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**MAKING ART TO MAKE IDENTITY:
SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF SELF AMONGST
HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED SOUTH
AFRICAN ARTISTS**

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ABSTRACT

Making Art to Make Identity: Shifting Perceptions of Self amongst Historically Disadvantaged South African Artists

Jade Gibson, 2005

This study examines how historically disadvantaged artists shift self-identities through art-making beyond previously racialised, hierarchised and essentialist constructs in a transforming New South Africa. Fieldwork research involved direct observation, working with artists on art projects, and interviews with visual artists and other arts practitioners in Cape Town, 1998-2001. Artworks are examined as events incorporating social change, and thus as a focal point between unconscious praxis and the cognitive coming-to-awareness of self within-the-world. Using a non-essentialist approach to identity construction, I argue for an understanding of, and approach to, studying individual identity that incorporates complexity, multiplicity, materiality and change as integral to identity formation.

The reworking of memory materially within artworks is demonstrated through examining how artists re-presented autobiographical and historical referents of identity to affirm and re-present new narratives of self in South Africa's present. How artists respond to, and negotiate, tensions and contradiction between concepts of 'freedom' and externally-derived categories of value within socio-economic limitations in a transforming South African art world is also explored. I also show how artworks act as sites of transcultural encounter for artists, within their awareness of different gazes and contexts of interpretation, to position identities simultaneously both within the local and beyond the local, through different images, styles, techniques and technologies in their work. Finally, I demonstrate how different collaborative art projects, through artistic praxis, enable mutual processes of social and artistic collective identification between artists of different socio-cultural backgrounds, in relation to processes of nation-building and reconciliation for South Africa in the future. The study not only provides insight into art-making in South Africa and material processes of cognitive identity construction, but also how individuals act as agents in shifting self-identities within processes of collective socio-political transformation.

University of Cape Town

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I view art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. The 'action'-centred approach to art is inherently more anthropological than the alternative semiotic approach because it is preoccupied with the practical mediatory role of art objects in the social process, rather than with the interpretation of objects 'as if' they were texts.

Alfred Gell, 1998: 6

...of all the things in the environment an active body must make mental models of, none is more crucial than the model the agent has of itself.

Daniel C Dennet, 1991: 426-7

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

If you look at the pigment of your skin, then I'm black, but when I speak, I speak as a human being. Then, later, because of my craft, I am an artist. I don't see me as a black artist because I'm different to so-called white artists because of the skin. I'm different to other artists because of how I approach my work. That's how I see myself really...

But growing up in South Africa, I must say that sometimes you are reminded of your colour, you are reminded of what you are, of your language and all that, because you live in a system that has created those segregations, those divisions. So, when you walk, you see this reflection in people's eyes, in walls, everywhere, that you are this person, and that person... -
artist, Xhosa-speaking male, Cape Town, 1998.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study examines the relationship between visual art, artists, identity and agency within macro-level processes of socio-political transformation in the New South Africa. The study focuses particularly on the agency of historically disadvantaged artists in Cape Town, 1998-2001, in reconstructing their self-identity through producing art.

With the understanding that artworks are the visible components of socially and culturally embedded processes (Banks and Morphy 1997), the study examines how the construction of artworks incorporated broader, more expansive, multiple and diverse perceptions of self for historically disadvantaged artists in the New South Africa, a society previously founded upon racist, segregated, hierarchised and essentialist constructs of identity. The study is pertinent to several disciplines and several contemporary theoretical areas of burgeoning interest.

The viewpoint is taken that individuals, rather than responding passively to hegemonic socio-political changes, actively contribute towards collective change. The ways that individuals shift perceptions of self-identity through their presentation, practice and performance within the production of artworks are examined in relation to macro-level change within South Africa. The approach to identity is anti-essentialist, in that emerging social identities in the study are understood not as end-points in themselves, but as evidence of ongoing complex, negotiated, and multiple processes constituted within social praxis, and subject to further change.

The results document the cognitive coming-to-conscious awareness of self through individual agency and intentionality within socio-political transformation, and indicate different processes and possibilities for identities in South Africa in the future. The study also provides insight into the complex internal composition of self-identities in South Africa that fundamentally underlie some of the many alternative realities and different perceptions of identity within contemporary South African society. Challenges faced for change and transformation at ground level are presented – not only for artists – but in relation to constituting macro-level collective social transformation for all individual persons in the New South Africa.

SOCIAL IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The socio-cultural transformation taking place in the New South Africa, including South African contemporary visual art practice, provides the context for this study. When fieldwork for this study began, issues concerning social identities in a South Africa undergoing rapid and dramatic transformation were (and remain) contentious and contradictory. A year before fieldwork began, Kellner, a South African theorist, aptly summed up the prevailing situation:

In a sense, to be South African is to be a hybrid, from which no singular origin is evident. Black South Africans have had their history and culture - their very existence - erased due to apartheid, while white South Africans have been cut off from their European ancestry, either developing a distorted sense of self, not wholly African but not entirely European either. Forty years of apartheid policy has created a deformed, brutally twisted beast.... South Africa is something of a bastard. A completely heterogeneous cocktail of discord, assemblage, bricolage, metamorphosis and epistemological erasure" (1997: 29-31).

Apartheid had existed in South Africa as a system of political control since the rise to power of the National Party in 1948. Apartheid, and the segregatory practices and legislation that preceded it, had formed the foundation of South Africa's entire social fabric and involved the legally enforced hierarchised categorisation of the entire South African population into race categories. The four main race categories, or 'population groups' as they were known under apartheid, were white, coloured, Indian and black ('African') in descending order of hierarchical privilege. These racialised identity categories were part of an imposed and pervasive social structure for over forty years. Some argued, since democratisation in 1994, South Africans faced a transition not only from over forty years of racist, legalised and hierarchised racial oppression, but also a release from 300 years of colonialism and segregation (Posel 1999).

Following the official end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa became a constitutional democracy and underwent rapid processes of socio-political transformation, which continue into the present. The end of apartheid impacted dramatically upon South Africa, both internally within the social framework, and externally, through international relations.

Internally, the national election of 1994 marked the point at which the previously politically invisible historically disadvantaged population were given the vote, and thus agency in constructing a future for the New South Africa. South Africa was now declared a 'Rainbow Nation', with an egalitarian, diverse and multicultural population. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, (lasting from April 1996 until October 1998, with Amnesty Hearings into 2001)¹ took place as a public means of bringing about national reconciliation and closure from the apartheid past for South Africans. Affirmative action was introduced as a policy to redress some of the economic and work imbalances that had previously been part of apartheid legislation and previously legalised racist restrictions were abolished. Externally, the removal of anti-apartheid international sanctions post-1994 led to a sudden influx of international trade and media, exposing South Africans to rapid processes of cultural and economic

¹ These events and dates are significant for the political and social climate surrounding the timing of this study.

globalisation. Furthermore, towards the end of the 1990s, a political emphasis on an 'African Renaissance' emerged which culturally and economically associated South Africans not with Europe, as under apartheid, but in the African continent.

Social transformation inevitably resulted in South Africans themselves grappling with changing perspectives and possibilities for social identities. These had previously played out within daily praxis and interaction as part of apartheid South African society and were now, theoretically, 'freed' from categorisation and restrictions in the New South Africa. For socio-political transformation to occur successfully, macro-level changes would inevitably require integration at an individual level. However, social change is a dynamic, negotiated process and individuals are agents that respond to, negotiate with and contribute to collective social change. A shift away from apartheid-constructed identities would require a shift in the body's relationships with others, and the modes and spaces through which it exists and interacts with the world. These issues are explored in greater depth in later chapters.

Socio-political change in the New South Africa also directly affected the working lives of historically disadvantaged artists. They, like everyone else except whites, had been subject to racial segregation under apartheid, socially disadvantaged in access to art markets and education and representation within provincial art institutions. With the growth of the anti-apartheid movement from the 1980s to early 1990s, many historically disadvantaged artists had taken part in the collective fight against apartheid as 'cultural workers', producing anti-apartheid art work. Following the official end of apartheid in 1994, the South African visual art world 'opened up' to the international art world and shifted to an emphasis on individualised artistic 'freedom' in the New South Africa, with a strong emphasis on the avant-garde. There was therefore pressure on artists who had worked collectively as 'cultural workers' against apartheid to enter contemporary fine art world markets that assumed a contemporary fine arts training.

Artists were thus faced with challenges on several accounts – the need to deal with socio-political change in relation to their own perceptions of self-identity in their everyday lives, and working within a domain of praxis focused on visual representation through which identities could be, both consciously and unconsciously, 'performed' in public.

*

The remainder of this chapter presents key theoretical concepts and ideas which inform the study and are re-visited throughout the ensuing chapters. First, I describe relevant identity theory and argue for an approach that examines identity as fluid, multiple and undergoing continual processes of change. Second, I present arguments for a focus on agency and individuality within social theory in relation to collective social change. Third, I argue for a theoretical focus on the role of artefacts within identity construction, in relation to the objectification of the self. Following this, and as a means to bring together and incorporate the theories presented thus far, I present arguments for an anthropological approach to art and artists within social study.

IDENTITY AND CHANGE

Although previously perceived as essentialist, static, and fixed, identity is now understood by most social researchers and theorists to be fluid, multiple and undergoing continual processes of change.² Identity has consequently been described as a “hybrid, inescapable mixture of ideas” (Gilroy 1993: xi), and as a “‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall 1990: 222).

However, despite its seeming fluidity and amorphousness, *perceptions* of identity as fixed and static, “both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life” (Gilroy 1997: 301) can, and do, have significant and often crucial impacts on peoples' lives (Hall 1996, 1990a, 1990b; Gilroy 1997; Woodward 1997). For example, essentialist perceptions of identity, particularly in relation to perceptions of cultural, territorial or national origin, are often directly connected to, or responsible for, today's ethnic conflicts, wars and genocide, as well as being the foundation for the apartheid principles and beliefs that provide the socio-political context for this study in a transforming New South Africa.

A gamut of theoretical studies evidences the complexity and multiplicity of social identities. Identities, for example, have been studied as shaped through narratives of the past (Antze and Lambek 1996, Tonkin 1996, Bloch 1998), often through performative and commemorative public ceremonies (Bhabha 1990, Connerton 1989; Goldsworthy 1996; Rowlands 1993). Identities may be created through perceptions of ‘sameness’ or ‘difference’ in relation to other individuals or groups (Gilroy 1997; Woodward 1997; Jenkins 1996), perceptions of localised communities, nations and territories (Anderson 1983, Lovell 1998, Gillis 1994, Soja 1996, Hutchinson and Smith 1996), as well as by an imposed categorisation by others (Jenkins 1990). There is also a growing interest in processes of hybridisation, creolisation, globalisation and multiple identities within an increasingly globalised world. Gilroy (1993, 1995) even argues that individuals may become positioned within seemingly mutually exclusive identities, looking ‘both ways at once’, in relation to the ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ that they contextualise themselves within. Described as a ‘slippery’ concept, difficult to pin down, and in need of further academic study (Handler 1994), identity can thus be seen as, seemingly paradoxically, both fixed *and* continually changing.

In his extensive study of social identity, Jenkins describes social identity as a complex process, one conceptualised as both individual *and* intrinsically social:

First, identities are necessarily attributes of embodied individuals which are equally necessarily socially constituted, sometimes at a high level of abstraction. In social identity (or identities) the collective and the individual occupy the same space. Second, if social identity is conceptualised in terms of process, as here, a sharp distinction between structure and action may be avoided. Third, if those processes are conceptualised as a perpetual dialectic of two analytically (but only analytically) distinct moments – the internal and the external – then the opposition between the objective and the subjective may also be sidestepped. Fourth, since identity is bound up with cultural repertoires of intentionality such as morality, on the one hand, and with networks of

² See, for example, Gilroy 1993, 1997; Hall 1990a, 1990b, 1996; Hall and Du Gay 1996; Woodward 1997; Jenkins 1996.

constraint and possibility, on the other, it is an important concept in our understanding of action and its outcomes, both intended and unintended. Fifth, the institutional order is, at least in part, a network of identities (positions) and of routinised practices for allocating positions (and therefore identities) to individuals. Sixth, there is a direct relationship between the distribution of resources and penalties in society and social identity: identity is a criterion for distribution and is constituted in terms of patterns of distribution. Means and end again. Seventh, in identifying internal and external moments of identification a necessary connection is made between domination and resistance and processes of social identification. Lastly, the classification of populations as a practice of state and other agencies is powerfully constitutive of both the institutional order and of the experience of individuals in the interaction order (1996:26).

Jenkin's (ibid.) understanding of social identity involves differing and multiple modes of presentation. These consist of negotiations between the individual and the collective, as a dialectic, involving processes of both internal and external definition between the subjective self and the objectified subject in society. Such negotiations, he claims, coalesce as *process*, dependent upon modes of power and expression within constructs of domination and resistance such as institutions and the state, and these modes operate through cultural repertoires of intentionality, and networks of constraint and possibility.

INDIVIDUALS, COGNITION AND SELF

In the last thirty years anthropologists have shifted away from a mind-body dualistic approach towards self and culture to an approach mediating between social constructivist and embodied concepts. Kapferer (1995) argues for an understanding of 'embodied consciousness' in which "the actualities of human existence are fundamentally the constructions of human beings" (138). The self is has been argued to be an agent of cultural construction through action in-the-world,³ in which "the body is the self, not just its carrier" (Hastrup 1994: 23) - a "self-in practice" (Holland et al. 1998: 32), emerging or 'coming to awareness.' Bourdieu (1977, 1990) has also examined the extent to which human experience is materially embodied through its unconscious praxis within society. The body has been argued to be 'in-the-mind,' in that human meaning and cognition are mediated through image schemata derived from human bodily experience (Johnson 1987; 1991) in which, "Grasping a meaning is an *event* of understanding; it is a dynamic, interactive and fundamentally imaginative process relating to previous experiences and embodied knowledge" (ibid. 1987: 236; emphasis in original).

In addition, to refining ideas about the self and body, there has been an increased interest in the role of individuals within social transformation. Rather than being perceived as passive recipients of external socio-cultural forces, it has been argued that individuals "make up collectives" and are thus agents of social change:

... there is general agreement that the individual is certainly creative within (and possibly outwith) the current and received terms of the collectivity to which she or he belongs; and that the individual's activity of *interpretation*, of sense making, requires us to develop a more sophisticated and sensitive view of the complexity of individuals and to refrain from seeing them as merely generalizable within 'cultures'. Rather than talking glibly of collective consciousness,

³ See Cohen and Rapport 1995; Hastrup 1995; Kapferer 1995, Johnson 1987 and 1991.

we would now advocate the more cautious, 'consciousness within collectivity'. (Cohen and Rapport 1995:13: emphasis in original).

... To pay attention to the consciousness of the individual and to the narratives in which it is expressed is not to privilege the individual over society; but, rather, is a necessary condition for the sensitive understanding of social relations and of society as composed of, and constituted by, subjective individuals in interaction (ibid.11).

People are thus not perceived as representing or acting as bearers of culture in acting out a set of symbols, but as creating culture through their active interrelationships with others, as cultural actors (Fuchs, 2000).

Cohen and Rapport further claim that individuals create points of stasis within the action of lived experience, within which identity is constructed, practiced, and undergoes change:

In real life, there are no absolute beginnings or ends to particular events, there are antecedents and successors to every moment. In order to orientate themselves, *individuals are required to create points of stasis, "creations" or "articulations" of the self, as discrete, bounded focal points, at the same time enabling possibilities and processes of change* (1995:7: my emphasis)

There is little research however on how individuals shift seemingly fixed "discrete bounded focal points" to new perceptions of self during times of social transformation. Furthermore, it is claimed that there is a "relative lack of attention to specifying exactly what goes on in an embodied mind in relation to activity in the world" (Tilley 2000: 261). Part of this problem lies in the need for a methodological approach that draws together cognitive, material and identity theory and provides insight into the individual's capacity for change, through agency within collectivity. This study provides such an approach through studying how historically disadvantaged artists shift perceptions of self through making artworks in the New South Africa.

THE MATERIALITY OF IDENTITY

Representation is the means through which people identify each other, and themselves, and is therefore essential to anthropological study. Banks and Morphy (1997) for example contend that:

Anthropology as a discipline is itself a representational process, engaged in an activity of cultural translation or interpretation. It involves the representation of one culture or segment of society to an anthropological audience which itself includes people with different cultural backgrounds who operate on varying premises. An understanding of the nature of representational processes across cultures is thus integral to the overall objectives of anthropology (: 2).

Images are often the means through which people represent themselves. Writing of imaginal performance in ritual healing, Csordas argues that the 'image' exists, not within the visual modality alone, but "is a bodily practice in so far as it engages multiple sensory modalities (1996 :98), and in which the self is "a repertoire of capacities for orienting in and engaging the world" (ibid. 100-101). The concept of 'image' extends to artefacts. Strathern, for example, claims that:

Images are presented through artefacts ... also through persons in their bodily form and where it is equally the case that persons are objects of the regard of others, through performances of all

kinds. People objectify or present themselves to themselves in innumerable ways, but must always do so through assuming a specific form... (1990:29)

Much work has emerged on the relationship between the materiality of artefacts as images of society, and how they shape social behaviour and identities. In the last twenty years for example, ethnographic studies of material culture [broadly defined as an interdisciplinary form of research with a common focus on “the investigation of the relationship of people and things irrespective of time and space” in order to explore “the ways in which artefacts are implicated in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social identities” (Tilley and Miller 1996:5)] have undergone profound transformation. The field is now claimed to be one of the most dynamic and innovatory areas of contemporary anthropological research (Tilley 2000). Tilley writes that, “...the identities of persons and things are mutually entangled, one cannot be understood without considering the other” (2000: 267).

Artefacts are made by people, and this study focuses not on the final products, but on the making of artefacts, as a means through which people determine self-identities, from the perspective that, “...the object is only a fulcrum or lever across which the force of creation moves back into the human site and remakes the makers” (Scarry 1985: 307). Scarry (ibid.), for example, contends that a made object is a projection of the human body, a making sentient of the external world and, consequently, “through making things, people make themselves in the process” (2000: 260).

This study examines the construction of objects deliberately and self-consciously concerned with representation – the making of artworks to make identity amongst historically disadvantaged artists in a transforming South Africa.

ART, ARTISTS AND IDENTITY

There has been a considerable increase in the literature on the anthropology of art (Buchli 2002, Marcus and Myers 1995, Gell 1998, Tilley 2001) concomitant with the recent theoretical shifts described above. It has been suggested that artworks and artists should no longer be studied as seemingly ‘set apart’ in society, traditionally objectified as a form of ‘high culture’ based on individual innovation, and subject to their own discursive framework within art historical criteria (Napier 1992, Root 1996). Some argue that, “the very physicality of art offers a prime medium for beginning the intellectual exploration of other societies” and consequently, for this reason, “art should be at the forefront of anthropological studies” (Coote and Shelton 1992: 3). Indeed, it has been suggested that new theoretical approaches are required in which the artwork is studied as a visual *system*, perceived not merely as symbolic of society, but the visible outcome of a cultural process of production sited within social practice (Banks and Morphy 1997).

Several social and cultural theorists have suggested a need for alternative frameworks for the study of visual art (Schneider 1996, 1993; Rowlands 1993; Kuchler and Melion 1991; Napier 1992; Thomas 1997) and conventional studies of art and art practice have been challenged⁴ (Thomas 1997;

⁴ This was recently a focus of the conference *Fieldworks: Dialogues between Art and Anthropology* at the Tate Modern, London, UK, 26-28 September 2003

Schneider 1993; 1996). Drewal (2000), for example, commenting on Brazilian creative arts, argues that there should be a theoretical focus on those who *create*, as agents within society. Such studies, he argues, should be in relation to “the instrumentality of creating one’s reality - the process of turning aspirations into practices and products” (241) and “how specific interests were (or were not) turned into practices and *why*” (252; author’s emphases). Fabian (1996), in his study of the Zairian artist, Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, has argued that paintings are performative, in being constituted as an action in real time, deeply “embedded in thought and reflection, in stories and conversations, all of them realised through a series of events that occurred at a particular place, during a certain time, involving certain persons” (219).

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in studying the work of contemporary visual artists within anthropological studies⁵. Schneider (1993, 1996) has also claimed that visual artists may act as anthropologists and historians because they appropriate anthropological and historical research techniques in their work to investigate their own and others’ referencing and situated-ness within society. Consequently, “...such art can be as legitimate in the representation of other cultures as already academically established written and visual discourses in anthropology” (ibid. 1996: 183).

In this study, artworks are examined as *events* of creation, material points of negotiation or ‘hinges’ between an individual’s self-perception, and the ‘making real’ of cognitive processes of self-identification in society.

STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapters One and Two

Chapters One and Two outline basic theoretical concerns, a background to the project, research methodology and an outline of the study. The following chapters were developed from theoretical areas of interest and the focus on identity construction that emerged during fieldwork. Case studies of artists and projects were also selected from fieldwork and included within theoretical chapters. It should be noted that the theoretical focus of each chapter is by no means mutually exclusive from others, and that different process of identity construction are often interlinked. Indeed, it would go against the main theoretical premise of this study if they were not, and thus, at times, there is some inevitable overlap across chapters. Likewise, different works of the same artists may be referred to in different chapters.

Chapter Three

Socio-political change in South Africa involved the collective reworking of the past, through national processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. How did this affect individual narratives of the past in relation to self-identity? To what extent is memory constructed from verbal

⁵ For example, the ‘Fieldworks’ Conference at the Tate, London, UK, in 2004, had a significant proportion of its programme devoted to these very issues.

narratives, and to what extent, for South Africans, is memory an embodied, spatial and non-verbal construct? Furthermore, how do artworks rework such embodied, spatial and non-verbal relationships with the past? How does this compare with cognitive processes of memory construction? Chapter Three examines the artwork as a form of cognitive memory construction which re-shapes individual narratives as a process of 'healing' from the apartheid past, illustrating at the same time how, "memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration" (Antze and Lambek (1996): vii).

Chapter Four

Identities are determined not only in relation to perceptions and narratives of the past, but are also created through categorisations created externally by others, and our responses to them: "Not only do we identify ourselves... but we also identify others and are identified by them in turn, in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image" (Jenkins (1996: 22)).

In Chapter Four, in relation to concepts of 'freedom' in art in the New South Africa, I explore tensions and contradictions between historically disadvantaged artists' personal attempts to move beyond apartheid identity constructs, and externally-derived categories of value determined by art markets and institutions in the art world. I further examine artists' responses to these tensions and contradictions, as agents in responding to and drawing upon these same restrictions, to redefine self-identities and sell work, through resisting, negotiating, and appropriating these same art categories on their own terms.

Chapter Five

Changes in South Africa also occurred in relation to the international world, with the lifting of international trade sanctions; an emphasis on an African 'Renaissance' and the exposure of South Africans to rapid processes of economic and cultural globalisation. Chapter Five thus examines how identity referents are located in space, in relation to the linking of perceptions of culture and 'territory' beyond 'the local', in relation to theory suggesting that, "contemporary cultural identities must be about internationalism in a direct sense, about our positions in transnational spaces" (Morely and Robins 1995: 41). This chapter takes a complex approach, with the view that, "The various flows from which we construct our cultural identities require more than the old Newtonian analogies of force and power if we are to understand them adequately" (Gilroy 1995: 27). Furthermore, in these cases, the cognitive incorporation of multiple identities as a 'whole' within an incorporative, assimilative and expansive approach to identity, rather than as a fragmented sense of self, is examined through exploring the use of imagery and techniques within artworks as a form of territorial and cultural encounter, juxtaposing visual referents to perceptions of 'traditional' cultural identities, with contemporaneity, modernity and the trans-local contexts for their interpretation. I therefore examine the extent to which artists locate themselves

culturally and geographically through visual referents within the context of different 'gazes,' sometimes simultaneously positioning themselves as both insiders and outsiders to the cultures they represent. I further examine how these 'positionings' are related to 'outside' locales of power, as well as the agency of artists' in strategically using these in the marketing of their work, and presentations of self-identity.

Chapter Six

Change in South Africa also required the removal of perceptions of hierarchised racial differences and practices which perpetuate perceptions of 'us' and 'them' in the move towards a democratic, egalitarian and reconciled New South Africa and the establishment of a collective national identity for all South Africans in the future. In Chapter Six, I draw on themes of individual identity construction in previous chapters to examine the forms and outcome of interactions *between* artists. I focus on three collaborative art projects – The Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops at the National Gallery (1998 and 1999); *Childhood*, a collaborative artwork between two artists at the Irma Sterna museum in Cape Town (1998); and 'Dis Nag; the Cape's Hidden History of Slavery,' an exhibition focussed on the contemporary relevance of the history of slavery in the Western Cape, at the Cultural History Museum (1998). Within these projects, I examine how mutual referents of collective identification are created, despite perceived racialised boundaries of difference between Cape Town artists of diverse backgrounds, through often unconscious processes incorporated within art praxis.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

In Chapter Seven, the outcome of separate chapters is summarised. The results are then discussed in the light of the three main concerns of this thesis: theory concerning individual identity construction, particularly in relation to human cognition and praxis; issues concerning approaches to studying art and artists in South Africa; and processes of micro-level change in self-identities necessary for macro-level processes of change in a democratic and egalitarian New South Africa for the future.

CHAPTER TWO:

METHODOLOGY

FIELDWORK PROCESS

The concentrated fieldwork for this study extended from mid-1998 to 2001 with an earlier period of preliminary research from 1996-7, and took place in the Greater Cape Town Metropolitan Area, South Africa. It involved both participant observation within art projects and workshops, and personal interviews and conversations with practicing artists and other persons in the arts field.

I took part as a participant artist in 'Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops'⁶ at the South African National Gallery in 1998 and 1999 (see Appendix C at the end of this study for a list of participant artists). I also worked as artists' co-ordinator and artist as part of the 'Dis Nag: The Cape's Hidden History of Slavery' collaborative exhibition at the Cultural History Museum Slave Lodge building,⁷ Cape Town, Heritage Day, September 24th 1998 (list of participating artists and works exhibited included in Appendix D). I also attended life-drawing classes with a group of local artists, in central Cape Town from 1998 to 2001.

In addition to continued artistic participation and more general discussion with other arts practitioners, academics, gallery staff and curators, I conducted around forty-five formal interviews with selected Cape Town artists, and additional interviews with curators and arts administrators between 1998 and 2001, which I felt were particularly relevant to this study (lists of formal interviews and key organisations contacted are included in Appendices A and B).

Background to Fieldwork

Prior to the main fieldwork period for this study, I spent a preliminary year in Cape Town from April 1996 to April 1997. During this time, I worked with historically disadvantaged visual artists at the Joseph Stone Centre studio space⁸ in Athlone as a member of the 'Cape Flats Arts Group' and as an assistant on life skills courses at 'New World Foundation Community Centre' in Lavender Hill, Cape Flats. Both these experiences provided background insight into some of the social issues and concerns affecting peoples' lives and living conditions on the Cape Flats. Much of my later fieldwork originated and was inspired by observations made and experiences gained from working with members of the Cape Flats⁹ Arts Group.

⁶ See Chapters Four and Six.

⁷ Now Iziko Slave Lodge. Also see Chapter Six.

⁸ The backstage area of the Joseph Stone Theatre formed the studio space.

⁹ The Cape Flats is generally understood to comprise the residential area of the majority of the historically disadvantaged in Cape Town, established largely as a result of the Group Areas Act under apartheid social engineering.

The Cape Flats Arts Group formed around 1995/6 and lasted approximately two years. At that time, the group comprised artists Donovan Ward and Craig Masters, in their thirties, and three younger artists in their early to mid-twenties, Mustafa Maluka (formerly Dennis Maluka), Humza Gulam, and Andre Pillay. The latter three claimed they had recently left their Cape Technikon graphics design and illustration courses to focus on developing careers as fine artists. I spent most time with the three younger artists, as Donovan frequently worked at home, and Craig came to the Joseph Stone Centre only occasionally. While the three artists and I worked on paintings, I observed, listened to, and participated in long discussions (and sometimes arguments) in relation to concepts of 'freedom' in the New South Africa, and particularly concerning moving away from apartheid-imposed race categories in relation to these artists' perceptions of self-identity.

Although the three artists had all grown up classified within a purportedly homogeneous coloured identity under apartheid, they expressed very different opinions regarding their self-identities both verbally, and visually within their work. Mustafa Maluka, whose work is discussed in Chapters Three and Six below, was in the process of changing his name from Dennis to Mustafa while converting from Christianity to Islam. He was preoccupied with what he claimed was the denial of a black African ancestral component within the 'coloured community'. This was based partly on his own research, in the South African Public Library Archives, which revealed that approximately one third on the slaves brought to the Cape by the Dutch East India Company, now believed to constitute the majority of the Western Cape's coloured population, were of black African ancestry. Mustafa also claimed that his surname, Maluka, indicated direct descent from African origins on his father's side.

Humza Gulam had a Muslim father, Christian mother and Hindu grandmother. He had, at different stages of his life, been brought up with all three religions and was particularly interested in examining his Indian Hindu ancestry. Humza's artworks incorporated images drawn from Indian graphics and calligraphy that he had spent his time researching¹⁰. Andre, also classified coloured, was a Rastafarian. He depicted Rastafarian motifs in his paintings and drawings and played an active role in the Rasta community producing banners for Rastafarian events. He claimed an identification with Haile Selassie and Ethiopia as the basis for an African identity.

What is notable is that, whether through religion or history, these three artists were concerned with exploring aspects of self-identity that extended beyond, and contradicted, a perception of coloured identity as homogeneous. It could of course be argued that, since these three artists were in their early twenties, self-identity was a concern particular to their generation. However, their artistic expressions, occurring shortly after the formal end of apartheid in 1994, were also sited within, and in relation to, external hegemonic contexts in the New South Africa, where a shift from the institutionalised racism of apartheid was a conscious and specific concern of socio-political transformation. Their personal explorations of self-identity indicated processes of agency and self-transformation in a 'New' South

¹⁰ At the time of my main fieldwork for this thesis (from 1998 to 2000), Humza was in Durban and his work is therefore not featured as part of the main study.

Africa beyond previous apartheid-perceptions of categorised identities. The intensity with which artists were concerned with these issues raised the research questions which inform this study.

Contact with Visual Artists and Arts Practitioners

I returned to Cape Town in 1998 to commence fieldwork for this study officially. A number of anti-apartheid arts networks and groups operated in Cape Town from the 1960s to the early 1990s set up by trade unions, arts groups and institutions,¹¹ and mostly funded by international anti-apartheid organisation. However, by the time of this study, many artists claimed that collective art groups had fallen away or 'fragmented' after 1994, that there were now few centralised facilities for contacting other artists, and that contact between their members, especially across cultural and race boundaries, had not been maintained. All artists – black, white and coloured – often commented that there was a lack of artistic networks and communication. Historically disadvantaged artists in particular complained of now working in isolated pockets of activity.

Consequently, I contacted the majority of artists for this study via word-of-mouth through personal networking, primarily through ex-members of the Cape Flats Arts Group, and through personal contacts at the South African National Gallery and University of Cape Town, rather than through established arts collectives. Introductions and contacts with other artists whom I interviewed often came through those artists I had met on art projects.

During fieldwork, interviews were either recorded on tape or paper, notes were taken during art project participant observation, and photographs of artists and artists' work were collected. Given the specific focus of this research on shifting perceptions of self-identity, as well as time practicalities and the sheer number of artists working in Cape Town, this study has centred mainly on selected case studies of particular art projects and artists rather than attempting to incorporate all Cape Town artists. The total number of artists and arts practitioners I interviewed, worked with or spoke to in order to contextualise and inform other aspects of the study far exceeds the number of artists presented in depth.

Criteria for Selection of Artists

My focus was on shifts within historically disadvantaged artists' personal perceptions of identity, and their concerns and work in relation to a transforming South Africa. Given a theoretical focus outside of conventional art history, and based primarily on the relationship between artists and art-making rather than the artworks themselves, my criteria for selection resembled the working definition of artists that Schneider (1996) adopts within his theoretical framework as "those individuals who define themselves as producing artworks and are defined as such by others" (184). The artists included in this study were, or recently had been, creating, exhibiting or selling artworks at the time of my fieldwork, and my focus was

¹¹ To name a few, the Community Arts Project, the Visual Arts Group, Thupelo and Vakalisa. More detail is given in Chapter Four.

primarily on painters and sculptors. I did not apply any kinds of criteria for 'good' or 'bad' art, or consider the extent to which individuals established as mainstream artists. Studying both established and non-established artists, I believe, provides a more comprehensive view of the breadth, diversity and complexity of the Cape Town fine art arena, as well as allowing for shifts and changes over time in the careers of these artists. Furthermore, many South African art theorists¹² have noted problems with judgements of artistic value within South African art institutions. Many of the historically disadvantaged artists whose perspectives and work I looked at were not considered mainstream artists at the time of my fieldwork.

Focusing on the practitioner's perceptions rather than art historical evaluation in contemporary fine art is nothing new, as in Fabian's 1996 study of the Zairean artist, Tshibumba, where he writes, "Whether this study establishes Tshibumba as an artist according to the standards of current art criticism or as a historical figure worthy of being included in African historiography does not concern me here" (190). In line with this approach, the study also echoes Fabian's argument that ethnographers "should represent the people we study - groups as well as individuals - in a way that does not erase their presence as historical subjects and agents" (ibid: 190).

Since completing fieldwork, some of the then lesser known artists I knew or interviewed from 1998-2001 have certainly become more locally or internationally established or well-known. Others have gone abroad, started or finished tertiary study, changed careers, or are still building a local artistic career.

The number of practising historically disadvantaged female visual artists working in painting or sculpture was, and remains, very small, despite the large number of practicing white female artists. The majority of the artists discussed in the case studies are therefore male, although female artists are included where possible. Gender issues are not a main focus of this study, but the comparative absence of practicing female artists in the historically disadvantaged sector is a fact which could, and should, be investigated in further studies. This discrepancy could be due to a social emphasis on other forms of work or career skills via more craft-based media such as beadwork and textiles for women from historically disadvantaged communities rather than on painting or sculpture, which is seen by many as a 'male' domain. Many women from the historically disadvantaged sector are involved in craft-based work, such as fabric painting, pottery, jewelry and clothes-making, within a number of commercial local co-operate initiatives. Thus, although not a focal area of this study, there is certainly scope for an examination of these areas of activity along similar theoretical lines to this study.

Approaches to Participant Observation and Interviews

Ethnography is traditionally perceived as a process of information-gathering, to be represented from the researcher's theoretical context. Since I directly participated in artistic projects and engaged in dialogue during interviews with artists, it is inevitable that my personal interaction with artists, both as an

¹² See Rankin 1989 and 1995; Nicodermus and Romare 1997; Oguipe and Enwezor 1999; Koloane 1993 and 1999. Also see Chapter Four for a discussion of aesthetic values and South African art.

artist and interviewer, and within a South Africa undergoing rapid social transformation, had some impact on the persons around me, and thus arguably on the outcome of my research. However, as Fabian (1993) points out, even traditional ethnography is known to be an interactive process between researcher and subject, and the ethnographer's presence and subjectivity cannot be divorced from the outcome of the research process. Furthermore, since the theoretical interest was not on outcome per se, but concerned with *processes* of change, and how artists acted as agents in negotiating between external hegemonic influences and personal perspectives, my personal participation did not, I believe, overly affect my study of individual agency in relation to external contexts of social change.

My aim was to examine primarily historically disadvantaged artists' perspectives in a country where these artists' views had been suppressed under the previous apartheid state. Many artists expressed a concern with being "spoken for" and a fear of being mis-represented as a "type" in order to fit art theoretical constructs rather than having their viewpoints "heard", a situation which many individuals felt they had been exposed to during the apartheid years. This was particularly important in a context where the legacy of apartheid had led to a suspicion towards those who gathered 'information' within what were very rigid power structures of privilege, and which often implied an assumption and sometimes an abuse of a right to ownership of the knowledge so gleaned. Such suspicions are evident in one artists' comment that, "Academics come here and they get information from us, and then they go away and they benefit and we get nothing."

I therefore approached interviews and projects as an exchange of information and opportunities between myself, as an artist and researcher, and the artists I engaged with. My approach was that it was important to 'give back' either information or opportunities through my interactions *with* artists, as opposed to a top-down approach, where only the academic benefits. The 'Dis Nag: The Cape's Hidden History of Slavery' project is an example of where I was part of directly initiating and co-ordinating a project that benefited both participant artists in terms of exhibition exposure and myself, as a researcher.

Personal Interaction

My personal and artistic experience - being trained as a visual artist¹³, having lived and worked in different countries¹⁴, and being of mixed British-Filipino ancestry - strongly contributed to the way in which my research was approached and conducted. I entered my research as a practitioner rather as an academic, having previously worked with members of the Cape Flats Arts Group and taken part in arts projects prior to commencing academic research, thus circumventing some of the historical issues and suspicions between artists and researchers. My artistic background also enabled me to talk about processes, materials, themes and techniques within artists' artworks in a familiar language as a fellow-artist and to explore art-making from the subjective approach of a practitioner, as well as from the external gaze of an observer. This included discussions about work opportunities, the accessibility of

¹³ BA Hons, Fine Art - Painting. Central St Martin's Art School, London.

¹⁴ The United Kingdom, North Africa, the West Indies, South Pacific and South Africa.

markets and the development of concepts in creating artworks. Working as an artist with other artists also enabled a sense of familiarity, following casual conversations that we had already shared within shared workspaces and projects, and helped bridge gaps of suspicion and 'outsider-ness' in many interviews with artists.

My half-Filipino-British background was also beneficial to my research, providing a relatively neutral position in relation to contexts of power and race. This background often facilitated conversations with interviewees, 'breaking the ice' when opening discussion on often sensitive identity issues. This resulted in me also being personally exposed to different forms of racialised inclusion and exclusion in Cape Town, as I did not fit neatly into the locally defined white, black or coloured categories. I was invited, for example, to join the 'women of colour' group at the University of Cape Town, and exposed to debates and issues highly applicable to my research concerning coloured and black South African identities from the 'inside'. My invitation, through a 'women of colour' member, to a founding Black Arts Collective (BLAC) meeting also sparked off a debate by participating members as to whether I was white or not, inevitably embroiling and positioning me within the confusion and controversy surrounding perceptions of social identity in the New South Africa (see Chapter Four). Such experiences provided me with some personal insight into how identity, in this case, my own, could be complexified, contextualised and played out in different ways and how perceptions of race were still highly pertinent to concerns of access, inclusion, control and power, in a changing and fluctuating New South African context.

TERMINOLOGY – DEFINITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Any racialised identity terminology is problematic in South Africa and it is with reluctance that I have used any such terminology at all to describe artists. The use of such terminology seems to perpetuate an assumed essentialism which is indefensible in either social science discourse or within simple logic and perpetuates divisions in a New South Africa that claims to be focused on non-racism and egalitarianism - a particularly problematic situation when, as Sharp (1988) points out, all South African groups themselves are originally social and cultural constructions. I disagree with racialised descriptions that seem to re-essentialise perceptions of identity, particularly those based on previous apartheid categorisations. The use of racialised terminology is also problematic considering that this study emphasises the development of more complex, multiple and fluid perceptions of identity than were previously defined under apartheid.

However, the terms 'black', 'coloured' and 'white' are still deeply embedded in the consciousness of all people in present-day South Africa and form part of the pervasive reality of social identities as political, if not social, comparative points of reference. One also has to have a starting point in order to describe shifts away from previous apartheid categories of racialised identities in South Africa. Describing social identity in a transforming and present South Africa is complex.

The term 'historically disadvantaged' (abbreviated to historically disadvantaged in the text) is a common descriptive term in South Africa, often resorted to as a blanket term to describe black, coloured

or Indian/Asian individuals (who some would collectively consider a comprehensive 'black' group) who were politically and economically disadvantaged during apartheid. The term indicates an individual's racially and historically hierarchised position in relation to previous white hegemony. Where appropriate, the term black has also been used to refer to black and coloured artists collectively. Under apartheid, many, although not all politically conscious people, also chose ideologically to be called black, as a preferred less-divisive identification for the oppressed population. The term is nevertheless still contested in a variety of ways in a transforming South Africa.

Blanket terms, however, do not necessarily describe people's socio-political positions under apartheid. It has been necessary to resort to the terms 'historically disadvantaged', 'coloured', 'black' or 'white' at times when describing artists, and to indicate the extent individuals have moved away from, or re-determined perceptions of, these categories. It is therefore an unfortunate yet inevitable fact that, in order to challenge apartheid categories of identity, it has been necessary to draw on those same categories.

I have used such terminology only when directly relevant or to clarify issues of social identity for the artist(s) at the time. The terms are not intended to limit or re-categorise the self-identities of any of the artists studied. For simplicity and convenience, and because of their frequency within the text, the terms are not enclosed within quotation marks. I also emphasise that the artists under discussion would not necessarily choose to represent themselves within the particular terms used in this study. During interviews, some historically disadvantaged artists personally chose to define themselves as coloured, some as black, and others not at all. At times in the text, and where necessary, I have extended my discussion to explore artists' own individual interpretations and statements regarding self-identities, particularly where individual case studies of artists are concerned. I suggest that the use of these terms should be understood to be past reference points which, rather than being permanently imposed, are open to re-interpretation in the present, and future.

REPRESENTING ARTISTS' OPINIONS

Due to my own language limitations, interviews were conducted in English. However, the majority of artists interviewed were multilingual. Most artists were fully fluent in English as a first, second or third language, other first-languages often being Afrikaans or Xhosa and indeed, most are themselves very articulate in describing and discussing issues concerning identity in South Africa. In direct quotations from interviews, the exact words and comments of artists are used as an attempt to directly convey artists' 'voices'. Any amendments for clarity where the artist was not fluent in English are made in square brackets.

I have often maintained the anonymity of artists' personal opinions on the art world, and/or where anonymity was promised in interviews, particularly where collaborative projects and collective issues were examined. In these cases, it has been difficult to include too many details of the artists as they would then have been recognisable, possibly to their disadvantage, in an already contentious art world where

issues of race and racism are concerned. Consequently, in the case of quotations or comments included from artists who were assured anonymity on group projects, or which were obtained informally, I have indicated salient details such as age, gender, artistic experience and previous apartheid identification only when necessary for the reader to understand the relevance and significance of the artist's comment. It has, however, been necessary to include artists' names, with their permission, where formal interviews for individual case studies of artists and their work are concerned. In order to emphasise artists as people, and distance this study from a traditional art historical approach to visual art, the first names of artists have been used deliberately in individual case studies rather than the more conventional use of surnames.

*

ADDENDUM

The subject of this study is contextualised by a final, sad end-note to this chapter. On returning to South Africa in 1998, to commence fieldwork officially, the Cape Flats Group was no longer formally in existence and Mustafa, Humza and Andre were not in regular contact with each other. Andre and Mustafa were still in Cape Town, and Humza was living in Durban. At the time Mustafa was preparing an exhibition, 'Childhood' (Irma Stern Museum, 1998) with another artist, Gregg Smith, and this will be explored in Chapter Six below. During the 'walkabout'¹⁵ at the exhibition, Andre Pillay turned up 'out of the blue' having seen notice of the exhibition, and his fellow artist friend Mustafa. I spoke with Andre, who reported how he had struggled financially to continue as a fine artist. Due to family pressure to find 'real work', Andre claimed he had shaved off his Rastafarian locks in order to "'conform' to find work". As he wryly put it, "I even went to an interview to be a policeman."¹⁶

According to himself and others at the time, Andre had been short-listed out of three final candidates to be a cartoonist for the Cape Town Argus newspaper, and was awaiting the results of his application. I congratulated him on his possible success, but he stated he was not happy. He repeatedly emphasised that he had 'lost' his 'identity', giving up both fine art and Rastafarianism in order to work commercially and conform to what he described as a materialistic society he did not want to be part of. All he really wanted to do, he said, was to continue working as a fine artist and be a Rastafarian. The following day, Andre, at the age of twenty-five, tragically hanged himself in his bedroom at home.

Knowing Andre personally, and the concerns of himself and his friends in their work, it is arguable that Andre was personally struggling with a sense of purpose and change in the 'New' South Africa. Despite the new possibilities for self-transformation within collective transformation, his personal situation within a society where habituated and practised economic, social and cultural divides persisted, emphasised the gap between expectation and reality, and the limitations of their own agency for social change, that individuals had to confront. His continual reference to his 'lost identity' also illustrates the extent to which identity forms a fundamental part of conscious awareness and expression of self for all South Africans. Although artists throughout the world face economic concerns for survival, whatever other reasons, family, psychological or personal, that may have caused Andre to take such drastic action, it is notable that he voiced his disillusionment with life with the word 'identity'. Notwithstanding other personal reasons, identity was the term which Andre used to describe his situation within a society that had only recently undergone a transformation that seemingly offered opportunities for his success, recognition and accomplishment in the future. Andre's personal experience growing up had been contextualised by a South African society founded on categories of identity which were, I believe, not only the means through which an individual described or expressed him or herself to others, but were the means through which he or she *existed* within society. This raised further questions. On an individual level, what does 'self' mean in the New South Africa, and how is this articulated in terms not only of what people say, but what they do, and how they present themselves in the New South Africa? What, indeed, are the modes of operandi through which individuals now confront, negotiate, internalise and act

¹⁵ A process common at, or following exhibition openings, where the artist/s takes the attendees on a 'tour' of the exhibit, explaining its components and answering questions.

¹⁶ The police force had a particularly bad reputation in the Cape Flats as a result of the apartheid years, often being employed as a brutal means of enforcing apartheid law.

as productive agents within processes of hegemonic socio-cultural transformation? What are the complexities, difficulties and obstacles that individuals in the New South Africa face in accommodating a transformation that not only redefines their society but, with the State's conscious and deliberate attempt to unravel South Africa's racial categories and their deleterious effects, ultimately redefines who they perceive themselves to be? This thesis attempts to address these questions for particular South African artists.

THE SOCIAL REALITIES OF HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED ARTISTS

Although there is variation in individual opportunities, economic access and family histories, and, particularly in a transforming society, artists' living environments and personal circumstances are not static, certain difficulties are common to the majority of historically disadvantaged artists featured within this study. Most of the artists lived in black African or coloured townships in the Cape Flats area outside central Cape Town, areas created by the Group Areas Act of 1950¹⁷. Some townships, such as Khayelitsha, are up to 30 km from the city centre. Generally, living conditions in black and coloured townships are overcrowded, and difficult. Many black African artists live in shacks in townships or informal settlements, often without convenient access to running water, electricity or adequate sanitation, although the post-1994 South African government has prioritized the alleviation of such conditions. Coloured townships, primarily composed of apartheid government constructed housing, on the whole have access to better facilities, but in comparison to white areas are still vastly inferior. Township areas have high levels of socio-economic problems, including excessive violence, drugs, domestic abuse, crime and gangsterism, to which artists are also exposed. For example, I witnessed one artist arrive at an art workshop with a recent gunshot wound in his chest after an altercation in a local shebeen.

Art was not taught in the vast majority of township elementary or secondary schools. Many historically disadvantaged artists thus entered the arts scene informally; some as a result of political activism in the 1970s and 1980s, as cultural workers creating anti-apartheid banners and posters, or through craft centres. Other artists sold artworks initially through craft or 'tourist art' markets and then later became exposed to contemporary fine art. The majority of black African artists under apartheid are unlikely to have studied art at a university-level art institution. Coloureds had access to 'coloured' university education under apartheid. Because these universities did not teach fine art, some coloured artists under special conditions, could apply to white universities to study art, usually within the context of teacher training. In the 1990s, opportunities opened up for black and coloured artists to study fine art at tertiary level and at this point many artists in this study did so.

Although there are now art and craft centres emerging in townships, these are few, and currently little or no community support, exposure or resources for emerging artists exist. Markets for art work exist mainly in central Cape Town through foreign buyers visiting markets and galleries. Many economically disadvantaged artists travel into the centre of town using trains and/or minibus taxis – limited local transport which becomes unsafe to use after 6pm - transporting work by hand. Artists bringing work to sell in the city may need to borrow money for transport to the city centre. If they fail to sell, they will need to borrow money again the next day. In open markets, their artwork is exposed to rain, sun and dust. In South Africa, there is no social welfare to rely on. Therefore artists more often than not need to rely on other sources of income (for example, one artist worked as a panel beater) to support themselves. Some artists are dependent on other family members for support. Often, when money is earned, it may need to be shared with unemployed family members. Opportunities to survive as artists are thus often intermittent and the ability of the artist to produce work may be wholly dependent upon any grants or patronage that may be provided. Artists therefore, primarily as a consequence of apartheid-induced disadvantage, face considerable social and economic difficulties in producing, developing, exhibiting, marketing and selling their work.

