THERE'S NO PLACE (LIKE HOME)
A graphic interpretation of personal notions of home and displacement

ERNESTINE BIANCA WHITE

Documentation and commentary on the body of practical work presented for the degree of Master of Fine Art
Michaelis School of Fine Art
University of Cape Town
November 2004
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This book is dedicated to my mother, Jane Esther White and all the SGI members in the USA and SA. Thank you so much for your love and support. Pambili nge diamoku! Pambili! More chanting!
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I wish to offer my sincere thanks to my ever so patient supervisor Stephen Inggs for allowing me the total freedom to explore my ideas and to make the inevitable mistakes.

I wish to thank my ‘fairy godfather’ Russell Jones of Scan Shop for his generous support in printing this document.

I am grateful to my bursars, the University of Cape Town Research Scholarship, the MacIver Scholarship, Katrine Harries Scholarship and the Jules Kramer Fine Art Grant for their financial assistance.

I bestow my sincere thanks to Vishaal Lalla for spending the time to work on the layout and design of this document.

I wish to thank Ron Moller for the photographic documentation of my work.

I wish to also thank Denise Cupido for the help in editing this document.

My grateful thanks to my studio mate Andrea Steer for providing me with a friendly and cheerful studio environment.
HOME THOUGHTS (Mark Swift)

There is no road home
for home is where the heart is.

We are
voyagers, we carry
our journeys within us. Privateers,
we run before a fickle wind.
Each day defines a course; it's fixed
imperative. Out on the jet
streams, Adrift for days, we navigate
the tide-bound globe. We are all
Columbus, quaffing
sour water under creaking stars
till moonfall.

I fly, as unerring
as a bird, between two departures.

One lies
dark, skeletal; the other is verdant,
a wildness of birds and gunfire.

With renegades
from every corner of the shrinking
world, I discuss, duty-free,
the love of distant friends,
the lure of the sun

(De Kock & Tromp 1996: 2).
I was born in Cape Town, South Africa around the tumultuous time of the Soweto uprisings of 1976. The first few years of my life were spent living with relatives and friends of my mother in Langa while she worked in the city in various households as a domestic worker. Her occupation took her away for long periods of time. By the age of two my mother and I moved to Woodstock where we lived with a family that consisted of five adults, who each had children of their own all under one small roof. The house was always full of people.

Sundays were a sight to behold with a series of tables set up to accommodate this large group. Within this house and among this family I have many fond memories of ‘Sondagkos’, glass bottle cool drinks, Christmas, my first doll, street races, Easter Sundays, outside toilets and plastic basin baths.

By the age of four, I moved to another part of Woodstock where we stayed with the Muller family. The memories in this house are of gatherings of people, my “uncle” giving me secret sips of beer, and of having my first glass of champagne at Christmas dinner. After another two years we moved once again, this time to Sea Point to live with a Greek family. We lived in a small bungalow next to their home - my mother worked as their domestic worker.

Memories in this house are of my best friend Yanni and I playing on the beaches of Camps Bay, of the two of us walking to the Pavilion to watch the bathers swimming and basking in the sun. I have vivid recollections of playing with my neighbour in her back yard amongst her caged Lemur monkeys, of standing on top of a gigantic tortoise and of being first princess at a beauty contest at the shopping centre down the road from home. Around the same time I started to hear my mother talk about going to America. The whole idea sounded like a dream and on many occasions I can remember my friends teasing us about how we would speak once we arrived in that strange and exciting land. It all seemed like a dream that would never come true and

The consensus from most of the people around her was that she would never get the chance to go. Little did they or I know that it was not just another pipe dream but soon to become a reality? A reality that would separate us from each other for four years and cause me to live in three more homes before being reunited with her; each of them containing their own share of traumatic and happy experiences.

The eleven year old child that arrived on American soil in the late 80’s, who spoke Afrikaans and was accustomed to the South African way of life soon grew up to become a typical American. Before I knew it I had shed all resemblance of the girl of my childhood. In the blink of an eye my physical appearance, my language and ways of interacting with my peers and my environment all changed. I had become someone else. And as I grew older the memories of my childhood began to fade with time. To counteract this inevitable process I would unpack the piles of photos from my childhood that were tucked away in my mother’s cupboard and sit and contemplate on the memories that they evoked. I often wondered how different my life would have been if I had stayed in South Africa.

As a young woman I focused on my studies at the State University of New York at Purchase College and my career as an artist. After completing an apprenticeship as a Master Printer in Lithography at the Tamarind Institute, I made the choice to return to the place I once called home.

When I think back to the places I lived in as a young child in South Africa, I begin to realize that even then my understanding of the meaning of home was different. Moving from one place to another did nothing for my sense of belonging and understanding of permanence and stability. I grew up with the realization that home was not just a structure situated in a geographical location that
contained a fixed collection of memories, languages and traditions. It was instead an impermanent, unstable space that was defined by and ever changing collection of experiences.

Through my personal experiences and research on the notions of home, place and identity, I have discovered that these subjects cannot be answered in a straightforward manner, but in a multitude of ways. Irit Rogoff in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* describes my dilemma quite accurately in reference to her own sense of displacement by saying:

... my own displacement entails complex daily negotiations between all the cultures and languages and histories which inhabit me, resulting in the suspension of belief in the possibility of either coherent narratives or sign systems that can actually reflect straightforward relations between subjects, places and identities (Rogoff 2000: 06).

Madan Sarup in *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (1994) speaks of the same sense of displacement and dislocation that both Rogoff and I have experienced. She was born in India and at the age of 9 moved to England where she has lived for 50 years. In reference to her sense of displacement she states:

I've forgotten my mother tongue, but I do not feel British. I think of myself as an exile and it's painful here, and there in India when I return for short visits ... I am preoccupied by ideas of home, displacement, memory and loss (Robertson et al. 1994: 93).

