

RESEARCH



Voices of Freedom



Deirdre Pretorius

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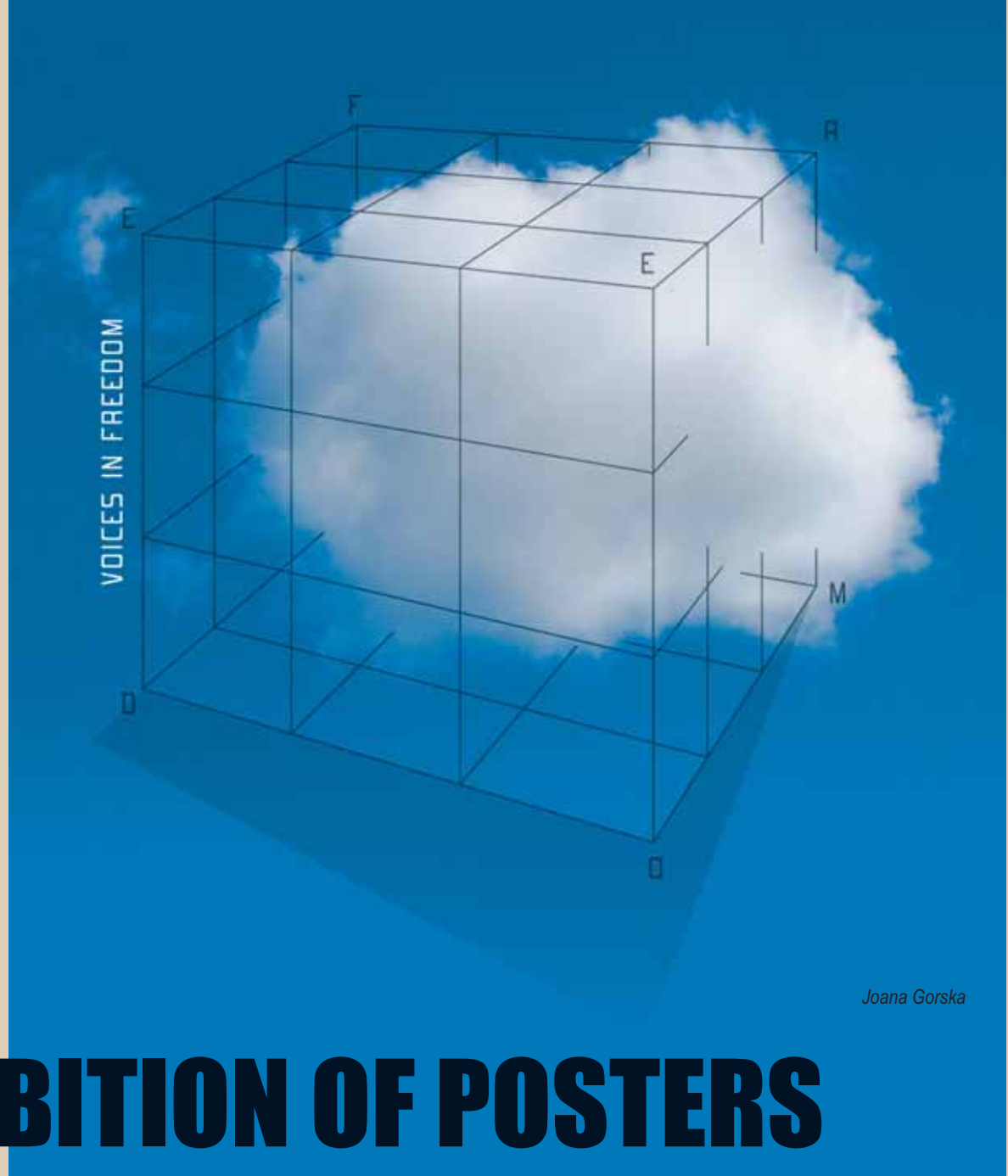
In 2010 Mexico celebrated the bicentennial of its independence from Spain, as well the centennial of the Mexican Revolution. In commemoration of these events, the International Poster Biennial of Mexico invited 110 designers from 35 countries to design a poster on the meaning of the word 'freedom'. Voices in Freedom, the resultant poster collection, was first exhibited in Mexico in September 2010 and then travelled to China, Colombia, Italy, Japan, Russia and Uruguay, before reaching South Africa. The FADA Gallery hosted the Voices in Freedom exhibition from 14 July to 3 August 2011 in conjunction with the Embassy of Mexico. This striking collection of posters, which includes work by well-known designers and illustrators such as Luba Lukova, Alain le Querrec, Ivan Chermayeff, João Machado, Chaz Maviyane Davis and Rafal Olbinski, was expertly exhibited by FADA curator Roz Cleaver and generated significant interest among visitors and local media.

Copies of the posters sold out rapidly with the proceeds going to the Rainbow Children's Village, a local charity selected by participating designer Sindiso Nyoni. Not only is Nyoni one of the youngest designers and one of only two designers from Southern Africa who participated in the exhibition, but he was also the driving force behind getting *Voices in Freedom* exhibited at FADA. Nyoni completed his BTech in Graphic Design in 2008 at the University of Johannesburg and is currently working as an art director at the South African advertising agency Black River FC.

The exhibition powerfully articulates concepts of freedom; the posters are, on the whole, accessible and

understandable and draw on a limited range of symbols which cross over language barriers. The distinctive exhibition logo – a silhouette of a soaring bird with an ink pen nib for a head and a pencil-shaped tail feather – captures the spirit of the collection well. The bird is taken up as a symbol of freedom in a number of the posters; for example a white bird stretches its wings across the globe of the earth, a flock of birds in outline ascends up and out of the picture plane and a

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Joana Gorska

AN EXHIBITION OF POSTERS

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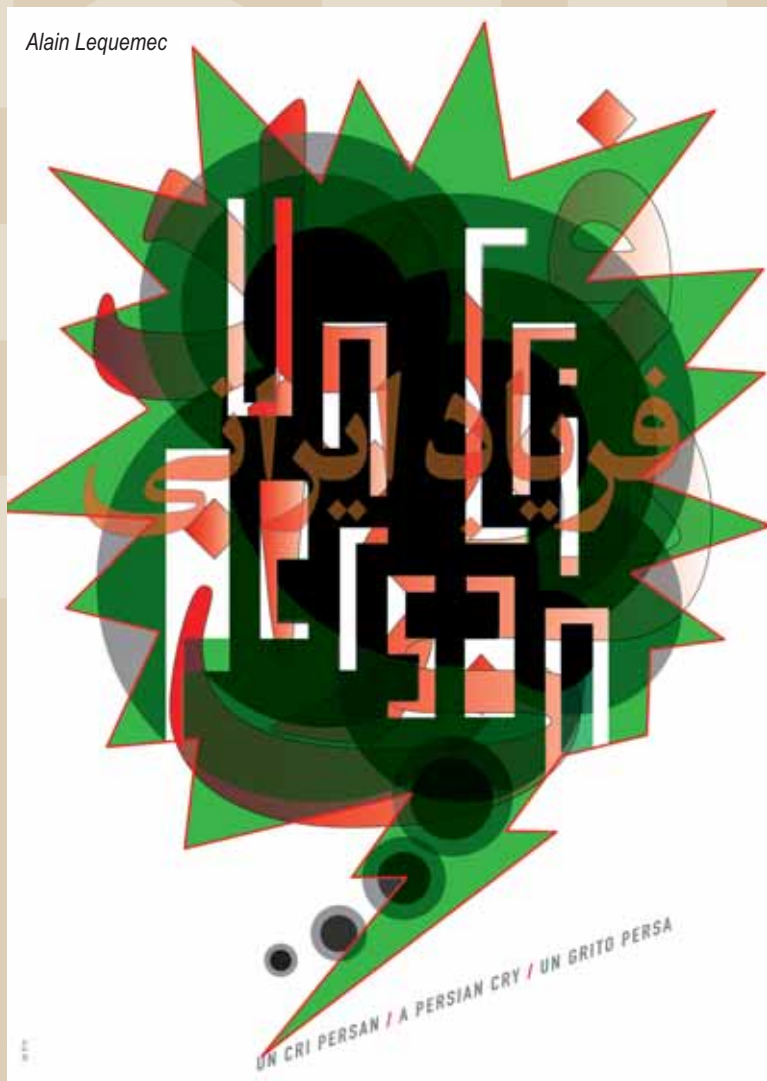
small green bird is mutely entrapped in a cage. Eric Olivares's poster in which a cloud escapes from a birdcage declares "dream, be free" and in Lex Drewinski's poster, handcuffs transform into flapping wings and the handcuffs take flight.

Blue skies with white clouds frequently appear as backgrounds to the birds, or are combined with symbols of confinement. In the poster by Joanna Gorska, a soft cloud cannot be contained by the geometric cage which encases it and Kari Piipo's empty thought bubble uses minimal graphic means to emphasise the power of the human imagination. The speech bubble symbol is arrestingly used in Belen Mena's poster of a bunch of empty speech bubbles floating like colourful balloons, waiting to be filled with words and released, whereas the poster by Elaine Ramos fills the poster's surface with a cacophony of voices, each contained in a speech bubble of varying shape.

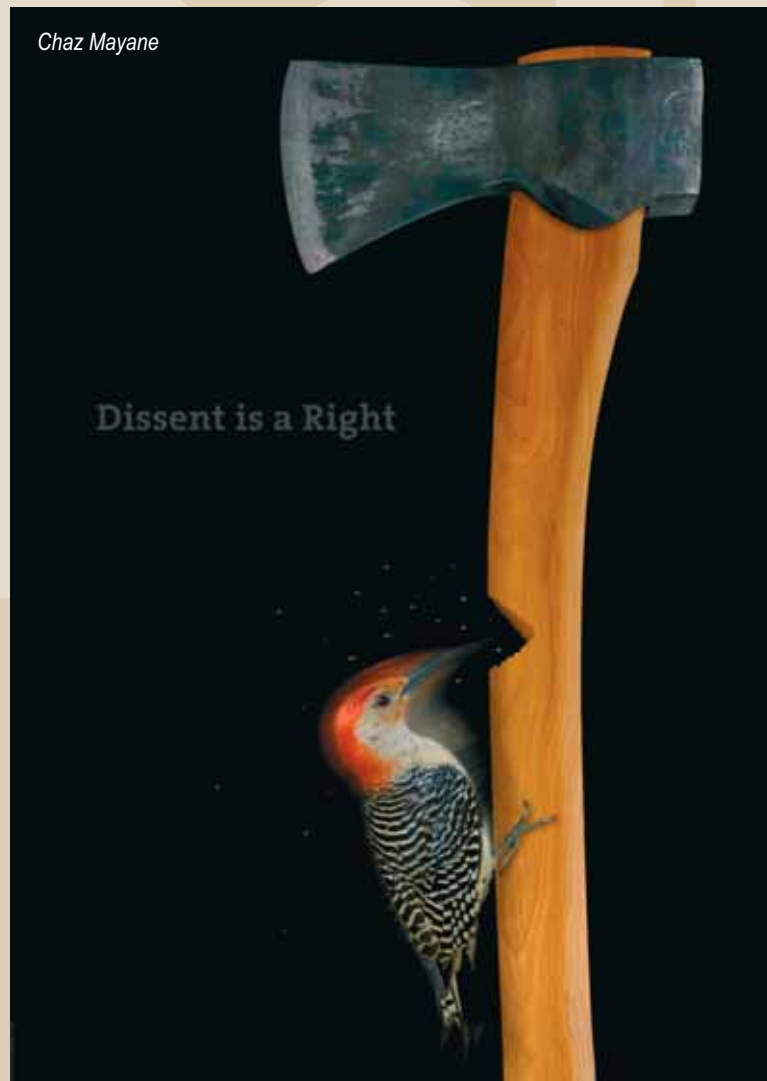
A number of the posters consist only of type, as is seen in posters in which the word 'freedom' emerges from an optometrist's chart, forms the sides of a cube, floats towards the viewer, grows into organic forms and emerges from optical patterns. Words become pictures in posters which show the human profile. A rude word is preceded by a fly, a small bird flies from a mouth and a delicate blue swirl puffs gently from human lips. Mexico is celebrated in posters that draw on the green and red colours of the Mexican flag or Mexican iconography such as the sombrero, folk art and day of the dead imagery.