¹⁷ The Group Areas Act controlled ownership, use and residence of land in terms of a system of population classification, in which the main categories were black, coloured and white (West, 1988 – see Boonzaier and Sharp, 1988)

CHAPTER THREE:

REWORKING THE PAST – ARTWORKS AS MEMORY

Who am I? What am I? How do I fit into this society? What am I proud of? Where do I want to go with my life? In the 1990s it's more kind of searching for who you are. We have been denied being who we are - we had to be coloured, this or that. We were always stratified, classified. This is the stage now when we declassify ourselves, from all kinds of governmental or compartmentalised identities. But our own identity? Who am I? Where do I come from? What are my origins? ...It's not an identity to make myself a 'special' being - but in terms of understanding who I am, or where I am going to - I need to know where I come from. It's that kind of identity I'm talking of - *artist and ex-political activist, male, forties, coloured, 1998.*

I think it has become a very big problem, racial classification. I think a lot of people have become disappointed with what's happened since 1994. I can't place it, but one of the things in the seventies and eighties was if you were not white, the generic term black was used, and we all accepted this because we knew what it was all about. Suddenly, one of the things that has happened, now, is people still use these terms: black, Indian, coloured. I don't know, it's a problem for me. 'That question - who am I? It's like I still have to be born, if I can put it that way. I still have to be born - *artist, male, thirties, coloured, 1998.*

All understandings of the past affect the present. Literate or illiterate, we are our memories. We try to shape our futures in the light of past experience - or what we understand to have been past experience - and representing how things were, we draw a social portrait, a model which is a reference list of what to follow and what to avoid...- *Tonkin, Samuel and Thompson, 1996.*

MEMORY AND IDENTITY

In his true story of a man with a form of amnesia which prevented him from remembering anything about himself, the eminent neurologist and writer, Oliver Sacks, wrote:

If we wish to know about a man, we ask, "what is his story - his real, inmost story?" - for each of us is a biography, a story... To be ourselves, we must have ourselves - possess, if need be repossess, our life-stories. We must "recollect" ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative of ourselves. A man needs such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self (1995: 118).

Memory, therefore, is necessary for identity. Antze and Lambek, likewise, claim that, "any invocation of memory is part of an identity discourse" (1996: xxi) in that memory "enables us to refashion ourselves, remembering one thing and not another, changing the stories we tell ourselves (and others) about ourselves" (ibid: xvi). They argue that memory is not merely a process of recalling the past, but is a *practice*, produced out of experience and, in turn, reshaping it, as a performative act of narrative construction in the present, and thus that, "Identity is not composed of a fixed set of memories but lies in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding" (xxix), in that, "People emerge from and as the products of their stories about themselves as much as their stories emerge from their lives" (xviii). Consequently:

...memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration (Antze and Lambek 1996: vii).

Antze and Lambek (1996) argue that, within psychoanalytic processes, the process of constructing and reflecting back an objectified gaze to the subject, objectifies and distances memory, establishing a cognitive division between 'then' and 'now', the 'before' and 'after,' to bring about closure with the past. Memory is also, they argue, an *act* of gazing, which may be objectified through symbols, codes, rites and sites. Likewise, Seremetakis (1994) argues that, 'perceptual memory as a cultural form... is encased and embodied out there in a dispersed surround of created things, surfaces, depths and densities that give back refractions of our own sensory biographies" (129).

Given that identity is, at least in part, made up of narratives of an individual's past, then changes in narratives of historical or personal memory will result in shifts in perceptions of identity. For example, the performative reconstruction of public memory through ceremony and memorialisation in the reconstruction of national histories substitutes new memories to 'forget' and thus rework the past (Connerton 1989). Artworks, it will be shown here, are also points of material location, or images in-the-world through which memories may be visually constructed, or 'performed,' to re-shape narratives of self. Artworks are also, as Fabian (1996, 1993) notes, 'embedded' in discourse, stories, events and praxis within artists' lives – they are not only individual, but social.

In this chapter I examine how artworks created by historically disadvantaged artists in Cape Town constitute the reworking of autobiographical, ancestral and historical narratives of the past. Through case studies of artists and their work, I show how, through artworks, these artists moved beyond previously essentialist, racist and bounded apartheid constructs of self. I also examine how *making* memory in artworks reveals the significance of non-verbal as well as verbal referents in the artists' cognitive constructions of self in a transforming New South Africa.

REWORKING THE PAST IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Following the official end of apartheid in 1994, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process (TRC) took place. The TRC created public awareness of the falsity and constructed-ness of the racist myths, histories and activities of apartheid, thereby contesting previous 'official' apartheid government versions of history. It sought to determine the 'truth' of the apartheid past through individual and voluntary public testimony from perpetrators and victims with the aim of reconciliation. All South Africans were portrayed by the TRC as victims of the apartheid past to some extent. As a process, the Commission emphasised the role of individual agency in redressing some of the damage of the apartheid past and reconstructing 'the truth' of South African history.

The TRC has been presented as a cathartic, performative process of healing through public spectacle and 'remembering' in order to 'forget' (Chapman 1999, Truth and Reconciliation Report 1998, Posel 1999). As a consequence, some argued, the past, with a 1994 cut-off point, was formally narrativised and distanced through its objectification as public spectacle, in order to create a new national memory for South Africans and to establish the apartheid past as 'history' (Chapman 1999, Truth and

Reconciliation Report 1998, Posel 1999). Despite the national focus on *remembering*, the implication was thus that the emphasis was on *forgetting* when it came to the present of individual South Africans.

However, re-defining the self from a past in which identities had been categorised, highly segregated, hierarchical, essentialist and bounded, and have become ingrained as part of the daily praxis of individual South African's lives over years of apartheid policy and segregation continues to present a difficult challenge for South Africans. The Western Cape is a notably heterogeneous region of South Africa, as a result of several historical, political and geographical influences. As a result of considerable miscegenation over the centuries, and with few official records, the direct knowledge of many individuals' personal ancestries is obscure. The Cape population includes descendants of indigenous Khoisan and black Southern Africans, later Dutch, French and English settlers, and descendants of slaves, the last as a result of the Dutch East India Company slave trade from regions as varied as East India, Madagascar, Indonesia, Malaysia, China and East Africa. Later, immigrants from Europe, Asia (including Indian indentured labourers), and other African countries further contributed to the Cape's already diverse population (Bickford-Smith et al, 1999, 1998; Ward et al, 1998). At the time of fieldwork, the population of the Western Cape was approximately 54 percent coloured, 24 percent black, and 22 percent white (Population Census, South Africa 1996).

The classification of people under apartheid was based on appearance, 'general acceptance' and descent¹⁷. Although a number of people successfully applied for and changed their race classification during apartheid, it was not possible to occupy more than one race category at a time. The apartheid government also used notorious tests –such as 'skin colour' charts, with gradations in tone and colour, the measurement of nose width, and the 'pencil test' to see if a pencil placed in a subject's hair would fall out, and thus to indicate how 'curly' their hair was - as physical indicators to determine race classification in what the government termed 'borderline' cases. Under such criteria, different members of the same family were sometimes assigned to different race categories.

Separate population groups were subject to the legally enforced and hierarchical segregation of residential, social, work and public spaces. All people not categorised white were denied a political vote. Mixed-race relationships were illegal¹⁸. Consequently, separate spheres of cultural and social development based on race and ethnicity permeated the whole social infrastructure of South Africa during apartheid - to the extent that they seemed synonymous and interchangeable with the terms 'culture' and 'community' (Thornton and Ramphela 1988). As a result, rigid divisions and essentialist perceptions of population groups constructed on these racial classifications were maintained and enforced. The National Party government thus, under the apartheid 'gaze', arguably created a 'panoptic' (see Foucault, 1998) vision of South African society through determining the physical movement of persons, their access to

¹⁷ See *Apartheid: The Facts*. International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1991 for more detailed description of subcategories within major divisions, and political structure in South Africa over time.

¹⁸ Although the Mixed Marriages Act was repealed in 1985 and the Immorality Act substantially amended, other legislation remained in force, such as cohabitation permit requirements, which made such relationships difficult (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1991)

social interaction and work opportunities under strictly controlled and observed state rule, within a highly racist, hierarchised and essentialised identity framework.

Furthermore, as in the rest of South Africa under apartheid, coloured and black people in Cape Town were subject to forced removals. The Coloured Labour Preference Act severely restricted black African access to the area and thus ensured the predominance of a 'mixed race' or 'coloured' population in the Western Cape. Under the Group Areas Act (1950) up until the 1980s, large numbers of the Cape Town non-white population were moved from areas declared 'white' to government-created 'townships' in the Cape Flats area outside central Cape Town, residential areas vastly inferior to white areas in terms of all facilities. Forced removals often led to whole communities and extended families being split up into different areas, thus fracturing and erasing previously well-established social and support networks.

The legally enforced hierarchical control, segregation, and forced removals caused pain, anger and emotional stress. Such feelings were intensified, and ultimately repressed, by the suppression of any resistance to apartheid. Furthermore, 'official' histories taught in schools and universities had privileged European histories and perspectives and suppressed alternative histories of oppression, such as that of slavery and the treatment of the Khoisan in South Africa (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen and Worden 1999, 1998; Ward and Worden 1998; Ward 1997). South Africans also suppressed reference to links perceived as 'undesirable', such as black African, slave and Khoisan family ancestries, and preferred to emphasise white ancestries, further evidence of the insidious pervasiveness of racism in South Africa. This was particularly the case for those who were of mixed origin, the so-called coloureds who form the majority of the Western Cape population.

Although transformation in the New South Africa implied social restructuring from hierarchised racism to democratic equality, social change in the New South Africa was, and still is, an ongoing process. For some, breaking away from the past involved a shift from previously essentialist perceptions of identity towards acknowledging a more hybrid identity. In post-1994 Cape Town there emerged some interest in reclaiming previously 'suppressed' identities, such as slave and Khoisan ancestries, seen to be particularly prevalent among members of the mixed-race 'coloured' population (Bickford-Smith et al, 1999). However, on the whole, the perception of apartheid-constructed identities as synonymous with separate 'cultures' (Thornton and Ramphela 1988) was so entrenched as to be maintained in the post-apartheid era. For example, the continued political use of apartheid classification terms and their association with separate social activities, histories, languages, dialects and accents has perpetuated the entrenched perceptions of difference and separateness.¹⁹ Although Sharp (1988) has argued that all South African race and ethnic groups are social and cultural constructions and the product of a particular world view in the New South Africa, body appearance, skin colour and perceptions of separate cultures and communities remain critical markers of social identities. The demography of Cape Flats township residential areas, based on the previous segregation of race categories, has changed very little since the

¹⁹ See Field 1999; Minkley and Witz 1996; Rassool 2001, 2000; Rassool and Witz 1996; Witz, Minkley and Rassool 1999.

official demise of apartheid in 1994. Residential and social segregation has continued in practice, despite a small increase in a black middle-class and some residential integration in central Cape Town areas.

Despite some recent theoretical interest in the development of a creolised identity in South Africa, in which South Africa is seen as “a place striking for its imbrication of multiple identities – identities that mythologies of apartheid, and of resistance to it, tended to silence” (Nuttall and Michael, 2000: 1), race distinctions derived from apartheid in reality have remained ingrained within South Africans’ consciousness. Coloureds in particular, who distinguished themselves from a black identity because of their shared ‘coloured’ experiences, now expressed a fear of losing their ‘culture’²⁰ in response to the construction of a shared national identity in the New South Africa.

RODERICK SAULS: ‘A PERSONAL MEMORY’ - CASE STUDY ONE



Figure 1. Roderick Sauls inside his installation artwork, 'A Personal Memory' (1999-2000).

Roderick Sauls originally worked for many years as a technician at the University of Cape Town, first in the archaeology department and then in the printmaking department. He claimed he was influenced by the political emphasis on ‘freedom’ after 1994 to decide to study fine art as a mature student. He started studying at UNISA (University of South Africa) as a correspondence student, and completed his degree in the printmaking department at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

Roderick described himself as growing up ‘working class coloured’ with his family in District Six until he was around seven years old, when his family was forced to move to the Cape Flats area of Bonteheuwel shortly before the official declaration of District Six as a ‘white area’. District Six, once a residential area in central Cape Town, considered by many to have constituted a vibrant cosmopolitan

community, was officially declared 'white' in 1966 and its population forcibly removed by the South African apartheid government. The District Six land area was never fully redeveloped and remained a notably and notoriously barren visual 'scar' in central Cape Town,²¹ despite being prime property.

Like other houses and buildings in the District Six area, except for a few mosques and churches, Roderick's family home had been bulldozed to the ground. A freeway was later constructed over the site of his house. Without even a barren space to remember it by, the destruction of Roderick's old home and street thus seemed absolute. Having no actual physical home to refer to for the construction of his artwork, Roderick embarked on a process he termed "discovering" his past. This involved researching the memories of himself, his family and other former District Six residents. Through his research, Roderick came to realise that he and his immediate family had lived in one room:

I spoke to my parents and friends and ex-residents and stuff... they never talked about a home. There was this whole thing about this room... and it made me realise I grew up in a room... There were lots of families staying in that house, you know, so the room actually became your home.

Roderick believed that the fragmentation of communities during apartheid, and the 'silenced' memories and histories, as discussed earlier, had contributed to a "loss of identity" in historically disadvantaged families, particularly, in his view, coloured families. In his view, the impact of apartheid had resulted in a sense of powerlessness and lack of choice for historically disadvantaged individuals, in that they had "been spoken for" and their identities imposed "from the outside". He claimed that, during apartheid:

People didn't have freedom, to say what they wanted, to do what they wanted, to go where they wanted... Somehow there was an identity loss... We didn't think about a lot of things, there's a lot of things that we accepted. We didn't actually become ourselves in some way.

Themes of identity and memories of living in District Six played a major role in the conceptualisation and construction of Roderick's earlier artworks. These included linocuts and prints created from old photographs of District Six and an installation artwork representing the Minstrel Carnival²² he remembered being celebrated in the local community, for the District Six Sculpture Festival (1997).

²⁰ See Erasmus (2001; 1999; 1997) for arguments concerning a specific coloured identity in the New South Africa. At the time of fieldwork, this also manifested itself in the National Party being voted in again in the Western Cape Region.

²¹ This visible reminder of the destruction of District Six became a rallying point for former residents, leading eventually to the establishment of the District Six Museum in Cape Town. The museum has become an important site for the recording and provision of information for and about former residents of District Six, as well as supporting successful land-claims in the area (Bohlin 1998, Rassool 2001). Other areas in Cape Town where coloureds and a few black Africans had been owners or tenants were built over, such as Cavendish Square shopping area in Claremont, or their houses were occupied by whites, as in Harfield village, Kenilworth.

²² A New Year's festival, previously known as the 'Coon' Carnival, and now known as the Minstrel Carnival, involving dressing up as 'minstrels' in a parade and competing as 'troupes' for music and costume prizes. The carnival still takes place annually in central Cape Town, and in recent years has returned to the main streets of the city (See Martin, 2000).

Roderick's final-year exhibition, on which this case study is based, was an installation artwork, 'A Personal Memory',²³ at Michaelis School of Art (December 1999 - January 2000). This was the construction of a representation of Roderick's original District Six family home. My information is derived from data based on a series of formal and informal interviews in Roderick's studio during the construction of the installation from 1999-2000.

Description of the Artwork



Figure 2. Interior: 'A Personal Memory' - Roderick Sauls

Displayed outside the entrance to the installation, the written statement accompanying Roderick's exhibition stated:

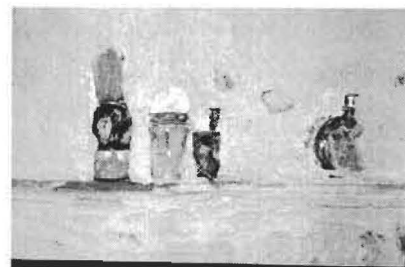
The objective of the exhibit produced is to restore my lost identity. My desire is to assert pride in my own identity, my African heritage, my culture and memories.

The constructed doorway of the representation of Roderick's original home led into an enclosed, dimly lit room with panelled wall sections. As one grew accustomed to the dim light, half-hidden three-dimensional objects and pieces of furniture became visible, embedded within and protruding slightly from the pale surfaces of six panels made of wood covered with Crete stone²⁴ which made up the walls of the room. The walls surrounded a central floor area approximately four metres square with a ceiling of equivalent area above. There was the sound of a radio playing faintly in the background which, Roderick claimed, represented the previous "background life and noise" of District Six.

²³ The artwork was later temporarily displayed in a less complete form in the foyer of the *Little Theatre* at the Hiddingh Hall campus of the University of Cape Town, before moving to the District Six Museum. A large portion of the original artwork is now housed within the permanent display of the newly-designed interior of the museum. Several panels from the original were displayed, although not in the artwork's original complete form. See Rassool (2001) for an analysis of Roderick's work on display at the District Six Museum, in relation to commemorating the memory of that community.

²⁴ Crete stone is a form of building material somewhere between the consistency of cement and plaster, which sets to form a hard, cream-coloured surface.

Figure 3. Detail from bathroom cabinet



Pieces of furniture - a coat stand, kitchen shelves, a bathroom cabinet, a wardrobe complete with clothes, a dresser' with ornaments, shelves displaying plates and books, a medicine cabinet, a flower stand, and a window frame with net curtain - had been cut and incorporated into the Crete stone surfaces of the walls to represent functional areas of Roderick's original family room - namely, the hallway, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and sitting room. The objects included personal family belongings used in District 6, such as an old shaving brush that had belonged to his father (see Fig. 3); items of clothing, a hat, books, school trophies, pots and pans, crockery and drawings created by Roderick's own children (see Fig. 4).



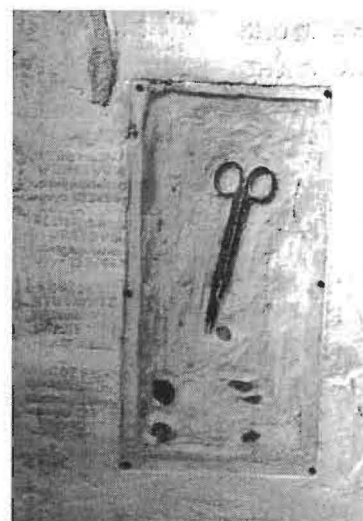
Figure 4. Children's drawing, 'A Personal Memory'

Roderick claimed that he had deliberately created the impression of an archaeological dig, drawing on his previous experience as a technician in the archaeology department, to create a feeling of “discovery” and “digging back” into a past which, to him, seemed obscure, and difficult to access. The

objects embedded in the rock-like surfaces of the panels appeared as if fossilised and semi-excavated. In one area of the wall, Roderick pointed out that the stone surface had been “scratched back” to appear to reveal a pair of scissors, which he had protected with a piece of Perspex, “just as they do in an archaeological dig” (see Fig. 5). As he himself stated, “The past has its own blurring. I just remember bits... but that's how I remember it from seven years old.”

Figure 5. Detail of 'Excavated' Scissors

Different letters, words and phrases were stencilled with crete stone onto the wall surfaces, so that they appeared in relief, interspersed between the half-protruding pieces of furniture and objects. Words, Roderick claimed, had impacted strongly on all South African's lives. They were used as, and formed, an integral part of the beliefs, terminology and institution of apartheid, and thus had contributed to the “labelling, dispossession and denial of identity under apartheid.” Roderick claimed that, as part of the District Six community, he had felt associated



with these words, and thus that they had contributed to his sense of identity in the past. One wall panel, for example, contained letters of the alphabet (see Fig. 6). Roderick pointed out that these letters, “make up all the words” which had in the past dominated his understanding of race and identity. He had included

examples in the same panel, words such as IDENTITY, MYTHS and the deliberately half-obscured word, KAFF...²⁵ A further panel contained words used to describe race, such as WHITE, KHOISAN, and COLOURED, together with their dictionary definitions. Yet another panel contained words such as FILTH, ILLITERACY, IMMORALITY and DISHONESTY, which Roderick claimed were used to label District Six as a slum, before declaring the area 'white' in order to justify removing residents.

Figure 6. 'Letters of Alphabet' and numbers on a wall of Roderick's room, embossed onto the surface of a wall representing a 'fossilised' curtain and window

Further wall panels referred to historical events that Roderick felt contributed significantly to his "lack of identity." These included excerpts from historical documents, such as census reports, and versions of 'official' apartheid histories of South Africa found in schoolbooks, such as Jan Van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape. One panel, for example, listed place names that people in Cape Town had been forcibly removed from, such as MOWBRAY, CONSTANTIA, DISTRICT SIX and SEA POINT, as well as those on the Cape Flats these people had been moved to, such as LAVENDER HILL, MANENBERG and BONTEHEUWEL.



Roderick pointed out that the panels also deliberately contained historical reference to marginalised peoples, such as the Khoisan and slaves. Through such representation, he hoped to remove the sense of shame and suppression of personal histories "denied" within many, particularly coloured, families in the Cape and thus cultivate a sense of pride and acceptance of his own mixed background and for others of coloured background. He wished to claim and acknowledge diverse ancestries in South Africa by "putting behind him" the stigma of a hybrid historical past:

Terms like coloured, you know, was very degrading in a sense. But I think in our new country it can take another meaning. You shouldn't be ashamed of that, you know. You should actually be proud of what you are. You say, but I am who I am, you know. ... There's a whole lot of coloured people that don't want to be associated with the slave past, so they accept their European past ... People are still sitting with that and not really identifying what and what they are. We need to recognise those labels, but we don't need to cling to them. Then you can move forward to be whatever you want to be - you don't need to stick to the past.

He emphasised a need to communicate *individual* stories within the collective history of South Africa. In his opinion, the story of District Six had been de-personalised, through what he termed 'general' narratives of the past, which prevented individuals taking personal ownership of their past roles and histories:

²⁵ Standing for the beginning of the derogatory racist word 'Kaffir,' in common use during apartheid.

You see, there's a common thing, there's a common story about District Six. You've seen some plays about Cat and the King and so on, but those are common stories... There's the personal stories... those common stories are not going to help them heal... District Six was a very cosmopolitan place, so there was all forms of different races and cultures within, so there cannot be one story.... These so-called, the 'play-whites'²⁶, where did they come from? ... If we're not going to talk, we're going to fight. We can communicate, we can talk about these things.

Only through acknowledging the constructedness of a coloured identity, Roderick claimed, was it possible to "move on" in the New South Africa.

Extensions

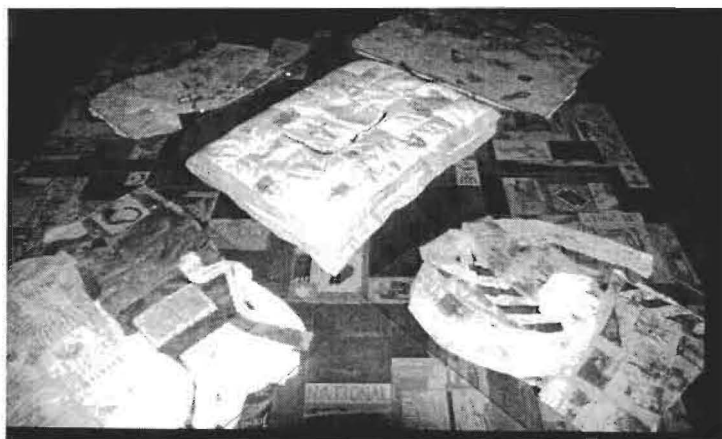


Figure 7. Clothing and quilted bedspread on lino-cut floor

Roderick also stressed that, through creating his artwork, he had strengthened his connections with, and understanding of, his former community. Two panels which also made up part of the walls of the room were filled with old personal photographs

(see Fig. 8) of Roderick's extended family and of other previous residents of District Six. These photographs created a sense of intimacy, linking his own identity within the former District Six community.

Figure 8. Photographs on one of the panels of Roderick's Room

As well as this, on the floor of the room were four large glass panels under which were displayed items of clothing (see Fig. 7). Roderick claimed that these clothes - including overalls, dungarees, an evening suit and a dress for dancing - represented the different trades and social activities of former District Six residents. The fabric was also printed with images and phrases depicting daily life in District Six. In order to design the clothes, Roderick had spoken with former District Six residents to research the former occupations and activities that had taken place in District Six.



These clothes are mainly because of the things I remember, like my mother used to go ballroom dancing... All of them have got stories on, like I told you, stories, like 'Bits and Pieces', 'Checkers' and things, these were all the Coons²⁷. And this was basically the ordinary working

²⁶ The name given to those people of mixed families who, in local terms, 'went over' and 'played white' through passing as white for apartheid classification, which often in these cases led to separation from, denial of or disowning coloured relatives.

²⁷ Referring to different 'Coon Carnival' Minstrel troupe names.

class guy and the factory worker... you know... the places where they all worked, Ackermans, Newmans²⁸...

He had also employed tailors who were former District Six residents to sew the garments, and had drawn upon the help of builders linked to the former District Six community to help build the main artwork structure. There was also a tradition, Roderick claimed, of laying new floor tiles in homes in District Six for Christmas. The floor tiles of the room were made from linocut templates Roderick had previously used to make prints depicting District Six. There were also 'tiles' that made up the ceiling of the room - made from embossed paper 'prints' of District Six, and created from the floor templates.

A quilted bedspread, printed with more images and text relating to District Six's past, was folded and placed on the centre of the floor of the room, with an open Bible (see Fig. 9) displayed in its centre to emphasise its central focus within his former home and family's life, as well as the community he had been part of. Roderick also described mixed feelings about the Bible, in that he saw it as also representative of colonial influence and part of apartheid doctrine. Consequently, he had altered the Bible's pages with his own images and words, interpreting it and shaping it on his own terms.

Figure 9. Roderick's 'altered Bible', on bedspread.



For Roderick, researching former residents' memories and experiences of the past, as well as connecting his personal memories with those of others thus fulfilled several purposes - an act of commemoration of District Six, a means of establishing his personal identity, and re-connecting with, and to some extent re-constituting, the community within which he had lived. Roderick's work thus illustrates how narratives of identity bear "the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formation and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration" (Antze and Lambek 1990: vii).

Through re-constructing his memory as a material artefact, Roderick thus claimed to shape and determine his own identity, on his own terms. Telling his "own story" provided a means for him to reclaim those parts of his identity he felt had been erased, displaced, ignored or deliberately suppressed during apartheid:

I'm not even taking other people's cultures. In a way, I'm taking my own culture, and building and working on my own culture.... It becomes my own thing... formed in my own wording, my own saying, my own belief... I can work in this domain and not be shy or scared to say something, or say my father was a factory worker, or my mother was a domestic worker or whatever. It makes me proud in a sense that where I am today is where I look back... Once you accept it, you can heal. The first thing is, you have to accept it.

Although merging collective South African narratives of history and personal memory, Roderick stressed that it was *his* story, *his* culture, and *his* process of healing that he was engaging with. Roderick's personal sense of ownership and choice in telling his 'story' of the past is evident in his statement:

²⁸ Names of well-known businesses in the CBD adjacent to District Six, where many of the District Six residents

Why I'm doing these things now is more like I'm myself, you know. I want to say, I want to tell the story, my story... I'm more free now. I see myself more as just what I am... It becomes my own thing... formed in my own wording, my own saying, my own belief.

The Materiality of Memory

The materiality of a place or artefact often evokes stronger memories than verbal narrative alone, through drawing on embodied forms of memory construction or recall.

The following account by Steve Robins, a South African Jewish academic, emphasises the power of the physical presence of a place to evoke a sense of personal knowledge and embodied sense of history. Standing before the Berlin building his uncle had once lived in, Robins claimed a profound sense of recovered identity in relation to his family's experience during the Holocaust:

This knowledge is now permanently etched in my memory. Visiting the building in which my father's brother Siegfried Robinski and his wife Edith lived in Berlin's Kreuzberg District, now a Turkish working-class neighbourhood, embodied and materialised my knowledge about my family's terrible fate. *Standing in front of the building on a bitterly cold winter night produced a profound materiality to what had once been a vague and repressed knowledge about my family's past* (1998: 139: *my emphasis*)

Similarly, when some former District Six residents walked over a large representational drawing of the previous District Six street map covering the floor of the District Six museum²⁹ and physically stood at the point on the map where they had once lived, such strong memories were evoked that they had to be physically helped away from the map.³⁰ They were overcome with emotion as a result of standing on the imagined representation of their home.

Such descriptions indicate the extent to which an artwork such as Roderick's, in reconstructing his original home, may have a profound effect on his own reconstruction of 'memory.' Roderick gathered and selected elements of his memory of District Six that made up a material narrative of his self-identity, as a presence in the present, depicting memories from his childhood, the former District Six community, and the impact of apartheid as well as visually representing collective histories and memories. Through physically containing the collective context of the apartheid past within the personal context of his family room, Roderick's experience of being an ex-inhabitant of the room was the central focus within which he gathered and re-constructed his memories, history and identity. He 'made real' what seemed unreal, by re-gathering the past within a material, tangible and physical space he could stand within and engage with. Memory therefore, in *A Personal Memory* operated, not merely through linear narrative, but spatially, associatively and laterally. Through the inclusion, juxtaposition and fusion of images and artefacts – such as printed words, family objects, photographs, and historical texts – and verbal explanation, the artwork acted as material *evidence* for Roderick's past memory. All these - family photographs in District Six; implements used daily in the kitchen and the bathroom; the 'dresser'

had worked.

²⁹ This museum commemorates the memory of the forcibly removed community and destroyed residential area of District Six in Cape Town (see Rassool and Prosalendis 2001).

³⁰ World Archaeological Conference, 1999. Panel Discussion, 'Healing the Social Wounds of War'; personal notes.

complete with small trophies and ornaments; the silent, dimly-lit, semi-excavated walls; the window with net curtain that appeared to look out of the room yet stared into the stone surface of the wall - suggested not only the physical loss of Roderick's original childhood home as a result of forced removals, but a destruction of a way of life. His artistic reconstruction thus not only examined loss, but provided a contextual framework for memory that made sense of the fragmentation and damage within his own past. He thus re-created his self-identity within a three-dimensional space that represented the place he had once lived in, setting personal memories, narratives and collective histories within a common framework of understanding within the present. The *making* of the artwork *made* Roderick's memory, and thus, identity. Through bringing into physical reality, re-creating, in its physical absence, a representation of his destroyed home, the house and community in District Six where his family had lived, Roderick defied the past.

Through his artwork, Roderick thus arguably recreated and reshaped the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990, 1977) of his past, reworking its referents on his own terms and within his own context of understanding. Roderick also claimed the right to accept the confusion, complexity and obscurity of the multiple narratives that formed reference points for his own sense of self through re-creating the past as fragmented words and objects that were often half-buried, blurred and unclear. For example, Roderick's references to various 'forgotten' histories stencilled on walls hinted at, but could not prove, possible slave and Khoisan ancestries. Consequently, the obscurity of his past itself became a claim for a 'whole self' - the *absence* of knowledge as a *presence* in Roderick's work.

Framed and immersed within Roderick's, and others', memories as a physical, material presence in-the-world the spectator also weaves a personal narrative within the artwork space, following visual, material and discursive associations and a sense of familiarity conveyed through the incorporated objects and home space. As Fisher (1997) has stated:

... art circulates around the structures of spectatorship - the mode of address by which art seeks to appeal to its viewer. This means exactly an attentiveness to the relation between self and other, and how the object mediates this relation... Vision here is haptic; it is a sense of touch, and it implicates other sensory mechanisms - sound, smell, rhythm, spatiality, and so forth; an aesthetic dimension that is not reproducible, not fixed, and asks for attentiveness from the viewer. (22).

Such observations are embedded within the framework of apartheid history, indicated by the content of the stencilled words on the walls, Roderick's own interpretations, and the knowledge that this was a house destroyed under the Group Areas Act. Different visual and verbal references to the past became linked within the artwork, and new associations were woven between the fragments that constituted Roderick's memories. These interpretations generated further associations, creating new 'memories' for the future. Through placing the spectator 'within' his childhood habitus, Roderick thus materially conveyed the permeation of apartheid into everyday life in the past. Memory, therefore emerges as a performative *practice*, which the spectator engages in becoming part of the construction of Roderick's self-identity, acknowledging his presence and voice, in a society in which historically, as Roderick noted, "people spoke for other people".

RANDOLPH HARTZENBERG - CASE STUDY TWO

A nationally recognised artist³¹, Randolph (Randy) Hartzenberg's artworks include sculpture, paintings, prints, installations, film and performance work. Despite being classified as coloured under apartheid, Randy strongly disagreed with "racist labels" in the New South Africa. The information provided here is from both formal interviews and informal conversations with Randy between July 1998 and September 2000.

Like Roderick Sauls, Randy was deeply concerned with the impact of apartheid on South Africans, particularly the psychological impact of forced removals. He spoke of the extent to which spaces and bodies had always seemed endangered and controlled in the past, resulting in a sense of fragility and vulnerability for the oppressed:

I have certain very, very clear memories of the demolishing of houses, of people being moved, and the fear that it could happen to us as well. ... You were put up against a very oppressive regime, which had the power to move people against their will, and then to place them in quite inhospitable areas. Now, that being compounded by the whole apartheid structure, e.g. the fact that one went to designated schools, you only could travel in designated buses and trains, you could go only to designated beaches for example - your whole life is prescribed in those terms.

The resultant psychological pain and sense of powerlessness, Randy claimed, had had a negative impact on what he termed the 'human psyche' in South Africa and led to a lack of respect for both self and society, as well as post-apartheid problems such as violence and crime:

It's a wounded society, a damaged society, where there is this lack of respect, but it starts with a lack of self-respect, with "I was dumped way out"... Here on the Cape Flats, the people who were driven out of District Six had to go and live in areas that were set aside for them in living conditions that were utterly putrid, and we see what the result has been - the result is antisocial behaviour. That is, for me, a result of saying, 'I wasn't cared for, so I don't care for myself'. ... I think that is where my art starts from ... I'm acutely aware of the pain of what people are suffering. It's plain to see. It's all around us. It's visible. It's not like a pain you have to go deep for, or excavate.

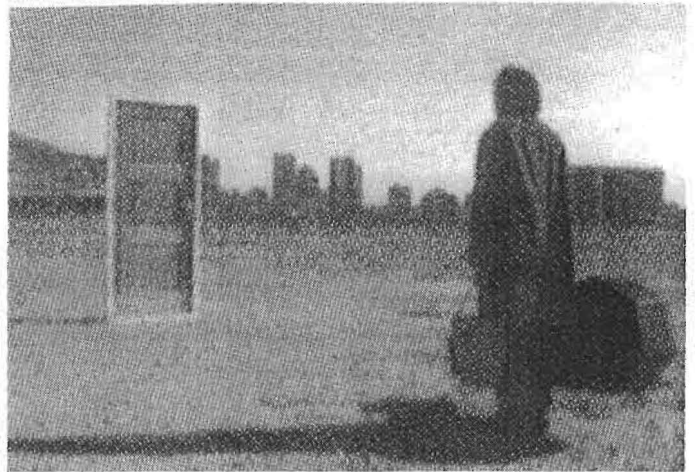
Themes within Randy's artworks included the sense of isolation, loss, pain and damage in the apartheid past, including the body's relationship of with social space³² and the dis-ownership of land, and what Randy claimed as the consequent need for human communication and healing. Many of his artworks re-created the embodied lived experience of apartheid on the body and the effects of being subject to apartheid's restrictions, exposing on the one hand its absurdity and, on the other, what he felt was its tragically damaging psychological effect. Consequently, a sense of vulnerability permeated his work - of

³¹ He had previously worked with the Space Theatre during the apartheid years, and had taken part in many significant exhibitions in South Africa.

³² Randy claimed being strongly influenced by the work and philosophy of the conceptual artist Joseph Beuys.

fragility, uncertainty, tension, expectation - contrasted with direct, though abstract, references to healing, freedom and the need for communication in South Africa's present.

Figure 10. Still from 'Road Zero' video- Randy Hartzenberg 1999



The above themes, for example, were evident in Randy's installation 'Road Zero: Salt Theatre, No Strings - installation with video and three sculptural elements' ('Staking Claims' Exhibition, The Granary, Cape Town, 22 September - 6 October 1999³³). The video component of this installation ran

continuously and depicted a seemingly absurd, long and meandering journey by Randy on a bus around the barren uninhabited spaces that used to be District Six (see Fig. 10). The bus stopped repeatedly, at different parts of the area where streets and houses had once been, and where Randy dismounted from the bus with an empty cello case, knocked at an invisible door, then climbed back on the bus and continued his journey. For Randy, the video referred to forced removals and their resultant psychological pain. He described this as:

The sense of threat, the sense of an endangered living space is perhaps what it [the artwork] is about, and in the video accompanying the installation elements, it's about the absence, the loss of a lived experience. Or, rather, it's an absence of life. Like, say if you take District Six, I'm knocking on a door. There's no answer to the door, and there is nobody there. That area has disappeared - it has been wiped off the map. The people are not there. It's about that kind of loss, that kind of emptiness.

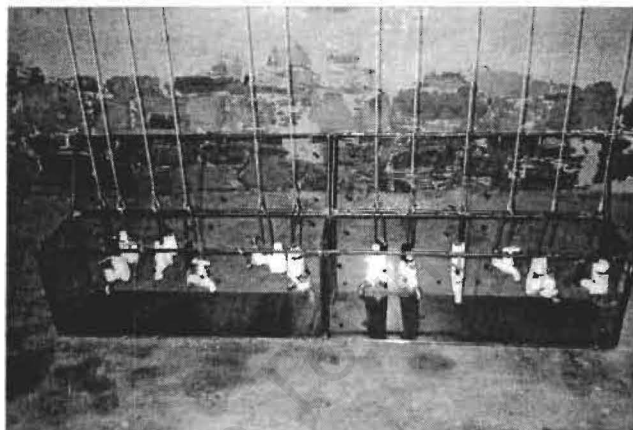
He described the empty cello case as representing music *not* being played, and human activity *not* occurring, as he stopped at each, now non-existent, doorway of the deserted landscape. Randy also linked the reference to music in his work to his past experience of segregated spaces and a racialised identity:

We can't in this country avoid those issues around spaces, because every space here is tainted in some way by an ideology that controlled the spaces.... I, for example, couldn't go in to the City Hall in Cape Town to listen to a Symphony concert... I was told you cannot listen to a Symphony concert because you are not the right colour. So, when I go there now, I go there still thinking about that time.

A further component of the installation consisted of a number of music stands in orchestral formation, as if, as he described it, "about to be played from." But instead of music sheets, the stands held steel sheets and the conductor's stand, a pane of broken glass. He explained, "In the case of the music stands... we also have broken glass - and for me, broken glass is a reference to shattering.... For me, it's like the human psyche - it can be easily shattered." References to sound, often in the form of music, also referred to emotional and sensory bodily needs, and stressed the need to communicate emotion and feeling, in opposition to the sense of isolation of the past.

Many of the spaces in his artworks were notably suggestive of, yet absent from, human occupation, or were not functional. Objects of daily life in Randy's artworks - such as domestic spaces, and taps, physical work, doors, windows, openings and barriers referenced the segmented interrelationship between the body, emotion and the spaces under apartheid, and what Randy perceived as its physical and emotional impact on post-apartheid identities. A sculptural component of the installation 'Road Zero' consisted of a convoluted arrangement of pipes, taps, medicine bottles and bandages (See Fig. 11) which, for Randy, referenced the opening and closing of links, connections and communication between spaces, and the accessing of nurturing, nourishment and healing.

Figure 11. Sculpture, part of 'Road Zero', showing bandaged taps



Much of Randy's work appeared incongruous, even absurd, incorporating meaningless blockades and piles of salt bags, and repetitive actions in performances.

'Pointless' and repetitive actions and work, within performances, suggested, for him, the futile work involved in the previous

maintenance of apartheid structures. Similar themes were also part of a performance piece by Randy at the Granary, Cape Town, on Heritage Day September 24th, 2000 (part of the 'One City Many Cultures' Festival). The performance involved the seemingly ritualistic mimicking of the ingestion and egestion of bread, water and salt³⁴ repetitively, referencing what he described as essential physical bodily needs, and the opening and closing of tubes and taps referring to the need of the human body to connect and communicate beyond itself. Physical barriers, he claimed, were suggestive of the body being denied access to spaces under apartheid. Pipes, tubes, doorways, suggested access points of entry and leaving and yet, often, these were closed, symbolising blockage and barriers, and were sometimes patched with bandages. The basic components of life - bread, water and salt - were used again and again in his artworks, to suggest sustenance and nurturing of the body. The performance was also suggestive of the ritualistic cleansing of the body, and arguably, the 'cleansing' of the apartheid past. A further performance artwork, *Salt Between the Walls* (Outshoom 1999), for example, involved the seemingly meaningless loading and unloading of bags of salt to create 'walls', linking the artwork with forced removals:

In Outshoom I worked with bags of salt...[it] was a work that was largely about housing in South Africa and, for me, the sort of pain that goes with not having a house, or the load that people have borne in relation to being moved - not having a house. South Africa as a house of pain, and the offloading of that pain. I mean, those bags weigh, like 50kg each and there's always a loading and an offloading that takes place round the bags.

³³ Curated by Emma Bedford. For full details, see *Staking Claims* exhibition catalogue, 1999

Healing the Past

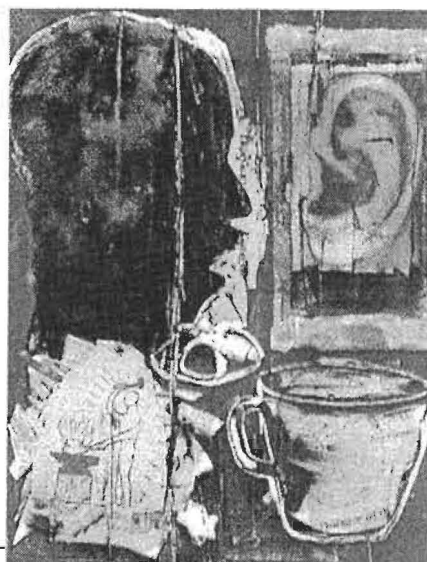
Scarry (1985), in her theoretical exploration of the link between the body, pain and torture, argues that within torture, the boundary between the body and the external world, normally divided by a person's skin, is destroyed and broken down through its physical and psychological invasion, so that the torture chamber becomes synonymous with the victim's inner self. Following Scarry, one can certainly argue that apartheid had a psychologically and physically comparable invasive effect on the individual's self-identity. An autonomous individual sense of self was, as in Scarry's torture chamber, 'broken down' from the 'outside'.

Scarry (ibid.) contends that a made object is both a site of projection and of reciprocation, in that "the act of human creating includes both the creating of the object, and the object's recreating of the human being" (ibid: 310). She argues that artworks may be seen as a way of remaking the world, "the making of what is originally interior and private into something exterior and shareable, and, conversely, the reabsorption of what is now exterior and sharable into the intimate recesses of individual consciousness" (284) that, through externalising and expressing in non-verbal form the unspeakable pain of the inner self, alleviate the pain to some extent.

Scarry's arguments are equally applicable to Randy's work. Like Roderick Sauls, Randy felt that his art was a process of personal healing, with the possibility of reaching out to others through his work. Although Randy did not appear to be directly constructing a 'narrative' of identity, his work contrasted referents to past denied bodily experiences - emotional expression, the aesthetic senses, bodily movement and access to space - with referents to what Randy called 'humanity' and 'healing' as an attempt to re-constitute of the 'whole' self. Through remembering and exploring what he felt had been taken from individuals, and through references to healing, reconstruction and communication, he hoped to enable individuals to pay attention and become 'whole' again, to recreate a sense of community and what he called 'humanity.'

Figure 12. Monograph 'Untitled' by Randy Hartzenberg

Randy also considered human communication - hearing and listening - necessary for South Africans to recover from the past. He claimed that nourishment and healing of the body and 'human psyche' required reworking the emotive, communicative domains of self if one were to be 'whole'. For example, he interpreted his monograph print, "Untitled" (see Fig. 12), showing an image of an ear, a man forging a heart, and a cup, as



³⁴ Salt was traditionally used on the Cape Flats to clean wounds.

representing the body's need to listen, work, and obtain nourishment.

Randy also believed that his work had relevance for other countries as well, because it focused on what he described as 'humanity'. He stated:

Certainly for me one of the intentions with which I approach the art-making process is that there is the possibility for healing. I'm not talking about healing on a big scale. I think I'm talking about more, like, subtle healing, even on a small scale with individuals, with a one-to-one thing where a person experiences an art work in their own way, that part of that experience will have to do hopefully with healing you know... Maybe if there were a small voice somewhere in what's like a dark wilderness, even that small voice is important. Rather than no voice at all, that keeps on saying, "Hey, look. Where are we going to? What is this about? ...I think that our consciousness should be much, much sharper all the time and it must be felt and must be seen in art, visual art, in theatre, music, in the dance world, in whatever discipline we make art, and it should be a prevalent thing in education... so we nurture a society so that there is a sharper consciousness about being here, part of a larger community of human beings.

Randy's work was not only an exploration of his memory of the apartheid past, but was located within the emotional and psychological experience of his present. Although often abstract and obscure, Randy's work was an effort to come to terms with the past through a corporeal, spatial reworking of memory. Through making art, Randy attempted to rework his understanding of the past through the experiential process of reconstructing his present. This suggests an experiential, emotive aspect to memory, and memory as a practice. Work that dealt with what Randy called the damaged psychological self, or psyche, externalised his sentient, autobiographical experience through its material construction. His work was an effort to understand the impact of apartheid through materially reworking referents depicting difficult-to-verbally-articulate *embodied* experiences of existence during apartheid South Africa. Randy himself explained that his intentions and associations with his materials and work were not always clear to him in advance, and that he often came to a "realisation" of his intentions through the creative process: "I am not necessarily logically constructing the images - it quite often comes about quite intuitively. Then I see a whole network of images - space, doorways, doors opening and closing, movement between spaces." Emotion and pain became materialised, embodied, focused towards the future, through his referents to healing, to undergoing reconstruction in the present. His work illustrated how apartheid was not only a verbal and legal imposition on individuals, but impacted on everything the body did, and felt, or what he termed the 'pain' of apartheid on the 'human psyche'. 'Remembering' thus occurred *through* the body.

Johnson (1987, 1991) claims that recurring cognitive patterns in the mind that order experience ('image schemata') are grounded in the body, and thus that the body is "in the mind", so that, "Grasping a meaning is an *event* of understanding; it is a dynamic, interactive process, relating to previous experiences and embodied knowledge" (ibid. 1987: 236: author's emphasis). It seems to me that artists such as Randy and Roderick have shifted 'image schemata' through re-constructing embodied relationships. Randy's work, reworking embodied relationships with both emotive and spatial aspects of memory, re-enacted memory within the present, making visible the experience and impact of the non-communicativeness of a damaged and fragmented society. His art was a means of articulating embodied relationships, in relation

to emotive, experiential, spatial, bounded and practised aspects of the 'identity' he had lived that would have been difficult to narrate verbally.

Clearly, Randy's associations with the past were complex and multi-layered. He linked together many aspects of an identity oppressed under apartheid as well as the impact of apartheid in creating what he described as an incomplete, damaged 'self' – restricted and restrained in its self-expressive, communicative, and motile capabilities. His incorporation of the past into the context of the present also tied in with Roderick Saul's emphasis that his artwork was created to restore his 'lost identity', in that identity requires an audience or witness for its existence, and also indicates how a sense of wholeness is tied to agency and self-empowerment in South Africa.

GARTH ERASMUS: CASE STUDY THREE



Figure 13. Garth at Thupelo Workshop Exhibition, 1999

An example of how history and ancestry are intertwined in the shaping of narratives of self-identity is illustrated in the work of Garth Erasmus.

Garth, a visual artist and musician originally from the Eastern Cape, had lived in Cape Town for many years by the time of this research (1998-9). His artwork encompassed abstract and figurative drawing, painting, and performances. Several events in Garth's life after 1994 had led to a new focus in his work on Khoisan identity and culture.

One such event was his father's revelation, shortly before he died in 1996 of what Garth described as "hidden" family ancestries. His father re-introduced Garth to members of his extended family he had not seen for many years as a result of forced removals, as well as to family members he had not met or could not remember. Being informed of what were obviously very mixed roots in his family by his father, and hearing of histories, including Khoisan roots and individuals who had not previously been revealed, had an enormous impact on Garth's perception of his own identity. He described this impact:

One of the things that I was learning about is that, in my roots, I have got obviously Dutch European. From my mother's side, there's local Hottentot [Khoisan] clans; and from my father's side there's the Dutch colonial; and then there's the slave, the Malaysian slaves from *his* mother's side... And part of that was discovering long lost aunts and family, and photographs that date back to, like, you know, 1910, 1905, 1922. You don't see, like, these things, which I've never seen before. It was never exposed. It was like, really, a refreshing thing to have happened you know, it's like, it's almost like being born again.... I think a big problem in South Africa is that we haven't presented history properly yet - I mean we always spoke about this over all the years of, like, political activity, you know, that the history is skewed, twisted... there still isn't that movement to make that right.

