

1998-08-12

SENDER

Guy Butler

RECIPIENT

Ernest Mancoba

FACTS

Document type:

Letter

Language:

Engelsk

Date explanation:

date on letter

Mentioned people:

Sister Margaret

Sister Mariya

Sister Pauline

Professor Colin Bundy

Elza Miles

Mrs Michael Whisson

Archive:

Estate of Ferlov Mancoba

DOCUMENT CONTENT

Guy Butler is writing a book about some of the nuns at Grace Dieu Diocesan College, South Africa, where Ernest Mancoba studied. He asks if Mancoba carved an ecclesiastical object for a South African Cathedral and he encloses photographs that he thinks may interest Mancoba including of Mancoba holding a bust of himself [researcher clarification: bust carved by another artist]

TRANSCRIPTION

Dear Ernest Mancoba

I am a retired professor of English at Rhodes University with poetic and artistic interests. Over the last four years I have written a book called The Prophetic Nun - 1. Sister Margaret C.R. - 2. Sister Pauline C.R. - 3. Sister Dorothy Raphael C.S.M.V. (Dorothy Maud)

I enclose a copy of Chapter 4, which sketches your relationship with the first two and with Sister Mariya, and the last pages of the book, which consist mainly of quotations from yourself.

I would be most grateful for any corrections or comments. I have been greatly helped by the work of Dr Elsa [sic: Elza] Miles.

During my research I made the acquaintance of Sister Mariya MacAllister, who, as a novice in 1936, looked after you, and visited you in Paris some time after the war. We became good friends. My last visit to her was on 30th July. She died three days later, of cancer. Rest in Peace.

One of the reasons for my visit to her was to show her the missal-stand from the Cathedral, to ask her if she remembered you carving it. She said she could not, but that you might well have done it. The unmistakably African features of all the figures were in keeping with the theory and practice of both Sister Margaret and Sister Pauline. She also added that you used to worship at the Cathedral of St Michael and St George.

My action sprang from a conversation in which Mrs Michael Whisson reported that Professor Colin Bundy, (now vice-chancellor of Wits), had told her husband that during your visit to U.W.C. to receive your Doctorate, you had said that there was a work of yours in Grahamstown Cathedral.

Research through the minute books and other church records - which are seldom very well kept - has so far brought nothing to light.

In a matter as important as this, one cannot rely on hearsay. I enclose photographs of the missal-stand [researcher note: this photo was not included with the letter]. I hope your answer will be "Yes. It is my work."

You may also be able to answer the question: "Who commissioned and accepted the gift?" Because it must have been done by someone who had the desire and the power to replace a "European" missal-stand with an indubitably African piece.

However it came about, it has been used whenever mass is said at the High Alter since 1936! If it is by you, Chapter 4 will have to be altered and a photograph included.

Sister Mariya told me that you used to stand at the back of the Cathedral during worship. You will be pleased to hear that the congregation is now thoroughly mixed and that the curate is Xhosa.

I enclose some pictures, which may be of interest to you. With regard to the picture of you holding the bust of yourself, did you do the modeling? Where was it done? In the Art School? What happened to it?

With many thanks for your work and witness and with every good wish.

Yours sincerely,

KILDER TIL
DANSK
KUNSTHISTORIE

NY CARLSBERGFONDET

122 High Street
Grahamstown
6139
12 August 1998

Ernest Mancoba
C/o Elske Miles,
13 Rue Petion,
175011 Paris, France

Dear Ernest Mancoba

I am a retired professor of English at Rhodes University with poetic and artistic interests.
Over the last four years I have written a book called

The Prophetic Nun - 1 Sister Margaret C.R.
- 2 Sister Pauline C.R.
- 3 Sister Dorothy Raphael C.S.M.V.
(Dorothy Maud)

I enclose a copy of Chapter 4, which sketches your relationship with the first two, ^{and} with
Sister Mariya, and the ~~past~~ pages of the book, which consist~~s~~ mainly of quotations from
yourself.

I would be most grateful for any corrections or comments. I have been greatly helped by
the work of Dr Elsa Miles.

During my research I made the acquaintance of Sister Mariya MacAllister, who, as a
novice in 1936, looked after you, and visited you in Paris some time after the war. We
became good friends. My last visit to her was on 30th July. She died three days later, of
cancer. Rest in Peace.

