstract or non-figurative work, no internationalism. It is an essentially regional art. The artists are the victims of their circumstances. With Jentsch the art of South West Africa has reached its zenith. But with him we also come to the end of an era.

Riena van Graan, the Assistant Curator of the Pretoria Art Museum, wrote at the time of the Jentsch Exhibition there (1970-1971): 'I think that the great value of Jentsch as an artist lies in that he is the

only artist who tackled the problem of the homogeneous blue cloudless sky above a landscape with a veld full of bushes and veld-shrubs, consequently full of turbulent elements. Pierneef, who sought the decorative quality in the landscape, abridged this problem of discord in the painting by means of a cloudy sky. But this smooth blue sky of Jentsch's does not divide the painting in two; it rather contributes to the grandeur and infinity, and strongly emphasises the third dimension of the landscape over which it stretches. It is but one of the reasons why it may be said that Jentsch, perhaps more so than Pierneef, penetrated to the character of the landscape and laid bare its innermost nature.'

It is of interest that Jentsch has no materialistic inclinations. He seems to part with his paintings reluctantly, especially if he suspects that the buyer has commercial motives. While always courteous, he maintains his freedom to sell if and when he so desires. In any case, he usually refuses to part with his best work, saying, 'Why should I sell the raisins in my cake?' Out of a hundred paintings, only a few satisfy him (my comment: 10 actually). He would also rather give a painting to somebody he likes or to an impecunious artist than sell it to a purchaser whom he believes desires it for other than aesthetic reasons, however high the offer.

Once Jentsch absolutely refused to sell a beautiful oil called Waterhole at any price. Then, a couple of years later, he gave it to me for the art collection of the South West branch of the S.A. Association of Arts when its new gallery was inaugurated. Actually, in February 1948, soon after the branch was founded, this particular painting had featured in an exhibition it held in Cape Town of South West African paintings, native arts' and crafts. An art critic there had singled it out, saying: 'Of the artists whose work is on view ... it is perhaps Adolph Jentsch who has most completely captured the spirit of the country. The eye of the visitor inevitably returns to his canvases . . . Waterhole with its touch of blue to relieve the monotony of the landscape, and Daybreak, in which the crudeness of sand and stone are relieved by the soft light of early morning, are superlative examples of great talent, making much out of the most unpromising material.'

On one occasion the Meister showed his lack of interest in worldly honours during a presentation to him at which the speeches were rather long and tedious, and not in German. He whispered to me, 'Have you ever seen me stand on my head? No? Well- would you like to see me do so now?'

Sincerity, modesty and harmony are the key-notes to Jentsch's life, as they are to his work. There is a classical quality in the very simplicity and understatement of his paintings, a subtlety in their economy of line. Deeply imbued with the mystique of South West Africa, he has evoked the silent poetry of this great, empty land. Where modern art screams, the paintings of Jentsch whisper, and are therefore more likely to be overlooked. To appreciate his work, one should remember the axiom of the old Chinese masters, that the greatest truths are the most simple.

'A work of art,' said Jentsch one morning, 'is a visible, painted expression of human history - even when its creator has gone back into the dust. The pleasure, the radiance of the creative force that comes alive when painting, is wonderful. The force of creation leads finally to a harmonious feeling of disintegration into the harmony of the light. This is the fulfilment of the painter.'

Then he went off to paint, and as he walked along the sandy riverbed of the Skaap River, it seemed as though he were disappearing into one of his own landscapes. I thought of the old story of the greying Chinese painter in the palace of the Emperor, who had moved away from the people who were looking at his large landscape and then walked into the painting. In front of the eyes of his friends, he wandered along its valleys, past the waterfalls, upon its heights, getting smaller and smaller, until eventually he disappeared into the mist. Dissolving in the light, he was spiritualised.

'I am getting on,' said Yen-Hui to Khung-Tse.

'In what way?' the latter asked.

'I have discarded love of man and justice,' answered Yen-Hui.

'That is fine,' said Khung-Tse, 'but not enough.'

On another day Yen-Hui met Khung-Tse and said, 'I am getting on.'

'In what way?' asked Khung-Tse.

'I have discarded rites and rhythms,' Yen-Hui answered.

'That is fine,' said Khung-Tse, 'but not perfect.'

For the third time Yen-Hui met Khung-Tse and said, 'I am getting on.'

'In what way?' Khung-Tse asked.

'I have discarded everything,' answered Yen-Hui. 'Discarded everything,' said Khung-Tse, deeply moved. 'What do you mean by that?'