The posters which comment on freedom of speech are of especial interest to South Africans concerned about the dictates of the *Protection of Information Bill* which is currently under debate in Parliament. Wilbert Arreola's posters depicting a typewriter with sharp nails mounted on its keys and Takashi Akiyam's poster of a microphone blaring out the word 'freedom' are in the same tradition of fighting for freedom of speech as some South African resistance posters from the 1980s. Another link to South African resistance posters are the posters which contain icons derived from the international socialist movement, such as the raised clenched fist, the youth with a flag marching forward, the flaming torch of liberty, barbed wire and breaking chains. *Voices in Freedom* serves as an important reminder that freedom cannot be taken for granted.

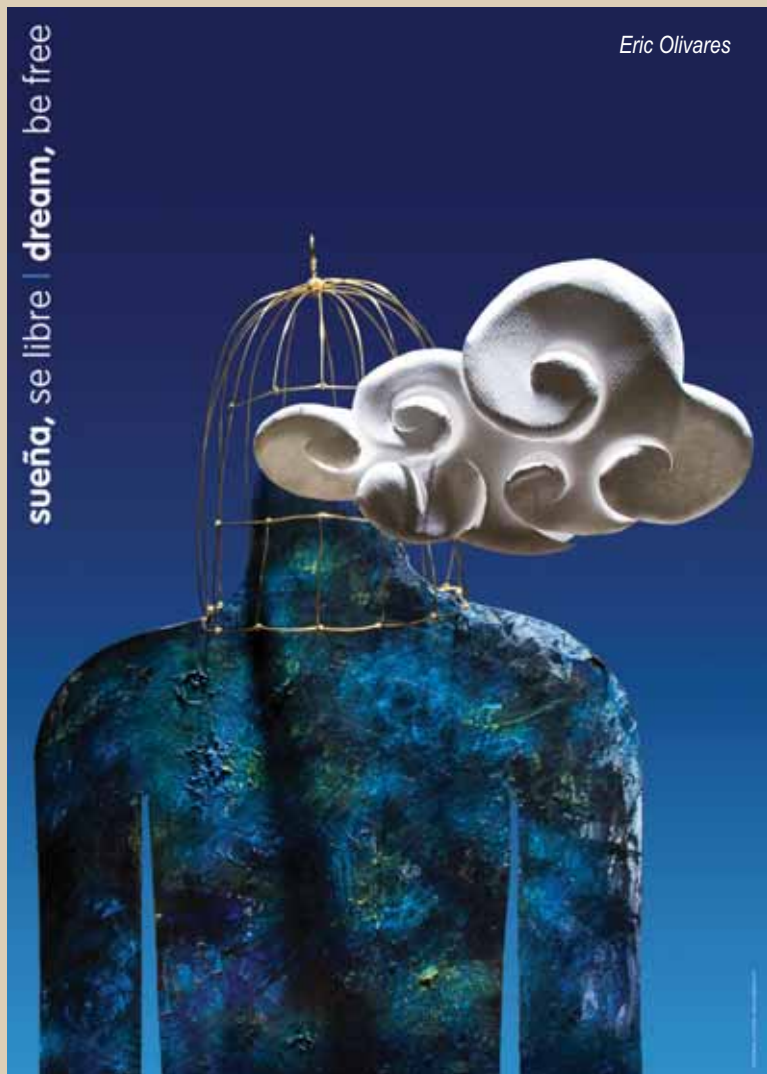
The organisation coordinating the Biennial, Trama Visual A.C., is supported by the Mexican National Council for Culture and Arts (CONACULTA), the National Institute for Anthropology and History (INAH) and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The exhibition is also endorsed by the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA). To view images of all the posters visit <http://bienalcartel.org.mx/voces.html>.



Alain Lequemec



Chaz Mayane



Eric Olivares



Joao Machado



Sindiso Nyoni



Ivan Chermayeff



Takashi Akiyama

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a *cosmographia del minor mondo* or a 'cosmography of the microcosm'. (Tempting in this case is the thought of how Nat Kratoch's *Vitruvian Woman* may have impacted on the work). In an academic context, the didactic relevance of Cleaver's multi-modal composition does not go unnoticed. In addition to its intrinsic value, the work recalls Yusef Waghid's (2005) reference to teaching and learning in terms of what he calls "debate, enquiry, conversation and instruction". Here, Waghid refers to Nicholas Burbules's (2003) unpublished notes on *Dialogue and Deliberative Democracy* in which Burbules refers to the nature of critical engagement between teacher and students in terms of debate, enquiry, questioning, conversations, persuasion and argumentation, which precedes learning. Waghid further reinforces the point by drawing on Maxine Greene's (1995) assertion to "...stir students to reach out on their own initiative, engage them in critical thinking, and to share in dialogue where there is always more to be discovered and more to be said". In this way, Cleaver's collaboration with the Ditsong National Museum of Natural History lends credence to Ball & Tyson's (2012) assertion of "... (encouraging) scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good".

Similarly, Myer Taub's, Nadine Hutton's and John Trengrove's collaborative three-minute video artwork entitled *Spring-Cleaning and Death in Varanasi* (which, for the sake of brevity, is collectively referred to as Taub's work) is a further indication of the value of creative collaboration. In my analysis, I argue that the parallels between Taub's work and Hindu tradition are close and deep:

In the video, the artist's body was ritually shaved by the barber Vikas Sharmah, an action which was intimately documented by the videographer John Trengrove and photographer Nadine Hutton. By using cameras and cell phones borrowed (from) South Korean tourists Lee Jiyeon, Bak Changhyeon and Lee Yuk Yung, the work was produced. The video work critiques the notion of collaboration itself and challenges fixed notions of identity, sexuality and language.

Taub and his co-authors developed two important outcomes in the work; first, the conceptual underpinning of rites of passage, and second, the interactive nature of the collaborative and reception processes. In the first instance, Taub referenced this video on an earlier work entitled *Spring Cleaning 2009*, which focused on the rite of passage as a personal journey in his life. He developed this concept more fully by locating his idea in Hinduism's holy city of Varanasi, known for its burning ghats (quays) on the River Ganges, a place of life and death in Hindu tradition, where the earthly remains of an individual soul are cremated on its path to immortality. Taub extends the metaphor between his work and the Hindu belief in the role of *atman* (individual soul) in relation to *samsara* (suffering, or the cyclical nature of life, death and re-birth), *moksha* (the individual soul's attainment of liberation from worldly life) and *karma* (the determinants of *samsara* and hence *moksha*). The reference to the Ganges is not dissimilar in essence to Charon

in Greek mythology, who ferried souls across the River Styx. In India, where philosophy predates modern Hinduism by millennia, Taub's reference to the metaphysical is poignant. Indian philosophy is focused on six principally divergent schools of thought which deal with concepts of the self in relation to worldly and ultimate realities. For example, Taub appears to borrow the concept of *neti-neti* (*na-iti; na-iti*) (neither this nor that) (liminal?) in relation to the *Advaita Vedanta* school of philosophy in which the nature of *bráhman* (*Being*), which is the supreme universal being, is defined. In relation to *atman* (individual soul) understanding the conscious (individual) soul, in relation to the universal can sometimes pose a dilemma which requires a definition of *Being* first, before the one can make sense of one's own soul. At the risk of reducing its meaning, the definition of *bráhman* is often measured against that which it is not, hence the reference to neither this nor that, i.e. as in *Being* or not-*Being* (liminal?). The Hindu reference to *moksha* is the liberation from *samsara* and the

suffering involved in being subjected repeatedly to reincarnation. *Samsara* is the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. *Karma*, or the nature of actions committed during each lifetime, determines one's fate in terms of reincarnation. The cyclical process ends in the attainment of *moksha*. *Death in Varanasi* is a metaphorical reference to a continuation of that passage in understanding the self. Taub references *samsara* and *moksha* by geographically locating his work in the holy city. He reinforces this by using the metaphor of shaving, in which the shedding of hair (in this case, through a collaborative process with the barber, photographer, videographer and by-standers), is likened to the giving up of attachments and assuming a new identity. *Samsara* means knowing how to overcome *avidya* or ignorance, or knowing one's true self (*atman*). In this case, the quest to find closure about the self is normal human nature and is often seen as a rite of passage. Taub develops an intensely personal expression of his rite of passage via collaborative means from an earlier

work in which he examined notions of the self, memory, heritage and autobiographical elements of his own identity. In a sense, the metaphor of transformation, which Taub demonstrates in his video by being shaved, is essentially a transient, liminal state from one identity and experience to another. In this case, the value of collaboration addresses notions of individual and group identity, liminality in an inter-connected cultural milieu.

Such a focus on 'in-between-ness' finds curatorial expression in Anthea Buys and Leora Farber's multi-layered presentation of *A Hauntology of Johannesburg; the underground, the surface and the edges*, a curated compilation of fourteen video artworks by contemporary South African artists and musicians. Each artist in this community of practice³ contributes significantly to the conceptual underpinning of this project. Buys and Farber use the borrowed metaphor of Johannesburg as representative of "an inter-connectedness of plural spatialities", determined by links between the city's underground, its surface and the peripheral or

marginalised spaces, which in turn, reflect conditions of economic and political greed, racism and social inequity. Buys and Farber nuance the central theme of the dialectic of spaces by focusing on the three dominant modalities, viz. the underground, the surface and the edges, to reinforce the notion of an interstitial or liminal space. To epitomise *The Underground*, the curators refer to William Kentridge's (1991) work entitled *Mine*, in which the metaphor of the relationship between the surface and the underground is exemplified by the character Soho Eksteen's use of his coffee plunger to represent an invasion, retrieval and occupation with wealth, as well as discarding in human terms. In *The Surface*, Minnette Vári's video entitled *Quake* is further nuanced along three modes, which register firstly, the "autophagic architecture of Johannesburg", secondly, the city as "a vast granular field of corrosive energy" and thirdly, communities within the city which "grow from miniscule foetal bundles", which evoke a sense of inter-connectedness insofar as the surface and the underground are also connected. In *The Edges*, Buys and Farber refer to Steven Cohen's (2002) performance of his work entitled *Chandelier* which represents the contradiction and hegemony evident in self-imposed marginalisation within a marginalised community and its associated effects on citizenship, lack of ownership, belonging and an impermanence of the liminal. Buys's and Farber's successful curation of these fourteen performance works attests to a level of critical enquiry which supersedes the production of discipline-based work.