One of the reasons for my visit to her was to show her the missal-stand from the Cathedral, to ask her if she remembered you carving it. She said she could not, but that you might well have done it. The unmistakably African features of all the figures were in keeping with the theory and practice of both Sister Margaret and Sister Pauline. She also added that you used to worship at the Cathedral of St Michael and St George.

My action sprang from a conversation in which Mrs Michael Whisson reported that Professor Colin Bundy, (now vice-chancellor of Wits), had told her husband that during your visit to U.W.C. to receive your Doctorate, you had said that there was a work of yours in the Grahamstown Cathedral.

Research through the minute books and other church records – which are seldom very well kept – has so far brought nothing to light.

In a matter as important as this, one cannot rely on hearsay. I enclose photographs of the missal-stand. I hope your answer will be “Yes. It is my work.”

You may also be able to answer the question: “Who commissioned and accepted the gift?” Because it must have been done by someone who had the desire and the power to replace a “European” missal-stand with an indubitably African piece.

However it came about, it has been used whenever mass is said at the High Alter since 1936! If it is by you, Chapter 4 will have to be altered and a photograph included.

Sister Mariya told me that you used to stand at the back of the Cathedral during worship. You will be pleased to hear that the congregation is now thoroughly mixed and that the curate is Xhosa.

KILDER TIL
DANSK
KUNSTHISTORIE

NY CARLSBERGFONDET

I enclose some pictures, which may be of interest to you. With regard to the picture of you holding the ^{dust}head of yourself, did you do the modeling? Where was it done? In the Art School? What happened to it?

With many thanks for your work and witness and with every good wish.

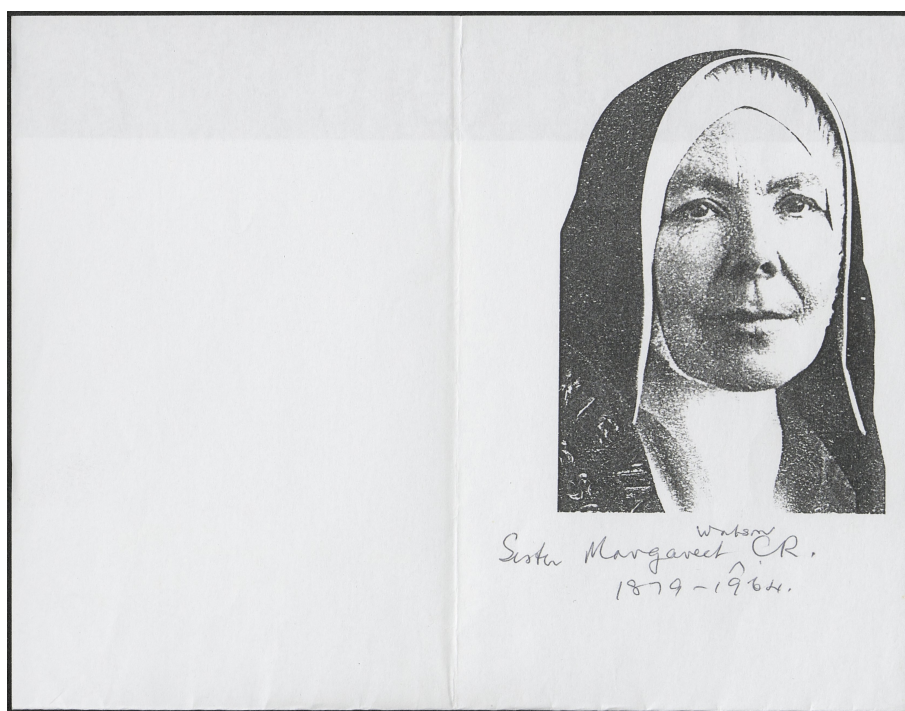
Yours sincerely,

Guy Butler

F. C. BUTLER.

KILDER TIL
DANSK
KUNSTHISTORIE

NY CARLSBERGFONDET



KILDER TIL
DANSK
KUNSTHISTORIE
NY CARLSBERGFONDET



Sister Pauline C.F.E.



Ernest Mancoba, with first
wife, Grahamston
1930?