Social, cultural and political changes after apartheid formally ended had also left Garth uncertain as to how, or whether, to describe himself racially or culturally. In the 1970s and '80s, Garth had participated as a 'cultural worker' in the black consciousness movement as a member of the then active Cape Flats based arts group *Vakalisa*³⁵. In the 1980s he was also a founder committee member of the Cape Town Thupelo workshops³⁶. Post-1994 he claimed he felt social and personal pressure to 'change' his artwork from a political anti-apartheid focus, to 'new' post-apartheid concerns:

...three, four years back, it was the start of the changes in South Africa after the elections ... as an artist there was this thing - what kind of work were you going to do now? What was the nature of the work going to be now that there's political freedom, now that there are no more of these things to dwell on? So, on that level, and on a personal level, I was having to deal with, on my father's side, learning about my roots, and on the outside, also having to deal with, like, having to think of myself quite seriously as an artist.

Although classified coloured under apartheid, he made it clear that he found 'coloured' problematic as a term of identity. Garth described his new work as forming part of the discovery of "who I am", framing it in terms of ancestry and artistic "self-determination":

In the eighties I worked from anger, strong emotional charges. Now... it's different... I'm much more interested in self-determination. ... When it comes to finding out who you are and investigating things like heritage and so on, and if you do it I find, in a very honest way, I think you are busy with self-determination. Because I think that is what my work is all about. I am trying to determine myself through my work.

Garth also claimed that his attendance at the official opening of the exhibition, 'MisCast' (1996), at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town inspired further influence on his artworks³⁷. Created by the (white) visual artist, Pippa Skotness, this controversial exhibition took up several rooms of the National Gallery and aimed to represent the Khoisan past. Skotness' attempt to expose the past dehumanisation and exploitation of the Khoisan resulted in her being accused of continuing to reproduce colonial attitudes and Khoisan victimisation through the way in which her exhibition was presented, and caused considerable uproar within various sectors of the South African population. Criticism was particularly centred on the highly controversial display in the installation artwork (Klopper 1996) of body casts of parts of Khoisan bodies obtained from the Natural History Museum's storerooms. This display had resulted in the mobilisation of large numbers of Khoisan groups in protest, and the establishment of new organisations, through which many South Africans of mixed heritage began to look at the possibility of their 'Khoi' or 'San' roots as a source of pride rather than shame.

³⁵ This group, comprising many 'black' visual artists, writers and musicians, including visual artists such as Garth Erasmus, Lionel Davis, Peter Clarke and Mervyn Davids, was based on the Cape Flats and produced exhibitions and musical and literary events in an attempt to 'mobilise' political action in the Cape Flats. There is little written or visual documentation of this group, although Mervyn Davids, an ex-member, was hoping to put together and publish documentation he has. (Interview with Mervyn Davids, 1998).

³⁶ See Chapter Six.

³⁷ Garth had originally planned, with a few other artist-musicians, to disrupt the opening of the exhibition by playing his saxophone as a form of protest against the exhibition. However, the protest did not go as planned: "I remember we had planned to go upset that exhibition you know... When the moment came, it didn't happen... Everyone else chickened out". Garth consequently, wandered around the exhibition on his own playing his saxophone³⁷.

As a result of viewing the exhibition of Khoisan body casts, photographs and texts, Garth felt a strong need to respond to the treatment of the Khoisan from his own perspective, in what he described as a different, more personal and positive way:

When I went the first time I was really pissed off... I went already angry, because I could already pick out that they were going to be on display as Khoi people, objects.... And then later on I began to check - I feel like I should do something. I was beginning to question how I was just feeling negative, you know, that personal thing. I was just, like, reviewing my life, and was sick and tired of just having negative feelings towards this, that and the other, you know, coming out of all those years of being against.... I was checking out, I should be able to do something concrete with these negative images.

The entire experience had a significant impact on Garth's own thinking and perception of self-identity. Garth linked his own experience under apartheid, verbally as well as visually, to the historical treatment of the Khoisan, and began to create artworks incorporating what he termed "images, symbols and artefacts" from Khoisan culture. Visual references to the oppressive treatment of the Khoisan, for example, were evident in his paintings. For example, the painting 'Rest lost - post-morte...[m]' (1999) (see Fig. 14) was a direct response to the body parts he saw in MisCast, referring to the label, 'Rest lost. Post mortem' on one of the exhibits.



Figure 14. Rest lost. Post Mortem, Garth Erasmus, 1998

Through creating artworks, he intended to reclaim, on his own terms, an aspect of his self-identity that he felt had been denied him, revealing not only his own Khoisan ancestry, but also what he referred to as a "shared history of dispossession," of land, histories, and family ties. Garth emphasised that he was not concerned with representing collective histories, the stories "told by 'others'," but with personalising them. This personalisation and identification with Khoisan history is evident from his description of his representation of Sara Baartman in one of his artworks, a Khoisan woman who had been exhibited abroad in the nineteenth century and died in France³⁸:

I think in a way that whole story of Sara touches on, is symbolic of all of us, and how we fit into the history of this country, and she is basically a symbol of all that has happened - being used, classified, whatever, cut up, being dispersed, displaced.

³⁸ At the time, there were political efforts to repatriate her remains to South Africa from France. Eventually, these efforts succeeded and Sara Baartman's remains were ceremoniously buried in South Africa in 2002.

Figure 15. 'Riemvasmaak', 1998, Garth Erasmus

In another painting Garth pointed out the word Riemvasmaak (meaning to 'tie' or 'fasten', in Afrikaans) (see Fig. 15) painted on the its surface, as the name of what he claimed to be a "Khoisan ancestry area" in the Northern Cape, from which people had been forcibly removed in the past. He explained that he had represented the place name as a means of commemoration, "to make it heroic, because hardly anyone knows about it - one of those little bits of history that gets completely lost." Garth claimed to re-interpret South African history by memorialising places like Riemvasmaak in artworks. He thus created new historical referents for collective memory, to recreate history in the present.



Figure 16. Garth's studio at Greatmore Studios, 1999, with work in progress, using gourds, and home-made instruments made of natural materials.

Khoisan images and visual references, sometimes more abstracted and symbolic, became the overriding focus in his later paintings. Garth also constructed self-made Khoisan instruments from wood, gourds, and other 'natural' materials (see Figs. 16 and 17). These Khoisan instruments were also often incorporated into his paintings. For example, he incorporated a musical instrument he described as a Khoisan bow, which he had made himself, in a two-dimensional assemblage (1998, untitled). He also often combined his paintings with improvised musical performances, using his self-made Khoisan instruments, and other instruments such as his saxophone, claiming that music was in itself a form of artistic abstraction, moving beyond the visual, into sound.

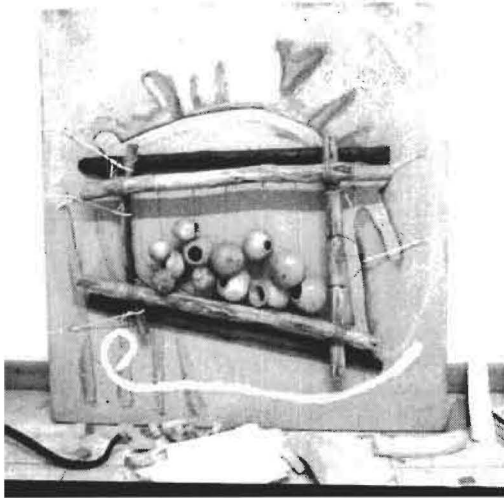


Figure 17. Small painting of Garth's, using natural materials, such as gourds and wood, 1999

Over time, Garth became more and more involved with his performance work, including visual media, music and oral poetry and often in collaboration with other artists. By September 2000 he had become part of a small performance group called *Khoi Connection*,³⁹ with a strong focus on Khoisan cultural influences.

Garth thus corporeally and materially reconstituted a 'dispossessed' Khoisan society through his art work, affirming both his own previously hidden Khoisan ancestry, and identifying with Khoisan oppression through his personal experience of racial oppression and land loss to create a 'whole' self. Such processes demonstrate how memory referents to personal ancestry and autobiographical experience are incorporated into collective historical frameworks, and referents to collective history are incorporated to change personal narratives of self-identity.

BERNI SEARLE: CASE STUDY 4

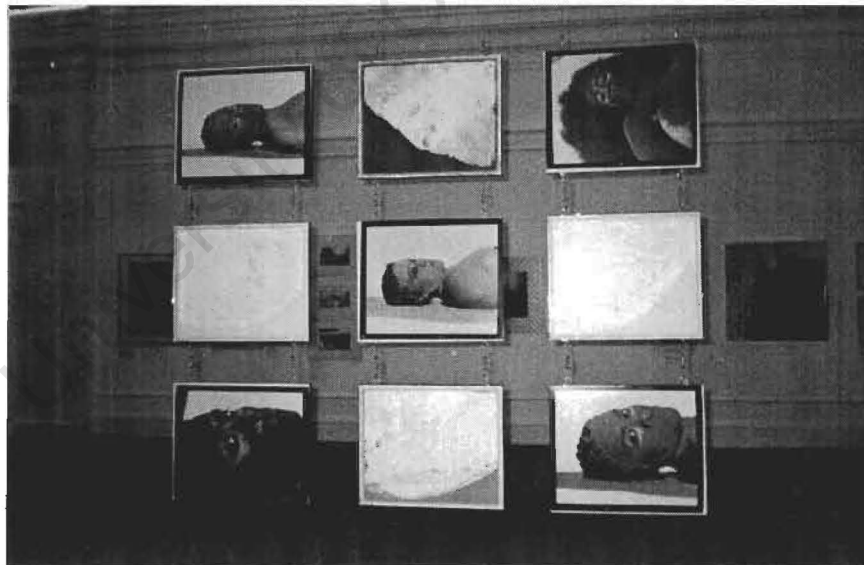


Figure 18. Works from 'Colour Me' Series, Berni Searle, shown at South African National Gallery, 1999

A female artist of coloured background, Berni Searle, like Garth Erasmus, also claimed that themes in her work had shifted over the past few years from working politically within 'resistance' themes to a more personal investigation of identity:

³⁹ The group performed at The Granary, Cape Town, as part of the *One City Many Cultures* festival on Heritage Day 2000, and at the formal re-opening of the District Six Museum with the exhibition 'Digging Deeper', in September 2000.

I think this whole thing of heritage is, for myself anyway, a relatively recent development. For a long time, the main thing was we were oppressed. And we have some space now to look at these things, where we are coming from. For myself, as well, I can start now.

Berni has had increasing success and international exposure as an artist since she was interviewed (1998-1999). She is now an internationally acclaimed artist. She explained that the original inspiration for the new direction in her art works were dioramas depicting the indigenous Khoisan inhabitants of South Africa. These life-size dioramas were constructed from body casts taken from living Khoisan people. The diorama was on permanent display at the South African Natural History Museum, an institution depicting the flora, fauna, geology and mineralogy of South Africa. Part of a major controversy that emerged after democratisation, the dioramas are no longer on public display at the museum.

For Berni, such representations of the Khoisan were indicative of what she described as "the colonial gaze" which had dominated non-white South Africans in the past and played a primary role in determining identity through skin-colour and appearance during apartheid. Like Garth Erasmus, Berni claimed that she had, felt motivated to respond to the 'MisCast' exhibition mentioned above.

Bernie's artworks drew on collective, ancestral and autobiographical histories, using her own body as subject matter, to explore concepts of the racialised body and to rework its representation. One example of work produced with these aims was the 'Colour Me Series' (1999) (see Fig. 18). In this work, she displayed photographs of her own face and body entirely covered in differently coloured spices. The use of differently coloured spices on her body visually 'changed' the appearance of her skin colour in each photograph, to orange (turmeric), green (split green peas), black (cloves) or white (flour) amongst others, and was intended as a deliberate play on skin colour.

Moreover, Berni's work incorporated reference to a history of dispersal and hybridity via her possible, though not proven, slave ancestry. She described the use of spices as indirectly referring to the Dutch 'Spice Route', the shipping route used under colonialism for the trade of spices and for the shipment of slaves to South Africa by the Dutch East India Company, as well as to the use of spices in cooking by her great grandfather, a chef, suggesting a possible family slave ancestry. Spices thus imbued Berni's body with history, both playing on the visual suggestion that perceptions of colour are only 'skin deep', and her possible ancestral links with spices. This was indicated in the written statement accompanying the *Colour Me* series:

Using spices to express ideas about my identity also stems in part from my heritage, my maternal great-grandfathers having come from Mauritius and Saudi Arabia, each of them marrying Cape Malay women. Very little connects me to this heritage in terms of a lived tradition, one of the tentative aspects being food. (Berni Searle, written statement, *Colour Me* exhibition, 1998)



Figure 19. 'Re-Presentation', Berni Searle, 'Dis Nag' Slavery Exhibition, 1998

Another artwork, entitled 'Re-presentation' ('Dis Nag – The Cape's Hidden History of Slavery' exhibition, Cultural History Museum, 1998⁴⁰) (see Fig. 19), consisted of a life-size photograph of her body covered in ground cloths, displayed like a museum artefact in a museum case. Referring to the similarity of labelling her own body as 'other' in the past, and the historical public display of the Khoisan as 'other', oppressed and submissive to the apartheid and colonial gaze, she explained that she deliberately and provocatively turned her gaze in the photographs of herself on her audience, to represent the previously labelled individual 'looking back'. Through visually playing on the objectification of her body, on her own terms, Berni thus hoped to challenge preconceptions around perceptions of race.

On a personal level, Berni reworked her previous subjective experience of categorisation and racial stereotyping under apartheid - a bounded, stereotyped, skin-deep, imposed of 'identity' - and reclaimed the same referents for the representation of her own body, and thus identity, on her own terms. Her intention, she claimed, was not to represent herself as 'Khoisan', of which she had no direct proof, but to explore and challenge the past categorisation and typecasting of bodies in relation to self-identity. She thus deliberately played on the representation and 'reading' of her own body, claiming to subvert past associations and racialised readings. In the process, she asserted and acknowledged what she described as her own mixed heritage and possible 'hidden' ancestry through her work.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Six for a discussion of this collaborative exhibition.



Figure 20. 'They Stole the Land' – 1999, Mustafa Maluka

Yet another example of remaking identity involved the young artist, Mustafa (formerly Dennis) Maluka, who I previously worked with in the Cape Flats Arts Group in Athlone, as previously described above⁴¹. Mustafa grew up in Bishop Lavis on the

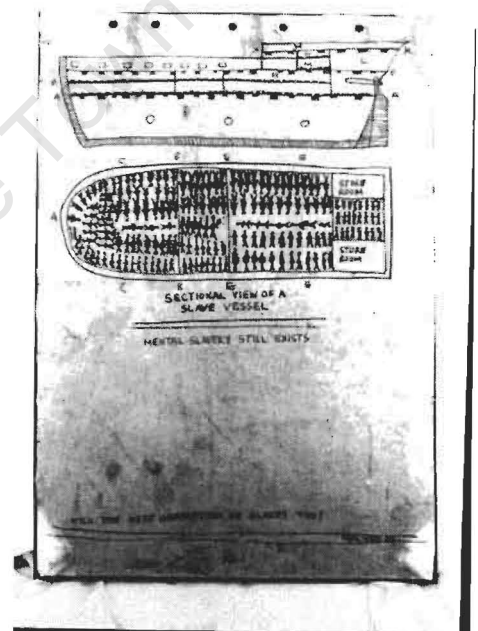
Cape Flats as coloured. He converted from Christianity to Islam in 1997, changing his first name from Dennis to Mustafa.

Figure 21. Painting by Mustafa, showing a representation of the plans for arranging slaves below deck during transportation overseas, 1999



Figure 22. Painting satirically depicting a 'kaffir ball' - confectionery Mustafa had grown up with as a child, 1999

Mustafa Maluka's work was concerned with what he described as "the denial of a black African identity within the coloured population." From 1996, after



undertaking his own research into the history of slavery in the Western Cape⁴² at the Cape Town City Reference Library, Mustafa became more and more interested in representing the possibility of black roots in the coloured population. He claimed to have discovered that approximately one third of the slaves were of black African ancestry and was concerned about with what he felt was considerable ignorance and denial of black ancestries in the coloured community that acknowledged East Asian but not African slave roots.

The reason why I'm focused mostly on African slavery is because that's the slavery which gets focused on the least... people tend to romanticise the whole South East Asian slave trade thing you know, but they don't say anything about the African slaves that were brought here. Nobody can be purely Indonesian or whatever... I think people who claim that are lying to themselves - they don't like themselves as Africans. People who use terms like coloured are ignorant. I'm referring mostly to people with my own kind of history - who've had that self-hate thing all their lives... straightening their hair and so on.

⁴¹ See Methodology, Chapter Two.

⁴² See Ward, 1997; Ward and Worden, 1998

Although previously classified coloured, Maluka claimed that his surname indicated direct descent from "black African roots" on his father's side. He focused on what he described as his experience of being a "black South African man", having made a conscious choice to emphasise a 'black' rather than coloured identity. This emphasis was also a political statement in support of the Black Consciousness movement, an association that had evolved with through his interest in reference to the black diaspora within hip-hop music. He claimed that emphasising his black slave roots was a means of establishing both pride and a black identity for himself and other coloured people, and noted that, "If one is mixed, then black genes dominate."

Mustafa's solo exhibition at the Association of Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery, Cape Town in 1998, titled 'The Unstoppable Rap-ist' focused on themes of slavery and black identity, incorporating words such as 'black', and 'slave', images such as slave ships (see Fig. 21), afro combs and what he termed "stereotyped" black African facial features (see Fig. 23), the latter influenced by gangster graffiti from the walls of the Cape Flats, and hip-hop imagery. Like the other artists discussed here, he also drew visual connections between apartheid oppression and slavery in his paintings.



Figure 23. 'Blackman on your Own', Mustafa Maluka, 1999

Mustafa positioned himself as 'black' in the international art world, particularly in relation to global debates about black diaspora slave identity. However, he did not explore direct links between himself and South Africans classified black African under apartheid, but kept his argument pertinent to the coloured population. His focus remained on emphasizing physical appearance, skin colour and African slave histories in the Western Cape coloured population. This suggests that his self-identification was with an international black diasporic discourse of identity rather than with local South African debates. Being black allowed him to be elsewhere than within the bounded perceptions of the coloured identity he grew up with under apartheid, and through art-making he reshaped his own identity.

Ambitious, and determined to "make something" of himself despite his "oppressed background", Mustafa eventually distanced himself geographically from his coloured background, while nevertheless continuing to refer to it. Since 1997, Mustafa has gained increasing local recognition and obtained a prestigious fine art scholarship to study in Amsterdam, where he married and was still residing in the year 2001.



Figure 24. Xolile Mtakatya, pastel drawing of Sara Baartman and African traditional objects, 1999

The examples to this point have dealt only with work by coloured artists. Exploring alternative identities has not typically been considered to be a major concern of persons seen as 'black African', due to the generally held perception that black African identities are less hybrid. I interviewed Xolile Mtakatya, a black Xhosa-speaking artist living in Khayelitsha, a black township on the Cape Flats, specifically about his pastel drawing depicting an image of Sara Baartman (See Fig. 24), at the Association of Visual Arts (AVA) Gallery space in Cape Town in 1999⁴³.

Xolile related that he had read the story of Sara Baartman in a magazine and was intrigued by her story, particularly regarding "what people were interested in... the shape of her body, and also what exploitation they do to the Khoi people." In his artwork, Xolile portrayed his interpretation of that history. He combined Sara Baartman's image, which he claimed to have copied from the same magazine, with symbols that, he claimed, represented 'traditional' Africa and referred to associations with the sexual exploitation of Sara Baartman's body - a "Zulu tribal fetish" and an image of a rhino - "they do aphrodisiac from the rhino horn." He described the three men in the artwork as representing colonialists "gambling over who would own her."

Xolile claimed that he had a personal interest in Sara Baartman because his great grand father was Khoi, a history that he was personally exploring in relation to his self-identity:

I'm the third generation from my clan of the Khoi... My great grandfather was Khoi... You see, I'm on the way to track the story because I grow up [with] my stepfather and they have a different clan name... The grandfathers, they mixed before with the Khoi and that particular clan which belonged to Xhosa then. ... Mix of Khoi and Xhosa.

⁴³ Xolile exhibited here as part of a joint exhibition with another artist, Lundi Mduba.

A Khoisan ancestry is generally associated with 'coloured' identity, despite the historical intermixing in the distant South African past between adjacent black and Khoisan populations. As a black Xhosa-speaker in apartheid South Africa, Xolile grew up separately from the coloured population. Through working with Khoisan imagery in relation to personally exploring perceptions of self, Xolile broadened the idea of Xhosa identity as more hybrid and, by so doing, arguably moved *beyond* perceptions of separateness. Xolile claimed that he had "extended" his own identity to "connect" with others, and that, in the New South Africa, he could now do this "on many levels:"

I'm labelling myself as someone else now.... I deal with issues which could be universal or taking some other things and relate it to my culture because we are all like a circle you know; we meet somewhere at some point.

'TRUTH' AND HISTORY

Given that purportedly historical facts in South Africa are often obscure or unclear, a question that emerges is whether historical accuracy is relevant in visual artists' representations of the past in their re-shaping of history and identity. Bloch (1998) sees little distinction between autobiographical memory - that experienced during a lifetime - to that of more distant historical events. He refers to practices of imaging events in the mind, which are later recounted as narratives, as a process of 'fleshing out' more distant historical events in the mind so that they become as 'real' as autobiographical experiences to the narrator. He states:

...normally to remember a story is to construct a coherent mental model which enables one to remember what is happening as though one was witnessing it; it is this imagined event and not the text that is remembered. ... This, I believe, is most important for our understanding of the nature of historical narratives which are highly relevant to the identity and moral life of people concerned... the inferential fleshing out of a heard narrative in the mind of those who will retain it in their memory is very great indeed, so great that the inevitable thinness of a narrative is replaced by an experience which is as "all around" as one which may be lived through.... This means that in spite of the poverty of the original input they can, when remembering, search an almost unlimited and vivid memory of the events contained in the story in exactly the way that an individual can do this when recalling auto-biographical memories. In this way the difference of the nature, if not the content, of historical and autobiographical memory for narratives of events of great importance for those concerned disappears completely (1998: 123-124).

Jenkins (1996) also argues that thinking is more than language and that material objects facilitate the transmission of memory 'as if one was really there' (120). He likewise states that, "If people think something is real, it is real in its consequences (if nothing else). Therefore it is socially real." (83).

If autobiographical narratives are indeed imaged and fleshed out with historical memory, then the artworks presented here are analogous to Bloch's 'mental models' in cognitively reconstructing artists' narratives of self-identity. The artists in the case studies presented, drew together historical and autobiographical narratives to make the past *material* through visibly constructing new referents, and thus helped 'flesh out' narratives of identity. Bernie Searle, Garth Erasmus, Mustafa Maluka and Xolile Mtakatya reworked narratives of their own ancestry, incorporating referents such as skin colour, social

displacement, and historically 'denied' ancestries. Even where ancestry was obscured and unclear, its material *representation* was significant in shifting these artists' perceptions of self-identity.

The artists here not only represented marginalised (collective) South African histories visually, but incorporated 'real' and 'imagined' personal and collective histories into narratives of self, making visible their own hidden family histories, and suggesting other associations. The created narratives were materially experienced in the reworking of space, bodies and visual representation. Identities were thus constructed *through-the-making*. Consequently, through-the-making, the past became experiential, embodied, a 'fleshed out' construction of the artist's own 'truth' and a focal point from which to move on, in the present. These self-constructed narratives of identity provided a positive alternative to the sense of dispossession of self-identity and the imposed categorisations of the past. A sharp sense of history rather than historical accuracy was an important catalyst in this (arguably healing) process.

RE-REMEMBERING THE SELF

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.
Hall, 1996

Schachter claims that "extensively rehearsed and elaborated memories come to form the core of our life stories - narratives of self that help us define and understand our identity and our place in the world" (1998: 301). In these narratives, memory is flexible, malleable and, ultimately, a creative process (ibid. 1998).

Memory is metaphorical rather than analogical, being more akin to poetry than linear narrative (Kuhn 2000). Recent neuro-cognitive research indicates that memory, rather than being located in a single 'site' in the brain, is composed "of a variety of distinct and dissociable processes and systems" (Schachter 1998: 5). These systems consist of a number of memory sites connected in the brain through an amalgamation of neural networks which work together. How a memory is 'remembered' and, consequently, the form it takes, has been shown to depend on the form of cue and neural networks used in its recall. For example, cues for memory recall may be verbal or non-verbal, sensory, such as taste, smell, and vision, or emotional. On each memory recall, networks of previously recorded information become amalgamated with new cues used to retrieve them. The subsequent memory becomes a re-construction, a combination of both cue and original recorded information. Consequently, particular neural networks of recall may be strengthened over others or new cues and associations incorporated during successive recalls of the past. Indeed, memories associated with strong emotional stimuli appear to be remembered more effectively⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Emotion in the brain has been linked to the amygdala, in the centre of the brain. Strong emotions associated with an event have been shown to result in a stronger imprinting of the memory within neural networks (see Schachter 1998).

Artworks are able to reconstitute memory in ways that verbal narratives cannot, in that “artists can convey with considerable potency some of the personal, experiential aspects of memory that are difficult to communicate as effectively in words” (Schachter 1998: 11). Artworks work spatially, experientially, and also form foci for the construction of further narratives through multiple access points. New referents can be materially amalgamated with referents from previous memories to form new identity narratives.

The artists presented here reworked referents of the past in their artworks: material, corporeal, ancestral, emotional, autobiographical and those of oppression and dispossession. In so doing, they reshaped memory narratives in the New South Africa in different ways, notably, *on their own terms*. Old referents and memories were re-contextualised in relation to new referents in the present to create new self-narratives that, inevitably, re-shaped identities. Roderick Sauls and Randolph Hartzenberg reworked embodied relationships with social spaces. Roderick replaced his destroyed room in the past with a representation that also drew on the broader South African historical context. Randy reworked spatial and embodied referents of the apartheid past into a metaphor for the healing of humanity. Berni Searle’s artwork used her own body as a site for historical and personal agency, through reworking associations with skin colour and ancestry to claim alternative ancestral histories and contest labels based on racial phenotypes and skin colour. Garth Erasmus and Xolile Mtakatya drew on Khoisan ancestry, in particular histories of dispossession and denial. Mustafa re-determined his identity in terms of his ‘black’ roots through references to slavery, thus, as Gilroy (1993) terms it, “re-routing” his black identity within the slave diaspora.

As objects in-the-world, these artworks thus materially evidenced memory, confronting and ‘returning’ the gaze of apartheid, through choosing how and what to represent in relation to the artist’s own personal history. Within the artwork, memory also had the capacity to expand and incorporate, to be reshaped through constructing new reference points and positions within alternative frameworks, and to re-construct narratives of identity.

Rather than rejecting the past, I suggest the artworks presented here negotiate between past and present as an act of *re-remembering* in the present. Through re-remembering the past, they effectively created memory through artworks, a process which exemplifies how “transmission itself is a mode of memory, that memory is a dynamic process informed by the cognitive experiences through which images are fashioned” (Kuchler and Melion, 1991: 3). These representations, however, do not necessarily permanently redefine these artists’ self-identities but may be understood as an exploration of the *possibilities* for self-identity. Identity is thus constituted by artists in a particular point in space and time in the present, within a continuum of identity change that, as Hall (1990a) states, “is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (222).

In a different context, Parkin (1999) notes that in times of social depersonalisation through social displacement in which people flee homes and previous social structures become absent, people invest in objects which act as relics or mementoes of previous social lives and which take the place of the previous structures. Such objects, which he terms ‘transitional’, become re-instated, he claims, when things return

to normal. It is possible to suggest a parallel between Parkin's displaced society and the internal sense of displacement and social depersonalisation many South Africans must have felt when faced with rapid transition from an apartheid social infrastructure based on racial identities and racism established over centuries, to an egalitarian, non-racist society.

For the artists in this study, art-making seems to have provided a means of objectifying the self within what was arguably an experiential sense of social displacement as a result of rapid socio-political change. One may even suggest that the artists presented here invested in artistic images as self-created 'relics' of past identities, in order to re-instate self-identities within the present, imaged transitional realities that for these artists objectify social relationships and identities for the future.

The artworks presented here thus not only form a focal point of legitimacy and anchorage for the self in the new South Africa, but also exemplify how self-identities may be asserted, reformulated and changed. Roderick Sauls' work, now incorporated within the District Six museum permanent 'Digging Deeper' exhibition, has become an individual story within the 'collective' museum representation of District Six. Mustafa, now living in Holland, presents himself as 'black' African despite having lived abroad for several years. Garth's work coincided with and was part of his creative performative work with Khoisan Connections. Bernie's work has placed her, as a black South African artist, on the international art stage. The completed artwork thus acted as a reference point from which to base new narratives of self. It was therefore transformative, acting both as reference point for the artists' externalisation of, and self-reflection of, perceptions of identity, and in its presentation to others through exhibition and display.

Re-framing and re-selecting references to the past effected a *performance* of the re-remembered self in the present, moving forwards as well as backwards in time, in a process of self-discovery. Through the externalisation, acknowledgement and witnessing of the body's experiences as material artefacts and performances, not only the boundaries between inner self, and the material world, broke down, but the self was reworked and reconstituted 'as a whole'. Loss of the body's own right to self-determination through ancestry, history, place, was thus regained through the artists materially and physically anchoring associations between embodied memories of the past and narratives in the present. Although using referents of self-identity constructed within an oppressive apartheid past, artists affirmed and reshaped self-identities through the re-contextualisation of these same referents on *their own terms* in the New South Africa. They thus reclaimed self-identities, visibly *remaking their world* within artworks.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY – TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN ART CATEGORIES, MARKET VALUES AND ARTISTS' IDENTITIES

Just as in any other society, there are distinctions between urban and rural, professional and untrained artists: but in South Africa these have tended to form along racial lines. In a country where formal art training was denied to black artists for so long, the unquestioning application of established selection criteria continues to limit acquisitions in the areas of painting and sculpture, and can render black artists well nigh invisible - *Rankin 1995: 76.*

There are these word stereotypes - 'resistance' art. We haven't heard what the artists have said, and most of these writings are of Professors or students who do their theses or dissertations. So then there is the whole question of what really the artist *is*, the question of [what] the reality of the artists themselves really was. How accurate was that information? ... It is so easy to box it, to label it. Labels like 'township' art, stereotypes, like 'primitive' art, as if artists are not using formal structures, all that - *Xhosa-speaking male artist, in his late twenties, 1998.*

Images of progress and change do not have a place in the West's vision of Africa: they cannot be situated easily in the taxonomy of non-Western art - *Jules-Rosette 1990: 29-30.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing about identity, Jenkins argues that, "Not only do we identify ourselves... but we also identify others and are identified by them in turn, in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image." He argues that the extent to which labels of identity impinge on individuals from the outside is dependent on power relations within the individual's society:

Significant in the processes whereby people acquire the identities with which they are labelled is the capacity of authoritatively applied identities effectively to constitute or impinge upon individual experience. This is a question of whose definition of the situation counts (put crudely, power). Identification by others has consequences; it is often the capacity to generate those consequences which matters (1996: 22-23).

The concerns around external categorisation and power relations brought to attention by Jenkins are equally applicable to the art world.

European art has been argued to typically 'distance' the image, as an "appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time it first made its appearance" (Berger 1972:9) in which the "art object, the thing, must be made mysteriously so"(ibid.). Such distancing depends upon learnt assumptions about art, based on notions of social hierarchy, in which "art makes inequality seem noble and hierarchies seem thrilling" (ibid: 9). Root, for example, claims that Western art aesthetics is always tied to power relations, in which, "Art appreciation does not take place in a purely aesthetic, apolitical space, regardless of what we have been taught" (1996: 73). She argues that, subject to the external 'gaze' in galleries and the media, the act of collecting artworks separates them as objectified

commodities from their embedded-ness within social praxis (ibid.). Power relations are implicit within perceptions of aesthetic value, and often insert the artist into racialised positions and categories which reflect back onto the artist's self-perceptions. For example, Root shows how the Afro-American artist Michel Basquiat was constructed under the voyeuristic 'gaze' of the art world as a marginalized, culturally authentic, naïve artist 'from the ghetto', a construction which he willingly played into, despite being from an upper middle-class background with an art-school education (ibid.). Such situations can be problematic when evaluating art works which cross boundaries of racialised identities or first/third world contexts.

This chapter examines the tensions, limitations and contradictions created between Cape Town's historically disadvantaged artists' changing perceptions of self-identity and their self-identification in relation to shifting value criteria and art categories externally determined by art theorists, markets and institutions in South Africa. Furthermore, I explore how the reception and categorisation of artworks feeds back into artists' self-identities. I also examine the extent to which historically disadvantaged artists were able to negotiate, appropriate or contest existing art categories, values and markets and how artists' social contexts of production impact upon market opportunities, artistic recognition and artists' perceptions of self-identity. Finally, I consider the implication for theoretical approaches to art study in South Africa.

LABELS AND CATEGORIES IN ART DURING APARTHEID

Race(ism) and Art

Collecting, categorising and placing objects in museums objectifies the past under the colonial 'gaze' as a form of self-reflection of values and ideas in the terms of those who collect, thus empowering those who collect to define themselves (Preziosi 1996). It is equally arguable that the categorisation of artworks in apartheid South Africa was created in relation to the hegemonic power's own needs for self-definition.

It is difficult to divorce art production in South Africa from the effects of the racist policies of apartheid in the past. For example, historically in South Africa, there is a clear division in how black and white artists have been written and spoken about. Although art categories were seemingly constructed in relation to the type of work artists produced, described within terms such as style, genre, aesthetics and value, the categories themselves were often derived from perceptions of different 'communities' and 'cultures,' understood as interchangeable with apartheid race categories (Thornton and Ramphela 1988; Sharp 1988).

As a consequence, art categories and value criteria have often incorporated explicit or implicit racist assumptions. Implicit undertones of racism are evident, for example, in the following excerpt taken from a book published in 1992, entitled *Images of Man - Contemporary South African Black Art and Artists*:

What then emerges from a viewing of contemporary South African Black art over the past sixty years? One is struck in the first place by the Black artists' preoccupation with man, that he relates almost entirely in terms of the human being... The Black artist has an *innate* urge and ability to react to human situations; his motivations are invariably directed at the human being, and he is a humanist at heart (De Jager, 1992: 206: emphasis added).

In this excerpt the writer claims that black artists possess racially-determined 'innate' artistic 'urges' to work with emotive and humanistic themes. Such a description is unnervingly reminiscent of primitivist colonial approaches to the black 'native', presenting their work within a non-intellectualised homogeneity, rather than considering a specific intellectual rationale, or the impact of specific socio-political influences, in decisions these artists might make in creating artworks.

Many historically disadvantaged artists encountered during fieldwork expressed resentment against the racially circumscribed art categories that had been imposed upon them, and resist having been denied recognition of their full potential for artistic diversity and individual artistic expression during apartheid. Almost all historically disadvantaged artists contested the 'labelling' of themselves and their work in the past. They claimed to have been racially typecast by white academics and critics, art institutions and galleries and to have been silenced from expressing their own perspectives and viewpoints about their artwork and artistic identities. A common concern was not only that had they been viewed as stylistically and conceptually homogeneous 'black artists', capable only of producing figurative, conceptually simplistic artworks, depicting aspects of township life under apartheid, but that many galleries, markets and the media continued to define, categorise and interpret their work within strongly racialised perceptions of identity.

Many artists expressed their resentment strongly. For example,

I hate labels, because labels are always applied by people outside of that situation. No township artist has thought of themselves as being a 'township' artist, some may not think of themselves as being a black artist. You are just an artist, or you happen to be an artist who happens to live in what is referred to as a township. It's supposed to signify a particular type of work, poverty, etceteras, whereas so many black artists living in a township have been producing all kinds of work, from straightforward figurative to abstract. I prefer to just see myself as an artist. ('H', male coloured artist, late thirties, 1998).

I will resist any attempt to categorise me... I think it is a flawed strategy, we should move away from that. We should move into a dimension where we begin to see people as people.... A typical example of 'x' race, a typical example of 'y' race. What does white tell you about a person? What does black tell you about a person? It's actually limiting what we know about each other ('Y', Male coloured artist, early forties, 1998).

I'm a South African artist. I can't say I'm a black artist. Black is not just black. There's all colours. If I cut myself and cut someone else, the same blood will come out. There's no difference ('E', female coloured artist, early thirties, 1998).

All artists expressed a desire to move beyond such classifications, to 'speak for themselves' and not be represented by others.

'Township' Art

One such contested category is that of 'township' art. According to Verstraete (1989), township art emerged on the South African art scene in the late 1950s and 1960s as a category created by art historians to describe paintings and graphics by urban black artists. Verstraete (*ibid.*) further describes township art as a 'transitional' work between an 'Africaness' in form and meaning, and Western painting. The best township art, he claims, had a "relevance to life", having a specifically figurative iconographic content depicting the township landscape and the daily life of people and activities within it. It was also predominantly expressive, mostly concerned with 'struggling' and having a mood and quality that depicted harshness, anger, bitterness and suffering, with the "necessity of making a statement, of finding identity and thereby 'resisting' dehumanisation" (Verstraete 1989: 152-156). One artist of coloured background who had been part of Vakalisa Arts Group in the 1970s claimed that it had been hard to break away from the category of 'township artist' and be accepted by art galleries simply as a contemporary artist, despite the fact that he had studied art at university level.

White galleries were putting the art down, because it was 'township' art. Their idea of township art was there was a lack of education, a lack of something formal in the work. It was treated as 'curio' art. White artists were always 'up there', white artists were treated on a certain kind of level....

It was very much like the dark ages, from the point of view considering yourself or wanting to be treated as a serious artist as opposed to an 'African curio' for tourist consumption and overseas 'quaint' consumption.... One of the problems we had at that time was just to be treated in a professional way by the galleries where you would want to go and exhibit.... So being accepted in galleries was a problem (H, 1998).

Often widely-held perceptions of black innate and homogenous urges to produce emotionally-driven figurative work have since been contested by other theorists as the direct historical result of white hegemony and patronage in the South African art world of the past. Koloane and Powell (1995: 261), for example, argue that the perception of township art as humanistic and figurative is an 'invention' for whites rooted in European expressionism and which plays into notions of a "spontaneous Africaness.". They claim that, "if a black artist was referred to as primitive, that meant he was going in the right direction" (*ibid.* 262). Powell (1993:33) writes that "black art in South Africa has always proceeded according to rules made up by whites" in which, he writes, whites were the "masters and mistresses" of the whole spectrum of art (33). Koloane (1997) also notes that, "Black African artists are not expected to venture beyond a certain threshold in their work, the primary reason being the fear from some dealers that they will lose their identity or roots." (34). Conversely, white artists were not perceived to have any innate tendency to work in a particular style or genre, or within a category of 'white art', and could assimilate alternative styles, even those seen as 'black' styles, without criticism of losing their identity (Koloane 1993: 102)⁴⁵. Kasfir (1999) claims that the perception of the black artist having limited

⁴⁵ Controversy in the South African art world was also caused by Enwezor's article, 'Reframing the Black Subject: Ideology and Fantasy in Contemporary South African Representation' (1997) in which he criticised what he saw as the assumed right of white artists to represent the black body in their artworks. This was vehemently defended in

capability for creative diversity has been derived from Western colonial perceptions of Africa being rooted in a timeless, traditional and homogeneous past. On the other hand, as the result of separate and white-controlled art education and resources, black artists were kept out of the provincial art scene in the past by dealers and gallery owners (Nicodermus and Romare 1997).

'Freedom' and Abstraction

Another example of the extent to which external criticism and categorisation can, in retrospect, be seen to limit perceptions of what black artists could and could not do was the reaction of outrage by academics and art critics in the South African art world in the 1980s to the Thupelo Artists' workshops⁴⁶. These workshops, held in Johannesburg and Cape Town, drew together white, black and coloured, local and international, artists from diverse backgrounds. A cross-learning approach of artistic exchange and experimentation in which participating artists were encouraged to learn new painting and sculptural techniques from each other was encouraged, rather than an emphasis on 'finished' commercial products. The focus on creative exploration resulted in artists producing primarily abstract works.

When the workshops began in the 1980s and early 1990s, they were subject to considerable criticism and controversy. Criticism was directed particularly from academics and art critics, who argued that what they termed "American Imperialism" had been imposed on artists, in the form of abstract expressionist modernist ideas, and that these artists should instead make exclusively 'committed' art (Rankin 1994).

However, participant artists within Thupelo and more recent theorists disagree with these accusations. Such critics, they argue, incorrectly assumed that the participant artists were compliant and passive within a white top-down approach to teaching abstract expressionism. What appeared to have been overlooked by many critics in the 1980s and early 1990s was the agency of historically disadvantaged artists to decide for themselves in selecting from a repertoire of choices and possibilities for their work. Artists I spoke to who had participated in Thupelo during the apartheid years argued that the workshops provided one of the few opportunities to 'free up' and explore alternatives to the limited arts education opportunities available at the time. Abstraction, they felt, provided a means to move away not only from restrictive art forms, but also from the association of their artwork with a particular racial identity. Participant artists claimed they had determined for themselves what they would take or leave from the workshops to use in later artworks of their own. They saw the workshops as an opportunity to experiment with new styles, and to expand their repertoire of techniques. These views are supported in the following statement of a male artist, 'S' classified coloured, and a former political activist, who had participated in Thupelo Workshops in the 1980s:

Atkinson and Breitz (eds) *'Grey Areas'* (1999). Also see Hobbs and Rankin 1997; Enwezor 1999, 1997; Koloane 1999, 1995; Powell 1997; Rankin 1995, 1994, 1989; Rosen 1993; and Sack 1988 for further debates on the stereotyping of work by black artists in the South African past.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Six for more details.

There was this major outcry against this 'New American Imperialism' - 'blacks must now do abstract art'. Galleries had been exposing black artists for years as township artists. Academics wrote their theses on this. When black artists suddenly moved away into expressionism, it was seen as a threat, this new form of 'American Imperialism'. What they didn't realise was that people maintained their own identities. They didn't become abstract expressionists. We learnt a hell of a lot. They could break away from this figurative expression and deal with ideas, thoughts, incorporating these two schools together. It broadened their vision. Also myself - I looked at more conceptual issues (1998)

However, by the 1990s, some art critics offered more positive interpretations of Thupelo.

Koloane (1990), an artist and co-founder of Thupelo, wrote that,

There is a general tendency in South African art circles to expect that black artists should not express themselves in a non-representational mode....A persistent innuendo is that Thupelo has fallen victim to an American imperialist conspiracy to, believe it or not, brainwash black artists... The irony is that such presumptuous assertions emanate from some academic quarters. Surprisingly, when the same academics pursue their studies in American Universities, as they often do, no negative slur is made. They would seem to propagate a view that the naïve and sometimes crude ethnicity of black artists has to be maintained regardless. Creative experience is not perceived by them as a long-term and varied process moving towards maturity... Thupelo's goal on the contrary is to create opportunities for genuine self exploration amongst artists. Before you can make any music you first have to make noise - and that noise may be of any kind. (84).

In retrospect, Thupelo has thus been understood by theorists as the ultimate resistance to apartheid. Thupelo was described by Oliphant (1995: 260) as a "non-referential mode of resistance which established a space for visualisation which was not conditioned by the necessity to describe oppression" and which therefore ultimately made apartheid "irrelevant" (260). Rankin (1990, 1994) has also argued that Thupelo provided many possibilities for artists regarding contacts and international exposure, and that,

From the artists' point of view, Thupelo offered a freedom that they had seldom experienced before to try out new materials and new ideas.... it was liberating to have had the chance to experience a range of possibilities from which to select, or reject, a direction for their art - an experience that is after all taken for granted in art institutions.... It was the interchange of ideas and the extension of their potential artistic range that was important to the artists that participated (1994: 41).

The Black Consciousness Movement

To further complicate issues around identity in the art world, the Black Consciousness movement was in existence from the 1960s onwards in South Africa. Black African and coloured writers, visual art and performance groups had separated themselves under a unified 'black' identity from the white art world and institutions in order to "detach themselves from the normative orbits and institutions of which intellectuals were committed to colonial values" (Oliphant 1995:260).⁴⁷ The movement was at first actively encouraged by the apartheid government as part of their 'divide and rule' policies, until its influence increased, and its supporters became perceived as a threat (Oliphant 1995). A group, for

example, that existed on the Cape Flats from the 1970s into the 1980s was 'Vakalisa', focused on being a black self-empowerment group. It included visual artists, poets, writers and musicians from mostly coloured Cape Flats areas⁴⁸. The group boycotted white art institutions and produced an annual calendar for many years, and held local exhibitions, readings, and musical events to coincide with anti-apartheid political meetings on the Cape Flats. However, as it appears much of the activity in this group occurred 'underground', with minimal funding, there is little formal historical documentation on the activities of the group.

By the 1980s, black resistance had shifted to a working union between black and white artists, in which, according to Oliphant (1995) white artists took part in an apparently ambivalent position as 'Africans,' in political solidarity with black artists in the fight against apartheid⁴⁹. At the turn of the 1980s, leading up to the 1990s, a number of conferences encouraged a focus on using art as a collective tool against apartheid oppression⁵⁰. The work produced by the artists who took part was widely described and written about as 'protest' or 'resistance' art (Williamson 1989), and the participant artists described themselves as 'cultural workers' in the collective fight against apartheid. This was despite the fact that some historically disadvantaged artists argued that sharing a black experience of political oppression and working as black activists did not imply that their work itself was restricted to a particular style or genre that was inherently 'resistance art' or 'black art.' Such artists argued that although their work had encompassed a resistance theme, it was not stylistically simple, and went beyond 'fists' and 'spears' to represent more complex themes and techniques. One coloured male artist, for example, complained that he felt the inclusion of his work in a particular art book⁵¹, misrepresented his work's content and imagery. He felt that the author had not listened to what he was saying when she interviewed him, and that his work, which he believed was "more complex" than implied by these terms, had been "forced" into the category of 'graffiti art' and 'resistance art' to meet the author's needs. Whatever the merits of his claim, it was strongly evident that he resisted the categorisations and that his viewpoint and intentions in his work had not been appropriately represented.

⁴⁷ Interview 1998 with Mervyn Davids, artist and a founder member of Vakalisa, who had some documentation of the group in his possession, which he hoped to eventually publish.

⁴⁸ Members included Mervyn Davids, Peter Clarke, James Matthews, Lionel Davis and Garth Erasmus, amongst others.

⁴⁹ Examples of an institutionalised cultural struggle against apartheid in Cape Town include art centres such as the Community Arts Project (CAP) and Mediaworks, which contained mostly black students, and produced anti-apartheid banners, posters, and T-shirts as well as anti-apartheid prints, drawings and paintings. The Visual Arts Group (VAG) was also established in Cape Town to organise meetings and events with both black and white artists.

⁵⁰ The 'State of Art in South Africa' conference (University of Cape Town, 1979) resolved that "it is the responsibility of each artist to work as diligently as possible to effect change towards a post-apartheid society" (Sack 1988). Likewise, the 'Culture and Resistance' conference (Gaborone, Botswana, 1982) defined creative expression as an "integral aspect of the struggle for liberation" in which the personal identity of the artist was seen as secondary to a 'collective spirit' (Koloane 1997). The 'Culture for Another South Africa' (CASA) conference (Amsterdam, 1987) also encouraged all artists to join the 'cultural struggle' against apartheid (Molefe 1990).

⁵¹ Sue Williamson - 'Resistance Art in South Africa' (1998)

SHIFTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN ART WORLD

Concepts of 'Freedom' in art

As apartheid drew to an end, shifts began to occur in the local art world towards what was described by art theorists as an emerging 'freedom' in cultural practice. In a controversial paper 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom' (Sachs, 1990), presented at an in-house ANC seminar on culture in Stockholm in 1989, Albie Sachs suggested that protest art in the 1980s had minimised aesthetic value in favour of political content and that 'freedom' meant the chance to produce 'better' art. Sachs suggested that art should now be more self-referential, "critical not only of apartheid, but of itself and its history," in which it was now "not enough" to use more "fists, spears and guns" in art, as this would lead to an "impoverishment of art." This statement provoked vigorous debate over exactly what form 'good' art in the new South Africa would take and was interpreted by some to imply that art should become avant-garde (Ntuli 1993, Meintjes 1990)⁵². Not only had historically disadvantaged artists previously been labelled and categorised from the 'outside' and forced into particular ways of working, but were now faced with the opening up of the art world to the international art market outside South Africa and to the expectations, both internal and external, this market created.