In support of critical enquiry, Grant Kester (2011) refers to such an example of creative endeavour as "a process of reciprocal creative labor". In his book *The One and The Many*, Kester provides a broad overview of artists who work within, and outside of, the conventional art practice in a manner where critical enquiry leads to human agency and identity as outcomes of collaborative processes. A further reference in support of my contention includes the following: When institutional imperatives forced the relocation of Cooper's and Raubenheimer's 'secret/wish' from receiving the level of public attention outside of the FADA Gallery, to inside of the Gallery, the FADA art community and well-wishers responded in total support and engaged fully by interacting with the work, albeit at the expense of a perceived threat of censorship by segments of a larger, uninformed campus constituency. In essence, it seemed that participants responded to Cooper's and Raubenheimer's work more enthusiastically while the work was positioned inside the Gallery. Judging by the level of response received, audiences were curious about associating meaning to the plethora of 'wishes' which the work generated, only to be returned to the act of 'dialogic enquiry' which the work evinced.

All of the works on show subscribe to Kester's notion of a collaborative, liberating, dialogic exchange between artist, collaborator/s and the audience, to the extent that "conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself". Kester maintains that the knowledge with which the artwork



Gordon Froud

³ The participating artists include Nina Barnett, Leora Farber, Maja and Gerhard Marx, Die Antwoord, Berni Searle, Steven Cohen, Zen Marie, Anthea Moys (two works), Minnette Vári, Theresa Collins and Mocke Jansen van Veuren, Johan Thom and William Kentridge.



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Kim Berman



Landi Raubenheimer and Paul Cooper



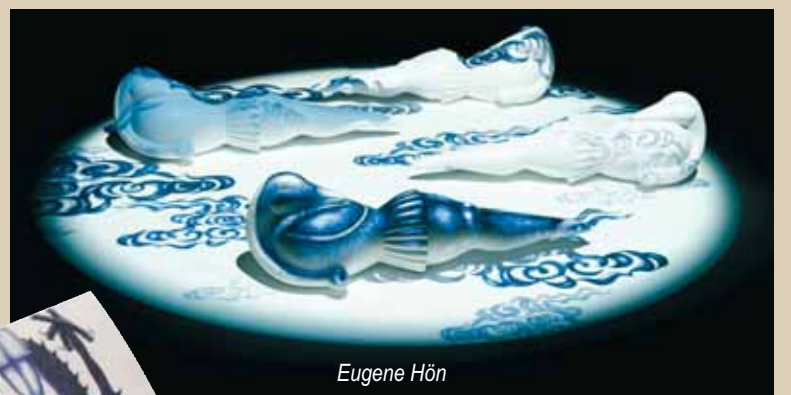
Eugene Hön

imbues its audience refers to the broader social and political world brought about as an outcome of the aesthetic effect. Kester refers to Nicholas Bourriaud's term "relational aesthetic", which relates to the power of an artwork to elicit communication and dialogue between the work and its audience. This dialogic art practice was in turn adapted from Mikhail Bakhtin, who contended that the work of art is often viewed as a conversation between two entities, having differing meanings and interpretations. In further support of his argument, Kester maintains that Jürgen Habermas's principle of communicative reason and interaction provides strong impact on the notion of dialogic enquiry. Such a focus on objective reality, and equally, on self-critical analysis can lead to 'creative transformation' in which the propensity to agree with, disagree or empathise with the artwork and/or the artist/collaborative team, is present. Kester advances three ways in which empathy can lead to critical creative exchange between the work and the viewer. First is the interaction between artist and collaborators, especially in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Second is the interaction amongst the collaborators themselves along common themes, which can range from approach to resources. Thirdly, interaction exists between/among the collaborators and the viewers. In all cases, these interactions are inter-dependent and take

place in relation to each other. In this regard, all of the nine projects in the show subscribe to Habermas's three 'criteria' of artistic collaboration. In all of the nine projects which constitute *Collaborations/Articulations*, Gray has curated a successful show of critical enquiry. Contrary to the conventional, linear approach to presenting creative academic output, galleries and curators now work with a diversity of art and design practitioners engaged in collaborative work which is critical, reflexive and dialogic. In this instance, Gray has managed to shape the debate around how diverse communities of creative practice can interact in terms of the production of knowledge, which supersedes individual and group modes of collaborative production, but which is focused equally on how audiences engage with the reception of the work in order that it may instil confidence in the greater public good. Evidently, the focus of *Collaborations/Articulations* lies not merely in generating discipline-based knowledge but in the more challenging arena of dialogic and critical enquiry and its potential to serve the interests of the public good. In this exhibition, FADA practitioners and their associates have demonstrated greater acumen in negotiating the demands of critical enquiry through their work. It remains to be seen how the success of this exhibition is advanced through further academic enquiry and by means of greater institutional support.



Rosalind Cleaver



Eugene Hön

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Serge Alain Nitigeke. 2009 The Tunnel



Space, Ritual, Absence

SPACE, RITUAL, ABSENCE

Dr Gerhard Schoeman

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Cluttered survey shows, slick but ultra-thin student group exhibitions, hollow blue-chip artists showing in hollow blue-chip galleries — South African art exhibitions leave a lot to be desired. If you aren't overwhelmed by the tedium of overabundance, the emptiness will kill you for sure. I am missing exhibitions that are concisely organised around a nuanced theme or motif which unfolds over time and which might provoke, among other things, what Michael Fried and Ellen Esrock both call "the hard work of perceptual activity", involving "countless acts of imaginative projection of bodily experience", animation and reanimation, "sustained effort of close study" and thinking. Instead, pretentious and narcissistic conceptualising and glib aestheticising are the order of the day. As I wrote recently in a review essay, "Can't we ask South African art exhibitions to offer us more occasions of quiet contemplation, time and space, and to engage with fluid, mobile and interwoven constellations of meaning — the kind of occasions and engagements that bring us to our senses?"

My lament would have little or no grounds, were it not for exceptions to the rule. In January 2011, I was blown away by Christo Doherty's exhibition *Bos* at Resolution Gallery in Johannesburg. Comprising digitally constructed images that evoked the Chapman brothers' synthetic appropriations of Goya's *Disasters of War*, *Bos* illuminated, refracted, reproduced, focalised and blurred contested memories of the South African 'Bush War'. What was so captivating about the show was the intense interplay between projection — "the sense of moving out of the body to meet the world", to become the thing we look at, and introjection — "the experience of the thing entering one's own body" (Ellen Esrock). This interplay of to-and-fro between this and that (disaster), past, present and future, was partially brought about by the visual dynamic of the images themselves, which zoomed in and out of scenes, coming into and going out of focus, as well as the relationships between them.

Somebody wrote a letter to the *Mail & Guardian* complaining about the politics of the exhibition, arguing that Doherty's reconstruction of experiences of white, conscripted males during the war obscured, blurred and repressed the experiences of blacks. The author's one-sided racial slant ironically illuminated the dialectics of seeing one thing and not seeing another, a theme which was articulated in the show through

projection and introjection, focalising and blurring of history and other (bloody, atrocious) fictions, reproductions of reproductions, ongoing wars and blind spots.

In March 2011, I attended the opening of *Space, Ritual, Absence*, a group exhibition hosted by the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) Research Centre, Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD), at the University of Johannesburg. Intelligently curated by James Sey (Research Fellow, VIAD) and Leora Farber (Director, VIAD), the exhibition was organised in tandem with a two-day colloquium comprising the exhibition *Space, Ritual, Absence: Liminality in South African Art*, the installation *Nothing is Missing* by renowned Dutch writer and theorist Mieke Bal, as well as the screening of the film *A Long History of Madness*, co-directed by Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker. Intricately linked to this succinctly organised, conceptually intertwined, four-part event, the theme of the exhibition developed in multiple directions. The productive multi-dimensionality, involving a constant movement to-and-fro related to the dynamics of Doherty's *Bos*, attests to the intellectual vision of VIAD, which is proving to be an important research centre for South Africa.

Although I've seen some of the works on display in *Space, Ritual, Absence*, many were startling new discoveries.

The thoughtful way in which the works were grouped created meaningful connections and cast the works that I did know in a new light. I liked the various thresholds one had to cross, physically and imaginatively, beginning with Serge Alain Nitigeke's *The Tunnel* (2009), a roughly built structure placed at the front entrance of the gallery, which was tellingly awkward to cross. The stairway downstairs was also transformed into a threshold, leading to different-sized screens flickering in the dark (these were artworks by Penny Siopis, Minnette Vári, Steven Cohen, Claire Jorgensen and Berni Searle), which I also experienced as different thresholds. In fact, all the works on display involved crossing over, and being barred by, thresholds; the bodily awareness that resulted, characterised by flow and frustration, rejuvenated my thinking about thresholds.

Often exhibition themes seem tacked on, pretentious, politically motivated or belaboured, but the idea of the threshold, which links the concepts of space, ritual and absence, was consistently developed throughout this exhibition and its related events. Everything was carefully organised, down to the choice of opening speaker at the exhibition, Jane Taylor, who related liminality (the state of the threshold) to death and the uncanny. Liminality relates to time. Living and dying occurs in time — the one crosses over into the other over time. The

different spaces, rituals and absences of living and dying entail body meeting time. This was exemplified in the painfully meditative, slow-moving, trancelike body of the artist walking/balancing on skulls in the city, in limbo, in Steven Cohen's performance-video *Golgotha* (2007-9), which was projected in the basement of the gallery. Breathing in and out — like zooming in and out of a picture, like concentrating or meditating — happens in time, and time is "multiple, heterogeneous", to cite Mieke Bal writing about video, heterochrony and the migratory politics of time.

As this exhibition demonstrated, concepts such as space, ritual and absence travel and shift in time, in multiple ways, according to different spaces, rituals and absences, as well as different bodies. They fold, unfold and are bodied in the act of looking, experiencing and thinking. Like images, concepts are performative; so is the thinking and "the looking we write about and with", to cite Bal again. This is why the inclusion of Bal in the event, of which this exhibition formed an intricate part, was inspired, because in her writing, her keynote address at the colloquium and in the installation and film, she presented "time matters".

Time matters, from beginning to end. Time starts, stops, speeds up, slows down, freezes and loops. The circles within circles in Jackson Hlungwani's black ink screen print *Wisdom Circle* (1983), which hung near the entrance of the gallery, suggest as much. They thematised the liminal time of ritual, the various crossings over from human to animal, dead and alive, and back again. Circles within circles connote transformation, transfiguration and transmutation, shifting boundaries. Hlungwani's circles suggest a rite of passage through which wisdom is gained, but also anxiety. What is in between human and animal worries us, because it is as yet unformed, "not fully understood or fully accepted", to cite the press release of the exhibition. It relates to the *materia prima* of alchemy, dark matter which hints at transcendental form yet remains other, obscure and inchoate, even disgusting.