When I returned to South Africa. I felt completely alienated from my surroundings and had indeed “forgotten my mother tongue” (ibid: 93); I soon realized that the actuality of living in South Africa and the place I constructed within my memory would always be different. Sarup's preoccupation with “ideas of home, displacement, memory and loss” (ibid: 93), are the exact issues and notions that I have dealt with within my creative production. And it is these avenues of personal conflict that I explore within this document and body of work.
INTRODUCTION

The title of my dissertation "There’s no place (like home)" was extracted from a film I used to watch quite often as a young girl, The Wizard of Oz, in which the main character Dorothy – towards the end of the film - is seen clapping her eyes tightly closed while holding her dog Toto; repeating the words: “There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home”. She is then as if by some magical spell transported back home in Kansas to her Aunty M.

This scenario of being able to return home to a loving family or community after a long absence - also defined as homecoming - is rarely the happy ending as the one in the movie. My personal experiences are a prime example. I returned to South Africa after a decade long absence with the naive belief that I would be greeted with open arms at my arrival.

Members of my community instead treated me with suspicion and hostility. My ruby red shoes had failed to return me to my 'Kansas'. I realize now that it never will because there was never one. The home constructed within my childhood memories are just that - memories.

The irony is that memories must be constantly selected and reconstructed in accordance with the ever-changing world around us; discarding what has become unuseful is equally as important as assimilating what is needed. "The past is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember or pretend to remember (Pinter in Lowenthal 1985: 198)."

The segmented phrase, “There’s no place,” suggests an inability to gain access or entry, of restriction. For if you have (no place) you are homeless and thus rootless. One needs only to watch television or to pick up a newspaper to read about the civil wars raging within places such as Angola, Zaire, the Congo and Burundi; and see the images of thousands fleeing their homelands to some unknown destination for safety, to realize that war is the greatest cause of displacement.

To fathom the sheer volume of displaced peoples not just in the continent of Africa but globally is staggering. Within the recent past similar circumstances have occurred in places such as Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia where victims of civil unrest and ethnic cleansing have made the same kinds of exodus to places beyond their known borders. With events such as this occurring globally it’s not difficult to realize the severity of the phrase “there is no place”.

In the first section of this dissertation the perception and interpretation of home is the main focus. I make reference to the works of Kay Hassan and Lallitha Jawahirilal in an attempt to understand the influences of their personal experiences (pertaining to notions of home and displacement) on their working methodology. It is as a result of their individual experiences that the notion of home takes on a distinct interpretation.

The second section is a brief discussion on theoretical interpretations on the importance of place in the formation of identity. The third section broadly outlines issues concerning notions of place and mobility and their roles in the formation of identity. The fourth section briefly outlines the multitude of positions that lead to notions of un/belonging and displacement by highlighting theories of 'mobility' from the viewpoint of being a refugee, migrant, emigrant, an exile and a foreigner. The fifth section of this dissertation describes the working methodology of the creative work and includes brief descriptions on the formal, photographic, drawing and printing processes. Progressive drawings and sketches are shown throughout this dissertation with the final section documenting the practical work.

It is important to note that within the limitations of this dissertation it was not possible to unpack all theories concerning place, mobility and identity. I have however tried to present the reader with a background or context that highlights relevant aspects pertaining to my creative practice and personal investigation into these issues.
What makes a place home? Is it an architectural structure? Is it family? Is it the place that holds the most memories? What is the true meaning of home? Is there such a thing?

"Home is where the heart is" and the phrase "There's no place like home" are well known within the English vernacular. But what do they actually infer about the meaning of home? "Home is where the heart is", conveys the notion of home being a place of fond memories, of gatherings with family, of feeling safe and secure within a loving environment.

These phrases also refer to the classic idealized Western perception of home as portrayed in magazines and media so common in the first half of the twentieth century. This was often defined as a structure containing a roof, with doors and windows, and a white picket fence.

A house is a relatively simple building ... It provides shelter; its hierarchy of spaces answers social needs; it is a field of care, a repository of memories and dreams ... For the personal selfhood that world is the house (Tuan 77: 164).

Living within this structure was the perfect family consisting of a mother, a father, a son and daughter and of course the dog. Life for this family was ideal in every way. The wife stayed at home, tending to all aspects of domesticity and child rearing. The husband was commonly characterized as the provider.

For a large majority of the Western population during the first half of the twentieth century the home symbolized the ideals of domesticity, safety and stability. Sadly, for a large majority of women the reality of home as a site of domestic bliss is a far cry from the true reality of their condition. Tim Cresswell in Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility (2002) - in reference to the domestic reality of women versus the ideal notion of home - writes:

The image of home as a peaceful and meaningful refuge has been described as masculinist – hiding the realities of power relations in the home which, at their extreme, are linked to battery and rape (Cresswell & Verstraete 2002: 19).

The home or domestic space is all too often a site of conflict and violence. In order to fully understand the meaning of home many factors need to be taken into account however, such as race, gender, age and location. These issues along with personal experience greatly affect the interpretation of home. It is important to understand that the interpretation of the notion of home for a white middle class wife living in suburbia is drastically different from her Black maid who lives in Site B Khayelitsha (ibid).

For many home is defined by one's roots, the ability to retrace one's ancestry. But what happens when that location is unknown or at best hazy, when your roots, your place of origin are a mystery? This is often the case for many African Americans and as a result many aspire to realize the dream of returning to the motherland. This is done with the strong belief that to know where one (one's ancestors) comes from is to know whom one is. A fortunate few who are able to retrace their ancestry do in fact make their journeys home, retracing the routes of the slave ships that displaced (them), their ancestors centuries ago. They travel to this vast continent of Africa in search of their identity. For most this scenario is one that rarely has a happy ending.

It has been said that America is essentially a 'melting pot', a land made up of displaced people spanning the entire globe. For centuries it has been the site where various cultures have made the great exodus from their countries in search of a better existence.
Places like the Ellis Island Museum and the Library of Congress house hundreds upon thousands of photographs that capture images of boats overflowing with passengers coming from far off lands in search of a better way of life.