The political shift from apartheid to democracy in the 'new' South Africa in 1994 also emphasised the role of the individual as an agent⁵³ of political and social change, with terms such as 'freedom' and 'equality' at the forefront of democratic rhetoric. The TRC process had to some extent objectified the past as 'spectacle' from the immediacy of individual experience, creating a 'then' as opposed to 'now'. A similar process occurred in what South African art critics deemed to be the category of 'political art' of the past, despite the fact that many historically disadvantaged artists I spoke to expressed a need to deal with ongoing social concerns concerning race and social issues within their daily lives. There emerged a perception of resistance art being sloganistic, artistically unsophisticated and, in certain cases, 'bad' art.

The lifting of international sanctions at the end of apartheid led the South African art world to seek a strong foothold within international, Western-driven contemporary art markets. There was now a demand that visual artists consciously create a new form of work, and 'prove' themselves within the international circuit individually, rather than, as previously, as 'political workers' fighting collectively against apartheid 'for the cause.' In tertiary institutions such as Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town, which led the local Cape Town contemporary art market, there emerged a strong focus on what was seen as the avant-garde, emphasising innovation, individuality and the pushing of artistic exploration to the limits, particularly in the production of installation work.

⁵² Published papers and debates around this topic are included in the publication De Kok and Press (eds). 1990. *Spring is Rebellious. Arguments about cultural freedom by Albie Sachs and respondents*. Buchu Books.

⁵³ For example, as highlighted through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, in which individual testimony represented the 'truth' in contrast to the 'lies' of the previous apartheid state.

Under the new banner of 'freedom', art was now perceived to be 'freed' from a past of stereotyped figurative, collective and political motifs. For example, in 1997, Marilyn Martin, Director of the South African National Gallery, Cape Town, announced that artists could now work "as they like", that "demands cannot be placed upon them by politicians, institutions, self-appointed guardians of public and well-being, or by other artists" (1997: 16). However, it was difficult for these artists to escape some form of racial stereotyping given the external discourses and categories of value concerning their work; the artwork's interpretation was all too often framed by the assumed race or 'culture' of the artist. A number of historically disadvantaged artists were suspicious that they were now perceived as 'token' black artists for affirmative purposes, valued more for their perceived ethnic representation within affirmative action policies than for their actual artworks. One previously classified coloured artist for example, expressed outrage at the erroneous assumption of a local journalist in the arts section of an Afrikaans magazine that references to hard labour in one of his artworks at the Outshoorn Festival in 1999 were due to his 'slave background'. He described this perception as 'entirely untrue' as he had no slave ancestry and, "that it showed the journalist had not done his or her research". The association, he claimed, had been made purely because the journalist assumed all coloured individuals had a slave ancestry. The allusion made him "feel like a stereotype" and highlights the artists' emphasis on having the right to determine their own self-identities.

Questioning and Re-assessing local Art Criteria

The situation described above was further complicated by the fact that, from the early 1990s there had been a growing reassessment and re-evaluation of black 'crafts' within South African art institutions and galleries. There were efforts towards the end of apartheid to 'elevate' what had previously been perceived as functional objects, particularly those seen as 'black crafts', such as wood carving and beadwork, to the status of fine art within the local South African art world (Sack 1988). If artists could now really work "as they like" then this implied that historically disadvantaged artists should have agency in determining the value and meaning of their own work. Such changes implicitly raised questions as to whose cultural perspective should determine aesthetic criteria of value in contemporary South African art.

The South African National Gallery (SANG), in Cape Town, claiming to recognise 'different' cultural perspectives and art forms, also created a number of what it called 'ground-breaking exhibitions' from 1993 onwards, which, the gallery claimed, involved "working hand in hand with the people whose histories and/or visual cultures were being represented, or engaging individuals in the production of the exhibitions and written documentation" (Martin 1995: 3). Such exhibitions included Western Cape Beadwork, and what was described as 'Muslim Art from the Western Cape' (Martin 1995: 3). Around 1994, the gallery actively acquired what had previously been seen as 'tribal African' crafts, such as beadwork and wood carving, as part of the permanent collection,⁵⁴ and displayed these in the main gallery with 'Western' painting and sculpture. A printmaking exhibition at the National Gallery deliberately

⁵⁴ Interview with Emma Bedford, SANG curator, 1999

included relief prints, made from lino cuts or wood blocks, primarily created by black artists due to their cheapness and ease of production, now 'reassessing' them as equal in artistic value to other forms of printmaking (Hobbs and Rankin 1995).

In their attempts to re-address what were seen as cultural imbalances, art theorists and artists struggled with contradictions in their own attempts to set criteria for what was 'good' or 'bad' art. Whose historical art context, for example, determined aesthetic value? Whose cultural perceptions determined 'good' or 'bad' work, particularly when the aesthetic criteria and perspectives of alternative cultures were being recognised locally "on their own terms".

The fact that the South African National Gallery had made an effort to represent 'alternative visual cultures' in the National Gallery suggested that alternative cultural perceptions of aesthetic value were as valid as previous European perceptions of 'high art'. These decisions, however, were still subject to dominant hegemonies of power and value which were inevitably white-determined.

In 1989, for example, Rankin suggested that the use of different criteria from that of white artists to evaluate the work of black artists in South Africa could, on whatever basis it operated, become "over-indulgent and harmful to black artists" (1989: 47) and that;

A patronising attitude that does not subject their art to the same critical rigour as that of whites, is not generous, but demeaning. It may be inappropriate to consider all art by African artists in exactly the same way as art by European artists, when it may be based on different premises, but it must be done the justice of serious study and assessment (ibid.: 47).

However, Rankin's statement is still based on an implicit assumption that art by whites is already of the highest 'critical rigour' and hegemonic perspectives of what 'good' art 'is' and whose cultural context and authority in the determination of value and 'critical rigour' was paramount, remain unquestioned, while 'black' art remains to be subjected to 'serious study and assessment' and subject to criteria equivalent to 'white' art. Part of the problem thus concerned who determined what made art 'valid' in the switch from a political emphasis as a vehicle for cultural recognition, motivation and resistance, to a mainstream focus determined by institutions interested in promoting South African art for internationally-determined external markets.

This presents a tension between alternative modes and criteria of value in South Africa. The strong historical divide in the education of white and black artists, and the determination of the criteria for what was considered 'good' art at this time being white-dominated, placed whites in the role of experts over what was considered the best art, in a top-down approach to art-making, and this division remained prevalent in post-1994 South Africa (Nicodermus and Romare, 1997; Rankin 1997; 1994; Hobbs and Rankin, 1997).

RESPONSES OF HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED ARTISTS

“Now We Can Paint Flowers”

During fieldwork, ‘freedom’ (in their work) was a term often used by historically disadvantaged artists. They were also of the opinion that their work had to shift towards new styles and genres, if they were to be successful artists in the New South Africa.

With a shift in focus from a collective, community-orientated political interests to the individual artist⁵⁵, ‘protest’ art was now perceived by many artists, both black and white, as didactic, direct and unsubtle in its representation, non-individual and limited in its creative expression. By the late 1990s, the prevailing view among the majority of historically disadvantaged artists in Cape Town was that resistance art was ‘inferior’ because artists had been coerced to work in particular styles. Most artists I spoke to expressed the opinion that political art was ‘out’, and was now ‘bad’ or ‘inferior’ art, whereas installation and technology was ‘in.’ This is exemplified in this statement by a Xhosa-speaking artist, ‘P,’ in his early twenties, who had attended CAP (Community Arts Project) workshops in the past, and who claimed that,

Around 1987, when you see older artists producing a certain kind of work, then those artists kind of indoctrinate you to create such works. You can’t come up with your own thing because everybody is doing this kind of political stuff. It’s like you are blinkered - you can’t look around. You have to focus on politics, make art about politics (1999).

However, artists did not always subscribe to hegemonic ideas of what ‘freedom’ in art institutions was taken to imply, such as a shift to the avant-garde, or even what avant-garde was understood to mean. Artists’ perceptions of innovation in a local context were sometimes very different from those of the contemporary Cape Town art galleries. For a number of artists, their interpretation of artistic ‘freedom’ meant the right to explore materials and styles of work previously unexplored or discouraged, linked to a sense of moving beyond what they felt were previously racialised art categories and criteria. One Xhosa-speaking artist, ‘A,’ in his early thirties claimed that artists could now, if they so wished, “paint flowers.”

In the ‘80s you used to draw people throwing stones and [things like] that... but also being an artist you grow in ideas, you change your style. ... Social issues, I deal with them, as well as, like, universally, how do I see the world, and to celebrate [that] in my art as well... A long time ago it would be funny to see an artist with a still life and that, or some flowers. But now we can paint flowers. (1999)

Painting flowers instead of political themes may have represented innovation for some artists, yet in art institutions that was not necessarily the case. For some artists, materials such as oil paint, and styles such as abstraction represented a shift away from previous ways of working, whereas those were commonplace in the contemporary arts scene.

Artists also often made strong associations between abstraction and ‘freedom’, in some cases possibly linked to the experience of Thupelo workshops, as a means of moving away from figurative

⁵⁵ Napier (1992) points out that what might be seen as an ‘individual’ artist in the avant-garde is in part an illusion, as these artists are also a part of society, reflecting the aims and values of that society.

'township' art styles. One coloured male artist in his late twenties, 'Y', continually emphasised that he was producing 'abstract' artworks - and therefore could not be racially stereotyped, an interesting association bearing in mind the points raised earlier in this chapter. 'R', an older, former political activist, coloured male artist, emphasised his shift away from political themes in the last 1990s, producing a series of abstract collages which he described as his personal 'African Renaissance.' Several younger Xhosa-speaking artists who sold mostly through tourist markets also chose to emphasise that they produced abstract work, describing it as 'modern' art, as well as figurative work to sell to tourists. One internationally well-known artist, 'E', of coloured background, who had produced political mixed media and sculptural works in the past, now produced a series of small portraits in oil and claimed he began using oil paint only after 1994, because until then he had not had the opportunity to explore this form of painting.

LIMITATIONS TO ARTISTIC 'FREEDOM'

Immediately following the end of apartheid, there were, and continue to be, distinct differences between the majority of white and historically disadvantaged artists. Differences concerned not only, as previously discussed, how historically disadvantaged visual artists were written and spoken about, but also the resources they were unable to draw upon.

Economic Resources

About two thirds of historically disadvantaged artists I spoke to who had previously worked figuratively expressed the desire to create 'installation' or conceptual artworks in order to be acknowledged by the avant-garde arts scene. A common perception among historically disadvantaged artists was that 'good' avant-garde work meant the use of expensive and sophisticated materials, equipment and technology - such as video, film, sound recording, computers and photographic work - and large spaces for exhibiting installations. Some consciously attempted to compete with international contemporary art markets. For example, a female coloured artist who had not received formal tertiary training and who produced mostly two-dimensional figurative paintings and drawings nevertheless entered a sculpture competition in 2000 with a conceptual design for an installation⁵⁶.

However, a Xhosa-speaking artist, 'O', teaching at Community Arts Project (CAP), claimed that despite a growing interest in installation post-1994, under-resourced artists were not able to compete with those more advantaged, mostly white, due to limitations in workspaces, and the cost of materials. He suggested that 'value' in avant-garde art was determined more by the expense of the materials, with a focus on the use of video, computers and photography, technology seen as 'innovative,' than on the content of the work. He emphasised the difficulty in producing contemporary art within the overcrowded conditions in townships: "In Guguletu, I painted above my bed. I had to kneel on my bed and paint

⁵⁶ She did not, to my knowledge, actually win the competition.

against the wall. Most South Africans don't really realise how that work was produced. It was under extremely difficult situations" (1998).

Socio-economic limitations such as finance, education and access to workspaces and materials continued to limit the type of work the majority of historically disadvantaged artists produced, and thus often prevented them from exploring alternative styles and genres. Although there have been some programs and improved educational opportunities for some historically disadvantaged artists to date, many limitations still apply. Such factors inevitably informed artists' choices of target markets for their work – whether the more financially risky conceptual avant-garde markets, or the more touristic craft-oriented galleries. Many historically disadvantaged artists were quite explicit about their choice to produce small paintings, lino-prints and drawings, rather than large artworks suited to contemporary galleries. Small artworks could be created in smaller workspaces, were cheaper to produce and easy to transport to and from galleries and street markets. Furthermore, with poor communication facilities in townships, networking contacts between historically disadvantaged artists and art organisations were also difficult to maintain. As the following coloured artist, 'L', in his mid-twenties, commented:

I still feel that black South African artists are marginalised because of the disparities in education and how some of them feel compelled to produce a certain kind of art to survive, whereas other artists have a background of luxury, a background of education, a background of money, so they can explore and experiment, and you see a progression in their work...

What is very evident is the levels of professionalism in the way artists present their work, access to the internet, email, which is part of the packaging of the artist. It's all quite evident between different levels of artist in South Africa. So there's still imbalances (1999).

Another Xhosa-speaking artist, 'I', studying art at Michaelis Art School, commented on the divisions between what was perceived as 'higher' art and the work that he described as being produced 'on the ground'. As he put it:

Art itself requires money. Materials need money. Time is money... I don't blame artists doing art just to sell because they want to eat. It's no use to make an artwork without meaning, reading [it] as a concept, if, at the end of the day, that ends up at the storeroom at the back of your house.

Then you don't eat. Then it's a waste of time. Unless you have a profession that makes money, then you can do art or whatever. That is another problem I have, with academics who speak from a comfort zone... It's easy to speak from comfort, put critics, and read these theories, but on the ground, practically that doesn't work...

For me, it is very important that people know we are not equal; it is still going to take time to be equal if that is going to happen... spaces, funds are still a problem, education is still a problem. That is what we need... Even when we have spaces we want to manage or maintain those spaces in a way that it will continue to reproduce itself in a way that other people will get opportunities. So, without those things, skills, knowledge, money, I don't see that will happen. At the moment, still, black artists are struggling (1998).

The need to earn a living was often prioritised over producing conceptual avant-garde work for many historically disadvantaged artists and played a strong role in determining the media and genre they chose. Another artist, ‘E’, who described himself as an ‘African’ artist from mixed ‘Xhosa/Coloured’ parentage claimed his work was based on “local people” and “township and rural life” and mostly sold to tourists around Greenmarket Square, a popular street market (see Fig. 25) and tourist attraction in the centre of Cape Town.

He produced mostly lino prints and spoke of their reproducibility and ease of mass production as major factors for his choice of genre:

With linocuts, I can produce more and more of the same. Paintings - I do one, I don't do the same one again. It's an original thing. I respect them. They are very expensive. It takes me a long time to do a painting. With linocuts I can do one hundred prints ... I can make money (1998).

Figure 25. Tourist postcard image showing tourist art stall in St George's Mall, close to Greenmarket Square



Having won a Smirnoff painting prize in 1997 which provided him with a sponsored studio for a year and a solo exhibition in a Cape Town gallery at the end of 1998, ‘E’ then started creating oil paintings, previously considered a ‘luxury’, of township and rural life for his exhibition. He described the use of oils, due to their expense and their novelty, as a significant shift in his work, but of course working in oil would not necessarily be seen as significant from the avant-garde art world’s perspective.

Often, too, access to gallery spaces in the city centre was difficult, because of their distance from the townships where most of these artists lived, and the city centre. The poor public transport infrastructure, a legacy of apartheid, and the expense of transport, made it difficult for many historically disadvantaged artists to attend exhibition openings that, on the whole, occur in the evenings when there is hardly any, if any, safe public transport. One Xhosa artist ‘D’, for example, echoed the sentiments of many:

I don't have transport... Every piece I produce, I have to think of that. How do I get it from one place to another, how do I pack it and what kind of material can I afford to put that idea out? ... So in that way there are things I can't put in my artwork, not because I don't want to, because of the reasons I mentioned. (1998)

Education

As Nicodermus and Romare (1997) have pointed out, the promotion of self-critiquing avant-garde art in the new South Africa also implied a knowledge of learnt assumptions about art drawn from a

view of 'high' culture, derived from western art. Being innovative and avant-garde as an artist implied a knowledge of Western art education in order to work within international 'cutting edge' paradigms. A fine-art education was seen as a means of obtaining not only knowledge, but also working space and a networking environment, both of which were difficult to obtain or were non-existent in townships.

Apartheid education policies in the past had resulted in segregated and different forms of art education. Despite racially segregated tertiary institutions with severe limitations for aspirant black artists some training opportunities outside formal institutions had been developed through community art centres and projects that provided resources to many black artists (Court 1995, Miles 2004). Consequently, as Rankin (1994:30) points out, although many black artists proclaimed themselves 'self-taught', a modicum of training had often taken place, either through an individual mentor or the informal classes of an art centre. Some historically disadvantaged Cape Town artists had received training at centres such as Rorke's Drift in Natal (1960s) and Polly Street in Johannesburg (from 1952). The Community Arts Project (CAP) in Cape Town, established in 1977, taught art and had a strongly politicised focus from the mid-1980s, producing murals, posters, banners and other art-forms with a political agenda, and continuing from the second half of the 1990s to provide courses for the unemployed, with very low fees⁵⁷.

However, although art centres were available, they were provided mainly under white patronage, mostly through white liberal initiatives in which white artists were the teachers, organisers, or providers of resources. This patronage inevitably reinforced some of the divisions of South African society:

When they are seen from the perspective of the 1990s, it seems sadly ironic that such centres inevitably reinforced some of the divisions of South African society: invariably, only black artists attended these classes... and all too often those in authority in the classroom as teachers were white - the beneficiaries of the very educational system that the centres sought to undermine (Hobbs and Rankin 1997: 18).

Consequently, although the role of art centres has been important in attempting to provide local opportunities for black artists, it has been suggested that such centres provided little academic study for artists to obtain "a solid theoretical foundation for the complexities of contemporary art practice" (Rankin 1994: 38) and white positions of privilege were maintained. Most white artists had received university-level fine arts education. Although a minority of coloured artists of middle class backgrounds attended university art schools, often as part of an art teaching diploma, the majority of historically disadvantaged artists had been excluded from higher-level tertiary institutions.

The lack of formal art education thus seriously disadvantaged black artists when competing with whites on the art circuit. Despite the emergence nationally of a collective emphasis on art as political action against apartheid during the 1980s to early 1990s, a phenomenon which appeared to unify artists as artists, divisions remained in the opportunities and education available. The limited range of artistic skills that most historically disadvantaged artists who had not received a tertiary education possessed did not equip them to fulfil Sachs' suggestion (1990) that artists should self-referentially critique art and its history within their work.

⁵⁷ CAP, which teaches other subjects as well as visual art, still primarily attracts young black art students, mostly Xhosa- and Zulu-speaking, who are generally in the lowest income brackets.

Post-1994, some artists of historically disadvantaged communities who had previously worked in 'township' genres gained recognition within the contemporary art world through entering tertiary education, such as through Michaelis School of Art, where resources were available. Some historically disadvantaged artists without tertiary training also managed to access resources that exposed them to different ways of working. These included participating in group studio projects such as the Thupelo Artists' Workshops mentioned earlier, and which, at a contemporary level, are explored in Chapter Six. More recently, Greatmore Studios⁵⁸ in Woodstock (started officially in 1999), provided cheap, often sponsored, workspaces, support and an artistic environment for artists of all cultural backgrounds, as well as exposure to international artists.

For those with the educational and space resources, and some financial support, the move into installation and avant-garde conceptual work was achievable, and provided a distinct advantage over other historically disadvantaged artists who did not have these resources. The artists with access actively produced installation and conceptual work at art school, proving concretely the obvious: that black artists did not 'innately' choose township genres!

Black and coloured artists at tertiary level were clearly very much the numerical minority compared to the number of white students. Furthermore, historically disadvantaged artists who did receive a university tertiary education often experienced differences between academic art institutions and their personal perspectives of art. All such artists interviewed in this study believed that tertiary art education was still dominated by 'white culture'. They argued that the focus on the production of conceptual and installation-based work had little relevance for black artists struggling to survive.

Many historically disadvantaged artists were of the opinion that the criteria for 'good' art should be relaxed and be made more inclusive to include alternative perspectives within the South African context, rather than focusing on avant-garde work. Several artists argued that alternative forms of artwork should be seen as 'proper' art and not marginalised. One male coloured artist, 'N', in his thirties, put it:

National institutions should be looking at the diversity out there - showcasing it. South Africa isn't a first world country. It has elements of both. You should showcase that. Here, it's more about looking at art in the developed world, and, here, we have little 'pockets' of privilege. They're looking at each other, Europe and quite privileged artists as a whole. That kind of work gets seen. I see artists in the streets - they consider their work art. That sort of stuff should be put next to installations as well... They're trying to package South African cultural production for international audiences - 'we're just as cutting edge as you.' This isn't just one homogeneous community, there's all this diversity (2000).

Another male coloured artist and former political activist, 'Y' in his late thirties/early forties, stated:

Everything's in a state of flux. What's in today is out tomorrow... that's the line we tread, and you have to have your ears open and your eyes open, feet on the ground, even though your head's in the sky. If a township guy calls his art 'deconstructivist' or 'postmodernist', that's great. If someone else calls it 'township art', full stop, that's great. So what? One is not better than the other, or vice-versa. They [don't] even need to be given the go ahead to be given the rubber

⁵⁸ Supported and organised by Robert Loder from Triangle Workshops and linked to Gasworks Studios in the UK.

stamp by the international view of what good art is. It doesn't need a qualification. It doesn't need to be in Art Forum to be considered the best. It doesn't need to win the Whitney Prize or the Turner Prize to be the best. If it's between persons x and y and they think it's great art, that's what matters (1998).

Some artists questioned perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' art in tertiary art institutions. For example, 'I,' in his late 20s, studying at Michaelis School of Art, pointed out that what was considered 'high' art or 'innovative' in Western art styles was questionable as 'innovative' when compared to what he described as his own cultural context:

People who come here, like Picasso, took and painted the mask and became famous. Then, when I paint a mask I am questioned and they say ethnic and tribalist. It is just that someone talks about it, writes about it, so it became this new thing to some of us, whereas it was always there... Africans have been doing installations for a long time... as in the Ndebele, they have done art but it is not boxed and put in galleries and bring in wines and look at it, and someone gives a speech. It was part of everyday living.... African women have been artists a long time, they have produced good art - paint murals, sew, do beads and all those kind of things. They have made and decorated huts - that is installation to me. Even if today if we go to shacks, although possibly they have minimal things, they have made the house feel comfortable, so maybe me as an artist I take it to the gallery, it becomes a new thing. (Xhosa-speaking black male artist, 1998).

He also referred to a performance art work he had seen by a white artist re-enacting black sangoma rituals. This, he argued, was seen as 'innovative' within a white cultural context, but a 'stereotype' when seen from his own cultural perspective as Xhosa.

Unfortunately, evaluating artists within separate social contexts brings one back to the fact that these are ultimately, apartheid-constructed. The factors outlined above thus illustrate the complexity and contradiction inherent within South African art, and its ongoing embeddedness within race identity issues. Such views are backed up by the concern of Duncan (2001), who claims that "a growing emphasis on promoting the country's international competitiveness is marginalising key development needs in the sector..." (281). She also writes that:

... even 'progressive' Biennales - like the one in South Africa - largely reproduce a definition of 'contemporary art' that is premised tacitly on exclusion, as it does not make space for the creative production of people in a multiplicity of genres (304).

Community

Historically disadvantaged artists also often expressed concern over the fact that, despite the emphasis on a 'national' South African art, most of the art produced never reached township communities. Several artists claimed they wanted to make art relevant to their 'own communities' but felt that their major challenge was to make work acceptable on the contemporary art scene in order to survive as an artist. The pressure to work as internationally-selling artists in order to survive financially was an issue historically disadvantaged artists claimed divided them from their 'own' communities despite a desire to work within them. Another's expressed concern was that if they worked within the community, they might be seen as stuck in past 'resistance' or 'community' genres. Indeed, they believed that

community-based artwork was not valued as 'proper' art by art institutions because it was perceived as non-individualistic and issue-based rather than 'art for art's sake'.

As mentioned earlier, exhibitions also tended to take place in centrally-located Cape Town art galleries not visited by residents who lived far from Cape Town's centre. One historically disadvantaged artist for example, spoke of the lack of a local art market in what he described as his "own" community in an area of the Cape Flats, and the difficulty of getting local people to attend art exhibitions. Another historically disadvantaged artist and art teacher, 'L,' at one of the few arts centres on the Cape Flats, the Battswood Arts Centre in Athlone, claimed that a "community of interest" in the arts had not been created on the Cape Flats. He also noted that the vast majority of historically disadvantaged schoolchildren on the Cape Flats in the late 1990s received little or no secondary school visual art education, as it was not compulsory in their secondary school syllabus. A common complaint was a 'lack of interest' in the arts from these communities, and that the majority interest in visual art was from affluent, primarily white, communities. Those artists who complained of the lack of exposure of historically disadvantaged communities to visual art, saw this as perpetuating the hegemony of white-dominated values in visual art.

One or two artists did claim to bridge community and contemporary fine art interests. One artist, for example, who sold internationally, was working on a mural project and a painting for a local church and said he felt proud to both contribute to and be recognised within his own community, as well as internationally.

There were, however, artists who refused to enter or collaborate with mainstream art galleries and institutions, as an active form of resistance against what they saw as white hegemony in the art world⁵⁹. One previously politically active historically disadvantaged artist reported, for example, that many politically orientated artists from the townships had 'gone into the woodwork', disillusioned with what they perceived as a Westernised focus on conceptual art with little social relevance. In this artist's opinion, the South African art world's move towards conceptual work in the New South Africa effectively eliminated the visibility of a number of competent and actively practicing historically disadvantaged artists, who had perceived themselves to be community artists in the past.

Ironically, and no doubt consequent to the problems outlined above, some artists claimed to feel isolated from their 'own' communities precisely because they were artists. Two Xhosa artists I interviewed, one on a scholarship to Michaelis, the other teaching at CAP at the time, had moved from townships to Woodstock in Cape Town. Both said it was better to live closer to town in order to be closer to art institutions and galleries. However, they also felt somewhat 'alienated' from their own communities, in that there was no local understanding or appreciation of their work as artists. This situation is substantiated and verified Koloane (1997: 34) who stated, "Artists are still viewed ambivalently within black communities as an enigma, documenting day-to-day events for the benefit of an affluent white clientele."

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⁵⁹ Information provided by the artists Donovan Ward and Paul Hendriks, who were closely linked to trade union movements and 'political' artists in the 1980s.

The artwork in Cape Town can thus be argued as a material manifestation of the artists' socio-economic context, in which identity, artistic education, space and materials become intertwined to make up the artwork. The material construction and presentation of an artist's finished work depended on the conditions within which he or she lived, the type of art education received in the past, access to workspace and support structures, access to, and finance for, materials required, access to transport to main galleries and suppliers of art materials for artists who lived in outlying township areas, and access to good communication facilities, such as email, fax and telephone in order to network with galleries, curators, dealers and other artists. Although these aspects apply to artists everywhere, South Africa was unique in that they were produced within a social framework defined by racialised perceptions of these artists identities, masked by terminologies of 'culture'. When artists attempted to break out of what were seen as 'traditional' genres of work, they were often restricted by a lack of resources and art education. Therefore:

In the twentieth century in the West, access to art education has more or less been taken for granted and the likelihood that resources may affect art production has been little considered.... But in a country where opportunities have been so vastly differentiated, and usually defined along racial lines, an understanding of educational and economic circumstances is a key to an understanding of art practice (Hobbs and Rankin 1997: 8).

In the next section I will examine how artists negotiate artistic categories and limitations in resources through art praxis, in relation to changing and contested perceptions of self in a transforming South Africa.

NEGOTIATING ART CATEGORIES

The Re-appropriation and Negotiation of Racialised Identities in Art

Given the previous anti-apartheid political focus on 'old' South Africa in the international and national media, there were some advantages to being a 'black South African artist' in international and national art markets that looked for visible evidence of a 'new' South African art, including the visible presence of black artists. For example, one art curator working predominantly for corporate businesses spoke of what she termed post-1994 'affirmative action buying' by large South African businesses who specifically requested artworks by South African black artists. One artist, 'N', in his thirties, pointed out that although, "I prefer to just call myself 'mixed race,' not 'coloured'... what I like about 'mixed' is it doesn't represent colour - it's about culture and people etceteras," art dealers and galleries still defined him as a 'black' artist, and actively sought his work as such:

Art remains racialised. Art in Cape Town is still in white people's hands. The collector phoned me and told me the dealers are starting to buy 'black' art now. Artists are still represented in terms of black and white. There's still a dichotomy. There's always this emphasis on colour and I'm quite tired of it (2000).

Several historically disadvantaged artists noted that being black helped them gain study, travel or workshop scholarships abroad. One coloured female artist expressed the opinion that being perceived politically as a black female artist played a strong role in her selection as a representative for South Africa in 1998 for a major international Biennale, which became a platform for her international success as an artist.

Consequently, given that it has been difficult to move away from a racialised identity in the art world, it is not surprising that some historically disadvantaged artists actively re-appropriated racialised identities. An organisation called BLAC (Black Arts Collective) was set up late 1998/early 1999⁶⁰. The stated intention of BLAC at the founding meetings, was to create a network for the support, representation, empowerment and promotion of what were described as still marginalised black artists (including performers, musicians and writers) through regular meetings and events.

The name of the organisation, BLAC, and its principle of including blacks only at meetings, also caused some controversy and disagreement among both those historically disadvantaged artists who attended the initial meetings and those who didn't. Some historically disadvantaged artists criticised the group as being opportunistic with its members 'jumping on the bandwagon' by promoting themselves to the international market as black. One historically disadvantaged artist who did not join for example commented, "They are what we call the 'five to twelve': South Africans who suddenly became conscientised five minutes before the elections, and have now decided they are black."

On the surface, BLAC appeared to represent all artists of historically disadvantaged backgrounds, even though not all had joined the organisation. Some historically disadvantaged artists were concerned that being a member of BLAC implied that they wanted to be identified as black, and rejected this on the grounds that they were re-creating the very race divisions they had fought against during apartheid. This created interesting tensions and debates between the organisers and attendees during early meetings. Several artists were also concerned that they would be seen as what they termed 'token' black artists, in that their work would be represented as 'black' work and not interpreted in terms of its own artistic worth and content in the new South Africa.

Part of BLAC's stated intention at an early founding meeting was to create a 'discourse' around what it was to be black in the new South Africa. The group was thus perceived by some artists to consist of primarily middle class members who focused on discussion rather than being concerned with what the less economically or educationally privileged artists felt were more immediate issues of funding and resources. One historically disadvantaged attendee, for example, responded:

We already know what it is like to be black, we had that in the '70s and '80s. We've been through all of that. We want to leave it behind us. We now want to discuss resources.

Others did not agree with a homogeneous 'black' identity as there were continued perceptions of difference between black and coloured artists. An artist of coloured background, for example, who did not attend the meetings gave his assessment:

⁶⁰ Involving Zayd Minty, then organiser of the One City Many Cultures Festival, and Emile Maurice, then Education Officer of the South African National Gallery, and others, as co-founders.

What is funny, is that they all call themselves black and the label is quite prominent - well, they're all quite educated, university educated - you just listen to their accents - they are quite an elite - the 'black intellectual'. There's a split along class lines.... This isn't one homogeneous community - there's all this diversity. We weren't just struggle or political activism. I don't want to use a term that is just one aspect of myself - it just reduces you. I like to look deeper - at what I am, and what I do.

Another artist who had attended meetings stated,

I go to the meetings but I have trouble seeing this homogeneous blackness thing - Black South Africans don't see me as black - they see me as coloured and would never accept me as black.

Other early criticisms were that BLAC aimed to create a black minority group in a country where the majority was black. BLAC's leadership responded that in the South African arts institutions and markets, black artists *were* a minority as far as recognition and access to education and resources were concerned. There was also confusion among the attendees at an initial meeting over how to decide who was black in the 'new' South Africa in order to know how far BLAC's exclusion rules extended. The reason for exclusion was given as enabling artists to work outside white hegemony stemming from apartheid. It was suggested that only those who had historically experienced apartheid oppression, in being black or coloured, should be members. However, did this mean that white non-South Africans who had arrived after 1994 were eligible to attend meetings as they had not been part of apartheid? A white European, for example, who wished to join, argued that she had not been in South Africa pre-1994 and that the organisation was unconstitutional. A black South African who had grown up in Europe and America as the son of parents in exile, then said that the definition would problematise his own membership in the group, as he had not grown up black in South Africa during apartheid⁶¹. When a visiting white Irish artist was brought to a later BLAC meeting by a coloured artist, was prevented from attending, the local artist pointed out that excluding the foreigner just because he was white was hardly fair as he had not taken part in apartheid, and that, as an Irishman, "his people had also been subject to colonial oppression".

At the time, the meeting concluded that "whoever sees themselves as black, is black". Due to the strong disagreements and problems regarding the exclusion rule, the rule was relaxed within the year for whites to attend public discussions, with central decisions being made by a core black membership. These debates provided a fascinating glimpse into the complexities of determining artistic and political identities in the 'new' South Africa and the fluidity in interpreting, defining and categorising perceptions of race.

Given the fact that many historically disadvantaged artists felt separated and distinct from the white community in Cape Town, and conscious of the economic, educational and resource divides that existed between them, BLAC did enable the exploitation of a black identity for these artists to present

⁶¹ My own identity was subject to scrutiny in relation to the issue of 'blackness', when I was invited to attend BLAC meetings by a fellow member of the UCT-based 'Women of Colour' group, into which I was invited and accepted, and further accentuates the complexity and contradictions involved in applying race terminology and classification in the New South Africa. (Being half-British, half-Filipino, it was difficult to place me clearly in a white or black category. Furthermore, historically speaking, under apartheid, Japanese Asians were generally classified as 'honorary' white, being allowed to live in white areas but not marry a white person, due to negotiated South African beneficial trade agreements with Japan, whereas Chinese and Filipino Asians were classified 'coloured').

their own point of view and form a market category for the promotion of their work. BLAC, over time, provided historically disadvantaged artists who attended with some resources and support, including marketing and publicity, talks and meetings, a web-site promoting their work, and an art catalogue, 'Returning the Gaze' (2001), featuring black artists, and an internal networking system within the organisational structure. Some of those artists who had initially been suspicious of joining the organisation were later drawn in, although some remained ambivalent about their involvement, explaining that they made use of the opportunities despite still not agreeing with being seen as 'black'. As one historically disadvantaged artist wryly commented:

I don't agree with the exclusion principle and I wouldn't want to be labelled as black, but who am I to speak? I'm in the BLAC catalogue (2000).

Consequently, whatever artists' reservations about attending BLAC, the organisation succeeded in creating the general impression of a homogeneous and empowered group defined by race. To outsiders it certainly seemed that members of BLAC had chosen to identify themselves as black, even if there was no indication by the organisation or individuals that some had joined only in order to access resources.

Clearly, a number of historically disadvantaged artists resisted terms such as black as homogenising and de-individualising. At the same time, many re-appropriated black identities strategically. These same artists, even if by default alone, were defining themselves as black in order to be visible in the art world and create market opportunities for their work. They were also often simultaneously attempting to break out of the mould of what it meant to be black while challenging previous notions of what black art in South Africa was perceived to be.

It could be argued that being black in this sense becomes enabling rather than disabling, opening possibilities rather than closing them. The social theorist Erasmus (2001, 1999, 1997) has argued that blackness is itself a creative category, and that there are many ways of 'being black' in which the term 'black' can be argued as not bounded, in terms of its possibilities and capabilities, but as a negotiated and transformative process. A distinction can thus be drawn between the perception of an artist's work being determined by his/her black identity in ways that reduce, delineate, bind, categorise or limit the potential of an artist to produce work, with black identity being seen as only one component that makes up the artist or the work. 'Old' categories may be appropriated and take on new understandings and definitions, in which previously essentialist labels can undergo change and evolve. Awareness of such change and conflict in perceptions of black identity was expressed in this comment of an artist of Xhosa background whose work was featured in the BLAC catalogue:

Black can be cultural, political, you know, can be intellectualised in all sorts of forms, so even the way I understand it, over two, three years it has shifted. So now I have many words to explain my black, which I am [also] trying to avoid. I'm trying not to be the same. But for me as a person, I am what I am. So I don't know if there's such a thing as a black culture (1999).

However, racialised divisions in South Africa are deeply entrenched, the product of a long history of differentiation. Perpetuating 'blackness' as a category in the South African art world does not ultimately enable the breakdown of already prevalent divisions between white and black artists, or, for

that matter, indicate the complex and often contradictory individual manifestations of identity that artists present to themselves and others and through their work.

As an interesting contrast, about the same time BLAC was being established, an Anti-Racism Arts group was started on the Cape Flats, incorporating visual artists from the Battswood Arts Centre in Athlone, Bush Radio, hip-hop performance group 'Black Noise'⁶², and ex-political activists. They planned to focus on schools in the Cape Flats and particularly on racism between black and coloured students. This for them indicated that within Cape Town at the time, there certainly was not a homogeneous black identity. Some of these artists were also present at BLAC meetings. The concurrent formation of a black arts group, and an anti-racism arts group, both claiming to represent historically disadvantaged communities, gives some indication of the different and often conflicting interests, beliefs and frameworks that provided a working context for historically disadvantaged artists.

Yet another art group, calling itself Public Eye was also established during late 1998-1999, claimed to be focused on what they called 'public art', and working with communities in Cape Town. The founding committee were, notably, all white artists. A co-founder I spoke to at the time defended this, claiming it was unintentional and coincidental in that the group "just happened to be white", and had gotten together because "they all knew each other", "worked well together", and "had similar aims and understood each other's work", rather than because they were all white. Although the core committee would remain as it was, he noted that there would be an advisory committee which would include black artists. The founders' belief that they 'just happened to be white' reveals the extent to which the lived social, economic and geographical experience of each race category, constructed under apartheid as culturally different from each other, is normalised in South Africa to appear natural and coincidental. This also indicates the ease with which white hegemony in the arts can be perpetuated, as white artists continue to have advantageous access to finance, resources and networks.

The degree of conflict, contradiction and contrast in the relationships between art categories, market values and perceptions of artists' identities presented here, underlines the continuing complexity of the South African art world. Artists may have joined arts organisations, or been represented within racialised identities in galleries or through dealers, but these did not necessarily represent the artists' personal realities, beliefs or desired identities.

RE-EVALUATING ART STUDY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The flux and change of art categories within South Africa, as well as the international art world's own questioning of aesthetic value and constructs of power suggests the need for alternative analytical and evaluative processes for South African art. The perceptions, external categories, labels and values in the art world that historically disadvantaged artists deal with on a day-to-day basis need to be taken into account in order to understand the relationship between externally constructed art categories, markets and

⁶² Emile, the leader of the hip hop group Black Noise, himself pointed out during the meeting that it was ironic the group was called Black Noise when he was part of an anti-racism group.

values, artistic identities and artists' processes of self-identification within these. Such an approach could be based on the interpretation rather than the categorisation of artworks, with a focus on artists' perceptions in reading artworks, or an exploration of junctures between different aesthetic approaches. At the least, research into artists' works would benefit from some acknowledgment of where these artists see themselves coming from, even if it remains open-ended as to where they are going to.

The following case study provides a basis for exploring some of the above concerns, and exemplifies an artist's responses to and negotiation of art categories, in relation to his perception and appropriation(s) of artistic and racial identities, as a means of marketing his work.

A CASE STUDY: TIMOTHY MAFENUKA

Some of the points raised above are exemplified in the case of the artist Timothy Mafenuka, who described himself as a black Xhosa artist and who I interviewed and worked with in the 1998 and 1999 Thupelo Workshops⁶³.

Timothy described himself as 'self-taught'. According to Timothy, an artist in his early thirties who then lived in the black township of Khayelitsha, on the Cape Flats, he came to Cape Town from the Transkei in the 1980s to find work. After working as a fisherman and in a hotel kitchen in Cape Town, he made the decision to become a full-time artist. He had originally learnt woodcarving from his grandfather in the Transkei, making "traditional objects, such as wooden walking sticks". He claimed he had not had a formal art education, although he had attended several informal classes and workshops in Cape Town, through the Community Arts Project and the Thupelo Cape Town artists' workshop. He made a point of emphasising what he described as Western art techniques, as a result of having attended workshops with Western-trained artists. His long-term aims were to have a solo gallery exhibition and to continue to learn more and grow as an artist.

Timothy's artworks included sculptures in wood and clay, and paintings, drawings and mono-prints painted over with watercolours. Timothy had sold work to mainstream art galleries, although the majority of the work from which he supported himself sold at street markets such as Greenmarket Square, and local art galleries aimed at the tourist market. He marketed himself by actively taking work to galleries and market stalls to be sold. Much of his work consisted of multiple versions of mono-prints, based on simple drawn figures of people and animals which he painted in with watercolours, and which sold unframed for R100 – R200.

In recent years, Timothy had sold two large animal sculptures. One, a wooden crocodile, had sold for over 10,000 Rand to the South African National Gallery permanent collection. A further sculpture sold to a foreigner for 15,000 Rand through a local gallery that specialised in 'contemporary African art'. Timothy and other artists he knew from Khayelitsha and similar Cape Flats areas, saw such sales as

⁶³ See Chapter Six.

indicating considerable financial success.⁶⁴ At the time, ten thousand rand was equivalent to at least a thousand pounds, and was a large sum for many South African artists and extremely large for someone living in a black township.

For Timothy, 'value' was tied to market value and the work's sale-ability. The price his sculptures sold at made his work 'valuable' – both aesthetically and financially. This market value and national recognition he felt he had gained from the gallery's acquisition of his work played a role in defining him as a 'good' artist, as he and other artists from his community saw it. Through both the financial value of the artworks he sold and the acknowledgement and inclusion of his work in the permanent collection of the National Gallery, Timothy now claimed he had national recognition as a contemporary South African artist. However, Timothy expressed concerns that his two dimensional paintings, drawings, collages and mono-prints (see Fig. 26) were not accepted as 'good' art by Cape Town art galleries. Timothy argued that if his wooden sculptures were good enough examples of contemporary African art to be in the National Gallery permanent collection, then his two-dimensional artworks, which depicted very similar images, themes and styles to his sculptures, should also be considered good contemporary African art, and should sell at similar prices.

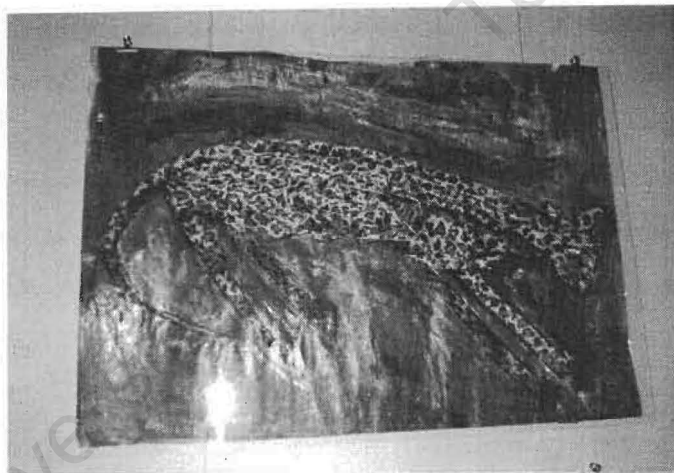


Figure 26. Collage by Timothy Mafenuka, depicting a leopard, 1999

At the beginning of the Thupelo Cape Town Workshop he attended, I heard a few of the tertiary-trained artists describe his paintings and mono-prints as bad art, unsophisticated, 'touristy' and formulaic. Concerns were also expressed by some of these artists that Timothy's recent financial success would influence other artists to create 'unadventurous' work. This negative view was exacerbated by the fact that Timothy initially used much of his workshop time to make the most of the free materials provided to churn out large numbers of small mono-prints to sell later to tourists. However, the mass-produced stylised 'simplistic' images of animals and people in his paintings, prints and drawings were not problematic when he created the same images as sculptures. Later in the workshop, Timothy created a simple clay sculpture of a lion. The same artists who had criticised him described this as 'good' work.

⁶⁴ This success was further amplified in relation to his peers when he bought a second-hand car and was able to transport other artists to and from Cape Town to Khayelitsha.



Figure 27. Timothy Mafenuka, on the right, creating a clay sculpture of a lion, at Thupelo Workshop

Such a strong divide in the evaluation of his sculpture and drawing suggests that the institutional flux in the evaluation of

artworks in South Africa not only caused contradiction in determining and evaluating what ‘good’ art could be at ground level in South Africa, and how value was tied strongly to perceptions of ethnic identities. It is evident from looking at Timothy’s artworks and his and others’ responses that a number of different discourses and approaches to art come into play, arguably in relation to racialised perceptions of a black Xhosa identity. The dichotomous evaluation of Timothy’s works on paper as ‘bad’ art, and his sculptures as ‘good’ art, can be understood to be due to these works being subject to differently perceived ‘Western’ and ‘African’ art aesthetic contexts for their evaluation (both categories are notably ultimately derived from Western art market perceptions – see Clifford 1988, Graburn 1976, 1999). Timothy’s wooden carvings were evaluated within Western concepts of traditional African practice, arguably in relation to the perceived stylistic repetition of images in African ‘tribal’ art (see Steiner 1994, 1999) and ascribed value as such. However, when Timothy worked within Western genres and materials, drawing similar repeated figures on paper as those of his sculptures, his two-dimensional artworks were perceived as a poor mimicry of Western contemporary ‘high art’ art standards.

Some artists have proposed that defining himself as a ‘Xhosa’ artist was a clever marketing ploy by Timothy to make up for his lack of Western art skills, an attempt to utilise his ethnicity to define his work as ‘good’ within its own criteria.

Timothy certainly showed an astute awareness and ability to draw from different categories and discourses in relation to his identity within the flux and contradiction of South African art, particularly in the markets he accessed and in dealing with prospective buyers. He had learnt effective techniques for manipulating his audiences and arguing his way into both Western and tourist art markets, playing on his African ‘cultural authenticity’ in purchasers’ eyes. For example, Timothy drew on perceptions of an authentic Xhosa cultural identity in describing his work, referring to what are perceived and acknowledged as ‘traditional’ art practices. Referring to what he described as his Xhosa identity, he argued that his artistic skills were innate and a natural part of his culture:

I didn't go to school to learn about colours, but I know myself how to mix the colours. It's natural...

Art is part of my culture. Because, in the homelands they used to paint with soil – different kinds, they are colourful when they are put on the wall.⁶⁵ Near December, they draw butterflies because it is the time of butterflies. The person who draws the butterflies doesn't go to school but he can draw the butterflies there.

It's in my veins to work with my hands. I was born like that. I don't need a lot of skills. I catch on quickly... It's something from your hands, something from your ideas... You are not supposed to go to school to learn artwork, because artwork is born to be in the artist...



Figure 28. Work by Timothy Mafenuka at Thupelo Workshop, 1999. On the wall are paintings of his, and on the table are his clay sculptures, including a lion and an elephant.

He added that producing paintings, prints and drawings on paper did not mean that his work was European, but simply that he used Western techniques within an African context, in which he claimed, "If I paint abstract, it does not mean I am painting European - this abstract is from here... I am based in my African art, this side."

He described himself as an artist in his own cultural right. He insisted that the 'authenticity' of his Xhosa African cultural identity gave him cultural authority over the criteria for evaluation of his work as a contemporary African artist, and that this included his paintings, drawings and prints. It was also evident that he sometimes played on the perceived simplicity of the unspoilt, naïve and unsophisticated African artist in marketing his work to tourists and galleries, as in his statement that,

Sometimes you can just play with a title, because somebody is just buying the title and others are buying for the picture. If you play like this it's good – because they love this title – 'Lovely Day' – and they just buy it for this you see, because some people don't care about the artwork, they like your words only.

Timothy himself described differences in the reception of his sculpture and two-dimensional work respectively with the telling comment, "The people, they don't have the same eyes – they look differently". This statement implied the different 'gazes' he felt his work was subject to and framed by within different contexts. At the same time, Timothy stated that art education had been denied to his culture in the past, and that he had a right to access a Western Art education with Western techniques:

⁶⁵ Referring to the tradition of 'wall' painting of houses in rural areas in South Africa.