According to the Renaissance neoplatonists, what is above is reflected below. In other words, spirit is reflected in matter, high in low. As if to manifest this polarity and reversibility, which is intricately linked to ritual, the curators placed Claire Jorgensen's *Seedlings* (2010) on the floor to the right of Hlungwani's print — a polyethylene tank the size of a rectangular pot for plants, filled with black ink which sprayed upwards through small fountain misters. Dark matter sprinkling upwards and outwards ever so slightly, returning to the source — like the metamorphosis of Goethe's *Ur-Phlanzen* (primordial plants) or art historian Aby Warburg's engrams, "mnemonic energies" rising, like the sap of plants.

Time is material, and to scan or touch the textured materiality of the series of paintings by Penny Siopis from her *Pinky Pink* series, even if only with one's eyes or in hindsight, gives and takes time. The materialities of these paintings evoke palpably feelings of fragility and violation, yearning and discomfort (like the little girl with erased eyes in *Limbo*, 2007), horror, the uncanny (the plastic eyes staring back in *Pink Eyes* and *Green Eyes*, 2003, like the eye in Magritte's piece of ham on a plate in *Le portrait*, 1935), the textured presence of absence and loss. Can we explain what emotional or physical pain feels like, other than by speaking of the unspeakable presence of absence, an unavoidable yet hallucinatory fact? Something causes the discomfort, but it is only the trace of a trace. One can't break through the screen to discover the root. This is what I am left with when I think back on the catholicity of James Sey's three-part quasi-altarpiece, *Sublimation and Reversibility* (2010), comprising a DVD playing on a monitor and, on either side, two digital x-ray prints: three elemental, Mary-like women evoking Freud and transubstantiation. Or the four crystal clear inkjet prints by Brent Meistre depicting empty scenes of a crime in the landscape, the crime of dispossession, clearly demarcated by fences or their traces, human ownership of land (including a graveyard) in a state of ruin.

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Curators James Sey and Leora Farber with Prof. Jane Taylor at the opening of the exhibition

As noted earlier, this show cast well-known works in a new light, which is what crossing thresholds should entail. Like Neil Goedhals's *Waiting Room* (1985), which I've written about in terms of amputation, and Philip Guston's work. In this context, which recast the title of the work in terms of liminality, I was surprised to see traces of another influence: Alan Crump. It was when I stood back after closely studying the paintbrush bristles stuck to the encaustic, glue, enamel and oil paint of the central panel, that I noticed the resemblance between the linear, dotted schema of body parts hovering above the readymade landscape and Crump's watercolours. The father uncannily present in his absence in his son.

But what lingers long after the exhibition is the burning tyre hanging from the end of a rope tied to the invisible limb of a tree next to a river in Berni Searle's 17 min 33 sec DVD *Moonlight, Gateway and Lull* (2009-10), which was projected downstairs. Evocative of pictures of lynchings drifting back to us from the depths of time, "like bodies dumped in a river" (Richard Lacayo writing about the exhibition of photographs of lynchings in *America Without Sanctuary*, 2000), the tyre burns, falls off the rope, leaving behind rope, then nothing but black smoke. Then the haunting begins again. The circle of the tyre links back to the circles in Hlungwani's work – the liminal snake swallows its tail. The end is in the beginning. ●

Leora Farber

Research Centre: Visual Identities in Art and Design

The colloquium Space, Ritual, Absence: The Liminal in South African Visual Art, hosted by the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) Research Centre, Visual Identities in Art and Design, took place at the University of Johannesburg's Bunting Road Campus on 10 and 11 March 2011. It was timed to coincide with the opening of an accompanying exhibition at the FADA Gallery entitled Space, Ritual, Absence, curated by Leora Farber and James Sey, on show from 10 March to 1 April 2011. As additional components of the colloquium, Mieke Bal's installation Nothing is Missing ran from 10 to 24 March at the Jozi Art Lab at Arts on Main, and a one-off screening of Bal's film, A Long History of Madness, made together with Michelle Williams Gamaker, was screened at The Bioscope, Main Street Life, on Wednesday 9 March.

Keynote speakers at the colloquium were world-renowned academic, Professor Mieke Bal of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Dr Ashraf Jamal of the Department of Visual Art, Rhodes University. Other presenters were from a range of institutions, including the University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology, Rhodes University, University of Johannesburg, University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, University of California and University of South Africa.

Bal's paper, entitled *Video, Migration and Heterotemporality: The Liminality of Time*, probed how video art can contribute to a better understanding of migratory culture through an analysis of selected video works. Bal argued that migratory culture helps to engage with video art on a different, more socially engaged level than might be obvious, particularly in terms of temporality. In his paper, *Learning to squander/making meaningful connections in the infinite text of world*

culture, Jamal, using Bourriaud's *The Radicant* (2009), charted the function of visual art in the twenty-first century. The key question posed is "why is it that globalisation has so often been discussed from sociological, political and economic points of view, but almost never from an aesthetic perspective?". Jamal speculated that by shifting the focus to the aesthetic, the solidity of a global cultural economy can be challenged. The upshot of these shifts is a move away from the sterility of multiculturalism – the relative autonomy of reified cultures – towards a global (local-and-generalised) culture in perpetual translation. Key to this shift is the move away from origins and a move towards unforeseen destinations.

Conceptual framework of the colloquium

The concept of the liminal refers to the state of the threshold. That which is liminal exists in an in-between state, not fully realised, fully understood or fully accepted into the socius. Things and beings which exist in a liminal state



Mieke Bal, keynote speaker at the colloquium

Space, Ritual, Absence: The Liminal in South African Visual Art

are properly at the margins, often not accorded a full legal, epistemological or psychological identity. As such, they acquire a range of different meanings and functions in society – attracting power, magic, danger and mystery, but also suspicion and repressive control. Liminal spaces are those in which the normal rules and mores of society are suspended, thus allowing for transformation and new confluences to happen – they are also transit zones, such as hotels and airports, where people are essentially always moving from one place, and state, to another, and are therefore subject to different rules and controls which exist in society. But liminal zones are also spaces of spiritual or social power, which denote a place where things can happen outside the normal realm of social structure. These range from disputed political territories to asylums and internment camps, from shrines to caves, seashores and crossroads. Liminal spaces thus can attract dispute and contestation, but can also represent a place in which no political or social action or decision can yet be

taken until the decision is made to exit the liminal zone. A good example of this would be the science-fictional space of the 'Twilight Zone' or 'Interzone', or the insane asylum, where, while inmates cannot have medicolegal or moral status as full citizens, they also cannot be held responsible for their decisions and actions.

Similarly, liminal rituals act as a marker of the state between exclusion and inclusion from a social group. The clichéd idea of a 'rite of passage' actually elides the fact that bodies and consciousness exist in a different and suspended state between two social categories when undergoing such rites – they are in effect in an altogether different realm that belongs to the liminal itself. The many rituals marking initiation into adulthood are prime examples of this perhaps most widespread of liminal phenomena. It is rare, however, that the liminal state itself is of interest as it is here – only the fact that it buffers the two states of social exclusion and inclusion. In the case of liminal bodies, the clearest

instance of the phenomenon occurs. Liminal bodies are those always caught in a curious 'almost-becoming', a state of absence which is held in place sometimes quite literally, as with the mythological centaur, a being which is both horse and man and also neither. The rights of a body to certain observances and status are held in limbo by the absence of citizenship, for example, in the case of the illegal immigrant, or the absence of clearly attributable, socially sanctioned gender and sexual object choice in the case of transsexuals, transvestites, bisexuals and even homosexuals in some cases and places. Cyborg bodies are another clear subcategory of the liminal form. In the case of bodies, therefore, the liminal state is defined by the absence of a full bodily identity which might take different forms.

The liminal and South African visual art

Considered from the point of view of these epistemological categories of liminality, South African visual art,

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OTHER
Views

Art History

in (South) Africa and the Global South

Landi Raubenheimer

Research Office

In January 2011 I attended the first joint SAVAH/CIHA colloquium, held at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Along with the theme of the event, this colloquium celebrated the fact that in 2008, SAVAH (South African Visual Arts Historians) became the first African art historical body to join CIHA (Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art).

As a context for the conference, CIHA's recent interests have been turning to the notion of the Global South and how resources in terms of art history and academic pursuit are unequally distributed across cultures around the world. The Global South is often seen as a marginalised site, and the conference aimed to interrogate this problem. The Global South is not a geographical location but rather a constructed site of cultural difference and, for the purpose of the conference, included artistic practices omitted from, or disregarded by dominant Western Art Historical discourses. It was also contextualised as referring to indigenous craft or artefacts that were appropriated by museums in the Western world.

Some of the questions considered at the conference included: What is African Art History? How does Western Art History begin to integrate the voices and narratives of marginalised histories into its canon? In fact, the notion of Africa and the Global South as undifferentiated was postulated as problematic by the conference; how does one address disparate and diverse notions of art history within specific cultures under the discipline of a unified Western Art History?

Furthermore, there were questions such as how one counters the notion of 'African art' as a homogenous cultural entity? Where could one position indigenous craft and cultural practices to establish alternative art histories, and might one speak of such utilitarian practices as 'art'? What is the importance of the notion of heritage? Museum practice and conventions of display were also interrogated as ideologically charged, along with concepts such as culturally specific identity and global identity.

The conference took place over four days and in six plenary sessions, with a keynote address by Amareswar Galla, Professor of Museum Studies at the University of Queensland. Galla is an expert on the notion of heritage development, sustainability and poverty alleviation, and museum practice in this context. He is known for his work in South Africa, Vietnam, Iraq and Asia along with other locations relevant to

the Global South. The conference was opened by a panel session chaired by CIHA President Jaynie Anderson and delegates included academics from Cameroon, Nigeria, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Jamaica, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, India and Singapore. The University of Johannesburg was represented not only by Karen von Veh (elected SAVAH President in 2011), and Landi Raubenheimer (re-appointed as SAVAH Secretary for 2011), but also by Alex Oppen and von Veh as delegates presenting papers.

The opening addresses by Galla and Anderson were informative and contextualised the aims of the colloquium, as discussed above. I would like to focus more broadly on the sessions in the conference to highlight important points raised and problematised during the four days. This report does not provide an overview of the entire colloquium, nor does it mention every panelist. Rather the aim of this report is to highlight concerns that I considered pertinent to the theme of the colloquium, and as such, provides only a partial reflection on the event.

One of the largest panels was themed *Modernist primitivism and indigenous modernisms: Transnational discourse and local art histories*. This panel contextualised the problem of Modernity; how does one define it if not within the established canon? Did Modernity also take place outside of the canon of Western art and how does one describe such practices as Modern? This session had three parts, spanning the Wednesday and Thursday of the conference. Petrina Dances from the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Jamaica presented an interesting paper exploring how national heroes were memorialised in the National Heroes Park in Jamaica. She discussed in detail how Western conventions, and specifically the notion of Modern art, influenced the way these traditional and political figures were represented in the Park up to the present day. Elizabeth Rankin from the University of Auckland discussed the way in which specific black African artists

appropriated aspects of Western Modernism in establishing an African Modernism of sorts. Johnathan Mane Wheoki, also from the University of Auckland, discussed the work of a Maori artist, and Bonnie Devine discussed a First Nation artist working in Canada.