Permanently etched in the memories of the older generation of American immigrants are the images of thousands standing in queues at Ellis Island for health inspections; holding onto hope of becoming citizens of their newly adopted country or the despair of being told that they were being deported back to their homelands never to return again (Rogoff 2000: 36-45).

In South Africa home can be defined in a number of ways. It is the make-shift tin sheet shacks devoid of clean water, sanitation and electricity; the government subsidized one room structures that stand in rows in townships; the middle class suburban homes with all the amenities, and the million rand mansions concealed by high brick walls and state of the art security systems.

The location and appearance of these structures do not only give you an idea of the economic status of the inhabitants but also reflect the political turmoil of South Africa's apartheid structure. The notion of home during those times was continuously redefined. This was the result of a series of racist laws, which mandated the forced removals of whole communities and families to specific regions designated according to racial profile, economic and social status.

Laws such as the Group Areas Act of 1950, The Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 and The Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970 among many played major roles in implementing the racial, social and physical separation of a nation. The creation of these sites of displacement was a time in which a systematic strategy of fear and violence was executed by the ruling government to divide and rule the majority for the sole purpose of securing the sustained dominance of the minority.

The notion of home for me cannot just be defined by a four walled structure endowed with memories and meaning, it encompasses many places and experiences. For me home can be defined by the interactions between people that have created memories and experiences within many places. Home is the Saturday morning ritual my mother and I performed on a weekly basis during which time we would wake up at around 9 am like clockwork to watch our favourite program Fashion Television without fail. It is the memories of going to weekly discussion meetings at Gloria's house - of taking the train to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of interacting with and engaging in religious youth activities.

Recently home has also been the town of Gugulethu where I make weekly trips to places like Yeolvimento, NY (Native Yards) six and Mzoli's to visit Aunt Dora, my family and to savour the worlds best braaied meat! It is also the small dusty South African town called Victoria West where members of my family still reside. It is a place where everyone knows everyone, where values and traditions are strong. In this small town young boys still make the physical and emotional journey to the 'bush', returning as men. Animal sacrifices are still performed to celebrate births, deaths and to appease the ancestors and where on a clear day the expanse of sky is so vast that you can truly understand your place within the universe. These moments are home.

For artists such as Kay Hassan and Lallitha Jawahirilal notions of home and displacement are a central concern in their work and means of interrogating the effects of South Africa's past on its people. Their personal experiences around these themes have informed their working methodology in many ways. The work by Hassan portrays life in the townships of his youth, Alexander and Soweto. "I re-create scenes similar to the scenes of displacement I lived with as I grew up" (Flood 1997: 96). This is suggested through the use of structures like the 'shack', a common vernacular seen in townships and abandoned land sites. Fragments of his past in which people were constantly on the move and displaced for one reason or the other is at the root of his artistic exploration.

Hassan's work "pivot(s) around the constant displacement of families and workers he witnessed while growing up in the townships of Alexandra and Soweto" (ibid: 54). As a young man Hassan was struck by the constant act of people "moving" (ibid). In an interview conducted by Susan Robeson he gives an account of his own experiences of being dislocated by saying:
My work has to do with me growing up and being moved – bulldozed – from one area to another. My parents moved from Alexandra and we went to Kliptown; from Kliptown we moved to Diepkloof. Growing up as a young boy in a township, I always saw people on the move – carrying bundles, cases, and boxes. I always questioned myself – what’s in those things? I wanted to know. I really didn’t understand, but I kept on seeing people moving, moving, moving. And today they are still moving, but not for the same reasons ... Those things have stayed in me from youth and now they’re coming out (ibid: 54).

Within the works Flight 3 1994 and Flight 1996 Hassan places suitcases and bundles alongside each other in a seemingly haphazard manner, but in doing this, creates a fictional or factual scene in which a group of people, perhaps a family were forced to abruptly abandon their belongings. As a result of their displacement many questions arise such as: What were the circumstances that created this event? Where have they gone? A further reading into the meaning of these bundles suggests the reference to the dislocation and displacement experienced by many South Africans during and after Apartheid. What echoes throughout these works is the stark sense of absence that exists within the presence of these material objects.

Hassan’s large-scale collages utilize billboard advertisements that have been torn and assembled to recreate scenes depicting the root of his artistic exploration.

These constructed works and the process of their creation evoke the effects of South Africa’s past in which the lives of many were racially, economically and socially torn apart. The process of assembling these torn pieces highlights the reality of Post-Apartheid South Africa quite clearly, in which we are all (as a nation) still trying to piece together a clear path to the future from a fragmented past (ibid: 58-59).

Lallitha Jawahirilal’s work on the other hand suggests that as an exile one’s notion of home is fragmented. As a result of the political and social unrest raging within South Africa in the late 70’s Jawahirilal made the decision to leave her place of birth to ‘travel and study art’ abroad (Nolte 2001: 54). She would return twelve years later with an altered sense of the notion of home.

During her twelve years of living and studying abroad Jawahirilal received numerous awards and residencies, taking her to many places. Nolte (2001), states that despite this, Jawahirilal always longed to return home. She continues by saying that this longing would become more apparent with the arrival of the first democratic elections. In reference to Jawahirilal’s longing, Nolte asserts:

The sense of home was always a haunting one for Jawahirilal. She retained a connection with the physical location of her youth through imaginative recollections and productions, as well as periodic visits (ibid: 56).

Jawahirilal’s work explores her range of emotions and experiences upon returning to South Africa after a twelve-year absence. Since 1990, her body of work encompasses bright, bold strokes of colour executed in a rather abstract manner. A self-referential female figure is quite often positioned within a landscape composed of abstract strokes of colour. In some of her works a bird, a tree as well as a floral motif is incorporated.
Each title as well as the additional use of text within her paintings provide further insight into the thoughts and experiences of this artist at particular times in her life following her relocation (ibid: 138).