Black people can't afford to buy art. I can blame the past government. They made a lot of damage to black people. They don't see art as our culture, our thing. The government separated art from the indigenous people. The white community got a lot of education about art, whereas us on the other hand were just fed with Bantu education.

Timothy obviously positioned and re-positioned himself between different reference worlds. While situating himself in a 'traditional past', a cultural context where he argued that his abilities were culturally 'innate', he simultaneously sited himself at the forefront of contemporary art through the recognition of his sculptural work at the South African National Gallery. Picton (1993) clearly understands these contradictions:

...it appears people in Africa can never win, for if they remain attached to the traditions of the past, they are innocent and exotic, and if they move into the present, they are merely foolish (92).

... There are all manner of particular, indigenous, functional networks of patronage, production and evaluation, and artists do address common themes across these networks and institutions; but we shall never see any of this as long as we constitute artists within ready-made curatorial boxes. (98)

The acknowledgement by the South African National Gallery of alternative 'visual cultures' as valid in South Africa in their own right at the suggests that Timothy did have a right to claim access to whatever artistic values and appreciation he desired *on his own terms*, and from his 'own' cultural perspective. This brings to mind Napier's suggestion that:

... what we do when we set out to look at the art of another culture is to reshape it into a category of thought with which we are comfortable. In this respect our interest in the art of other cultures ought rightly to result in an interest in other modes of thought - even when such modes of thought have the potential to undermine conceptual categories with which we are comfortable. What we should be asking ourselves is not what aspects of other cultures reaffirm all that we already know, but how different ways of dealing with the material would help to suggest to us new and different ways of seeing (1992: 31).

Academics world-wide have recently begun to challenge aesthetic hegemonies of power and the categorisation not only of art in relation to culture, but the categorisation of culture through art. This critique has been levelled at the relationship between colonial power and cultural domination in the past, as Root (1996) argues:

Art can operate as an alibi for cannibal power because of its ability to gild ugly social and historical facts with the patina of taste and beauty. Certain forms of aesthetic practice are believed to be able to elicit lofty sentiments (particularly, but not exclusively, those that fall into the category of high culture) and hence can obscure the conditions under which these same lofty sentiments are made possible. The presence of art can draw attention away from the extent to which its practice continues to be dependent on a rhetoric of exclusion and mastery... Art is often utilized to explain and naturalize the display of authority ... and the effects of this display can be extremely subtle and complex, profoundly influencing how we understand cultural, sexual and other differences (Root 1996: 18).

Divisions between what has been seen as ethnic vs. western, traditional vs. modern art are being questioned internationally, and constructs of aesthetic value and divides in both Western and non-

Western, and popular and contemporary arts are being challenged (Anderson 2002; Banks and Morphy 1997; Napier 1992; Thomas 1997; Graburn 1999). Anderson (2001) writes that:

...an analytical distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' prevents art anthropologists from pursuing what I believe to be the most interesting issues that face the subdiscipline today: the analysis of popular art and vernacular aesthetics in stratified societies, and the global cross-fertilization of aesthetic values as seen in both the fine and the popular arts (6).

Much of the income for South African historically disadvantaged artists is derived, as in the example of Timothy Mafenuka, from tourist or craft markets that feed into perceptions of a timeless and traditional authenticity (Jules-Rosette 1990; Steiner 1998, 1994; Graburn 1999; Clifford 1988; Napier 1992). Both contemporary fine art in Cape Town and tourist art sold in markets and less 'avant-garde' galleries is sold to international buyers.

Timothy's work sold in Greenmarket Square could be interpreted as tourist art. However, Jules Rosette (1990) argues that 'tourist' art is often individually produced and more like contemporary fine art than we would think. Kasfir (1999) argues that African 'tourist' art has been excluded from the canon of 'authentic' contemporary art based on the belief that it is cheap, crude and mass-produced. He argues that "by assigning everything under one classification and inevitably dismissive label, Western art museums and galleries cause all other 'unassigned' forms to become invisible, to fall through the canonical sieve" (100), and suggests that:

Now... it is perhaps time to bring the canon into better alignment with the corpus, with what the African artists actually make, and to leave behind a rather myopic classificatory system based so heavily on an Africa of the mind" (110).

TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN ART VALUES, MARKETS, CATEGORIES AND ARTISTS' IDENTITIES

During the time of study there was no overall agreement or concordance of historically disadvantaged artists' perspectives in relation to the (hegemonic) 'outside-determined' categorisation and market evaluation of themselves and their work. This in itself is not a bad thing because it correctly indicates that historically disadvantaged artists do not represent a homogeneous population but are composed of individuals, with different motivations and perspectives, and represents the broadening out and expansion of these artists' approaches to art in the South African art world. It does, however, give rise to tensions between current approaches to art study in South Africa and alternative approaches to evaluating art. In a time of rapid social change, art categories, artists' perceptions of themselves, and who determined the categories, were thus in continual flux in relation to each other. These artists were subject to, and active within, continually fluctuating negotiations of shifting perceptions of self-identities in relation to both socio-political changes in the New South Africa, and externally-produced categories and values in the South African art institutions and galleries.

Determining market values in relation to perceptions of racialised identities in art in the New South Africa was thus a process fraught with tensions and contradictions, when not only art categories were being re-evaluated in the art world and were in a complex state of flux and re-determination, but

historically disadvantaged artists were also challenging previous art values, market categories and aesthetic criteria. Differences in art education, finance and exposure, as well as racialised categories of art were limitations artists had to work against in establishing themselves as 'free' artists in South Africa. Exposure to the 'avant-garde', particularly installation and conceptual art international markets from abroad, conflicted with more local perceptions of art and styles. There was also an opposition to frameworks of value in the art world stemming from hierarchies of the apartheid era. There were tensions between how aesthetic value was determined by external contexts and artists' own perceptions of what was valuable in their work. The local art world seemed confused as to how to ascertain value in relation to these artists' works. There was considerable overlap between racialised identity, artistic categories, and aesthetic value, leading to particular conflicts over the marketing, aesthetic evaluation and racial categorisation of Cape Town artists. Constraints were more often than not the result of the impact of apartheid in the past – its influence on socio-cultural environments and economics; the different perspectives of 'good' and 'bad' art, often linked to perceptions of culture and race, and the hegemonies of power that categorised the artists.

Such issues are not unique to South African artists, in that all third world artists struggle with national representations of themselves as 'culturally and stylistically stereotyped' (Canclini 1995; 1994). South African artists, however, faced the additional impact of an apartheid past which had artistic genres and styles with associated concepts of 'race' and 'culture', and under which there had been little opportunity to openly contest labels and definitions, despite artists' personal resistance, due to their dependency on white-led galleries, dealers and institutions that had controlled and defined markets.

Consequently, 'freedom' in visual art, promoted nationally and internationally within the South African art world, was limited by practical constraints and discourses of value that impacted upon artists' access to local and international art markets. The categorisation of artists and artworks in the art world during apartheid, particularly through how artists were spoken and written about, compounded by the many shifts in interpretation of art categories and possibilities post-apartheid, fed back into artists' negotiation of their social identities. This, coupled with economic and educational disadvantages, led to an interesting and complex situation in which, although they resisted race categories verbally and intellectually in relation to their self-identities, historically disadvantaged artists often accepted or played into externally derived racialised artistic identities that provided marketing opportunities for their work. Artists may be forced to accept these categories in order to survive financially, alternatively, attempts to bring about shifts in their work may not be seen as innovative in the avant-garde artistic domain.

Artists were cognisant of the multiple perspectives and different categories that they themselves were 'framed by' and, to some extent, framed themselves, in relation to perceptions of self-identity. This was apparent in artists' responses to current markets and how they spoke about themselves and their work in relation to these markets. At the same time, historically disadvantaged artists were not passive recipients of change but were actively engaged in negotiating art categories and value criteria, and attempted to move beyond limitations and restrictions from the past.

Aesthetic value was still to a large extent determined in relation to perceptions of 'fixed' cultural identities, as an alternative context for evaluation, within the hegemonic gaze of a Western art education which was not fundamentally challenged. In an attempt to define their own markets and value criteria in the face of what was inevitably a Eurocentric hegemonic construct of market value and categories, some artists re-accessed and re-appropriated the 'outside'-derived racially based categories while others strongly resisted such categorisation. This led, in some cases, to artists 'buying into' the commodification of their racialised identities. Some historically disadvantaged artists drew simultaneously on different discourses of value regarding change and identity in the new South Africa, in order to market their artworks. Still others engaged with several markets at once, playing on several different perceptions of identity in the process. Yet others sited themselves within rural and traditional African backgrounds in order to access art markets within 'African' or 'tourist art' aesthetic genres, theorising these as compatible with Western 'fine art'. Artists such as Timothy Mafenuka marketed themselves from the position of what they described as their own cultural context, arguing that it was their cultural authenticity that determined their work as good and, at the same time claiming, and often being recognised as, an avant-garde contemporary South African artist. Yet others questioned the aesthetic criteria that determined 'good' art or 'bad' art in South African art institutions, while others expressed the opinion that value criteria should be based on where an artist was 'coming from' rather than where they were 'going to'. Some artists resisted the contextualisation of their work within racialised genres and searched for alternative interpretations of, or challenged, these categories. Shifts in styles and genres of work occurred, many of which incorporated serious attempts by historically disadvantaged artists to move beyond limitations in financial and educational resources. Some historically disadvantaged artists acquired scholarships or were able to afford or access tertiary education. Others attended workshops, such as Thupelo Cape Town Artists' workshop, when possible, in an attempt to broaden technical skills and capabilities, rather than being passive recipients of imposed styles, while yet others, or even the same artists, re-appropriated or re-determined the category 'black artist' on their own terms. Other artists attempted to compete within international contemporary art markets and work within the avant-garde.

Historically disadvantaged artists therefore looked 'many ways at once' (Gilroy 1993) in order to satisfy different needs, aesthetic considerations and markets. The many contradictions outlined in this chapter explain why, caught between a racialised art world's gaze and their own perceptions of freedom in self-identity and expression post-1994, artists might choose to work within genres which suited externally-constructed and racialised perceptions of aesthetic value, while simultaneously contesting and working outside of these ethnicised identities. Consequently, simplistic understandings of the choices that historically disadvantaged artists appear to make in creating artworks ignore the complex contexts and considerations that affect them and their work. Such concerns clearly demonstrate Jenkins' (1996) contention that:

The world is not really *everyone's* oyster: a range of factors systematically influences access to the resources that are required to play this game. In any given context, some social identities systematically influence an individual's opportunities in this respect. The materiality of identity, and its stratification with respect to deprivation and affluence, cannot be underestimated (51; original emphasis).

CHAPTER FIVE: THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS – TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS BEYOND THE LOCAL

In our experience being "African" is not just one single thing ... the first stereotype of Africa is a black African, whereas we know the whole northern part of Africa is like, Arabic, the middle Africa is "black", and the original people of the Southern regions are Khoisan ... that is besides all the other considerations like the slave trade ... So when it comes to myself ... I find myself being interested really, being many things at once. I don't know why I am interested in so many diverse activities; interests - the whole universe interests me ... I have found in my experiences that you are many, many things; many things joined up into one and Africa has become that, so Africa itself is not an easy concept to understand - *artist, coloured, male, Cape Town 1999.*

"You may look in front of you, and on both sides, if you like," said the Sheep; "but you can't look all round you – unless you've got eyes at the back of your head" - *Lewis Carroll: Through the Looking-Glass: And What Alice Found There.*

... multiplicity is the key to identity, interpretation and visual pleasure –
Mirzoeff 2000: 36

INTRODUCTION

In a progressively more complex, globalised and post-modern world many analysts claim that previously seemingly intact social and cultural identities are breaking down. New theoretical approaches to studying identities have been suggested within social science in relation to contemporary globalising processes. For example, the idea that culture must be based in one nation has been challenged, in that, "...contemporary cultural identities must also be about internationalism in a direct sense, about our positions in transnational spaces (Morely and Robins, 1995: 41). It has been suggested research should instead focus on "the way that culture crosses border and oceans with ease in a constant state of evolution" (Mirzoeff 2000: 21). Likewise,

The classic monograph documenting unique and self-contained cultures must then give way to a new genre, taking its point of departure in those nodal points in the networks of interrelations where there is a mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters (Hastrup and Olwig 1997: 5)

For some theorists, identity within a globalising world becomes problematic for the persons concerned. Burgin (1996: 155) is one such example, who claims that identities are fragmenting as a result of modern technology, which appears to compress geographical space, and creates a barrage of fragmented and multiple media images, through which people deal with the 'Other'. Consequently, he argues that national, cultural and individual identities are threatened with dissolution, through what he perceives as a schizophrenic, psychocorporeal identification with a fractured world, in which subject-object distinctions break down in the very *act* of looking.

South Africa underwent particularly rapid processes of economic globalisation and exposure to international cultural influences beyond its borders after the end of apartheid. In the past, the country had

been subject to severe international cultural and economic sanctions, resulting in South Africans as a whole being cut off from direct global influences. The lifting of sanctions resulted in South Africans being suddenly and dramatically exposed to cultural and economic globalising processes. Coupled with these changes, there emerged a political emphasis on an 'African Renaissance' under Thabo Mbeki's presidency, after the 1998 national elections, which aimed to place South Africans culturally, economically and politically *within* the African continent. These changes inevitably impacted on individual South Africans. These changes are particularly notable when it is considered that South Africans, especially the historically disadvantaged, had existed within bounded social, working and living spaces under apartheid, according to perceptions of separate 'cultures' based on racial categorisation. These cultures had been defined or fixed, as if unchanging or unchangeable, in terms of separate languages, traditions and ancestral histories.

In the New South Africa, in relation to the changes described above, determining self-identity implied re-siting locality and ethnicity in relation to beyond the local – a focus on being 'African' in positively valued ways rather than assuming European supremacy, and in relation to an increasingly globalised world that, from a South African perspective, was undergoing expansion and incorporation, and to theorists such as Burgin (1996) above, compression and fragmentation.

*

Artworks, or images of them, often travel beyond the immediate locality of the artist through exhibitions and their representation in the media. They are consequently framed within different interpretative discourses, through a 'gaze' very removed from the producers' indigenous social experiences and local contexts (Thomas 1997). Such a 'gaze,' as discussed in the previous chapter, may also feed back into the aesthetic frameworks and artistic categories for an artists' work, and often the artists' self-identity.

Jenkins argues that, "To identify something is to locate it in time *and* space" (1996: 27; my emphasis). However, space is also social, in that, "...space is not an area between points, it is the effectiveness of an image in making the observer think of both here and there, of oneself and others" (Strathern 1990: 29). Here, I examine the artwork as territorial; a locale for the self that incorporates multiple locales for self-identities as a means of trans-cultural encounter with the world 'beyond' the local. I do this through focusing on five artists who create, juxtapose, re-contextualise and incorporate referents of territory, culture and locality in their artwork imagery, and how these referents suggest perceptions of self-identity in relation to the local, international and global 'gazes' the images are subject to. I also explore the extent to which these artists' use of images, styles and technology simultaneously and seemingly paradoxically sites their identities both 'inside' and 'outside' specific cultural locales.

However, rather than disjuncture, dysfunction, fragmentation and neurosis, for these artists I argue a cognitive attempt at a positive, creative construction of identity, in which multiple perceptions and seemingly paradoxical referents of self cognitively co-exist as a cohesive 'whole.'

TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS WITHIN ARTWORKS

Phillips and Steiner (1999), in their study of the way that art objects circulate through different frameworks and contexts of interpretation in the networks of world art exchange, claim that interstitial nodes of negotiation and exchange occur as art objects move between art-artifact-commodity categories based on the locality of their definition. They argue that, to interpret such objects, it is necessary to unpack the baggage of trans-cultural encounter with which they travel, and search for the meanings and memories that are stored inside. Consequently, the art-artifact-commodity triad must be merged into a single domain where “the categories are seen to inform one another rather than to compete in their claims for social primacy and cultural value” (ibid: 16).

The above concerns individual artefacts moving between networks of world art exchange. However, the social or aesthetic significance of artefacts may also be interpreted in relation to other artefacts in the *same* space, be this museum or gallery (Strathern 1990, Preziosi 1996). Greenblatt (1991) for example, argues that an object in a gallery or museum has ‘resonance’ in relation to other objects surrounding it, which determines the interpretation it is subject to.

In the same way that objects are contextualised in relation to other objects, the positioning of an image in relation to the images that surround it within the composition or ‘frame’ of an artwork, as well as the styles and technologies with which the artwork is created, might also determine its interpretation. It is therefore feasible that images may undergo negotiation and exchange within artworks in relation to other images, or technologies employed, in which artworks act as interstitial nodes for trans-cultural encounters for the interpretation of images in relation to artists’ self-identities. Edwards (1997), for example, in her work on photography, argues that an individual image in a photograph is ‘framed’ by the visual context within which it is placed. She suggests an alternative perceptual reading of images, in which she takes the approach that photographs may act as a “site for the articulation of other frames and other forms of expression and consumption” (ibid: 53).

Here, I examine how artists act as agents in creating and negotiating their own forms of ‘interstitial nodes’ and merging different interpretations of referents for self-identities in artworks. This section in particular explores how artists consciously incorporate images into artworks as signalling devices, or icons, which utilise interpretations of territory or culture derived from an ‘outside’ gaze ‘beyond’ the local, to define selves in relation *to* the local.

Donovan Ward



Figure 29. Donovan Ward standing before one of his artworks. In the background is a figure copied from a Khoisan painting.

Donovan Ward (see Fig. 29) grew up in Athlone, Cape Town. Having first studied art at secondary school⁶⁶, he then worked as a graphic designer and illustrator for trade unions in the 1980s, producing what he described as ‘politicised’ work. He described himself as “only really doing art after the elections”, when he made a conscious decision to sell his work as fine art and hold exhibitions at galleries⁶⁷, as opposed to being a ‘cultural worker’.

He was particularly conscious of his mixed ancestry, being visibly pale-skinned with light hair. Indeed, he had experienced problems being accepted by members of what he described as his “own community”: “I was also a ‘black’ artist, but I had problems within my own community because they used to call me ‘whitey’.” Interviewed from 1999 into 2001,⁶⁸ his work then sold mostly through a private dealer in Europe. He has since gained increasing recognition in South Africa as well as abroad.

Donovan claimed to be aware of multiple influences on his identity as a South African. He claimed to be particularly interested in recent socio-political change in South Africa, and the impact of recent cultural and economic globalisation on international power relations for South Africa. He commented:

I’m starting to look at myself, and how I used to look at the world. Moving from a single-focused black and white thing. I try to look at the world differently. I’ve undergone a lot of growth and questioning what I used to do and what I’m trying to do now...

There are so many things impacting today, especially here in South Africa all of a sudden. For me, it’s shifting all the time, and I think a lot of people are just... not sure any longer

Describing his experience of contemporary South Africa as “increasingly homogeneous as well as fragmented,” he claimed that he sought to define his experience of being South African through his work, exploring “everything” that constituted himself as part of the process of “discovering himself” and “figuring it all out.” His artworks were mostly two-dimensional, and combined an eclectic selection of materials such as oil and acrylic paint, cement, ash, rust and animal bones. His techniques were equally varied, combining airbrush, montage, sculpture and painting. He described his work in terms of a complex layering, superimposing and re-contextualising of diverse images and techniques to form multiple surfaces.

Many of Donovan’s art works consisted of flat surfaces consisting of multiple drawn or painted figurative images and abstract areas, with larger graphic images superimposed or montaged above, either

⁶⁶ Donovan attended Livingstone secondary school which was one of the few academically strong schools on the Cape Flats, and where art was part of the school syllabus.

⁶⁷ This decision was influenced by attending a Thupelo art workshop soon after the elections and being exposed to alternative ways of working as an artist, as explored in the following chapter.

⁶⁸ Informal conversations have been maintained with Donovan up to the time of writing.

painted, or made of materials such as Perspex. The larger images and symbols were often associated with business, finance or colonialism, and examples include McDonalds signs, dollar signs, or historical coats of arms, which he termed “‘icons’ of the past and present.” His concern was, he claimed, with the influence of globalisation on South African national and cultural identities as form of continued historical colonisation, particularly by the West, through the recent emergence of large conglomerate international business interests in South Africa. He described these businesses as a form of contemporary cultural and economic neo-colonisation which dominated alternative cultural values and perspectives.

As a contrast to the above concerns, he included images of whom he termed “just ordinary people,” “people from the past” or “subjugated peoples”. These images were copied or collaged from a variety of media sources, such as advertisement, magazines, old photographs, history books, images from historical paintings, and book illustrations. Donovan explained that these images of ‘ordinary people,’ such of those of the Khoisan or slaves, were deliberately selected from their original contexts, in order to remove them from their original pictorial hierarchical relationships, and place them “on their own”, as individuals rather than anonymous figures, within new contexts of interpretation in the present. For example, one small image of a female slave forming part of the collaged background of one his paintings, he described as having come from a “subordinate position” as an anonymous secondary image, in an original colonial etching he had come across in a book. Now, he claimed, she was depicted as “an individual in her own right”. Another painting, ‘Theme of the Forgotten Peoples (1997) included images of the Khoisan and slaves he had isolated and copied directly from “original colonial drawings and paintings” in order to affirm their previous existence in the present. Other images included copies of, or stylistic derivations from, African sculptures or Khoisan rock paintings. As a further contrast to the materials and images that made up the “icons of the present”, Donovan also claimed to “age” the images from the past he collaged onto his artwork surfaces by previously “exposing them to the elements” in his backyard, so they faded and appeared old.

The end result was the juxtaposition and contrasting of mass-produced images of global culture with diverse local identities, historical origins, and influences in South Africa, reflecting what Donovan expressed as his concerns over cultural and economic global and colonial hegemony in South Africa. Simultaneously, his artworks contrasted modernity and tradition, the global and the local. This contrast is evident in descriptions of selected artworks of Donovan’s discussed below.

One artwork, ‘Untitled’ (1996) (see Fig. 30), depicted a black African woman carrying an image of Marilyn Monroe on her head, clearly commenting on the dominating influence of Western culture and economic globalisation on African women. This included, in Donovan’s opinion, contrasting ideals of beauty in Africa and the West.

Figure 30. 'Untitled' - Image of African woman/Marilyn Monroe, 1996, Donovan Ward



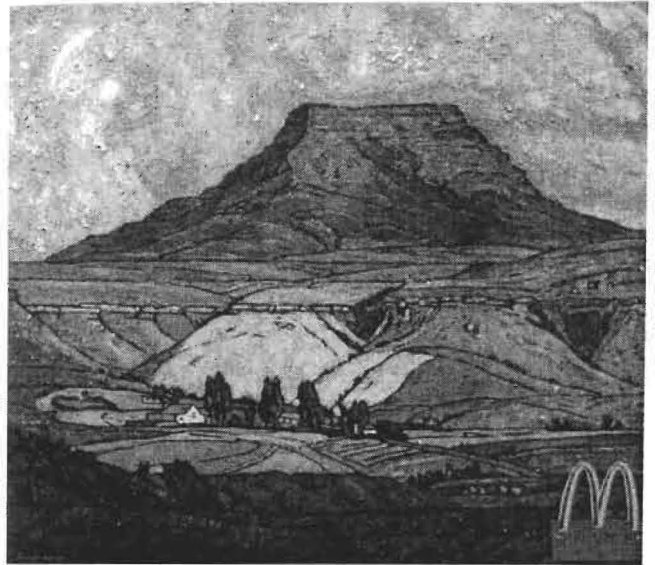


Figure 31. 'Superstar', 1998, Donovan Ward; showing images of people in the past, an 'African sculpture', and a neon sign –layering history globalisation, and colonisation in South Africa

A further artwork, 'Superstar' (1998) (see Fig. 31), consisted of a large raised illuminated Perspex sign in the shape of a Hollywood-style star, superimposed over a background containing what Donovan described as an 'African image' which he had based on an African sculpture. Yet another artwork, 'AMAJUBA – after Pierneef' (see Fig 32) deliberately superimposed a large Perspex McDonalds over a reproduction of a well-known historical South African landscape painting, by the colonial South African painter, Pierneef. He recreated this landscape out of burnt animal bones, wood ash and coal dust, thus satirically commenting on the destruction he associated with the colonial domination and ownership of South African land in the past, and associating this with what he believed was the impact of American economic power on South Africa in the present. Yet another artwork, 'Yoruba' (1997), [Fig. 00] depicted what Donovan described as a "Yoruba sculpture," painted over a background of computer circuitry. For Donovan, this work deliberately brought together and contrasted images of technology and modernity with images of tradition and ancestry, and Africa and 'the world'.

Figure 32. AMAJUBA - After Pierneef , 1997, Donovan Ward

One three-panelled artwork, 'Alta Continua' (1998), (see Fig. 33) in particular drew together several comparisons and juxtapositions in a single framework. On the right, was a panel consisting of a large image of a Khoisan man that Donovan had copied from what he described as a 'colonial etching'. In the centre, as a deliberate contrast, was an airbrushed image of what Donovan described as a "contemporary African woman" he had copied from a glossy magazine, and whom he had depicted



wearing a T-shirt with a Japanese-captioned Mickey Mouse logo on the front. He described his interest in the woman being in her representation in the magazine as a "global consumer," rather than in her depiction as a 'traditional' African woman. On the left panel, as a further contrast to the modern woman in the centre, was what Donovan described as an African 'found' sculptural object.



Figure 33. Aluta Continua, 1998, Donovan Ward

Donovan's work thus drew on, contrasted and conflated perceptions of territory, history, culture, tradition, modernity, colonialism, globalisation and change within a single framework. He depicted the local within a global context, as well as the impact of the global on the local, inevitably revealing how these overlapped and shifted within perceptions of identity in a transforming South Africa.

Donovan's artworks also indicated his own agency in engaging with, reworking, and contesting previous and present relationships with colonial and Western economic and cultural domination in South Africa. He subverts these relationships through their deliberate and challenging juxtaposition with 'dominated peoples' of the past and present. Furthermore, through visually re-interpreting images of

persons within different frameworks from those that the original composition offered, Donovan re-shaped the perceptual reading of these images in ways different from their original relationships, affording them space and recognition 'on their own,' while juxtaposing them with the powers and hegemony of values that they were previously subject to. Such processes bring to mind Edwards' (1997) request for a re-shaping of the West's perceptual framing in the reading of photographs, as sites for "the articulation of other frames and other forms of expression and composition" (53). In this case, Donovan's artworks acted as 're-framing' devices incorporating multiple contexts and cultural interpretations for the reading of imagery within them, and siting perceptions of self in relation to both the local, and beyond the local. Although his artworks clearly commented on collective South African histories, he did not express a need to explore his personal ancestry. He stated, "I haven't even gone back all that far... I'm a lot more comfortable with the uncertainty, the accepting of it, in a sense."

Selvin November



Figure 34. Selvin in his home studio, with paintings in progress, 1998

Selvin November (see Fig. 34) was previously classified and grew up as coloured, but stated clearly that he "didn't want to be put in a box," and that he "steered away from the black/white thing" in regard to self-identity. He claimed to have no tertiary art school training but had in fact received some informal training via 'alternative' arts centres and organisations. He worked during the day in computer design for a tie company and spent his free time painting in his room at the back of his parents' house in Athlone on the Cape Flats. He was formally interviewed in his studio in 1998.

Claiming that the variety of images and styles in his work resulted from multiple influences on him as both an artist and South African person, Selvin described himself as a "South African artist" who was "aware of the multiple influences on myself within many simultaneous contexts", a situation he described as "part of the contemporary South African experience." His paintings consisted of juxtaposed and contrasting images and styles drawn from a wide variety of sources. They incorporated both abstract and figurative painting, as well as the collage, montage and assemblage of found and utilitarian objects and images.

Figure 35. 'Untitled' - 1998. Painting by Selvin showing combination of 'African art', historical figures, abstraction and images of technology



How Selvin described and interpreted his artworks provides insight into how he drew upon multiple visual referents to position himself professionally as a contemporary international artist, while locating himself geographically and culturally in relation to his 'local community' in South Africa, to the African continent, and as part of what he described as the "modern globalised world." For example, Selvin described the paintings in progress in his home studio (see Fig. 34), where he was interviewed in 1999, as using "artistically sophisticated techniques – abstraction, painting, and collaged textures" – which he claimed were indicative of the "modern stylistic influences" that he drew upon as "a contemporary artist". There were also figurative images within his artworks, some of these being what Selvin described as "representations of African' sculptures" derived from "tourist curios" that he had "seen around" in market stalls (see Fig. 35). These depictions in his own work, he claimed, represented his "African culture" and "the African part of me." He also expressed an interest in wanting to "elevate African sculpture to the status of fine art in the art world" through the depiction of African sculpture within "contemporary paintings." He stated, "I've always used some sort of African element in my work.... African sculpture always has intrigued me."

There were also additional painted, collaged or montaged objects or images incorporated into his artworks' surfaces. One such image was an African comb that Selvin claimed referenced hair. This was relevant to his own identity, because hair texture had been one of the physical characteristics used to determine coloured, white or black status under apartheid, and was still, as Selvin noted, an important and controversial issue among coloured persons.⁶⁹ Other objects incorporated into the surfaces of his paintings included parts of a computer keyboard and various machinery components. Selvin described these components as representative of the influences of modernisation and technology on himself as a South African. The computer keyboard in particular, he claimed, referred to the work he did to earn money and this was contrast to what he described as the more "traditional" perception of South Africa which he represented in his depictions of African tourist masks and curios in his work.

Selvin's use of 'modern art techniques' such as abstraction and collage was arguably an effort to aid his marketability in on the contemporary international art market, while the visual referents identified him as simultaneously coloured and 'African'. Such multiple visual and stylistic devices could appear to referent separate and discrete, rather than complementary, aspects of self. However, the incorporation of diverse juxtaposed visual referents within a single artwork can also be interpreted as a deliberate effort to

⁶⁹ See Erasmus 1997 and 1999. Hair was also a major feature in the work by the artist Tracey Rose in the Johannesburg Biennale shortly before this interview with Selvin and he Selvin would have been exposed to, and possibly influenced by, her work. Also see Erasmus (1999) on hair and 'coloured' identities in South Africa.

frame the multiple influences on Selvin's sense of self in contemporary South Africa as a cognitive whole. Such intentions were apparent not only visually, in that the different elements described above were often juxtaposed and incorporated within a single artwork, but were also evident in his Selvin's own statement below:

I'm trying to blend two different worlds, because I feel that I am African and at the same time I'm living in a very Western type of lifestyle. There's always this argument of Afrocentric or Eurocentric. I don't agree with that... We're living in another world, globalisation is on our doorsteps, there's no time for that sort of division. I prefer to be a South African artist in a global sense - for me, there's my international influence, there's my South African influence, and there's my township influence.

Xolile Mtakatya



Figure 36. 'The Inheritor' - Xolile Mtakatya, 1999

Two pastel colour drawings⁷⁰ of the Xhosa-speaking artist Xolile Mtakatya provide further examples of the extent to which shifting perceptions of international, local and cultural referents overlap in perceptions of self in contemporary South Africa. These drawings were displayed at his solo exhibition (1999) at the Association of Visual Arts Gallery where he was interviewed, in central Cape Town.

Xolile claimed that his work was concerned with showing the effects of change on what he termed "modern society." His aim, he claimed, was to deliberately contrast the "loss of traditional practices" with "Western development" in his work, in relation to his South African urban environment. Images of what he described as "tradition" and "modern life" were juxtaposed in his two pastel drawings, which are briefly described below.

The first pastel drawing, 'The Inheritor' (1999) (see Fig. 36) contrasted several different images. He deliberately juxtaposed images of what he termed "African tradition", such as a pig, which he described as "important in traditional ceremonies," with "symbols of Western civilisation" – a knife and fork, and money. As a further contrast, the artwork also included an image he also described as a symbol

of “African tradition” – an image of what he described as a “West African mask,” that he had copied from the cover of an African art magazine. He commented on its inclusion as demonstrating his own lack of familiarity, and connection, with a broader sense of loss of ‘African tradition’ in urban South Africa:

It’s a very precious mask from West African countries. ... We don’t have such things down South. We’ve lost track of them. We’ve lost our traditional sculptures and that, except for a few things that we still know today.



Figure 37. 'Self-Portrait', 1999, Xolile Mtakatya

The second artwork, ‘Self-Portrait,’ (1999) (see Fig. 37) represented Xolile portrayed inside his home in Khayelitsha on the Cape Flats. As in Donovan’s and Selvin’s artworks, Xolile included depictions of carved African masks on the wall of his shack, describing them as “the kind found in tourist markets.” He also verbally drew attention to images of his neighbours from the township “looking in to see what he is doing” in the work, depicting the community he lived within. He also emphasised the fact that he was eating from tin cans, and that he no longer ate ‘traditional’ food. Seen through the open door of his shack, was an airplane flying overhead through the open door, which, he claimed, referenced his experience of international travel as an ‘international artist.’ He had recently travelled to Germany on at least two arts projects. His artworks thus drew together images of ‘tradition’ in relation to his desired location of self in Africa, and, at the same time, deliberately and consciously aimed at representing himself within modernity, as an ‘international artist’ in-the-world.

Double Strategies and Icons of Culture - Masking and Revealing African-ness

Figure 38. Images of masks typically seen on sale at tourist venues (in this case, the Pan African Market, central Cape Town)

It has been argued that ethnic artists are under great pressure, despite having access to Western style education, to create only those arts (and crafts) which signal their ethnicity and thus cater to the image desired by the mainstream art market (Graburn 1999). Graburn



⁷⁰ Other works of Xolile Mtakatya are presented in Chapter Three of this study.

(ibid: 348), for example, argues that many ethnic artists use a variety of formal and symbolic devices in their works as “signalling devices” to compete and avoid rejection by world markets. These ‘cultural images’ act as commodities that enable cultural outsiders to access – or believe that they have accessed – the culture of the ‘other’ (Root 1996). Phillips and Steiner (1999), for example, write that:

Throughout history, the evidence of objects has been central to the telling of cross-cultural encounters with distant worlds or remote Others. The materiality and physical presence of the object make it a uniquely pervasive witness to the existence of realities outside the compass of an individual’s or a community’s experience. The possession of an exotic object offers, too, an imagined access to a world of difference, often constituted as an enhancement of the new owner’s knowledge, power or wealth (3)



Figure 39. Entrance to Pan African Market stall unit, showing ‘African’ sculptures and masks on sale, along with paintings

One identified feature of African ‘art’ forms is that they are perceived as closed, bounded and discrete systems that can be symbolically interpreted by insiders, but remain inaccessible to outsiders, except through their presentation within highly conventionalised and standardized genres (Steiner 1994, 1999). These presentations are derived from concepts of mass production (see Figs. 38 and 39), through forms replicated over and over through images or objects that invent, re-invent and re-inforce non-African notions of African authenticity (Steiner 1999; Jules-Rosette 1984, 1990). The original function of what is now termed an art object is closed to the tourists and gallery curators that acquire them,

and the original artist remains anonymous. However, its stylistic familiarity provides a means of accessing the ‘known’ from the confusing ‘unknown’, creating standards of reality in which:

...just as printed illustrations and words both in the past and today have achieved visual and textual authority through repetition, so too, I suggest, does tourist art effectively produce its own canons of authenticity - a self referential discourse of cultural reality that generates an internal measure of truth-value (Steiner 1999: 95).

The gaze of the tourist buyer may thus be fixed on the familiar through the power of redundancy and mass reproduction of African artefacts, "thereby ultimately forestalling and perhaps even avoiding the more demanding task of serious cultural translation and interpretation that might otherwise be produced in a less superficial encounter with the visual culture of Africa" (Steiner 1999: 101). An interesting example of this is Steiner’s (ibid.) reference to the use of mass-produced African tourist artworks in American domestic interiors which become coded as ‘real,’ in some contexts, in order to make statements about the cultural roots of African-American identity and, in other contexts to invoke ‘the primitive’. The tourist curio image hence becomes what Steiner (ibid.) terms an *iconic trope*, a vehicle for accessing an African authenticity on the surface, yet devoid of real or inherent meaning.

Images of 'traditional' African masks and sculptures are predominant icons of African culture in the West. This leads us to consider to what extent artists who reproduce tourist art forms in their artworks use these images as iconic tropes to access some form of 'African' authenticity and thus as an insertion point into an outsider-determined African 'identity'.

Despite verbal references to African tradition by the artists described above, the masks and representations of carvings used in their work were not of their personal experience, or even South African. Selvin's images of masks were derived partly from imagination and partly from objects and curios around him, but not from his personal experience of their ritual or traditional use. Nevertheless they were intended to depict "the African part of me". Donovan's images of African sculpture were also based on curios he had seen in market stalls, created and added to, he claimed, from his imagination. Xolile's incorporation of the mask in the painting *The Inheritor* was derived from the cover of an African Art magazine and was certainly not indigenous to South Africa. It is notable that, although Xolile used the mask to reference African tradition, he did not know either the original use or provenance for the mask. He thus incorporated an externally-derived representation of his desired African 'authenticity' that he was in fact culturally and experientially distanced from.

To the outsider, the artwork appears to reveal aspects of the identity of the individual who created it, but actually it 'masks' local contradictions. The images in their work locate these artists, from the outside, geographically and culturally within the African continent. Yet, by the artists' own admission, these images are elusive and unfamiliar in meaning. The images visually conceal their own experiential distance from, and lack of insider knowledge of, the practice of the traditions they represent, or the provenance the images originate from. It is arguable that their choice of such images symbolise a broader identification with 'African' tradition beyond a specifically South African locality, creating, at least from the perspective of the observer, and an African 'authenticity' for themselves within the broader African continent. Their work thus uses 'signalling devices' to access an outsider-derived nostalgic and sentimentalised view of 'traditional Africa' to compensate for their own loss of traditional roots in contemporary South Africa. According to Steiner (1994) the movement of art objects from Africa from one place to another re-sites them so that the artefact becomes a 'tabula rasa' for new discourses of value in different contexts. For these artists, the image of African curio acts becomes a 'tabula rasa' for artists to identify themselves within the seemingly 'traditional' African context they claim has culturally been denied them, or forgotten.

Although all of the above are incorporated within perceptions of what it is to be South African today, the artists here, in the way they speak about the images they include in their work, clearly equate innovation, technology and modernity with influences from the 'West' and being African with 'tradition.' Images of 'African-ness' are rooted in tradition, the imagery of the 'West' within technology and business, depictions of computer circuitry, Perspex corporate business logos, money, even the artistic materials and techniques the artists used, as in Selvin's reference to modernity in his work through 'abstraction'. Selvin, for example, described his work as modern and contemporary as opposed to a 'primitivist' African genre of work and stated that he was 'uplifting' traditional art. Xolile's artworks

represented images of a Westernised lifestyle within artworks that referenced traditional Africa. The aeroplane in his 'self portrait' was also a conscious referent to Xolile's own awareness of his international exposure and positioning. Donovan depicted visual images of 'African tradition' and 'indigenous people' while juxtaposing them with referents to colonisation, economic and cultural globalisation. Other images described as relating to 'contemporary life' such as the tinned food and aeroplane in Xolile's work, and logos such as McDonalds, the Dollar sign, and the use of neon lights and computer components in Selvin's and Donovan's artworks, were contextualised by and resonated with images of 'tradition', conflating aspects of history, territory and culture.

Although such images capture the familiarity of mass-produced African art, they are also incorporated within visual contemporary art contexts perceived to be innovative and original. It is notable that, even in their versions of tourist art, Xolile, Donovan and Selvin pointed out that they created *their* versions of 'traditional' African sculptures and masks, even, as Donovan and Selvin stated, adding to these images "from their imaginations" as part of constructing 'innovative artworks.' Consequently artists simultaneously referent an African authenticity while presenting themselves as what they saw as at the forefront of contemporary innovation within the art world and it is through the 'gaze' of this market that the artist is geographically and 'authentically' located. Localised referents to 'tradition' and 'culture' are, for these artists, thus played out within a framework of global consumption in relation to the 'gaze' of an international contemporary avant-garde art-market based on concepts of stylistic innovation and originality. Through their work, these artists thus 'signalled' their modernity, in which they felt tradition played an important role. Their understanding of the art market thus required a double strategy: creating African 'authenticity' for viewers/buyers by incorporating familiar commodified images of an exoticised traditional Africa as well as simultaneously presenting themselves as avant-garde artists through stylistic innovation and individuality.

Within these artists' artworks, the 'gaze' of the West, in which an object is displaced from its original locality and meaning, is thus 'reflected back' to their own gaze, incorporated and re-externalised as a means of self-identification with an African past. The images referencing their 'African-ness' are as foreign, exotic and distanced as their personal knowledge of the African traditional culture they claim to represent, and are most likely less familiar than the referents to modern technology and globalisation depicted in their artworks. Like Steiner's tourists, these artists therefore act as collectors of iconic tropes and styles to position themselves in-the-world, and to make statements about their own identities. Distinctions between those who collect and those who produce break down. Through 'collecting' images, the artists here thus reveal their own desires and projections, and become cultural tourists of their own 'African-ness' to 'make real' and referentially "re-route" (Gilroy 1995) their desired cultural location within Africa as well as position themselves as artists within perceptions of global modernity in relation to beyond the local.

INSIDE-OUTSIDE IDENTITIES

In the next section of this chapter, the mirror reverses in on itself, and I examine how artworks act as sites for local exclusion while siting artists' identities simultaneously inside and outside 'the local' from different perspectives. Multiple and overlapping themes of locality, culture, modernity, globalisation, tradition and visibility are explored in the work of the two Xhosa artists, Pro Sobopha and Thembinkosi Goniwe. Both artists examined issues around ritual practices in Xhosa society, incorporating the controversial theme of Xhosa male initiation and the representation of traditional culture in a global arena.

Pro (Mgcineni) Sobopha

Figure 40. Image from 'Joyful Pains' series - Pro (Mgcineni) Sobopha

Pro (Mgcineni) Sobopha described himself as a Xhosa-speaking artist, originally from the Transkei area of the Eastern Cape. He lived in Cape Town and, when interviewed in 1999, was studying his final degree year in fine art at Michaelis School of Art. This discussion concerns his final BA Hons show, entitled the 'Joyful Pains' series.

Pro's work concerned shifts in Xhosa culture, focusing in particular on exposing what he described as contradictions, tensions and problems as a result of changes in the social perceptions and the practice of contemporary male Xhosa initiation rituals. He claimed that circumcision practices in contemporary Xhosa society remained important as a sign of attaining the status of manhood, and yet the practice itself had altered drastically, incorporating Western cultural practices and as an adaptation to contemporary lifestyles. He also expressed a concern that, as a result of these changes, circumcision would die out as Xhosa men gained status in society through other means.

Pro claimed there was a lack of discourse within the Xhosa community because of the tradition of secrecy concerning initiation rituals. However, Xhosa practices, attitudes and values concerning initiation ceremony had changed so much that he felt there was a need to speak openly in public and examine the relevance of these practices to contemporary Xhosa life. Through his work, he claimed to challenge the lack of critical engagement of the Xhosa rural and urban community with these shifts and to raise



questions concerning how to "reconcile the old way with the new" and "what it meant to be a Xhosa male" in contemporary South Africa.

His work consisted of two large composite panels that he claimed, were "in dialogue with each other." Each panel consisted of six separate figurative paintings. These paintings depicted traditional rural initiation practices and juxtaposed these with images displaying contemporary shifts.

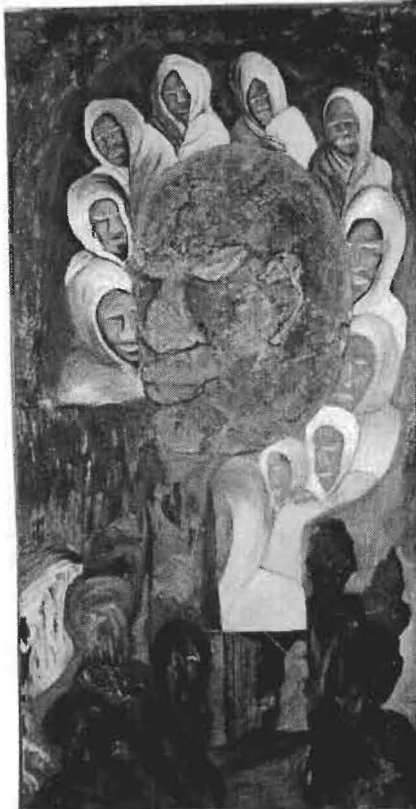


Figure 41. Initiates returning home in form of question mark

One painting showed what he described as "the joyful time of freedom as a young boy before initiation" in the rural areas. Another painting showed initiates in the rural areas leaving home for the veldt to be circumcised, led by "a respected man in the community in charge of the ceremony". Another painting showed an initiate sitting in a kraal, wearing the initiate's traditional white blanket and, yet another, the confused initiate "sitting with his mind racing - uncertain of what is going to happen next." A further painting portrayed the boys being instructed as to how to behave in society as men, and another depicted the initiates returning at the end of initiation. The group of recent initiates were depicted in the form of a question mark (see Fig. 41), which Pro explained, questioned the future of the ceremony.

Other paintings displayed shifts in these traditional practices. One painting contained a door, which opened onto a further painting to reveal a hospital circumcision, indicating how hospital circumcision was "closed and not spoken about" in the Xhosa community (see Fig. 40). Pro pointed out modern lifestyles had impacted on traditional initiation rituals and changed their content and procedure, sometimes leading to serious problems and changes. The time period for the entire initiation process, Pro claimed, was now often shortened for convenience. For example, although traditional initiation in the 'bush' had taken months, in urban areas it now took only "a matter of weeks in school holidays". Procedures were hurried, and the hurrying of the ritual could lead to complications. Pro stated that there were urgent and serious concerns around unfair practices, and lack of hygiene, such as the non-sterilisation of equipment during contemporary circumcision rituals, causing infections. As a result, several deaths had occurred among initiates. Many initiates, some for this reason, went to hospital to be circumcised, thus involving western medical doctors in what had previously been a 'closed' process. Hospital circumcision, however, was not considered completely valid in modern initiation practices, and, although used, was consequently hidden by those who had used this option, for fear of not being seen as a 'proper' man.

Another painting depicted women sitting indoors in their shack, separated from the initiates only by a goatskin which acted as a symbolic "shield". Traditional physical boundaries, where male initiates had been prevented from meeting women during the initiation process, were now often not adhered to.

For example, in rural areas he claimed the initiation area was often now close enough for initiates to go home for visits, or for mothers to just "pop in". In urban areas, he stated, due to lack of space, as depicted in his painting, initiation sometimes took place in the initiate's home.



Figure 42. Images from 'Joyful Pains' Panel, 1999, Pro Sobopha

A further painting represented the initiates wearing new shirts and trousers in the now common practice of going to church "to be told how to behave" on the first Sunday after initiation. At church, he said, in contrast to the secrecy surrounding circumcision ritual, "everyone hears what is going on". The tradition of secrecy about male circumcision in Xhosa society was maintained on the surface, with a consequent lack of discourse on the subject, Pro stated, yet the practice was already exposed through the involvement of the Church, tourism, and public discussion in the media and academia. Another section of his work thus depicted the new initiates no longer in the initiation area, but hiking around the area and posing for photographs for tourists. Yet another painting depicted an image of a white Jewish man undergoing the Xhosa circumcision ceremony (see Fig. 42), copied, Pro claimed, from a photograph in a coffee table book. Pro stated that this painting drew attention to the fact that, despite attempts at secrecy being made 'within the community', "Westerners" were aware of the practice and were even taking part themselves. Pro suggested that, if the Xhosa circumcision ritual itself had changed, and was becoming more and more visible outside of local culture, as well as within Xhosa society – that is, to Xhosa women and non-initiates – the insistence on the practice of secrecy too should change. Furthermore, Pro claimed, because of a lack of contextual understanding, the majority of art critics were limited in their appreciation of his work. Consequently, he claimed, it was essential that art critics be exposed to, and examine, the issues he was concerned with, and that this was a function his work performed.

Through openly portraying his knowledge of male initiation however, Pro's work contained contradictory implications for his own sense of self. Pro stated that he had been criticised by members of the Xhosa community for publicly revealing and allowing people outside the community to access knowledge of a 'secret' ceremonial process. Consequently, although Pro described himself as a Xhosa male, and part of the Xhosa community, who had undergone initiation as a young man in the Transkei, he acknowledged that, through the traditionally taboo act of revealing Xhosa initiation practices through their visual representation in his artworks, he had to some extent become an "outsider" to Xhosa society. Indeed, as a result of creating his artwork, Pro had started to question his own beliefs and role as a Xhosa

man. Thus, through creating his artwork, Pro's own identity as a Xhosa man was in the process of changing, and the work itself shifted public perceptions of Xhosa culture as unchanging.