Another session which had multiple parts was entitled *Between seeing and believing, documentary and archival practices in the Global South*. There was much discussion in this panel around documentary photography. Liminal photographic practices such as the work of Billy Monk and Roger Ballen were explored in papers by delegates Michael Godby from the University of Cape Town and Gerhard Schoeman from the University of the Free State. The bodies of photographic work under discussion were seen as representing at once the marginal in the medium of photography (which is not 'Modern high art'), as well as engaging with the subaltern in South African culture, such as Monk's photographs from the night club *Les Catacombs Club* in the 1960s. This was an interesting interpretation of the marginal from the Global South which dealt with history from a more scientific milieu, in the photographic medium. The notion of documentary photography is also interesting because of the inherent power relationship which unfolds between photographer and subject. Although one is tempted to think of the medium as neutral and factual, it is nonetheless endowed with much authority due to this relationship, which becomes very problematic in the representation of minorities or the marginalised as subjects. The position of the spectator is thus often one of complicit domination through the 'gaze' he or she inflicts on the photograph. This is not due to the cultural orientation of the photographer but to the medium itself, which can be understood not only in terms of the masculine gaze of Modernity, but also as culturally specific (Western) in its manifestation of the importance of notions of truth, representation and looking as exercises of ownership and scrutiny of the exotic or Other.

A panel discussion which was particularly relevant and poignant in my mind was the one themed *Who is entitled to tell the black artist's story?* This session was chaired by well-known South African artist David Koloane and included papers by Siphon Manda (from the Freedom Park in Tshwane), Julie McGee from the University of Delaware and David Andrew from Wits University. Manda did not present his scheduled paper and another paper was presented in its stead. Manda's paper was entitled *The oppression of blacks in South Africa is to blame for the inequalities that face art discourses today*, and would have been an interesting paper to introduce the session. The paper delivered in its stead was less contentious, and instead Julie McGee's paper set the tone for the discussion. Her argument was that 'black' African art history could be included within existing Western Art History and that one could regard it as a minority voice that was now being incorporated into a more accepting paradigm of historical writing. Her notion of re-writing art history failed to concern itself with the paradox that such a situation presented. How could an American art historian, for instance, accurately and sufficiently represent a marginal voice that is not his or her own? David Andrew's paper was very specifically focused on compiling a history of arts education in South Africa, and his account focused on specific schools and programmes across the economically and culturally diverse society of South Africa.

What was not really addressed in the session was the right to tell the black artist's story. This session seemed important since it embodied one of the central problems in contemporary South African art historical practices. What happens when art historians schooled in the tradition of Western Art History attempt to address African and South African art history by investigating African art? Can such theorists ever begin to represent the minority voice of such 'neglected' traditions in their writings? McGee seemed to think that this was not a concern and that marginalised discourses could simply be included

in a 'new art history'. Royce W. Smith, lecturer and researcher at Wichita University, points out in a reflection on the conference that care needs to be taken against subsuming the Global South under Western art historical practices, which then begin to resemble Modernist and colonial ideologies, rather than question or deconstruct those practices. The audience raised concerns with McGee's approach, which is what the panel could have been expected to address. Do, and should, historians write new histories that represent discourses they are not culturally included in, and conversely, does one need a culturally, nationally or even ethnically specific identity to be able to engage with culturally specific art histories? Is the lack of active black theorists at the colloquium an indication that such theorists do not have enough of a presence in the discourse in South Africa? If so, who should do something about it?

The so-called deficit of the Global South may be related to a colonial legacy of domination and exclusion. As the call for papers for this event stated, the assumption is that cultural discourses from the Global South have been neglected, omitted and marginalised in the writing of Western Art History, and the question remains: how might that be rectified, adjusted and deconstructed? The last session I want to highlight was entitled *Art as an act of decolonisation: Perspectives from and on the Global South*. Specific art practices from countries such as Morocco, Ghana, Kenya and, again, Jamaica were discussed, along with the notion of contemporary African art. Bernadette van Haute from the University of South Africa discussed the notion of post-Africanism and township art in South Africa. Mario Pissarra, art historian at the University of Cape Town, emphasised a departure from Africanism in his discussion. He based his paper on the writings of Denis Ekpo, who argues for the manipulation of the "tools" of Modernity in transforming Africa. He maintains that Africanism is a weighing-down by burdens from the past, such as a focus on colonialism, and that a departure from the past is needed to establish a "redeemed" future. ●

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especially in its contemporary guise, might be fruitfully reappraised as a unique treasure trove of the liminal. In the South African context, the liminal is a penetrating means towards understanding South African art because of its inherent opposition to the notion that the other is an opaque unknowable, that an inherent barrier exists between the experiencing self and the close but distant other, between the mad and the sane, or the imperial subject and its colonised objects. This project is emphatically not concerned with fitting artists into the pre-existing

categories of the liminal and liminal experience that it sets out here. Rather it seeks to interrogate the notion that the liminal might be a useful lens through which to view South African art from a critical and historical perspective.

The reasons for this view are clear. South African art history struggles most with the establishment and maintenance of a clear identity for the country's art, caught as it was for decades between apartheid state-sanction and underground agitprop and resistance. By definition, in such

a scenario, artists working in conceptual modes or those influenced by movements elsewhere, as well as those artists (usually black artists) perform outside of institutional systems, were in liminal states of being and creativity. The mode of the creation of art outside of the institution which befell many black South African artists in the apartheid era, a non-professional impulsion which was by definition outside of the framework defining it as art, and its creators as artists, is definitive of much of the experience of the liminal elsewhere in the world. The

affinities between this subaltern position for many artists, as well as those working within the art system but who were counter-intuitive or perhaps actually revealed in, and used their position as liminal figures in the creation of work, is little explored or understood.

These affinities and anti-social or 'anti-aesthetic' – to subvert Hal Foster's (1983) provocative term – formations in South African art history, of course take place in a larger social context pointed out in the introductory background here. This is the background of separate definitions of

liminality, madness and 'outsiderness' dictated by race, of separate institutions to cater for those differences, of different and parallel epistemologies, even, eugenically ordered to exclude blacks and reduce them to *homo sacer* – that liminal state par excellence – in apartheid South Africa. Art, as a discourse and a practice, was not exempt from these exclusionary strategies, and South African art history has never really considered until now, what such phenomena might mean for the country's artists who were affected by it in various ways. ●



Judy Ramgolam

Department of Jewellery Design

Cape Town once again hosted the annual Design Indaba Conference and Expo from 23 to 27 February 2011. Established in 1995, the scope of this visual cultural event has broadened to include new areas of design and related activities. The vision of Ravi Naidoo, the founder and host of Design Indaba, is premised on the belief that "creativity will fuel an economic revolution in South Africa" (Creativity can [sa]) and "advance the cause of creativity" (DIXIV: 2011). The positivity around the conceptual development of Design Indaba is firmly rooted in the euphoria of the establishment of the new South African political dispensation in 1994. The global vision of Design Indaba is to locate design and visual transcultural interaction in South Africa and to attract strategic global players in the design industry.

Design Indaba (Young Designer's Simulcast): Interface between reality and virtuality

Visual cultural fields at Design Indaba include graphic design, advertising, film, music, fashion design, industrial design, architecture, craft, visual art, new media, publishing, broadcasting and the performing arts. The Conference held as part of Design Indaba is a foremost event and generates numerous initiatives in publicity, education and training as well as business, development and the community. The Conference provides a platform for more than 40 speakers before an audience of 2 500 delegates. This important event has been the recipient of prestigious accolades (Creativity can [sa]).

The vision of Design Indaba also extends to the pedagogic needs of the nation by addressing access to the Conference for emerging designers, students and young designers. The Young Designers Simulcast (YDS) is a live broadcast of the event held at the International Convention Centre in the Western Cape. In 2011, Design Indaba increased access to the event by including audiences from Johannesburg and the surrounding areas. The University of Johannesburg (UJ) was identified as a suitable partner in this undertaking because of its shared drive to educate young creative designers and contribute to the development of a competitive local design industry. UJ's Faculty of Art Design and Architecture (FADA) facilitated the broadcast of

the YDS at the Arts Centre Theatre from 23 to 25 February 2011.

While the broadening of access and participation informed the hosting of YDS in Johannesburg, the benefits for FADA were extensive. An increased number of young and emerging designers and staff members were able to attend the simulcast. Local audiences were exposed to contemporary designers and practices as well as innovative ideas in technology, design, community projects and the growing concern of sustainable development and design. The event was also an excellent marketing opportunity for FADA, which hosted the public lecture by international design trend analyst, Li Edelkoort. The lecture was well attended by staff and students from FADA and the greater Johannesburg design community. The association between Design Indaba and UJ also marked the beginning of organising an educational forum on design and curriculum development discourses in higher education.

In contemporary cultural practices the boundaries between time and space are blurred. The YDS provided a platform for cultural interchange and virtual conversations between designers, concept developers and brand consultants with UJ audiences. The Design Indaba Conference offered valuable perspectives on global, multidisciplinary, artistic and cultural practices. The field of visual

culture and current trends reflecting design solutions for social development were expressed in the various presentations during the conference. A number of speakers examined the construct of a local South African design identity providing a reflection of the national context. In this regard, concept developers and brand custodians, Brad Armitage and Rui Esteves, showed how they revolutionised the South African consumer experience by developing the vida e caffè franchise. Cebo Hlobo provided a sustainable design solution to the problem of litter in historically disadvantaged communities. The inspirational conversation of Steward Levine with Hugh Masekela chronicled a journey of incredible success during the turbulent years of apartheid. South African businessman and entrepreneur, Mark Shuttleworth, also gave a presentation during the Conference. International speakers included Mexican fashion designer Carla Fernández, who examined common design solutions in the post-colonial context of Mexico, and a collaborative from the Design Studio in Rio de Janeiro which provided interesting design solutions to sustainable development projects in developing economies.

The association between Design Indaba and FADA is extended to the 2012 Young Designers Simulcast, which will be hosted at UJ's Arts Centre on the Kingsway Campus. ●

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STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES of examination as summative assessment for theoretical subjects at the Department of Industrial Design

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Department of Industrial Design

The focus of my Masters research was to investigate students' experiences of written year-end examinations set within the context of industrial design education. The Department of Industrial Design at the University of Johannesburg implements year-end written examinations for all of its theoretical subjects as a final summative assessment. This assessment process has remained largely unchanged over the years and remains an important period within the academic calendar. However, students' experiences of this phenomenon were unknown. Reasons for this situation were varied but, primarily, a lack of open communication between lecturers and students as a result of the nature of the discipline had compromised a deeper understanding of the student experience. Previous research regarding assessment within the broad art and design field has focused intently on the subjective studio critique as a method of assessment of practical work. The results of previous research have, therefore, sidelined investigation of written year-end examinations.