The titles of works such as *Oh South Africa you've turned my world completely upside down (mixed media)* (1996) (fig 3) as well as *Oh South Africa how to continue this singing rain is blowing its cold whip at me – lost in the vastness of Kwa Zulu Natal who knows which way my soul is fleeing* (1997) (fig 4) reflect the uncertainty of Jawahirilal’s position within the ‘new’ South Africa, and ‘... refer the viewer to a sense of arrival, return and settlement’ (ibid: 141).
PLACE AND IDENTITY

The notion of place and its role within the formation of identity has been a widely contested subject for quite some time. In the late 70's Humanistic theorists such as Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph offered perspectives on this subject by suggesting that place was central to the formation of identity and to the creation of human experience. Evidence from different cultures suggest that place is specific - tied to a particular cluster of buildings as one location - wherever the people believe it to be not only their home but also the home of their guarding spirits and gods (Tuan 1977: 150).

Without the Kalahari we are nothing. In the Kalahari, we know we belong, we know what to do with the land, we know who we are. The animals know us. We are their brothers and sisters ... The red Kalahari sand is like the blood of our people. Our parents and their parents were buried in the sand, and one day we will all join them there, and become part of the red sand (Bailey & Shaik. 2003: http://www.pmps.gov.za).

An interpretation of the above extract would suggest that for the San of the Kalahari the land and landscape is at the core of the individual's sense of identity. It would also infer that the relationship between man and place is bound by the cycles of life and death, thus confirming the belief that the invisible connections between the physical and the spiritual realm are tied to the land. This sentiment is further evident in the ancient rock art paintings of Southern Africa in which it is possible to discern images that suggest the transformation of man into animal or visa versa via the land.

Places can be made visible by a number of means: rivalry or conflict with other places, visual prominence, and the evocative power of ... ceremonial and functional rhythms of personal and group life (Tuan 1977: 178).

Place in reference to location (Tuan 1977) is thus an integral component in shaping identity be it through the spiritual or physical navigation of the land. Within the book Place and Placelessness (1976), theorist Edward Relph continues on this train of thought by stating:

... to have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular (ibid: 38).

If this is true however, one of the many questions that arise is what happens when the stability of rooted identity is interrupted? What of those whose very sense of place has been disrupted by social and political warfare? Where place is no longer the 'stable', 'protective' veil symbolic of by home but is instead defined by the precarious circumstances of living a life as a 'wanderer'? How are these identities then defined?

The quotes above suggest a level of exclusivity that leaves no room for the migrant, exile or refugee whose identity is defined by a specific act of movement. Within recent decades, hundreds upon thousands of individuals have had to (on a global scale) forcibly leave or flee their homelands. If for a moment we were to place ourselves within their lives, we would realize that place in this instance plays an ambivalent role in the formation of identity. It is also important to note that within the reality of many Third world nations, place has served as a platform and tool for acquiring political and economic power.
Within today’s technology driven society the increased interest and use of information system highways, has required the reassessing of the importance of place and space in society. Living in an era in which one is able to exist in more than one place at a time, and not physically be in any place via the ‘world wide web’ or ‘cyberspace’ is indicative of the opinion that the interaction between ‘real’ places and people has in one way become threatened. It is mind-boggling to contemplate the vastness of this placeless place in which, regardless of time zones or physical location, hundreds upon thousands of individuals are simultaneously ‘living’, ‘breathing’ and ‘existing’ within the virtual world.

Technology allows us an alternate space within which we can invent unique methods of telling stories, forming identities, and remembering (Flanagan 2000: 75).

Vincent Mosco in his essay Webs of Myth and Power (2000): Connectivity and the New Computer Technopolis convincingly challenges the notion of the “end of geography” theory held by critical theorists whose interests lie in the increasingly invasive position technology holds in today’s society (ibid: 37-40).

In spite of considerable talk about the “death of distance” and “the end of geography” computer technology appears to accentuate the importance of place, both physical and virtual (ibid).

Mosco emphasises the importance of the role of people within places and suggests that although the ‘virtual world’ has its appeal in being able to bring together people of various backgrounds and interests within an imagined space many businesses have realized however, the benefits of ‘real’ human interaction. In a specific example he points out that the livelihood of a metropolis such as Manhattan is highly dependent on the constant interaction of people (the target market) within their geographic vicinities.

He continues by noting that technology driven entities such as software businesses, advertising and publishing companies strategically position themselves within locations where – although the standard of living is high, the “physical proximity”

to large groups of people, “fellow professionals, potential customers, service providers and universities” prove to be a much greater incentive (ibid: 39).

The flip side of this faceless coin however is to realize that “in cyberspace and in real space, however, actions taking place in networks have very real impacts on human beings” (Flanagan 2000: 75). These actions can at times have devastating affects in the ‘real’ world. One needs only to read recent newspapers to understand the severity.

In the not so distant past ‘hackers’ have wrecked havoc on global economies by implanting viruses within core security systems threatening the national security of entire countries. Recently within South Africa the online theft of individual identities and money through internet banking forced everyone to seriously question the ramifications of the effortless availability of personal information from the internet.

I remember the fear and anxiety that engulfed the air of New York months before Y2K in which the entire nation along with the rest of the world worked in a frenzy towards safeguarding their information systems. Predictions of banking system failures by the media resulted in the wide spread fear of people losing their earnings. On New Years Eve 1999, television captured people withdrawing their savings from ATM’s, emptying bank accounts and backing up the data on their computers. The world held its breath as seconds after the New Year, 2000, brought with it the all to sobering realization that the modern world is far too dependent on technology for its livelihood.
PLACE AND MOBILITY

Unlike the concepts of *home* and *place* which tend to be confined to ideas of ‘located ness’; ‘stability’ and ‘authenticity’; where “people and identities are located within particular spaces and particular boundaries” (Malkki cited in Cresswell 2002: 15).