Thembi (Thembinkosi) Goniwe



Figure 43. Thembi seated in his exhibition space at Michaelis School of Art

Thembi (Thembinkosi) Goniwe (see Fig. 43) is a Xhosa artist originally from the urban Cape Town township of Nyanga and at the time of interview was completing a degree (printmaking) at Michaelis School of Art, the University of Cape Town and living in the City Bowl area of Woodstock.⁷¹

Like Pro, he depicted traditional Xhosa ritual practices.⁷² He claimed to challenge the visual representation of black body alteration practices in contemporary South African society, in particular, in relation to the urban Nyanga Xhosa community he had grown up with. The focus of this discussion is on Thembi's final degree exhibition work in September 1999.

His exhibition work consisted of an installation artwork filling an entire room. The work deliberately combined different styles and genres – painting, prints, drawing, film, computer-generated images and photographic stills – arranged as separately titled but interrelated components.⁷³ The purpose of the different stylistic components, he claimed, was to depict them as equal in importance and thus to challenge artistic values in South Africa, critiquing what he saw as the recent focus in the art world on expensive media technology and installations. One wall of the exhibition space, for example, displayed a row of oil-pastel artworks showing members of the Nyanga community 'talking' to emulate the appearance of what he called "the political mural work of the 1980s" (see Fig. 45)

⁷¹ He is now studying for a postgraduate degree in art in the US.

⁷² A detailed description of the ritual practices represented in his work, as well as details of the artwork and its making, are included in Thembinkosi Goniwe's unpublished masters thesis, University of Cape Town

⁷³ Components of the original installation were also exhibited at the Association of Visual Arts Gallery in Cape Town, November 1999

them. So there is a lot of confusion around those rituals.” By depicting them in his work, Thembi claimed his artworks “will travel places’ and thus contribute to global dialogues and debates. Another set of works represented “the dirty washing” of what he felt were, like Pro, unspoken issues concerning Xhosa ritual practices, which he felt “should be taken out and aired. This art piece consisted of a row of separate prints, each depicting a piece of clothing, and laid out as if hanging on a washing line. On the front of each item of clothing, Thembi portrayed different body alteration practices, such as scarification (*ukuchaza*), removal of a finger shortly after birth (*ingqithi*) and the practice of male circumcision (*ulwaluko*).



Figure 46. Images of Video stills of ‘Communication’ showing mock circumcision

Yet another, and more controversial, aspect of the exhibition was the inclusion of a video (titled ‘Communication’) (see Fig. 46) in a separately partitioned part of the room. Depicting a video of a re-enactment of a circumcision ceremony in graphic detail, Thembi, like Pro, also contravened Xhosa initiation rules by exposing aspects of Xhosa initiation practice deemed ‘secret’ to outsiders in what were, ultimately, commoditised artworks. He claimed he had come under much criticism from other Xhosa individuals for not behaving as ‘true’ Xhosa in this respect.

Thembi refuted accusations of not being ‘true’ Xhosa. He claimed he did not intend to shock the Xhosa community but to initiate dialogue in a public space around contradictions between locating particular Xhosa practices in the past, and perceptions of modernity and westernisation in the New South Africa. Issues around Xhosa practices, he claimed, were both locally and internationally relevant, and thus need to be visible to both the local Xhosa community, and globally. Furthermore, he claimed that urbanisation, westernisation and globalisation had already impacted on, and become part of local urban and rural Xhosa practices, and to deny changes had taken place would be hypocritical. Indeed, he noted that photographs of circumcision ritual had frequently been taken by white photographers and



Figure 44. 'Face Value,' 1999, Thembinkosi Goniwe

On another wall, there were large, computer poster-sized prints ('Face Value' 1999) (see Fig. 44) displayed of mainstream black magazine covers, such as from Drum and Thandi. Thembi had digitally altered the

model's faces to display ritual scarification marks. These images, he claimed, challenged Western perceptions of beauty. He argued that traditionally scarified or altered black body was denied visibility in an urban environment, particularly in the contemporary media:

It's worse now, with the body - perfect shape, beauty. Also, people like to watch this beauty contest, Miss World. I never saw, even from Africa, women with scarification. Whereas scarification *is* about beauty. Now, these things are disappearing.

Western cosmetics conceal the mark, whereas in terms of Africa, Australia, the third world, physically, they pronounce those marks. Now, you look at the city, these magazines, this beauty stuff, these beautiful people, superstars - people with scars, you don't find them.

In Thembi's view, body aesthetics in contemporary South Africa were derived from white European perceptions of body perfection superimposed on the black body. However, Xhosa body alteration practices, on the other hand, were perceived as culturally static and unchanging, exoticised, and In contrast, he questioned why male circumcision was globally accepted as contemporary 'traditional' Jewish practice, whereas African scarification and male circumcision was perceived as "located in the past", and 'backward'. He argued that Xhosa persons, however, were part of contemporary global

experience, and therefore were as much a manifestation of modernity as Western culture.

Figure 45. 'Mural-style' drawings, showing people communicating in different ways



However, he also claimed that ritual practices were themselves altering, or were losing their associated meanings: "there are all these influences coming in already. ... influences of the West on how we do things... Rituals have shifted now, but people still hold

published⁷⁴. For the Xhosa community, he thus hoped to initiate conversation and discourse through his work, concerning the local and global relevance of ritual tradition within contemporary South African life, and drawing the community into verbal engagement and acknowledgement of shifts in traditional practices. Hence, he claimed, he could make Xhosa individuals 'look back' at themselves, and engage with and question the role of traditional practices in relation to their Xhosa identities, as well as black body aesthetics in South Africa.

His resistance to what he termed as the 'primitivisation' of his Xhosa identity was not only expressed through his representation of changes in these practices but through his use of sophisticated technology in his installation piece. Through using film, photography and computer imagery in his artwork, Thembi consciously satisfied what he perceived as the international demand for avant-garde work, contextualising and positioning himself at the forefront of social change, as opposed to depicting himself as sited within perceptions of static culture bound by unchanging traditions. This desire to locate himself within modernity did not deny his Xhosa tradition, he claimed, but emphasised Xhosa ritual and society as *part* of contemporary South African culture, rather than in a 'primitive' unchanging past. Traditional practices, he believed, if they were to survive, had to accept change.

Thembi particularly expressed a wish to take the work "back" to his "own" Nyanga Xhosa community to initiation discussion through their direct confrontation with images typically verbally and visually 'invisible' in Xhosa culture. However, it is notable, and he was conscious of the fact that the installation *form* of his work excluded much of the Xhosa community in the Cape Flats, excluded the majority of the Xhosa community from responding to his work, both because of its limited exposure to the public, through fine art galleries, and because installation work itself required a specialist knowledge of what he described as "Western fine art."

Through his artwork, Thembi thus attempted to shift the concept of Xhosa society as a bounded and closed space, located in the 'past', to a globally visible contemporary Xhosa identity. This shift is indicated as much by his own making visible of his Xhosa identity in the international contemporary art arena, as his breaking of the secrecy taboo around these rituals.

Juxtapositions: Power and Transcultural Encounters from the Outside to the Inside

Thembi and Pro were both concerned with examining the impact of the global on the local, and on siting local practices in the broader global arena. They perceived their audience as both international *and* local, aiming at both problematising traditional practices within the local Xhosa community, and emerging as contemporary South African visual artists on the international arts scene through a sophisticated interplay of imagery and technology. Through the representation of Xhosa practices within artworks, they drew Xhosa-ness itself into 'other' spaces of interpretation and contexts.

However, through their work, both artists contravened the secrecy expected from members of the Xhosa (male) community and exposed a cultural space perceived as closed and secret to outsiders,

⁷⁴ One such example is the South African photographer Hilton-Barber.

including individuals within Xhosa society, namely, women and the uninitiated. Thus their work contravened what traditional Xhosa practice demands – *not* to be exposed. Consequently, they positioned themselves outside Xhosa society through such actions, and for those of the Xhosa society who had accused them, effectively became non-Xhosa. As a result, the artists either ultimately redefined what it is to be Xhosa, or found themselves outside the definition of what ‘Xhosa’ males are. They thus created a problematic situation for their own identities.

Paradoxically, Thembi and Pro presented their selves as both ‘inside’ the Xhosa community, to the non-Xhosa outsider, and yet, in the opinion of other Xhosa individuals, ‘outside’ the Xhosa community. As Gilroy (1993) suggests in ‘Black Atlantic’, Pro and Thembi were ‘looking both ways at once.’ As artists, they acted as interlocutors, translators between different perceptions of overlapping worlds – between their experience of being Xhosa and being what they themselves termed ‘westernised’ South Africans, affected by globalisation, tourism and western views and consequent changes in their own perceptions of initiation rituals and roles in Xhosa society. Their work thus portrays, and to some extent, constructs, the complexity of their identities in relation to both global and Xhosa cultural localities.

The dichotomy in the two artists’ Xhosa and ‘international’ or ‘global’ identities, also reiterates the problem of the two being perceived as distinctly separate in the first place; that these cultures might be seen as oppositional, not incorporative or assimilative. Globalisation, often, is tied up with perceptions of a dominant western influence, and tradition in itself become a resistance not to change per se, but to Western cultural hegemony, with its perceived notions of modernity and progression, as opposed to stasis and cultural repetition – a circularity as opposed to Western linearity, even reproducible in perceptions of African ‘art’. As has been clearly pointed out, traditions do change, and to some extent may be conceptual constructions that mobilise identities (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Giddens 1999). The non-stasis of the West is, interestingly, often in opposition to constructs of ‘alternative’ cultures being timeless and unchanging and, in a globalised world of dominant western economies, ‘tradition’ certainly becomes a means of self-identification for cultures that may be resisting economic or political domination. The predominant point here is that there is a difference between *denying* existing changes and shifts in traditional practices in a society, while practising them; and defying unspoken rules through openly and consciously *exposing* changes in traditional practices, and arguing that these changes should be conceptually incorporated into the (sometimes fragile or threatened) concepts for identities within that society. In openly proposing that a society’s cultural traditions accept change, there is consequently, and often a legitimate, fear of ‘loss’ of that culture and its assimilation into the dominant force(s) that it is opposed or subject to. Artworks that visibly present changes within Xhosa traditional culture from the insider’s perspective, thus site artists like Thembi and Pro within this seeming mutual exclusivity – on the transcultural boundary of the practiced and conceptual self.

Thembi and Pro’s artworks therefore operated on many levels: questioning circumcision practice within the Xhosa community; exploring boundaries between Xhosa and ‘other’ cultures, problematising issues of secrecy and exposure within cultural practice and, ultimately, interrogating and contriving to

negotiate the constituents of their own self-identities as Xhosa South Africans. Through exposing traditional practices through their artworks, they both 'identified' themselves from the 'outside' and changed self-perceptions of their own Xhosa identities to a considerable extent on the 'inside.' as well as consciously constructing multiple locales for self-contextualisation within the framework of the artwork.

*

The work presented here may seem to indicate, indeed, the 'loss' of localised cultures and their domination by the West. Featherstone suggests that post-modernity creates an acknowledgement of a complexity of diverse cultures and the co-existence of multiple identities, in which:

... one paradoxical consequence of the process of globalisation, the awareness of the finitude and boundedness of the planet and humanity, is not to produce homogeneity but to familiarize us with greater diversity, the extensive range of local cultures (1995: 86)

Because, in his view, this enables the "rest speaking back to the West", he argues that, through globalisation, culture is re-centred, not de-centred. He thus suggests a need to develop a new set of cultural concepts. He argues that if there is a global culture, it would be better to conceive of it not as a common culture, but rather as a field in which differences, power struggles and cultural prestige contests are played out. Featherstone claims that, for example, "Americanisation," such as the spread of McDonalds, has occurred, but there has also been a "growing sense of multipolarity and the emergence of competing centres" and that "globalisation makes us aware of the sheer volume, diversity and many-sidedness of culture" (1995: 8-9). Consequently, the West might seemingly dominate the local, but the local may also incorporate and define the global on its own terms.

However, Gledhill explores the 'disguises' colonial power takes, and states that, "... the production of a counter-identity on the part of subaltern groups in the face of oppression may express antagonism but not in itself undermine power structures." (1994: 92). And adds:

A focus on social movements encourages us to look at the politics of culture as a process by which groups in 'society' construct or reconstruct identities for themselves in their struggles and negotiations with both dominant groups and the state. Such processes are never entirely free-floating and rarely involve a radical rejection of the semiology of domination.... Even if practices of domination can never eliminate the spaces within which such counter-hegemonic discourses and practices emerge, they still influence both the forms taken by counter-hegemonic movements and their capacity to articulate together to mount a challenge to the existing hegemony. (194)

...it is easy to delude oneself into thinking that power can be undermined simply by revealing it and talking about it. It is intractably embedded in social practices and situations that cannot be deconstructed in reality simply by possession of insight and the ability to objectify. (224)

The artworks presented here, despite presenting and incorporating 'local cultures' in relation to global 'culture', are further subject to power relationships in relation to the art world, particularly through the artist's own awareness of, and subjectification to, the artists' assumed ethnicity having direct bearing on their products in ways not true for westerners. As long as there are economic and cultural power differences between the local and global and the artists in question depend on institutional and economic support and recognition for their work, it is arguable that it is difficult for artists to break out of 'cultural' locales. As a consequence their work is often acquiescent and incorporates symbolic devices that play

into these power relations, especially in relation to their perceived ethnic identities - a self-conscious identification manifest in the imagery they draw upon. In the case of the artists discussed here, financial control, in the buying of artworks, remains international, and in South Africa a predominantly 'white' market and international tastes dominate. Artists thus may claim an acknowledgement of localised identities and cultures in the global art world, but in doing so may well play into globalised perceptions of local and 'traditional' cultures for their self-representation.

MULTIPLE SELVES, AND FRAMING MULTIPLICITY IN ARTWORKS

"Can you do addition?" the White Queen asked. "What's one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?"
"I don't know," said Alice. "I lost count"
- Lewis Carroll: *Through the Looking-Glass: And What Alice Found There*

The artists presented in this chapter utilised images of culture to reveal and conceal multiple locales for self-identity, and to conflate cultural, social and territorial identities. They therefore create and merge their own forms of 'interstitial nodes' which break down triads of categorisation between art, artefacts and commodities within one domain, i.e. the artwork, within which images and styles inform one another. The 'trans-cultural encounters' and multiple identity referents presented are also indicative of their personal experiences as artists and individuals in the new South Africa, encompassing power relations, multiplicity and multi-locality within the 'frame' of the artwork. Different styles and images used by visual artists provide a means of actively reworking 'transcultural baggage' through visually reworking and re-interpreting 'icons' of culture within different frameworks which explore and re-work trans-cultural contexts of interpretation for images in their work. Such an approach in artists' works breaks down divisions in the interpretation and categorisation of some of the images in their work, drawing attention to questions that emerge concerning their interpretation.

An artwork can visually re-contextualise spatial, geographical and cultural referents and present them to different 'gazes'. In this chapter, I have examined how artists use images as a means of transcultural encounter, simultaneously both in relation to siting self-identities locally, and siting the self in relation to *beyond* 'the local'. Artists are able to use 'icons' of self-representation towards their own ends, in asserting local identities in South Africa in relation to a global context. Symbolic devices, such as a representation of an African mask or sculpture, indicate the desire to represent one's 'African-ness' to outsiders, particularly after years of colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa, where an 'African' identity had been suppressed in favour of European history and culture in the past. The artists' opinions and contextualisation of images and materials associated with technology, capitalism and cultural change constitute a critique of global issues and unequal power relations between Africa and the West. Artists conflated images of tradition and modernity, arguing that traditional practices are contemporary and subject to change, as well as incorporating varied and diverse styles and images within artworks that drew both upon stylised images of traditional Africa as well as what artists felt were 'modern' art techniques and media that placed their work within the contemporary global art arena. Such representations were

created in awareness not only of local but of global audiences. Consequently, in relation to the iconic tropes and signalling devices these artists draw upon, they often represent themselves as simultaneously both 'outside' and 'inside' the local.

Making local referents of history and culture visible through artworks aimed at an international audience, sites the artists as local, yet also re-sites the artists' perspective of self *beyond* the local. In Donovan's work, global issues became local, and local issues global. Xolile referenced images of tradition in juxtaposition with tin cans and aeroplanes. Selvin referenced his African-ness through images of sculptures and masks, and what he termed "modern life" through references to computer technology while aiming his work at a contemporary art arena. Through juxtaposing Perspex signs and icons of commercialism and globalisation, as in American commercial logos, Donovan also questioned the extent to which old power relationships continue in contemporary South Africa. The various images and styles Selvin drew upon acted as multiple referents which 'fix' identity referents in relation to both local South Africa, and externally, and thus locate his own identity. Thembi represented traditional Xhosa practices, making these visible in the international arena, while at the same time creating tensions through situating himself both inside and outside what was perceived as his 'Xhosa culture'. Pro also created images that placed him both within and outside Xhosa culture through visually representing aspects of Xhosa practices. Thembi and Pro likewise reframed 'traditional' practice within the contemporary practice of fine art with an international audience in mind. Within these positions, they attempted to subvert, problematise or re-appropriate power relationships. Xhosa ritual, a previously 'secret' cultural space was visually exposed. African-ness was accessed through visual images that incorporate geographically expansive referents outside South Africa. The context is removed, the image reframed, and identities reworked on new terms, re-contextualising historical viewpoints.

Space, territory and locales of identity were thus reworked within artworks, and in relation to one another through the re-contextualisation and juxtaposition of images and styles. Positioning oneself in the world is consequently a process of cognitively assimilating multiple spatial and historical referents to incorporate broader perspectives of self. These artists have coalesced different cultural and territorial locales of identity, linking history and locality in relation to both South Africa and beyond. Consequently, the local, global, temporal and spatial coalesced and intertwined and, for artists, territorial selves overlapped within visually contrived trans-cultural encounters.

Through utilising these devices, the artists in this chapter not only reworked power relationships but sourced 'identity fragments' from multiple sources, as mentioned in previous chapters, to attempt to construct a cohesive 'whole' self. Within the artwork, seemingly juxtaposed fragments created visual dialogues, connections and interrelationships with each other which work as a cohesive whole that accepts fragmentation, fluidity, and opposition to incorporate juxtaposed realities and contexts of interpretation.

On a cognitive level, this inclusiveness may enable artists to assimilate and coalesce seemingly oppositional contexts for referents of identity within perceptions of their own self-identities. Although the artists in this chapter present often seemingly paradoxical referents of self, a wide variety of disciplines

now accept the idea of plural, even competing, sites of the self (Holland et al. 1998: 29). Cognitive neuroscientific research indicates that the brain is constructed as a massive parallel network without a 'centre' which, rather than computing concepts, 'arrives at' or 'settles into' conscious concepts (Kafatos and Nadeau 1990) It has also been suggested that the mind creatively negotiates with the world, through self-reflective areas in the brain. The mind is thus argued to be 'complementary', in that, although conscious concepts such as thought and feeling appear to exclude each other, they are both part of the underlying and co-existing reality of consciousness (Kafatos and Nadeau 1990; Dennett 1991). Plural identities are therefore feasible, rather than being mutually exclusive.

The above suggests a more integrated understanding of multiplicity within identities – not fragmented, but incorporative and assimilative – in which an identity may be 'arrived at' and where many 'selves' may co-exist in conjunction with one another. Artworks which simultaneously place an individual both 'inside' and 'outside' a particular culture, indicate how seemingly paradoxical identity referents may co-exist within the self. Furthermore, within artworks, emotional, narrativised, spatial and embodied referents to identity interrelate in a manner which correlates with complementarity within the mind.

In the examples presented here, images within artworks site the self both in relation to the local and in relation to the world beyond the local, playing on insider-outsider perceptions and different gazes. Multiple visual and stylistic devices could seem, as visual fragments, to referent separate and discrete domains of self which appear contradictory or juxtaposed rather than complementary. However, encompassing multiple identity referents within a single artwork can also be seen to be a means of visually and materially interweaving these multiple influences and referents, in which the artwork frames them, both materially and cognitively, as a whole. These changes can be understood to be positive rather than negative, suggesting cohesion rather than fragmentation and indicate how individuals are able to locate self-identities in relation to shifting and multiple territorial and geographical referents of 'culture' through visual referents.

The artwork may therefore act as a territorial space in which artists created desired locales of identification. Rather than reflecting fragmentation and schizophrenia, these artworks may also be seen as incorporative of multiplicity, a fluid process of reworking seemingly discrete cultural and territorial referents which interrelate between perceptions of cultural localities which are interwoven and play off against one another. Within the space of the artwork, a form of cohesion is thus created that incorporates disjuncture and conceptually extends beyond boundaries of bounded localities to incorporate concepts of African-ness and a globalised identity as well as specific perceptions of a self defined within perceptions of nation, culture and community. Consequently, their creation in itself creates extensions in artists' own perceptions of self both in relation to the local and beyond the local. As Anderson (1983) states "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." In this case, communities are distinguished by the 'style' in which they are *imaged*.

CHAPTER SIX:

COLLABORATIVE ART-MAKING AND COLLECTIVITY

Apartheid ... is synonymous with the meticulous making and marking of difference ... in terms of a rationalised bureaucratic master-plan of a total differentiation of spheres of life based on race and (what was the same for its architects) culture - *Thornton 1996: 142.*

Having endured and survived the conflict and violence of apartheid and its predecessor racial systems, and having engaged in successive forms of resistance, South Africa's 'diverse' people, still characterised by separate and discrete ethnicities, have been placed on a path of achieving 'reconciliation' as the basis for the new 'rainbow nation' - *Rassool 2000: 1.*

Reconciliation may be defined as a process of developing mutual accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups so as to establish a new relationship predicated on a common shared future. As such, it is a central dimension of the transition from a deeply divided past to a new society in which former adversaries live together - *Chapman 1999:16.*

INTRODUCTION

A collective identity requires mutually shared referents of belonging and similarity which, even if only in people's imagination, shape constructs such as nationhood, community and culture for its members (Anderson 1983). Referents of collectivity may also be constructed through simultaneously shared perceptions of difference *from* 'the Other' (Jenkins 1996). Bhabha (1990), writing of hybrid identities, argues that collective cultural groups construct divisive boundaries along 'edges,' in which, "The 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves' (4; emphasis in original). However, these same boundaries, he argues are also areas of creative construction, "the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated," where the "edges come to the centre" to construct new narratives and meanings (ibid: 4).

After the official end of apartheid in 1994, as part of social transformation, South Africa underwent a collective and public process of national 'reconciliation' through the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC), a public investigation of apartheid crimes and injustices. Inasmuch as the TRC process was aimed at cathartic closure from the apartheid past within a framework of 'forgiveness', it also aimed at establishing a sense of South African national collectivity for the *future*:

National unity and reconciliation is to be understood as a single concept. ... National unity and reconciliation calls for a commitment to share a future and for each, in his or her own way, to build towards that future (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 5, 1998: 439-443).

For persons in the New South Africa, where public discourses of cultural diversity and heritage continue to exist (Rassool 2000, Robins 2000), overcoming these boundaries of 'difference' between South African persons, as a process of nation-building, remains difficult. Apartheid South Africa was

constructed along boundaries of 'difference' based on static perceptions of racial and cultural divisions understood to be "at the centre of culture" (Thornton 1988: 28), in that

One of the most remarkable things about South Africa is the multiplicity of boundaries that define it, divide it, and thereby give it shape. Apartheid, the political system under which it lived for more than four decades, is synonymous with the meticulous making and marking of difference, especially that difference known as 'race'... (Thornton 1996: 142)

And,

To many South Africans it is self-evident, a matter of common sense, that the society consists of different racial and ethnic groups, each of which forms a separate community with its own culture and traditions. It is believed that such groups actually exist objectively in the real world, and that there is nothing anybody can do to change this. (Sharp 1997: 1)

It has even been argued that the State "imposed nations and sub-nationhood from above" (Zegeye and Liebenberg 2001: 316), to the extent that "people socialized within one entity were encouraged to fear the culture and manifestations of the culture of 'others'" (ibid: 319).

If culture, however, is a construction, and particularly, a construction in South Africa (Thornton 1988), then it is theoretically possible that *alternative* constructions of culture in South Africa may be created. Some theorists offer solutions. Nuttall and Michael (2000) suggest that, rather than a focus on hybridity constructed around concepts of pure identities in the centre, one should not think oppositionally in the New South Africa, "as if somewhere, despite the adoptions of a language of fluidity, hardline divisions, based on an 'authentic' difference, remain" (16), but that a fusion of cultural elements or 'creolisation' should be encouraged. Others have suggested a 'dynamic' and 'open ended' interpretation of culture in the process of nation-building, with a requirement for "communication and communicative praxis" between citizens (Zegeye and Liebenberg 2001: 319).

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This chapter examines three collaborative art projects occurring in Cape Town between artists of different racial, social and cultural backgrounds, in relation to how these , at micro-level, establish collective identities across perceptions of 'difference' in relation to macro-level processes of nation-building. The first example is the installation artwork created jointly by artists Mustafa Maluka and Gregg Smith, 'Childhood' at the Irma Stern Museum, (1998). Secondly, I examine the collaborative creative workspace of the 1998 and 1999 'Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops (South African National Gallery Annexe building). The final example is the shared thematic art exhibition, 'Dis Nag – The Cape's Hidden History of Slavery' on the history of slavery at the Western Cape (Cultural History Museum⁷⁵ 1998).

ARTISTS AND RACIALISED DIVIDES IN CAPE TOWN

Before examining each collective art project in turn, it is necessary to gain some understanding of perceptions of racial and cultural divides and differences already existing among visual artists at the time of fieldwork.

Despite a significant number of artists expressing the desire to re-determine *individual* identities beyond previous race categories, as has been shown in previous chapters, perceptions of *collective* divides and difference between artists, on the whole, remained racialised. Although artists in Cape Town, as artists, constitute a collective group in themselves, they are also subject to divisions, racial and cultural, both in the art world, and their own lives.

In interviews, informal discussions and meetings with both white and black artists at the beginning of fieldwork research, I frequently came across expressions of divides in the art world and resentments and divides based on memories of the apartheid past. Some of the personal views below were expressed by artists in somewhat extreme terms. These statements should by no means be over-generalised, and remain specific to that particular artist. However, the frequency with which I heard similar, if less vehement, expressions and beliefs begs consideration and, in my view, does often represent more generalized underlying and often unspoken prejudices, insecurities and suspicions that existed between artists. What is particularly notable in the examples that follow is the extent to which racialised constructs of difference predominated.

Historical, economic and categorical divisions in the art world were examined in Chapter Four of this study. In the following section, I will briefly outline how artistic divides interrelate with social divides for Cape Town artists, by examining how they spoke of, and with, each other; and how *habituated* (see Bourdieu 1977) practices and beliefs stemming from apartheid racist and hierarchical policies of segregation persisted, as a comparison for describing later shifts during collaborative art-making processes.

Habituated Divides and Social Spaces

Social interactions in the past for South Africans as a whole had been embedded in hierarchical and segregated racist practices and beliefs. For artists, these divides had been part of their lived social lives, and artists, as people, were no less affected by their impact. One coloured male in his thirties for example, described his interactions with whites while growing up as only ever “over a counter” and mostly “within antagonistic relationships, such as being ordered or told what to do.” A sense of inferiority, based on race, was implicit within these relationships. The end result, he claimed, was to “grow up with a very good well-rounded sense of rejection” (‘H’, 1998). Divisions worked both ways – inasmuch as black artists felt they had been subordinate to whites, the lived social worlds of black artists had been separate from the experience of whites. One white female artist, who claimed to have been “politically active” in the past stated, in her experience, “unless whites actively went out to meet black people during apartheid, they intersect with one’s life. In a naïve way, you were not conscious of what was going on” (‘E’, 1999). Another coloured male artist in his thirties claimed that, “It was seen that everything that’s good and organized is in the white areas ... we were never on an equal basis” ‘R’, (1999).

⁷⁵ Now renamed ‘Iziko Slave Lodge’, as part of ‘Iziko Museums of Cape Town’.

A sense of segregation and exclusion, articulated very explicitly by historically disadvantaged artists, continued to manifest through habituated relationships with spaces and places in the city, which remain permeated with racialised and embodied memories (see Lovell 1998, Bohlin 1998). In residential areas, racialised divisions on the whole persisted: "The lines are very clearly drawn... when the changeover came, it wasn't so easy to lose those boundaries" ('H' coloured male artist, 1999). A sense of exclusion from the past remained significant in artists' relationships with public and cultural spaces in the present, particularly within the City Bowl of Cape Town. One male coloured artist in his forties, for example, stated:

You never went to a gallery... You just can't forget. People still doesn't know they can walk into the gallery, the National Gallery. They're still scared, because the building reminds them of the past. ... You can walk through the parliament now. I still don't walk through the parliament, because of the whole thing. I mean, I know I can, but I still can't ('K', coloured male artist in his forties, 1999)

Another coloured male artist in his forties claimed that, during apartheid, he had gone to the City Hall in Cape Town to listen to a Symphony concert, but had been told he could not enter because he was not the 'right colour'. He said, "When I go there now, I go there still thinking about that time. ... Every space is a contaminated one" ('Y', 1998). Despite apartheid being formally ended before they reached full adulthood, the younger generation largely continued these habituated practices with spaces in Cape Town. It is evident that, although racial segregation was formally over, public and cultural spaces were not neutral for artists in the New South Africa.

Speaking of The 'Other'

The fact that the South African art market tended to define artists and their work in terms of racialised categories (See Chapter Four) also perpetuated divisions between artists. Many historically disadvantaged artists argued that a sense of division was exacerbated by some white artists maintaining a sense of superiority derived from past privileges. Some, particularly younger, white artists lacked awareness of the legacy of apartheid-constructed educational or economic disadvantages that historically disadvantaged artists still faced. They claimed, now that "apartheid is 'over' and everyone is equal", historically disadvantaged artists should be "responsible for themselves" and should not rely on other artists or institutions for patronage. These same white artists also often assumed that their own understanding of artistic quality and criteria was vastly superior, without acknowledging the possibility of alternative perceptions of value or the impact of economic or educational disadvantage. Another opinion I frequently heard expressed was that black artists continued to work in figurative township genres and sell to street markets and tourist shops because they were too lazy to work on "improving their work", or to "present their work properly." Several emerging white artists also argued that, as they were not responsible for the decisions of the previous generation and thus had not played an active role in supporting apartheid, they should be treated as 'equal' participants in the art market rather than black artists being given affirmative opportunities. Some claimed that affirmative action policies, by giving

preference to historically disadvantaged artists, limited their own local and international work opportunities. As a consequence, some emerging white artists even went so far as to informally complain that they were now the 'disadvantaged' in the New South Africa. For example, although expressed in somewhat extreme terms, one then emerging white photographer⁷⁶ declared:

Black artists get all the f***** opportunities because of this affirmative action. You get one artist who is excellent, and another guy, who is less skilled, gets offered the job just because he is black and the first artist is white. It's completely unfair ('M', white male, late thirties).

On the other hand, many historically disadvantaged artists argued that affirmative opportunities were essential in the art world to counteract what they saw as obvious racialised divides in opportunities, education and finance. Relative economic and social advantages still meant that a greater proportion of white artists, although not all, could more easily obtain a university arts education and hope to sustain a fine art career after studying, as well as paying for expensive art materials and equipment for their work and having access to networking and support from their communities and friends. It was often pointed out that the majority of students at Michaelis School of Art, a leading art school in Cape Town, were white, and the majority of gallery shows featured white artists. As one university-trained historically disadvantaged artist, 'L' in his mid-twenties, put it:

White artists primarily come from a background of privilege and professionalism and education and all that, and I feel like maybe with some of them it's just a case of sour grapes or them feeling that they have to have the first choice, or have the privilege. I feel that those initiatives of black artists going overseas, it's important for them, because it gives them a chance to expand their work, a chance they may not get in South Africa, because of the pressure of just barely surviving, of paying your bills and things like that.

Conversely, other historically disadvantaged artists were concerned that affirmative action policies within white-run organisations and galleries could be intellectually patronising, in that gallery owners valued their work not 'for itself', but only because they were "token" black artists.

Speaking to The 'Other'

One way of bringing artists together during apartheid had been through meetings and workshops. However, according to several artists, racialised and habituated hierarchies had been embedded even within liberal attempts in the past to create communication and interaction between artists of different socio-cultural groups. As one white artist who had identified with the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s and early 1990s explained, white leadership had been implicit within interracial interactions, as a result of apartheid socialisation:

Liberals were naïve. They believed what they did was right, that they were being helpful. They were never interested in what black people may think. They never asked ('E', white female)

One concern expressed frequently by historically disadvantaged artists during fieldwork was the opinion that such 'old' hierarchies of the past were still in place at racially mixed artistic gatherings, and

⁷⁶ In more recent years, this artist has gained significant recognition in South Africa.

that white artists were used to “speaking out” and “taking control.” The focus for such meetings, as did occur, was often divided in interest, on the whole, along racial lines. A number of less privileged historically disadvantaged artists, for example, expressed a need to prioritise financial concerns over more privileged artists’ interests in theoretical discourse. In the words of one Xhosa-speaking artist in his early 30s, who had attended arts collective meetings in the early 1990s:

I once attended the Visual Arts Group. It was great. But for me joining this Art Forum is a waste of time. I need money. I want to work. I don’t want to discuss art, politics, and all that.

Language differences also caused divides and hierarchical relationships between artists. Several Xhosa-speaking artists, for example, complained that they felt limited and intimidated by the fact that communication during meetings was primarily in English, or, secondarily, in Afrikaans, and that they consequently felt marginalised and excluded from speaking and writing about their work.

Almost all historically disadvantaged artists stated a desire to merely talk openly “on the same level” about the past with white artists as, despite the TRC process occurring on a national level, white artists on a personal level were not generally willing to openly acknowledge their role as part of a privileged group that had benefited from apartheid. It was hard to initiate or facilitate opportunities to talk about racial divides between artists, as all had been “forgiven and forgotten” on the surface in the New South Africa. Such discussions were also in danger of immediately polarising artists along black-white divides in terms of the past, with the consequent issues of guilt, privilege and blame for white artists, and issues of victim-hood, acknowledgement and reparation for historically disadvantaged artists. In any mixed gathering of artists in the present, unexpressed and silenced tensions would inevitably be present.

On the other hand, despite existing hierarchies, politically motivated gatherings in the past had at least enabled communication of a kind to occur through bringing artists of different backgrounds together. Ironically, the art world had become increasingly racially segregated in the New South Africa, due to the absence of a collective anti-apartheid emphasis and supportive artistic funding from abroad for artistic collaboration. As one artist claimed: “Once the elections were over and South Africa became a democracy, people went all-out for themselves. A lot of support fell away. The ‘struggle’ wasn’t there (‘H’, coloured male). Another younger artist in his twenties commented on what he described as a sense of isolation: “you have little islands of artists dotted around the city, everyone working and doing their own thing, and not knowing about other artists” (‘P’, coloured male).

Furthermore, not all artists had taken part in racially intermixed arts meetings during apartheid. In the 1980s some artists worked in organisations such as trade unions, which had deliberately stayed separate from white-organised cultural groups. As verified by former members, for example, artists Mervyn Davids, Peter Clarke and Lionel Davis, arts groups such as Vakalisa operated from the 1970s to 1980s as consciously black groups on the Cape Flats. Consequently, activities of groups such as Vakalisa remain largely undocumented and relatively unknown, whereas many white-organised groups are better documented. Some of these previous artists had deliberately remained “in the background” in the 1990s, “working in their backyards,” and refused to enter the contemporary gallery scene.

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Given the above and numerous difficulties for artists, creating a sense of collectivity between artists in Cape Town required more than simply subscribing to discourses of ‘reconciliation’. Mutual referent points of identification were required to overcome racialised and segregatory practices of how artists spoke *of* each other and also how they interacted *with* each other - to create a sense of ‘us’ rather than a sense of ‘them,’ across difference. Physical isolation between artists of different socio-cultural backgrounds also required addressing. Furthermore if there were to be a sense of non-racial equality and mutual ground between artists, many white artists needed to overcome habituated and hierarchised practices of patronage and assumed superiority; and to understand and appreciate the value of alternative social perspectives and artistic backgrounds. Overcoming previous hierarchies also meant providing historically disadvantaged artists with a ‘voice’ - a sense of inclusion, *not* exclusion, as a *visible* presence listened to and acknowledged by white artists.

“CHILDHOOD”: A COLLABORATIVE ARTWORK CREATED BY GREGG SMITH AND MUSTAFA MALUKA



Figure 47. Invitation flyer from the three artists, Gregg Smith, Mustafa Maluka, and graffiti artist ‘Ice’ - from left to right – for ‘Childhood’ exhibition

The Childhood exhibition was initiated by Gregg Smith, a white artist in his late twenties with a fine art degree from the University of Cape Town. The idea for the artwork stemmed from a desire to move beyond the isolation of growing up ‘white’ in South Africa:⁷⁷

My inspiration came from the boredom of sitting alone in the studio the whole time dealing with issues that had a lot to do with the past, the way I have grown up and the way the whole country has been spoiled at the time I was growing up, and I couldn’t find a way to get outside that and see another perspective on it. It just seemed that living in a culture that had such a habit of separation and fear, and such a situation of isolation, my studio was not the way to go about it. ...This idea came up to try to use the medium of painting as a medium for a conversation between different people and different visual styles.

Gregg developed the concept, as he put it, of “creating a visual dialogue” between himself and other artists. To this end, he prepared a series of canvas panels as a surface to be “worked on” by himself and other artists. He booked a gallery space through a personal contact at the Irma Stern museum⁷⁸ and set about contacting other artists for the project. As a deliberate contrast to what he felt was his own more traditional fine art figurative painting style and a personal interest in hip-hop graffiti art, Gregg originally contacted two graffiti artists. ‘Sky1’, the first artist, began by producing a graffiti image across some of the panels, but then went to work abroad on a graffiti project. The second graffiti artist Gregg contacted, ‘Ice’, initially agreed to take part, but due to full-time work and family commitments, could promise only to contribute work towards the end of the project. Gregg then contacted Mustafa Maluka⁷⁹, who was personally unknown to him at the time, via a mutual acquaintance. Mustafa was an aspiring artist in his early twenties of coloured background from the Cape Flats who had, as he put it, “dropped out,” after studying graphic design for a year (1996) at the Cape Technikon in order to “develop a career as a fine artist.”

Gregg and Mustafa worked together for about two months on the panels to create a ‘visual dialogue’, on the theme of exploring and comparing their respective childhoods. They responded artistically to each other’s artistic contributions - using a combination of collage, painting, montage and drawing and incorporating the graffiti ‘piece’ started by Sky 1 - on the same prepared panel surfaces.

The exhibition ‘Childhood’ opened as an installation artwork in July 1998 in the Irma Sterna Museum upstairs gallery with the panels covering the gallery walls. The graffiti artist ‘Ice’ also contributed a separate graffiti ‘piece’ painted outside the entrance to the gallery room.

Gregg and Mustafa were interviewed by myself from 1998 to 1999, both together and separately prior to, during and after the exhibition. A few days after the exhibition opening, the two artists held a public ‘walkabout,’ during in which they described their experience of the process. Direct citations in the following text are taken from formally recorded interviews.

⁷⁷ Part of Gregg’s idea resulted from attending a Healing of Memories workshop (see Kayser, PhD, work in progress, University of Cape Town) which focussed on the telling of individual life stories as a formal extension of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

⁷⁸ A University of Cape Town owned museum in Rosebank, Cape Town commemorating the life and work of the South African artist, Irma Stern.

⁷⁹ Mustafa was a former member of the Cape Flats Arts Group (see Methodology) and his individual art work is presented in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Outcome of the Exhibition



Figure 48. 'Childhood' exhibition, 1998: one wall showing painted panels

When referring to their childhood experiences and sense of identity while growing up, the artists continually commented on a personal sense of isolation from what they described as 'other cultures,' particularly in relation to the social segregation of space in Cape Town. Both artists consistently described the artwork as a "shared territory" which offered a valuable opportunity to explore their respective boundaries in relation to cultural differences and similarities. As Gregg put it, their intention "to take our different territories and different backgrounds and try to become less precious about them, and try to realise there were no real boundaries. To trash those boundaries within our own heads." The images and techniques the artists used acted as visual reference points to provide opportunities for discussion of their comparative perspectives of growing up in South Africa. This isolation was depicted and described through their use of materials, imagery and symbols that made up the artwork's surface. Their conversations focused on mutually exploring and emphasising their perspectives on differences, disharmony and contradiction in their lives.

Meeting Points

Figure 49. Mustafa, Gregg and graffiti artist 'Ice' standing in front of artwork panels at the Irma Stern Museum, 1998

The artwork's overall production was clearly contextualised within financial and social hierarchical inequalities stemming from their apartheid-constructed backgrounds. Gregg had initiated the idea and had personal contacts for acquiring the exhibition space. He had paid for the space and materials, as well as preparing and supplying the canvases to be worked on.



Despite the fact that Mustafa's sense of isolation and separation from 'Gregg's culture' had initially resulting in his first reaction to the project being "suspicion" - "I thought, who is this white artist, and what does he want from me?" he agreed to participate primarily because he saw the Irma Stern Museum as a prestigious exhibition space: "The museum Irma Stern is such a precious place. Such a sacred space, a space that reminds Gregg of the area that he grew up in, like his parents' home in Kenilworth." His use of the word 'sacred' notably suggests his sense of habituated exclusion from and

hierarchisation of “white” spaces from his own experience, and that this is also reflected in his comparison of the Museum with Gregg’s home area. But he acknowledged that the project was, “an opportunity for me to stamp my authority. I’m here and I’m reclaiming.” Both artists had also worked in Gregg’s town studio space, rather than in Mustafa’s workspace - his room in his parents’ home in Bishop Lavis on the Cape Flats.

However, the artists claimed that they were able to find a meeting point outside of social hierarchies and where artistic and discursive exchange was relatively equal within the ‘internal’ space of creating, discussing and interpreting the artwork. The artists also acknowledged that, through their conversations, they were able to recognise some shared similarities in their experiences of growing up in apartheid South Africa. For example, the artists found some similarities in childhood referents through the images they drew upon in constructing the artwork. As Mustafa commented, “Some of the things I brought in, Nik Naks, Wilsons⁸⁰, things we have in common, there is that we could relate to, middle ground.” Other images from childhood, he claimed, were less familiar to him, such as Gregg’s inclusion of Tin-Tin comic pages, which Mustafa described as “foreign” to ‘his’ culture. In particular, they commented on the deleterious effects of apartheid on their own families and sense of South African community. As Gregg stated:

... at the same time I started to realise the similarities between our backgrounds, even though I’m from a very privileged kind of white background, and they not.... I started to realise through that project and through a lot of other things, that even though I’m supposed to have had a really easy ride, I know I’ve been pretty screwed up by the whole system, and I started to see that in a way we are all at the same level in a lot of ways.

Throughout their discussion of the artwork, both artists continually referred to Gregg’s life as “safe” and “secure” and Mustafa’s as “exposed” and “unprotected”. Mustafa further commented on their mutual sense of isolation, “The Cape Flats is a prison still, and Tamboerskloof⁸¹ is equally a prison of its kind. A lot of isolation still. Prisons like Pollsmoor with kids with no future.”

In contrast, Mustafa had scrawled numerous street graffiti slogans and images onto the panels. He emphasised the contrast between them in relation to what he saw as Gregg’s insular and protected home life, partly reflected in his “protected images of family.” Gregg had montaged sections of his own oil-paintings of portraits of members of his family copied from photographs onto the installation. Although some of his paintings had been cut up in order to fit onto the artwork’s surface, unlike the other components of the artwork, neither he nor Mustafa had altered or worked over their original surfaces. Gregg described this as, “I know for myself I am still very precious about a lot of things. The mere fact such as I didn’t scribble on my own paintings is indicative of that.”

In response to Gregg’s paintings, Mustafa incorporated postcards of what he described as European “Old Master” paintings onto the panel surfaces, and scrawled local colloquialisms and comments on them. He claimed that, through scrawling across these images, he subverted the idealised and assumed superiority and authority of images of European culture, prestige and lifestyle, particularly

⁸⁰ Crisp and sweet brand names, referring to the wrappers Mustafa had ‘collaged’ onto the surface of the artwork.

⁸¹ Formerly a ‘white’ area in the centre of Cape Town.

portrayed in European fine art, that people on the Cape Flats had been 'taught' to aspire to. For example, on a postcard depicting the French artist Edouard Manet's 'Le Dejeuner Sur L'herbe' (1863) (trans. 'The Picnic'), he had written 'Gatsby's R20'⁸² across the image. He stated that although images of these paintings were often displayed in Cape Flats homes, and depicted lifestyles people aspired to:

I was questioning those kinds of things that went on in that period, also the use of images during the period. There were artists painting these idyllic scenes, people in Europe dressed up beautiful clothing etc. Meanwhile, people in Africa being put onto slave ships, slaves sold off and so on. Even in Europe I haven't seen any pictures of how the other side of Europe looked, slums, poor people and so on. I see it portrayed in some movies, but art history back then was showing only rich culture, the elite, painting pictures which reflected that kind of grandeur and stuff. That is my reaction to those images, the idealised beauty and their presence in the Cape Flats.

Mustafa also described many of the images he contributed as being taken from gang imagery and wall graffiti from the Cape Flats and Pollsmoor prison, where he had worked part time as an art teacher with Pollsmoor teenage prisoners in '96-'97. To him, these symbols and images were indicative of oppression and deprivation in the Cape Flats. For example, he referred to a particular slogan he used on the artwork's surface (see Fig. 50), as follows:

This kind of saying 'when I do good none remember, when I do bad no one forget'. That is like the kind of stuff the kids in the prison write. It's tattooed with a needle on your arm, scraped into your flesh really, like a cry for help. Like saying, why should I do good if people don't take really note of me, if I've done good things, but when I do bad things then they take note. If you want to do positive things then they push you down again... that kind of mind state.

This depiction of street graffiti in the artwork represented, for him, his childhood exposure to what he called "street life and conflict."

The way I approached it, it was me saying things about my childhood, Gregg showing his childhood, like snapshots taken out of an album. That's what the paintings are of - his family, dog, house whatever, so that's his childhood. He didn't grow up with this kind of graffiti all over the show for instance.

Mustafa also felt to some extent that he had been racially stereotyped by the media as from an uneducated "gangster" background, interpreting his artistic origins as being from street graffiti, and not from art school. This is evident from the conversation excerpt below, in which the artists discuss the media interest in Mustafa's artistic background.

Mustafa: Some people really missed that point. They didn't listen to what I said, like where I came from artistically and things, they just took it, 'okay you're from the Cape Flats gangster areas, you survived the gang lands and stuff, but it's a conscious decision to become a gangster. People romanticised the whole Cape Flats things itself. I didn't like it so much... There was no mention of where I came from artistically or my artistic journey up to this point.

Gregg: The Western Art world hasn't been totally alien to him - he studied.

Mustafa: They just assume I have always been scribbling on walls, that's all I have done. Just like I'm a ghetto-man....

⁸² A popular 'sandwich' on the Cape Flats, made from a wide baguette filled with chips and other fillings such as polony (sausage), eggs, and other food items.

Despite resisting the homogenizing claims by the media, and stressing that the differences between them were far from resolved, the two artists did agree that the process of the production of 'Childhood' provided a meeting point between their respective pasts. For example, the collaborative creation and depiction of their separate perceptions of childhood realities provided the two artists with a visible 'presence' to each other, and their audience. The medium of their interaction, being visual, and their discussion concerning the images they incorporated within their work, provided a means of responding both verbally and non-verbally.