The study investigated written year-end examinations as a phenomenon and identified possible linkages to Transformative Learning (TL) theory. TL theory posits that students are able to transform their meaning structures through contextual experiences and are able to reflect critically on experiences so as to be able to apply a different viewpoint (Mezirow 2000:19). Through lived experience, a transformation in meaning perspective (or "habitual set of expectations") takes place (Cranton 2000:183). Transformation, according to Mezirow (2000:22), may be a result of what he terms a "disorienting dilemma". The concept of a disorienting dilemma was critical to the study for the following reasons:

- The event of the written examination was investigated to determine if it was experienced as a disorienting dilemma by the student sample.
- The students' experience of written examinations as a possible dilemma that affects learning was described. These were described as either a gradual transformation (incremental), or dramatic transformation (epochal) (Cranton 2006:71).
- The students' examination experiences were also investigated to determine if examination, as assessment, provided the impetus that 'triggers' transformations in attitude, motivation, confidence and the type of innovative thinking that is required by the discipline in question.

Therefore, students' experiences of examination were investigated as contextual experiences that could bring about a transformation in meaning structures that would, in turn, initiate critical reflection. According to TL theory, students who are able to reflect critically on experiences would be able to adopt and even accept different viewpoints. It was critical to establish such a changed viewpoint in order to understand if, and how, students learn through transformation as a result of their experiences of the phenomenon of written examination.

The study adopted a qualitative research paradigm. In particular, a phenomenological research design

enabled the researcher to investigate the students' experiences of examination by analysing, interpreting and describing the experiences of the participants in the study. Data was generated by means of a focus group interview with five purposefully selected participants. This was followed up by one individual interview with a sixth participant. The data obtained from these interviews was analysed so as to identify categories, themes and sub-themes. The main themes identified were: positive and negative experiences, learning in context, positive and negative learning strategies, examination purpose and assessment alternatives.

Analysis and interpretation of the data collected yielded important findings. The following broad conclusions were reached:

- Participants were found to have had both positive and negative experiences of written examination.
- Participants claim that learning in the context of industrial design education is enabled by their ability to conceive mental images.
- Participants felt that the most effective learning strategy involved group or collaborative learning.

Based on these findings, recommendations were made. It was recommended that faculty programme planners assess the value of examination as an assessment method before any radical changes are implemented. In addition, other methods of assessment should only be used in order to complement the written examination at the end of the year. Written examinations also need to be more closely integrated with practical subjects. Furthermore, a group approach to learning should be fostered in earlier year groups so as to enable the process of transformative learning within learning groups. Moreover, the weighting of the examination mark as against the overall year mark should be revised, as the current weighting of fifty percent appears too high. Finally, due to the small sample utilised in this study, further research could focus on greater numbers of students at earlier stages of their development within the department so as to obtain a broader picture of assessment.

Social change, according to Taylor (2008:10), begins with the transformation of individuals. The discipline of industrial design should be concerned with producing designers capable of addressing concerns holistically and not superficially. This not only relates to what we teach, but also requires lecturers to involve students in a transformative process of dialogue and thinking. By this, I not only mean dialogue between students, but further dialogue between lecturers and students. On a more personal level, what I also found from conducting this research was a group of individuals motivated by one another and ready to enter into their professional practice, all of whom could be described as transformed or undergoing transformation. They embodied the progressive action of transformative learning that will never really end for these individuals. However, for these individuals, transformation was not a result of writing examinations, but instead, examinations provided the intricacies or 'obstacles' on the way to their personal development as industrial designers. They have undergone what Dirkx (2006:20) refers to as the "journey of the self". This journey not only speaks about 'obstacles' and 'hurdles', but also mentions the attainment of milestones along the way in the form of personal development, deep social engagement and collaboration with others within the same context (Dirkx 2006:19). Therefore, as a lecturer, it is also important to help realise the personal development of the individual student to achieve their own learning objectives, be they personal or social, in conjunction with my objective to help students become autonomous thinkers (Wiessner & Mezirow 2000:348).

Examinations are, therefore, part of a valuable means by which TL is fostered, beyond the constraints of the classroom. It brought students together in groups that achieved far more in terms of developing transformed attitudes towards each other as individuals and it extended their appreciation for the discipline of industrial design. ●

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Photovoice,

mural art and mapping as mobilising tools for social change: A case study of a Phumani Paper enterprise



Introduction

This article is a summary of my MTech Fine Art research project with a small craft enterprise, Kutloano Papermaking, near Welkom in the Free State. The aim of the project was to explore and respond to Kutloano's needs, which are to gain larger visibility, increase sales of products and connect with the community of Thabong township. The project used participatory methods of resource-mapping, Photovoice and mural-making as processes to enhance the economic sustainability of the Kutloano Papermaking enterprise. My research established that the combined application of these three tools had the ability to create social action on a community level.

Kutloano Papermaking

Kutloano is a Sesotho word that means 'togetherness'. Kutloano Papermaking was initiated in 2000 as part of a community engagement initiative and one of the then 21 poverty alleviation projects of Phumani Paper. The enterprise is situated at the Matjhabeng Industrial Park, a warehouse for community enterprises initiated by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

Kutloano produces beautiful paper from onion skin, denim, maize husks and other natural fibres to create products such as conference folders, photo frames, envelopes, pen holders, writing pads, specialised bags, jewellery boxes and wine boxes. Kutloano's commitment is an example of resilience and it serves as a strong organisational role model for its community. Like other Phumani Paper cooperatives, however, the group struggles to find viable local markets.

Motivation and entry into the research

Cultural Action for Change is an intervention jointly supported by the Ford Foundation, Artist Proof Studio and the University of Johannesburg. It was established to assist 16 Phumani enterprises with market access, increased local networking and HIV/AIDS awareness training. As part of the team, I worked with Kutloano as a research assistant to Professor Kim Berman. Having developed a rapport with community members during the research field trip, I engaged in extended conversation, exploring ways to return and work on my own. I returned to the group before embarking on my Masters project for a period of residency.

The experience was rich. I lived in the township with a friend of one of the Kutloano members. Here I engaged with families, spoke to people and explored ways of selling the products and gauging the community's knowledge and reception of Kutloano's products. I walked with the members to and from work daily. I created my artwork, learning and teaching in the process. I visited a variety of shops and organisations in Welkom and created networks in a short period of time. Throughout my residency we spoke about the potential of the enterprise as well as its challenges. When I concluded my residency, the group had contacts to follow up on and had learnt some new techniques. I had also learnt new techniques, created a body of work and engaged in a rich community-based residency. It was a natural decision to embark on a community-based research process, with Kutloano as a case study, for my Masters studies.

The research question

The object of my project was twofold. Firstly, the project explored the benefit of combining the visual arts-based methods of Photovoice, resource-mapping and mural-making as organising and research tools. These three methods were complemented by the use of a programme-planning tool, the Logic Model. Secondly, the project demonstrated how the methods were used to help Kutloano gain larger visibility, enhance sales of products and increase social networks.

The key principles of the project were participation, dialogue, collaboration and action. Transparency was a requirement and not an option, especially since I was a young male outsider with academic aspirations that differed from those of the community-based women entrepreneurs of Kutloano. The tradition of survey-type scientific research may be met with resistance from marginalised communities who may begin to feel like subjects as opposed to participants. Repeated cycles of action and reflection enabled a more horizontal research process. The participatory process enabled an organic knowledge creation/sharing process rooted in real and local concerns of participants/community.

Photovoice, resource-mapping and mural-making were tools and processes that enabled a research process invested in real dialogue and exchange. Ultimately, the research organically led to community involvement, notably through the partnership with a local group called Welkom Anti-Aids Youth Club based in Thabong. The youth group became a key partner in the creation of a community mural. The entire project was divided into three main phases and ran from August 2008 to August 2009.

Mphapho Christian Hlasane



Every participant was involved in the entire mural-making process



Narenyana Marake – Better Housing, 2009



Smangele Molelekoa – Better Housing, 2009



Tlaleng Mokoena – Better Housing, 2009



The final mural at Zuka Baloyi Stadium

Visual Graphics for Human Rights: An Art Education Approach

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Department of Visual Art

In the context of South African visual art practice, the historical relevance of graphic imagery in the South African struggle for liberation from apartheid is widely acknowledged. My MTech Fine Art research presents an example of how the use of graphic imagery and printmaking among undergraduate University visual art students, may help to introduce social awareness and responsiveness to human rights. I premised my argument on the fact that in the post-independence period of South African higher education, universities are engaged in transformative processes as well as a covert struggle with racism, intolerance, prejudice and related social injustices. The specific educational programme-intervention introduced to incoming University visual art students, engages social injustice by requiring students to develop visual responses to selected human rights violations. I argue that the visual art-based projects provide an opportunity to counter a noticeable decline in the students' response and sensitivity to the freedoms entrenched in the South African Bill of Rights. As a result, the larger research project points to a set of critical attributes which benefit visual art students as they adopt more positive roles as 'educators' and activists, engendering a sense of socio-political awareness in relation to notions of self and society. I conclude my research with an imperative to re-insert the discourse of human rights as a basic tenet of constitutional democracy in higher education.

I based my research on the observation that there is a general lack of awareness of human rights issues among incoming Visual art and design students and that it aggravates the neglect of ethical values and lack of social cohesion, characteristic of South African society at present. I have observed over the years, in questionnaire responses among some incoming art and design students, attitudes which range from apathy,

indifference and disinterest to a general lack of concern about social and politically-related issues. As such I examined ways in which the use of graphic imagery and printmaking in visual art may exist as one of many modes that help to foster social awareness and responsiveness to human rights. This led me to explore qualitatively how a critical level of social awareness at higher education level can lead to an ability to make

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Pre-Phase

Resource-mapping

Resource-mapping is a data-gathering and map-making activity applied by groups or individuals to identify and access community resources. The first resource-mapping activity with members of Kutloano occurred as part of the *Cultural Action for Change* intervention. The objectives of the resource-mapping were to help the enterprise members expand their access to social networks, markets and resources.

Kutloano members created a map of Welkom using found material, including the interfacing used for the interleaving of handmade paper. They also used felt, coloured tapes, markers, stickers, pictures and cotton threads to indicate routes and structures on the map. The activity, (adopted from a method developed by Marcus Neustetter of the Trinity Session), started with a discussion of each member's daily route to the site of business, noting landmarks and significant events that occurred. Members then reflected on the map by drawing their respective routes from home to work using coloured tape. Once each member's route to the Matjhabeng Industrial Park was marked on the map, the discussion focused on Kutloano's existing and potential relations to the Welkom community, symbolised by an indicator on the map. The map that the participants created highlighted and pinpointed potential networks to pursue. The identified networks included youth organisations, local schools, local government and civil organisations. Kutloano members used the map to define a path they would take in response to poor market sales of their papermaking products

and the creation of the mural project. Resource-mapping is a participatory process that is not only illuminating, but also fun and educative.

Phase One: The Logic Model

The Logic Model is a planning and development tool that helps to track and monitor operations, enhance communication and build consensus in groups and organisations. It consists of four components: resources, activities, outputs and outcomes. I introduced the Logic Model to stimulate action and to supplement action plans from resource-mapping. According to the Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Guidebook (2003:iii), the Logic Model "is a conscious process that creates an explicit understanding of the challenges ahead, the resources available, and the timetable in which to hit the target". Participants mentioned during the introduction session that they found it difficult to follow up on action plans. As a participant/researcher, this challenge stimulated me to reflect on my role and what I could bring to the research.