Theories of mobility question, interrogate and disrupt the validity of the perception of identity solely being rooted in the ‘authentic’. Thus “places [like identities] are not static, they are always changing” ... (Robertson et al. 1994:96). In short the argument states that places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process (Cresswell & Verstraete 2002: 20).

Theories of mobility are thus positioned between the ideas of ‘roots’ as a place of origin and routes’, as a ‘journey’ (Piranio 2002). The introduction of travel as a past time along with the improved economic status of the West has resulted in a greater ratio of first world households with disposal income. No longer are people solely concerned with being citizens of their respective countries content in remaining in their native land. The growing trend instead is to be a ‘global citizen’ in which one is constantly moving from one place to another. The emphasis is thus “to think locally, act globally” (Piranio 2002: 40).

In an online conversation conducted in March 2002, amongst a group of artists and theorists this topic was simultaneously being discussed in four different countries. Yikiko Shikata (Tokyo, Japan) offers a rather interesting interpretation of this topic of translocation (Piranio 2002).

I locate *translocal* as a condition realized by an unlimited number of people, each of who is attentive locally and connected globally. The *translocal* emerges through a kind of ever-changing interaction process among these people and can be different depending on the reality of each participant. This is multilayered, and those layers are not always synthetic but rather contain some contradictions. The reality of each location can be shared in part with other locations. But at the same time not all shared ... (Piranio 2002: 45).

Translocality derives from chaos and order ... appearance and disappearance, globality and locality (Piranio 2002: 53).

What makes this interpretation particularly interesting is to realize that the *translocal* person is always in motion redefining his/her identity by the very act of moving. This holds true in defining the position of a most refugees, migrants and exiles in the world.

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries. The travelling self is here both the self moves physically from one place to another, following ‘public routes and beaten tracks’ within a mapped movement, and the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere (Robertson et al. 94: 9).
It can be said that these labels also perpetuate the hostility, ambivalence and suspicion associated with those who are ‘stranger’s or ‘foreigners’ to a land. This inevitably leads to displacement.

The migrant, journeying from ‘there’ to ‘here’, becomes a stranger in a strange land ... where exile is forcibly imposed – the dream of home and eventual return is shattered at the longed for moment of re-entry. The homeland that was left, forever lost, survives only in traces and memories ... (Robertson et al. 94: 3).

These social classifications suggest the kind of differences which often generate conflict in the form of resistance and power struggles amongst the so called ‘native’ and the ‘foreigner’ or ‘stranger’; resulting in the inevitable ‘them’ against ‘us’ mentality. Attitudes such as these all too frequently serve as the dangerous and destructive fuel for sentiments of racism, extreme nationalism and xenophobia, all of which have given rise to the creation of the above social markers.

Julia Kristeva in Trade Routes: History and Geography (1997) describes the position of the foreigner (of which I believe the refugee, migrant, exile and emigrant are included) as the one who does not belong to the group, who is not “one of them, the other ... the one who does not have the same nationality” (ibid: 39). According to Kristeva ‘foreigners’ in stark contrast to ‘citizens’ are deprived of the right to own land, to vote and work, (ibid: 39). Rogoff (2002) in turn asserts that these are all ‘issues’ that determine and shape the conditions of our lives, which are integral to our sense of belonging (ibid: 2). In my opinion these social practices of legalized exclusion further disrupt the already fragile personal narratives thus contributing to the dislocation of their identities.

It is not surprising that there are some people who either do not wish to or cannot either become integrated here or return from whence they came (Robertson et al. 1994:100).
According to Nadia Lovell in *Locality and Belonging* (1998)

Locality and belonging may be moulded and defined as much by the actual territorial emplacement as by memories of belonging to particular landscapes whose physical reality is enacted only through acts of collective remembering (ibid: 1).

I concur with Lovell and point to my personal experiences of living in New York, where I frequented places such as 'Little Italy' and 'China Town' (to name but a few), where entering these neighbourhoods one was instantly struck by the manner in which these communities reflected the country of 'origin'. Entering these worlds gave one the sense of being in the "remembered" landscaped of the early immigrants who first set foot on American soil in search of a better life for them and their families. In addition to this, the individual's sense of identity was further solidified by the continued adherence to the language and values of the *homeland* (ibid: 1).

What I found even more interesting was that a large majority of these inhabitants had never set foot in the country, their neighbourhoods were named after but nonetheless they expressed strong allegiance to the *homeland*. This to me is a prime example of how:

... locality (is) recreated as a particular place through the memory of its existence in the past". This memory is thus conducive to the forging of social bonds in the present, and for the future, among communities of displaced people ... (Lovell 1998: 4).

Judy Purdom in her essay *Mapping Difference* (1995) in partial concurrence with Bhabha (1994) suggests that through the affirmation and opposition of difference, displaced peoples are able to forge 'new identities' (ibid: 19). These identities are thus redefined (or rather exist) in the 'in-between' spaces, whose definition (according to Purdom) resists the westernised classification of the 'black, the colonised and the aboriginal as Other' (ibid).
My own notions of displacement and sense of not belonging stems from having to face: “language, nostalgia, loss, (and a) search for identity” (Robertson et al 1994: 97). As mentioned earlier within this document the “language” of Xhosa played an integral role in my sense of not belonging and displacement. My inability to speak Xhosa along with the refusal to speak to me in English by members of my family and community, created a barrier that was difficult to cross at first. As a result I was not able to fully express myself that resulted in feeling a sense of isolation.

The “nostalgia” I initially experienced when I returned to South Africa was soon replaced with a sense of alienation, hostility and defensiveness, firstly at the realization that the South Africa I ‘remembered’ was no longer. Secondly, I was forced to navigate within hostile environments where I was required to explain myself to total strangers who were quite often ambivalent and hostile towards ‘pretenders’. I soon discovered that ‘pretenders’ were Black South Africans who once they moved out of the township, adopted a “white” way of living and only spoke English (even though they understood and spoke their native language).