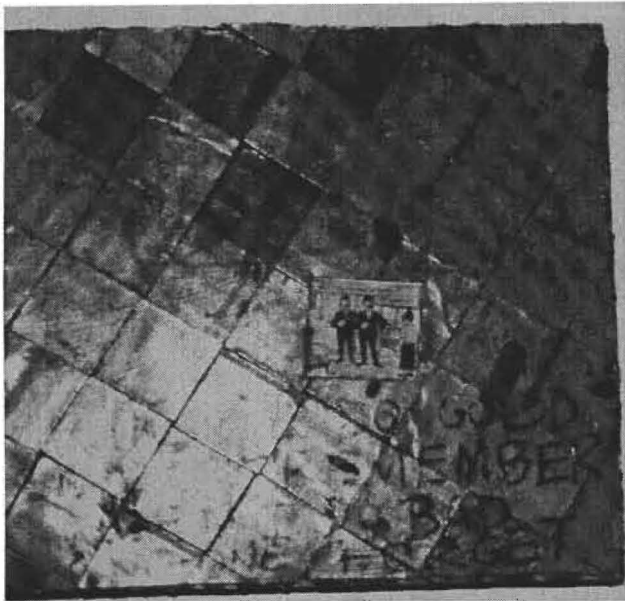


Figure 50. Detail from 'Childhood' panel - 'When I do good no-one remember, when I do bad, no-one forget'

One example of how their work provided a meeting point for discussion is the artists' mutual attempt to explore their respective and different understanding of the definition and role of "graffiti art" in Cape Town. This was seen by Mustafa as an effort to overcome underprivilege and anonymity on the Cape Flats and by Gregg as a subversive and rebellious opposition to affluence:

Gregg: The message of a white kid doing graffiti on a suburban wall, really pissing people off a lot of the time, is totally different from a guy who's come from Mitchell's Plain. Totally different motivations.

Mustafa: For kids from the suburbs, it's about vandalising, breaking down - I'm the man - being cool.

Gregg: A lot is from the boredom of being bourgeois.

Mustafa: Whereas from the Cape Flats, it's more about there's nothing going on. Everything is grey. It's ugly, just dull. The reason why a lot of people like graffiti artists on the Cape Flats don't spray a lot is because they don't have money to buy spray cans. White kids have lots of money. They can get it from people like mummy and daddy. Sky I was privileged in that way, as he was the only child. [He had] lots of money for cans and stuff. People like Ice and Falco⁸³ and a couple of other people I know had to go out and steal spray cans, just to be able to express themselves. That's a major difference.

The exhibition also received considerable media response from newspapers, radio and television. The SABC2 television programme 'Cape at Six', for example, described the artwork as "a new art form, a kind of East meets West, or Kenilworth meets the Cape Flats... It means people of different backgrounds can come together" (June 1998). However, both artists felt that the enthusiastic media response had over-optimistically appropriated their work into popular public discourses, emphasising the collaboration in an attempt to view their work as a 'homogeneous' culture, rather than an exploration of contrast, complexity and contradictions within their personal experiences. As was evident in the following excerpt from their conversation, Gregg and Mustafa emphasised that the artwork was not the end point of a process of cultural fusion and that they still felt far from a homogenous South African culture.

Gregg: The media really picked up on the show partly because I think graffiti is in vogue at the moment, also this 'New South Africa' stuff, so those things caught people's eyes. I do feel the emotional questioning thing was sidelined. Our society wants things to be a lot further than they are, to have this strong South African culture sensationalised.

Mustafa: 'Simunye, We Are One'⁸⁴ ... showing this is where we are at.

Gregg: Yeah, Mandela will save us and everything. But this is still a very jarring kind of situation. The idea of this show was more. We aren't there at all yet...

Mustafa: It was a bit too sensationalised.

Gregg emphasised contrast in the styles and themes in the artwork, revealing, he claimed, contradiction and disharmony between their respective backgrounds, rather than a synthesis. As Gregg noted, 'the idea wasn't to make a nice pretty fusion of our different styles - our styles are all individual and where we come from is individual.' This was evident in Gregg's description of the process of working:

We worked in a vandalistic spirit kind of style. It was important to get past that stage where you paint and paint and try to make a pretty environment, which makes people happy and forget about the pain. The idea was to try to avoid a pretty environment, to find a bedrock about where we really are now, instead of what our aspirations are and what we are taught to believe.

He described their approach as seeking to explore the truth and reality of their respective experiences, in which, "we didn't want to create a big universal statement but basically a small conversation... about personal things". He claimed:

[Our work is...] not so much about trying to fuse our styles into this 'New South Africa' aesthetic, which a lot of people seem to want - all cultures merging into something very powerful and unique.... This is more a breaking-down stage, a very early initial stage. More a breaking-down of one's old understanding than actually asserting, yeah, this is really what I am."

While retaining their respective narratives of the past, the artwork itself thus became a commonly shared referent in time and space, a point of *simultaneity*, exploration and discovery within art praxis for both artists. The work thus provided a means through which their respectively perceived boundaries of "difference" were mutually subject to discussion, negotiation, and acknowledgement, in itself a notable accomplishment, given the difficulties with such communication normally experienced and discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Following the exhibition, both artists continued to expand their socio-cultural boundaries. Gregg continued to work on cross-cultural projects, focusing on what he termed opportunities "to create conversations and communication with others"⁸⁵. Mustafa later acquired a scholarship to study at a prestigious art school in Holland, married abroad and chose to remain in Holland, while continuing to create artworks concerning aspects of his self-identity. The two artists have also remained friends and in contact with each other.

⁸³ Names of graffiti artists.

⁸⁴ Phrase from theme music for SABC1 South African television programme.

⁸⁵ This, at the time, included a mural project on the Cape Flats with the Xhosa artists Siphon Hlati and Thembinkosi Goniwe funded by the Amy Beale project, and further installations depicting conversations and encounters with South Africans of diverse backgrounds.

Whether or not the 'Childhood' exhibition was a direct cause of these outcomes in these artists' lives remains debatable. However, the exhibition certainly provided an important initial step for them to move beyond a sense of exclusion and division resulting from stereotypes of each other's identities. Both artists also emphasised that, within the artwork, they had respected what they described as "each other's creative spaces". To some extent therefore, through the artists' discursive interaction and their shared responses to each other's contributions, Gregg and Mustafa were able to move towards an understanding of each other as *individuals*. The artwork, as a collaboratively created physical reference point in-the-world, thus created a mutual sense of 'belonging' and referent point to move on from, in the future. Consequently, referring back to Bhabha (1990), they brought the 'edges' of their respective cultures to the centre, within an area of creative construction, in order to create new meanings.

THUPELO CAPE TOWN ANNUAL ARTISTS' WORKSHOP



Figure 51. Participant Artists, Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshop 1998, South African National Gallery

Background to the Thupelo Cape Town Artists Workshop, 1998 - 1999

The Thupelo workshops were originally started in the 1980s in Johannesburg by artists David Koloane and Bill Ainslie with the purpose of bringing artists of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds together to expose them to different ways of working⁸⁶. The Thupelo Cape Town Artists Workshops were then founded in 1990 by a committee of former participant artists who had attended the Johannesburg workshops.

Thupelo Artists' Workshops were one of the few opportunities in the late 1990s for Cape Town artists of diverse backgrounds to come together regularly on an annual basis in a shared workspace with

⁸⁶ These workshops were linked to the well-known international 'Triangle' network. More information may be obtained from Greatmore Art Studios, Greatmore Road, Woodstock, Cape Town.

the intention of creative exchange and social interaction. Although the Thupelo workshops were initially and controversially accused of being stylistically didactic and even a form of 'American Imperialism' due to their seeming emphasis on abstract art⁸⁷ (Koloane 1990), they are now, widely recognised to have offered, and continuing to offer, alternatives and options in working techniques, through which artists are determining their own responses. As well as the regional annual Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops for local artists, international Thupelo workshops also take place on an intermittent basis, with artists from different countries being invited to participate.

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For this study, I examine the 1998 and 1999 Thupelo Cape Town workshops, with formal interviews taken on the last day of the 1999 Thupelo Cape Town workshop. The workshops claimed to focus on fostering the expansion of artistic ideas based on a process of cross-learning through diffusion rather than a top-down approach; and rather than producing 'finished' artworks for exhibition, emphasise a supportive, non-critical, environment of interaction and exchange between artists. Such aims are evident from their catalogue mission statement, which reads:

Thupelo Cape Town [to teach by example]⁸⁸ exists to encourage personal artistic growth in the visual arts in a mutually supportive environment that encourages freedom to experiment through a sharing of ideas, experiences, techniques and disciplines. We aim to create a synergy that will enlarge the artistic community and foster inter-relationships through the Thupelo workshop concept (Thupelo Cape Town International Artists' Workshop Catalogue, 1996).

As in previous Thupelo workshops, the 1998 and 1999 workshops were organised by an annually elected committee, voted in by the previous committee. The committee consisted of black, white and coloured members, who determined the length, format, size, and duration of workshops, selected participants from those who applied, and organised publicity and funding⁸⁹. The workshops were advertised through posters and leaflets in galleries and libraries, and by word of mouth.

The 1998 and 1999 workshops each drew together approximately twenty artists of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (see Appendix C for names of participants in the workshops). The participants' educational backgrounds and range of artistic experience were diverse. Artists came from different parts of the Greater Cape Town Metropolitan Area, and including relatively affluent areas such as Hout Bay and central Cape Town, to Cape Flats areas such as Khayelitsha and Athlone, and included a few visiting international artists. The local artists ranged from art students (from Community Arts Project in Woodstock and Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town), professional well-known or 'successful' artists wishing to explore new working techniques, and 'emerging' artists in mid-career. These

⁸⁷ See Chapter Four for more details.

⁸⁸ Sesotho.

⁸⁹ Sources of funding for the workshops varied from year to year and came from supporting personal contributors, various charities and business financial support and donations of art materials from companies. The workshop was also connected to and part-supported by the international Triangle workshops. In 1998 and 1999 materials such as drawing utensils, paints and paper were donated by various companies as well as provided from monetary sources of funding for the workshop. Some basic foodstuffs to make sandwiches, coffee and tea were provided from funding, and others donated by participants. The National Gallery provided the workspace free of charge.

artists then worked from 9am to 5pm, producing art over a two-week period in the South African National Gallery Annexe Building upstairs studio space.

As I took part as a participant artist, I was able to experience the workshop 'from the inside', and take part in and observe verbal and artistic conversations and exchanges between artists during the workshop - an experience which proved immensely valuable for understanding the workshop process as a whole. This was particularly the case in 1998 and 1999, as the Thupelo Committee decided the workshop should be closed to non-artists during its progress. This was, the committee claimed, in order to remove any outside 'gaze' which could affect the outcome of the artists' work by focusing their attention on the final product, rather than "free-up creativity and encourage experimentation."

An informal⁹⁰ half-day exhibition was held on the last workshop day, in the National Gallery Annexe space, to which the 'outside' public was invited. As the creative component of the workshop was officially over, I formally interviewed artists and tape-recorded their comments on this last exhibition day of the 1999 workshop. Anonymity was guaranteed for these interviews, from which quotations are often drawn and hence no names are cited. However, I have provided salient details of artists where possible in order to illustrate the diversity of artists taking part.

Layout of the Workspace, and Workshop Process

On arriving on the first day of the workshop, each artist was given a large board to work on, which they placed against a section of the Annexe building studio wall on a first-come, first-served basis. The adjacent floor spaces next to their section of wall, and the board surfaces, constituted the artists' work spaces.

At the official opening of the workshop, the committee members stressed that the workshop's focus was on the exchange of artistic concepts, techniques and ideas between artists. The participants were also encouraged to work in any style or any materials they chose and to explore new and alternative ways of artistically working, with less emphasis on the eventual artistic products of the workshop. Half-way through the workshops, a formal 'walk-about' (see Fig. 54) also took place, in which all the artists moved from workspace to workspace, each taking turns to discuss their work with the other artists, with the intention of facilitating artistic exchange.

The artistic outcome of the workshops was diverse and covered a wide variety of materials and techniques. Some historically disadvantaged artists, particularly first-time participants, produced largely figurative scenes, that they felt they could sell in the future, as well as being influenced to experiment with other methods. Others created sculptural pieces, using paper, clay or cloth. One artist, who usually worked as a potter, decided to paint figurative portraits of all the attendees of the workshop as a 'new' way of working. The majority of artists commented on the continual intensity and energy of the Thupelo workshops, as well as the artistic exchange and interaction. One new committee member and white female third-time participant emphasised,

⁹⁰ Artworks were not framed or mounted, and were displayed within each artists' workspace.

For me it was a focus of energy - it's the only place I've seen in Cape Town for artists to meet, apart from anything else. I'm not attached to any of the schools or institutions - I don't have any of those kind of contacts, but here we are just drawing in a lot of different artists from different places. I find it really really exciting.

Incorporating Bodies: Creative/Social Exchange



Figure 52. Artists working at Thupelo workshop, each artist working on a board placed against the wall of the studio space

Thupelo workshop created numerous opportunities for, and thus played an important role in, artistic and social exchange. This success of this exchange was to a large extent facilitated by the layout of the shared studio space for the workshop. The layout facilitated not only exposure to, and the exchange of, different artistic techniques and approaches in a non-didactic manner, but determined the physical inter-flow of bodies within the workspace, as a means for informal verbal interactions beyond habituated apartheid practices. As Johnson writes:

The centrality of human embodiment directly influences what and how things can be meaningful for us, the ways in which these meanings can be developed and articulated, the ways we are able to comprehend and reason about our experience, and the actions we take. Our reality is shaped by the patterns of our bodily movement, the contours of our spatial and temporal orientation, and the forms of our interaction with objects. It is never merely a matter of abstract conceptualisations and propositional judgements (1987: xix):

As a result of the large number of participants and limited size of the Annexe studio space, the artists were crowded closely together. The workspaces were not partitioned, and faced the centre of the room where the work was visible to other artists (see Fig 52). Through this exposure, there was a sense of physical enclosure and immersion in each other's work. Donated art materials were placed in the centre of the room, to be drawn from as and when needed. Artists were also welcome to bring their own art

materials, which were sometimes shared, although most artists used the main supplies. Snacks and drinks were placed at one far end of the Annexe studio for artists to help themselves during informal work breaks, taken as and when participants wished to do so. In order to obtain art materials from the centre, workshop participants had to walk around and across each other's workspaces. These factors favoured informal spontaneous conversations between artists concerning the work they saw in different parts of the room, and their own work. Conversation topics that emerged between artists included discussions on the work in progress, art techniques, marketing artworks, finding studio space, approaching galleries, sources of funding and general networking concerns as well as moving on to more personal topics, including problems at home, families, life stories, comparisons of social and personal experiences, hobbies, personal interests, political and social events. One Xhosa artist, and many times workshop participant, 'H', in contrast to more formal meeting structures described at the beginning of this chapter, also emphasised how Thupelo enabled him to meet and discuss work-related issues with other artists:

I get bored with meetings. I don't like to talk. Sometimes I just talk with my hands. Better to have a meeting while I am working. Like Thupelo. Having a meeting, I just sit. I'm not used to it. I get tired, sleep. It's better to work, listen, chat, then do something with my hands.

Another factor for social exchanges was that informal meetings and conversations between artists also occurred during tea and lunch breaks, taken in artists' own time, when the artists clustered around the small table to obtain food. Sharing materials and food further removed overtly apparent economic differences between artists. Some artists also made use of a small landing at the entrance to the fire escape to sit outside, or went down to the car park, and spoke there. One of my formal interviews (with Timothy Mafenuka and Lundi Mduba) actually took place in the car park. The two artists concerned brought in their work, at their leisure, and discussed it outside. Setting up such a meeting with these two artists would normally have been difficult, and the regularity of working daily together for two weeks certainly facilitated not only the ease with which meetings could, and did, occur, but also the trust and ease that emerged between artists, in talking about their personal lives and work as a result of their shared and ongoing interactions in the workspace.

For the entirety of both workshops, a portable music player was also brought in by a participant and placed on one side of the studio, and artists brought in different music and took turns in playing their music. This exposure to the same music also, I believe, contributed to a sense of shared space between artists, acting as a levelling factor for discussions, not excluding discussions around the music being played. Music, through physically and bodily immersing the participants in sound while they worked, also contributed to a sense of cohesion and enclosure within the workspace, thus exposing artists to, and sometimes influencing them in, what they often perceived as different 'cultural' interests. The many different tastes in music in South Africa – for example, ranging from classical to 'New Age' to reggae to kwaito - often remain, like many other aspects of South African 'cultures', racially separated in interest. Several artists spontaneously commented about music they were not used to hearing, and it was evident that this contributed to a sense of cultural exposure for them. The white female artist, 'P', in her fifties, for example, commented that her family were surprised that she was now listening to reggae at home.

Incorporating Artists' Responses



Figure 53. Artists at work during Thupelo workshop (artist Timothy Mafenuka in foreground)

The overlap between creative and social exploration, as well as its *personal* relevance, is evident in almost every artist's description of Thupelo. One male coloured artist also spoke of his enthusiasm for the combination of social space, the interaction with diverse people, conversation and exchange of ideas: "This workshop was a very wonderful workshop... the atmosphere working with different artists, sharing ideas, talking to the artists...the list is endless." Another Xhosa-speaking male artist's description draws together his personal sense of exploration, understanding others' realities and artistic exploration: "Exploring materials, exploring different realities, not knowing where I am coming from and also not knowing where I am going." One female coloured artist, who had notably returned to the workshop after previously attending one international and two regional Thupelo workshops, emphasized how the shared emphasis on art making enabled artists to interact across boundaries towards a common ground of understanding:

Artists come together. They're all from different backgrounds and whatever, and totally different techniques and educational backgrounds and things like that. But, you find that on a face value level. Then you look at the works, then none of that really matters, the backgrounds, or whatever. ...the work must speak for itself and it's a time for practical hands-on experience. So, on that level, the prejudice of coming from different backgrounds in a very divided country doesn't really matter, because it's the hands-on experience that really matters, and you can see people influencing other people, so in that way, there's a break-down of prejudice ('S, female artist, coloured)

The interwoven-ness of art-making and social exchange during Thupelo is clearly evident in other comments. The comment of male Xhosa-speaking artist, 'I', who had participated previously in several

Thupelo workshops and who claimed to have spoken to “everybody” during the workshop, reveals how artistic and social ‘difference’ emerged as secondary to the shared focus on creative work and exchange:

I’m glad that workshops like this are happening. Working with more artists in the studio. Different artists. Like different visual images. Just that we come from, like different areas, then it happens that one is black or one is white.

Productive shifts were also expressed in terms of overcoming barriers of what were very real fears about interacting with what were perceived as ‘other’ cultures by artists of all backgrounds. One first-time white female participant in her fifties stated that an opportunity for social exchange across racial boundaries was a major factor in her decision to take part in Thupelo.

I felt it was a wonderful opportunity, because I have no opportunity of meeting black people apart from the gardener situation or something like that. So that was very, very important to me. I have a few black friends, but not in working circumstances like this, so this actually has been magnificent and valuable to me. Now I know what it really means, you know, the word Thupelo, ‘by example’. I just think that what I’ve acquired is just going to go into the next few years, I’m sure, with my work. Because I think I saw things all the time without realising and it’s just beginning to come through now. And I worked in a completely different way to my normal style. The whole ten days. I made up my mind I was going to. I’d never worked in acrylics before, I work in oils. And so it was just a whole new passage for me. And I feel this is just the beginning of what I’ve got out of it... (‘P’, female white artist, fifties)

Although P’s comment is articulated in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, revealing the extent to which racial hierarchies were still embedded in her daily life, and her own psychological ‘baggage’ of being a white South African, there is an enthusiasm and intention on her part to move beyond racialised differences, and a sense that Thupelo provided her first and possibly only social opportunity to interact across colour divides:

You know, watching their processes, how they’ve worked and how they’ve struggled. I think I’ve spent half the ten days talking to, just everybody, because I thought that was really important... I think I ended up by feeling so incredibly humble, because I thought they were very articulate, they were more articulate than I was about what they were doing, they seemed to know where they were going. I’m filled with all sorts of outside energies, so they, you know, I shouldn’t say ‘they’, the difference has been that... I felt it was so direct, and they shared everything with me too, everything. I didn’t know whether to be involved with my work, or, you know, be absorbing what other people were doing... I have seen the process of how what I picked up from other people has gone into that work and, psychologically, baggage I came with at the beginning of the week. What I ended up with, in my work, is actually quite something to reach... I’ve got friends who work in colleges in the townships and that sort of thing, and I’ve made friends through them but it isn’t the same thing, say, to working with artists, and just ‘getting to know’ people.

Her statement clearly reflects a shift, although far from absolute, in her thinking and self-perception as a result of the workshop that demonstrates the overlap between creative and social exchange for artists through the workshop. Bearing in mind the problems and difficulties for artists’ interactions across black/white divides outlined at the beginning of the chapter, it should be noted that Thupelo provides her *only* opportunity for interaction on a non-hierarchical basis; ie. within the *exchange* of art materials and values. Even if this represents a small step, it is, at least a big step for humankind, in the context of South African society. The statement of one coloured female artist who had taken part in several previous Thupelo workshops sums up how the workshop, enabled the overcoming of differences,

whether social or artistic, which she notably termed as giving “courage”, revealing the extent to which such exchanges were normally difficult to access or achieve: "It really gives you that courage. It's teaching you the techniques of the other people - it gives you like, open mind, how to work more with other people."

Within a shared space of artistic creativity, the focus on art-making thus removed the focus from people and provided a relatively neutral territory for negotiating across the bounded-ness of selves. In the absence of an outside gaze, the gaze of artists turned in on themselves and their work. The juxtaposition of different styles, music and languages drew awareness to the fact that differences between individuals existed. Yet artists, within their interactions and exchanges, found possibilities to work beyond personal issues, boundaries and perceptions of ‘difference’. The end result was an opening up of opportunities and an expansion of dimensions of self, a “becoming” through action, within personal intentions to work across boundaries of difference, that placed participants as *agents* in shifting perspectives and creating work that, in being focused on creative growth and expansion, was future-oriented in time and space.

Incorporating Disagreement

Not all aspects of the workshop were necessarily egalitarian and by no means did all artists reach a comfortable relationship with each other. Positive responses do not mean that there were no disagreements or problems encountered or that *all* artists responded the same way. In fact, different views and perspectives were expressed. I believe one of the major strengths of the workshop was its ability to incorporate and enable a diversity of opinions and their expression differences and diversity within the creative process.



Figure 54. Artist discussions during Thupelo workshop 'walkabout' session

There were occasionally personal disagreements over the type of art some participant artists created. Some artists initially used the free art materials to produce figurative ‘township’-style work that they could easily sell to tourist markets in the future. There were occasions when some artists appeared to

exhibit patronising views towards those with less formal arts education.⁹¹ Some complained in private that these artists were not adhering to Thupelo's emphasis on 'working differently' from their usual work. However, although using new technologies and styles was encouraged as part of the workshop, it was not prescriptive. It was, however, notable that as the workshop progressed, these same artists, having now produced 'enough' work to meet their need to sell, then started to experiment with alternative techniques and approaches to their work, clearly inspired by the diverse range of work created by the others around them. This change indicated that these artists were indeed open to shifting to more experimental work; and that such shifts were also a process over time, in which experimentation was not forced but occurred as an optional and sometimes temporary or playful process of exploration.

Not only did the artists working in 'township' styles feel challenged to explore alternative artistic perspectives, but the artists with a patronising attitude at the beginning of the workshop had also, to some extent, shifted some of their perspectives by the end of the workshop. It was clear that these artists had made some attempt to acknowledge and understand perspectives and intentions alternative to their own, as captured on the final day in the following comment by a white artist who had attended the workshop for the first time:

...even though they're working in a so-called township art genre, there is still something idiosyncratic about each person's work. I think their savvy and their fundamental intelligence comes through - it's not a verbal thing.

This comment still reveals inherent prejudices and divisions in this artists' perceptions. Yet given the assumed superiority and hierarchy of many such artists, as discussed earlier, and, I believe, as was evident in this particular artists' initial opinion, this does represent an attempt at a considered understanding of the particular coloured and black artists working primarily in township genres, she was referring to as 'they'. On the final exhibition day an open disagreement also occurred over a black artists' complaint, supported by other artists, about a lack of access to studio spaces and facilities for his work. More privileged artists claimed that the artist in question was not making use of the grants and networks available to him, and that he needed to put more effort into his own marketing.

The fact that disagreements and contradictions occurred openly at all, I believe, was a positive factor, given that historically disadvantaged artists felt able, to some extent, to voice their opinions rather than being subject as previously discussed to a habituated hierarchised 'silencing' within such gatherings. This indicated that complaints could be aired and disputed, across race, class and gender differences, and the discussion in question did lead to the artist in question being directed towards the appropriate grant-giving bodies.

However, given the overwhelmingly positive responses from the anonymous interviews at the end of the workshop, in which I did not receive a single negative complaint directed at the workshop process as a whole, and the particularly notable fact that the majority of the artists returned to the workshop in consecutive years, and continued to speak of Thupelo in similar favourable terms to those described above, demonstrates Thupelo workshop as a beneficial experience overall for these artists.

⁹¹ See the section on Timothy Mafenuka's work in Chapter Four.

Thupelo Cape Town workshop thus reworked *practiced* embodied interactions of individuals in a space outside their daily lived economic and social realities, from the perspective that: “The body is not just a passive phenomenon which is simply produced by symbolic schemes; it also plays an integral part in the moulding and sustenance of these schemes.” (Shilling 1997: 103). Collective identification between individuals occurred not only in discourse during art-making, but through reworking the interaction of bodies with other bodies, and bodies within spaces; hence creating new landscapes for interaction and networks that consequently, through the performance of their *possibility*, mapped out paths for future relationships. There was also no guarantee that changes within the workshop would necessarily be reflected outside the workshop. However, the fact that spaces, ideas and conversations were shared during Thupelo, and interactions took place across, and within, boundaries of ‘difference’ between artists, still, in essence, *performed* possibilities for the future. Within the workshop, there were therefore nodes of connection, created moments where equality became *real* for individuals who took part. The participants took these moments out with them, as possibilities for interaction.

Incorporating the Future: Continuity and Fluidity

One of the elements significant of Thupelo's success over time is also its continuity, in that it occurs annually. The continuity over time enabled changes over years to be incorporated within a familiar framework of interaction.

Artists, too, changed in their opinions and attitudes over the years. For example, its continuity, for more reticent artists, gave them the opportunity to ‘open up’ in future workshops. One third-time white female participant, ‘L’, for example, who claimed to be shy - both artistically and, notably, in being ‘exposed to different cultures’ - spoke of how repeated workshops created a possibility for shifts in her own attitudes to occur over time. Her statement also brings together many of the elements described above in relation to the overlap of work, environment and people as part of the experience of Thupelo:

This has been the best one [workshop] for me. I think the previous two, I was shy. I hadn't painted before, because I do ceramics.... I think I was also shy of the different cultures. I hadn't been exposed enough to different cultures... I don't know if it's Capetonians, or South Africa - maybe it's just my lifestyle...

I hardly ever mingled with people at first. I just came in and worked, and I didn't look up until almost half way through. I almost didn't connect, and then I started connecting. And I was excited by what came out... I found a new method, and I was excited by all the work around me, everybody's ideas and people were trying and I was watching and experimenting a bit with that.... There's so much power in it, there's so much energy. I think you go up and you go down, and the rhythm changes and I find that exciting. I was almost exasperated, and then compelled to compulsively work, and then to stop, and all the influence of other people's work, and the music, and the people... I found that a very exciting week.

New artists can be drawn into the workshop over the years and that allows previous participants to encourage others to take part:

The first one I was invited by X ... He told me about the workshop and I told him ya, I want to be part of the workshop, and I actually followed it up. I told my friend to attend the workshop. He

also was quite shy to attend it. I said, no, come, we'll be there all of us ... I'm sure things will be happening. ('Y', Xhosa-speaking artist, second time workshop participant).

Thupelo workshop is fluid over time, able to incorporate multiple, sometimes conflicting individual intentions, perspectives and practices, and yet still enable a sense of mutual exchange and interaction for artists through individual choice and agency. The workshop provided starting points for some artists, opportunities of returning to old networks and acquaintances for others, an opportunity to create work to sell, or to experiment with new techniques. This created a range of experiences and artistic exchanges, depending on the individual taking part. The networking that occurred within the workshop enabled a sense of connection and collectivity to be incorporated within the Thupelo format while also encompassing new shifts and changes, such as the incorporation of new artists and changes in its structure. Such a sense of continuity and extensions over space and time incorporated within Thupelo was also evident in the following citation from an artist who had regularly attended the workshops.

Intrinsically it hasn't changed, the working method. I think Thupelo is about basically not so much the work that is produced, but a process of the work method you know. You know, a simple way of working is set up, and carried through, and that is basically what the workshop is all about. This, the by-product of an open-day and the products, of paintings and so on, is really just not so important, as basically working together, people meeting one another, new faces, younger people coming in and so on. So this is very much in keeping with the tradition. You check, you were there last year, there's a whole lot of new faces that you didn't see last year, you know. ('H,' participant in Thupelo Workshop since the 1980s)

Another Xhosa-speaking artist who claimed to have participated in 'many workshops' also illustrates how, in being *creative*, the workshop also incorporates a conscious sense of orientation towards the future. He further commented on personal changes, both in his work and through exposure to others, including international artists:

Thupelo is still the same Thupelo... but it always changes, because you always find some other new people and people from other countries who are invited. So we are actually learning a lot, as well as the presentation of what they are doing in their countries you know like we always get something from it. ...

So much people here are really interested in your work that you do and who spoke to you, and you get some things that you follow up... My work is kind of improving, I'm still doing my same work but there is an improvement that is taking place in me... So it's really fabulous when a person feels that way....

You can realise something new that you never did before you see. ...it's a healing process as well and talking to people; the healing process is there. It really works. I'm so grateful about it.

Thupelo Cape Town workshops continue into the present, evolving in principles, aims and intentions over time⁹².

*

Thupelo also extends outwards geographically in its impact. Via links with the Triangle Workshop network, there are international workshops in other countries; links with studios such as

⁹² Contemporary doctoral research has also been undertaken on Thupelo workshop and the Triangle network from 2001 by Rhoda Elgar in the Anthropology Department, University College of London, UK.

Greatmore in Cape Town, the Bag Factory in Johannesburg and the Gasworks in London. There are also new studios being set up through the Triangle networks abroad, such as in Trinidad, the Caribbean, continually drawing in international artists to take part with local artists.

Within the emphasis on artistic exchange in Thupelo, artists were not only exposed to numerous and alternative ways of working but a space to talk with each other in a non-competitive context. Furthermore, their exchanges not only concerned different work processes and techniques but also served a means of moving beyond the isolation of working within historically habituated racialised separate spaces in Cape Town. As one first-time white male participant, 'A', in his forties enthusiastically put it:

South Africa is a very kind of segmented place. You know, you've got the black township ones, whatever that bloody well means. You've got me, rich white suburbanite, whatever that means. But the art should break through all of it.... Cape Town has always been known for its cliques, and people are quite clique-ish.... I think that Thupelo... I think it's important. I think it's important to mix people up, to mash them all up together. Mash it up. Mash it all up. That's what I say.

Despite the different perceptions and beliefs about what the workshop should be about, the workshop was inevitably what artists made of it. It was artists themselves who had agency as individuals, in choosing who to talk with, how to socially interact, and the form of artistic exchange they participated in. The artworks were 'shared' in their inspiration and creation, incorporating processes of personal change and mutual artistic cultural and personal points of reference within the work they produced. For artists who made use of the workshops in these ways, new relationships and understandings were formed, through which the workshop itself became a common referent, creating a sense of collectivity. The artistic products of the workshops also materially incorporated memories of these shifts and referents to discursive and artistic interactions between artists for the future. The initial reasons for artists attending were also open to change, and these were often reflected as the workshop progressed. Furthermore, the prestigious space of the National Gallery provided an opportunity for historically disadvantaged artists to work at a primary artistic location in the centre of Cape Town previously seen as white. The workshop itself eventually became a collective referent, combining creativity, materiality and space as a means of transcending, crossing or working, despite boundaries, contributing to the process of breaking down deep-seated and lived-out perceptions of difference and boundaries between artists of different socio-cultural groups.

**'DIS NAG' (NIGHT) - THE CAPE'S HIDDEN ROOTS IN SLAVERY – A
COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITION AT THE SLAVE LODGE, CULTURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM, 1998**

The TRC process has been criticised by some as being limited in terms of what it actually entailed, or achieved towards national unity and reconciliation in practice (Asmal et al 1998, Chapman 1999, Kayser 1998, Posel 1999, Ross 2000; 2003, Wilson 1999). Posel (1999) for example claims that the TRC process, in being restricted historically to victim-perpetrator clashes during apartheid, only superficially deals with racist divides woven into the 'warp and woof' of South Africa's social fabric since the beginning of its colonisation in 1652. For true reconciliation to occur, Posel argues, a broader understanding of the nature and dynamics of racism's impact and interconnectedness within South African society would be necessary (ibid.). She asks:

If we don't understand the conditions under which racism was produced, reproduced and intensified in South Africa, taking account of its interconnectedness with other modes of power and inequality such as gender and class, how can we transcend it? (ibid: 30).

Public discourses of cultural diversity and heritage in the New South Africa, it is claimed, emphasize separated histories. These continued divisions in South Africa, Rassool claims, stem from the "tourist spectacle of cultural stereotypes" which, based on a concept of culture as, "seamlessly constituted by a traceable purity or demonstrable authenticity" (2000: 8), re-ethnicise South Africans. Consequently, there is a perception of a fragmented, rather than unified, understanding and divided ownership of South Africa's past, which does nothing to re-site boundaries between groups or establish a shared historical narrative for South Africans (Rassool 2000, Robins 2000).

The history of slavery was suppressed under apartheid⁹³, both within public and education institutions (Cornell 1999; Ward and Worden; 1997; Ward 1997), as well as by many Cape families who had hidden slave ancestries (see Chapter Three of this study). However, there has more recently been a reclamation of a slave history by those previously classified coloured, to the extent that slavery in the Cape has been used as a "rallying point for contemporary coloured ethnic politics" (Ward 1997: 169). Erasmus (2002), for example, states that slavery forms part of the framework for a 'history of a people' as part of a valid constructed "coloured" identity⁹⁴. However, others argue that not only cultural but blood ties exist between the slaves, settlers, the Khoisan and others, and that "the cultural heritage of the slaves cannot be separated and kept apart from the heritage of others." (Cornell: 1999: 278).

⁹³ Much of the history of slavery in the Cape was ignored in the official school histories taught under apartheid, and certainly was not a feature in the syllabus of most schools in the 1980s (Dr Nigel Penn, UCT History Department, personal communication).

⁹⁴ This is interestingly contradicted by the reaction of the artist Randolph Hartzenberg, in responding angrily to a journalist who wrote about his work at the Ootshoorn festival in 1999, in relation to a 'slave past' which she incorrectly assumed Randolph had, simply because he was 'coloured.' Randolph strongly refuted that his own

The Exhibition Process

How seemingly particularised histories may be shared and collectively owned across cultural groups can be seen in the '*Dis Nag*⁹⁵ - *The Cape's Hidden Roots in Slavery*' exhibition which took place at the then Cultural History Museum in Cape Town, from 23 September-10 October, 1998.

The Cultural History Museum Slave Lodge building in Adderley Street, now renamed the Iziko Slave Lodge, is on the site of the original Slave Lodge where slaves were housed by the Dutch East India Trade Company following their arrival in Cape Town. The exhibition coincided with the activities surrounding the renaming of the Museum building as the *Slave Lodge* on Heritage Day, September 24th, 1998. A series of talks, walks around the museum and other 'slave sites' and dramatic presentations exploring the slave history of the Cape, had been planned, including a guided tour of the building and its surroundings, actors re-enacting events experienced by the original slaves in different rooms, and lectures on the history of slavery in the Western Cape.

In 1998, the Museum building had virtually no visual display concerning its past function as a slave lodge, and most of the artefacts in the display were European or colonial furniture and objects. One room however did contain a small display which explored Khoisan culture. The material history of a slave presence was thus negligible,⁹⁶ due to an absence of evidence of archaeological slave artefacts and a slave past has been claimed to have been invisible (Cornell, 1999). Using visual artists appeared to be a way of making the history of slavery visibly and materially present for the public, given the absence of archaeological evidence.

I acted as Exhibition Co-ordinator for the exhibition, in conjunction with the then Cultural History Museum Education Officer, Ramzie Abrahams. I also personally took part in the exhibition, as an artist involved in creating a collaborative artwork. The intention was to enable artists to act as decision-makers in the organisation and presentation of the exhibition as a collaborative effort⁹⁷. The project was established as a pilot venture, as the entire process of inviting in artists and creating the exhibition took place in less than two months.⁹⁸

family had any slave history and that he knew his own 'origins'. This indicates the problems with assuming a blanket ancestry or identity to be appropriate for different groups.

⁹⁵ "It is night" in Afrikaans

⁹⁶ The Cultural History Museum in fact, at that time, could only provide material evidence of the remains of a clay pipe thought to be used by a slave in the past at the slave lodge, and an excavated grave of what were thought to be slave remains. More recently, excavations have been taking place at the Slave Lodge to discover more about the Lodge's past.

⁹⁷ The idea for an artistic collaboration with the Cultural History Museum was also inspired by two exhibitions I had come across in the past involving visual artists interpreting ethnographic themes within museum spaces. The first exhibition, curated by John Macke at the Museum of Mankind in London, UK (1994) involved a female Nigerian artist creating contemporary sculptures in response to an exhibition of traditional Nigerian masks. Both the artworks and original masks were then exhibited together. Another exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, UK (1997) involved visual artists responding to exhibits in the Pitt Rivers ethnographic display. Artists have also been compared to anthropologists and historians, due to their participation in active research processes of gathering materials and presenting facts (Schneider 1996, 1993; Fabian 1996, 1983).

⁹⁸ The project was part-funded by the Cape Town City Arts Council, and sponsorship for printing and mailing obtained through artists' contacts, with assistance and space provided by the Cultural History Museum.

Given the very short notice – a two-month deadline - and lack of coherent and organised arts networks in 1998, former members of the Cape Flats Arts Group⁹⁹ and other artists I had previously interviewed for research purposes were initially contacted and asked to draw in more artists via word of mouth as time progressed. Artists who had expressed a strong interest in contributing to or had worked on previous community development projects were particularly encouraged, due to the social relevance of the project. The intention was not only to bring together artists of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds within the same project, but also to provide opportunities for then emerging historically disadvantaged artists to exhibit in a prominent public cultural space¹⁰⁰. The exhibition eventually involved 19 artists from different socio-cultural backgrounds working collaboratively within the museum on the theme of the Western Cape's "hidden" history of slavery. (A list of participant artists and their works is in Appendix D of this study).

Workshops

The artists attended three consecutive Saturday workshops to provide a historical background on slavery for the artists, and to plan the exhibition.

The first workshop informed artists of the history of slavery. It involved talks and discussion with Dr Nigel Worden, a historian, and Dr Antonia Malan, an archaeologist, both at the University of Cape Town, as well as the Education Officer, Ramzie Abrahams. Much of the workshop discussion focused on the marginalisation of a slave history in South Africa. The artists were provided with an overview concerning the history and origins of the slaves who had been brought to the Western Cape in the past, the conditions they experienced and lived under, their emancipation and their impact on the socio-cultural environment of the Western Cape. A series of slides depicting historical images of slaves, particularly in Cape Town, were shown by Dr Worden. He emphasised that slaves were most often depicted as anonymous incidental or secondary figures in historical artworks, often in order to emphasise colonial power. Furthermore, the lack of material artefacts providing archaeological evidence, as well as the absence of clear records and personal information on individual slaves who had existed in the past, was also described, with an emphasis on the 'invisibility' of a slave history in South Africa's past. There were also moments of revelation such as for two participating artists Fatima February and Selvin November, who had no personal knowledge of a slave ancestry within their families, who discovered that slaves were often given surnames depicting the day or month they had arrived. This experience further emphasised the historical invisibility and suppression of slave histories in families in the Western Cape.

The artists were then asked to interpret the history of slavery on their own terms and determine and organise their own exhibition from information provided by the workshops. Collaboration on artworks between artists was encouraged, but not mandatory. The final result was a thematic exhibition

⁹⁹ The original contact group of artists, with whom I had worked previously (see Methodology) from 1996-7.

¹⁰⁰ In being racially affirmative, the exhibition was fairly successful, as historically disadvantaged artists were in the majority. However, the proportion of historically disadvantaged women artists was relatively low, as there were few practising historically disadvantaged female artists at the time.

exploring differing perceptions and interpretations of slavery. Encouraging all artists to respond to the history of slavery also permitted those who felt they had no direct family slave ancestry to find personal connections with a history that might otherwise have appeared distanced from them.

The second workshop took the form of a discussion between the artists and the Cultural History Museum Education Officer, Ramzie Abrahams, concerning artists' responses to the facts and issues raised in the previous workshop, as well as determining how artists would organise the exhibition.

Practical issues concerning organising the exhibition as a collaborative effort were discussed at the next meeting. Almost all of the artists collaboratively participated in some aspect of the exhibition, through workshops or its organisation. Although artworks were constructed in artists' own workspaces, in their own time, outside the Cultural History Museum premises,¹⁰¹ tasks such as mailing, designing and organising invitations¹⁰², arranging the layout of the exhibition space, and determining the type of and date of the exhibition, were divided among participating artists. Each artist also provided a short written statement displayed publicly beside their exhibit describing the reasoning behind their artwork.

The exhibition opened on 23rd September, 1998, on the eve of Heritage Day and remained for three weeks. It drew many attendees to the opening, and was featured as a cover article for the Arts Section of the Cape Times (September 1998).

The Artworks

In the artworks that were produced for the 'Dis Nag' exhibition, almost all artists interpreted slavery in relation to a personalised understanding of oppression under apartheid, and its impact on contemporary South African society. Many works did not reference apartheid directly, but made strong associations with slavery, the impact of colonisation on South African history, and patterns of historical events over time, leading through to the present.

¹⁰¹ Given that this was not a 'selling' workshop, artists were also remunerated for their time and contributions from funding provided by the City Council for materials and time spent on the work.

¹⁰² Printing of invitations was sponsored by Tone Graphics, known to two of the artists, and funding towards the exhibition opening, mailing and materials was provided by the Cape Town Metropolitan Arts Council.

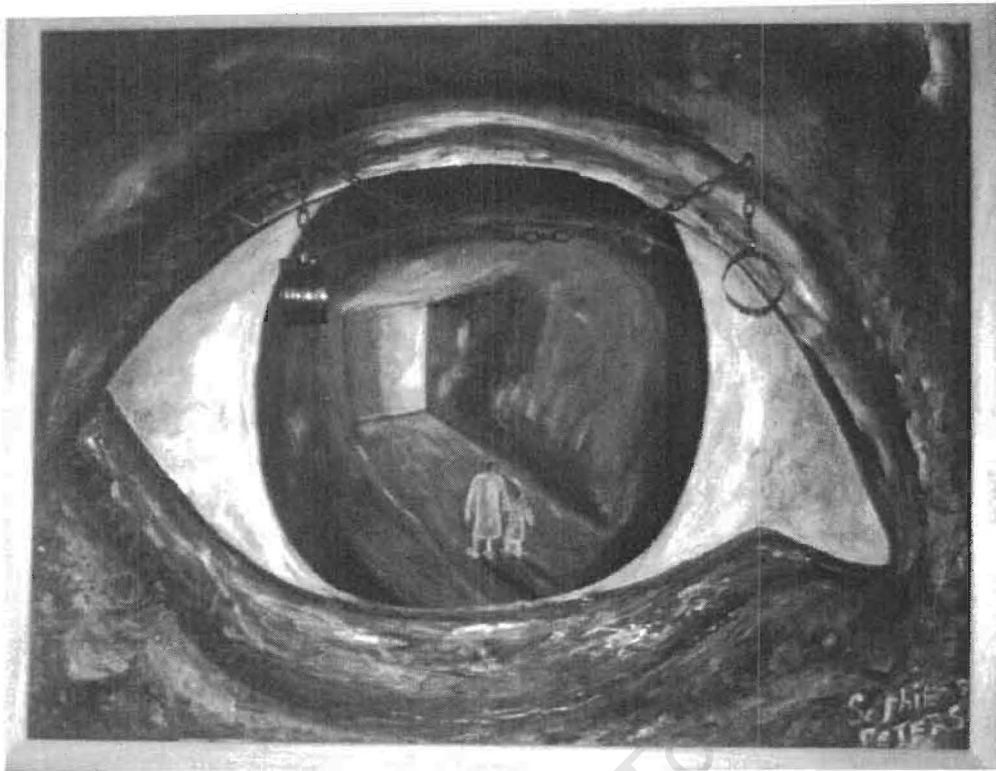


Figure 55. 'Eye of a Slave' - Sophie Peters 1998

In her artwork 'Eye of a Slave' (see Fig. 55), Sophie Peters, a coloured female artist, equated a slave history in the Cape with her personal experience of growing up under apartheid and observing the treatment of farm labourers. In her artwork, she painted herself as a child holding her mother's hand, in an enclosed space inside the shape of an eye, and a manacle and chain was montaged onto the front of the artwork. She explained:

In the time of apartheid, slaves were treated very bad, what I saw as slaves. So, through the eye of a slave, a lot of people saw things happening, but couldn't talk. It was just pain in their hearts. They could just cry and just work for that little money. A lot of people really suffered. White and black could not engage like they do now - talk, eat, hug, sit and talk or whatever.... Slaves had that kind of pain inside for a long time.

Sophie spoke of a childhood memory where she had come across the body of a man who had been shot on the farm near where she lived and the corpse had been left to rot. She associated this experience with what she felt the slaves had gone through in observing and being victims of oppression, injustice and suffering, but having no power to alter or change their situation. Her work was created:

...just through things seen. The ways people were working... My mother, like a slave, come back from work with not enough money to support us at home. So I mean there really was no food. We suffered. That was slave times.

Producing the artwork, Sophie herself suggested, gave her a voice in relation to her personal experience of apartheid. It is evident that the exhibition theme provided a safe context, through its contextual presentation within the suffering and victimisation of slaves in South Africa's distanced past, *and* its expression through visual means, to express what Sophie felt was the 'silenced pain' of her apartheid experience in post-apartheid South Africa.

Apartheid and slavery was all together. It's sensitive. Whites didn't want to talk about it.... Words hurt. Speak, but in peace, friendliness... Speak it like it is - bring it out and feel free and be happy. We can't keep that pain inside for years and years and die with that kind of pain. It's time to speak it out and be free... It was good to take out what was disturbing inside."



Figure 56. 'Freed Slave' - Donovan Ward, Liesl Price, Paul Hendricks and Andre Marais, 1998 - note the 'Colonel Saunders' on the right of the slave, and the poem written across the surface

Likewise, a collaborative work titled 'Freed Slave' (see Fig 56), by artists Donovan Ward, Liesl Price and Paul Hendricks, and poet Andre Marais, depicted the classic image of a 'freed slave' that Dr. Nigel Worden had shown in his slide show of previous artworks on slavery. The depiction of the 'freed slave' was surrounded by images which Donovan termed modern icons of economic globalisation and power (see Chapter Five), such as the dollar sign and the World Bank. The artists described the artwork as questioning what they termed 'slave-style' economic relationships between the West and South Africa in the present, extending from past colonial relationships with the West. A poem by Andre Marais titled *'The Freed Slave'* was written in the foreground of the painting. The poem dealt with perceptions of freedom and could be interpreted as equally pertinent to a history of slavery in the Cape and/or a South Africa recently 'freed' from apartheid.

Figure 57. Craig Masters - The Castle, the Display, the Slave's Pipe and the Descent into the Dark Cellar, 1998

Reference to, and questions around, establishing the 'truth' of a South African past were also explored in the exhibition. For example, the historically disadvantaged painter Craig Masters depicted the few artefacts and bones that formed the scant archaeological evidence of a slave past, in the artwork 'The Castle, the Display, the Slave's Pipe and the Descent into the Dark Cellar' (see Fig. 57). Depicting the skeleton remains of a slave and the only slave item at the Slave Lodge – a slave pipe - he thus deliberately and consciously made visible the material 'invisibility' of slaves. Such aims are clear in his written statement accompanying the artwork:

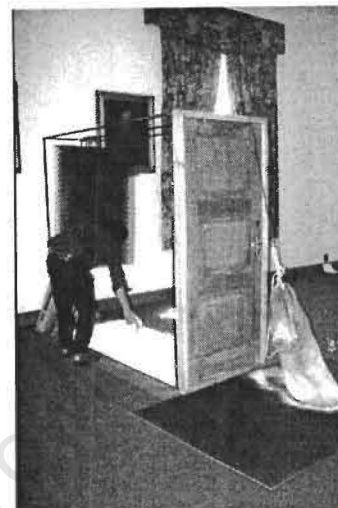


This work speaks of the vast differences in the historical physical evidence to be found between the slaves and their masters. While volumes of evidence exist of the slave owners present here at

the Cape, the only item – apart from the skeletal remains found at various sites - is a smoking pipe once owned by a slave, which is now housed in the Slave Lodge. This to me illustrates the invisibility of the slave role in the development at the Cape, and why a shadow of shame is still cast over the Cape, as many institutions here are still unwilling to recognise the hardship endured by these people in the Cape's early years.

