

PEN SKETCHES

P

eter Mascher grew up



between donkeys and cows and dirt roads and thorns, north of Johannesburg in the Rustenburg area.

One of four sons, he would line up his brothers to draw their portraits.



He hated school. "I drew the teachers... maybe that's where it all started!"



BY KIM GURNEY & JOANNE LILLIE

Mascher's Mirror

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This is one of Peter's favourites. "The people love Madiba muti: if he's there, they win."



Peter Mascher's magic mirror



AS the son of Lutheran missionaries, Peter Mascher spent a significant amount of time in church and it wasn't long before the elders too became the subject of his sketches.

After school Peter studied Fine Art at Wits Technikon. For three years he didn't have anything to do with cartoons. The first thing he bought to put up in his residence room was an A1-sized red tin board with two cartoons by Derek Bauer: "That was the first thing I stuck up and that was where I ended up". Along with Ralph Steadman, Derek Bauer has remained an influence on his work.

In his second or third year, he bought a tandem and together with his girlfriend, Lucy, cycled from Johannesburg to Cape Town. "What we enjoyed mostly was the concept: to have no car with luggage, but to have everything on

the bicycle from the food to the tent". The trip took five weeks.

A year or two after the tandem tour, they built a busking contraption in a metre long box. A coin is picked up by a hand on the one side, and moves along the conveyor belt where it falls into a hat. The belt moves the wheels of a tandem, which in turn moves the legs of the cyclists. Music plays and signs with information about the two are displayed. The lid of the box is a moving landscape. Pressure on a pump emits bubbles from underneath.

This box became their life-line when they busked the streets of Germany, Amsterdam and London for six months. "It's a nice concept. We couldn't sing or play instruments well enough. But we could live off our takings for one hour a day of operating it. It was more economical to do three hours of entertainment for three

"I like simplicity... when someone glances at the picture, they've got to get the point immediately."





days and then take a break. We made that tandem because it was something we had experienced. We had lived on that bicycle."

He travelled for two years, accumulating artistic experience. On a kibbutz in Israel, he ended up drawing cartoon birthday cards. Waiting for a train in Germany, caricatured postcards of politicians caught his eye. "They really impressed me and I bought them immediately."

He never completed his year at AAA studying graphic art. An accident on his motorbike landed him unconscious in hospital for a week. "I smashed up my leg and with a lung embolism was given a 40 percent chance of survival". He hasn't ridden a bike since.

During this crucial week of unconsciousness, *Die Beeld* was looking for a cartoonist. Lucy put together a portfolio of his work and approached the paper on his

behalf. Mynderd Vosloo, already published, was given the job but he left after six months. After the elections Peter received a phone call out of the blue. He gave up his course in Industrial Design and snapped up the job offer. He has been with *Die Beeld* for the last two years.

Living from his talents, Peter Mascher is a modest artist, just following a passion: "I love to draw. I've always been creative, making things, drawing. Basically I enjoy design above everything, whether it's 2-or 3-D, but with cartooning there is a humour aspect that comes into it."

And any responses to his work? "I haven't had a politician phone me up yet!"

Kim Gurney and Joanne Lillie are postgraduate students in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

"I look for characteristic facial features and play on that, either by enlarging or reducing them".



Peter Mascher's waggie mirror

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Mascher's diversity lies in his ability to poke fun in every direction, without prejudice.