Amongst the Black communities within the township these individuals were thought to perceive themselves as ‘better than the rest’. To my dismay I fell under this category and only after a lengthy explanation did I received recognition. My initial sense of “loss” came about as a result of members of my own family refusing to understand my dilemma. I was constantly spoken about and to in a language I did not understand and this caused an additional barrier that prevented me from getting to know my family and ultimately my personal history. Through time however, this has been eroded by the constant interaction with members of my family as well as my gradual understanding of fragments of Xhosa.

What I have realized through this journey is that I no longer place emphasis on who or what I should or shouldn’t be. My personal experiences have made me realize that to have a label is to truly limit who or what I can become. With this in my mind I am able to open doors to future possibilities and experiences. Knowing all this brings me to the realization that I am no more dislocated and displaced than the next person and that home is everywhere and nowhere.
CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES ON
THE CREATIVE BODY OF WORK

How many suggestions can be derived from the image of the wall and all its possible permutations! Separation, ... witness to the passing of time; smooth surfaces ... tortured surfaces; ... signs of human imprints ... a sense of struggle, of effort, of destruction, ... or construction, ... forms that suggest natural rhythms and spontaneous movement of matter; a sense of landscape ... (Gimenez 1995:48).

Additional inspiration came from looking at the work of the photographer Brassai, particularly the photographs taken throughout the 1930's. These images captured not only the mysterious unseen activities of nightlife on the streets of Paris but also highlighted and made relevant the ignored visual activities of the unseen artist, activist, protester and vandal, this being graffiti.

I became interested in the beauty and mystery of graffiti at an early age of my artistic development. Through studying the work of Spanish 'matter painter' Antoni Tapies I became aware of the power and the voice of graffiti on the wall. His thick impasto like paintings (incorporating sand) resembled walls in the process of deterioration. The manner with which he integrated texture, colour and composition created works reminiscent of the surfaces on which graffiti is so commonly seen in society.

In the simplicity of graffiti he found a stunning modernity. His whole life through, Brassai would hunt down these mysterious or playful marks on walls, on trees, even on the ground ... Brassai was convinced that these manifestations of so little importance, were in fact an emanation of the dream world, a true essence of reality (Brassai 2002: 06).
Words
figures
acquire on the wall
a straightforward
a vigorous self-evidence;
speech becomes action,
and the image,
an instrument of magic.

Its signs
its symbols
its figures
conjure up a world both obscurely sensed and dreaded.

The wall
belongs to “half-wits,”
to the “unsophisticated”,
the “ill-adapted,”
to the rebellious,
to the simple,
to all those of heavy heart.
The wall is truancy’s black board.

The wall,
safe haven for what is forbidden,
Gives a voice to all those who would, without it,
Be condemned to silence.

(Brassai 2002: 151-152).
WORKING METHOD AND TECHNICAL PROCESSES

The work I produced prior to this body of work consisted of large direct drawing lithographic prints that were either executed on stone or aluminium plate. They were works consisting of abstract forms devoid of any personal references, that resembled the walls and places of my environment. Very little of my personal life or experiences within these surroundings was evident. I made the conscious choice not to include this kind of information as I thought that it would detract from the overall composition in which form and colour was the main focus.

My recent working methodology developed out of a desire to create works that went a step further in overall presentation. I wanted to create works that challenged the definition of how a print could be created and presented. I began to explore other ways of working in print that would allow for greater freedom.

As an artist and lithographer the range of mark making at my disposal was endless and at that time my objective was to create works that were not just expressive in colour and tone but also thoughtful in composition. Lithography is a medium in which the success of a print is dependent on the ability to plan and envisage every consecutive colour and layer ahead of time. As I began working on a series of lithographic prints I realized that this to the process was hindering my ability to be spontaneous.

Monotype, silkscreen and gum transfer printing enabled me to experience a greater amount of flexibility than before. I was thus able to work on multiple prints simultaneously, each at various stages of completion. As a result I produced numerous prints during this project and a spontaneous approach to these mediums in turn forced me to rethink the notion of a print as simply being an image situated centrally on a white page viewed behind glass.

Prior to the creation of this body of work I considered the scale of each individual piece as an important factor and took into account the manner in which the viewer would engage with the prints. The idea was to create works that could be simultaneously viewed both in an intimate manner and also from a distance. In order to create this duality of distance and intimacy attention to detail was required.

The inclusion of contextual information and imagery relating to a personal interpretation of notions of home and belonging became an important element within the body of work. At times my personal experiences and interactions with people informed my work, other times childhood photographs became the catalyst for the creation of certain images. Close attention was paid to the environment and my surroundings. A large emphasis was placed on the details of the primary resource materials consisting of childhood photographs as well as images of various surfaces within my immediate surroundings.

Additional material was sourced from various texts such as the Dictionary of Semiotics (2000) as well as the Dictionary of symbols (1991). I incorporated and altered these signs and symbols in an effort to create my own personal iconographic vocabulary. These codes and images were then used as a starting point for the creation of some pieces within the practical work.
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS

The initial reason for taking photographs was for me to begin to understand the living conditions the people in my community of Gugulethu were experiencing. I was experiencing difficulties because of my inability to speak Xhosa and had to find an alternative way of communicating. By capturing the writings, scratchings, signs and symbols on the surfaces of various areas within Gugulethu I hoped to attain a better understanding of my environment and the lives of the people within it. My familiarity with the places and subjects I photographed was important as it aided in the final interpretation of each piece.