'I have freed myself from my body,' Yen-Hui answered. 'I have released my powers of thought. Since I am free of body and mind, I have become one with the All-pervasive. That is what I mean when I say I have discarded everything.'

'If you have become one,' Khung-Tse cried, 'there can be no more striving. If you have changed thus, you are free of all limitations. You have surpassed me, and I beg that it may be granted to me to walk in your footsteps.'

Tschuang-Tse, Discourses and Parables (German selection by Martin Buber)

Follow your heart without restraint
and your brush will be animated.
To write and to paint serve only one purpose,
the manifestation of the inherent good.
Here are two companions,
an old tree and a slim bamboo,
which his superior hand has transformed
and perfected within so short a time.
The incarnation of a single moment
is a treasure for centuries to come.
And one feels, as one unrolls the painting,
a sympathy, as if one saw the artist himself.

Poem by T'ang Hou (14th century) commenting on
a painting by Wang T'ing-yun (12th century)

Exhibitions, Awards

One-man Exhibitions

1938	First one-man exhibition in South West Africa, Windhoek
1958	Retrospective Exhibition on his 70 th birthday, arranged by the S.A. Association of Arts (S.W.A.), Windhoek
1966	Johannesburg Art Gallery
1968	Retrospective Exhibition on his 80 th birthday, arranged by the S.A. Association of Arts (S.W.A.), Windhoek
1969	South African National Gallery, Cape Town
1969	Art Museum, Stellenbosch University
1970-71	Pretoria Art Museum

Group Exhibitions

- 1948 Exhibition of South West African paintings, native arts and crafts, Cape Town, sponsored by the newly formed (1947) South West branch of the S.A. Association of Arts
- 1952 Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Exhibition, Cape Town
- 1953 Central African Rhodes Centenary Exhibition, Bulawayo, Rhodesia
- 1954 Biennale, Venice
- 1954-5 South West African Exhibition on overseas tour of Germany and the United Kingdom
- 1956 First Quadrennial of South African art
- 1958 Exhibition of Group ~: Adolph Jentsch, Otto Schröder, Fritz Krampe, Jochen Voigts, Heinz Pulon; S.A. Association of Arts Galleries, Pretoria, Johannesburg Art Gallery and S.A. Association of Arts Galleries, Cape Town
- 1960 Second Quadrennial of South African art
- 1962 Exhibition of South West African Art, S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town
- 1962 German contribution to South African painting, S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town
- 1964 Third Quadrennial of South African art
- 1965 Historical Exhibition of South West Art, Windhoek, on the occasion of the opening of the new art gallery in the Dr Erich Lubbert Stiftung Building
- 1966 Republic Festival Exhibition, Pretoria

Awards

- 1913 Königlich~Sächsische Staatsmedaille für Kunst und Wissenschaft
- 1958 Order of Merit, First Class, Federal Republic of Germany
- 1962 Medal of Honour for Painting, S.A. Akademie vir Kuns en Wetenskap

Appendix

Important Public Collections:

S.A. National Gallery, Cape Town
Johannesburg Art Gallery
Pretoria Art Museum
Hester Rupert Art Museum, Graaff-Reinet
William Humphreys Gallery, Kimberley
Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation
S.A. Association of Arts (S.W.A.), Windhoek
Administration of South West Africa
University of Stellenbosch
Pretoria University
Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg

Publications

Lantern, Vol.3, No.4, April-June, 1954: 'Adolph Jentsch' by Otto Schroder

Lantern, Vol.7, No.1, October, 1957: 'Vyf Kunstenaars uit Suidwes-Afrika'

Adolph Jentsch, SWA.: An appreciation with reproductions of watercolours painted by Jentsch in the surroundings of Brack. Essays by Otto Schroder and P. Anton Hendriks, Swakopmund, 1958 (70th anniversary)

Our Art, Vol.1: Essay by Otto Schroder, 1959

Fontein, Vol.1, No.1, 1960: 'Adolph Jentsch' by Anton Hendriks

Art in South Africa by F. L. Alexander, Cape Town, 1962

South West Africa Annual, 1970: 'Jentsch' by Olga Levinson

Art and artists of South Africa by Esme' Berman, Cape Town, 1970

Film

Jentsch, documentary sound film, 16mm, commissioned by The Friends of the South African National Gallery, Cape Town. Written and produced by Olga Levinson; filmed by Lewis-Lewis Productions.