It has been noted that community groups often lack the sophisticated structures found in professional organisations (Kayroos & Trevitt 2005). The Logic Model introduced an exciting culture of collective planning and communication. The combination of the Logic Model with the map meant that the group could navigate activities as they responded to the possibilities presented by the map. The participants used the Logic Model to great effect in the project.

Phase Two: Photovoice

Photovoice is a visual research method that uses photography and stories to investigate a problem with a group of participants. It is an activity where

research participants take photographs around a chosen theme and then discuss them in a group setting. Photovoice as a research method is used widely in participative action research (PAR) projects, with origins in the health sector. It has been used effectively as a strategy to open up and enhance communication in the AIDS Action section of the *Cultural Action for Change* intervention.

The objective of Photovoice in phase two was to obtain visual data, aimed at creating a space for dialogue around markets for Kutloano. To encourage ownership of content and open participation, the themes for the Photovoice exercise were open-ended, the only parameter being that participants explore the issue of markets for Kutloano. Interpretation of themes was left to participants.

Each of the Kutloano participants used a disposable camera to document their interpretation of the theme. Due to limited cameras, members of the youth club worked in pairs. After the films were developed and photographs printed, all participants discussed the themes arising from the images. The two major themes that emerged were: the environment and crime. The outcome of the Photovoice stories form part of a community mural that is discussed below.

Phase Three: Mural-making

The painting of the mural on the wall of Zuka Baloyi Stadium on Thuhlwane Street in Thabong took place from 26 to 31 July 2009. The primary participants included the four members of Kutloano Papermaking enterprise, five members from Welkom Anti-Aids Youth Club and two third-year students from Artist Proof Studio.

The team received help from community members, who stored

material and equipment and organised lunches. The mural-making was one of the highlights of this project. The public nature of mural-making that takes place in full view of the community offered moments of dialogue with passers-by. Direct and indirect comments (both positive and negative) provided a rich experience for all participants.

The mural themes addressed pertinent issues that were experienced and spoken about in the community. Although this mural (or any other mural) could not address all the burning issues of the community, it laid a foundation for critical thinking about community challenges and how they could be voiced.

The stylistic approach of the mural composition took into account the diversity of community members who would be exposed to it. In the light of this, participants ensured that the images were accessible in a variety of ways. Firstly, Photovoice text was kept brief so that passengers and passers-by could comprehend an image and read the accompanying text without losing concentration. Secondly, key messages in a text were summarised and written in bold. This approach mimics sub-titles in documentary photography. The bold text summary also ensured that taxi and bus passengers would understand an image by reading the brief text. The series of images and bold text summaries provided passengers with a 'snapshot' sense of the themes addressed. Thirdly, some of the narratives were written in seSotho, a language predominantly written and spoken in the Free State, and Thabong township specifically.

The narratives could be seen as social action and a move away from apathy

to activism. The participants indicated a desire to act against crime through visual arts-based processes, as opposed to complaining about crime. Furthermore, the narratives challenged the community to do something about crime. The mural provided evidence that collaboration and support could initiate community development.

Conclusion

The research project demonstrated that visual arts-based research methods provided new ways of seeing the world. According to Amartya Sen (2004), "social solidarity and association" are the cultural dimensions that feed into social capital. Throughout this project I observed that support from the community was essential to development.

Collective or community economic development should be tackled from many angles, one of which is the cultural (Sen 2004:40). Cultural development brings people closer and sustains a community. Cultural hubs such as community art centres flourish because of their communities and the mutual support and social networks they produce. Sen (2004:40) elaborates that "successful operation of an exchange economy depends on mutual trust and implicit norms". Visual arts-based methodologies can help to create economic sustainability for marginalised communities. ●

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choices as responsible citizens in terms of redress and social justice. My research focused on two curricular interventions for first and second year Visual art, printmaking students who are introduced to issues of human rights through projects that require both personal and public engagement. As a result, the documentation of the research provided a case study which can be applied to a human rights-focused pedagogy in the field of visual art. In the first instance my study advanced the notion that a visual arts methodology is a useful approach among others, to inculcate social awareness, based on the need for social justice in a society fraught with class and human rights differences. Second, the focus on critical pedagogy is important in terms of giving form to the methodology of Action research, especially in view of Paulo Freire's (1996) model to effect social change. The research questions include: how do Visual art students recognise the inadequacy of their knowledge and begin to engage in human rights redress through art? What role does visual graphics have in addressing students' notions of social responsibility? What are the possible curricular means for Visual art students to engage in human rights education in order to address social justice concerns?

In my opinion, the limited social responsiveness among entering Visual art students is linked to the change in political values experienced in current South African society. The preamble to the South African Constitution establishes fundamental principles of human rights and social values. These principles are important to the rationale of my research to the extent that human rights are not commonly understood by most students. Another rationale for this study is the apparent lack of focus on advocacy programmes related to issues of social injustice, social redress and human rights generally at university level. I contend that there is a need to empower the student body to participate more actively in social action in order to contribute to the public good. My study proposed a strategy to address the lack of focus on human rights awareness limited to my own department at the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg. In particular I examined how a curriculum-based, visual methodology may be used to understand issues of human rights and social justice. The project proposed for printmaking students is intended as one approach to inculcate social awareness through a visual graphics curricular programme.

The educational component of my study was based on an adaptation of Ernest Stringer's (2008) Action research methodology. This research model is helpful to the outcomes of the project for two reasons; first, it is congruent with the pedagogical approach advocated by Freire (1996), which formed the basis for the philosophy of the 1996 (South African) Education White paper. Secondly it ensures that my role as an educator is more facilitative rather than directive. I acknowledge that action research is



Figure 1: Zimasa Diela. Screen print. Second year. 2008. Department of Visual Art.

a wholly participatory process which benefits from the contribution of willing respondents who undertake and validate the outcomes of their particular enquiry. I propose an adaptation of Action research as a facilitative, enabling and democratic

methodology, to inculcate human rights awareness and apply this to relevant art processes, community engagement and visual methodologies which advocate human rights. In my adaptation of this process, the students conduct their

independent inquiries within the ambit of the Visual art curriculum. The second methodological framework which underpins my research is that of social responsibility in (higher) education, advocated by Caryn McTigue Musil (2009). Her model

involves the 'Self Analysis Framework' and the 'Civic Learning Spiral',¹ which foregrounds the curricular interventions which I introduce during the first and second year of the undergraduate Visual Art programmes. The third part of the

¹ The 'Civic Learning Spiral' is a useful participatory structure, suitable for adapting an action research approach to the classroom.

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methodology I employ involves a reflective framework based on the work of the students in order to evaluate the outcome of each curricular programme. I contend that the process of research and production of human rights-based visual graphics can promote individual and social change.

To substantiate these approaches, I focus on the role of culture as well as the historical legacies of art and human rights advocacy groups such as the Durban-based Artists for Human Rights Trust (AHRT) and Art for Humanity (AFH), as mediators of social change. These organisations advocate change through visual methodologies which involve arts-based practice. Similar to other rights-based advocacy groups, the outcomes of these methodologies challenge perceptions about human rights and contribute towards an ethos of criticality. I also examine how at the higher education level, this leads to an ability among students to make choices as responsible citizens in terms of redress and social justice through understanding fundamental human rights values. These values include an understanding of socio-economic rights, socio-political rights, civic rights and environmental rights, among others. To reinforce this I use the metaphor of culture as a mediating force to address the perceived decline in moral and ethical standards among students. This approach is theoretically underpinned by Arjun Appadurai's model of "futures" (quoted in Rao and Walton 2004) and the role of "culture as a catalyst for social change", advocated by Amartya Sen (quoted in Rao and Walton 2004).

The purpose of such an interrelation between culture and education is to understand how these may be used in conjunction with visual methodologies to facilitate awareness of human rights. To contextualise the problem, I refer to Mamphela Ramphele's (2008) position regarding the "dilemmas of the transformation in South Africa". I then apply this in relation to John Rawls's (1971) theory of justice in terms of its application to a system of ethics through which we understand the tenets of human rights and the need to establish principles and institutions of justice. The values espoused by Ramphele and Rawls foregrounds Mala Singh's (2001) assertion, supported by the work of Saleem Badat (2001), Crain Soudien (2008) and Yusef Waghid (2008), who advocate the value of "reinserting the public good" into higher education. To support the notion of 'reinserting the public good' I suggest the need to improve critical thinking skills, in order for the students to provide 'reasoned judgements' in their visual responses to social justice themes. Students are empowered to research their own concepts by engaging in information-gathering procedures such as conducting interviews with family members, friends, neighbours and relevant role players; documenting subjects photographically; drawing; sketching, creating collages and photo-montages, collecting newspaper articles and undertaking library research. In so doing, they understand the participatory nature



Figure 2: Chivonne Naudé. The Earth Charter Screen print. Second year. 2008. Department of Visual Art.

of practice-led research in art. Because of the multi-modal nature of visual methodologies which the students use, I encourage students to engage in art making processes which accommodates a variety of responses relating to the concept, subject matter, form and style. These include a range of visual outcomes such as lino-prints, etchings, screen prints, photography and photo-voice projects. It also includes aspects of such approaches to teaching as Discipline-Based Art Education, Visual

Thinking and Constructivist Teaching Strategies. During the two year curricular cycle, I adopted a flexible approach to implement the programme in order to ensure that the students fulfill the curricular requirements for art practice, benefit from the action learning spiral and express their critical voice about human rights.

In the findings and recommendations of my research, I reflect on how students engaged with specific human

rights and visual graphic problems and the effect that these have had on their understanding. In so doing, I do not propose that the Visual art printmaking programme is able to embrace the many theories pertinent to the human rights challenges in South Africa, but that in the absence of a sustained policy and curriculum within an institution, the programme has achieved encouraging successes. Some of the key issues that emerge from this study include how perceptions of social injustice impacts

on the students' understanding of human rights; how exposure to the discourse of human rights values can influence agency and lead to positive change among students and by implication, the community; and how active learning in the context of visual graphics curricular interventions can foster positive, personal and social change. This experiential evidence allowed me to conclude on specific and critical outcomes relating to human rights, visual graphics and personal change through art making.