Prior to photographing the various neighbourhoods, I briefed my cousin Shane as to the purpose of these photographs and voiced my concerns about being robbed during our excursions. My concerns were soon put to rest with the realization that everyone knew and liked him, so the possibility of being robbed was minimal. I was still cautious however, and as we travelled in some areas I was made especially aware of my paranoia when my activities aroused the curiosity and suspicions of onlookers. If I found a particular image or wall surface that looked interesting I would stop, my cousin would quickly survey the premises for suspicious looking passers-by. If all were okay I would take my camera out of its bag take a few shots, place the camera back in the bag and move on. This would be the sequence of how most of the images were taken.

With my precious 35 mm camera (the one I’ve had since high school) safely tucked in my bag, my cousin Shane and I strolled through neighbourhoods in search of subject matter. What made this journey more interesting was that he was taking me to meet family who were unknown to me but who interestingly knew more about me than I did? These excursions (of which there were many) gave me a valuable insight into life experiences of members of my community and how I fitted into this group of ‘strangers’ called my family.
THE DRAWING PROCESS

My initial drawings were derived from the photographs taken in Gugulethu as well as out of a genuine interest in understanding the Xhosa cultural traditions. In the first few images I visually unpack a number of taboos that deal with the eating eggs by Xhosa women. According to this taboo the consumption of eggs would cause a women to be infertile and as a result many women refrained from eating them. Since I love eggs this taboo became even more interesting. It also made me think back to the numerous times where I offered the women of the household eggs for breakfast. I was confused for a long time by their utter disdain for this delicious source of protein. However upon further reading into Xhosa traditions and taboos I instantly understood the reasons and its implications and realized that these taboos were still adhered to even today.

These photographs and readings resulted in a series of loosely drawn watercolours where I continued to explore aspects of what was considered ‘taboo’ for women in the traditional Xhosa culture. I soon discovered however that this approach although important in furthering my knowledge of the subject, was not the area of content that I wanted to focus on. I began to explore personal issues that were much more personal, this being identity and the interpretation of the notion of home. The camera proved a much more flexible and spontaneous tool that allowed me to create an endless archive of source materials from which to explore these themes. The photographs were often the basis for the drawings.
THE PRINTING PROCESSES

The primary method of producing this body of work has been through the printmaking processes of monotype, lithography and silkscreen. Working with these different print media provided the opportunity to explore different textures, colours and surfaces. As a professional printer my skill was determined by the ability to print editions where each print in the edition had to look identical. As mentioned previously in this document, I found this way of working too stifling thus expanding into other media that would create similar effects attained in lithography.

MONOTYPE

The benefit of monotype was that it provided the opportunity and flexibility to create unique prints. It provided the opportunity to apply multiple layers of ink in various consistencies simultaneously or progressively to a variety of prints at a time. I prepared and mixed all of my colours for printing beforehand. Once this was ready I delineated small areas (the size of my actual sheet of paper) onto the large slab of limestone (lithographic stone) with a pencil. With a series of paintbrushes and rollers, each for different colour along with some turpentine thinners (to make the ink more fluid) I painted into these delineated sections. A large variety of textures and tones were created in this way. Thin transparent layers were printed several times to create areas of great depth. As an element of contrast thick almost impasto-like layers were then added creating prints that contained the illusion of textured, stained and deteriorating surfaces.

A hair dryer was used to remove any excess thinners from the ink, individual sheets of Zerkall Butten cotton rag paper were placed on top and put through a lithographic press. Careful attention was paid to the printing pressure as this determined the overall look of the print continuous modification it was possible to achieve subtle changes in the prints.

SCREENPRINT

Once the monotype layers were dry, I would inspect each print for its colour and composition and this would determine which medium to use next. At times layers of silkscreen were required in order to give me an inclusion of some photographic imagery or simply to add additional layers of ink to produce a particular textual quality. If photographic images were needed I would scan the image digitally, alter its appearance in Adobe Photoshop and then print it out on clear acetate as a photo positive for screenprinting.

Various colours and images were screenprinted onto each print to achieve a particular quality. For additional texture I painted onto sheets of clear acetate, using black acrylic paint and exposed and prepared the screens in the same way as previously mentioned.
LITHOGRAPHY

Lithography was initially the primary medium used in the production of my work but (as mentioned before) the process proved to be too time consuming and lacked the kind of immediacy for the kinds of prints I wanted. However, when I did incorporate this medium into the work, I used photographs as well as hand drawn elements. The photographic process once again involved scanning and manipulating the image on a computer. The image was then printed onto bond paper and altered through changing the contrast and appearance. These processed images were then transferred and the plate was then processed and printed.

The series titled *Imbumba Yengeba Zayo* (the sum of its parts) falls within the tradition of lithographic printing. It was the first of the series created and the only series where the majority of the runs were printed lithographically. I encountered quite a few problems with this work as I initially printed the first few layers in neutral earth tones prior to determining the colour of the subject matter. I chose this reddish tone with the initial sense of hesitation only to realize that the strength of the image lies in the harshness of this colour.

GUM TRANSFER

Gum transfer printing proved to be the easiest and the most interesting (in terms of the variety of textures available) of all the mediums. This process works by transferring a gummed and inked photocopy onto a sheet of paper using a press. While in the process of printing I discovered that the press, (even with the least amount of pressure) distorted the details of the image. The matrix prior to printing however retained the result I was looking for in the work. I decided that I would follow the entire gum transfer process until the moment prior to printing.