Figure 58. Randy Hartzenberg preparing 'The Speech of Birds', 1998

Randy Hartzenberg's installation piece 'The Speech of Birds' (see Fig. 58) deliberately played upon the concept of 'looking back' at the colonial history of the Cape. In response to the Museum committee's initial refusal to remove the paintings of Cape Governors and Parliamentarians from the wall, Randy cleverly responded to and utilised the situation by asking for two paintings to be kept on the wall of the lecture room. He incorporated the paintings of the previous Governors into his final artwork for the exhibition, as a deliberate comment on hierarchies of inequality. He combined the painting into an abstract sculpture with artefacts such as an old car mirror, a rope in tension with a bag of salt, and a constructed doorway. He described the sculpture as suggesting tension between the past and present in South Africa and concepts around 'looking back' into, and 'reflecting', the South African past. His exhibition statement clearly links colonialism and slavery with concepts of freedom and oppression across time.



There is a reflective point of contact with the past here. The sculpture has been determined by my responses to the portraits of colonial governors – Cradock (1811-1814) and D'Urban (1833-1837) hanging in the location chosen for this exhibition. The installation is thus site-specific, both in relation to the Slave Lodge site and in its proximity to these particular portraits. There are allusions to restriction, entrapment, punishment, survival and death. From the painful experiences of slaves we can learn and forge a new consciousness, more capable of hearing the caged and uncaged speech of birds and work towards developing a creative, compassionate humanity freed from the cages of psychic enslavement. (Written statement accompanying artwork at Dis Nag Exhibition).

Figure 59. 'Timeless Beat', 1998, Thembinkosi Goniwe

This combination of apartheid and slavery themes was also apparent in the work of the Xhosa and white artists not usually be considered to have a slave ancestry¹⁰³. For example, Thembinkosi Goniwe, a Xhosa-speaking artist, in the work 'Timeless Beat' (see Fig. 59) focused on issues of resistance to oppression. He depicted images of the historical rebellion of slaves who burnt down the original Cape Town Slave Lodge at the site of the Cultural History Museum. Playing on concepts of 'escape', he deliberately hung his artwork across a door entrance in the Slave Lodge room where the exhibition was held. Reference was made to both slavery and



¹⁰³ This does not imply that all coloured artists have slave ancestry, although it is generally believed to be more frequent within the coloured population than in other population categories.

apartheid, linking the two in his interpretation, where he claimed, “The reaction taken by slaves to burn the lodge has a connection to the reaction taken by African people against apartheid.”

Pro (Mgcineni), also a Xhosa-speaking artist, in ‘D.P. Ritual’ interpreted his understanding of slavery in relation to the poorly paid “hard labour” of farm labourers and traders in South Africa’s present, whom he depicted in a figurative painting, and claimed, “labour is another form of slavery”.

Figure 60. ‘Untitled’, 1998, Siphho Hlati

Siphho Hlati, another Xhosa-speaking artist produced an installation, ‘Untitled’ (see Fig. 60). He used images of Africa, the spread of colonialism and the Bible to illustrate what he described as the ‘indoctrination of the mind’ the colonial influence of education and religion throughout South Africa’s history, which, he felt, extended into South Africa's present. He therefore also, as did many other artists, incorporated and integrated the history of slavery within to the broader framework of colonisation and politics in South Africa.



White artists, too, found their personal points of access to issues concerning slavery in South Africa. Gregg Smith, a white artist, created a video installation, ‘Untitled’, based on the theme of a silent tennis game, that he hoped would illustrate the difficulty of verbal communication within his own family, which he felt, were an apartheid-derived consequence for whites of *not* talking about particular subjects, particularly the colonial and apartheid past. Another white artist, Nricco Massimo, created the work ‘Antagonist.’ Depicting school uniforms ‘imprisoned’ under glass, he claimed he referred to white South African schooling and education in relation to the control and domination of society under colonisation, and politics in South Africa.

Figure 61. ‘Till Death Us Do Part’, 1998, Jade Gibson, Fatima February, Yasmina February, Jasmine Stahl

I myself worked on an installation in relation to gender issues in South Africa in collaboration with three female artists, Fatima February, Jasmine Stahl and Yasmina February (see Figs. 61 and 62).¹⁰⁴ The original slave lodge was frequently used as a brothel, providing an odd means of release from slavery, in that women from the Lodge could marry into ‘freedom.’ The work, ‘Till Death Us Do Part’,

consisted of a traditional 'Cape Malay' wedding dress, onto the surface of which was printed, amongst the decorative beading, excerpts and headlines from newspaper cuttings concerning the domestic abuse of women in South Africa, and displayed on a converted shop dummy. A mirror was positioned over the face, under the veil, to reflect back the face of the observer as a means of creating identification, or in some cases, eliciting a response of confrontation.



Figure 62. Close-up detail from wedding dress, *Till Death Us Do Part*

While printing and decorating the dress with Fatima and Jasmine, conversations often revolved around the gender issues it addressed in the present. Fatima, in particular, afterwards commented on a strong personal connection with the exhibition theme, both as a woman, being Muslim (in that many of the slaves in Cape Town either were of, or had converted to, Islam religion) and as a result of earlier discovering that her own surname, February, was a typical slave surname. She felt a sense of agency and accomplishment in playing an active role in representing a slave history in terms of her own possible ancestry and in terms of being a woman.¹⁰⁵

Incorporating Tensions and Contradictions

Conflict, Power and Disempowerment in the Second Artists' Workshop

Coloured and black artists were in the numerical majority at the second artists' workshop, and people of both categories began to speak of strong connections and feelings brought up by the first workshop in relation to experiences of social inequality and apartheid. They also suggested that colonialism and slavery may have structured a 'whole way of thinking' in South Africa. Although the discussion in relation to the outcome of the exhibition was not directly or personally aimed at the artists present, a white artist, 'A,' in her twenties who was thinking of joining the exhibition (but had not attended the first informative historical workshop), became angry and agitated, saying a discussion about apartheid was a waste of time as it was not relevant to an exhibition on slavery. She left abruptly in the middle of the meeting, and did not return.

¹⁰⁴ The concept was initiated by me, the dress created by Fatima (artist who described herself as a 'Muslim woman' of 'coloured' background) and her sister Yasmina February (dressmaker), and the entire work created by Fatima, myself and Jasmine Stahl (artist, originally from Europe, living in South Africa since 1994).

¹⁰⁵ From my own perspective, as a non-South African, the process of constructing the artwork, as well as taking part in the exhibition, was a bonding process with other artists, providing an understanding of South African history, and its interpretation by these South Africans in relation to their lived lives. There was also a collaborative sense of agency and purpose in representing this history, as it indicated an active role in taking part in social change in South Africa.

Another white artist, 'E,' in his twenties, had attended all the workshops and took part in the final exhibition. He, too, had felt excluded from the discussion: "if you are white and in the minority it's very hard to take part in those discussions¹⁰⁶" although he claimed to understand how the topics had emerged.

However, the majority of historically disadvantaged artists described the discussions that took place as "empowering". Given what they perceived as an enforced social silence about the 'forgotten' apartheid past, these artists were of the opinion that the opportunity to talk openly about the past was important. Several of these artists stated that 'A' had 'taken it the wrong way' as they had only wanted to communicate how they had felt, not make personal accusations. Furthermore, given the power hierarchies of the past, talking openly about their experiences before a white audience was perceived to be particularly empowering.

I believe that the fact that these discussions took place at all reflects a sense of ownership of the exhibition process by artists from the historically disadvantaged sector, partly because they were in the numerical majority and partly because the exhibition was artist, and not curator managed. Thus, the focus of the workshops on slavery enabled historically disadvantaged artists to speak of apartheid oppression on their own terms, interconnecting a history of slave oppression with apartheid oppression. These workshops enabled artists to perceive themselves as embedded in an interwoven, multifaceted and complex South African history of colonisation, slavery and apartheid, to which they belong.

Conflicts between the Artists and the Museum space

The extent of the collaboration of the staff of the Cultural History Museum and the provision of exhibition space was a subject of much contention among the artists. Despite the original suggestion that the exhibition take place in the museum exhibition rooms as a response to associated functions of the building with the original Slave Lodge, the Museum Staff Committee refused to allow the actual museum exhibition rooms to be used, stating that they did not wish to disturb the permanent exhibitions of the Museum.

The committee eventually allocated the lecture room of the Museum for the exhibition (designed for lectures and seminars, not exhibitions) for a two-week period only. At the time, the lecture room contained paintings of previous Cape Governors and Parliamentarians acquired after their removal after 1994 from the Old South African Parliament. Initially reluctant to remove these paintings, the committee eventually agreed to do so. The lecture room continued to be used for lectures to the public on slavery on Heritage Day, during which time the artworks were on display but had to be moved around to accommodate the audience.

¹⁰⁶ He had previously attended a 'Healing of Memories' workshop run by Father Michael Lapsley, ex-activist, (see Kayser, PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, work in progress), involving individuals of different backgrounds coming together within facilitated workshops to talk about and explore their experience of the apartheid past to each other.

After the exhibition opening, there was a follow-up meeting with some of the participating artists and Education Director of the Museum (but not the Museum Committee) concerning their experience and opinions of the exhibition process.

The Committee's initial attitude towards the exhibition caused outrage among some of the artists, who claimed that their right to be respected and to be incorporated into the historically significant event of renaming the building as the Slave Lodge, had been discredited. They argued that the Museum committee had neither wanted to collaborate nor had taken their requests seriously, despite the Education Officer and Museum Director being supportive of the Exhibition. One artist, for example, expressed the view that the artists had been treated as a token gesture of transformation within the museum and that the museum had not really transformed, despite being nationally owned and funded by tax-payers' money. Other comments in the meeting were that the museum "wanted to remain colonial" and that artists were still "being marginalised in public spaces in South Africa". These sentiments indicate the importance to artists of being acknowledged within public spaces in order to feel valued in the new South Africa. The artists also felt that the museum committee should have collaborated more in helping artists organise the exhibition, particularly with publicity - for example, the Museum did not publicise the exhibition with its own Heritage Day events. The Museum had also offered no finance for the exhibition, which was funded primarily by the Cape Town City Arts Council and artists' own efforts to obtain sponsorship. The artists also complained once the museum realised the exhibition had been successful, being represented in the Cape Times newspaper arts review (September 1994) as a feature article, it took credit and benefited from appearing to be affirmative by hosting the exhibition as an empowerment project.

On the positive side, some of the historically disadvantaged artists felt that they had had an opportunity to claim a space within the museum, and therefore effect some form of transformation for themselves. The Education Officer remarked that the collaboration was a first of its kind for the Museum, and, despite the initial reluctance and disinterest of the Committee, many had "come around" and had shifted from speaking of 'their' exhibition, to 'our' exhibition. It was also pointed out by one participant that the Museum had eventually removed the paintings of the Old Cape Governors and Parliamentarians from its walls, which, it was agreed, was a historical moment in itself, and he hoped it had made the Old Governors and Parliamentarians of the Cape "turn in their graves". Furthermore, the mailing list, provided by the District Six Museum for the opening of the exhibition, had brought in a large sector of the community who had never before visited the Cultural History Museum.

Many artists emphasised that the most significant experience for them was the collaboration between artists in organising the exhibition and their ability to create a successful exhibition within such a short space of time¹⁰⁷. The attendees at the opening ceremonies on Heritage Day, 24th September, had also responded positively to the exhibit, which had provided a visual focus for further discussions¹⁰⁸. These

¹⁰⁷ Due to some artists joining the process late, and others not attending all meetings, a minority had not understood this to be a collaborative effort, and had expected the exhibition to be 'curated' by the Museum in a more 'traditional' manner of arranging art exhibitions. Furthermore, the majority of artists who expressed these opinions were historically disadvantaged, although most artists of all backgrounds felt the collaboration had been worthwhile.

¹⁰⁸ For example, one particularly enthusiastic visitor, was a street stall worker had wandered into CHM on Heritage Day from the nearby Gardens. I found her looking at the artworks after the Heritage Day presentations had ended.

factors and the fact that the exhibition had enabled the artists to “take part in creating history” through visually representing a slave past as part of the significant historical event of renaming the Cultural History Museum as the Slave Lodge on Heritage Day was overall described as “empowering in itself” by the majority of artists at the meeting. Interestingly enough, those artists who did not attend earlier workshops and thus did not fully appreciate the collaborative process, or played less of a collaborative and active role in putting the exhibition together, claimed they had benefited less from the exhibition, a point that was discussed during the follow-up meeting.

Once the two-week exhibition was over, the only visible evidence in or around the building that remained to suggest the Cultural History Museum had been a Slave Lodge was the renamed plaque outside the front entrance to the museum which had been unveiled on Heritage Day.

Reworking Histories: Commemoration and Exhibition

The *Dis Nag* exhibition involved the collective engagement of artists of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in visually representing slavery from multiple perspectives. In many cases, artists integrated these collective historical representations with their personal experiences of apartheid. Artists therefore acted as agents in responding to a history which extended beyond the history of apartheid, as explored by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, to that of slavery.

History is continually recreated in the present through commemorative processes and spectacle (Connerton 1989). Historians have moved away from regarding visual images as illustrative of literate findings or as showing how the past really was (Witz, Minkely and Rassool 1999). They write, instead, of mediums of ‘visual history’ which make and remake meaning and historical knowledge. Rassool, for example, writing about the more recent District Six Museum developments in Cape Town, such as the ‘Digging Deeper’ permanent exhibition (2000 -)¹⁰⁹, claims that, particularly in South Africa, “histories have erupted into the public sphere in visual form” (Rassool 2000: 5). He argues that different understandings of culture are emerging, and that creative and artistic display, particularly through museum and artistic spectacle, play a role in shaping history. Consequently, the exhibition creates, as Rassool suggests, “a space of knowledge production outside the dominant contours of discourse” (2000: 17) through which new understandings of culture and history were made. In this case, the new understandings were collectively made, in that individuals from different backgrounds created personal referents to a history that became publicly owned. Furthermore, collaborations within artworks, and engagement and interaction through discourses and disagreement between artists were incorporated. Not only were artists in ‘Dis Nag’ able to play an active role in creating South African history, they were also

She claimed that her great grandfather had been a slave from Indonesia, and she had handwritten diaries with sketches depicting the ship voyage. Despite the attempts of the CHM Education Officer to follow this up, she refused to allow the works out of her possession, claiming that one diary had already gone missing and that it was a ‘family heirloom’.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter Three for more information concerning the work of Roderick Sauls which became part of the Digging Deeper District Six Museum exhibition when it formally re-opened in 2000. Much of the new museum

able to focus on the impact of the Cape's slave history, through individual, emotive and personally-created referents, to shape a collective understanding of history within the present.

The framework of the exhibition process also enabled confrontation between artists, which, I believe, was a necessary step in the process of moving forwards towards a better understanding of each other. It is notable that disputes occurred during workshop discussions when artists verbally expressed feelings linking slavery and their experience of apartheid. However, the visual representation of an apartheid past in relation to slavery allowed the 'telling' of artists' experiences and viewpoints in a format that was not perceived as confrontational between them. Creating visual representations of their interpretations of the past, often tied to their personal experiences of apartheid, provided a means of having a voice without direct confrontation. This indicates that material presentations of the past enable the expression of difficult and emotive aspects of recent histories from different perspectives by individuals. It shows the relevance of allowing individual agency and ownership within the shaping of such projects. For those artists who worked through the process of shaping the exhibition, disagreement during workshops was part of an overall process of creating a cohesive end product within a collective framework. However, the participants also needed to be willing and able to take part in such processes. For some artists in particular, the exhibition made them aware of issues they had not resolved or confronted.

The artistic outcome of the slavery exhibition resulted not only in the expression of individual opinions and experiences concerning apartheid, but the bringing of the distant historical past of the Western Cape into the present in relation to lived experience. The exhibition thus acted as a vehicle through which apartheid issues and experiences could be collectively explored, critiqued, re-lived or expressed in relation to a sense of connection linking the distant past, the apartheid past, and the present. It provided a visual means of relating to a slave past despite the material absence of proof of a slave past. It was also a referent for the future, in being an event for the relating of future narratives of a shared process. Its ownership therefore became collective, not culturally segregated through its claim to an ethnicised identity and ownership within cultural 'heritage' discourses, but publicly owned in relation to its relevance to the present. The exhibition process was also able to link the individual to the collective, the past to the present, and the making visible of an invisible history of the past, to the making of the future.

The exhibition therefore was not only about the past, but provided a means of moving beyond the past through establishing change in artists' own sense of agency and belonging in South Africa, as well as making visible albeit temporarily, a little publicly-explored period of the Cape's History, as something that was not culturally divided, but collectively owned through its linkage within individual experience. The exhibition indicates that the past may be collectively re-determined in order to forge a collective identity in the present – a negotiation between the two that occurs through a complex, interwoven process through which representations are made. Embedded within the making of these representations are the

involved contributions and interpretations of the past of District Six by artists. In 1997 there had also been a sculpture festival on the empty District Six site, where artists were invited to produce sculptures on the site.

changes that take place, within history, within boundaries that lie between people, and, ultimately, within people.

An exhibition of this kind is not ultimately able to break down all boundaries between artists of different socio-cultural groups. It also lacks the fluidity and informality of sharing the creative process such as in the Childhood exhibition and the Thupelo workshops explored earlier. However, the fact that discourses between artists of diverse backgrounds occurred, and were challenged; that histories were interpreted, assimilated and evaluated on personal levels; that artists acted as agents and decision-makers in shaping the representation of a little-focused on yet significant history within the Western Cape; and that an exhibition of this kind even took place in the Cultural History Museum, was, in effect, part of the overall transformative process within South Africa for these artists. For many of those who participated, the exhibition provided small steps towards cognitively breaking down some of the many boundaries that separated socio-cultural groups, and to establishing a collective sense of cohesion through a historical basis. They were also provided within an opportunity to claim the past as their own, through an agency and engagement on their own terms, a process that would have been difficult under apartheid. This agency within a collaborative project also gave them a sense of ownership over the shaping of history in general in contemporary South Africa.

INCORPORATING 'DIFFERENCE' FOR THE FUTURE?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report (1998) suggested a need for individual South Africans to engage in integrating their shared histories:

Somewhere down the line, we must succeed in integrating, through political engagement, all our histories, in order to discontinue the battles of the past... If we fail in this regard, we will fail to be a nation. (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 5, 1998: 443).

However, post 1994 public discourses around reconciliation focused on division and difference within unity:

National unity accepts different communities, accepts different cultures, accepts different value systems, accepts different religions, and even accepts different histories, provided there is some shared history.... Reconciliation is built on a mutual understanding and acceptance of these differences and a capacity of people to manage conflict and live with others (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, 1998, Volume 5: 443).

Should the emphasis be not only on acknowledging difference, but equally, or even more strongly, on finding and creating points of similarity between individuals? Given that there are many points of cultural similarity, ancestries, interaction and understanding that exist or could occur between South Africans, many mutual referent points of identification are possible. The emphasis could be less on a hard-line approach to a racialised sense of culture as the divisive factor between individuals within processes of collective commemoration, representation and interaction, but on facilitating the agency of the individual, *as an individual*, and not as a type of a particular cultural group, who, despite having his or

her own particular differences and perceptions from others, is able to form collective points of cohesion across boundaries of difference.

The case studies in this chapter indicate that establishing a sense of mutual collectivity between artists of different socio-cultural backgrounds involves multiple, often simultaneous, processes. The *Childhood* exhibition focused on a shared understanding of artists' autobiographical and artistic pasts in relation to the different contexts within which the two artists grew up. Engaging in a visual exchange, the artists facilitated verbal dialogue, through looking at and acknowledging their respective boundaries and differences. Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshop centred not on producing artworks for the outside gaze, but on processes of artistic creation as a form of exchange and interaction. The working framework of Thupelo facilitated both artistic and social exchanges, enabling conversations and visual and spatial interactions between individuals through which hierarchical and habituated practices of division were broken down. Changes in how artists perceived these shifts were often as much a process of coming to an awareness of social change *through* artistic praxis, as artists' original intentions to work across socio-cultural boundaries in attending the workshop. Within Thupelo, the extent artists took part in social exchanges was also a matter of choice. Artists' intentions and interactions also underwent further changes as they returned to participate in the workshop over consecutive years. The slavery exhibition 'Dis Nag' involved the shared organisation of a thematic exhibition on slavery in the Western Cape, interpreted from individual artists' perspectives. Through the mutual exploration of this theme, a sense of collectively occurred, in that all participating artists could lay claim to having been influenced by the impact of the history of slavery in relation to apartheid, albeit even in terms of colonial attitudes and legacies within their own lives.

In all these projects, artists gained access to culturally important spaces in Cape Town. Thupelo took place at the National Gallery, the *Childhood* exhibition at the Irma Stern Museum, and the *Dis Nag* exhibition at the Cultural History Museum, all prominent public spaces in Cape Town. These spaces provided historically disadvantaged artists with a sense of agency in reclaiming what had been seen as previously white spaces. However problems that artists encountered with negotiating exhibition spaces in the *Dis Nag* exhibition also indicate that issues regarding the use and ownership of spaces within public institutions are important considerations in projects of this kind. This implies that any collaborative or empowerment effort in South Africa needs to consider the extent of agency attributed to the benefactors of the project - the extent to which artists take part – and in relation to who participates in their organisation and reception and their relationship with the spaces that they interact with and within. I also believe that that enabling of conflicts and disagreements within workshops, while focussing on a creative outcome, at the least, provided artists within a 'voice' in that there was some provision for discussion and confrontation within the workshops, even if limited in outcome, was a positive outcome in itself. The incorporation of some flexibility for assimilating disagreement within such projects is therefore beneficial and, I believe, is further enabled through empowering participants in the process of organising and shaping the project.

The studies of collaborative projects presented here examine processes of creating a sense of commonality between persons as a means of moving beyond racialised perceptions of difference in the New South Africa, for the future. During collaborative projects, artists have the opportunity to come together within difference, to create possibilities for the future. Such processes move historically disadvantaged artists in particular from positions of passive patronage to being active participants in the shaping of cultural events through representation. Such outcomes tie in with Soja's (1996) claim that:

...we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities... there is a growing awareness of the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence. And this three-sided sensibility of spatiality-historicity-sociality is not only bringing about a profound change in the ways we think about space, it is also beginning to lead to major revisions in how we study history and society (Soja 1996: 1-3).

The creative process of art-making is an act focused, through its creativity, on the future, in which action is directed towards a "becoming-through-making". *Through* action, individuals act as agents in creating points of mutual experience within newly 'performed' behaviour, which can bring about collective change. Schechner and Appel point out that:

...humans are able to absorb and learn behaviour so thoroughly that the new 'performed' behaviour knits seamlessly into ongoing 'spontaneous' action. Performance magnitude means not only size and duration but also extension across cultural boundaries and penetration to the deepest strata of historical, personal and neurological experience (1990: 45).

Collectivity between artists was also shaped through the materiality of art-making; the movement of bodies across shared spaces; the conversations and encounters that are facilitated through these interactions; and the visual engagement and creative exchange of making artworks. Processes of collective identification were determined, both by artists' conscious agency and motivation to move beyond racial and cultural boundaries, and through embodied praxis, in their relationships with the spaces and institutions they work within, and with each other. Past differences, shaped within constructs of race and culture, become less significant within the creative moving-forward of their own 'becoming' through praxis. These performances occur spatially, materially, verbally and bodily, to result in a coming to awareness of new, referent points, expressed in terms of 'us' rather than 'them,' outside of race boundaries. As Schechner and Appel write:

...performance magnitudes are not only about time and space but also about extensions and various cultural and personal boundaries... When strips of behaviour are taken from one context and played in another is it a different kind of performance if, in the replaying, the strip meant something entirely different from what it meant 'originally'? These transformations of meaning are inevitable if context determines meaning. But it's not so simple, because every strip, no matter how small, brings some of its former meanings into its new context. That kind of 'memory' is what makes virtual and artistic recombinations so powerful. (1990: 43)

Artists play out their 'strips' of difference within the collaborative projects described, yet also act as agents in creating new points of cohesion outside of these differences. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they act as agents in creating mutual points of common identification, where new

perspectives and perceptions of the past may be created, patterns of interaction re-shaped and re-determined *within* difference. Artists bring in issues around difference and dissimilarity when they enter collaborative projects, and when they leave many of these perceptions continue. However, these artists also come away with new referent points of similarity. Within these projects artists had agency to find mutual points of identification with others, shaping new forms of collectivity through points of shared simultaneity in time and space. Consequently, collectivity in this case involves a moving forwards through time through material praxis, as a creative process that involves bringing pasts into the present, providing a means, whether visual or spoken, through which one becomes visible to others, materially, spatially, visually, verbally and cognitively.

By enabling opportunities for these mutual points of identification to occur through collective praxis despite perceptions of difference and divides, one is able to provide individuals with agency in the present, for constructing a collective future in the New South Africa. Consequently, albeit incrementally at times, it is possible to “shift emphases” of commonality beyond previous racial and cultural boundaries of difference, to emphasise alternative contextual understandings of culture, and move towards a sense of a collective ownership of the past, the present, and the future for the South Africans who take part in them.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS - MATERIALITY AND ART-MAKING IN CAPE TOWN, THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

This study has examined how historically disadvantaged visual artists, through art-making, shifted perceptions of self-identity beyond previously racialised, hierarchical and essentialist constructs in a transforming South Africa. The approach taken was that artworks are not only symbolic of, but themselves incorporate, social change. The case studies reveal cognitive processes of individual identity construction and agency, and show how collective factors impinge upon and are negotiated by individuals within their realities. Furthermore, the relationship between the externalisation of identity into society from the individual's subjective experience and a materially objectified 'looking in' on oneself is taken into account, as well as the sophisticated interplay that individuals engage with in incorporating and drawing upon both internal subjectivities and external objectifications of identity framed by processes of social transformation.

This study has taken an incorporative approach to understanding concerns, responses and shifts in relation to individual identity in a transforming South Africa for historically disadvantaged artists in Cape Town, persons whose working lives are consciously concerned with visual representation. The aim has not been to establish new end-points or to re-essentialise identities for the artists concerned, but to examine the agency of artists, and processes of shifting self-identity, in which identity is understood to be a "production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 222). The case studies have demonstrated the fluidity and complexity of these processes.

The context was South Africa, a country founded on racist perceptions of identity that permeated every aspect of its citizens' lives. Following the formal end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa became a constitutional democracy and underwent collective macro-level processes of socio-political transformation. These processes incorporated Rainbow Nationhood, affirmative action, rapid economic and cultural globalisation following the lifting of international sanctions, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process and the promotion of an African Renaissance. These macro-level changes shifted socio-political parameters in the country and impacted on how individual persons conceptualised and negotiated self-identities. At a micro-level, individual agency could be exercised in the framework of political and social 'freedom' for all South Africans, for example, through the democratic vote in 1994 and the impact of individual testimony through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process.

The previously habituated and practiced embedded-ness of racism in the social fabric and reality of South Africa however implied not only how individuals perceived themselves conceptually, but what, within the praxis of their daily lives, they *did*. The new shifts were particularly relevant to historically disadvantaged persons, who had been particularly restricted by hierarchical segregation and racist policies. The Western Cape, where this study took place, is an area known to be of particularly

heterogeneous historical origins and thus presented a particularly interesting area for the study of an emergence of broadening and multiple perceptions of self-identity.

The approach taken was that identity is a negotiation, an *action* in space and time through which persons arrive at a concept of self. In the study, artworks provided a means for an analysis that was not proscriptive, but explored the diversification and expansion of identities that were multiple, paradoxical and complex. The case studies show the artists' ongoing development and experimentation around these issues.

First, I examined how individual memory was incorporated in artworks, both materially and conceptually, to reconstruct narratives of individual identity. For example, Roderick Sauls' material construction of the past enabled him to claim an identity in the present as an affirmation of self in the new South Africa. Randy Harzenberg's work showed the extent to which memory was sentient, through his reworking of embodied referents to the apartheid past with the intention of personal and collective healing. The work of Garth Erasmus, Berni Searle, Mustafa Maluka and Xolile Matakatya indicated that referents of collective history and personal ancestry could be reworked within personal autobiographies, being 'made real' through their re-presentation in artworks - Garth and Xolile, for example, identifying with a Khoisan past, Berni and Mustafa contesting perceptions of a racialised body within the external 'gaze' and referencing possible slave ancestries in relation to identifying with a diasporic sense of identity as opposed to framing oneself as limited to being coloured. The past was thus creatively 're-remembered' through its material re-presentation and objectification in the present; the process offered a means of moving forward that incorporated past referents of ancestry, autobiography or history to assert new perceptions of self-identity in relation to new contexts of interpretation in the present.

Chapter Four demonstrated how historically disadvantaged artists responded to and negotiated racialised identities in relation to external and shifting categories of value in the art world, in a situation where art categories and markets in South African art were derived from an apartheid past where 'culture' was a term synonymous with 'race,' and socio-economic contexts had limited artists' access to resources such as education, transport, financial supports, markets and art networks and thus influenced the type of work these artists produced. I examined the tensions and contradiction in the art world which brought into question different values and concepts of 'good' and 'bad' art in relation to perceptions of racialised artistic identities. Research revealed how individual artists acted as agents within social change in different ways, through contesting, subverting, appropriating or negotiating categories of value in art markets and institutions. Some artists re-appropriated the category of 'black' artist; other historically disadvantaged artists however, verbally contested or boycotted what they perceived as their re-racialisation through racialised frameworks of artistic identification. Others re-assessed cultural perspectives of aesthetic value in art and argued for aesthetic alternatives. Yet others simultaneously accessed multiple markets, playing upon different perceptions of aesthetic value and ethnic identities in art. The chapter consequently threw into relief questions concerning the different circuits, perceptions and re-evaluations of value in art that historically disadvantaged artists are subject to, and at the same time showed the extent and diversity through which individuals negotiated their identity in the context of their

survival as artists in the New South Africa. I argued that 'surface' presentations of racialised artistic identities in South African art may belie the intentions of historically disadvantaged artists to shift perceptions of identity on a personal basis. The chapter also further emphasises how the artwork in South Africa is not merely a material artifact, produced within art 'history' but, for the individuals concerned, ultimately concerns a negotiation between the expression of an artists' self and their objectification through an external gaze that determines perceptions of value, aesthetics and culture.

Chapter Five expanded on the previous chapters to demonstrate how artworks incorporated transcultural encounters between the local and 'beyond' the global, in relations to perceptions of culture, territory and 'self', for artists in a South Africa which had only recently opened its geographical boundaries to international trade and cultural influence, and encouraged an African Renaissance. I demonstrated how artists (Donovan Ward, Selvin November, Xolile Mtakatya, Pro (Mgcineni) Sobopha and Theminkosi Goniwe), through incorporating, layering, juxtaposing, re-framing and re-contextualising images in their artworks, drew upon and contrasted the different 'gazes' their work was identified within, and thus created multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting locales for their self-identities. Through art-making, I showed artists could simultaneously site themselves within different contexts and territories, being both 'here' and 'there,' intentionally aiming their work at a global audience while presenting themselves 'as' local artists, and siting their identities as global from a local perspective. Some artists used iconic devices derived from outsider perceptions of 'traditional' art, to locate themselves in the African continent to the outsider, while 'masking' their local distancing from the sources they depicted themselves within. Others through portraying 'local' knowledge in an effort to bring it into the global arena, sited themselves as outsiders to the community they portrayed themselves in. Part and parcel of these processes, it was argued, were power relations occurring between the local and global in relation to multiple cultural locales and contexts of historical, economic and cultural power inside and outside South Africa, which these artists self-consciously drew upon, reworked or juxtaposed. Despite different and seemingly fragmentary perceptions of artists' identities and contexts of identity, it was suggested that artworks might conceptually 'frame' different locales for identity referents through art-making, as a means to integrate multiple sites of identity as a cognitive whole.

Chapter Six expanded upon previous chapter to demonstrate how different mutual referents of collective identification could be created within collaborative art projects between artists of different socio-cultural backgrounds through examining "those nodal points in the networks of interrelations where there is a mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters" (Hastrup and Olwig (1997: 5). I examined the breaking down of racialised perceptions of difference between visual artists, in relation to their intentions as part of processes of constructing national unity and reconciliation for South Africans for the future.

The construction of 'Childhood' (1998) an installation artwork jointly created by Gregg Smith and Mustafa Maluka, indicated how a perception of mutual collectivity incorporating difference could be created through a shared focus on representing their respective spaces and experience of childhood in a

jointly created artwork. The shared focus on material creation, I argued, facilitated conversation and enabled mutual points of identification to occur in the process of making.

The 'Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops' revealed how creative interaction and exchange within a shared space facilitated social exchange between artists. I examined how a forward focus on creativity in space and time altered habituated, socialised, embodied and embedded practices of hierarchised racism from the past to challenge and facilitate moments of mutual identification between artists, in which the embodied performance of collectivity, through a mutual engagement with creativity facilitated changes in social interaction as 'strips' of newly performed behaviour that could be performed in the future. Such shifts, I also argued, incorporated the conscious intentionality of artists in this exchange, and unconscious praxis through the layout of the space they worked and moved in, and facilitation of conversation through a common creative focus as a point of departure for discovering mutual referents of similarity.

'Dis Nag – The Cape's Hidden History of Slavery' (1998), a collaborative exhibition on the theme of slavery at the Cultural History Museum in Cape Town, further demonstrated how a focus on the mutually shared and individually interpreted historical theme of slavery in the Western Cape enabled a sense of individual engagement and ownership in representing, and thus making, history. I argued that the shared organization of the exhibition process by the exhibiting artists provided opportunities for individual agency within collective social change, and an important space to express differences and conflicts. Research revealed that participants' perceptions of 'belonging' and recognition in public spaces and institutions were also important in providing a sense of agency for these persons in the New South Africa.

Despite initial suspicions and boundaries between artists, who, like all South Africans, were subject to perceptions of difference and divides that permeated interpersonal behaviour and social interactions, research showed that the shared focus of producing material artworks facilitated social interaction and discussion in a social as well as creative sense. An exchange of values, techniques, individual opinions and artistic outcomes, I argued, helped create mutually shared *events* of interaction as points of collective identification for artists in time and space. The chapter demonstrated that artwork production, in being creative, is forward-focused and open-ended in time and space, and facilitated both conscious and unconscious shifts in perceptions of self-identity through changing the praxis of social relationships.

These projects also altered habituated spatial and embodied relationships between artists. Artists' relationships with the spaces they worked in, the artworks they produced, the embodied and verbal interactions between artists, and the collective construction of memory through individual interaction were all factors that needed to be taken into account in shaping a sense of collective identity within such frameworks. The focus on material production also facilitated verbal interactions. Collaborative art projects thus presented new possibilities for social interaction between participating artists beyond habituated boundaries of difference, creating mutually shared referents of interaction and identification

through *material* processes of interaction, which facilitated a conscious 'coming to awareness' of new possibilities of self for artists.

Processes incorporated within collaborative art projects, I suggested, *perform* possibilities for collective identities across boundaries of difference, which, through being creatively and spatially *future orientated* in intention, overcome some of the divides and difference previously expressed and experienced by artists. Collective art projects thus enable a creative focus on a forward-movement in time, embedding new social relationships in processes of material production through praxis. Within collaborative projects, factors to be taken into account include not only the individual's embodied, discursive and habituated practices of interaction with other individuals across race boundaries, but also their relationships with the spaces they work in, and their personal engagement and identification with collective historical and social issues in South Africa. Consequently, establishing a sense of collectivity across difference between individuals of different socio-cultural backgrounds in South Africa is not merely a matter of verbally re-determining perceptions of self, or applying blanket collective terms, but is incorporated in shifting processes of unconscious as well as conscious processes of interaction between individuals, agency rather than passivity, and the provision of a 'visibility' and 'voice' for the historically disadvantaged, of a space to be 'heard' or to be 'visible' and acknowledged within public spaces enabled by a sense of ownership and recognition, within agency, of these changes.

IMPLICATIONS

The cases presented in this study indicate a plethora of emerging individual perspectives and responses to dramatic social change and processes of shifting towards more individualistic, expansive, alternative, diverse and multiple perceptions of self beyond apartheid constructs of identity for historically disadvantaged artists in Cape Town.

Self-identity is complex and, in a consciously transforming South Africa, is particularly so. Self-identity does not transform in one arena alone, but involves the *action* of an individual in time and space, a negotiation between its presentation, or in the case of artists presented here, its public visibility, and its unconscious praxis and performance within society. In a transforming South Africa, I have argued for an approach to examining identity that is in itself flexible and expansive. Through examining the construction of artworks as events that incorporate social change, this study provided a means of accessing the multiple influences and impacts on individual selves in a transforming South Africa without over-simplifying or reducing the outcome to a re-essentialism or re-categorisation of identities. Furthermore, my approach incorporated not only how identities are expressed or presented, but the materiality of the process of their making.

Implications for Art and Artists in South Africa

The making of artworks constitutes human activity - the processes and events through which individuals make themselves 'visible' within society. Visual artists create artworks which exist, albeit temporarily at times, as material artefacts in-the-world, and these artworks can be studied as an 'event' in space and time which mediate human relations and incorporate change through praxis. At the same time, artworks are subject to the 'gaze' of, and consequently sited within, externally derived theoretical and social discourses. In South Africa, artists, consciously preoccupied with processes of representation, are at the forefront of social change, and aware of the gazes and external categories that their own existence is subject to. As demonstrated in this thesis, these artists thus negotiate between the external gaze that contextualises themselves and their work, and their intentionality in re-shaping and re-determining the world they live in. This study suggests researchers should be cognisant that the art categories artists seem to be sited within may, on the one hand, be active negotiations of the art world, or, on the other hand, be strongly contested by the artist who created it. The question here is 'perspective'- the researcher's or the artist's social context? – an ongoing debate for anthropologists and art historians worldwide, concerning the evaluation of 'non-western' art. I argue, at the least, for an awareness of artists in South Africa consciously, and intelligently, negotiating and responding to art categories, as agents within structures that externally define who they are, and what their work is about.

Some years on from the original fieldwork research period, historically disadvantaged artists still contest racialised divides and hegemonies of value and visibility in the contemporary art world; the term 'black' artist is being more and more widely used; there are still economic and educational disparities between these 'black artists' and their white counterparts. International opportunities are continuing to expand and open up for all artists. Roderick Saul's artwork is still a major feature of the District Six Museum, Mustafa Maluka is married and lives in Holland, and Thupelo workshops continue to draw together local and international artists. In terms of social change in relation to some of the artistic issues explored, there have also been a number of archaeological excavations of slave graves, serious public debate concerning the medical safety of contemporary circumcision initiation practices and the District Six land area is being returned to its previous owners, if not tenants. There is certainly scope for extended studies of the artists' lives presented here; in terms of shifting categories in the South African art world within transformation; in terms of the making and re-making of individual memories in the New South Africa; in terms of divides and connections *across* boundaries of difference; and concepts of boundaries and boundedness in a globalising South Africa. The above shifts reveal the embedded-ness of South African artists' lives within ongoing and dramatic socio-political change in South Africa.

As an outcome of this study, I propose researchers in South Africa take into account the lives, contexts and concerns of artists who produce artworks in South Africa as factors in the choice of materials, images, techniques and styles incorporated in the artwork's construction, i.e.: *how* and *why* the artwork was created in the first place, as relevant to issues of socio-political transformation. Whether South African artworks are viewed in a market place, laid out on the pavement for tourists, or in a gallery

in central Cape Town, or, indeed, exhibited abroad, they incorporate an individual's positioning in-the-world through their production, evolving between artists' intentions in its creation and artists' awareness of, response to, and negotiation of the external categories that define themselves and their work and the limitations these impose. This study is particular in being sited within the unique environment of a transforming South Africa, a society moving from an extreme situation of racialised hierarchy and oppression to constitutional democracy (notably without bloodshed or war). Although the broadening and incorporation of new perceptions of identity may be experienced in other countries and cities, particularly those with notably hybrid or creolized populations, the recency of apartheid in South Africa in historical terms creates a situation with specifically localized concerns and outcomes which require acknowledgement. Art-making does not concern only an end-product, but the process of 'getting there'; of shifting the dreams, desires, beliefs and challenges individuals face in a transforming South Africa.

Implications for Social Identities

Fundamentally, this study has explored *process*, incorporating cognitive theory and theory on the materiality of human praxis and embodiment, to examine the multiplicity of identity, and how it operates in social reality; and how processes of shifting identity may occur on many levels and through many, sometimes simultaneous and even contradictory, negotiations by individuals. I have taken an expansive incorporative approach to identity. My focus on examining processes of change within individual identity has also aimed to emphasize that changes can, and do, occur. Identity manifests itself in diverse and multiple ways. The ways in which shifts in perceptions of self-identity occur, are also diverse and multiple. Identity formation depends on how contexts, circumstance and opportunity place individuals and the sense of agency and intentionality they are able to exercise in relation to these changes. A great deal has been written about the idea that different identities are played out in different contexts. However, perceptions of ethnic and cultural divides within, and between, nations persist, and are used to mobilize ethnic wars and conflicts and, in the recent cases of Rwanda and Yugoslavia, ethnic massacres and genocide. Popular culture also persists in reifying 'difference' within peoples' being, including ethnic and cultural differences. What this study presents is a focus on the *creative* aspect of peoples' being. I thus argue for an optimistic rather than divisive approach to identity construction.

Such an approach may seem to be idealist. However, social reality is not only how we exist in the here and now, it also becomes the ideas, aspirations and concepts we aspire towards, assimilate, and bring into being in our everyday lives. In this study I have shown how changes can and do occur for individual identities, presenting different ways within one area of social praxis - the lives and work of historically disadvantaged artists in South Africa through which, in making art, they make identities. Individual change is part of social change. Many say that true socio-political transformation in South Africa will take years. Some say, generations. Even though the impact of over forty years of apartheid and 300 years of colonialism in South Africa lingers on, people can, and do, come to an awareness of a multiple, diverse and incorporative self, linked to others, and are capable of, when circumstances permit or encourage, re-

shaping memory, history, categories, human praxis, territory and culture and how they interact, to redefine perceptions of self. The different selves that comprise the person are all relevant, and do not necessarily indicate confusion or fragmentation, but rather incorporation. Consequently, this study is against 'ethnic thinking' per se.

As Gilroy (1995) has noted, "The various flows from which we construct our cultural identities require more than the old Newtonian analogies of force and power if we are to understand them adequately" (29-30), and this study strongly supports an approach towards identity that is more akin to relativity; that time and space are themselves flexible, dependent upon the vantage points taken, that movement between positionalities depends on the eye of the observer, and yet that they are all interconnected and, ultimately, compatible. Selves are constructed, and become actuality, not based on inherent and predetermined 'truths', but in how we *look* at things. With this awareness, there are ways of shifting the realities people live within - the 'selves' they inhabit and how they manifest them; an interflow of referents, contradiction, multiplicity, flexibility and incorporativity that are, and always were, constitutive of the 'whole' self. In a world becoming more and more self-interrogative, and in a South Africa which has moved from oppression to transformation, artists incorporate these changes and, indeed, negotiate, rework and *create* them through art-making, as a material negotiation between the ongoing shifts in self-identities, and the transforming world they live in.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

(* = taped interview, n = written notes)

ARTISTS

Andre Marais - 1998*
Andre Pillay - 1998
Andrew Putter - 1998n
Berni Searle - 1998*
Billy Mandindi - 1999 - 2000
Bongi Bengu - 1998n
Cameron Vuyile - 1999 2001
Craig Masters - 1998*
David Hlongwane - 1998
Donovan Ward - 1999*, 2000n, 2001
Emile and Falco, 'Black Noise' - 1998, 1999
Fatima February - 1999*
Garth Erasmus - 1998* and 1999*
Graham Goddard - 1998*
Gregg Smith - 1998*, 1999
Guy Tillim 1998 - 1999
Humza Gulam - 2000
Jane Alexander - 1999n
Jasmine Stahli - 1998n, 1999
Jill Trappier - 1999n
Liesl Hartwood - 1998
Lionel Davis - 1998*
Lundi Mduba - 1998*
Mustafa Maluka - 1998,* 1999*
Paul Hendricks - 1998n, 1999n
Sipho Hlati - 1999*
Peter Clarke - 1998*, 1999
Pippa Skotness - 2000n
Pro (Mgcineni) Sobopha - 1999n
Randy Hartzenberg - 1999* and 2000
Robert Slingsby - 1998
Roderick Sauls - 1999*, 2000* (video recording)
Ruth Payne - 1999n

Selvyn November - 1998*, 1999
Sophie Peters - 1999*
Stanley Hermans - 1998n
Thembinkosi Goniwe - 1999*
Timothy Mafenuka - 1998*
Tina Smith - 1998N
Tyrrel Thaysen - 1999n, 2000
Velile Soha - July 1998*
Vuyile Cameron - 1999
Wonder (William) Martinus - 1999, 2001
Willie Bester - 1999*
Xolile Mtakatya - 1999*

ARTS ADMINISTRATORS AND CURATORS

Ciraj Rassool - District Six Museum Curator - 1999
Delyshia Forbes, Cape Town City Arts Council- 1998
Dr Jane Taylor, Curator - 1999*
Emile Maurice, Education Director, National Gallery, and artist - 1998, 1999
Emma Bedford, curator South African National Gallery - 1999N
Gordon Metz, Govt. Arts Administrator - 1999N
Julia Meintjes, art curator and corporate art buyer - 1999N
Rory Bester, Curator - 1999N
Zayd Minty - Arts Administrator, Cape Town City Arts Festival - 1998N

APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Centre for Popular Memory, University of Cape Town

Community Arts Project, Cape Town

District Six Museum, Cape Town

Greatmore Artists' Studios, Woodstock, Cape Town

Healing of Memories, Cape Town

Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape, Cape Town

Michaelis School of Art, University of Cape Town

Slave Lodge (Cultural History Museum), Iziko Museums of Cape Town

South African National Gallery, Iziko Museums of Cape Town

Thupelo Cape Town Artists' Workshops, Cape Town

University of Cape Town Departments, Dept. of Social Anthropology; Dept. of Historical Studies

University of Cape Town

**APPENDIX C: THUPELO CAPE TOWN ARTISTS' WORKSHOP
PARTICIPANTS 1998 -1999**

ANNI HENNOP
ANTHONY CAWOOD
BILLY MANDINDI
BIRTHE REINAV (DENMARK)
BRIAN GUM
CHRIS COZIER (TRINIDAD)
GARTH ERASMUS
HOWARD MINNE
JADE GIBSON
JANET RANSON
JEANETTE UNITE
JENNY PARSON
JILL TRAPPLER
JUDY MCKUNE
KEITH NUNN
KHAYA BOOI
LUNDI MDUBA
MARY VISSER
MAXIM MARGOC
MERVYN DAVIDS
ORRIN COTTLE
OSCAR PETERSEN
PAT NICHOLSON
PATSY GROLL
RICHARD RHODE
ROBERT GREEFF
SOPHIE PETERS
THEMBI NTSELE
TIM ZANTSI
TIMOTHY MAFENUKA
TWINKY LAUBSCHER
TYRREL THAYSON
WONDER (WILLIAM) MARTHINUS
WISEMAN ZWANE
XOLILE MTAKATYA

APPENDIX D:

‘DIS NAG’ : THE CAPE’S HIDDEN HISTORY OF SLAVERY’ EXHIBITION – ARTISTS’ NAMES AND EXHIBITED WORKS

AYESHA PRICE, DONOVAN WARD AND ANDRE MARAIS – **THE FREED SLAVE**

BERNI SEARLE – **NUMB-ER, FROM THE ‘COLOUR ME’ SERIES**

CRAIG MASTERS – **THE CASTLE, THE DISPLAY, THE SLAVE’S PIPE AND THE DESCENT
INTO THE DARK CELLAR**

GARTH ERASUMUS – **ARC OF THE TESTIMONY**

GREGG SMITH – **UNTITLED**

JADE GIBSON, FATIMA FEBRUARY, YASMINA FEBRUARY, JASMINE STAHLI – **‘TILL
DEATH US DO PART’**

MGCINENI SOBOPHA – **D.P. RITUAL**

NRICCO MASSIMO – **ANTAGONIST**

RANDOLPH HARTZENBERG – **THE SPEECH OF BIRDS**

SELVIN NOVEMBER – **EMANCIPATION OF SPIRIT**

SIPHO HLATI – **UNTITLED**

SOPHIE PETERS - **THROUGH THE EYE OF THE SLAVE**

THEMBINKOSI GONIWE – **TIMELESS BEAT**

YOLANDE SWALES – **THE SECRET HISTORY**