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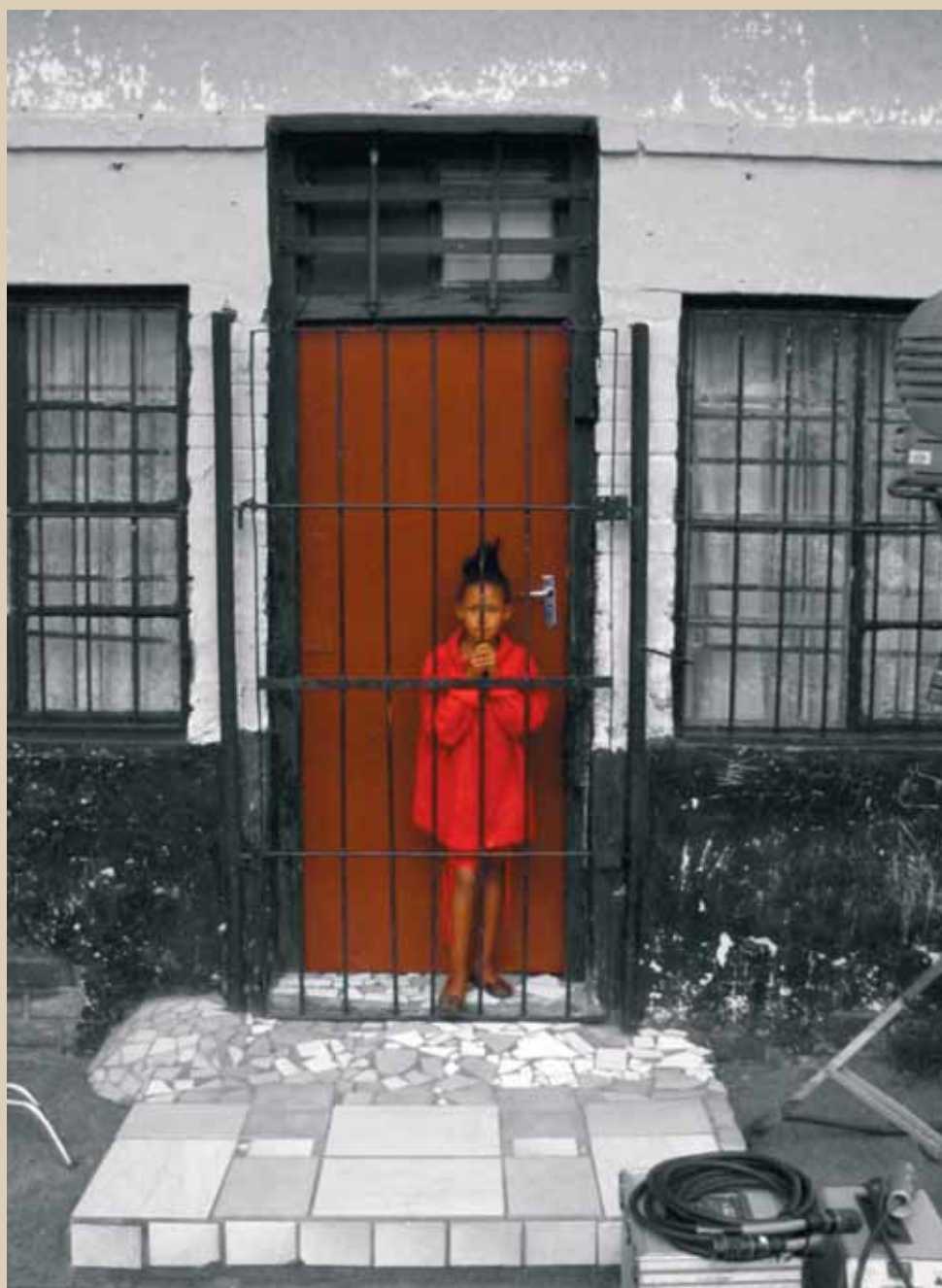
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Figure 3 (above): Amber-Jade Geldenhuys. Digital photograph 2007. Department of Visual Art. • Figure 4 (below). Amber-Jade Geldenhuys. Digital photograph. Xenophobia 2007. Department of Visual Art.

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Visual Art MTech graduates:

Christy Rennie and Shonisane Netshia

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MTech: Visual Art, Shonisane Netshia submitted a dissertation entitled *From Colonial to Post-Colonial: Shifts in Cultural Meanings in Dutch Lace and Shweshwe Fabric, and an exhibition of practical work entitled From my Mother's Closet: Objects of Forgotten Utility*.

In her dissertation, Netshia presents the central argument that crocheted doilies, and to a lesser extent, plastic tablecloths and placemats, might be considered as "post-colonial counterparts" of sixteenth- to eighteenth- century Dutch lace. She examines how crocheted doilies are adopted by her target group – a selected group of homemakers in the Soweto suburb of Naledi Extension 2 – and argues that whilst the formal and material qualities of the original Dutch lace have changed, the cultural meanings of the lace remain similar in both contexts. Netshia breaks down the category of "cultural meaning" into a subcategory entitled "consumptive meanings" (defined as signifiers of value, class, aspiration, desire) that, she argues, have not necessarily shifted in a post-colonial context. She thus demonstrates how, for her target group, crocheted doilies act as markers of value, class and respectability, and are indicative of certain decorative tastes, desires and aspirations.

Netshia establishes her argument that cultural meanings embedded in colonial Dutch lace from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century have remained similar in colonial and post-colonial contexts, whilst showing how the form of Dutch lace has been transformed by her selected homemakers. By way of example, she draws parallels between the use of lace doilies in the home of the Cape Dutch settler, Elizabeth de Waal, the Victorian colonial immigrant, Bertha Marks, and the student's mother, Geneva Maphangwa, arguing that for each, beautification of the home was a way of providing comfort from the harshness of external realities. She uses Homi K Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry as a point of departure, arguing that her selected homemakers move beyond mimicry because crocheted doilies, through processes of ownership and agency, become representations through which these homeowners' lives are articulated. She also links the ownership of doilies to the notion of respectability. In the dissertation, she provides a detailed analysis of her practical work; she contextualises her practice in the broader context of the study, teasing out how formal themes of hybridity, which underpin the theoretical component, are visually manifest in the paintings. Selected examples of the artist Yinka Shonibare's work are analysed, primarily in relation to similarities with her work.

In her practical work, Netshia uses Dutch lace, crocheted doilies, plastic tablecloths and placemats as well as

Maphangwa, S. 2008. Shweshwe, Crocheted Doily and Roses. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 200x150cm.



Maphangwa, S. 2009. Embroidery Hoop #3. Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, masonite and embroidery hoop.



Maphangwa, S. 2009. Embroidery Hoop #4. Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, masonite and embroidery hoop.



Maphangwa, S. 2009. Embroidery Hoop #2. (Painted logo). Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, masonite and embroidery hoop.



Leora Farber

Research Centre: Visual Identities in Art and Design

Shweshwe fabric as visual references. In these, she explores how, through painterly alteration and transformation, shifts can occur in the meanings of patterns derived from these culturally-loaded sources. In her exhibition Netshia deals primarily, although not exclusively, with two material objects which might be seen as quintessentially South African. Cultural critic Adam Levin has noted that, from its colonial German origins, *Shweshwe* has become "the quintessential South African cloth". He notes that it has now transcended its use by Basotho women for traditional clothing and has been appropriated into the commercial design sphere, where it is used for a host of different applications, ranging from trendy clothes by South African designers, to placemats, tablecloths and even dog baskets. The second material object which features throughout is the crocheted doily; often forgotten and overlooked, it may initially appear as an article of little importance. In the words of Norman Bryson, who speaks about still life in these terms, Netshia literally "looks at the overlooked". She picks out the crocheted doily, which features so strongly in her home in Naledi 2, Soweto, and in many other South African homes, transforming it in her paintings into an object of value and a signifier of South African material culture.

In working with these two signifiers of South African material culture – *Shweshwe* cloth and the crocheted doily – Netshia achieves a remarkable sense of hybridity. No longer two safely discreet entities, the patterning on the *Shweshwe* cloth begins to merge with the doily, with its references to Dutch lace and Victorian decoration prevalent in many upper class colonial homes in *fin de siècle* South Africa. Through her use of painterly technique, which effects

transformation and alteration, and visual and spatial ambiguity, these two cultural signifiers either appear as one or sit in a state of ambiguous tension. Perhaps an apt example of such hybridity can be found in her small series of square paintings, where at first glance, one might be led to believe that this is simply *Shweshwe* cloth which has been stretched onto a canvas. However, closer inspection reveals that the motif of the *Shweshwe* cloth has been replaced by a signifier of Western culture, the rose. This is a reference to the rose of England, and as such, brings with it another loaded set of references to colonialism in South Africa. The patterning on the cloth merges almost seamlessly to create a new hybrid statement about South African identity.

It is therein that I believe the importance of this exhibition lies. By taking a seemingly insignificant object in South African material culture such as the crocheted doily, and fusing it with another, perhaps more recognised, South African cultural signifier such as *Shweshwe*, Netshia creates surfaces which speak of the complexities of emergent, post-apartheid, post-colonial identities in a transforming South Africa. Her overall research makes an important contribution to writing and artistic production on South African material culture.

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MTech: Visual Art, Christy Rennie submitted a dissertation entitled *Privileging Corporeal Identity: An Embodied Approach to Artmaking Practice*. In her dissertation, she examines how the French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's conceptions of the semiotic and the abject may usefully be applied in a reading of artwork which asserts

corporeality, and which consequently may disrupt the symbolic element in representation. She links these Kristevian "disruptive" or "transgressive" theories to the use of tactility in visual representation, exploring how the latter may disrupt notions of 'sameness' or homogeneity prevalent in Kristeva's conception of the symbolic (which, as she notes, operates in oscillation with the semiotic sphere). She thus points to the necessity of the abject and the semiotic within the continual formation and renewal of the "speaking subject" within processes of signification and identification.

A primary aim is to assert how a tactile or 'embodied' approach to artmaking, as applied to selected works by South African artists Joni Brenner, Berni Searle and Minnette Vári, can be 'non-gendered'. This aim is significant since to date, much of the writing on tactility in visual representation on embodiment, corporeality and the abject has been written from a feminist perspective. Although extensive analysis of Kristeva's conception of the semiotic and abject has been undertaken in a number of discursive fields, ranging from psychoanalytic and literary theory, to post-colonial, gender and race theories or the visual arts, Rennie's analysis and application of her theories is innovative and makes a valuable contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field. Her work demonstrates how these theories can be applied to visual art without categorising the work as associated with femininity or, for that matter, with any particular gender.

Rennie's references extend from texts which contextualise the body within social, philosophical, aesthetic, gendered and racial categories; feminist readings, particularly those on

abjection, essentialism and the body; critical readings on opticality and the gaze (which she critically positions in relation to tactility) and the use of abjection within the 'body art' of the 1990s. Strong focus is given to Kristeva's theories of the semiotic and abjection, in particular her conception of "transgressive" or "poetic" language and the practice of "intimate revolt", which she likens to the use of tactility in representation. She also acknowledges other research in the field of embodied representation, such as the theories of French feminists Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Jacques Lacan as well as Maurice Merleau Ponty's phenomenological approach, George Bataille's conception of the *informe* and Rosalind Krauss's commentary on the latter.

Information on the three artists is derived from a variety of sources, including exhibition catalogues, journal articles and, in Brenner's case, several in-depth interviews, which are presented as appendixes in the dissertation. This textual information is effectively combined with close, detailed visual analyses of carefully selected artworks by each artist. Rennie proposes two different approaches towards tactility and abjection with regard to Brenner's and Searle's work, respectively. She considers Brenner's paintings, specifically those on the exhibition *Infra-Red* (2002), as examples of 'overt' abjection. Searle's digital multi-media works, on the other hand, are positioned as more subtle forms of abjection in which there is a constant vacillation between "mutable forms of identity". Tactility is explored in Vári's work under the premise that she interrogates the 'spectacularised' (or optical) nature of digital mass-media by the insertion of her embodied self into the work as both subject and artist. ●