While creating *Deurmekaar*, (DIEMACAR), I encountered the problem of how to display this work, since the matrix was a light bond paper that became even more fragile during the creation process. After discussions and my own research I decided to adhere these prints directly onto board that would then later be attached to another matrix for hanging.
Within this practical body of work I present the viewer with a glimpse into my memories and experiences while living in South Africa at various stages of my life, this is all in relation to my understanding of notions of home and displacement. My interest has been in exploring aspects of identity through my personal experiences and response to my environment. The prints are divided into six large-scale works consisting of approximately 300 individual prints. Each work contains a collective name that refers to notions of home and displacement. Each work is presented in the shape of a house. The individual pieces (which are all works on paper) were pasted onto board using archival glue called methyl cellulose. This was done in order to protect the work on paper from future damage caused by excessive handling. The reinforced print was then adhered onto two large sheets of mylar, using adhesive Velcro. Each individual print was placed alongside each other in an intuitive manner. I juxtaposed works for the contextual, or colour relationships. There were a number of works that required a thematic sequence in which the movement of the figure within a print dictated its particular placement.
**HOMECOMING** (James A. Harrison)

Suspended between worlds in departures, beyond
security,
not yet out but forbidden to turn back,
one hovers in a shiny space filled with things to sit on.
The journey itself uneventful, even tedious,
lacks all sensation of travel, of flying the length unseen
of a continent and the width of the widest sea,
or approaching an island, uncommonly green.

Heathrow is huge and hurrying, yet orderly, even
reassuring.
The shuttle bus driver knew and liked my country.
Driving a tiny Volkswagen on the usual left,
I found the M4 without difficulty. More cars, more trucks
but unmistakably a freeway, familiar if not tame
- even the signs were colour correct.
I drove towards Bristol as if it were Bloemfontein.

The English countryside is green, green upon green and
leafy,
like illustrated nursery rhymes and the pictures in story
books,
or like desired results in gardening magazines.

There are buildings older than the colonies; they breathe
the atmospheres of cherished literature, of history
I learned in school. And everyone spoke my language,
with irritating accents but without mystery.

It was not novelty but familiarity that disturbed,
Like the shock of déjà vu. A hemisphere from home,
nevertheless, at home, because home is the place
of understood meanings, where the worth and weight
of things are granted and customs go unquestioned.
One goes unnoticed there because one has always been
there.
A member of the family, I was camouflaged and bland.

Returning to this hybrid culture, it was strange to feel
again not embedded but precarious, dangling on the
fringe.
Meadows and the Queen’s English are deep and dear,
as owned as Afrikaans and koppies in dry landscapes,
but I am no colonist, no matter how those winds blow.
Living without a tribe is insecure, lonely;
the homefires burn low.

(De Kock & Tromp 1996: 158-159).
Additional drawings (2002).


MEMORY WALL: THE SPACE IN BETWEEN CALLED ABSENCE

2003 - 2004
Medium: Monotype with Lithography, Screen Print and Hand drawing
Measurements: 2375 mm x 2540 mm
Paper: Zerkall Butten
Edition: None
Runs: Variable

This series of prints was created using a variety of printmaking techniques. Each individual print contains a variable sequence of monotype, screenprint, lithography and gum transfer layers. The source material comes from my personal archive of childhood photographs taken during my childhood years in Cape Town and from photographs taken in the past three years by a number of friends. The most recent photographs were taken with specific themes or ideas in mind. Additional imagery was salvaged from books like *Dictionary of Semiotics* (2000) and *Dictionary of symbols* (1991). These books dissected the manner, purpose and effects of language and speech on the individuals understanding of him/herself in relation to groups of people as well as the environment.

What is also important to note is that the origin, in terms of composition and colour for the majority of these prints were from the initial graffiti photographs taken in Gugulethu.
Detail of print.
(L) ATTITUDE INCLUDES ATTITUDE

2004
Medium: Gum Transfer Print
Measurements: 2430 mm x 2100 mm
Paper: Zerkall
Edition: Variable
Proofs if any: None
Runs: 2

This work evolved out of a series of self-portrait photographs that were created in the same vain as the previous series, Translocal Spaces. However unlike that series in which the movement of my entire body was the focus, here my facial expressions and upper body movement (specifically my arms) was emphasized. Within this work the centrally composed figure (myself) was positioned rather close to the picture frame in an attempt to engage the viewer within the conversation.
DEURMEKAAR (DIEMACAR)

2004
Medium: Gum transfer print process
Measurements: 2430 mm x 2120 mm
Paper: Photocopy Bond paper
Edition: Variable
Runs: 1

Within the South African context the title of this work is a commonly used Afrikaans word that has a variety of meanings. I chose it for its association with the demarcation of an area (to demarcate) as well as for suggesting a particular physical and emotional state such as chaos, disorder and confusion. A series of photographs reminiscent of sequential photographs seen in The human figure in motion (1955) as well as Anatomy of movement (1993) were taken and this served as the primary source material for this series of prints. The theme surrounding these photographs and ultimately the final work was the notion of belonging. The positioning of my body (particularly my arms) along with the manner in which the images were cropped were vital in suggesting these notions.
The largest of all the works within the six series Translocal Spaces was my first attempt at making a print primarily using the silkscreen process. The initial idea for this piece came from reading books like Anatomy of Movement (1993) and The Human Figure in Motion (1955). Some of these photographs taken at the turn of the century had an amazing ability to capture the essence of a particular movement, such as a woman walking up a flight of stairs or a man running a race. Of particular interest to me was the way body language was used to convey an emotion or message within many of the photographs. With these images as my reference I began to create my own series of sequential photographs in hopes of conveying a variety of personal emotions relating to notions of displacement.
IMBUMBA YENGCEBA ZAYO
(THE SUM OF ITS PARTS)

2003 / 2004
Medium: Lithography and Monotype
Measurements: 2070 mm x 2120 mm
Paper: Zerkall Butten
Edition: Variable (No true edition)
Proofs if any: None
Runs: Approximately 20

The title of this series is a Xhosa phrase (as seen above) that when translated means 'the sum of its parts'. I was working around the commonly used phrase 'the whole is equal to the sum of its parts'. Images relating to various places I lived during my childhood years in Cape Town are seen in the background of each individual print. Juxtaposed against this is a self-portrait positioned in the foreground. The direct manner in which I gaze at the viewer along with the compositional elements in the background suggests that these places (along with their individual experiences) have had a direct influence on who I am today.
Detail of print.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


